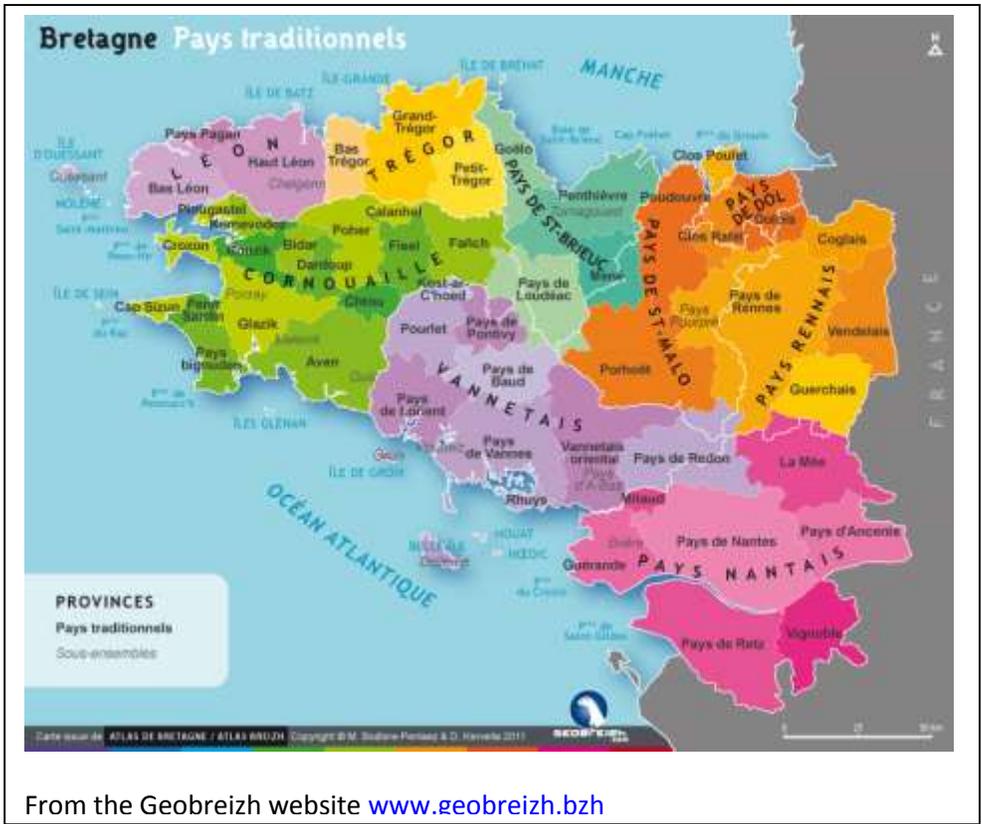


BRO NEVEZ

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

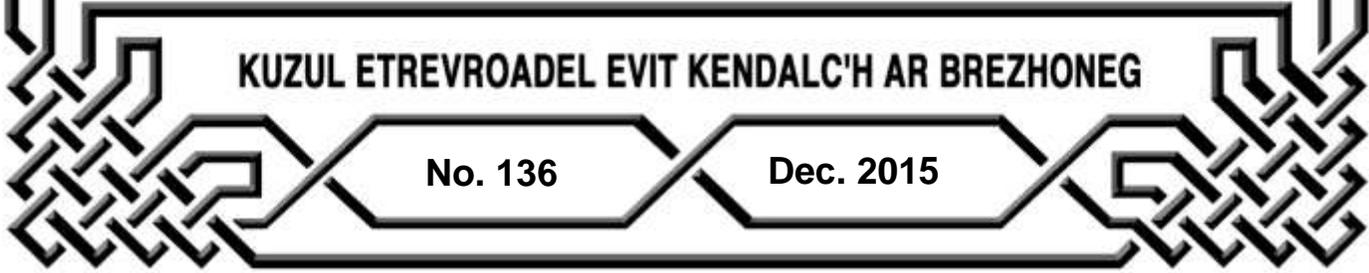


From the Geobreizh website www.geobreizh.bzh

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EDITOR'S ADDRESS & E-MAIL

Lois Kuter, Editor
605 Montgomery Road
Ambler, PA 19002 U.S.A.

(215) 886-6361
loiskuter@verizon.net

U.S. ICDBL website: www.icdbl.org

The **U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)** was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation on October 20, 1981. **Bro Nevez** ("new country" in the Breton language) is the newsletter produced by the U.S. ICDBL. It is published quarterly: winter, spring, summer and fall. Contributions, letters to the Editor, and ideas are welcome from all readers and will be printed at the discretion of the Editor.

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

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

For information about the Canadian ICDBL contact: Jeffrey D. O'Neill, PO Box 14611, 50 Bloor Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M8L-5R3, CANADA (e-mail: jdkoneil@hotmail.com). Telephone: (416) 264-0475.



From the Editor

With this issue of Bro Nevez getting completed well into the month of December, I have the opportunity to wish all those reading it a *Merry Christmas (Nedeleg laouen)* and especially a *Happy New Year (Bloavezh Mat)*

I encourage those who would be happy getting the newsletter as a PDF file to contact me if this is not already the way you receive it. I know that many prefer a paper copy so you can sit in a nice comfortable chair instead of in front of a computer screen, but you can always print out a copy! Sending an e-mail makes a big difference not only in photocopying costs but also in postage expenses. Perhaps the best argument for getting a copy by e-mail is that it will come with colorful images instead of badly reproduced black and white ones! And you will also have the opportunity to share Bro Nevez by e-mail with anyone else you think might enjoy it.

- Lois

Breton in the Schools – Numbers for Fall 2015

While numbers can change slightly after the school year settles in, the following is based on statistics provided by Ofis ar Brezhoneg www.brezhoneg.bzh.

In sum, the total of students from pre-school through high school in the three bilingual programs has reached 16,345 students. In the Diwan schools where the program is immersive, the number reached 4,087 with a 6% increase. For the public bilingual schools (often referred to by their support organization Div Yezh) where teaching is half in Breton and half in French the number is 7,128 with an increase of 3.5%. In the Catholic bilingual schools (referred to as Dihun) there are now 5,130 students with just a 0.6% increase.

In all, there are 472 sites where bilingual programs are found in 154 towns and cities, with 215 of these preschools. When broken down by Departments, Finistère is the region with the most growth, as it has been in past years. However, there was growth over all in all five Breton departments this year. That said, the increase in students is smaller than the average for the past years with 505 new students vs. an average of over 600 for the period of 2005 to 2014. An annual increase (and not a decrease) in students is a good thing, but the increase needs to be much larger to insure a future for the Breton language. A 2007 survey conducted by TMO-Régions estimated the number of Breton speakers to be 194,500 (15 years old and up), but 30% of these are over the age of 60.

Some statistics are presented below and many more details can be for on the Ofis ar Brezhoneg website:
www.brezhoneg.bzh

By School Type and Departments

	Diwan	Public	Catholic	All
Côtes d'Armor	715 +4.5%	1,290 -1.1%	425 +4.7%	2,430 +1.5%
Finistère	2,237 +7.7%	3,524 +5.7%	2,001 +1.7%	7,762 +5.2%
Ille-et- Vilaine	220 +12.8%	637 +4.3%	390 -5.1%	1,247 +2.5%
Morbihan	580 -1.8%	1,435 +1.6%	2,242 -0.2%	4,257 +1.0%
Loire-Atlantique	335 +4.3%	242 +8.0%	72 +5.9%	649 +2.5%
All Brittany	4,087 +6.0%	7,128 +3.5%	5,130 +0.6%	16,345 +3.2%
Growth	233 students	241	31	505

Looking at different levels

	Preschool	Primary	Middle Sch	High School	Total
Diwan	1,376	1,463	879	369	4,087
Public	3,027	3,145	747	209	7,128
Catholic	2,051	2,459	553	67	5,130
Total	6,454	7,067	2,179	645	16,345
Growth	140 2.2%	226 3.3%	92 4.4%	47 7.9%	505 3.2%

Communes of Brittany by number of bilingual and Diwan students (from pre-school to secondary combined)

<u>Commune</u>	<u>Department</u>	Total	Total New
Rennes	Ille-et-Vilaine	734	15
Quimper	Finistère	667	81
Vannes	Morbihan	589	16
Carhaix	Finistère	563	39
Brest	Finistère	545	66
Nantes	Loire-Atlantique	523	25
Lannion	Côtes d'Armor	505	15
Plougastel-Daoulas	Finistère	423	13
Landerneau	Finistère	417	11



Adults Learning Breton

As the poster here asks, would you want a tattoo that reads *Kenaveau* instead of *Kenavo*? (*veau* is French for calf). Maybe taking a Breton class could help you avoid such an embarrassment.

For the Breton language to thrive, it is not enough for children to enroll in bilingual or Diwan classes. Adults who will have the competence to

use Breton as an everyday language are also important in creating producers and audiences for new media, employees for offices and services where Breton is needed, and new teachers to allow further expansion of bilingual school programs. Ofis ar Brezhoneg has long supported adult learning opportunities and has launched several poster campaigns to promote adult classes, working with DAO (Deskiñ d'An d'Oadourien), a federation of all the organizations fostering adult Breton learning. In the latest poster campaign some 7,500 posters will be placed in communities throughout Brittany.

Breton classes for adults range from weekly evening sessions to intensive 3 and 6 month training courses which are particularly effective in helping adults truly master Breton. To support those teaching Breton new pedagogical materials called *DaoDal* have been developed. Available online by subscription, these include written, visual and oral aids. <http://www.dao-bzh.org>



The Redadeg relay race for the Breton language

The race is back this year. The following is a summary of this important event drawn from the website: www.ar-redadeg.bzh.

On the website you can find information in Breton, French and English, and you can sign up to support the cause – from afar – by purchasing a few kilometers! The race supports a variety of Breton language initiatives each year.

From 29th April to 7th May, from Nantes to Locol-Mendon, 1700 km in Brittany!

The Redadeg, launched in 2008, is a relay race which takes place every two years.

Popular and festive, it crosses Brittany, day and night to symbolise the transmission of a lively, creative and

dynamic Breton language, across the generations and territories.

To back the projects in support of the Breton language the kilometres are sold and the profits are redistributed. These new initiatives are selected based on application, they are very diverse and can relate to teaching, leisure, media, sport or culture but they all promote the use of Breton in social and family life.

The race goes through the 5 Breton departments over 1700kms and crosses more than 300 municipalities.

The Redadeg defends the idea « Brezhoneg ha plijadur » ! « Breton language and pleasure » ! You can run with your family, friends or colleagues, in disguise, with music, follow the race on foot, or on rollerblades, in pushchairs or on bikes....organise some entertainment or take advantage of the local festivities, concerts, theatre, stands, breakfasts....organised according to the time and place of the race passing. The main idea is to take part, to be seen, to have fun and it's also the opportunity to hear, to use and to make Breton be heard!

The baton, symbol of the Breton language, carries a secret message, it is passed from hand to hand and is read at the finishing line.

For the start of the 5th edition in 2016, the race will leave from Nantes on Friday 29th Ebrel [April] and arrive in Locol-Mendon on Saturday 7th May in the middle of the Trofe Roñsed-Mor, Gouel ar bagadoù.

The Redadeg is an event which is uniting, sporting, cultural, popular and festive all at the same time.

The Redadeg is an event with a strong media (in Brittany and elsewhere), economic (direct and indirect) and cultural, impact.

“Bro” / “Pays” – What are these?

I have always been at a loss as to how to translate “pays” (“bro” in Breton, “broioù” as the plural). When I look in my French dictionary the definition of “pays” is given as follows: “Country, land; region, district; fatherland, birthplace, native land, home; the country.” It is a bit more complex than that for the *pays* of Brittany, and it is important to recognize the importance of these geographic territories to the people of Brittany.

This was pointed out in Dossier 18 (La Bretagne: un pays de pays) produced by Construire la Bretagne – one of a series of 20 excellent documents on a range of topics leading up to the regional elections this December. www.construirelabretagne.bzh

The following is a translation (my own) of part of that dossier which I hope will be of use in better understanding Brittany and the importance role pays play in identity and social organization. I cannot say that I am less uncertain as to how to translate the word *pays* into English but have chosen to use “land” in this case.

Dossier 18: Brittany. A Land of lands

Live and work in the “land.” When Brittany gets going, the word comes back like a litany. But Brittany is a land of lands in that its identities are fitted, complex, subtle. The word is like nesting tables, designating what is here and in turn territories of very variable statures. From the 1960s and 70s Brittany was the first in France to suggest the creation of territorial entities and lands which corresponded to gradations of everyday life, promoted by intellectuals like Paul Houée, Louis Ergan, Loeiz Laurent, Raymond de Sagazan. But the land here is also Brittany and France, without forgetting smaller scaled territories which often have a decisive role in peoples’ mentalities and their sense of belonging (the Pays Bigouden, the Pays Pagan, Le Mené, le Coglais, etc.). Why this higher role? Why this importance? In a period where an “indivisible” French coat of mail is present which often creates ostracism, Brittany is singularly different with its nesting tables of belonging.

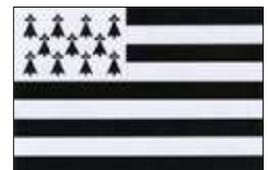
Bretons define themselves first of all as Bretons (88%) but also French (80%). They are for now the most pro-European with a region, out of all of France, which most strongly supported Europe in elections. And finally, they have a very strong attachment to their micro-lands ... not to mention their countryside. Several authors (A. Lecourt, T. Kernalegenn...) have shown that the strongest fights against projects considered deconstructive are in Brittany: Plogoff, the “Menhirs libres” In Carnac, the fight against waste centers and projects for waste burial, the Peuple des dunes Why this attachment to land and countryside? Is it an element of archaism in a globalized society? Is it in contrast a form of modernity finding roots in very old attachments? Bro gozh ma zadou. Old land of my ancestors. An “old” idea? Or the expression of a new modernity?

Ar vro, “la” payse. In the Breton language, the term land is feminine and denotes more of a motherland than a fatherland. Like the word *kêr* (used for a house, village, hamlet, town, city), the originality of the term here is that it is used indissociably with different levels and in a very frequent manner. One verifies in Breton (the lands Fañch, Bro Vigoudenn, Bro Pagan, Bro Wened, Bro Gerne ...) and/or in French (le pays Pourlet, le pays de Retz, le pays de Saint-Malo, le pays de la Mée, le pays de Dol-de-Bretagne, le pays nantais ...). In the Breton language its importance is such that one cannot name certain areas without giving this term. Trégor is called Bro Dreger, Léon is called Bro Leon, the “Region” administered in the French sense is called in Breton Rannro (part of the land). France is translated as “Bro

C’hall.” The varied territorial usage is a conundrum for researchers, especially since there are ancient names as well as others more recently created here and there. The multiple meanings stem from plural appurtenances, confirmed by multiple writers (Pierre Flatrès, Mona Ozouf, Paul Houée, Ronan Le Délezir, Ronan Le Coadic, Jean-Michel Le Boulanger, Philippe Jouët, Mikael Bodloré, Yves Lebahy, etc.).

Pierre Flatrès explains well the way the Breton spirit makes it appear as a Russian dolls. Brittany is a land of lands. Opposite to “indivisible” France, Brittany is one and divisible. The flexibility of representation integrates Brittany into a vaster land, affirming sometimes in a supporting way the serial decline in scale of different areas where one finds the same naming. Bretons often evoke their territories in spontaneously speaking of a land rather than a region (from the Latin *reg*: to dominate; *regere*: to govern, to direct). They return to their land. “Dud divroet.” People “without” their land. In a very strong manner, the Breton expatriate is defined as “deprived” of the land. One evokes this slogan more precisely with “Live and work in the land,” launched it seems in 1970 by the CFDT, very much used in 1972 during the Joint Français strikes, and massively taken on again during the Bonnets Rouges movement with a usage that would be difficult or inappropriate for other territories of France.

The origin of this expanding use is very complex and is probably the result of a linguistic conception that has been inherited (*ar vro*). This is threaded also to the classic importance of bishoprics (le pays de Dol-de-Bretagne, Bro Wened ...), a weight passed down from history and Breton autonomy, the plurality of territories woven into the territory. The multiple-meaning term sometimes designates cultural specificities (the land of “Fisel” or “Glazik” for costumes, certain dances ...) or evokes agricultural or geographic particularities which gives a name to landscapes (pays de Rance, pays du vignoble nantais, pays des abers ...). In representing the bishoprics, the Breton flag shows a land of lands, which might explain the success of this flag.



.... In conclusion, Brittany appears sometimes on the French scene as a Region just like the others. This accepted governance hardly translates the reality. Brittany effectively creates a unique place for itself in its taste for the acceptance and promotion of the notion of lands at different levels. Let’s make it a marker of our fabric and a door to open the way to possibilities. Brittany, a Region for Paris, land of lands for the Bretons. This is a bond to a reality that is often felt, a will to fight against the excesses of centralization and to establish a true regional ambition. This is an interesting concept to give life to Brittany and democracy. To bring life and harmony to the different territories of the heart.

The map on the front page of this issue of Bro Nevez is from the Geobreizh website www.Geobreizh.bzh where you can find more about the lands of Brittany and maps and statistics of all kinds.

The capital letters on the map are for the nine “bishoprics” of Brittany (Leon, Tregor, etc.), and the smaller titles are for the smaller sized “pays.” Although there are borders shown on the map, these are not well-defined lines like those of a state which are set in location.

The Bagad – A “New” Tradition in Breton Music

Lois Kuter

The bagpipe, bombard and drum ensemble known as the *bagad* has become such a natural part of the Breton music scene that many think it is an ancient tradition of Brittany. But, in fact, this unique ensemble dates back only to the mid 20th century.

Like other countries of Europe Brittany has a much older tradition of bagpipes with the tiny *biniou* (*biniou koz* or *biniou bihan* – old biniou or small biniou) which is played in pair with the bombard, a very loud “oboe.” The two can be viewed as one instrument played by two musicians. This type of paired playing of a bagpipe and oboe-like instrument was not uncommon in other parts of Europe but persists only in scattered areas of northern Italy, Occitania and Catalonia today. The paired biniou and bombard was joined by a drum (*tambour*) in the second half of the 19th century, but this trio is not common today.

Another bagpipe (one-droned like the biniou) dating back in Brittany is the *veuze* which was found in southeastern Brittany and the northern part of the Vendée. This is usually played solo. Unlike the biniou and bombard which have a long unbroken tradition (albeit threatened at times), the *veuze* stopped being performed in the early 20th century. In the 1970s Breton musicians brought this instrument back to life thanks to a few older instruments as models and research to determine its repertoire.

Scottish style Highland bagpipes appeared in Brittany first at the end of the 19th century, played by Jean Guillerme of Belle-Isle-en-Terre with a clarinet, a popular instrument of this part of the Tregor region. No one knows what this might have sounded like, but it seems likely that the pair performed much like the paired biniou and bombard for Breton dances, marches or melodies. Just a handful of “Breton pipers” would be known until the years between World War I and II.

Inspired by the Scottish pipe bands, and desirous of promoting traditional Breton piping, it would be in Paris that Bretons would found the Kenvreuriez ar Viniouerien in 1932. Spearheaded by Hervé Le Menn and Doig Le Voyer, this included some 30 musicians.

It would not be long before Bretons in Brittany would try to create their own bagpipe bands – hindered at first by the approach of World War II, but aided by the fact that Doig Le Voyer would move to Rennes. Also key was the entrance of a young man named Polig Monjarret who would be a key player in the creation of Bodadeg ar Sonerion (BAS) which made its debut in 1943. Like the KAV of Paris, BAS served to teach the instruments and organize musicians – paired players as well as ensembles. The May 23, 1943, performance at a concert for the Celtic Congress that year included bombard players Dorig Le Voyer, René Tanguy and Iffig Hamon, and bagpipers Polig Monjarret, Efflam Cuven and Robert Marie, with two drummers, Jean Rivière and Joly (whose first name is lost to history).

There is some dispute as to the first true bagad of Brittany. Based in Dinan the 71st Infantry Battalion claims the honor with an ensemble created in 1946. Bagads were also created in Carhaix and Rennes in 1948 and Brest in 1950. It would only be in 1950 that the word *bagad* was used. Besides being organized geographically and based in towns and cities, early bagads were also organized by groups such as the boy scouts. Famous is the Bagad Bleimor of the Paris Bleimor scout group through which passed Alan Stivell (Cochevelou) and Donatien Laurent (see the note about him in this issue of Bro Nevez). Bagads in Breton cities and small towns would bloom throughout Brittany in the early 1950s.

Like Scottish pipe bands, bagads would march in parades, but would also perform at contests where creativity in arranging Breton dances and melodies was tested. Through the years musical technique has improved and instruments have changed and the Scottish influence has pretty much disappeared. Bretons continue to travel to Scotland to master Scottish style piping on Highland bagpipes but the repertoire of the bagad is distinctively Breton. In the earliest years of the bagad bagpipes were manufactured in Brittany, and then imported from Scotland. With the realization that the Scottish Highland bagpipe was not well adapted to the needs of the Breton repertoire, Bretons adapted the instrument and started to make instruments again in Brittany. The story of the reinvention of the Highland bagpipe for the bagad as well as for performance in pair with the bombard (modeled on the pairing of biniou and bombard) is complex, so those interested in the details of musical keys and tunings are advised to delve into the bibliography provided here.

In its over 60 years of existence the bagad has evolved into a highly sophisticated orchestra. Still at the core are the bagpipes, bombards and drum section (snare, tenor and bass drum) but bombards now come in all sizes and keys, and bagpipes and their drones are modified to match new musical needs. Performances for concerts and competitions commonly incorporate other instruments and voices as well – from clarinets and the biniou koz, to piano, saxophones, trumpets and the gaita,

not to mention an international range of percussion instruments. Bagads travel to perform throughout the world and often incorporate traditions and rhythms from Africa, the Middle East or South America.

Today there are over 100 bagads performing for competitions at 5 different levels, with two contests each year to determine the top bagad of Brittany. You will hear bagads at every major festival of Brittany, at concerts, the fest noz, and even at demonstrations for the re-unification of Brittany, the Breton language, or other issues which brings Bretons to the streets to protest.

Children and young men and women who make a musical start in a bagad often move on to add other types of performances and repertoires – bombard players and pipers commonly also perform in the traditional style of paired “couples.” Bagad members might also join a range of other ensembles with acoustic and electric instruments for concert and fest noz performances.

As it was in its earliest days, the bagad has served to instill pride in Breton identity and the unique musical traditions of Brittany. While bagads have traveled widely to represent Brittany, it is rare that bagads are created outside of Brittany or cities with a large Breton emigrant community, like Paris. As you will read in the article which follows, the United States has the good fortune to have its own bagad: the Bagad New York. Check out their website to learn more about them: www.bagad.us.

Note: While I have used *bagads* as the plural of *bagad*, in the Breton language one would use *bagadoù*.

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Armel Morgant & Jean-Michel Roignant. *Bagad – Vers une nouvelle tradition*. Coop Breizh. 2005. ISBN 2-84-346-252-5.

ArMen. *Musique Bretonne – Histoire des sonneurs de tradition*. Le Chasse-Marée/Ar Men. 1996. ISBN 2-903708-67-3.

Website for Bodadeg Ar Sonerion : www.bodadeg-ar-sonerion.org

There are many great recordings of bagads. Check out past issues of Bro Nevez for some notes on newer releases.

Bagad New York in Alaska

Natalie Novik

At the invitation of the Celtic Community of Alaska (CCA), a well-established organization promoting Celtic culture in Alaska, six musicians from Bagad New York spent a few days traveling around Alaska at the end of October. The

initial invitation sent to Kerlenn New York stemmed from the fact that CCA celebrates Samhain, the Celtic New Year, every year before Halloween, and picks a theme for the event, which happened for 2015 to be Brittany. Lacking any Breton pipers in Alaska, CCA turned to the Bagad New York and invited six of them to come over, with a grant from the Rasmuson Foundation and the Alaska Council on the Arts. Bagad New York includes numerous piping champions who have been to Brittany and studied with local bagadou.



We were in for a treat: the group, headed by penn soner Alex Bartholomew, also included Mike MacNintch, who plays both biniou koz and veuze, two Highland pipers, Rory Cullen and John Locoiano, and two percussionists, Michael Eagle and Nick Mitchell. Their repertoire focuses on fest-noz music: gavottes, an dros, plinns, etc., either played as a band, or daou ha daou with Alex Bartholomew on the bombarde and Mike MacNintch on the biniou.

The conditions of the grant required that the invited musicians tour Alaska. With only six days, including one evening dedicated to Samhain, CCA made the choice to focus on Anchorage and three smaller communities within two hours by car, two on the Gulf of Alaska and one closer to Denali Park in the north.

The group left the morning after their arrival for the port of Seward, where they performed at the school. The school masters had brought together all the students in town, a great crowd of 300 children gathered in the gym, very eager to learn Breton dances. The decision was made to teach them the hanter dro, which is easy and can be danced in long chains. All the children took part, even the smaller ones... After touring Seward, the musicians performed in the evening for the public at the theater located in the high school. It gave Bagad New York the opportunity to play in concert, something they had not done before, and the audience was genuinely entertained not only by the music, but also by the stories and explanations provided by the musicians.

The group overnights in Seward, and drove back towards Anchorage the next day, with a stop in the small community of Whittier. The musicians were invited to lunch at the school, after which they performed for the total student body (35). There was as much enthusiasm as in Seward, as Whittier is rather isolated and warmly welcomes all visitors. The group drove back to Anchorage in time to take part in a Meet and Greet evening, followed by a rehearsal with local performers. ICDBL member Natalie Novik had contacted a group of local cloggers, the Midnight Sun Cloggers, earlier in the summer, offering to teach them some Breton dances. The Cloggers took to gavottes and kost ar c'hoat like fish to water, and the Bagad New York was happy to oblige, some of them participating in the dances, which they know remarkably well.



Staying on the local stage in Anchorage, there was a master class the next afternoon at Alaska Pacific University, featuring piping and drumming classes and focusing on Breton airs. It attracted quite a crowd of local pipers and drummers, intrigued by the difference with their usual Scottish/Irish repertoire.

The Samhain (Kala Goañv in Breton) evening was a great success, featuring the Bagad as the guest of honor, but also local band Jubilee, harpist Linda Yarborough, local female a capella singers the Derry Ayres, and the Midnight Sun Cloggers. The Bagad performed four times during the evening, and in particular led the audience outside the building to the Old and New Fires ceremony. Many people joined in the various Breton dances of the evening, quite happy to find out that all they had to do was learn one step and repeat it!

The next day, Sunday, was more relaxed, and the musicians took this opportunity to visit the Portage Wildlife Conservation Center, where wild animals get rescued and are kept in their natural surroundings (with an electric fence, of course). All through their visit in Alaska, the group had the opportunity to see a lot of wildlife: whales, seals, otters, eagles, moose, the huge Alaskan ravens and magpies, and even a Dall sheep on the road to Seward. At the Center, they also had a chance to see brown bears and caribou.

The Sunday evening saw a concert at the brand new Glenn Massay theater in Palmer, a small village 45 minutes north of Anchorage. The audience was sparse, but the Midnight Sun Cloggers had made the trip with the musicians and gave several dance demonstrations, enticing the public to join in. The musicians went back to Anchorage that night, in order to catch their flight to New York the next day. Hopefully, this is only their first visit to Alaska and there will be many more exchanges.

Breton Oral Traditions Online

On November 17, 2015, Dastum celebrated the online internet presence of Donatien Laurent's many years of research and collection of Breton traditional music and lore. Partnering with the Centre de recherches bretonne et celtique (CRBC) in Brest, Dastum will be making this valuable documentation available online.

This material is from collection work done from 1955 to 1975 when Donatien Laurent completed 36 research projects for the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires in Paris and then as a scholar with the CRBC. This represents some 300 hours of recordings – just part of a lifetime of work by Donatien Laurent.

Born in 1935, Donatien Laurent grew up in a family where Breton identity was valued and celebrated, and he started collecting in his teens. Perhaps best known of his research work is his study of Hersart de la Villemarqué's song collection notebooks which would show that song texts in the *Barzaz Breiz* were indeed drawn from Brittany's oral tradition and not just poetry concocted by La Villemarqué (even if "cleaned up" a bit by him).

The hundreds of hours of recordings and the hundreds of hours spent in transcribing and documenting the recordings are an invaluable contribution to Brittany and those who will continue to transmit this rich heritage.

Information can be found on the following links:

CRBC: <http://bibnumcrbc.huma-num.fr>

Dastum www.dastum.bzh

Bretania www.bretania.fr

Albert Poulain (1932-2015)

On October 6, 2015, Brittany lost one of its finest traditional singers and storytellers, Albert Poulain. Albert Poulain had a huge influence on the revitalization of music and culture of Gallo Brittany, touching generations with his knowledge of and passion for the traditions of eastern Brittany, and in particular his home town of Pipriac. He was a master of song and storytelling, but also an artist and photographer who documented the rich details of rural architecture – from farm houses, stone walls and wells, to fountains, old bake ovens, road-side

crosses and chapels. He was a fine observer and chronicler of every detail of the Breton culture in which he lived – and more importantly he was an active force in passing along his knowledge of oral traditions.

Like many Bretons – whether from the Gallo speaking heritage of eastern Brittany or the Breton-language heritage of the west – Albert Poulain became fully conscious of his Breton identity while he lived in Paris, studying design and architecture from 1953 to 1958. Upon his return to Pipriac in 1959 he began collection work, lugging a huge and heavy tape recorder which cost him the equivalent of a few months' salary. He was a pioneer in collecting the oral tradition of Gallo Brittany, contributing thousands of texts and recordings to the Dastum archives as well as thousands of drawings and photos documenting landscape and buildings. But it was not so much about collecting as it was about encouraging people to sing and tell stories and dust off a hidden heritage that was considered useless and outdated. Albert Poulain was not about to sit back and allow people to become zombies in front of their television.

In 1959 he collaborated with Jean-Louis Latour and Albert Noblet to create the Groupement Culturel Breton des Pays de Vilaine, an organization still very active in the promotion of traditional dance, song and oral traditions of the Vilaine River valley. In 1975 Albert Poulain worked with Jean-Bernard Vighetti to initiate the Bogue d'Or. Celebrating its 40th anniversary this fall, the Bogue d'Or festival and song contest culminates in the town of Redon after a series of local "eliminary" contests to choose those for the final competition. Not only has this contest inspired older singers to find treasures in their repertoire, but it has also encouraged youngsters to become engaged in their heritage.

Albert Poulain was not only a great singer and master storyteller himself, but a teacher and mentor whose love and passion for the Gallo tradition and Brittany was contagious.

I am grateful for having had the opportunity to meet him when I was in Brittany to do research for my PhD dissertation on Breton identity and its expression in music and language. My first introduction to Albert was a bit "difficult." He barked and growled at the person trying to introduce me and seemed to want no part of meeting an American student studying Bretons. With some persuasion he did agree to meet me and I traveled to his house in Pipriac on a November day in 1978. My French was pretty rudimentary at that early stage of my year-long stay in Brittany, so I don't think I had much success in describing my research project to study "Breton identity." Albert did most of the talking and I learned of his knowledge and love of Brittany's architectural heritage as well as song when he showed me boxes of old hinges, nails, and doorknobs. It was clear to me that I was in the presence of someone quite remarkable.

And that same November day Albert introduced me to another remarkable Gallo singer, Jeannette Maquignon (1906-1998). We drove from Pipriac in separate cars since our destinations after the visit would be different. Much to my surprise I managed to keep up on the high-speed drive over narrow twisty back roads strewn with wet leaves without landing in a ditch. I imagined at the time that Albert was perhaps hoping to lose me. I had no idea of the final destination and did not have the leisure to observe landmarks or signs along the way since my eyes were riveted on the road and my hands very firmly gripped on the steering wheel.

At Jeanette Maquignon's farm we found she was out in a field pulling up beets (betteraves). With just a small patch to go we pitched in to add to the pile of beets and then headed to the house to wash off the mud and have a chat. She and Albert talked about the Bogue d'Or, traded some snippets of song and laughed a great deal. I had nothing useful to offer the conversation and learned more by remaining silent and listening than I could by asking any questions. Even if I had a brilliant idea to add, it would have been difficult to get a word in edgewise! Two masters of song were at the table, clearly enjoying the opportunity to have a joyful chat.

I would meet Albert Poulain briefly in later trips to Brittany, the last one in 2007 when I encountered him at a protest march from the Parliament building to the Prefecture in Rennes. This was one of many gatherings by Bretons to demand the reunification of Brittany – in this case it was to demonstrate against government plans to take the judicial oversight of judges in the Loire-Atlantique Department away from Rennes. Albert Poulain was not one to restrict his expression of passion for Brittany to the promotion of song and music. He was not afraid to speak his mind. In recognition of the immensity of his contribution to Brittany, he was inducted into the Order of the Ermine in 2004.

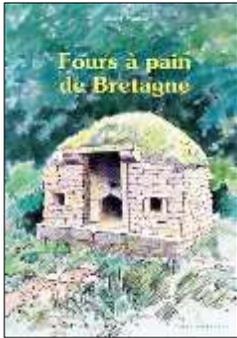
Albert Poulain will be greatly missed but I can think of no one who has done more to share his love for Breton tradition and inspire new generations to enjoy and value their heritage.

Albert Poulain can be heard on several CDS of traditional song of the Pays de Vilaine, but the following provides the best introduction to his repertoire: *Y'a rien de plus charmant Tradition vivante de Bretagne N° 12*, Dastum, 1999.

While Albert Poulain leaves a vast collection of unpublished documents and photographs, the following are some of his publications of stories and traditions:

Contes et légendes de Haute Bretagne", éditions Ouest-France, 1995, reedited in 1999
*Finfinaw et contes de Piperia**, association Kistinenn, 1995

Les signes des pierres, mémoire des bâtisseurs en Bretagne", éditions Celtica, 1995
Sorcellerie, revenants et croyances en Haute Bretagne, éditions Ouest-France, 1997
Architecture en pays de Vilaine", co-authored with Bernard Rio, *Ar Men*, March 2007
Petit patrimoine en pays de Vilaine", co-authored with Bernard Rio, *Ar Men*, May 2007
Fontaines de Bretagne, co-authored with Bernard Rio, Editions Yoran Embanner, 2015

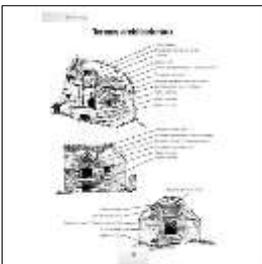


And a new book by Albert Poulain: *Fours à Pain de Bretagne* (Yoran Embanner, 2015. 310 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-79-5)

Sadly, Albert Poulain did not live to hold this new book in his hands, but I think he would have been pleased to see his many years of research come alive.

This is not a book you read cover-to-cover, unless you have a passion for outdoor bake ovens of Brittany. But, this is a book that is beautiful to explore for its exquisite drawings, very numerous photos and the attention to detail in presenting thousands of bake ovens that still populate Breton villages and towns.

Albert does everything possible to help you through the architectural details of bake-ovens with a glossary of terms, descriptions of the basic parts to an oven, and descriptions of the basic elements that make up an oven – not as simple as one might think.



While this illustration is too small to read the print it gives an idea of the detailed information presented in the book and the author's concern that readers know the basic terms to understand what makes up an oven.

Depending on one's geography and access to different building materials an oven will vary from region to region. And some may be larger or fancier than others. But if you wanted to restore a long-abandoned oven in your village or build a new one from scratch, this would be the book you need.

There are some 60 pen and ink drawings of ovens – artistically as well as technically interesting. And there are over 80 photographs of ovens – some in use and others of varying states of condition. And then there are close to 200 drawings of ovens giving all the measurements.

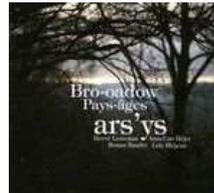
The bulk of the book is a listing of ovens, by construction types, architectural elements and locations – a veritable encyclopedia of the ovens of Brittany. 11 maps of Brittany show the distribution of specific types of construction, so you can get a quick sense of how different elements were found in specific areas of Brittany and not in others. Proverbs and short stories related to ovens are interspersed in the book and there is a section devoted to this as well.

The detailed documentation – written and visual - of this book certainly reminds us that Albert Poulain was an exceptional scholar of rural Breton traditions. He was a master of song and storytelling, but his respect and love of the wealth of architectural heritage in Brittany is unmatched. This book is a fitting testimony to his scholarship and passion.



Heard of, but not heard – 18 New Recordings from Brittany

Information for these short descriptions were drawn from the Coop Breizh website (www.coop-breizh.fr) and the journals *Ar Men* 208 (Sept.-Oct. 2015) & 209 (Nov.-Dec. 2015), *Musique Bretonne* 245 (Oct./Nov./Dec. 2015)



Ars'ys. Bro-oadow / Pays-âges.
www.ars-ys.com

Ars'ys is a group composed of four musicians performing compositions by Hervé Lesvenan, who also performs on piano and organ. The group also includes Armel an Héjer with vocals and texts, Loïc Bléjean with uilleann pipes and low whistle, and Ronan Baudry on soprano saxophone. Through stories, songs and melodies the compositions poetically evoke the countryside of Brittany.



Yves Berthou, War ar prim.

Yves Berthou is one of Brittany's master bombard players and he presents here some 50 melodies and dances from the Gavotte Pays of central western Brittany.

Accompanied by biniou players Patrick Molard or Fañch Pérennès, these live recordings (many from the Gouren contest for paired biniou-bombard or the Printemps de Châteauneuf festival) show off the tradition of these instruments and their performance by true masters. Included are suites for the dance gavotte as well as slower melodies and marches.



Ingrid Blasco. *Les Trois ours. Fur ha Foll/Le Logellou.*

Ingrid Blasco performs on vielle à roue (hurdy-gurdy) with an electronic mix created by Guillaume Tahon to evoke a range of soundscapes. Blasco uses the unique sound of the stringed Vielle

where manipulation of the wheel striking the strings can add a percussive sound. Traditional Breton music figures with classical and contemporary electronic composition for an interplay of acoustic and techno effects.



Championnat des bagadoù – Loirent 2015.

This three CD set with a DVD presents the championship performance in Lorient of 15 of Brittany's top bagads – the second contest of two to determine the

best. You will hear Bagad Penhars, Bagad Kemper, Bagad ar Meilhoù Glaz (all from Quimper), Bagad Quic en Groigne (St.Malo), Bagad Cap Caval (Plomeur), Bagad Karaez (Carhaix), Bagad Melinerion (Vannes), Bagad Roñsed-mor (Locoal-Mendon), Bagad Pañvid ar Beskont (Pommerit Le Vicomte), Kerlenn Pondi (Pontivy), Kevrenn Alre (Auray), Bagad Bro Kemperle (Quimperlé), Bagad Beuzec ar c'hap (Beuzec Cap Sizun), Bagad Briec (Briec), and Bagad Elven (Elven).



Filip Chrétien. *Les Traces*

Nine poetic compositions (and one instrumental) performed in French by Filip Chrétien. Co-written with a number of other artists or solo, these evoke a range of moods and situations – everyday and dreamlike.



Faustine. *Faustine.*

Faustine Audebert experienced the modal music experimentation of the Kreiz Breizh Akademi but also completed conservatory of music studies. On this first album she accompanies herself on piano with

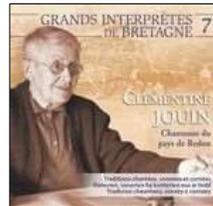
songs in English. Texts are quite diverse, drawn from Lewis Carroll, Allen Ginsberg, Keats or Elizabeth Bishop. The music is of her own composition. She is accompanied by Hélène Brunet on electric guitar, James McGaw on bass, and Nicolas Pointard on drums for a jazz-rock sound.



Mona Jaouen. *Me va unan / Moi seule.*

Mona Jaouen has done several CDs for children but here returns to her own compositions – in Breton and French – from her career which spans over 20 years. With new

arrangements by Patrice Paichereau who accompanies her on guitar, the songs have a contemporary sound – rock, jazz, electronic, blues, acoustic in tone. With a uniquely warm voice and original style this is a welcome new release.



Dastum, Groupement Culturel breton des pays de Vilaine, L'Epille. *Clémentine Jouin, Chanteuse du Pays de Redon.*

Grands Interprètes de Bretagne 7. This is the seventh in a series of CDs featuring masters of traditional

Breton song. This features Clémentine Jouin from the Redon area of Brittany – a town straddling the borders of the departments of Ille-et-Vilaine, Morbihan and Loire Atlantique, exemplifying how administrative borders can totally ignore culturally coherent *pays* of Brittany.

Born in 1926, Clémentine grew up on a small farm in Sixt-sur-Aff, just to the north of Redon and learned her repertoire of song from family and neighbors in a period when song was very much a part of rural social life. She married, and with her husband moved to larger farms in the area. With changes in lifestyle in the post war period of the 1950s song was pushed to the side of work and raising children.

When she retired in 1989 at the age of 63 Clémentine would occasionally sing at retirement homes and her fine voice and repertoire of song was noticed. In 1990 she would meet Mathieu Hamon – then 18 years old – who would collect songs from her and encourage her to perform more widely at *veillées* for song and for the Bogue d'Or festivals/contests for traditional song. Her reputation grew and 120 songs in all – especially ballads - would be collected from her. "Collection" of songs in Brittany means they are preserved in recordings and written form, but more importantly the act of collection itself is a social occasion when younger singers learn new songs which in turn are transmitted to a new generation.

This 72-minute CD includes a selection of songs from Clémentine Jouin's repertoire and is accompanied by a 72-page booklet documenting her life and presenting background information and the texts of the songs.



Yann-Fañch Kemener, Aldo Ripoche & Damien Cotty. *Les Chants de la Passion.* Buda Musique 4716928.

Yann Fañch Kemener is one of Brittany's masters of traditional song and his repertoire includes the long and dramatic Breton *gwerz* as well

as songs for the dances of central Brittany. Like singers throughout all of Brittany Kemener's repertoire comes from his family but also from collection work – visits to singers who are happy to share their repertoire with

younger generations. On Kemener's first Lp *Chants Profonds de Bretagne* in 1977 he included a 13-minute performance of "Ar Basion Vras," "the Great Passion," performed at Easter time in Breton churches up until the eve of the Second World War. Kemener has often recorded *cantiques* (religious hymns), and this new rendering of the Passion shows off the beauty of the traditional religious repertoire of Brittany. Included on the CD are three parts of the Easter performance – *Ar basion vras*, *Ar basion vihan*, and *An Anjelus*. Added are songs related to Mary and the subject of the Easter Passion story. Kemener has worked with cellist Aldo Ripoché for a decade highlighting the interest of combining Baroque classical styles with Breton traditional song. On this CD Ripoché and Damien Cotty perform several instrumental interludes of music for strings by the 17th century composer Aubert. Included is a second "bonus" CD of a performance from 2009 in Saint-Tréphine alternating stories and songs performed by Kemener.



Kroazhent. 20.

In 1995 this band was formed in the basement of the famous Breton pub Ti-Jos in the Montparnasse section of Paris. Today they celebrate their 20th anniversary of performances of dance in Brittany, Paris and beyond.

Added to recordings from previous albums are some new ones for the occasion of this CD. Some 13 musicians are involved in the 17 selections (bombard, biniou, tin whistles, percussion, fiddles, flutes, guitars ...) for some songs (in Breton) and a range of Breton dances.



Morgane Labbe & Heikki Bourgault. Empreinte Vagabopnde.

La compagnie des possibles. Morgane Labbe with song, accordion and percussions pairs with Heikki Bourgault on guitar to provide music with a range of moods and melodies

to accompany amateur films produced between 1927 and 1966 in the collection of the Cinémathèque de Bretagne.



Lors Landat & Thomas Moisson. En Public.

In the unusual pairing of voice and accordion Landat and Moisson are well known on the fest noz and fest deiz scene and have performed in concert and for more intimate and

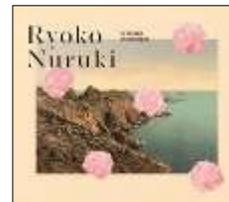
informal *veillées*. Here they perform traditional dances from Brittany as well as jazzier couple dances (kof-hakof) with a distinctive Breton swing. Dances include plinn, gavotte, rond de Saint-Vincent, rideo, Scottish, mazurka and polka ...



Matmatah. Antaology. Le Ouache Productions.

This is a double-CD with a 60 page booklet to celebrate 20 years for this now retired band. Its four albums have sold over 1 ½ million copies and the band has performed live all over Brittany, France, Europe, India,

and Australia. The first CD of this set collects 20 songs which made the band known. The second CD includes live performances, most not before released.



Ryoko Nuruki. Voyage en Bretagne.

A classically trained pianist, Noroko Ryuki here performs compositions inspired by the coasts and sea of Japan and Brittany. Recorded in Brittany, the CD includes nine of

her compositions, with three compositions by Breton pianist Didier Squiban and one by Japanese composer Kazushi Mityazawa. She sings (in French and Japanese) to the piano to express her attachment to Brittany and its seacoast.



Pempbiz. Karantez marv ha faltazi.

This group includes singers and musicians whose roots go to the 1970s group Storlok: Bernez Tangi, Yvon Gouez, Gildas Beauvir and Abalip. In the Breton language they sing about nuclear dangers, the

plight of migrant peoples, death, prisoners, and love, to a rock beat.



Pevarlamm. Del tu. Paker Productions.

A group performing songs and dances from Brittany, Ireland and Galicia (with songs in Breton and Galicien). Vocals are provided by Elsa Corre and the musicians of the

group are Konogan an Habask (bombard, biniou, uilleann pipes, whistles), Gabriel Faure (fiddle, mandolin, viole d'amour), Jérôme Kerihuel (percussions), Thibault Niobé (guitar, bouzouki) and Erwan Volant (bass).



Sonerien Du. Frankiz. CD SNDU 015.

This is the 24th album from this ever-popular fest noz band. After 40 years and some changes in line-up, the band still smokes with vocals, biniou-bombard, electric guitar, percussion

and other instruments.



Alan Stivell. *AMzer. Keltia III.*

Alan Stivell performs a composition with the theme of seasonal change in a seamless transition of carefully crafted melodies. To his voice and harp are added flutes, choir, percussion, and other effects in a

non-stop movement through the seasons. The CD shows off the generous of Stivell as a composer, arranger and performer.

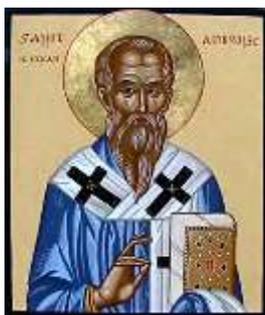
Deep inside a Breton skull 47 – Old Rambling Saints

Jean-Pierre Le Mat



I travelled recently from Huelgoat to Locmaria Berrien, in central Brittany. Under the rain, I stayed near the chapel of Saint Ambrose. It is strange to find here, lost in the mountains of Arree, a chapel dedicated to an old Italian Bishop. What is he doing here, in a place pervaded by the memory of Arthur and Merlin?

St. Ambrose is honored in the city of Milan where he was the bishop. Deep inside my skull, I tried to find a trace of him, together with Celtic shadows. According to old books, Maximus, Roman military governor of the island of Britain, was crowned emperor by his troops in 383 BC. To get the throne, he landed with his Roman army and Breton volunteers on the continent. Gratien, the first son of the Empress, then twenty-five years, offered him battle. Maximus, named Macten Vledig by the Bretons, refused it. The armies stayed facing each other without fighting. Maximus knew the behavior of men in war. Day by day, the troops of Gratien disbanded. The young man panicked. He fled with three hundred horsemen, who soon abandoned him. He wandered then on the roads of Gaul. Roman cities



refused to welcome him. Pursued by horsemen sent by Maximus, he took off his imperial ornaments not to be recognized. In Lyon, he was invited into the house of a man he formerly treated fairly. During the meal, Gratian was put in confidence and wore again his imperial clothes. At the end of the meal, he was assassinated. Gratien invoked Ambrose several times while dying.

His mother the Empress Justine, and his half-brother Valentinian, were terrified when they learned about the death of the young man. Meanwhile, Maximus was crowned emperor in Trier, now a town of West Germany, under the name of Magnus Clemens Maximus. He threatened the power of Rome. Justine was a heretical Arian, in open struggle against Catholics led by the fiery Ambrose. The man of God violently hated the Empress and called his followers to disobedience. Taking advantage of the confusion due to the death of Gratian, he imposed his conditions.

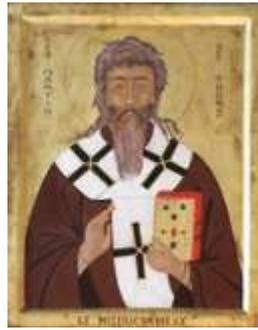
Justine promulgated an edict which gave equal rights to Arians and Catholics. The Empress held the brother of Maximus, Marcellinus, in prison. She wanted to kill him to avenge the murder of Gratien. Ambrose said no. Marcellinus was released and returned to his brother.

Ambrose agreed to negotiate peace on behalf of the Empress and her son. He had to go to Trier, where Maximus had established the center of his empire. During his travel, in Mainz, he crossed Count Victor. This ambassador had been sent by Maximus to Justine and Valentinian, to establish a lasting peace. When he arrived in Trier, Ambrose was not allowed an audience. Without fear, he entered the Great Council. He calmly explained the demands of Justine and Valentinian. Maximus wanted the Empress and her son to come themselves to Trier. Ambrose replied that he had the mission to ask for peace. It was agreed that Ambrose would wait in Trier for Victor coming back. Ambrose was a both a guest and a hostage.

Victor came back, and he ensured that Valentinian wanted peace, but did not want to leave Italy. Finally, after several deputations, it was established that Maximus was the legitimate emperor reigning on a part of the Roman Empire: Gaul, Britain and Spain. Maximus assured Valentinian possession on the rest of the Western Roman Empire.

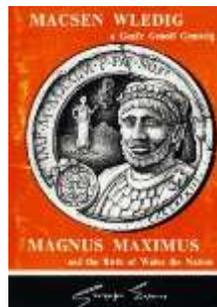
Ambrose, called Emrys by the Bretons, continued his apostolate in Trier. Maximus and his warriors held the same Catholic faith as the bishop. Among the Breton troops of Maximus, Emrys was honored as a saint.

Meanwhile, Saint Martin, called Marzhin by the Bretons, was sent to Trier by the Gauls. Marzhin is also the name the Armorican Bretons will give, a century later, to Merlin the prophet. The saint of Gaul came to get the release of Gallic prisoners, and the help of Maximus against heretics coming from Spain. Catholic tradition teaches us that Martin refused to eat at the table of the Emperor he considered as a murderer and a usurper. Maximus sincerely pleaded his cause. He assured Martin that his troops had forced him to adventure. He was not responsible of the death of Gratian. Moreover, his thundering success could only be the work of God.



Martin was convinced and, anyway, he needed the help of Maximus. He sat at the table of the Emperor, who greeted him. Martin was later his adviser and intimate. Martin is well known to us, here in the Cornwall bishopric, of south west Brittany. It is said that he consecrated our first bishop Corentin, during the reign of King Gradlon.

When Maximus attacked Italy and became emperor in Rome, the emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire marched against him. Maximus perished in the war. According to what is written on the Pillar of Eliseg, in Wales, Servira, daughter of Maximus, came back and married Vortigern, King of the Bretons.



Breton troops of Maximus, led by Conan Meriadec, settled in our peninsula. They established a Breton nation here. They knew that their emperor was advised by two great saints, Emrys and Marzhin. During the time the Saints were at his side, Magsen was a great emperor, victorious in battle, respected and powerful. The Bretons kept in their heart and in their brain the memory of these two men of God, Emrys Marzhin. The two names were associated in the light of the Holy Spirit, and transmitted from generation to generation. Our great prophet, more than one century after Maximus and Ambrose and Martin was called Merlin, but also Marzhin Emrys.

This is an old story of our ancestors. When it is written in books, we believe that it must be true. I don't know. That story is very old anyway. What is buried deep inside my Breton skull is not the memory of ancient events. It is the feeling that prophets and men of God were passing among us. We give them a name, possibly the same, for eternity. What is important for us is the divine light in their eyes, illuminating the little people of Brittany on a par with kings and heroes.

A Travel Account of Brittany from 1906

Francis Miltoun, with pictures by Blanche McManus.

Rambles in Brittany (Boston: L. C. Page & company), 1906



Editor's Introduction

I have pulled many excerpts from this travel book by the husband and wife team Francis Miltoun (Milburg Francisco Mansfield) and Blanche McManus. McManus was born in Louisiana in 1870 and illustrated a number of travel books by her husband as well as children's books.

Travel literature of this period often includes a mix of history, observations on scenery, architecture or social customs, as well as descriptions of people, animals, events, and sometimes food. While the details can be quite interesting, authors sometimes embellish their adventures, repeat inaccuracies of other writers, and can express some strongly negative attitudes about the people they meet. Francis Miltoun has a largely positive view of a picturesque Brittany.

Chapter III – the Morbihan – Vannes and the “Golfe”

The “Golfe” or Bay of Morbihan is one of those great landlocked havens in which the whole Breton coast abounds; its islands are as many as the days of the year, as the natives have it.

Morbihan itself is as much sea as land. The tides rise to a great height along this whole southern coast of Brittany, and in the Bay of Morbihan they have full play.

The metropolis of Lower Morbihan is Vannes, which the railway porters shout out at you, as you descend from the train as Va-a-a-nnes.

Leaving the station, one threads his way through whole batteries of laundresses, their gull-winged head-dress nodding in rhythm with the beating of their paddles, a most picturesque sight, but a process which works disaster to one's clothes, destroying pearl buttons, and causing mysterious small holes to appear in the most inconvenient places. An accompaniment of song always goes with these shattering and battering exercises. At Vannes, according to Theodore Botrel, it runs like this:

« Pan ! pan ! pan !
 Ma Doué !
 Comme la langue maudite
 Marche bien au vieux lavoit.
 Pan ! pan ! pan !
 Vite ! vite !
 Plus vite que le battoir ! »

It is the day of the local fair, the chief article of commerce being, it would seem, pigs, as at Limerick. At any rate, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of little porkers, who have just put foot to earth, as their venders tell one; their own voices, too, strident and high pitched, announce the same thing.

Vannes, truth to tell, is not much of a capital, but it is a highly interesting and picturesque old town, with manner and customs quite different from those of any of its neighbours.

The chief characteristics of the place seem to be pointed roofs of red and moss-grown tiles and walls of blue granite. One can almost imagine that Botrel chose it as the scene of the stanza:

« Qui donc chante sous nos fenêtres
Ces mystérieuses chansons ?
Ce sont les âmes des ancêtres
Qui reconnaissent leurs maisons ! »

There is a blending of the seashore and the open country here which is scarcely found in any other part of France. In some respects it is like Holland, and again it is not, for it lacks the web of canals with which that country is interwoven.

The whole bay – “Le Golfe” – forms a dooryard for Vannes, and a yacht or a boat is as much an appendage of the Vannes household of the better class as a dog or cat.

Vannes, the capital of the Morbihan, is a city of 23,000 souls, and has two great modern, up-to-date hotels. Choose one, and you will “like the other best,” as Rubinstein said to the young pianist, who was to play two of his compositions to the master. He said this, be it recalled, after he had heard only the first one. Not that Vannes hotels are really bad. Oh, no. Truth to tell, they are excellent in their way, but they are unconvincing.

When one is here, in the midst of a new, strange set of conditions of life, he looks for something characteristic about his inn. If he find it, he is content; if he do not, all the smugness and propriety of imported manners and customs in the dinner service will not make him so. The true traveler prefers taking his chances with the native dishes to trifling with Paris culinary fashions at the hands of a Breton peasant-chef - if that is the exact classification one ought to give the cooks of Vannes.

To enter Vannes by road, one has come down a precipitous descent to the sea-level, and accordingly rises again to an equal height when he leaves, for Vannes is the great tidewater port for the whole of the south coast of Brittany between Lorient and St. Nazaire. The traffic of the bays of Morbihan and Quiberon is considerable, and the ceaseless coming and going of

many small steamers and sailing-craft is unlike traffic elsewhere.

The great bay is an inland sea almost surrounded by the jutting peninsulas which terminate on either side of the narrow channel in Pointe de Kerpenhir and Port Navalo. The name is compounded of two Breton words, *mor* (sea) and *bihan* (little). The flat tree-grown islands of this little sea make vistas and groups of a unique character, and to learn the bay well by a voyage among them in a flat-bottomed skimming-dish of a craft, or by the more facile motor-launch, is a thoroughly agreeable experience.

The chief of the islands are the Monks Isle and the Ile d’Arz, but the enfolding shores of the mainland, with its little seaside-farmyard villages, have the same characteristics.

On the little passenger steamers, which ply between the islands and the mainland, one meets a queer company of peasant-folk in coifs and round velvet or straw caps, fowls, sheep, goats, and an occasional overgrown calf.

Such of the islands of the bay as are populated, and many of them are, were colonized from the neighbouring country, and the women in particular are physically admirable. They still wear the distinctive costume of the country in a spirit uncontaminated by the electric lights and railways of Vanes. Custom in these isle allows the young women to demand the hand of a likely swain in marriage, and the plan seems to work well. The population seems generally happy, prosperous, and contented. What better is expected as the outcome of marriage?

The climate of all the Morbihan shore is mild and tranquil at all seasons of the year, and one may sit beside the open window of his hotel dining-room throughout the year. The mimosa flowers in winter, and palms, rose-trees, camellias, and fig-trees prosper exceedingly in the open air.

Vannes was the ancient capital of the Veneti, a strong coast tribe of other days which resisted the invasion of Caesar and triumphed against his fleet a half-century or more before the Christian era.

When finally the Romans came, they made Vannes the centre of six great highways which radiated to Corseul, to Angers, to Hennebont, to Locmariaquer, to Rennes, and to Nantes. From this its importance may be inferred.

Christianity came to Vannes in 465, when St. Perpetus, Metropolitan of Tours, consecrated St. Patern as first bishop. By the sixth century it had become an independent country, but was joined again to the duchy of Brittany in 990. John IV established his habitual residence at Vannes, and constructed the celebrated Château de l’Hermine, with its constable’s tower so famous in the history of Brittany as the place in which he

imprisoned Clisson, releasing him only after the payment of a heavy ransom.

The history of Vannes and the Morbihan is too long and stormy to be even outlined here, but there are still many remains and memories which will serve as a foundation upon which to build the fabric anew.

The port is most interesting, with its varied traffic and its great ships of nearly a thousand tons which thread their way up through the islands of the gulf, bringing lumber, coals, and all the small cargoes of a great coasting port.

At Vannes one may see a huge parti-coloured handkerchief of the *bandanna* variety waving before a narrow doorway. It is the "shawl," the sign of the hair-cutter, who will exchange its fellow for your hair, if you be a Breton girl with dark brown tresses, or even an elderly person whose hair is iron-gray. In Lower Brittany, on summer fair-days, the dealer in hair makes a round exceedingly profitable to his establishment, though at each stopping-place it leaves a hundred or more young girls shorn of their crowning glory, - a loss which they successfully cover with their daintily ironed head-dress.

The chief of the sights and shrines of the neighbourhood of Vannes are St. Gildas de Rhuis and the Château of Suscino. The former is revered for its sixth-century monastic foundation of St. Gildas, called the wise, and for some time in the twelfth century governed by the famous Abelard. The ancient abbatial church is now the parish church. It dates from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, and is an unusual work in many respects, and rising to a height of grandeur seldom seen outside the larger Breton cities and towns.



The castle of Suscino – or more properly the ruin – is a wonderful thirteenth-century structure on the water's edge, built by John the Red-haired. It follows the best Gothic traditions of its time, and its crenelated walls and towers, the latter now unroofed, are perfect of their kind. It was captured by Charles of Blois, and retaken by his Montfort rival in 1364. An English garrison occupied it in 1373. Finally, it was given by Anne of Brittany to John of Chalons, Prince of

Orange, from whom it was taken by Francis I, and he presented it to Frances of Foix, Lady of Châteaubriant, as she then was. The rest of its history is equally varied, and as important as becomes so magnificent a mediaeval fortress.

In form the château is an irregular pentagon, perhaps modified from its original plan in 1420. Its orchid machicolations are remarkable both for their beauty and

their utility. Seven towers, of which six remain, originally flanked its gates and walls. The new tower is a fine cylindrical keep of the fifteenth century. Over the entrance one still reads a tablet inscription as follows:

Ici est né
Le Duc Arthur III,
Le 24 août, 1393

North of Vannes are Ploërmel and Josselin, two places which no one should leave out of the itinerary of Brittany. Neither is easily accessible by rail, but both are conveniently reached by road.

Ploërmel has a railway connection with the line to Brest by way of Rennes, and another with the line to Brest by way of Vannes, but Josselin is off the beaten track, and one makes his way from Ploërmel by omnibus or in a carriage.

Ploërmel and its "pardon" have inspired an opera, one of Meyerbeer's most celebrate scores, known to English music lovers as "Dinorah," but in French called "The Pardon of Ploërmel." The town owes its name to an anchorite who, in the sixth century, retired here to a hermitage.

The history of Ploërmel during the middle ages was stormy. It was here that the edict expelling the Jews from Brittany was issued in 1240. In 1273 the Comte de Richemont – upon his return from the Crusades – founded at Ploërmel the first Carmelite convent known the France. This ancient convent, situated without the walls, escaped from the disasters which caused the city to be burned in 1347. The Calvinists came in time to have a temple here, in which they held two synods of their church.

The church of St. Armel, a reconstruction of 1511-1602, is in parts highly decorated with stone sculptures and strange images, recalling, says an ingenious, but profane, Frenchman, the "pleasantries of Rabelais." Of course he refers to the players on the bagpipes, the man sewing up the mouth of his wife, and the wife tearing off her husband's cap. Certainly these quaint figures are not born of religious symbolism, unless, by chance, that the symbolism of the religious builders of Ploërmel differs greatly from that of others elsewhere.

There are still remains of Ploërmel's old city walls dating from the fifteenth century, and also a fragment of a tower.

Near by, on the road to Josselin, is a simple granite shaft perpetuating the famous "Battle of the Thirty," celebrated in history.

According to Froissart, Robert of Beaumanoir, chatelaine of Josselin, one day provoked an English captain – Bromborough – who was encamped at Ploërmel, and challenged him to battle; thirty of his men against thirty

Frenchmen. At the first attack four Frenchmen and two English fell. Then the combat began again with swords, battle-axes, and lances. Eight English only finally remained, including Bromborough himself; all the others were killed or taken prisoners and led away to the dungeons of the Château de Josselin.

Froissart writes elsewhere of this same engagement: "Twenty-two years after the battle of the thirty, I saw at the table of King Charles of France one of the combatants, a knight called Yvain Charnel. His face showed that the battle had been hot, for it was scarred all over."

This wayside column or pyramid just off the route bears the following inscription:

À la Memoire Perpetuelle
De la Bataille des Trante
que Mgr le Maréchal de Beau Manoir
A Gagnée dans ce Lieu l'An 1530

Josselin is now chief town of a commune of 2,500 inhabitants; it has a fine mediaeval château yet inhabitable, two ecclesiastical monuments of more than unusual excellence, and a rather shaky and ill-situated inn (Hôtel de France), which makes up in the abundance and excellence of its fare for what it lacks in the way of electric lights and modern sanitary arrangements.

The first houses of Josselin were grouped around a miraculous effigy of the Virgin, known as Notre Dame du Roncier, because it was found beneath a blackberry-bush. To-day Notre Dame du Roncier, the church and the chapel and its statue of the Virgin, are venerated highly by the faithful who make the pilgrimage to the shrine on the Monday and Tuesday of Pentecost and on the eighth of September, the birthday of the Virgin, when the remains of her ancient statue are shown. This effigy was broken and burned in the Revolutionary fury of 1793, but a modern replica was crowned, in the Chapel Notre Dame du Roncier, in 1868. The settlement which grew up around the shrine was surrounded by a protecting wall by the Count of Guéthénoc in 1008, and in 1030 it was given the name of Josselin, after his son.

In the thirteenth century, the county of Porhoet, in which Josselin was situated, passed to the house of Fougères, and its affairs were varied and involved until Peter of Valois, count of Alençon, sold it to the Constable Oliver of Clisson, whose daughter brought it in marriage to the Rohans, to whose descendants it still belongs.

In the Church of Our Lady of the Blackberry-bush is a remarkable tomb placed in the Chapel of St. Marguerite – the former oratory of the constable - to Oliver of Clisson and Marguerite of Rohan.

The castle rests on a rocky foundation beside the river Oust, and its front is most imposing. Three towers with

conical roofs flank the riverside, and are an expression of the best fortress-château building of its era (twelfth century), severe and gaunt in every line, and yet beautifully planned. The interior court takes on quite a different aspect, that of the "*architecture civile*" of the third ogival period, when Renaissance forms and details had crept in, almost destroying Gothic lines.

The window openings of the two stories have an admirable decorative effect, as beautiful as those of Blois and very nearly equaling those of Chambord. An open gallery above the windows is a charming additional interpolation, and between each window is carved "A Plus," the device of the distinguished family of the Rohans, who built this part of the structure. A keep and some later walls and parapets were added by Clisson somewhere about the year 1400, but most of them disappeared in 1629, when the château ceased to be a stronghold of the League.

In the main it is a twelfth and thirteenth century structure which is admirably preserved to-day. One may visit the interior, through the courtesy of the family in residence, and, though it may be somewhat disconcerting to walk through these historic apartments of another day and see such modern innovations as electric bells and other appurtenances of a late civilization, the experience is, after all, a peep behind the curtain, and this the up-to-date motor-car tourist always appreciates highly.

The great hall, the library, with its magnificent chimneypiece and its cipher, "A Plus," carved in stone, and the dining-room ornamented with a modern equestrian statue of Clisson, by Fremiet, are the chief apartments shown

. . . One takes the road again, by way of Locminé and Baud, for Auray, the most dainty and charming of all Breton market-towns, passing through a delightfully picturesque country of rolling hills and deep valleys and fir forests, studded here and there with lakelets.

Locminé, which derives its name from *Locmenec'h* (monk's cell), was the site of a monastery founded in the sixth century by St. Coloman. It was burned by the Normans in the ninth century, after the pleasant custom of these invaders, and reestablished in 1006 by Geoffrey, Duke of Brittany, as a priory attached to the Abbey of St. Gildas of Rhuis.

In the present church of Locminé is a chapel dedicated to St. Coloman, containing a painting representing scenes from the life of the saint; others are carried out in the coloured glass of the windows.

One reads to following, - a supplication on behalf of the dangerous madmen who at one time occupied two cells beneath the pavement:

"St. Coloman, patron of Locminé, pray for us!

St. Colomban, help of idiots, pray for us!"

Behind the church is an elaborate ossuary dating from Renaissance times, when these adjuncts to burial-grounds were so plentifully scattered over Brittany.

Baud has an enormous parish church of the time of Louis XIV, with a fine Gothic arcade and a great crucifix standing beside the outer wall. Aside from this, there is not much else here to attract one, unless he be a pilgrim affected with a disease of the eye. If he be, and if he bathe in the "Fontaine de la clarté," and the fates be propitious, and he be not too far gone otherwise, and everything else be as it should, he will be cured forthwith – perhaps.

It is unkind to scoff at these miraculous fountains scattered here and there over the world, of course, but one has seen so many individual cases that were not benefited, and heard of so many that were, that one may be justified in a little skepticism.

To Auray is twenty kilometres by a road which gently rolls down a matter of 150 metres of elevation until it reaches sea-level at the little market-town seaport known in Breton as Alre.

Auray is the real centre from which to make the round of the vast collection of relics of the long lost civilization of Morbihan.

Many have attempted to explain the significance of these rude stone monuments. Some have said that the famous avenues of Carnac were the streets of one of Caesar's camps, its roofs having fallen and mouldered away, and that the famous "Merchant's Table" at Locmariaquer was an ancient druidical altar, to which the helpless were led to be sacrificed.

All this and much more is for the antiquary alone, and a nodding acquaintance with the history of these curious stone formations or erections is about all for which most travelers will care.

He who arrives at Auray on a market-day will seem to himself to come into a region where everyone speaks the Breton tongue. Not all, of course, for French is now compulsory with the school-children, but the frequency of it here in the booths and stalls in and around Auray's lovely old timbered market-house is greatly to be remarked.

It is a question if this same market –house be not quite the most theatrical-looking thing of its kind in all France. It is for all the world like a successful piece of stage carpentry, with a great spectacular stairway running up into its garret above, quite in the manner that one has seen upon the stage over and over again, when the heroine or the villain – it does not much matter which – escapes from his, or her, pursuers. Low built, heavily

raftered, and with a leaky roof allowing rays of sunlight to dribble through into the gloom within in a most entrancing manner, this old market-house is the centre of life and activity of the place for fifty-two Mondays in each year.

Within and without the walls of the market-house is gathered the most varied conglomeration of wares imaginable. Beside the draper's counter are baskets of vegetables, eggs, or fish. A poor little calf, tied by the legs and lying at full length on the ground, keeps company with his former farmyard neighbours, the ducks and geese, but on either side is a second-hand collection of ironmongery and old shoes, and it should be the envy of the provident, for two sous buy anything in the collection.

The country-side Breton peasant who comes to Auray on a market-day is the glass of fashion of his race, his jacket embroidered in braid of gay colours, and velvet bands on this sleeves and collar. His shirt is high and stiffly starched, and his felt hat or cap heavily hung with velvet ribbons. The womenfolk are clad in equally spectacular fashion, with high white caps and full-sleeved bodices, each with a black velvet band around the sleeve, and full gathered skirts, spoiling all symmetry of form as nature made it.

The history of Auray, from the days when it belonged to John of Auray, grand huntsman of Brittany, has left its mark in the annals of the country in no indefinite manner. John of Montfort, the Counts of Blois, Duguesclin, and many others stalk through its pages of history until finally, in the wars of religions, it was held by the Catholic army and the Spaniards in turn. Its old château, whose foundation now forms the fine Promenade du Loc, dates from the eleventh century; and it was reconstructed and enlarged two centuries later, finally to disappear, as the result of an order for its demolition given by the castle destroyer, Henry II, in 1558,

The port of Auray is more daintily and charmingly environed than most seaports. As it lies between the wooded, deep-cut banks of the little river, its intermingling of ships and salt water, and country-side, and sailor lads and rustic maidens, and all the motley population of the little town, is a marvelous thing to see.

The smack of antiquity is about it all, and the historic legend of its shrine of St. Anne – which lives as vividly to-day as ever it lived – most touchingly connects the present with the past.



An Introduction to the U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)

The Breton language is spoken by an estimated 175,000 to 200,000 people in Brittany, but it is threatened with extinction as older speakers are not replaced by younger ones. The Breton language is no longer forbidden in schools or totally hidden from public view, but France continues to withhold the resources necessary for its development as a healthy living language, despite demands from an ever widening Breton population for its support and growth in the schools, media, and public life.

Who are the Members of the ICDBL?

Some U.S. ICDBL members are of Breton heritage, but the U.S. ICDBL is intended to be a group of “anyone and everyone” showing support for the Breton language rather than an organization for Breton-Americans like so many other “ethnic” organizations in the U.S. We do have quite a few members with Irish, Scottish or Welsh heritage, so there is a strong inter-Celtic element to our work. Most of our members speak neither Breton nor French and most have never been to Brittany. But we all have some reason to help fight for the survival of the Breton language.

What the does the U.S. ICDBL do?

With Members of the U.S. ICDBL dispersed throughout the U.S. --from Maine to Florida, from Alaska to California, and lots of states in between—we do not hold meetings or have the ability to carry out many projects as a group.

Quarterly Newsletter for Members and Subscribers

Our central activity is the publication of a quarterly newsletter called **Bro Nevez** (“new country” in the Breton language). It’s not slick and glossy, but includes 15-20 pages of current information about what is going on in Brittany related to the Breton language, and short articles on a range of topics, from music and dance, to sports, travel, the economy, or history. In November 2006 we published our 100th issue.

In the 3,000+ pages of Bro Nevez produced so far, over 800 books from Brittany have been reviewed or noted, and over 300 Breton music recordings have been reviewed and an additional 800 new releases briefly described.

The newsletter can be e-mailed as a PDF file you can share with others, and back issues can be found on our website. We are happy to send complimentary copies

(ideally by e-mail) to organizations and individuals in Brittany active in work for their language and culture.

**The U.S. ICDBL Web Site:
www.icdbl.org**

On our website we have published a guide to Breton music (updated in 2006), a guide to learning materials for the Breton language, an introduction to and map of the Celtic languages, a presentation of the Diwan Breton language immersion schools, and two documents presenting the Breton language and why it is endangered and what is being done about it. Bretons themselves have created many great websites to present their country and its culture, and we provide links to a large number of excellent and reliable sites created by Bretons themselves.

Other Action

We assist people from the U.S. and all over the world with requests for information about the Breton language and culture. ICDBL Members throughout the U.S. have been ambassadors for the cause of the Breton language by distributing information at Celtic cultural events and music festivals or concerts, and by simply discussing their concerns with friends and acquaintances.

As is the case for all branches of the ICDBL, our support of the Breton language is mostly symbolic—the fact that outsiders care at all offers encouragement to people in Brittany who are working to sustain the Breton language and find new and creative ways to use it. And we know that this has been noticed and much appreciated in Brittany.

PLEASE JOIN US. YOUR SUPPORT SHOWS THE PEOPLE OF BRITTANY THAT THEIR LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT TO THE WORLD

A yearly membership (including subscription to our newsletter) is just \$20. If you would simply like to subscribe to our newsletter, without becoming a Member, that is also \$20. Make out a check to “**U.S. ICDBL**” and mail it to the address below.

Lois Kuter
Secretary, U.S. ICDBL
Editor, Bro Nevez
605 Montgomery Road
Ambler, PA 19002 U.S.A.

loiskuter@verizon.net

For more information please check out our website:
www.icdbl.org



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