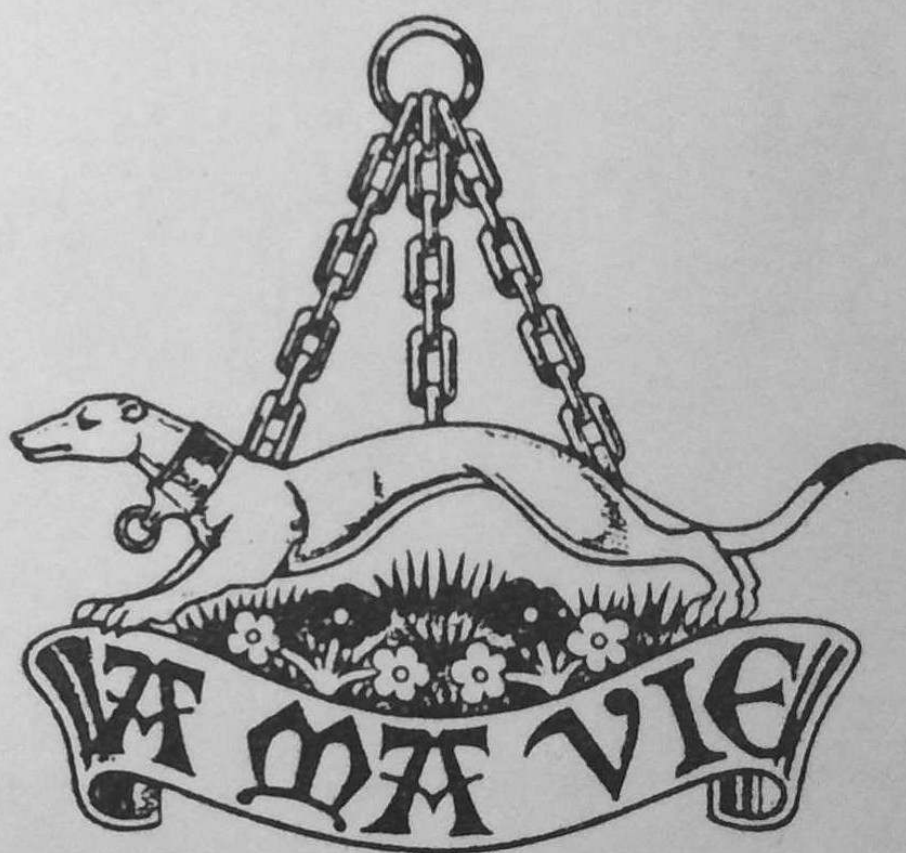


# THE REGIONALIST

Spring 1991

no. 13



Regions of Europe:  
Brittany

ISSN 0264 - 522X

'The Regionalist' is promoted by the Regionalist Seminar, a forum which provides an opportunity for those interested in regional self-government to meet from time to time to discuss issues of common concern, to exchange information and ideas, and to spread knowledge of what regionalism is about.

The first Regionalist Seminar was convened at St Anthony's College, Oxford, on 10 May 1980 and those attending agreed to make it a regular event. Subsequent seminars have been held in Oxford, Bristol, Manchester, Windsor, York, Cambridge, London, St Austell, Durham, Salisbury and Leicester.

The Regionalist Seminar is not an organisation: it is a mutually supportive network the effectiveness of which depends on the strength and activities of the groups belonging to it. It has one liaison officer, the Honorary Secretary, David Robins.

'The Regionalist' is printed and published half-yearly by John Ellis of Sancroft House, 6a Church Street, Houghton-le-Spring, Co Durham, Northern England. It is edited and distributed by David Robins of 16 Adolphus Street West, Seaham Harbour, Co Durham, Northern England.

Subscriptions should be sent to David Robins, cheques being made payable to 'The Regionalist Seminar'. There is a tear-off subscription form on page 31.

#### Subscription renewals

If there is a tick in the box:

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Prompt payment will avoid the need for further reminders.

The FRONT COVER illustration depicts the pendant of the Order of the Ermine, founded in 1381 by Jean IV, Duke of Brittany. The Duke, brought up and educated in England, was invested with the Order of the Garter by King Edward III in 1375 and founded the Ermine in imitation of it. Women were admitted (uniquely for such orders), as were commoners. The Order of the Ermine was revived in 1972 by the Breton cultural institute Skol Uhel ar Vro as an award honouring exceptional contributions to Breton public life.

#### THE REGIONALIST

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ISSN 0264-522X

'The Regionalist' enters the 1990s with a new editor and a renewed determination that the last decade of the 20th century shall see the turning of the tide of centralism and the emergence of new and effective institutions of self-government among the communities and nations of the North Atlantic archipelago.

John Banks retired as editor after issue No 12 to take up a new position as Secretary-General of the Wessex Regionalists. In our first dozen issues he set standards of rigorous scholarship, penetrating analysis and forthright criticism that it is a challenge to maintain.

During our absence from print the upheavals in Central and Eastern Europe have changed the geopolitical assumptions of a generation. The vision of a Europe of Regions which transcends the Iron Curtain is now a realistic prospect: a Europe to which Moldavia, Moravia and Mazovia have as much right to be admitted as Normandy, Navarre and Niedersachsen. Significantly, it was not the constitutionally-irrelevant state of East Germany that was admitted to the Federal Republic last October but the five reconstituted Länder which the East German state long believed it had obliterated.

As the vision becomes reality we may expect the present centres of power to use every trick in the book to frustrate the creation of a Europe composed of real regions able to supplement - or supplant - loyalties to the nation-state. For example, in the French scheme of regionalisation Normandy is divided into two, Brittany's capital is added to another region and the claims of French Euskadi, French Catalonia and Savoy are simply ignored. In the United Kingdom the Labour Party's plans for regionalisation may be charitably attributed to ignorance rather than malice but they nevertheless divide Northern England into three, carve up Wessex and sweep Cornwall under the sou'-western carpet. Thinking and arguing must continue undiminished if foresight is to prevail over expediency.

As ever, the prospects for regionalism in England are closely entwined with the fortunes of Celtic nationalism. The result of the Neath by-election in April, which saw Plaid Cymru leap from a poor fourth to a good second, gives cause for optimism. Meanwhile, a change of Prime Minister has done little to reassure Scottish Conservatives that the party of colonial government has much future north of the Border.

This issue contains material from a number of new contributors. Much of it is intended to generate controversy. The space devoted to readers' letters in our next issue will be a measure of how far that aim has succeeded.

No 14 will also look at the Conservatives' emerging proposals for local government restructuring. Twenty years ago the opportunity arose of combining reorganisation at local level with devolution from the centre in a regional tier of government. It was thrown away. Now the political geography of Britain is back in the melting-pot once more. Structural change in one form or another will occur whichever party forms the next government. The agenda of the 1990s is set: some interesting times may lie ahead.

The following organisations were represented at the first Regionalist Seminar:

The Campaign for the North, founded in 1977 as an all-party pressure group formed to promote the interests of the North Country and in particular the cause of regional self-government. The Campaign does not put forward candidates at parliamentary or local government elections.

Chairman: Kevin Daws

Publication: 'UP NORTH!', 1978 (re-printed 1987), £1

Address: Sancroft House, 6a Church Street, Houghton-le-Spring, Co Durham, Northern England

Cowethas Flamank (Flamank Group), founded in 1969, takes its name from Thomas Flamank, leader of the Cornish army which marched on London in 1497. It is a current affairs and research group working to safeguard the future of Cornwall and of the Cornish people. It sponsors the Perranporth conference series and the working parties that have arisen from this.

Administrator: John Fleet, 16 Centenary Street, Camborne, Cornwall

Publication: 'KEVREN' ('Link'), half-yearly in English and Cornish, £3 for 4 issues

Editor: Tony Casey, 101 Haytor Avenue, Seacrest, Paignton, Devon

Mebyon Kernow (Sons of Cornwall), founded in 1951, is a political party whose aims, based on the principles of Cornish nationhood, are: to secure self-government for Cornwall; to advance the social and economic welfare of the Cornish community; and to promote the Celtic culture, language and traditions of Cornwall. These aims are pursued by means of political activity, including putting forward official candidates for public elections within Cornwall.

Chair: Dr Loveday Jenkin

Publication: 'MAKING OUR OWN DECISIONS' (policy booklet), 40p + 20p postage

Address: An Gresen Gernewek, Tregarne, Cusgarne, Truro, Cornwall

The Orkney Movement, founded in 1980 with the initial aim of combatting proposals for uranium mining in the islands. To achieve this it seeks absolute local control of mineral rights and other domestic matters by an Islands Parliament. It contests seats on the Islands Council and fought the parliamentary seat of Orkney & Shetland in conjunction with the Shetland Movement in 1987.

Chairman: Mrs Dorothy Ritch

Secretary: Mrs Margaret Flaws

Publications: 'ORKNEY MOVEMENT' (policy statement), 1986  
NEWSLETTER (combined with membership subscription,  
£2 per annum)

Address: Castlehall, Wyre, Orkney

The Shetland Movement, founded in 1977, initially to solve the islands' fishing problems, but by 1980 evolving to include in its aims a Shetland Parliament. It first won seats on the Islands Council in 1982 and contested the parliamentary seat in conjunction with the Orkney Movement in 1987.

Chairman: Cllr John Graham

Publications: 'SHETLAND MOVEMENT' (policy statement), 1980  
NEWSLETTER (combined with membership subscription,  
£3 per annum)

Address: 10 Reform Lane, Lerwick, Shetland

The Wessex Regionalists, founded in 1974 when Alexander Thynn, Lord Weymouth contested Westbury as a Wessex Regionalist candidate. The party was formally constituted in 1980. Wessex regionalist candidates have contested eighteen parliamentary and five European seats since 1974. The party seeks to establish a regional legislature or 'Witan' to control domestic affairs.

President: Colin Bex

Secretary-General: John Banks

Publication: 'THE STATUTE OF WESSEX', 1982, £1

Address: 42 Rectory Lane, Bracknell, Berkshire, Wessex

Representatives of the above organisations were signatories to the following text - the Declaration of Oxford - in May 1980.

#### THE DECLARATION OF OXFORD

"We, the signatories of this Declaration, representing various movements for autonomy, declare that we are joined together in determined support for the right to self-government of communities and nations within Britain and against the centralism of the Westminster government."

The original six have been joined by:

The Movement for Middle England, founded in 1988. The Movement is a non-party political organisation working for the full autonomy of Middle England within a devolved England/Europe. It aims to establish 'shadow' institutions outside the present political system, rather than contest elections within that system.

The Movement has no formal leadership but is governed by a steering group with collective responsibility.

Publication: 'REGIONALISM IN EUROPE - THE VIEW FROM MIDDLE ENGLAND', 1990, 50p in stamps

Address: 10 Bartholomew Street, Highfields, Leicester, Middle England

Other organisations taking part in seminars, or with which friendly contacts have been established, include:

The Celtic League, founded in 1961 to support by peaceful means the struggle of the six Celtic nations (Scotland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Wales, Cornwall and Brittany) to secure the freedoms they need (political, cultural, social and economic) for their continuation as distinct communities. The League publishes a multi-lingual quarterly magazine, 'Carn'. The League has been represented at the 3rd, 8th and 9th Seminars.

Address: G42 Du Cane Court, London SW17

Common Wealth, founded in 1942 as a political party but now a political and social research group. CW has been represented at every seminar to date. It advocates the diffusion of political and economic power, hence its support for regional government.

Address: 107 Pilton Street, Barnstaple, North Devon

Fonden for International Forståelse (the Foundation for International Understanding) promotes regionalism throughout the continent of Europe and maintains contact with regionalist movements within the nation-states to that end. It sponsors the annual conference 'Europe of Regions' and the publication 'Regional Contact'.

Address: Kultorvet 2, Postbox 85, DK-1003 København K, Denmark

Plaid Cymru (the Party of Wales), founded in 1925 (as Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru - the National Party of Wales) with the aim of achieving Dominion status for Wales. Plaid Cymru today actively campaigns to secure self-government for Wales within the European Community. It contests local, parliamentary and European elections, and has been represented continuously at Westminster since 1974.

Address: 51 Cathedral Road, Caerdydd/Cardiff, Cymru/Wales

The Scottish National Party, founded in 1934 (by the merger of the Scottish Party and the National Party of Scotland) with the aim of restoring Scottish national sovereignty. The SNP's major policy is to secure full Scottish independence, within the context of the European Community. The SNP views Scotland as a nation - not a region - and as such entitled to the same rights and obligations as other member-states of the EC. The party contests all local government, parliamentary and European elections and has been represented continuously at Westminster since 1967 and at Strasbourg from the outset of direct elections in 1979.

Address: 6 North Charlotte Street, Edinburgh, Scotland



## TWELFTH REGIONALIST SEMINAR

The 12th Regionalist Seminar - hosted by the Movement for Middle England - was held at the Secular Hall, Leicester on 14 October 1989. The following report has been received from MFME.

The proceedings began with a round-up of news from those regions which were represented. The view from Northern England was not encouraging. No new initiatives had been brought forward to follow-up the 'Council of the North' meeting at York (see 'The Regionalist', No 12). Inspiration was now required.

The news from Wessex was more welcome. Whilst the increased deposit required had prevented candidates from standing in Westminster elections, three European seats had been contested by former members of the Wessex Regionalists acting on their own initiative.

Middle England had completed its first year of operations, which included recruiting a scattering of support members who were kept informed by means of quarterly newsletters. A leaflet setting out the Movement's aims, together with a pamphlet, had been published. A door-to-door canvas had been carried out in Groby, a village outside Leicester.

The seminar concerned itself with the next steps forward. The question of elections produced varying attitudes. The publicity that comes from fighting elections had to be set against the view that regional groups compromised their position by putting forward candidates for election to the central legislature. A majority view was that progress would be slow and that change would ultimately come about through one of the major parties but only as a result of external pressure from regionalist organisations and from Europe. It was suggested that common cause could be made in many cases with the Green Party, which was now 50% decentralist. Some approaches had in fact been made to the Greens - who simply did not want to talk.

To conclude, publicity and the projection of ideals were the themes which found most support at the seminar. The regionalist movement has ideas which should be advanced to a wider audience speaking with pride but without arrogance. We are not humble, but honest people whose strength is in thinking big - but not irrationally - and in having vision and dreams which can be translated into today's terms. This is the major function, to generate and propagate wherever it leads. Regionalism must come from the roots upward: slow growth but harder wood.

## PERRANPORTH XIV

The 14th Perranporth Conference, held on 17/18 November 1990, returned to the theme of 'the Cornish element in education'. The conference heard how the Cornish language GCSE had been saved following the decision of the Southern Examining Group to abandon the examination. Wella Brown of the Cornish Language Board reported that agreement had been reached with the Welsh Joint Education Committee (the GCSE examining board in Wales) for the Committee to take over responsibility for the GCSE in Cornish from 1992.

## THE BOURTON STONE - ECGBRYHTESSTAN?

"878. In this year the host went secretly in midwinter after Twelfth Night to Chippenham, and rode over Wessex and occupied it, and drove a great part of the inhabitants oversea, and reduced the greater part of the rest, except Alfred the king; and he with a small company moved under difficulties through woods and into inaccessible places in marshes... And the Easter after, king Alfred with a small company built a fortification at Athelney, and from that fortification, with the men of that part of Somerset nearest to it, he continued fighting against the host. Then in the seventh week after Easter he rode to Ecgbyrhtesstan, to the east of Selwood, and came to meet him there all the men of Somerset and Wiltshire and that part of Hampshire which was on this side of the sea and they received him warmly. And one day later he went from those camps to Iley Oak, and one day later to Edington; and there he fought against the entire host, and put it to flight."

This tantalisingly brief account is all that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle has to say about the momentous events which led up to Alfred's victory over the Danish invaders of Wessex. The rallying-point at Ecgbyrhtesstan - Ecgbert's Stone - has never been positively identified. There are as many as half-a-dozen well-argued theories about its location.

To understand why the Wessex Regionalists held a ceremony in a Dorset wood on Saturday, 20 October 1990, attended by nearly 100 local worthies, English regionalists and scholars of the Anglo-Saxon era, it is necessary to introduce a local landowner, Dr George Maggs.

For centuries, Dr Maggs' family have owned land at Farcombe Hall, Bourton on which lies the intersection of the three counties Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire. On this land there exists a sarsen stone which stood originally at the point of intersection, but which was moved some time at the beginning of this century to rescue it from sinking into a watercourse. Local tradition asserts the three-county stone to be Ecgbyrhtesstan.

Officialdom has not been kind to the stone. The Department of Transport had plans to drive the Bourton by-pass across the site in a massive cutting (these plans were eventually changed; the new route will destroy a Romano-British site instead). Dr Maggs approached English Heritage for help in restoring the stone to its original site but they were unwilling to investigate the claims made for it. It is not even scheduled as an ancient monument.

So it was that the Wessex Regionalists joined Dr Maggs in sponsoring a proclamation to draw attention to the Bourton Stone, at the very least a three-county boundary-marker of great antiquity and at the same time arguably a candidate to be Ecgbyrhtesstan - the point where the final preparations were made for the 9th century equivalent of the Battle of Britain.

The morning's proceedings began with speeches in a marquee pitched alongside the stone's original site, which is now occupied by a small stone marker. Colin Bex, President of the Wessex Regionalists, attacked central government for its contempt for the heritage of Wessex. It claimed commitment to "conservation" yet plotted to destroy beautiful and historic landscapes like Tyfford Down in Hampshire, where a motorway is planned to be carved through one of the most heavily "protected"

sites in England. He indicated the Government's own figures which show that less than one-fifth of the national expenditure on all construction work is allocated to conservation, maintenance and rehabilitation. As knowledge increases, he argued, so does ignorance. Inflated pressures for change from big business and over-centralised government often cause new information and new ideas to displace their superior precursors. It is salutary to respect and to retain material evidence of the past. He drew attention to past threats to the Bourton Stone and put forward a draft private Bill to seek Parliamentary protection for it.

WR Council member John Graves set out the known facts concerning Ecgbryhtesstan and the rival theories as to its most probable location. On this occasion he represented the Engliscan Gesithas ('the English Companions') - an association devoted to the study of the Anglo-Saxon period - and he began his speech by reciting the annal from the Chronicle in the original language.

Dr George Maggs recalled some of the local folklore associated with the stone, before leading the assembled company to the stone itself, half-submerged in the ground beside a stream. Photographs were taken by the local press, who were treated to the extra attraction of members of the Anglo-Saxon battle re-enactment group Regia Anglorum ('The Kingdom of the English'), dressed in period costume.

On returning to the marquee for the signing of the proclamation, further speeches were made by Lt Col John Peddie, a local military historian whose own research suggested caution before attributing the honour of Ecgbryhtesstan to the Bourton Stone; Viscount Weymouth, whose vision was to the future which, as already evolving, promised a truly representative system of democratic government region by region throughout the world; and Rose Heaword of the Engliscan Gesithas, who paid tribute to Alfred Watkins' 'The Old Straight Track' as the pioneering work in understanding the ancient history of our landscape. As the participants dispersed for lunch, thoughts were already turning to plans for further celebrations of Wessex history.

The intersection of the three central counties of Wessex may not be the precisely measured geographical centre of the region but in a symbolic sense it is very much 'the heart of Wessex'. If Alfred did rally his troops here, the boost to morale that such a point would provide can readily be appreciated. That earlier generation of West Saxons triumphed against all the odds to ensure that the Wessex of their day was not erased from the map of Europe. Last year's evocative commemoration of their achievement will be an enduring inspiration to all those who were present.

David Robins & Colin Bex

Further information on the Engliscan Gesithas (pronounced 'the Englishan Yeseethas') is available from the Membership Secretary, the Engliscan Gesithas, BM 4336, London WC1N 3XX, and on Regia Anglorum from J K Siddorn, 9 Durlough Close, Headley Park, Bristol.



The Wessex Regionalists have recently produced a lapel-badge (left) depicting the Wessex wyvern in green enamel on a plinth of the word 'Wessex' in Anglo-Saxon script. These are available from the address given on page 3, price £2.95 post free.

## THE BOURTON STONE (ECGBRYHTESSTAN ?)

### PROCLAMATION

We the undersigned do declare and do proclaim that the Monolith Sarsen Stone situate on land at Farcombe Hall, Bourton, Dorset, Wessex (formerly known as "Coombe Street") be the same stone which at a time unknown was set to mark the conjunction of boundaries of the three counties Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset in the Kingdom of Wessex, and further take note that we hereby resolve to establish a Trust by way of the appropriate authority of Parliament to protect the Stone which, having been returned to its previous location will be preserved and maintained thereafter as a monument for the benefit of posterity in perpetuity.

Whereas at a place closeby there is sited a smaller stone at the conjunction of boundaries of the aforesaid three counties, and in the absence of conclusive evidence to the contrary, we proclaim that the Bourton Stone is a fair contender for "ECGBRYHTESSTAN" as cited in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (KING EGBERT'S STONE) around which in AD 878 some 4,000 men faithful to King Alfred rallied before marching on Ethandune and defeating Guthrum and the Danish force who had invaded and occupied the town of Chippenham.

Should conclusive corroborative evidence be discovered to verify the stone as being ECGBRYHTESSTAN, we declare the trust shall be re-named the "ECGBRYHTESSTAN TRUST"

SIGNED:

*David G. H. Maggs*  
Dr. D. G. H. Maggs (Owner)

*John Graves*  
John Graves (The Engliscan Gesithas)

*Colin R. Bex*  
Colin R. Bex (President, Wessex Regionalists)

on this *Saturday* day the *twentieth* day of October 1990

## AWAKING MIDDLE ENGLAND

The following report has been received from the Movement for Middle England:

Some two years have passed since Movement for Middle England featured in issue 12; since then we have made slow but steady progress, both in developing our ideas on regionalism and direct democracy, and in getting the Movement better known.

Early press releases resulted in some coverage by local media within Middle England, including interviews on four radio stations. Articles were prepared for local, regional and European magazines. An introductory leaflet was produced, along with our first pamphlet: 'Regionalism in Europe - the View from Middle England'. Both have been generally well received.

The main public activity in 1990 was to hold street stalls in various town and city centres around Middle England, approximately 18 in all, including Nottingham, Oakham, Oxford, Tamworth, and several in Stafford thanks to the enthusiasm and energy of two local members.

As might be expected, reactions to our proposals varied greatly. However, a large majority shared our criticisms of centralised power and through the stalls we gained useful contacts and a number of new supporters. Our hand-made badges were often more popular than written information, particularly those with our "English not British" slogan.

We have developed and maintained contact with the Wessex Regionalists, Cowethas Plamank and Mebyon Kernow, and have had a positive response from Plaid Cymru.

In March 1990 we were especially pleased to attend a meeting of the Wessex Regionalists and later had a useful and stimulating discussion with Alexander Thynn at Longleat. In the autumn, five members were present at the atmospheric ceremony to commemorate the Bourton Stone. Earlier in the year we visited places in East Anglia associated with Hereward the Wake, including Crowland Abbey.

During 1991 two more pamphlets will be published and our programme of stalls will continue. Much work needs to be done, and we are all limited by other constraints (especially the need to earn a living!) so all support, whether practical or financial is welcomed.

[The letter opposite was received after MfME member Ray Trader sent greetings to the Lithuanian government, enclosing a stamp issued by the pre-war government of a then independent Lithuania]

The Movement for Middle England have produced a range of button badges featuring their emblems of the cross of arrows and the oak tree and various slogans such as "Small is Beautiful" and "English not British". A list of those currently stocked can be had from MfME at the address given on page 4.

Plaid Cymru have produced a colourful 'Wales in Europe' car sticker depicting the flags of 18 nations and regions whose movements for autonomy are members of the European Free Alliance. These cost 50p each (post free) and can be ordered from Plaid Cymru at the address given on page 4.

Deeply respected Sir

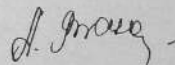
Ray Trader,

I'm sincerely thankful for Your warm wishes addressed to me personally and to all Lithuanians. I give expression of my gratitude to You and "Movement for Middle England" for feeling concern about Republic of Lithuania independence and support from Your part as well.

Nowadays the supportive actions for us are very important.

Thank you for a stamp which colourfully calls back Independent Lithuania.

With my deep respect



Algirdas Brazauskas  
Deputy Prime Minister  
of Republic of Lithuania

May 8, 1990

Vilnius

Republic of Lithuania

## THE CASE FOR THE ISLES

Those who followed the devolution debate of the late 70s will recall the slogan that "Shetlanders will have no truck with a Scottish Assembly". The undoubted hostility to Scottish devolution within Orkney and Shetland at this time was eventually confirmed when both island groups voted against the Scottish Assembly in the 1979 Referendum. Indeed a massive 73% of all Shetlanders who voted in the Referendum rejected the proposal to establish a Scottish Assembly (the largest 'No' vote in Scotland).

This negative attitude towards constitutional change reflected the fact that there had been little or no recognition that the islands are quite different from mainland Scotland and have unique problems. During the devolution debate it was wrongly assumed that Orkney and Shetland were simply another part of rural Scotland. As a result there was a predictable backlash from the islands.

And yet at the same time there was a growing awareness of the potential economic benefits which political autonomy could bring to the islands. More and more people were arguing that the islands should have more say in running local affairs. Unfortunately, the case for island autonomy became very closely linked with the anti-devolution campaign. To have advocated constitutional change for Orkney and Shetland while, at the same time, opposing the principle of Scottish devolution, was and is quite illogical and contradictory. Nevertheless, it appeared that the political objectives of island autonomy and Scottish devolution were mutually exclusive.

This curious and confusing state of affairs was a principal catalyst which led to the formation of the Shetland Movement in 1978 and the Orkney Movement a year later. The Orkney and Shetland Movements (OSM) agreed that their objective of island autonomy was part of the self-same process of constitutional change which would eventually result in the establishment of a Scottish Parliament. The OSM support for Scottish devolution together with their principal aim of island autonomy has resulted in the islands having a much more positive and constructive approach to the constitutional debate over the last few years.

As a result the Islands Councils from Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles, together with the two Island MPs and a representative of the OSM were eager to fully participate in the Scottish Constitutional Convention when it was established in March of 1989. An Islands Working Group was immediately set up in order to fully consider the future constitutional position of the Islands Councils.

There was unanimous agreement that there should be increased island autonomy following the establishment of a Scottish Parliament. It was also agreed that the future relationship between the Islands Councils and a Scottish Parliament was a constitutional question and not a matter of local government reform. This vitally important principle has now been accepted by the Convention which "acknowledges that the Islands areas in Scotland are sufficiently unique as to warrant separate constitutional consideration in the detailed legislative proposals for the establishment of Scotland's Parliament".

At long last there has been recognition that the islands of Scotland are different from mainland Scotland and therefore require a different political and constitutional settlement. The acceptance of this fundamental principle will ensure overwhelming support for the Convention Proposals in the Islands should there ever be a referendum on this issue.

In dealing with the practical implementation of constitutional change for the islands following the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, the Islands Working Group have proposed the innovative concept of "evolutionary devolution". This describes a mechanism which will allow each island group to develop the degree of autonomy best suited to its individual problems, needs and aspirations. This recognises that each of the three island groups is unique and that it would be quite inappropriate to apply exactly the same constitutional settlement to all three at the same time.

It has therefore been proposed that those powers and functions which could be undertaken by Islands Councils should be listed, as should those powers and functions which would always remain with a Scottish Parliament. In this way the maximum limits of island autonomy would have been identified at the outset. Each island group would then gradually evolve the system of island government best suited to its individual circumstances within the agreed constitutional framework.

What is in effect proposed is a system of evolutionary devolution which is not dissimilar to the process whereby the Farøe Islands have obtained and further developed a degree of island autonomy while remaining an integral part of Denmark.

John Goodlad

The above article is re-printed, with corrections, from 'Scotland's Voice', an eight-page tabloid published by the Scottish Constitutional Convention (c/o 74 York Street, Glasgow, Scotland).

The following extracts are taken from the February 1991 newsletter of the Shetland Movement:

"1990 was a good year for the Shetland Movement. At the local elections in May seven Movement candidates were elected to the Shetland Islands Council, making the movement the largest political grouping on the [24-seat] Council. Each of the seven is committed to the Movement Manifesto which has island autonomy as its major aim."

"The need for a greater say in our own affairs continues to be demonstrated. Take, for example, the recent refusal by the Scottish Secretary of State to take any positive action in reducing the intolerable level of freight charges recently announced. It becomes increasingly obvious that decisions made by a remote government without prior consultation produce severe problems for island communities. That is what the Shetland Movement is fighting to change."



## THOUGHTS OF A COMMON MAN

by Chris Dawe,  
a ceorl ov Wessex

## History as a Weapon

It was with surprise and delight that I received an invitation to attend the Proclamation of Ecgbert's Stone, and I congratulate Colin Bex and the Wessex Regionalists on their initiative. Two points, not intended as criticism, merely as an observation: it is a shame someone didn't plant the flag of Wessex next to the stone - indeed, Mr Bex could have dressed up as Aelfred the Great - and someone ought to have made a replica gonfalon.

A lesson that the Welsh and Cornish have learnt - and which the rest of us need to - is that the images of history can stir the emotions, especially those of oppression or betrayal.

The Tolpuddle martyrs were not only downtrodden labourers oppressed by capitalist land owners, they were West-Saxon heroes who were being starved by vortayn, that is, non-West-Saxon land owners. The bad years in Wessex lasted nearly forty years, during which time only those involved in the bread riots (or so-called 'swing riots') and the Tolpuddle martyrs stood out. The 63 bread rioters who were hanged, and the further 206 who were transported were the real martyrs, together with the many others who were charged with other offences and lost their jobs, eventually dying through lack of parish relief because they were black-listed. This is recent history and "it hurts like hell".

All the regions of the United Kingdom have tales to tell, from the Rebecca riots, the Peterloo massacre and the Jarrow march, to the Cornish tin-miners' strike and the Scottish land clearances. Riots, marches and protests about starvation, rents and political freedom: injustice haunts the pages of the last two hundred years of history and put into a regional context it can re-awaken a spirit which has been nearly down-trodden out of existence. Don't ignore it, let us use it as the socialist movements have.

## The Importance of Dialect

Language is not only the tool of communication; it is the marker of regional identity. The regional dialects were, until the centralization of education, living languages. The word 'dialect' comes to us from the Greek 'dialectos', which means speech, and that is precisely what regional dialect is or was, the spoken language of the people. It is a mistake to assume that dialect was purely the language of the common people; prior to Johnsonian English and its adoption by the great Public Schools it was also the language of the gentry.

Preserving and maintaining regional dialect, and encouraging its use where possible, can serve the regionalist well, for it will help to promote regional identity. The Black Country Dialect Society have done much to preserve Mercian dialect. Whilst interest and research into Wessex dialect has increased in recent years there is still a long way to go. Place names are, of course, a natural for dialect promotion, for example Beriksheer for Berkshire, Defn for Devon, Dōzet for Dorset, Hyampsheer for Hampshire, Zumorset for Somerset, Wiltshire for Wiltshire and Sturmster-Newtn for Sturminster-Newtown.

The Cornish and Welsh have used their Celtic speech well in arousing the spirit of community among their inhabitants. The English-speaking regions should grasp the nettle and promote their individual Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Norse dialects in much the same way.

Now for hobby-horse time. It is the pronunciation of Anglo-Saxon which leaves me somewhat bemused. Although I will confess to having never met an Anglo-Saxon, I find the guttural 'German' pronunciation difficult to accept ('German', incidentally, is derived from the Latin 'Germania', which originally described an area - the north-European plain - and not its peoples or their culture; the central part was inhabited by the Teuts, from whose name we get the words 'Teutonic', 'Deutsch' and 'Dutch'). I am of the same opinion as the Reverend William Barnes and Thomas Hardy in that I contend that the language was much softer. The three surviving spoken Anglo-Saxon dialects - Friessic, Hunsruck (Lower-Saxon) and West-Country (West-Saxon) all use a much lazier and softer pronunciation. Whilst I do not condemn the use of 'German' pronunciation it is the assertion that it is the only correct pronunciation that worries me, as it is inconsistent with etymological evidence. Anglo-Saxon was as distinct from 'Old German' as it was from Old Norse; therefore 'German' cannot be used as the benchmark for Anglo-Saxon pronunciation.

A universal standard of pronunciation imposed on Anglo-Saxon ignores the different regional dialects which make up the Anglo-Saxon language, for it was already sub-divided into West-Saxon, Mercian, South Saxon, East-Anglian, Kentish, East-Mercian, South Northumbrian and North Northumbrian dialects by the time the first of the Chronicles had commenced, so let's not be pedantic.

Time to dismount the hobby-horse and without reservation congratulate those who are keeping Anglo-Saxon studies alive and promoting the language, which has as much significance to the English regional dialects as Latin has to the early Christian Church.

## To Regionalists

We should all cautiously welcome the Labour Party's plans for Regionalism or 'Devolution for England', and make representations to the Right Honourable Roy Hattersley MP regarding the boundaries of our Regions. It is probable that Mr Kinnock will be the next Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and failure to persuade the 'Government in waiting' that there is a depth of feeling regarding 'English' and 'Celtic' Regions could lead to catastrophe.

Culturally, historically and morally unacceptable boundaries could lead to bitterness and resentment for decades to come. Let us all be clear which boundaries we believe to be correct for our regions and the reasons for them. Mebyon Kernow and the Wessex Regionalists have declared their minimum territories and should declare opposition to so-called plebiscital areas except in the case of communities which straddle or lie adjacent to a regional boundary. It would be suicidal for any region to allow areas to opt out for commercial reasons or reasons of perceived prestige, for this would ultimately weaken the legitimacy of a region.

The fight is on, regionalism is on the national political agenda. To lose this battle may prove to be the end of the road for logical regionalism in the United Kingdom; to win is to start a new beginning for the liberty of all our people.

## REVIEWS

'The Violent Kingdom', by Roy Anderson, 1971, reprint published by Butler Publishing, Cliffside, Rothbury, Northumberland, 1989

'The Violent Kingdom' traces the history of the kingdom of Northumbria from the English Settlement to the Norman Conquest and its aftermath.

The very idea of violence sits uneasily beside the conventional picture of the 'Golden Age of Northumbria', a period more usually represented by the artistic and literary products of Lindisfarne, Monkwearmouth and Jarrow. The violence of the title is, indeed, more often than not, imposed from without by Mercian, Dane and Norman but an understanding of its ever-present threat only makes the cultural achievements of the Golden Age all the more remarkable. A few kings did die at peace with the world but it seems most succumbed to the occupational hazards of the time.

This gory record does give a different picture of life in Northumbria but it is probably as partial as the first. The Northumbrian peasant might get to know inter-regional warfare at first hand if one or more of the contending armies passed through his village and his priest may have had tales to tell of the great monasteries of the day but getting the crops in was likely to be the main thing on his mind. Nevertheless, for better or for worse, it is kings and saints who fill the pages of story-book history and Roy Anderson succeeds admirably in bringing to life the characters of Northumbria's heroes.

What I learned of the Synod of Whitby (664) was that it was a debate on religious issues. Roy Anderson's pages draw out the conclusion that it was more a matter of geopolitics. The Celtic Church had a strong hold on Northumbria, linking it to the Gaelic north and west rather than the Latinised south of England. The outcome of the Synod was among the first triumphs of Lowland Zone continental culture over Highland Zone insular culture. It began the identification of the North's interests with those of the South in the entity we know as 'England'.

From a regionalist perspective, the Norman Conquest and its aftermath appear as the most fascinating chapters in Northumbria's history. The Normans were the first to mount a challenge to the power of the northern earls to rule without reference to a once purely nominal royal authority. 'The Violent Kingdom' tells how the king's writ was made to run in Northumberland and how Durham retained palatine status only through vesting it in a non-hereditary institution, the office of Prince-Bishop, subject to royal appointment and thereby open to royal influence.

The closing decades of the 11th century spelt the end of even pretensions to independence in Northern England and the beginnings of a colonial relationship to London which has been perpetuated to this day.

The book is illustrated with six maps and seven evocative line drawings. At £2 for 72 pages it is good value for money and makes an attractive gift.

David Robins

'Regionalism in Europe - the View from Middle England', published by the Movement for Middle England, 1990 (for address see page 4)

Why has English regionalism been a non-starter so far? My bible on the subject is the late Derek Senior's 'Memorandum of Dissent' to the Redcliffe-Maud 'Report on Local Government in England' (1969). Senior writes on page 136:

"'Regionalism' in England reflects dissatisfaction with the extent of our failure to achieve nation-wide uniformity in standards of living, rather than any hankering for the social and economic diversity of provincial home rule. There is no 'regionalism' in the South East."

That is a cold douche to our idealism, but it does help to explain the otherwise inexplicable. If it is true, as I am afraid it is, then we can expect no breakthrough until the system, for some reason, cracks at the top and obliges people to think about an alternative. What we can do, in the meantime, is our homework.

'Regionalism in Europe' is a useful start. It relies rather heavily on myth: memory of the moot, of Hereward the Wake, Wessex and Mercia. And myths are critically important but they are not all-of-a-piece. In Blake everything turns on myths - of Jerusalem, of Albion and the Four Zoas - but these are all essentially about the future, they are about vision, understanding and inventive creativity. It will take Jerusalem to crack English centralism! And only when the time is ripe.

Middle Englanders are committed Europeans, committed, that is, to a Europe of a Hundred Flags, a confederate Europe of the regions. And this is not just a dream. Germany has sixteen prime ministers and Italy has twenty. Switzerland has twenty-six. This is one reason why they are so successful and we are not. We need to look more closely into just how they do it. Not only is it virtuous, it is also efficient and efficiency is intelligible even in grossly materialist England!

The authors see England as five provinces: The North, Middle England, East Anglia, South East England and Wessex. And there they stop. Senior also prescribed five provinces but each province was then broken down into city-regions and each city-region in turn further divided into town-districts. There would be thirty-five city-regions altogether. His Midlands province consisted of Stoke-on-Trent, Nottingham, Lincoln, Birmingham, Leicester and Coventry. Birmingham was the centre of the West Midlands and had twelve districts. Leicester, on the other hand, was small enough to need no districts. The MfME plan speaks of semi-autonomous sub-regions and this needs to be further studied and made more specific, perhaps on the lines indicated by Derek Senior.

I think it is best to keep a very open mind on the exact prescriptions and do a great deal of listening. Why not get on your bikes (1) Middle Englanders and ask people about the area, district, region, province they feel they belong to - and draw maps to match?

Finally, we need some further study of where and how we have gone wrong over the last 150 years or so. The great original crime was the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. This disastrous Act, with blind Benthamite indifference, wiped out all the Town Charters of England, as near as makes no difference and excepting mainly the City of London, and introduced the direct elections

through wards that we have today. The political power of the Merchant and Craft Companies that had governed our towns since the twelfth century was wiped out at a single stroke. Of course there was a good case for reform but this promiscuous sweeping edict was centralism run riot; and we have been suffering ever since.

But it wasn't all bad. Back in 1889, on the 1st of March, William Morris gave a prophetic lecture called 'How Shall We Live Then?' ie, after 'the revolution'. He repeated it on four subsequent occasions but it was not published until 1971, in Amsterdam, by 'The International Review of Social History'. He said, *inter alia*:

"Tories themselves, driven on I believe by a blind fate, have given us in the County Councils the germs of revolutionary local opposition to centralised reaction."

He was referring to the County Councils Act of 1888. What went wrong with the extraordinary opportunities presented by that Act? We could use a good PhD thesis on that subject. My own tentative view is that Sidney Webb was the great destroyer. He, following Bentham, is the co-author of modern centralism and managerialism - a one-man disaster area who with his one-woman disaster partner ended their days writing open ideological cheques for Joseph Stalin. It is a sickening story. It also helps to account for the present character of the Labour Party, whose constitution he wrote in 1918.

Our political correspondents have been programmed to believe that the world begins and ends in the Lobby of Westminster. One day when Middle England, the North, the West and all the rest give them a thorough shaking they might just wake up and see that England is not just what goes on in London and the South East. Roll on that day!

Peter Cadogan

[Editor's note: The regionalist movement has generally rejected city-regions as a suitable basis on which to define political authorities because the resulting areas do not correspond to the more stable and culturally more significant territories represented by small nations, historic regions and other traditional communities. We shall be publishing a critique of the application of city-regionalism in practice in our next issue. Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that those existing local government counties which are most clearly modelled on city-regions - Avon and Humberside - are by far the most unpopular of the areas created by the 1972 Local Government Act.]

#### OBITUARY

We are sad to record the death of Paul Smales (1946-1990), chairman from its inception of the Perranporth Conference on Cornwall. His fair and firm guidance in its formative years did much to establish the Conference as a respected voice in Cornish public affairs. Space precludes reference to his many other contributions to the re-birth of the Cornish identity but it is the Conference for which he will be most widely remembered and whose continuing success is his most fitting memorial.

#### REGIONS OF EUROPE

##### BREIZH (BRITTANY)

There are sound reasons why in extending our series on regional areas onto the continent of Europe we should begin with Brittany.

Brittany takes its name from the British settlers who colonised it between the 4th and 7th centuries of the Common Era. From the beginning it has been treated as almost indistinguishable from the homeland. In French, Brittany is known as Bretagne; Great Britain is known as Grande Bretagne, literally 'Great Brittany'. Conversely, Brittany's other English name is Little Britain (the street Little Britain in the City of London is said to take its name from a palace of the medieval Dukes of Brittany which stood on that site). From this distinction between great and little there arose in the 16th century the idea of 'Great Britain' as the name of a proposed insular nation-state. The name is now taken for granted without any thought for its origins - which are popularly attributed to sheer arrogance!

Despite French influence, Brittany remains a Celtic land with a Celtic language and Celtic customs (including, for example, the bagpipes). It is one of the six Celtic countries recognised by the Celtic League. Pan-Celticists seek a confederation of the six countries, independent of the British and French states. To those who see the 'British Isles' as a self-contained and homogenous political and cultural unit it can come as a shock to realise that there are alternatives of at least equal validity.

##### Armorican Gaul

Before Brittany became Breton it was inhabited by other Celts, the Gauls. In earlier times the coastal area was known as Armor, 'the land of the sea' and the interior as Argoat, 'the land of the woods' (much of the woodland disappeared after Cardinal Richelieu designated Brest as France's major naval ship-building yard in 1631). The Romans knew the area of northern Gaul as 'Armorica'. 'Britain' appears in the works of Caesar and other Roman writers as Britannia, the land of the Brittones, described in the 4th century BCE as the Pritani or Priteni (the root of the modern Welsh for 'British', Prydeinig). Beyond this the origins of 'Britain' are the subject of much speculation. It is possible - though improbable - that the name dates back to the Neolithic.

Links between Britain and Armorica must have been close even then. The alignments of standing stones, of which those of Carnac are the most famous, are reminiscent of the circles of Avebury and Stonehenge. Like Cornwall, Brittany is dotted with menhirs (Breton for 'long stone') and dolmens (Breton for 'stone table'). The earliest inhabitants of whom there is a written record were the Celtic successors of the megalith builders. These tribes were conquered by Julius Caesar in 56 BCE and took part in the unsuccessful rising against him in 52-51 BCE.

##### The British settlement

According to Josephine Foulds, "The independence of the Duchy of Brittany was due, not to grants of Frankish Kings or Emperors, but to the circumstances of its origin. Owing to the various troubles of the fifth and sixth centuries, Armorica lay almost desolate, save for a few communities of Romanised Gauls in some of its cities, when emigrants from Britain fled there rather than submit to the invading Saxons."

It does not appear to have been an aggressive invasion. The Gauls in Brittany were closely related in language and culture to the new arrivals, and contacts across the Channel had previously been close and friendly. The British settlers came mainly from Cornwall and Devon but also from Wales and some settlers came from Ireland. As in Wales and Cornwall, many Breton settlements are named after Celtic saints. It is no exaggeration to call Brittany a Cornish colony. One province on the south coast is named in Breton Kernev and in French Cornouaille, proof of its links with what in Cornish is Kernow and in English, Cornwall. The legends of King Arthur and of Tristan and Iseult provide another link between the old country and the new.

The Frankish kingdom, Teutonic successor to Roman Gaul, posed no serious threat to Brittany under the Merovingian dynasty (the so-called 'do-nothing' kings). In 750 a more vigorous dynasty, the Carolingians, seized power and from this time until the final loss of its independence the history of Brittany is that of a series of attempts to reach an accommodation with powerful neighbours to the east.

#### Bretons & Carolingians

The line of Breton kings and dukes begins with Nominoë in the 9th century. There had been shadowy and legendary kings before that, who are mentioned in Welsh chronicles, but the extent of their authority is uncertain. The Carolingians carried out at least eight expeditions (753 to 825) to seek to bring Brittany under Frankish rule. Faced with perpetual unrest in the areas beyond the marches, Louis I preferred to entrust a Breton nobleman, Nominoë, with the task of representing him in Brittany and keeping order there. In 845 Nominoë threw off Frankish suzerainty and at the Battle of Ballon, near Redon, inflicted a crushing defeat on Louis' successor, Charles the Bald, forcing him to recognise the independence of Brittany. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records pointedly in the annal for 884 "The same year Charles [the Fat] succeeded... to all the western kingdom... even as his great-grandfather had had it, except for Brittany".

Nominoë added Nantes and Rennes to his kingdom, thus giving Brittany its historic shape and its mixture of Celtic and Frankish territory. Nantes and Rennes would have spoken a Celtic language in Gallo-Roman times but they have never been predominantly Breton-speaking.

Nominoë's successors Erispoë (851-857) and Salomon the Great (857-874) consolidated the Breton state. During Salomon's reign the kingdom reached its zenith, embracing both Anjou and the Cotentin peninsula. However, his work was soon to be undermined by internal feuds and a failure to maintain the kingdom's naval defences against a terrifying new threat to its independence.

#### Bretons & Normans

In 911, after 35 years of warfare, Charles III of France granted the province surrounding the mouth of the Seine to the Viking adventurer Rolf. Thus was founded the Duchy of Normandy, which became Brittany's neighbour to the north-east. Viking raids intensified as attempts were made to found a second Normandy on the Loire and Brittany's leaders fled to England for a time. In 937 Alan Barvak (Crook-beard) overcame the Norse threat and liberated Nantes, establishing it as his capital. On his death in 952 the Breton state disintegrated into counties, under Counts of

Nantes, Rennes, or Vannes, one of whom was probably a kind of Ard-Righ or Bretwalda.

Geoffroy I (992-1008), a descendant of Nominoë, became ruler of all Brittany and the primacy of his descendants was not challenged again. Nevertheless, the now well-entrenched feudal nobility continued to trouble the dukes for centuries. Geoffroy formed a dynastic alliance around 1000 when he married the sister of Richard II of Normandy, who in turn married Geoffroy's sister. Attempts by the Normans to impose their authority on Brittany continued through the 11th century, notably under William the Conqueror, but these were beaten off by the Bretons with occasional help from the King of France.

Bretons played a significant part in the Norman invasion of England and shared in the spoils of conquest. A Breton division formed a third of William's army at the Battle of Hastings. Alan the Red, a Breton nobleman who is said to have been prominent at the siege of York, was rewarded for his services with the lordship of Richmond (the western part of the North Riding, commonly known as Richmondshire). His nephew, Alan the Black, married into the ducal family and from 1156 until 1399 the Duke of Brittany was generally also the Earl of Richmond. Alan the Red's brother Brian seems to have been briefly Earl of Cornwall, where a Celtic ruler was doubtless good policy. Other Breton families moved on to Scotland. Walter Fitz Alan became hereditary Great Steward to the King of Scots; his descendants became the Royal House of Stewart.

The Norman Conquest is often presented as a 'them and us' conflict of Normans versus Saxons. In fact, the Bretons, along with the Flemings, constituted an important third force and, like the Normans, some had already established themselves in England during the reign of Edward the Confessor. In 1075 the Bretons in England sided with the earls Ralph, Roger and Waltheof in their ill-fated plot to seize the kingdom. Ralph was half-English, half-Breton; Roger was Norman and Waltheof half-Danish, half-English: a very mixed conspiracy indeed.

#### Bretons & Angevins

The Church had done much to undermine Breton independence during this period by seeking to incorporate Brittany with the Frankish Church. The Celtic Church clung to elements of druidism and the Council of Tours had excommunicated the Breton clergy in the 7th century for holding mass in the home and travelling with their women. When Pope Leo IX appointed Aurard, at the Council of Rheims in 1049, to reform the Breton Church and bring its Celtic practices into line with Rome, the Bretons drove him out. In 1199 however, Pope Innocent III issued a Bull requiring the Bishop of Dol to renounce the title 'archbishop' and the rights of the primacy of the Breton Church. Henceforth, the Bretons were to be governed from Tours in all ecclesiastical matters.

In 1154 Henry of Anjou succeeded to the English throne. He and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, also possessed the whole of the western half of France. Brittany was soon sucked into the orbit of the Angevin empire. Henry's fourth son, Geoffrey, was married to the heiress of Brittany, the Duchess Constance. Their son, Arthur I, was declared heir presumptive to the throne of England by his uncle King Richard I in 1190 but he was excluded from the succession by Richard's youngest brother, John, who in 1203 had Arthur murdered. Arthur's sister, Eleanor, 'the Damsel of Brittany', died a prisoner in Bristol Castle in 1241.



## The Hundred Years War

Following Arthur's death Brittany was successfully claimed by the family of Constance's daughter by her third marriage. Duke Jean II married Edward I's sister and his second son, John, Earl of Richmond, joined the king's Scottish campaigns and was appointed Guardian of Scotland in 1305. On the death of Jean III (Jean the Good) in 1341 the ducal succession was disputed between Charles of Blois and Jean of Montfort in the 'War of the Two Jeannes', so called because the wives of both contenders bore that name.

The Hundred Years War had begun in 1337. England and France, the super-powers of the day, locked in their own war of succession, took sides in the Breton controversy, England backing Montfort and France backing Blois. Jean of Montfort died in 1345 but his son defeated and killed Charles of Blois at the Battle of Auray in 1364 and was recognised by all parties as Duke Jean IV.

Jean IV's successors tried to secure Brittany's neutrality in the Hundred Years War, conscious of the duchy's intermediate geographic position. Even so, it was Jean's second son, the 'Constable de Richemont', who commanded the French royal army which finally defeated the English forces. He became Duke briefly as Arthur III but continued his predecessors' policy of resisting French claims to suzerainty over Brittany.

## The Duchess Anne

Descendants of Jean IV continued to rule in Brittany throughout the 15th century, increasingly engaged in a war of intrigue with the French Crown. By now the Pays Gallo around Rennes, then as now French-speaking, was heavily influenced by French and even Italian fashion rather than by the Celtic customs of Breton-speaking Lower Brittany to the west. The Duchy, like Wales and the Basque country, was progressively deserted by its higher aristocracy. The country's prosperity was not sufficiently based on its own production to sustain the burden of defending its independence. When Burgundy was annexed to the French Crown in 1477 Brittany lost its last ally within the French realm. Duke François II had no male heir and the future of Brittany hinged on the choice of a husband for his daughter Anne. In 1488 the Breton army - supported by English and German troops sent respectively by Henry VII (who had spent 14 years in exile in Brittany) and by Maximilian of Austria - was defeated by a French army at St Aubin-du-Cormier. François was forced to accept a treaty at Le Verger under which he agreed not to give his daughters in marriage without the French king's consent. He died three weeks later and Anne became Duchess of Brittany.

The reign of 'the Good Duchess' was in some ways a Golden Age for Brittany but it was destined not to last. From her accession at the age of 11 to her death at the age of 36 the life-story of the Duchess Anne is marked by her struggle to preserve Breton independence. In 1491 Brittany was invaded by Charles VIII of France, seeking to enforce the Treaty of Le Verger. Anne was forced to repudiate Maximilian of Austria, whom she had married by proxy, and to marry Charles instead. Charles died in 1498 and, as had been agreed, Anne then married his successor, Louis XII. By Louis she had two daughters. Anne tried to marry the elder daughter, Claude, to Charles of Austria but on Anne's death Claude was married to Louis' cousin, the future François I of France. Claude died in 1524 having bequeathed the Duchy (which according to her father's will should have gone eventually to her

younger sister) to her eldest son, the Dauphin. The 'union of crowns' was complete and in 1547 the title of Duke of Brittany was, de facto, abolished.

## The Treaty of Union

In 1532 François had sought ratification of the union from the Breton assembly, the Estates of Brittany. The Treaty of 'Perpetual Union of the Country and Duchy of Brittany with the Kingdom and Crown of France' guaranteed that only Bretons would be appointed to public office in Brittany, that the Estates would be solely responsible for the internal administration of Brittany, that they would be responsible for negotiating customs duties with foreign countries so far as Brittany was concerned and for the defence of their own coastline, that no tax was to be raised in Brittany without the consent of the Estates, that the Breton high court, the Parlement, would retain judicial sovereignty, that Brittany could maintain an army and that Bretons would not be required to serve in the French armed forces outside Brittany.

Parallels can be drawn between the Union of France and Brittany and the Union of England and Scotland. In neither case was it a union of equal partners; both were extracted by the lavish use of bribes backed up by the hint of force; and the fundamental flaw in both cases was the absence of any effective provision for the enforcement of the treaty safeguards against the dominant power.

Brittany descended along with the throne of France until the death of King Henri III in 1589 when both passed to Henri of Navarre. His claim to the French throne was his descent from a younger son of Louis IX (reigned 1226-1270) and he had no dynastic claim to Brittany. Under Breton law Brittany should have passed to Henri III's niece, Isabella of Spain, but the treaty of 1532 had now given the Bretons a ruler chosen for them by French law. They could no longer chose for themselves, just as the Scots could not reject the Hanoverians for the Stuarts. By a curious twist of history the lineal heir of the Duchess Anne today is Prince Albrecht of Bavaria, the Jacobite claimant to the thrones of England, Scotland, France and Ireland.

## The Consequences of Union

Late medieval Brittany was a prosperous and cultured community. The University of Nantes was founded in 1462 in order to bolster the Duchy's policy of independence from France. The invention of printing aided the development of a literature in the native language and the intricate beauty of the architectural monuments of the Renaissance period is evidence of the high level of Breton culture. Breton piety was expressed locally in the 'parish closes' with their remarkable calvaries (crosses surrounded by groups of statuary). Some have over 200 figures.

At the time of the French annexation Brittany had one of the largest merchant fleets in Europe. Its gradual decline was due partly to the continental outlook of governments in Paris but partly because France was endlessly at war with Brittany's former trading partners. In the days when Morlaix exported linen shirts to Exeter in return for woollen cloth, Exeter merchants sent their children to Brittany to learn Breton in order to further this trade. Union with France and the troubles of the Reformation began to transform commercial rivalries into national ones. Brittany was a prisoner of the times. At one point in the 16th

century the harbour facilities of Antwerp were used by more merchant ships registered in Penmarc'h than in any other port of Europe. Penmarc'h today is a deserted town and fishing village.

Many Bretons have distinguished themselves as seafarers and Brittany long provided the French navy with the greater part of its crews - as well as providing a high proportion of France's pirates. Jacques Cartier (1491-1557) founded French Canada and the city of Montreal but tradition asserts that Breton fishermen had reached Newfoundland well before Columbus set sail in 1492. The penguin is said to take its name from the Breton *pen gwenn*, 'white head', first applied by Breton sailors to the great auks then still to be seen in northern waters.

#### Brittany under the Bourbons

During the Wars of Religion, Brittany was the scene of much fighting against the Huguenots, and some areas were occupied by Spanish garrisons sent to assist the Catholic League and the Governor, Philippe of Lorraine, Duke of Mercœur, who nursed separatist ambitions. History was once more made in Brittany in 1598 when Henri IV signed the Edict of Nantes granting religious freedom to the Huguenots. This made Protestantism legal in France until the Edict was revoked by Louis XIV in 1685.

Under the Bourbons, particularly during Colbert's administration under Louis XIV, there were continual French attempts to circumvent the Treaty of Union. The revolt of the 'Red Bonnets' in 1675 was provoked by the unilateral imposition of stamp duties and commodity taxes which hit the working class especially hard. The revolt was ruthlessly suppressed. An attempt to restore Breton independence in 1720 was similarly crushed. In 1788 the Breton high court, the Parlement, issued a declaration denouncing French centralism. One of the signatories was Lafayette, a descendant of the Counts of Cornouaille, who won fame in the American War of Independence.

#### Brittany in the Revolution

When the Constituent Assembly met in 1789 the main grievance aired by the Breton delegates was that their Treaty of Union with France had not been respected. Far from redressing their grievances the revolutionaries requested the Breton delegates to sacrifice their regional rights in the proposed new constitution. The Bretons replied that they had no mandate to do this without consultation. This was refused and Brittany's institutions - the Estates and the Parlement - were abolished unilaterally. Breton supporters of the Revolution were appalled.

Patricia Elton Mayo comments: "Brittany's worst troubles date from this example of imposed authoritarian legislation. The Revolution, in abolishing collective as opposed to individual liberties - corporations, universities, provincial parliaments - left the individual alone and defenceless vis-à-vis the state." In Montesquieu's view it was the ancien régime's respect for 'intermediate powers' which distinguished absolute monarchy from despotism.

For three years the Breton republicans fought a losing political battle with the Jacobins before in 1793 Armand, Marquis of La Rouerie, and then Georges Cadoudal led a general uprising against the French republicans. Breton guerrillas became known as the 'chouannerie', from the Breton 'chuin', a screech owl, because the guerrillas would signal to each other with its call.

This warfare lasted until 1804 when Cadoudal was captured and executed in Paris. The chouans continued to fight sporadically but suffered heavy losses.

The chouan movement is generally explained as having been based on royalist and clerical opposition to the Revolutionary government. In fact it started quite simply in protest at the suppression of Brittany's institutions and was provoked by the mass levy which the Convention decreed in 1793, contrary to the Treaty guarantee that Bretons would not be required to serve in the French forces. Only at a later stage was it infiltrated by royalists. An analysis of this period in French terms ignores the role of the Breton republicans, who were neither French nor royalist and hence were condemned by both sides.

#### Effects of the Revolution

Long after its annexation by the French Crown, Brittany's trade went outwards by sea rather than inland into France. At the end of the 18th century Nantes was the first port of France with a fleet of 2,500 ships and bargues. As the 18th century became the 19th, France was at war with Brittany's best customers, Spain and Great Britain, and Brittany's industries and mercantile trade were ruined by the naval blockade of the Napoleonic wars.

The real regression of Brittany into a state of under-development began in the 19th century. With its textile industry ruined, its merchant fleet disbanded, its artisan industries uncompetitive and archaic, Brittany became purely agricultural and by the end of the century had become the butt of jokes about backwardness. The Industrial Revolution in France took place in the east. Coal too expensive for the development of industry arrived by rail from Lorraine: cheap coal by sea from Wales was too unpatriotic an idea to be seriously considered. The railways became not a means for industry to move in but for people to move out. No Breton voice existed with the authority to protest and be heard.

#### The First Emsav

The restoration of the Bourbons in 1815 did not bring with it the restoration of regional rights. It did provide a climate in which nostalgia found a constructive outlet in the scholarly study of Breton history and culture which in turn was to lay the foundations for the modern political movement. This period, the Emsav or 're-awakening', co-incided with the Romantic Revival, which encouraged an enthusiasm for old cultures and ethnic groups across the whole of Europe and whose ethos continues unconsciously to underpin much of nationalist and regionalist thought.

As in Cornwall, an interest in Brittany's history and culture co-incided with the period of its de-industrialisation. As in Wales, the period during which Breton was becoming a language of scholarship also corresponded to the period during which school-children were punished for speaking their native tongue.

In 1838 the Breton scholars de la Villemarqué and Ar Gonideg led a Breton delegation to Abergavenny and more cultural exchanges with Wales were to follow. In 1843 the Association Bretonne was founded to promote the unity of Brittany and to defend Breton interests but this was dissolved by Napoleon III in 1857. In 1867 the first Inter-Celtic Congress was held at St Brieuc, as a result of which a petition for the teaching of

Breton in schools was made to the French government by Henri Gaidoz, editor of the 'Revue Celtique', and Charles de Gaulle, great-uncle of the General.

In 1898 the Union Régionaliste Bretonne was founded to promote the Breton language and to press for the decentralisation of government along regional lines. In 1911 it was followed by the Fédération Régionaliste de Bretagne, which had similar aims and methods but was less conservative in outlook. Also in 1911 there appeared the first issue of a periodical called 'Breiz Dishual' ('Free Brittany'), published by a small group of the same name, which advocated independence or Home Rule for Brittany. This can be considered the first truly 'indépendantiste' party.

The term 'Emsav' is now given to three distinct phases. The first Emsav ended with the First World War, during which one in four of the Breton soldiers who went to the front were killed. The figure for the rest of France was one in eight. The second Emsav began with demobilisation and ended with France's vengeance after the Second World War. The third Emsav, beginning in the 1950s, continues today.

#### The Second Emsav

In 1918 a group of three young militants took up the battle where 'Breiz Dishual' had left off. They launched a new publication, 'Breiz Atao' ('Brittany Forever'), which among its other achievements invented the modern Breton flag. 'Breiz Atao' led in 1919 to the formation of a new political party, the Parti National Breton. The PNB developed links with other national movements and argued for a federal Europe based on greater freedom for minorities under its aegis.

During the 1930s various splinter groups arose from the PNB, such as the para-military group Gwenn ha Du ('White and Black' - the colours of the Breton flag). The supposed leader of Gwenn ha Du, Célestin Lainé-Kerjean, who adopted the Breton name Neven Henaff, advocated an armed struggle for independence and also broke with the previously Catholic bias of Breton nationalism by favouring a return to druidism. Gwenn ha Du's most spectacular action was the blowing up, on the night of the 400th anniversary of the Treaty of Union, of the monument at Rennes erected in 1911 to commemorate the French annexation.

Early in 1938 the French government suppressed 'Breiz Atao' and the leaders of the PNB were briefly imprisoned for spreading illegal propaganda 'likely to endanger the unity of France'.

#### Occupation & resistance

During the Second World War Brittany was occupied by German forces. Initially, hopes were raised that an independent Breton state might be created but this was not to be. Nevertheless, significant concessions were won from the Vichy régime. In October 1942 a Comité Consultatif de Bretagne was set up to advise the Regional Prefect, particularly on cultural matters. This privilege was not enjoyed by any other French province and was the first official recognition since the Revolution that Brittany deserved any special status.

Much has been written on the subject of Breton collaborators and heated argument continues to this day. Some were accused justly, others most unjustly. Some of those accused had actually been heroes of the Resistance. The middle ground included those who had simply seen Germany as a better friend to Brittany than

France had ever been or would ever be. Prominent Bretons were murdered or as a provocation it demonstrates the difficulty of preserving neutrality in such complex circumstances.

Whatever the facts concerning wartime events, it is a matter of record that after the 'Liberation' Nazi-hunting very soon degenerated into nationalist-hunting. Wartime concessions on the broadcasting and teaching of Breton and Breton history were withdrawn. The Comité Consultatif was suppressed and most of its members detained, along with about 1,000 Breton activists. In 1947 the National Eisteddfod of Wales sent a delegation to investigate and their report vindicated Breton claims that the post-war repression was much more extensive than was justified and that it was inspired by French determination to eradicate the Breton movement.

#### Brezhoneg

The third Emsav took time to emerge from the aftermath of war, beginning with a cultural movement, Kendalc'h, in 1950. Political organisation has remained fragmented and no one party can claim the status which the PNB enjoyed. A 1951 law allowed 'regional dialects' to be taught as an optional subject in schools and by this means Breton was rehabilitated. Breton - Brezhoneg - is a Celtic language, closely akin to Cornish and Welsh, and the methods of Cornish and Welsh language activists have also been applied in Brittany, where they have achieved similar limited successes. In Brittany today there are an estimated 500,000 Breton speakers out of a population of 3.8 million. This figure is estimated because the French census does not seek data on 'regional' languages.

Nearly 1 million Bretons live in and around Paris and the city now boasts a commercial local radio station broadcasting in the six 'regional' languages (Alsatian, Basque, Breton, Corsican, Occitan and Provençal).

Breton speakers today are to be found in Breizh Izel (Lower Brittany), while the 'frontier zone' of Breizh Uhel (Upper Brittany) speaks Gallo, a French dialect. Various spelling systems have been devised to accommodate most - though not all - of the local variations. The name 'Breizh', for example, is pronounced 'Breiz' in most dialects of Breton but 'Breih' in the dialect of Gwened, spoken around Vannes. The spelling system produced during the Second World War reflects both forms of speech. The differences between the Gwened dialect and those of Kernev, Leon and Tregor may reflect continuing Gaulish influence in this south-eastern area further from Great Britain.

Teaching in Breton at nursery and primary levels has been organised through the 'DIWAN' schools movement, founded in 1977, though French government support for such schools has been grudging and sporadic. The Welsh Language Society has a Breton equivalent, Stourm ar Brezhoneg ('Campaign for Breton'), formed in 1984, which seeks to make Breton the official language of an independent Brittany. There have been campaigns of direct action against French-only road signs and bilingual signs are now permitted except on trunk roads maintained by the French state.

In 1909 the French Minister of Education had rejected requests to teach Breton in schools, arguing that it would encourage Breton separatism. In 1925 the then Education Minister had declared, "For the sake of the unity of France, the Breton language must disappear". Official attitudes have relaxed

slightly. Breton is no longer subject to open persecution but the primacy of French is still non-negotiable. Breton has no official status in the courts or in the conduct of government business. For example, Breton activists must be charged in the French courts under French names. Only four of Europe's nation-states now reject the right to speak in a minority language in dealing with justice and the administration: Bulgaria, Greece, Romania - and France.

#### Breton politics today

Organised political nationalism in Brittany began to re-emerge during the late 1950s. In 1957 Yann Fouéré led a group of federalists who founded the Mouvement pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne (MOB). In 1964 a group of young socialists broke away to form the Union Démocratique Bretonne (UDB) and in 1966 the Front de Libération de la Bretagne (FLB) began a campaign of attacks on government property which have continued sporadically since.

Breton nationalism has been plagued by party-political factionalism. The Left bias of much of contemporary Breton nationalism can be seen as a reaction against the Right bias of Breton nationalism in the 1930s and 40s but the phenomenon is not unique to Brittany; for example, there has been a similar shift within Welsh nationalist politics. During the 1970s several attempts were made to form broad-based parties dedicated solely to achieving Breton autonomy but these organisations were short-lived. Today there are three nationalist parties: Emgann ('Battle'), Mouvement Independentiste Breton (MIB) and the Breton nationalist and European federalist Parti Pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne Libre (POBL). The socialist autonomist party, the UDB, rejects the nationalist label.

In 1983 the UDB polled 12% in local elections and succeeded in getting 60 candidates elected (with Communist and Socialist support) but it polled less than 5% in national elections and has been criticised by the nationalist parties for co-operating with the French Left in order to achieve its objectives. Both POBL and the UDB contested the elections to France's Regional Council for 'Brittany' in 1987 but none of their candidates were elected.

Paris continues to claim that lack of electoral support for nationalist candidates is proof that the movement lacks seriousness but to accept this is to accept that parliamentary elections on the French state's terms are the only practical outlet for political feelings. Outside the party arena perhaps the best known political activity in Brittany during the 1980s was the campaign against French government plans for a nuclear reactor at Plogoff. President Mitterrand eventually conceded defeat and the plans were withdrawn.

#### The Breton economy

An interesting aspect of Breton activity in the post-war period is neither cultural nor political but economic. The Breton maritime tradition has been revived in the form of Brittany Ferries, a company operating routes from Portsmouth to Caen and St Malo and from Cork and Plymouth to Roscoff. Brittany Ferries began by shipping vegetables before branching out into transporting tourists as well.

In 1949 an independent research and pressure group was founded to promote the cause of Breton economic development. This is known as CELIB, the Comité d'Étude et de Liaison des Intérêts

Bretons. In 1955 the French government recognised CELIB as a consultative body but has frequently failed to implement its recommendations.

In 1990 the population of Brittany was 3.8 million. One hundred and seventy years ago its population of just over 2 million was the same as the Netherlands, whose population today is 15 million. The French population has more than doubled since 1801 but Paris has been the main beneficiary. Today 2% of France houses 20% of its population. Between 1831 and 1926 1,127,000 Bretons emigrated but the climax came between 1946 and 1954 when 17,200 left each year.

Today the continuing emigration of young people is partially concealed by the numbers of incoming people of retirement age. Demographic recovery has also been uneven geographically, favouring the coastal areas and the cities accessible to Paris over the hinterland where communications are poor. It is the long-running depopulation of central Brittany that has provided the supply of cheap country property now so beloved of second-home owners from Great Britain.

Agriculture still accounts for 13% of the work-force, compared to an average for the French state of 8%. Fishing continues to be a major industry, and Brittany accounts for approximately two-fifths of total French landings. However, much of the food processing takes place not in Brittany but in the Paris region. It is a familiar tale, especially to Cornish ears.

London regards Cornwall as 'Land's End'. Paris regards Brittany in exactly the same light (the French Finistère means 'Land's End', the Breton for the same area is Pen ar Bed: 'the head of the world'). Two countries bordered on three sides by water are forced to live by their one with land. In both cases national plans mark these areas down as peripheral regions doomed by their geographic position to become tourist reserves. Any attempt to foster indigenous economic development is dismissed as wasteful of resources.

Another way of looking at the world, less obsessed with the management of territory, would suggest that Brittany's deep-water Atlantic ports are in a central position and far more worthy of development than the ports of the over-crowded Channel. For instance, it costs less to transport a ton of freight from Brittany by sea to North America than by land to Strasbourg in the east of France. Breton geographers look for their country's salvation to the emerging concept of the Atlantic Arc, a maritime trading community of 100 million people stretching from Scotland to Portugal and acting as a counter-attraction to the land-based hegemony of Europe's Golden Corridor (Birmingham to Milan via Brussels and the Rhineland).

#### 'Région Bretagne'

After various experimental attempts in the emergency conditions of the 1940s, administrative regions were finally established in France in 1972. Care was taken to ensure that these did not correspond to historic regions where autonomist movements were active. The Revolution had divided Brittany into five départements: Côtes-du-Nord (now Côtes-d'Armor), Finistère, Ille-et-Vilaine, Loire-Inférieure (now Loire-Atlantique) and Morbihan (a Breton name meaning 'Little Sea'). As part of the 1972 reforms an administrative region of Brittany was established comprising four of these; Loire-Atlantique - containing Nantes, the ducal capital since 937 - was detached to form part of a Loire Country region



(Civil Service regions for internal use had foreshadowed this partition as far back as 1941). Despite this, a 1988 opinion poll showed that 63% of those living in Loire-Atlantique would prefer it to be part of the Breton region.

Most of the concessions made to Breton nationalism in the past twenty years - such as the elected Regional Council established in 1983 - are limited to 'Région Bretagne'. By introducing its own definition of Brittany, excluding Nantes, France has been able to sow confusion and to re-assure itself that Brittany is, after all, only a French region that France can make and unmake at will. Another option which continues to be touted is to absorb all of Brittany in a 'Grand Ouest' region centred on Nantes but including an unspecified number of non-Breton départements.

#### The necessary crime

The Bretons have longer memories than the French. When young Bretons are jailed for their refusal to do military service outside Brittany they claim to be upholding their rights, guaranteed to them under a treaty exacted under duress which France even so fails to honour.

An early slogan of the Breton movement was 'With France if possible, without France if necessary'. Under Article 80 of the French penal code it is an offence - punishable by up to 20 years' imprisonment - to advocate, by any means, the severance of 'French territory'. In the face of French intransigence, this has become, for many of those concerned with the survival of the Breton identity, a very necessary crime.

"Potatoes for the pigs, peelings for the Bretons"

French children's song

"You can't organise this place like the others"

Major-domo of Brittany, 1703

"A man of St Malo first, a Breton may-be, and a Frenchman if there's anything left"

St Malo saying

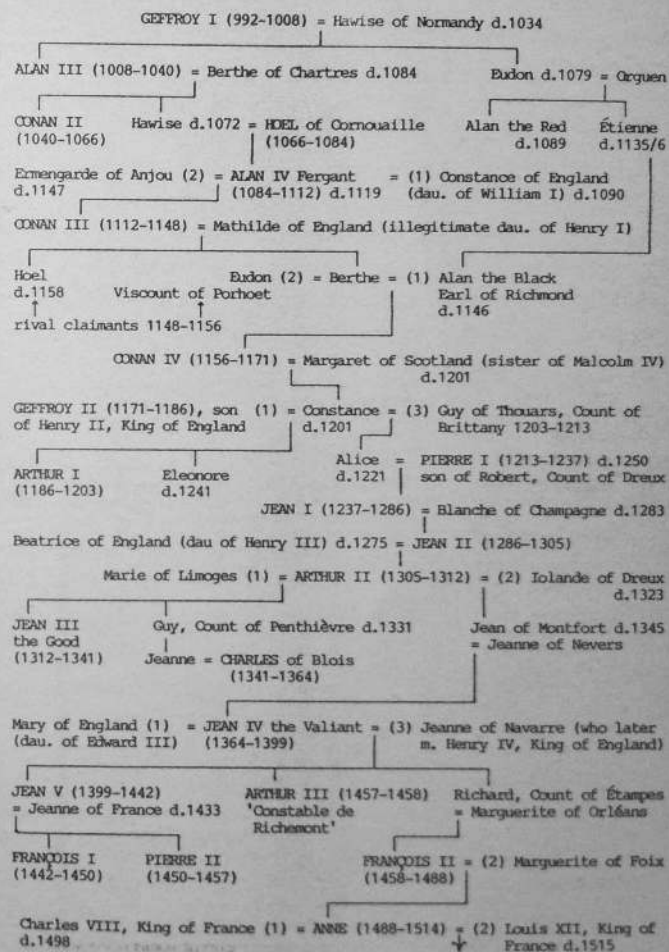
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E Josephine Foulds (ed), 'The Legitimist Kalendar', The Forget-me-not Royalist Club, 1910  
 Patricia Elton Mayo, 'The Roots of Identity', Allen Lane, 1974  
 Peter Berresford Ellis, 'The Celtic Revolution', Y Lolfa, 1985  
 Frank Victor Daves, 'Brittany', Christopher Helm, 1989  
 'Carn', journal of the Celtic League (see page 4 for address)

#### Further Reading

A wide range of often well-illustrated French-language titles on Breton history, geography and culture are available from Breton publishing houses. The following are two of the better known (send one International Reply Coupon to obtain a catalogue):  
 Editions Beltan, 43 Stræd St-Mikael, F-29190 Brasparzh, Breizh  
 Skol Vreizh, 6 Stræd Hir, F-29210 Montroulez, Breizh

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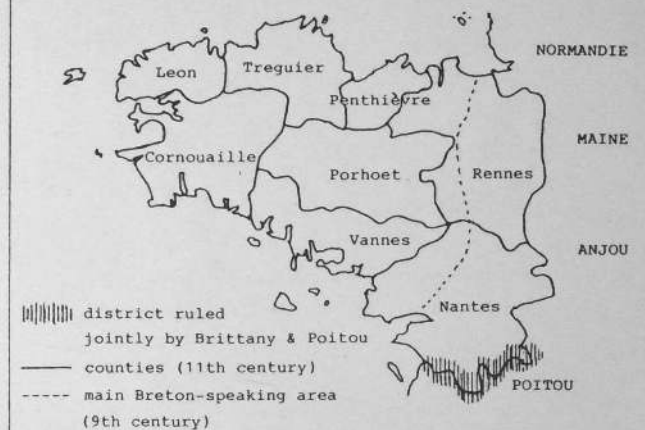
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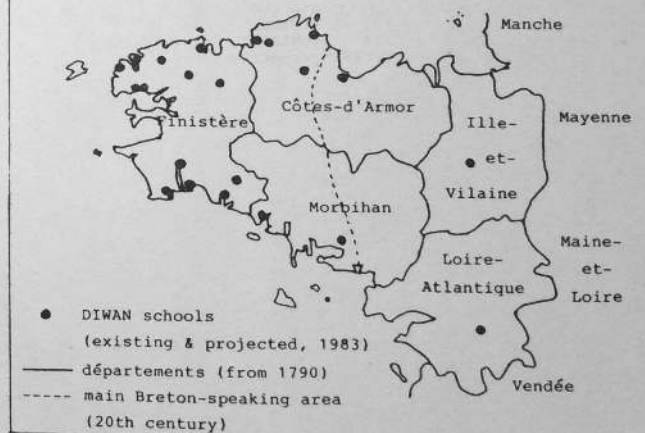
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#### MEDIEVAL BRITTANY



#### MODERN BRITTANY



# REGIONAL BRITAIN : movements for autonomy



Shetland Movement



Orkney Movement



Scottish  
National  
Party



Campaign for  
the North



Movement for  
Middle England



Plaid Cymru



Wessex Regionalists



Mebyon Kernow

DECADE MOVEMENT  
FOR AUTONOMY  
FIRST LAUNCHED



1920s



1950s



1970s



1980s

