

BRO NEVEZ

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



Ar Redadeg – Run for the Breton language



KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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The U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL) was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation on October 20, 1981. Bro Nevez ("new country" in the Breton language) is the newsletter produced by the U.S. ICDBL. It is published quarterly. Contributions, letters to the editor, corrections, 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 mail print copies. 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.

This newsletter can be sent as a PDF file attached to an e-mail instead of the print version. Just let the Editor know how you would like to receive it. The e-mail version is much more colorful than the photocopied print copy!

Back issues of Bro Nevez can be found on the U.S. ICDBL website

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



Editorial

While one would expect that retirement would bring more free time to work on projects, those who are retired probably know that this is not usually the case. Yes there is more time to relax in the morning over a cup of coffee or take a walk in the woods or neighborhood (when the woods are too muddy). And I have definitely enjoyed having more time to research information for each issue of Bro Nevez.

Slowly but surely I am also working to update the U.S. ICDBL website (www.icdbl.org). Most recently the "Links" section has been updated and I hope you will find this a useful place to find more information – directly from Brittany! While many Breton websites are in French and Breton, a good number also include some English, and there are excellent websites to explore music, radio, and audiovisual creations.

So check out the "Links" section and send your thoughts – sites you found particularly good, links that did not work, sites you think should be added! And you will find lots of back issues of Bro Nevez on our website, so explore and enjoy those as well.

Lois Kuter

Law Proposed for Regional Languages – A Little Step Forward

This February a law on regional languages – Protection Patrimoniale des Langues Régionales – was introduced to the French National Assembly, spearheaded by Breton Deputy Paul Molac and co-signed by 18 other deputies. On February 13 the law was adopted – in a very modified form – by a vote of 46 of 49 deputies present. This is good news and it is bad news since some key parts of the law were rejected.

What the law achieves – which is the good news – includes the approval of plurilingual signage on public buildings and roads and waterways. It also includes authorization of the use of diacritical signs in spelling of names in civic records – like the ñ so long contested for Fañch. The law also includes protection of regional languages in modification of the Loi Toubon of 1994 which promoted French to block English incursions. Since this law was used to block any other language than French, the modification to state that it would not "be an obstacle to the use of languages called regional languages or to public and private actions in their favor" is a welcome change.

What was cut out of the law – the bad news – were provisions for the teaching of regional languages, such as recognition of immersion language education (like

Diwan) as an effective pedagogical method. Also taken out was support of private primary and middle school bilingual programs and a requirement that the teaching of regional languages be integrated into the standard school hours.

The law is a step forward for Breton and other regional languages, although gutted of some key support for them. It goes next to the French Senate for approval – and perhaps more modification. No guarantee it will successfully come through that process. It is guaranteed, however, that Breton Deputies like Paul Molac and others who are fighting for the regional languages of their area of France will continue to introduce bills that insure protection, teaching, and promotion of these languages.

Language Rights in Europe – the Minority SafePack

In 2013 a campaign was launched to collect signatures in favor of the adoption of laws by the European Union to strengthen those already adopted to protect cultural and linguistic diversity within the EU. This petition was signed by over 1,200,000 citizens of Europe and in February the Minority SafePack was presented to the European Commission – the next step towards its adoption as a law by members of the European Union.

The campaign has been led by the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), a non-governmental organization (NG) which has had participatory status since 1991 with the Council of Europe and with the United Nations since 1995. FUEN was founded in 1949 by the Bretons Joseph Martray and Pierre Lemoine.

The Minority SafePack proposal has seven basic legislative proposals which one can access in full (in English and other languages) on the FUEN website – www.fuen.org.

There are the main headings for proposals:

1. Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity in the Union through effective language, education and culture policies for national and linguistic minorities in the Member States.
2. Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing a European Language Diversity Centre.
3. Adjusting cohesion policy to take account of the situation of persons belonging to national minorities and the role of cultural and linguistic diversity.

4. Research into the added value of minorities to social and economic development in Europe.
5. Approximating equality for stateless minorities.
6. Improving cross-border access to audiovisual media services and contents.
7. Adjustment of EU state aid rules for the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Adoption of the Minority SafePack will not necessarily mean major changes for the promotion of the Breton language since France may claim that it is already doing everything it can to promote linguistic and cultural diversity. And France has always fallen back on the argument that there are no “minorities” in France – everyone is a French citizen, thus French. However, strengthening laws at the European level can serve to support cases brought before it by language speakers who feel their country is not conforming to those laws.



Babiyezh – Early Childhood Immersion in Breton

On March 4 the organization Babigoù Breizh organized a one-day conference on early immersion use of Breton with babies and preschoolers. This aligns with a growing interest in developing childcare centers conducted through Breton as well as training childcare workers and babysitters to use Breton when desired.

This winter several day-long sessions called “babig-sitting e brezhoneg” were held for young Breton speakers (13 to 17 year olds). In December a session was held at Ti ar Vro Leon and in February in Cavan, with plans to hold these regularly in different parts of Brittany during the course of a year. The sessions covered topics such as relations with parents, pay expectations, roles and responsibilities of babysitters, understanding the needs of children of different ages, basic care like bathing and feeding, and problem-solving. Beyond the basic skills training the sessions included games, basic vocabulary, counting rhymes and songs in Breton that one might use.

Supplementing the developing encouragement of the use of Breton in early child care is the use of the website *Labourzo* (www.labourzo.upabar.bzh) to post jobs for day care workers, preschool assistants, and babysitters. This site can also be used by parents to post jobs and locate potential babysitters in their geographic area.

Roughly translated as Center for the Collection of Celtic Culture, KDSK – for short – has been receiving and sharing Bro Nevez for a number of year and makes it available online as well as in paper format. This library has some 18,000 books and documents as well as 400 journals all featuring Brittany and the Celtic countries – in French and Breton. It is one of the most important collections – if not the largest – in Brittany outside of municipal and university libraries. It is open for free use although a modest annual fee is required to borrow materials.

Among its collection are the archives of Maodez Glanndour, a major Breton language author, as well as unedited works and correspondence of singer/bard Glenmor. Also incorporated are the archives of the Centre Nantais de Culture Celtique (CNCC) and the Centre Régional d'information Bretonne (CRIB) from Rennes.

The director of KDSK – and its instigator – is Maripol Gouret who was inducted into Brittany's Order of the Ermine in 2019 for her lifetime commitment to the Breton language and culture. (See Bro Nevez 151, September 2019).

KDSK is in itself a major resource but it's location in the cultural center Yezhoù ha Sevenadur in Saint-Herblain (just to the west of Nantes) only augments its use and value. Also on the site of the center are Skol Diwan St-Ervlan, Skolaj Diwan 44, Radio Naoned, a branch of Skol an Emsav, Kentelioù an Noz, and Youn ha Solena, a day care center. All this shows clearly that the Breton language and culture have a vital place in the Loire-Atlantique Department of Brittany.



The Yezhoù ha Sevenadur center also hosts conferences and meetings of cultural organizations of the region. It is hosting an exhibit (February through April) of the artwork of graphic artist Fañch An Henaff. Born in Quimper in 1960 he studied art and graphic arts at the L'école des Beaux-Arts of Nantes and in Warsaw, Poland, and established his studio in

1985 in Locronan. His colorful posters express his concern for environmental issues, social and economic injustices, language rights, and support of Breton culture. They include posters for conferences, exhibits, festoù-noz, music and theater performances, as well as statements on a number of social issues. Their unique

design and bold design make them widely collected and exhibited.



His latest book, called *Skeudennoù – images et points de vue* (2019, Locus Solus), is a bilingual Breton/French presentation by Fañch Le Henaff of some of his best works of the past forty years.

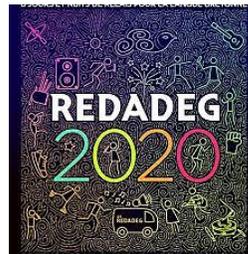
For more information about KDSK log onto <http://www.kdsk.bzh:8080/>.

ArMen magazine published a brief introduction to Fañch Le Henaff with a presentation of 13 of his posters (most full page) in its January-February 2020 issue (234). While you can get a glimpse of this article on the ArMen website (www.armen.bzh) you need to purchase the magazine to get the full article.

Skol Diwan Landerne



Because finances are always tight, parents of Diwan schools have become masters of fund-raising with the creation of events and festivities in their communities. The Bio-Fair of Landerneau marks its 22nd year and the proceeds go to the Diwan school of Landerneau who has organized it. Some 120 stands showing eco-friendly products and services will be present along with lots of workshops and presentations about farming, gardening, cooking, and living with the earth sustainably. There will be music and activities for children at the event which draws visitors from a wide area.



Redadeg 2020 – Run for the Breton Language

The Redadeg is a relay run held every two years that spans some 2,020 kilometers in all five departments of Brittany (see front cover). It has been held since 2008 and sponsors for the kilometers covered contribute money that supports a number of Breton language initiatives. The “race” which goes on day and night includes people of all ages and all sorts of events are organized along its route – music and dance, food and drink, and activities for children.

This year the run starts in Carhaix on May 15 and will end in Guingamp on May 23. In 2018 over 10,000 participated in the run and this year the goal is for 20,000.

From a large number of projects submitted for funding from the run just a few could be selected. These reflect the creativity and determination of those working for the future of the Breton language.

Radio Kerne – a Radio 100% in Breton in Nantes
This supports a Breton language radio in Nantes – Radio Naoned. This is already in operation but this support will insure a sure footing for this service which will serve Breton speakers in the Loire-Atlantique.

RAOK – Breton and communication in Kreiz-Breizh
This supports the creation of a “kit” in Breton to present the Breton language and encourage conversation in Breton or about the language at cultural or sporting events or places where tourists might gather in Central Brittany.

Bannoù-Heol – Ar Marc’h Dall: Le Cheval Aveugle.
This would support a new performance of Ar Marc’h Dall which was first created in 1979 – music composed by René Abjean and texts by Job an Irien. It would enhance the use of orchestra, choral and solo work, and solo instruments. And the text of this long work on the renaissance of Breton pride can be enjoyed in school studies or by individuals.

Radio Kreizh Breizh – Gerioù ar vuhez: Les mots de la vie.
This would support the creation of an online resource of radio programs by Herri an Aod on Breton words and expressions - some 600 radio emissions (“Gerioù ar vuhez”). This online resource will be an enjoyable learning opportunity for Breton speakers at all levels.

Babigoù Breizh – Babiyezh – Conference on early learning and Breton
This conference will be the occasion for a rich exchange of ideas and hopefully the launching of projects for Breton language day cares and early childhood education in Breton, as well as expanded employment opportunities for Breton speakers.

Herborescence – From plant to plant
This project collects Breton plant names and information about the diverse use of plants. The information will be made available to a wide public using the internet and other means of presentation.

Mignoned ar Brezhoneg – Stal.bzh
The website Stal.bzh promotes the use of Breton in stores and sales. While already in operation this support would be used to develop tools and a working

group to further encourage the use of Breton in the economic world.

Ti ar Vro Landerne – Put Breton into your vacation
As part of a larger project this support would go to opening a Breton language center for children 4 to 12 during their vacation time and later on Wednesdays when school is out. Ti ar Vro Landerne serves 22 communes and over 700 students who have Breton language schooling.

Morzhol Prod – Films
Support of a young and dynamic film maker for audiovisual creations in the Breton language.

New Books from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter



Marie-Thé Legendre. *Le Breton, langue des mères, langue des frères - le maintien du breton dans cinq familles du Trégor.* Yoran Embanner, 2019. 143 pages. ISBN 978-2-36785-021-4.

If one learns anything from this book it is that the history of the Breton language and of the declining number of speakers is complex. Certainly the French school system which imposed a French-only policy in the 19th century had an impact. Its aim was not only to bring children the gift of standard French but also to totally eliminate the use of any other language. The practice of punishing and humiliating children who continued to use their first language like Breton has been felt to be a key factor in a generation of parents who spoke Breton but wanted their children to speak French in order to avoid that experience. But there wasn't such a simple cause and effect relation there, since some who were punished resisted this injustice and were determined to keep speaking Breton. And the introduction of French was not always brutal.

Women of Brittany have been blamed for purposely bringing up their children in French to help them get ahead in the world where French was important for good jobs or simply meant one had progressed to a higher “civilization.” But not everyone fled from the Breton language and the transmission or not within a family was not solely a mother's decision.

Maire-Thé Legendre studied sociology at the University of Rennes in 1991 and then in Brest in 2004. Originally from Rennes, she learned Breton and has sent her children to Diwan schools. In 2009 she began a study of family transmission of Breton to prepare for an exhibit celebrating 100 years of the “Journée de la Femme” to

be held in St. Brieuc. She focused on the relationship of women to the Breton language. And if women were supposed to be responsible for the abandonment of Breton in families that became French speaking only, then they must also be the key factor in families where Breton continued to be transmitted from one generation to the next.

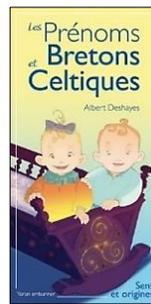
She focused on the Tregor area of north-central Brittany and sought families where three generations speak Breton – this would begin with a grandmother born in the late 1920 or early 30s who would have gone to school in a period when speaking the Breton language was most severely punished, and who would have been beginning a family in the 1950s when Breton was being abandoned. Maire-Thé Legendre found five families which basically fit this criteria, but the family dynamics and experience offered important variables to be considered.

In her interviewing the author looked at how school influenced a change in language use and whether punishment at school was a definite factor in the transmission or not of Breton to one's children. Also explored was the influence of activity in social organizations, exposure to radio or other media, and leisure activities. The difference between men and women's attitudes toward language as a means to move up in the world socially and economically was also investigated.

The author presents differences in how boys/girls, men/women are influenced by school experiences and the perception of French as a language for advancement. In families where Breton is viewed positively and where men dominate, Breton has fared better, and as younger generations put a value on Breton and learn it in school, older generation are more apt to keep it as part of family communication.

It is much more complex than that, as this book shows, but it is clear that there are many variables at work, and while the work of school masters to discourage (squench) regional languages and the backward social stigma attached to these languages had an impact, not all Bretons have rejected the idea that bilingualism within a family is undesirable or that a child will suffer from being brought up with Breton as his/her first language.

There have been many studies of changes in minority language use by sociolinguists – Breton and otherwise – and it is clear that more research can be done to fully understand the role of men and women and the many variables that have impacted the transmission of the Breton language.



Albert Deshayes. *Les Prénoms bretons et celtiques – sens et origines*. Yoran Embanner, 2019. 223 pages. ISBN 978-2-36785-020-7.

One of the most significant things one does for one's child is to give him or her a name, and there are many considerations in choosing a first name. For many it is an opportunity to carry along a family heritage with the first name of a parent or grandparent or other relative in giving it as a first or middle name to a newborn. For example Robert _ Jr., John _ III, or in the case of my family, Ottoleo, my sister's son whose name is composed of names of both his mother's and father's fathers. Of course, names are often chosen because they are simply appealing and sound good (Ottoleo vs. Leootto). Names are often chosen because they have cultural significance. This was especially the case in America's African American community when names of African, Arabic and Muslim origins and meaning first appeared in the late 1950s and 60s with growing popularity in the 70s – names like Najwa, Shaquille and Tamika (for girls) and Jamar, Denzel and Trayvon (for boys).

In the U.S. there are few limits to names one can choose, but laws can vary from state to state. Perhaps the only real limit to naming is the use of something offensive or embarrassing – Adolf Hitler, Poopy, Wonderwoman, Messiah ... as a few examples. That has certainly not stopped people from choosing highly unusual names – especially among celebrities. Jay Z and Beyoncé named their daughter Blue Ivy. Cameron Diaz and Benji Madden named a child Raddix, and Kanye West and Kim Kardashian West named children North, Saint, and Chicago.

Parents have often looked to celebrities for inspiration. In the sports world here in Philadelphia when the Eagles football team won the Superbowl, Carson and Nick were given to newborns in recognition of quarterbacks Carson Wentz and Nick Foles. My niece and husband in Massachusetts named their baby Brady in homage to Tom Brady, the Patriots football team superstar quarterback.

And what of the name "Brittany" that appeared in the 1970s and peaked in popularity in the 1990s (the third most popular girl's name in 1991 and 1992). It is unlikely that parents chose this name after Brittany the country – legend has it that its spread stemmed from a popular TV soap opera star with the name Brittany. It is found in many versions – Britney, Brittani, Brittney, Brittny ...

But what of parents in France and in the real Brittany choosing names for a child? As Albert Deshayes explains in this new book, *Les Prénoms Bretons et*

celtiques, before a law of 1993 it was nearly impossible to officially give a Breton name to a child. All names had to come from names on the Gregorian calendar – Roman saints recognized by the Catholic church. While officially one might be registered at the mayor's office as "Robert" that did not prevent one from being known as "Roparzh" among friends and family, or publicly. With the growth of pride in Breton identity in the post World War II period and especially in the late 1960s and 70s Bretons have become more and more aware of the beauty and cultural roots of Breton names. This book offers the option of choosing a name from a long list of Breton saints, martyrs and historical figures whose origins were very often from Ireland and Wales.

The bulk of the book is composed of short introductions to over 300 names – 266 men and 56 women (although my count may not be exact), with an additional 60 women's names noted as versions of men's names (e.g. Marzhin as the entry with a feminine version noted as Marzhina). Often a Welsh version of a name is also noted – Marthin for Marzhin. An entry will also note diminutives of a name – for instance, for the name Frañces / Frañsez, Fañch is noted as a shortened form with diminutives Fañchig and Fañchoù as well as Soa and diminutives Soaig and Saig. For the feminine version Frañsesa / Frañseza you have Soas / Soaz with diminutives Soasig / Soazig and Fant with diminutives Fantig and Fantoù. If you were expecting an entry for Soazig – which has been a popular woman's name – you will not find it, but an index in the back of the book allows one to track down most versions to a main entry.

Each entry tells of the source of a name – the tale of a saint or historical figure and older versions of a name. You will also learn of a word's roots in Welsh or Irish and variations upon the name and French versions of it. Names are also linked to churches, chapels, monasteries and places in Brittany. The book also includes a Breton calendar for the year showing the Saint's Days for each name (which is also noted in the main entries). Besides indexes for names and dates the book includes a glossary and some tips for reading and pronouncing Welsh and Breton names. An introduction to the book gives an overview of the history of saints names and the author's methods in researching and presenting names. And a propos of choosing a Breton name, a quick note is included about the "Fañch affair" – the refusal of the French government to accept the ñ in official records. As noted above in the Law Proposal for Regional Languages, it appears the ñ may get legal status, but the fight has been a long one and Skoazell Vreizh has supported parents with legal fees as court cases have gone on.

Whether looking for a name corresponding to a child's birthdate, seeking historical or symbolic meaning for a name, or simply looking for something pleasing and rooted in Breton and Celtic history, this book will prove

invaluable. For those not expecting to add a child to their family, the book is simply interesting in itself. I have chosen several shorter entries of names who have a dramatic history attached. The following are my translations and I apologize for any misinterpretations.

Beuzi

Masculine first name; celebrated 24 November

Saint Beuzi is believed to be a disciple of Saint Gweltas / Gweltaz. Born in Great Britain he would have followed his master to Armorica. The two founded a monastery in Castennec, Obligated to return to Rhuys, Gweltaz left his companion there. According to legend, Beuzi who said mass, refused to follow the lord of the area in a hunt. Furious, he [the lord] gave him a mighty blow on the head. Bleeding abundantly the saint rushed towards Rhuys to meet Gweltaz but died upon arrival. He is generally represented [in religious statuary] with a hatchet or knife in the base of his skull, which he had kept for two days. The parish church of Pluvigner is his base. The saint is believed to cure men and animals of rabies, a malady one calls *droug Sant Beuzi* in Breton. His name appears to be a diminutive form ending in -i of *beuz* from the Old Breton word *bud*, victory, advantage.

Gwenn

Feminine first name; celebrated 21 February

Originally from the Island of Brittany, she was the daughter of Emyr Llydaw. From her first marriage with Eneas Ledewig she had a son, Saint Cadfan. Becoming a widow she married Saint Fragan with whom she had three sons – twins Gwezheneg and Yagu, and Gwennole, all three honored as saints – and a daughter, Saint Kreirvia from which comes the modern first name Klerwi / Klervi. Called *Gwenn Teirbronn*, she is represented in the parish church of Pléguen (Côtes d'Armor) with three breasts, seated with a child in each arm and a third at her feet. The Welsh corresponding first name is Gwen. This name originates from *gwenn* which, other than the primary meaning of "white" also has that of "happy, blessed, sacred."

Korneli

Masculine first name; celebrated 14 September

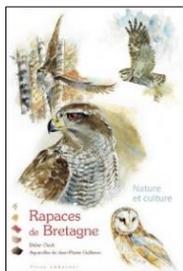
Saint Cornély responded to the Pope's orders serving from June 251 to September 253 to replace Saint Fabien who was martyred in 250. Honored by the Church as a martyr, he [Korneli] died in exile at Civita-Vecchia. He is equally known in the French popular form as Corneille. This saint has had a certain popularity in Brittany and even in Cornwall. At Tourc'h (Finistère) he is represented with a tiara on his head, holding a cross. No doubt in reference to his name he has become the protector of horned beasts. Local tradition in Carnac (Morbihan) tells of the saint pursued by Roman soldiers who at one moment faced him, and

with one look he petrified them, from which comes the Breton expression *soudarded Sant Korneli* – the soldiers of Saint Cornély – to designate the megalithic standing stone alignment. This name is based in Latin *Cornelius*, crow.

Hie

Feminine first name; celebrated 3 February

This saint, also known by the name Hia or Ia, was the sister of Saint Elwyn. She was part of a group of Irish emigrants led by Saint Gwinier which would become established in Penwith in Cornwall. Of noble family, she is said to be a disciple of Saint Finbar. Her tomb is found in Seynt Hy. In Cornwall her name is linked to St. Ives, Prthye in 1383; she is known as the patron of Pendinas and of Camborne. A fountain in Ayr, called Venton Eia, is placed under her name. She is represented as an Irish Abbess clothed in white wool, wearing a veil and holding a leaf in her hand. According to legend she had crossed the Irish sea on a leaf which floated on the water and then grew to the size of a boat. In Brittany she gives her name to Plouyé (Finistère) where her Pardon is held the 3rd Sunday of September.



Didier Clech, with watercolors by **Jean-Pierre Guilleron**. *Rapaces de Bretagne*. Nature et Culture Series. Yorán Embanner, 2019 176 pages. ISBN 978-2-36785-018-4.

Birds of prey of Brittany – Here is a book that is of interest on a number of levels, and for different readers. For

the serious bird watcher or ornithologist the book provides a history of the sightings and presence of 41 birds of prey that have been found – more or less – in Brittany. A good half of these nest in Brittany or are found regularly there. The other half are more rarely sighted. Each bird is presented giving its French common name, scientific name and Breton common name. Its size and weight and appearance are described, and its prey is identified. Also noted is where it is found in Europe more generally and its status in Brittany – a migratory, year-round nester, etc. For some birds the information is minimal – just a short paragraph, but for others several pages are devoted to the history of its presence in Brittany. These texts are not fascinating reading for someone with just a passing interest in birds, but important information for birders and others in Brittany who hope to see these magnificent birds.

Those less intensely interested in the science and history of birds of prey in Brittany will, however, find the sections devoted to the place of these birds in Breton culture – literature and the oral tradition - to be of great interest. As the author notes, the book is ethnozoological.

The book is organized by three major groups of birds – admittedly not a scientific grouping, but one that makes sense to me. First up are the 21 larger diurnal (daytime) birds of prey – eagles, kites, hawks, vultures *, buzzards, etc. Second are the 13 smaller diurnal birds of prey – falcons, kestrels, smaller hawks, etc. And third are the nocturnal birds – 7 owls. After each grouping is a richly illustrated section on these particular birds as depicted in Breton culture.

Sections at the end of the book document threats – past and present – to birds of prey such as hunting, trapping, pesticides, poisoning, automobiles, telephone wires and loss of habitat among other dangers. Another section – more optimistic – describes action to protect birds of prey. Those who want to dig deeper into scientific works or books about cultural and oral traditions are provided with two excellent bibliographies.

This book could serve well as a “field guide” to some of the birds of prey in Brittany, and greatly enhancing the descriptions are watercolor illustrations by Jean-Pierre Guilleron. These do not provide the photographic detail of illustrations (or photos) found in most guides to bird identification, but they capture the color and movement of the birds depicted – a presentation which gives the birds a character and personality not found in the stiff drawings of most field guides. Twenty-seven of the birds are graced with an illustration – often two or three, many full-page. I found these paintings artistically beautiful in the way they brought the birds to life.

This is a book that is dense in information but also beautiful to the eye. It provoked me to try to learn more about birds of prey. With my minimal familiarity of ornithology, I was curious to see if any of the birds of prey that could be found in Brittany might also be found here on the North American continent - in my backyard or more generally. Birds familiar to me (ever sighted or not) like the bald eagle, red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, Great horned owl, turkey vulture, and others, did not seem to be pictured or described in this book. This led me to seek out the Breton-sighted birds in my National Geographic Birds of North America Guide – using the only reliable key to a match, the scientific name, I found that just 15 of the “Breton” birds of prey were in my guide – Golden Eagle, Northern Harrier, Osprey, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Eurasian Kestrel, Eurasian Hobby, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Red-footed Falcon, Gyrfalcon, Barn Owl, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, and Snowy Owl. And it must be said that a number of these were to be found in northern North America, with any sighting highly unlikely in my neighborhood. That's good news! If I were to travel to Brittany for birdwatching I would discover many birds – bird of prey or otherwise – I could never spot here.

A note on the author – Didier Clech is an elementary school teacher who has been an ornithologist for some 40 years, publishing a number of articles in ornithological journals as well as a book called *Légendaires oiseaux nocturnes*.

A note on the artist – Jean-Pierre Guilleron specializes in animal subjects – fish, crustaceans, shells and birds. He is inspired by Japanese culture and works primarily in watercolors and ink.

* And another note on “commonly” used names like hawks and eagles ... The scientific name is the only label that clearly identifies a bird (or other animal) no matter what we more carelessly call it. A case in point – in wondering what the difference is between a buzzard and a vulture, I came across the following explanation: “In North America, a vulture is a vulture, a buzzard is a vulture, and a hawk is a hawk. In the rest of the world, a vulture is a vulture, a buzzard is a hawk, and a hawk is sometimes a buzzard, though there are still other birds with the name hawk that would not be called buzzards.” There must be better explanations but that one illustrated well how confusing common names can be.

Deep Inside a Breton Skull N° 62 - The Swans of Ar Faou

Jean Pierre Le Mat



I spend a part of my time working in Ploufragan, near Saint Brieuc, on the north coast of Brittany. And I spend another part of my time rambling around Ar Faou, a village on the west coast, not far from the town of Brest. The houses that line the main street are old ones, built probably during the Middle Ages. I am not sure if the village is part of the 21st century.

The tides punctuate the life of the small harbor of Ar Faou. Seabirds constellate the sky during high tide. At low tide, they conscientiously rummage between the wet stones, looking for food.

From time to time, swans are swimming in the harbor of Ar Faou. They nest near Prioldy Manor, not far from the river, in swamps. There, nobody approaches and disturbs them. They probably come here, in Ar Faou harbor, to get food. That's what everyone is saying. Why, then, do they not come every day? Why are they coming at high tide? I do not know. They mix with seagulls. They swim quietly near the church, regardless of the passers-by watching them.

From the old bridge, I approach them. They don't care about me. I can see, in the distance, the island of Arun and the village of Landévennec,

Landévennec!

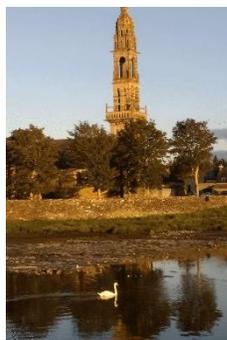
Landévennec is our Jerusalem. I don't joke, believe me. Oh, it is not a big city, with a huge temple! Like Ar Faou, it is a small village by the sea. But Landévennec is the setting for Breton spirituality. It's a mythical place. Fifteen centuries ago, in the year 485, the great Saint Gwenole established his monastery there. The legendary King Gradlon is buried here. Since that time, Landévennec attracted the Breton spirit like a magnet. King Gradlon and Saint Gwenole are like King Arthur and Merlin.

Gwenole died long ago, but there is still a monastery here, a new one. It was built during the last century. Monks are praying and working there. They sing mass. They receive visitors. They manage fruit trees. They manufacture delicious fruit pastes.

What message do the big white birds bring to me, when I see them coming from their place, near Landévennec? In Celtic traditions, swans, geese and all birds of the same family were viewed in the same way. Most of them are migratory birds. In ancient times, they carried messages from other countries and other worlds. They also carried our messages towards other countries and other worlds.

In his famous book "The Gallic Wars", Julius Caesar says that these animals were taboo among the Celts. It was forbidden to eat them. On the other hand, for some obscure reasons, these animals could be raised

Some scholars say that the Latin word for this family of birds, the anatidae, has the same root as Ana or Dana, the mother goddess. Among the great Saints of Brittany is Saint Anne, the mother of Virgin Mary. The Irish gods called themselves “Tuatha Dé Danann”, the tribe of Dana. What connection is there between these birds and the origin of the world?



In our traditions, women who are threatened with rape turn into swans, ducks or geese. They escape by flying away. In other legends, they are protected by geese. The holy girl Saint Onenn, honored in the church of Tréhourentec, in the forest of Broceliande, was a goose keeper. A great lord wanted her, but the geese protected the girl. Second question: what connection is there

between these birds and femininity?

I watch the swans swimming near the Faou church. On the horizon, I see Landévennec. And, deep in my Breton skull, I am reminded of the story of Klervi,

Gwenole's little sister. One day a goose bites Klervi in the face and eats both eyes. She cries out in pain and distress. Her parents are horrified. In the meantime, Gwenole arrives. They explain the drama to him. So he goes to get the goose. He opens its belly and finds his sister's two eyes there. He takes both eyes with one hand and puts them back in their place. With the other hand, he makes the sign of the cross and Klervi regains her sight. Third question: what connection is there between these birds and eyes and sight



Saint Gwenole is sometimes represented with a goose, for instance on the fountain of Saint Fregand. Fragan was Gwenole's father. He gave his name to the village of Saint Fregand, and also to Ploufragan.

What is the message of Ar Faou swans? Like Klervi's eye-eating goose, swans are surrounded by mystery. These birds symbolize nothing understandable, nothing that can be taught quietly to children. What connection with the origin of the world, with femininity, with eyes and sight? They have a glance that you can't catch. They see countries you cannot visit. Perhaps, they travel through other times

Deep in my Breton skull, I feel the great mystery of nature. I know that I could not understand it, watching the swans moving away from Ar Faou, towards Landevennec.



Breton Flag Emoji

Even the most technophobic among us are probably familiar with the "smiley face" ☺ which one used to draw by hand in letters and which is now a click away on computer keyboards with numerous other symbols.

"Emoji" is derived from Japanese "moji" meaning "image" preceded by an "e". And the Japanese were the ones to launch the pictograms on mobile phones in 1999 which have not ceased to expand - numbers I've seen for these images range from 2,666 to 3,178. While many are faces which express a full range of emotions, others evoke animals, travel, tools and other symbols. And flags are also very present.

Because flags can bring visibility to a country and culture, Bretons have launched a campaign to get a Breton flag emoji added to cell phone and computer choices. The Breton association Point BZH which enabled the .bzh option for web addresses started the campaign with support from the Region of Brittany. 26,000 signatures were collected in 2019 in support of

the initiative and during a month-long test of the Breton flag emoji, over 400,000 were sent via Twitter – a very strong showing.

Next step is for a review by the Unicode consortium (which includes Microsoft, Facebook, IBM, Apple, Google and other major tech players). We'll know in January 2021 if the Breton flag emoji will be added to the several thousand others for use.



Brittany/North America: Connections, Relations, Interactions

The following information was drawn from the Blog langue-bretonne.org by Fañch Broudic (February 19, 2020). This blog is always an interesting

source of news and views on Brittany and the Breton language.

On June 11 and 12, 2020, a colloquium will be held at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale in Brest on various relations and interactions between Brittany and North America. Proposals for this pluri-disciplinary conference are now under review. The conference will include a range of topics exploring contemporary and historical connections between Bretons and Canadians and Bretons and U.S. Americans. Areas that may be covered include language, literature, history, art, music, economy, science, and social movement such as emigration and immigration.

Themes can touch on travel between Brittany and North America, how relations between Brittany/U.S./Canada have been established and vary, how Brittany is perceived by artists and writers in North America, how travel by musicians has influenced creativity, and what commercial and economic exchanges have been established. There have certainly been a number of books on Breton emigration to North America, but this conference offers a look at other types of cross-continental influences that may not involve travel at all.

Organizing the conference are: Anne Hellegouarch, Gaëlle Le Corre and Jean-Yves Le Disez (Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, Brest), Anne Goarzin (Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, Rennes), Zélie Guével (Université Laval, Québec) and Elisabeth Mullen (Université de Bretagne Occidentale, HCTI research unit - Héritages et Constructions dans le Texte et l'Image)

Music News – Ar Soner

I received my December 2019 issue of Ar Soner, a 40-page quarterly magazine produced by Sonerion (formerly known as Bodadeg ar Sonerion) in mid February. It was quite soggy from the journey – no it did

not fall overboard on a boat journey. Fortunately I was able to separate the pages with very little damage to the print, and some damage to photos. The pages are now dry and very wrinkled and emit a little scent of moldiness – but the news is welcome and quite readable. I have always been a huge fan of Breton piping – the paired bombarde/biniou koz and bombarde/biniou braz – as well as the bagad, the unique “bagpipe band” of Brittany composed of Scottish style bagpipes, bombardes and a percussion section,



with many creative additions of other instruments and voices for new creations rooted in the Breton tradition. It is always enjoyable to read of all the activity in Brittany, and this issue underlined the work to engage youth and showed off well their accomplishments.

While the focus of Ar Soner is on the bagad and activities of Sonerion, the magazine has always included other news of interest. In this issue two short articles stood out for me. The first described work to help bagad members learn the Breton language. I have taken the liberty of translating this note as follows (any errors in translations are entirely my responsibility).

Breton in the Bagad

According to a study done as part of his studies in 2017 by Edouarn Le Sauz, a sonneur with the Bagad Sonerion an Oriant, 28% of musicians in bagadoù [plural for bagad] speak Breton.

Language is an element in understanding the culture. That's why since last year the Bagad Bro Logunec'h in the Morbihan has offered Breton classes, open for beginners – a step already taken ten years ago in the Bagad Eostiged ar Mené of Plomodiern in the Menez-Hom. Three courses are given by the association Mervent: all levels, level 4 (perfecting), and conversation (practice). For Raymond Le Bot, who initiated the project while he was president of the bagad, “language is critical in the spirit of preserving tradition.” Some sonneurs have chosen an individual immersion training with Stumdi – “Breton in 840 continuous hours” over a six month period. This training is offered at seven sites: Arradon, Ploemeur, Vannes, Guingamp, Saint-Brieuc, Brest, and Landerneau. Another option is offered in Brest, Guingamp, Ploemeur and Pluvigner: 180 hours in a 10-day course of two weeks of immersion. Site: stumdi.bzh.

The second article that seemed well worth translating was a note presenting online resources offered by Dastum. This nicely summarizes this service and its interest to sonneurs (and others) who want to really delve into the musical traditions of Brittany.

Dastumedia: online archives free

Digoust! Gratuit! Free! The association Dastum has shown its willingness to make accessible the full oral patrimony of Brittany in taking a new step: Since September 1, access to the archival online database is free. You simply need to sign up.

Dastumedia includes an incomparable collection of sound recordings gathered since the early 20th century from the “memory bearers” – holders of the tradition of song, instrumental music, and stories of the different pays of historical Brittany [all five departments]. To date, the database of Dastum gathers over 120,000 sound documents (from some 15,000 people recorded) to which are added several thousands of written documents, photos, transcriptions, a discography of Breton music, etc. This collection is the fruit of labor by passionate collectors, mostly volunteers, who want to share this patrimony with the greatest number to encourage its transmission through time.

Dastum is a precious tool for singers, sonneurs, and musicians who want to enlarge their repertoire in drawing from the roots of Breton music. But the site is a true Pandora’s box for researchers, students, or scholars, and more widely for all who are motivated by a curiosity about our rich patrimony or by a research step to find the voice of a parent, friend or neighbor. And they are more and more numerous. Over several days, nearly 600 people signed up, doubling the number of “consulting members” of Dastumedia, a strong sign. Supported by the Ministry of Culture, the Region of Brittany, departmental councils of Côtes d’Armor, Ille-et-Vilaine and Morbihan, and the city of Rennes, the association does not benefit from supplementary aid for this operation. Like Wikipedia, it made the choice for free access for all with a call for donations, on the other hand, to support its action.

How to benefit? Signing up (for free) as a “Consulting member” is necessary. Log onto www.dastumedia.bzh to access an online form. Click on the rubric “Signup and code” (“Adhésion et code”); an identifier and access code will be sent in the following days.

Bagad Competition Results – Phase One for the Top Level

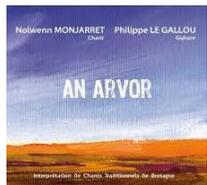


The first of two competitions for the national bagadoù championship of the top level of bagadoù took place on Sunday, February 16, 2020, in Brest. And this was carried live for the entire world to see and hear on the Sonerion Facebook page (where one can find video of the bagadoù) and on Sonerion's website www.sonerion.bzh (not to be confused with sonerien.bzh for the store Ti ar Sonerien which is certainly worth exploring too)

Here is the ranking from this first of two competitions to determine the champion – the second to be in Lorient at the Interceltic Festival in August.

1. Kevrenn Alré, Auray 17,33
2. Roñsed Mor, Locoal Mendon 17,05
3. Cap Caval, Plomeur 17,02
4. Kemper, Quimper 16,86
5. Bagad Melinerion, Vannes 16,22
6. Ar Meilhoù Glaz, Quimper 15,89
7. Saozon-Sevigneg, Cesson Sevigné 15,65
8. Sonerien An Oriant, Lorient 15,25
9. Kerlenn Pondi, Pontivy 15,19
10. Brieg Briec, 15,12
11. Beuzec Ar C'hap, Beuzec Cap Sizun 13,08
12. Boulvriag, Bourbriac 13,07
13. Sonerien Bro Dreger, Perros Guirec 13,02
14. Bro Konk Kerne, Concarneau 13,01
15. Bro Kemperle, Quimperlé 12,61
16. Plougastell, Plougastel Daoulas 11,84

A New CD from Brittany



Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Nolwenn Monjarret, Philippe Le Gallou. *An Arvor* – Interpretation de Chants Traditionnels de Bretagne. Coop Breizh, December 2019.

This is the third CD by singer Nolwenn Monjarret and guitarist Philippe Le Gallou (preceded by *Son Elena* and *Ar Roue Pri*). Featured are interpretations of eleven traditional songs and two compositions. Songs from the Vannetais area dominate and this CD demonstrates why that area is known for its beautiful melodies. Songs are all in Breton and Nolwenn sings in the Vannetais Breton which has a softer sound. But one cannot really describe her voice as “soft.” It is a deep and powerful voice – certainly distinctive and very effective in presenting melodies and songs on this CD.

Her rendering of song is “traditional” in style with a freeness and swing which is very nicely paired with the guitar of Philippe Le Gallou – sometimes in a bit of counter melody or rhythm and other times more of an accompaniment in sync with the melody and song delivery. At all times the guitar work is interesting and

masterful, and Le Gallou has also arranged the selections on this CD. Joining on some selections are Hervé Guillo on bagpipes and flute, Pierre Sergent on bass fiddle, and Robin Le Gallou on guitar. While this adds some variety in sound, I have to say I liked the pairing of just Nolwenn Monjarret and Philippe Le Gallou the best.

The songs cover a variety of topics typical of traditional song of Brittany where tragedy tends to be featured. Here you hear the story of a young lady who refuses to go collect nuts with a suitor, and about another who is led into the woods to be seduced. There is also a song about a sick man who pledges to marry his sweetheart when he recovers, and two tales of the tragic ends of unwed mothers, one who murders her new born and the other who abandons it in a basket to be adopted by sailors on the streets of Paris.

On a slightly lighter note there is a song also about a herder who thinks himself a great singer and whistler until he hears a nightingale. He searches in vain for a flute at the market – and on this piece the flute of Hervé Guillo adds a nice touch. There is also a song where a man asks the scullion maid to get him some food and he is sent to the attic to hunt up some meat (mice and rats) only to find that the cat has cleared things out, including the bombard and biniou player.

Two songs evoke the Vannetais countryside – “En nevez-hañv” evokes the destruction of *remembrement* – the practice of creating large farm fields by tearing out hedges which foster a wealth of birds and animals. Also on the CD is a song about the hard lot of peasant-farmers who work hard to scratch out a living and payments to the landowner.

Two songs are drawn from the tradition outside the Vannetais area. “Marivonig and Dourduff” is well known in many areas of Brittany and the text used here is from the Tregor – a text also used by Yann Fañch Kemener on his album *Enez Eusa*. It recounts the abduction of a young woman by English forces from the port of Dourduff who with the help of a little fish is returned safely to her parents. Drawn from the “Montagnes” of central western Brittany is the *ton doubl* of a gavotte performed in kan ha diskan style by Nolwenn (and herself). This is lively enough in rhythm but the song tells of the death of a woman just before she is to be married, leaving her husband devastated.

There are two instrumental selections on the CD. “War hent Kêrgelenn” is a march and jigs composed by Philippe Le Gallou featuring the bagpipes of Hervé Guillo (in pair with Le Gallou's guitar). Philippe Le Gallou shows his stuff in the arrangement of two laridés from the Baud area drawn from the collection Tonioù Breizh Izel by Polig Monjarret.

Jacket notes cite the sources for the songs and tunes – where, from whom, and by whom they were originally collected and the source of particular texts chosen by Nolwenn. In several cases the work of her father Polig Monjarret as well as performance by her mother Zaig Monjarret are sources for selections on the CD. But the sources can be quite diverse – from LPs and performances from the 70s to the present by a variety of musicians and singers who provide the inspiration for the arrangement by Nolwenn Monjarret and Philippe Le Gallou.

Texts of songs are given in Breton with a French translation. The choice was made to not put the texts into a “standard” Breton but to retain the orthography of the original texts of collectors which reflect better (although not exactly) the way Vannetais singers would have used Breton in song. The notes are enhanced by photographs of the performers and Larmor Plage – which is a subtitle found on the CD jacket for *An Arvor*.

While many of the songs presented are fairly well known in Brittany, Nolwenn Monjarret and Philippe Le Gallou make them distinctly their own and they reflect well the rich melodic tradition of the Vannetais area of Brittany from which most are drawn.



Heard of but not heard – 18 new CDs from Brittany

Information for the following notes were drawn from *Ar Men* 239 (Jan.-Feb. 2020), *Musique Bretonne* 262 (Jan.-Feb. Mar.2020), the Coop Breizh website, and other internet sites for various musicians. Sound samples are often available in searching the internet for a CD title and performers’ names.



Âme de Bretagne, Vol. 2. Aztec Musique CDM 2539

This is not a brand new release (produced in 2018) but worth noting as a nice compilation of well-known and lesser

known groups and performers of Brittany. The Two-CD set includes: Soldat Louis, Tri Yann, EV, Babord amures, Aranel, Glaz, Clarisse Lavanant, Morwenna, Carré Manchot, Arz Nevez, Yann Honoré, Plantec, Kejjaj, Hiks, Emsaverien, Lyannaj, and J. C. Guichen. Not necessarily brand-new recordings but a great sampler.



Âme de Bretagne, Vol. 3. – Fest noz. Aztec Musique.

Like Volume 2, this two-CD set is a nice sampler of Breton groups including 10 of the 17 on Volume 2 cited above. To this is added Kern, Ty Jaz, Occidentale de Fanfare, and H.

Lelu / Ph. Turbin. Dances are featured on these two CDs.



Dan ar Braz. Dan ar Dañs – 60 ans de guitare.

As the title says, Dan ar Braz has 60 years of guitar playing on the Breton and world stage, and he is a master of electric and acoustic guitars. This CD includes 14 selections of melodies and dances – his own compositions as well as innovative arrangements of traditional music.



Lina Bellard. Toutes les filles s'appellent Jeanne.

This CD is composed of two “chapters” – Chercher Jeanne (look for Jeanne) and Trouver les lièvres (find the hares). Lina Bellard is a harpist and singer and the artistic director of this composition with songs and dances from Brittany with African, Indian, and Oriental influences and rhythms. She is joined by Titi Robin (bouzouq), Grégory Dargent (oud) and Guillaume Tahon (electroacoustic effects).



Michel Boédec. #1653. Lanvellec Editions LE0001

This is a composition for organ on the theme of the voyage of St. Brendan in search of the isle of paradise. Breton and Irish themes are incorporated by the composer and organist Michel Boédec in a contemporary arrangement. Vocals by Alma Bettencourt enrich this innovative work.



Dastum. Pays Fisel / Ar Vro Fisel – Chanteurs, sonneurs et conteurs / Kanerien, Sonerien ha Konterien. Breizh ha Broioù / La Bretagne des Pays / La Bertègn dez Payiz. No. 6.

Dastum continues its series of well-researched and richly documented CDs focused on specific “pays” of Brittany. Number 6 in this series is the double CD focused on the Pays Fisel of central western Brittany. Like all the other “pays” of Brittany the borders can be fuzzy but Fisel is defined by its specific dance in particular. These recordings capture song and dance music collection from the 1950s to the present (with a wax cylinder recording from the turn of the century by Philomène Cadoret). While the gwerz and kan ha diskan singing are featured, the CD also includes sonneurs de couple, the clarinet (which is a strong part of this area’s tradition) and accordion. Like other Dastum recordings this is destined for those who love the truly traditional style of Breton music – the entire rendition of a gwerz – long dramatic songs in the Breton language – as well as masters of kan ha diskan singing for the dañs fisel. Check out the Dastum website for more about this as well as all the other remarkable CDs Dastum has produced in collaboration with a number of organizations and individuals. (dastum.bzh)



Denez. *Trañs – Teknoz Projekt.*

Denez (formerly known as Denez Prigent) is a fine traditional singer in Breton who here sings for seven selections of dance – an andro, suite plinn, rond de Landéda, dañs fisel and kostez 'r c'hoad. This is not just Breton dance, but a marriage of voice and electro beat recorded live at the Yaouank Festival fest noz. It is not Denez's first encounter with an electronic sound, but the latest.



Descofar. *Krai.* Descofar and Collectif ARP.

Brittany has long been a center for very innovative use of the harp, going well beyond reproductions of Irish tunes and simple Breton melodies to highly creative compositions and arrangements. This trio features electric harp by Alice Soria-Cadoret and Nikolaz Cadoret with Yvon Molard on percussions. There are six selections to the 26-minute CD: La Gavotte Noire, Plinn 4 Ever, Les Valses Russes, Kreis, Ridées 6, and Plinn Bye Bye – dances as well as more meditative melodies.



Fæst. *Les metamorphoses.*

This is a duo composed of Faustine Audebert (vocals, electric guitar, piano, fender Rhodes) and Antonin Volson (bass fiddle, flutes, bass guitar, percussion and “electronics”). The CD includes ten selections – traditional songs in French and new compositions rooted in the Breton song tradition but elegantly “metamorphosed” with a variety of instruments.



Brieg Guerveno, *Vel ma vin.*

This is the fourth album by this singer, composer and musician, with eight selections. All but two of the songs – in Breton - are his compositions, the exceptions being texts by Anjela Duval and Nolwenn Korbell (who joins in song on that selection). Guerveno sings but also plays acoustic and electric guitar and keyboards. He is joined in different combinations by Bahia El Bacha (cello and vocals), Joachim Blanchet (keyboard and percussion), Stéphane Kerihuel (electric guitar), Guillaume Bernard (electric guitar) and Yann Ligner (vocals). The sound is a bit folk/blues reminiscent of the 70s, but certainly nothing nostalgic in the poetic texts which cover a range of topics from the plight of migrants to environmental destruction and introspective musings on life and freedom.



Jean-Charles Guichen. *Braz Live*

This is a live recording of a performance at the Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient with original compositions by this guitarist who first took the Breton music scene by storm with the fest noz band Ar Re Yaouank. He is joined here by singer and fiddler Claire Mocquart. Featured is Guichen's

original arrangement of the Breton national anthem “Bro Gozh Ma Zadoù” as a waltz – a nice lively rendition in contrast to the all-too-dreary versions one usually hears. You can find this on YouTube. Eight other selections are included: an introduction and the dances Scottish, andro, suite plinn, cercle, and rond de St.-Vincent.



KANeveden. Production La Quincaille.

This is a CD and colorful booklet where children learn Breton words as they are associated with colors of the rainbow. Fred Boudineau composed the music and the CD features singers Katell Kloareg and Marion Gwenn with a chorus of others. Boudineau and Kloareg have created a number of performances for children in the Breton language.



Nava. *Ar Peroked.*

This is a trio composed of Jañlug er Mouel (vocals), David Sévérec (electroacoustic hurdy gurdy / vielle à roue), and Gaël Martineau (percussions). Described as midway between rock and oriental musics, the album features eight selections (7 sung in Breton).



Planché. *Planché.* AEPem

This is the first album by this group composed of Emmanuelle Bouthillier (fiddle, song, feet), Dylan James (bass fiddle, song), Yannick Laridon (accordion). They pull from the repertoire of Upper Brittany with a mix of contre-dances, couple dances and a bourrée (which engaged guest fiddler Marthe Tourret). This is a CD for dancers put together by musicians who are masters of their instruments and dance – adding voice as well as the sound of their feet.



Plantec. *Hironaat.*

Labeled as “trad-electro” on this 10th CD Plantec draws from traditional Breton sources and other world musics with 12 selections. The trio at the heart of Plntec are Yannick and Odran Plantec and Gabriel N'Dombi D'Otala. Invited guests include singers and musicians from Japan, Burkina Faso, Finland, and Brittany.



Ronan Le Bars Group. *Strink mor.* Paker Production 030/DB10.

Ronan Le Bars is a master of Irish uilleann pipes who has used this instrument to perform traditional Irish music and Breton music in a number of innovative groups and as a soloist. His group includes Nicolas Quemener (guitar), Pierre Stephan (fiddle), Julien Stevenin (bass fiddle) and Aymeric Le Martelot (keyboard). This third album by the group includes ten selections of melodies, and dances including the intriguing title “Breton man in New

York” which you can hear and watch on his website: ronanlebars.com



Sadorn noz e Kemper – Live Piping Session at Max Jacob Theater.

Sonerien 29 has put together a CD of 16 performances recorded live during a night of piping during the Fête de la Cornemuse (Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient). Performances by eight pipers from the years 2012 through 2018 are featured: Chris Armstrong, Margaret Dunn, Stuart Liddell, Angus MacColl, Willie McCallum, Sylvain Hamon, Alexis Meunier and Alisdair Henderson. While the Scottish repertoire and performers dominate, there is a touch of Brittany too.



Tri Yann. 50 ans de scène. Morgane Productions-Marzelle.

This CD and DVD document the “Kenavo tour” by the famous group Tri Yann (an Naoned). This live recording captures the exuberant use of costume, lighting and drama for which this group is known, and includes favorites from their 50 years of performance. Some outrage arose this February when a France 3 Pays de la Loire emission labeled the Tri Yann as “le groupe ligérien” – a label which ignores their Breton identity and militancy and was viewed as one more attempt to be-Bretonize the Loire-Atlantique which is administratively part of the Region of Pays de Loire. Natives of Nantes where they will end their goodbye tour this March, Tri Yann has been outspoken in favor of reuniting the Loire-Atlantique with the Region of Brittany.

And a New Book:



Roland Becker. Les Soeurs Goadec.

Editions Ouest-France. 336 pages. Roland Becker is perhaps best known as a virtuoso bombarde player and jazzman. But he is also a scholar of traditional Breton music – vocal and instrumental. Here he gives us a well

researched book presenting the Goadec Sisters – famous performers of Breton language song and kan ha diskann from central Western Brittany. They arose in the 1950s and 60s (with a number of other amazing Breton language singers who dusted off a repertoire) and their unique voices and mastery of Breton song kept them famous for decades. The book is enhanced by many photos.



Belle-Ile-en-Mer - Travel Accounts from 1909 and 1869

A. A. “Among the Breton Folk”

The Travel Magazine, Vol. XIV, No. 6, March 1909

If you wish to escape tourists and motor cars, and if you love the Breton folk, a wind-swept island and a diet of fish, you cannot do better than to pass a month’s holiday at Belle-Ile-en-Mer Morbihan, France. When you go down to the south coast of Brittany stop first at Carnac. There you see all about the quiet little village hundreds of Druid remains, great gray menhirs and dolmens standing in the fields like soldiers many hundred strong. They are nowhere else in Brittany so numerous and impressive as here, though all along the coast and on Belle Ile, too, are occasional relics of early Druid rites.

Then from Carnac go to the long, sandy peninsula of Quiberon and take the little steamer for Belle Ile, which you will reach in fifty rather agitated minutes. Your fellow passengers will be some peasants returning from mainland markets or mainland shrines, a few French bicyclists and a grunting pig or two. As you approach the long blue shore of the island a Belle-Ilois will tell you that down at one end is the grotto where the famous Porthos of the “Three Musketeers” used to bathe and that up at the other end the equally famous Madame Sarah Bernhardt still takes an occasional dip in the surf. The chances are that you will see little more of the one than of the other of these Island celebrities.

The landing at Belle Ile is not impressive. You may be disappointed when the steamer puffs into the harbor of the dingy town of Le Palais. There is surely nothing palatial about it. In the harbor is a big sardine fleet ready to start out at sunset. Men in blouses loaf along the wharves, fine blue nets dry in the sun. Behind the quay a row of ugly little buildings stares you in the face and the smell of a sardine cannery greets your nostrils. You will hardly want to stop except to taste at a delightful pastry cook’s around the corner the indigestible short cake famed throughout Brittany as the “gateau Sarah Bernhardt.”

By following the sounds of boat building up an inner harbor, strike back over the road across the island toward the “cote-sauvage.” Belle Ile lies stretched before you, miles of the most open, clear, wind-blown country you ever tramped across.

The island is twelve miles long and about the size of Guernsey. Like its British cousin it is edged with rugged cliffs about two hundred feet high. There are some big grassy hollows and a few high pine-covered knolls, but most of the island is broad, unfenced meadow-land with stretches of heather and gorse over which a south wind

sweeps, blowing away the fogs that go to linger on the mainland coast. Yellow peasant carts go jogging over the roads and up the little paths winding through the high growths of heather, white-capped girls lead home their cows at night.

For your stopping place you have your choice of a hundred or more villages, but a village, it must be added, means anything from a good-sized hamlet like that which clusters about Bangor's spire, to Le Chateau, which has three houses and a windmill. Indeed, there is Kervangeron (there are over sixty "Kers" on the island), which boasts the single house of the postman! The villages, big or small, are like "Spotless Towns." Whitewashed cottages, whitened every year, are dazzling in the sun and the trim gardens are surrounded by whitewashed walls over which vines hardly dare to clamber. Even the pig in his neighboring shed has a look of whitened propriety. But though you may visit windmills and threshing floors, or climb to the top of the great lighthouse, it is all along the enchanting coast of the island that you will want to spend your days. There is an almost infinite number of vast caves with walls brilliant green and red, and pools filled with wonderful sea weeds and sea creatures.

Island superstition inhabits at least one of these grottoes with a nine-headed dragon who devours unfaithful spouses, but usually no creature is visible but a shy lizard or rabbit or, at worst, an octopus stretching itself on the rocks. There are high jutting points on which the surf dashes, perfect secluded sandy bathing-beaches, and occasional coves, busy with fishing dories clumping out to lobster pots. A half a hundred delicious kinds of fish, lobsters, crabs, seaspiders, and oysters will be your daily diet. Then for excursions there is the Pointe des Poulains, where Mme. Bernhardt's remodeled fort is perched like an eagle's nest on the cliff, or further down the coast, a wonderful grotto named the Apothecary, because the cormorants have arranged their nests on the cliffs like chemists' jars on a shelf.

A month of scrambling will not exhaust the interesting cliffs and caves of the island. To sailors and fishermen it is a dangerous shore. You may hear many sad tales of shipwrecks and perhaps, in a severe autumn storm, may yourself watch with straining eyes for a long expected vessel which never makes its harbor. In every church are hung as offerings miniature ships, in recognition of safe guidance home of some storm-tossed sailors, and, in the religious processions of a holy day, these are borne about the village on the shoulders of proud sons.

The Belle Ile song runs:
"Toute les femmes sont gentilles
A Belle Ile-en-mer
A Belle Ile-en-mer."

I might also add that most of them are beautiful. Their faces are full of color and nobility and crowned by one of the most attractive of all the Breton caps. Their priceless shawls, family heirlooms, sweep from shoulders graceful and dignified as those of a queen. The men wear on Sundays their much-buttoned waistcoats edged with velvet, and hats with long velvet streamers floating in the wind. To be sure, sea air and breezes are not good for velvet ribbons and on week days of fishing these are abandoned. The women are more faithful to their costume, though in damp weather they must sometimes hang their heads over the stove to restore stiffness to their drooping cap frills.

Though an occasional old miller may talk to you in Breton, the French spoken on the island is so unusually good that from the mainland coast-villages children are sometimes sent to Belle Ile schools to learn French. The Belle Ile voices have a curious cadence and the inevitable "Dame oui," "Dame non," at the end of every phrase is like the refrain of a song. And everywhere too, there is music; the whole congregation sing the responses at mass, men gather to sing at the little "buvette" after the harvesting, the fishermen croon sea songs as they pull in their net.

Belle Ile has no historic interest, no picturesque shrines or churches, no colonies of artists painting hedgerow and cottage. It has only the charm of being quite unspoiled – a beautiful, heather-covered, wind-swept island, with the heartiest sea smack, the best sea fish and the kindest sea people to be found anywhere on the coast of France.

Mrs. Bury Palliser. *Brittany and its Byways – Some Account of its Inhabitants and its Antiquities.*
London: John Murray, 1869. Pages 250-257.

At Port Navalo we emerged from the Morbihan, and, on our right, passed the little rocky island of Teigneuse, with its lighthouse; and, on the left, those of Houat and Haedik (the duck and duckling); the former famous as the retreat of St. Gildas, who leaped from here with one bound, a distance of ten miles, to the peninsula of Rhuys, where he built his monastery. From, Auray to Belle Isle is in all forty-eight miles – ten miles of river to Port Navalo, the rest open sea. After eight hours' sail we reached Le Palais, the port and principal town of Belle Isle, built on the north-east side, and overhung by the citadel, the work of Vauban. The town consists of one principal street – the Rue Trochu – so called after the General of that name and his brother, who were the first, at the beginning of this century to introduce agriculture into the island. We passed, at a distance to the right, the model farm of M. Trochu fils, on our way across the island to the lighthouse, - a cheerless drive, as there are no trees to be seen except near Le Palais. When M. Torchu commenced his labors, agriculture

was little attended to in France, but he persevered in his exertions, beginning by clearing about sixty acres of granite rock, a land covered with heath and furze, setting at defiance the Breton saying, "Lande tu fus, land tu es, lande tu seras." This same district is now covered with rich meadows, fine woods, productive arable fields, and magnificent pasture land, on which horses are extensively reared.

We gathered on the heathy moor three kinds of heath, the Cornish among others. The artichoke grows wild in the waste grounds. Wheat, turnips, beetroot, Indian corn, and potatoes, are the chief produce of the land in cultivation. The last vegetable was introduced by families from Nova Scotia (Arcadia), who settled in Belle Isle, after that province was ceded to England by the Treaty of Paris, in 1766. This was several years before Parmentier had extended the use of the potato, or "truffle rouge" as it was first called, over other parts of France. Indian corn was probably also brought in by the Nova Scotians. The leaves are constantly cut during its growth as fodder for the cattle, so that the cob hardly attains a foot in height from the ground. On the left of our road we saw in the distance the village of Bangor, which gives its name to one of the four districts into which Belle Isle is divided. A little south is the fine granite lighthouse, of the stupendous height of 450 feet. We toiled up 255 steps (223 stone and 32 iron) before we gained the lantern, and, though the view was very extensive, we were rejoiced at finding ourselves safe down. One of the guardians had been waylaid, kicked and beaten, a few evenings before, for some slight grudge. He seemed in great suffering, but had no doctor; the Breton, in his simple confiding faith – that with the Almighty are the issues of life and death, and that illness will end according to His decree – considers the calling in of a medical advisor but an unnecessary expense to his family. From the lighthouse we walked to the sea-shore. Belle Isle is a table-land, surrounded by steep cliffs, averaging 130 feet in height, which can only be descended to the shore in particular places. We walked to the Grotte du Port Coton, where begins the "Mer Sauvage," as it is called, an extent of five to six miles of most picturesque rocks, some elevated from 130 to 160 feet above the level of the sea, jagged and torn into most fantastic forms by the ceaseless dashing of the waters of the Atlantic, which have formed various grottoes in the cliffs. We descended into one of these caverns by a narrow gully, but could not proceed far, as the tide was entering fast, and would soon have surrounded us, cutting off all means of return.

It reminded us of the description in the 'Vicomte de Bragelonne' of the grotto of Locmaria, which was blown up, and crushed the mousquetaire Porthos, at the moment of his and Aramis' triumph over the soldiers of the King. So great at times is the fury of the waves, that our guide at the lighthouse told us he had seen on several occasions the spray driving over to Le Palais,

nearly five miles distant. Continuing our walk along the cliffs, we came to an enormous mass of rock, standing far out detached from the cliff, and covered with screaming sea-gulls. We again descended by another fissure into a pretty sandy cove, surrounded by the same wild granite rocks; but in most places there is no beach at all. It was high water, so it was useless to attempt the Grotte des Apothécaires, - the finest they say, of them all, and we returned to Le Palais well pleased with the remarkably wild coast we had seen.

Belle-Isle forms now a canton in the department of Morbihan. In ancient days it belonged to the Abbot of Saint-Croix, at Quimperlé, who sold it in the time of Charles IX, to the Maréchal de Gondi, and, in 1573, it was erected into a Marquisate. (Cardinal de Retz lived here after his escape from the castle of Nantes.) One of his successors, Henri de Condi, being overwhelmed with debt, sold the island to Nicolas Fouquet, the ill-fated Superintendent of Finance, on whose disgrace, and his being subsequently consigned to the fortress of Pignarol, his grandson, the Marquis de Belle Isle, exchanged it with Louis XV for the Conté of Gisors, erected into a duchy in 1742. Fouquet built a palace and completed the citadel, for which he employed Vauban. He also projected fortifications to enclose the town, which are not in course of completion by the Emperor, after Vauban's plans. Several guns had just been landed, the day before we visited the citadel, to see which an order is requisite. Near the citadel is the "Maison centrale des détenus," now only containing a few old men, too feeble for hard labor. We were too tired to look at the celebrated cistern of Vauban, which holds, we were told, above thirty thousand imperial gallons of water.

Fouquet's palace was, it is said, destroyed to complete the line of fortifications. A house was pointed out to us as having formed part of the original building. Some years since, a stone was picked up in the harbor bearing his ambitious device – a squirrel, with the motto *Quo non Ascendum?* "To where shall I not rise?" The greater number of the population of Belle Isle are employed in the fisheries; of these the sardine and the tunny are the chief. There are large establishments for curing sardines, which are very abundant, and lobsters, taken on the rocks of Belle Isle and the little islands of Houat and Haedik, are sent to London and Paris. The boats go as far as Spain, to the coast of Catalonia, for the tunny fishery, which extends from August to the beginning of October. These fish are taken by lines hung along the sides of the vessel, with a bell attached to each to give notice of a bite. The most esteemed part of the tunny is the underneath, or "panse." The next morning we sailed back to Auray. The nearest point to Belle Isle is Quiberon, only ten miles from Le Palais.

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