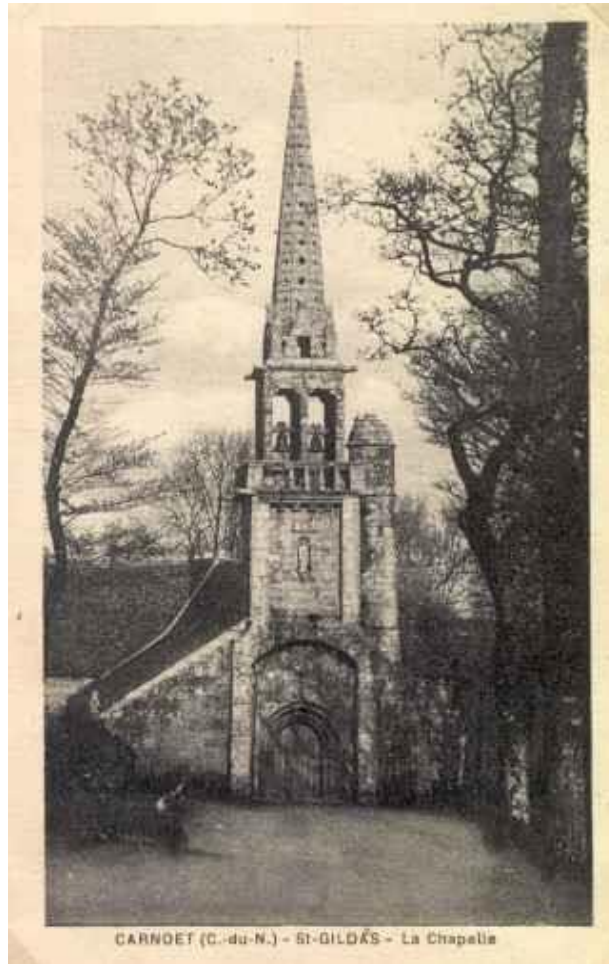


BRO NEVEZ

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



CARNOËT (C.-du-N.) - ST-GILDAS - La Chapelle

Chapel of Saint Gildas in Carnouët

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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

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On the Cover

I borrowed the image of this old post card from the website of Kevredigezh Sant Gweltas, the Association for the Chapel of Saint Gildas in Carnoët. You will read about a pardon to this chapel written in 1885 later in this issue of Bro Nevez and Jean-Pierre Le Mat will give you his take on Breton Pardons as they are found Deep Inside A Breton Skull.

This issue also includes lots of news about progress – and lack of it – for the Breton language.

Lois Kuter



Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg

The Public Office of the Breton Language works to support the expanded use of Breton in public life by offering a wide variety of resources to individuals, businesses, or governmental bodies of Brittany. In the past we have noted the Ya d'ar Brezhoneg campaign where organizations, towns, and businesses sign a "contract" to implement Breton in some way, where one moves to new levels as steps are completed to make Breton visible and audible in specific ways. So far 696 private organizations, 160 communities (towns and cities) and 12 inter-community structures have signed on.



The website of the Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg <http://www.fr.opab-oplb.org> offers a wealth of information for anyone interested in learning Breton and finding resources. This includes translation assistance, information on how to name things properly in Breton (signage, your children, your house ...), where to find classes for children or adults, media in Breton, leisure time activities where you can use Breton, and jobs where Breton is a plus. Explore the site for all kinds of practical information as well as a basic introduction to the Breton language and its situation today.

The following is my translation of the presentation of the sociolinguistic situation of Breton from the Ofis ar Brezhoneg website which presents a good idea of challenges as well as some positive advances for the language:

Breton is classified by UNESCO as a "seriously endangered language." The development of teaching and the political stance of public powers seem to offer positive signs for the future of Breton.

Evolution in the number of speakers

Measures taken at the end of the 19th century to insure the exclusion of Breton within school walls (punishments for children speaking Breton) strongly impacted spirits and led to a rupture in the transmission of the language. According to an INSEE survey as part of the 1999 census, 60% of Breton speakers were over the age of 60. Thus, the number of Breton speakers estimated in 2007 to be 206,000 (TMO survey – F. Broudic) has probably dropped today below the 200,000 mark.

At the other end of the demographic chain, among youth, the numbers are in a constant progression. The bilingual schools created by Diwan in 1977, augmented with bilingual classes in the National Education public schools (1982) and Catholic schools (1990) have seen their enrollments grow each year, from pre-school to high school (up 27% between 2006 and 2011). With 14,709 students in 2012 and the structuring of the development of bilingual education provided by the Public Office in collaboration with education workers, the dynamism of the bilingual tracks is a very important sign of confidence in the future of the language. Thus, according to the work of the Observatoire des pratiques linguistiques [of Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg], hypothesizing a sustained development in the teaching of Breton, the percentage of speakers among children under 12 could become larger than the percentage of speakers in the overall population sometime between 2020 and 2025. From 2040 on the number of Breton speakers would begin to grow after more than 100 years of decline.

Today the “generational low point” is found among the 20 to 50 year olds. But there, too, the number of learners is going up for weekly classes (3,640 adults, a number in progression for the 4th consecutive year) and for the intensive training programs (the number of students in professional training passed the mark of 200 in 2011/2012, a number which tripled in six years). To reinforce these trends attention needs to be given to the development of pre-school exposure to Breton (nursery and pre-schools), the continuity of bilingual teaching through graduation, the implementation of complete paths for the introduction to the language (approximately 12,000 students today), the development of classes for adults, and the diversification of post-baccalaureate offerings.

The absence of a legislative statute



The Breton language has for a long time been excluded from public space and is still the only Celtic language without legislative status.

At the initiative of local governments, the visibility of the language has nevertheless developed a great deal

these past 30 years. Today in three departments (Finistère, Morbihan, and part of the Côtes d’Armor) the bilingualisation of directional signs has become systematic. Communities have equally followed this direction in making signs at the entrance and exit of their town bilingual.

Progressively, other aspects of the community operations have become bilingual: directional signs, street names, electronic signage, brochures and paperwork, internet sites.

Finally, the Regional Council of Brittany was the first collectivity to prepare a plan for linguistic policies in 2004 (revised in 2012). Its action for the language cuts across many areas (culture, transportation, tourism, public buildings).

Redefining a Public Policy in Favor of the Regional Languages and Internal Linguistic Plurality – A New Report

<http://www.culturecommunication.gouv.fr/Actualites/Missions-et-rapports/Redefinir-une-politique-publique-en-faveur-des-langues-regionales-et-de-la-pluralite-linguistique-interne>

In March 2013 the French Minister of Culture and Communication put in place the Consultative Committee for the Promotion of Regional Languages and Internal Linguistic Plurality. Its mission is to clarify how public officials might apply the 36 actions for language protection signed on to by France from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (of 68 actions proposed in the Charter). The Committee more generally makes recommendations to promote linguistic pluralism in France.

France signed the European Charter in 1999 but has not ratified it because of views that it would be contrary to the French Constitution. While the Committee does not have the task of trying to change the constitution, it has proposed that strong legislation be enacted to clarify language rights and enable the promotion of regional languages of France in its report cited above.

The 104 page July 2013 report presented to the Ministry of Culture and Communication the Committee also called for a better understanding of the situation of languages in France and in the French overseas territories, and the promotion of public education about languages and resources for learning and using them in everyday life.

The full report (in French) can be accessed using the link above, but it is useful to present a summary of it here. It does not include ground-breaking new ideas that have not already been proposed by Bretons or other language-speakers of France, but one can hope that this

governmentally appointed committee of language experts may have some influence so that action is taken.

Part 1 of the report presents a general overview of the situation of languages of France – underlining that information about them from census counts is old and incomplete, but a decline in speakers is evident. Areas for work that are outlined in the 39 articles of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is also addressed (education, cultural and media, and social, economic and public services).

The second part of the report is made up of proposals by the Committee for action on the part of the French government. The table of contents gives a good overview of the Committee's proposals so I have translated it here (my apologies for any mistranslation).

I. Establish a federating structure

1. Put in place a strong judicial act for the promotion of the languages of France

- Triple objective: to affirm the importance of the languages of France for the national community, to make more coherent the scattered legal facts, and to frame the action of public services
- To determine the most appropriate legal actions.

2. Make citizens of France aware of France's plurilingualism and its history

- Launch a national information campaign,
- Improve information for families on bilingual education options in the regional languages
- Integrate training on regional languages and cultures into other teaching.

3. Improve knowledge on the situation of the languages of France

- Construct a barometer for the languages of France
- Bring the list of languages of France up to date and refine their classification [see below]

4. Better structure the roles of the State and territorial collectivities

- Reinforce the inter-ministerial organization and action of the State
- Expand the role of territorial collectivities based in principal on responsibilities shared with the State

5. Better account for the specificity of overseas territories.

II. Reinforce sector policies

1. Place teaching as the priority in policies for the languages of France

- Put a diversified approach in place matching the situation of each language
- Within France develop teaching programs for regional language and in regional languages
- Overseas, deeply reform the teaching of languages
- Organize a work plan for teaching regional languages for each academic level
- Better coordinate teaching in regional languages with the learning of foreign languages.
- Research solutions for financing associative schools. [Diwan is in that category]

2. Support access to patrimony, to creativity, to spreading knowledge in regional languages

- Publish a brochure for State service and public personnel specifying the objectives and modalities of cultural policies regarding regional languages.
- Open public funding for cultural operations to regional languages.
- Facilitate access to digital patrimony in regional languages
- Give an increased place to expression in regional languages in the media.

3. Facilitate access to regional languages in social, economic and administrative life.

- Publish a brochure from the Prime Minister for State services, territorial collectivities, and national public establishments which clarify the rights for the use of regional languages in public life, and which supports the elaboration of charters.
- Encourage bilingual mediations in economic, social and administrative life
- Develop teaching of regional languages in the professional training of public and social service staff
- Facilitate the affirmation of names and first names in regional languages in civil services.

Annexed to the report is a list of Committee members and those consulted in preparing the report, the speech by the Minister of Cultural and Communications, Auréline Filippetti, when the Committee was created in March 2013, a list of languages, a table of statistics on the state of languages (mostly drawing from 1999 information), and a list of the 39 measures of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to which France signed on.

Because most of us here in the U.S. have only a limited knowledge of the diversity of languages and culture in Europe and in France, I have included below the list of language of France (in the country itself and overseas in French territories).

Annexe IV : liste des langues de France établie par la délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France

scientific and didactic work in lesser-used languages. CIDLeS has three research groups (*CIDLeS Media Lab*, *Language Documentation and Language Typology* and *Language Revitalization*) whose projects are interrelated with the aim of fostering interdisciplinary research. (from the website)

International Conference on Endangered Languages in Europe

Date and venue

October 17-18th, 2013 | Centro Ciência Viva do Alviela - Carsoscópio (Alcanena/Minde, Portugal)

About the conference

The Interdisciplinary Centre for Social and Language Documentation (CIDLeS) cordially invites scholars working on endangered languages in Europe and on Language Documentation to join us at the International Conference on Endangered Languages in Europe. The 2-day International Conference aims to:

- Provide an interdisciplinary forum in which scholars from Language Documentation, Language Technology and others working on European endangered languages can exchange ideas and techniques on language documentation, archiving, and revitalization;
- Further discussion and research into linguistic diversity in Europe;
- Reflect on language policy issues.

The second day of the Conference will have two special panels: one focusing on the endangered languages in the Iberian Peninsula and a round table, dedicated to the theme “new speakers of minority/endangered languages”.

The Conference will include a socio-cultural program related to the theme “Endangered Languages in Europe” with the aim of promoting intercultural exchange and reinforcing the relationship between linguists and language communities. On the 18th and 19th of October 2013 there will be a “Language Fair”, in which members of endangered / minority language communities in Europe will present their languages and cultures through exhibitions and cultural performances (music, theatre, movies, etc.). On the evenings of 18th and 19th October there will be an Endangered Languages Music Festival.

Plenary speakers

- Ulrike Mosel (University of Kiel)
- Mandana Seyfeddinipur (School of Oriental and African Studies, London)

- Sebastian Drude (Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen)
- Fernando Ramallo (University of Vigo)

Scientific committee

- Annette Endruschat (University of Regensburg)
- Michael Cysouw (University of Marburg)
- Frank Seifart (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig)
- Wolfgang Schulze (University of Munich)
- Xosé Afonso Pérez Álvarez (University of Lisbon)
- Lachlan Mackenzie (ILTEC, Lisbon)
- Johannes Helmbrecht (University of Regensburg)
- Peter-Arnold Mumm (University of Munich)
- Nikolaus Himmelmann (University of Cologne)
- Geoffrey Haig (University of Bamberg)
- Kevin Scannell (Saint Louis University)
- Felix Rau (University of Cologne)
- Kilu von Prince (Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, Berlin)
- Sebastian Nordhoff (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig)



Saint-Herblain: A Center for the Breton Language and Culture

The following information is a summary of information from the article “Un grand pôle de culture bretonne en

gestation à Saint-Herblain, en Loire-Atlantique” published on August 27 by Christian Roget on the Agence Bretagne Presse website.

<http://www.agencebretagnepresse.com>.

Saint-Herblain is a town of some 44,000 inhabitants just to the west of Nantes in the Loire-Atlantique Department. Since 2008 it has fostered an activity center at 13 rue du Rémouleur which includes a Diwan middle school with 47 students, a Breton cultural center Yezhoù ha Sevenadur which organizes workshops, exhibits and classes for Breton language and music, and the media center *Kreizenn dafar sevenadurel keltiek* (KDSK) – to which we send Bro Nevez. This center of activity is supported by the Town of Saint-Herblain and the General Council of Loire-Atlantique.

With the availability of new space there is potential for even more activity at this site which is accessible from Nantes by tramway and which has nearby lots of apartment buildings and a park. It is hoped that in the future other organizations in the Nantes area may also move to the site. This could include a day care center in Breton, a recreation center in Breton, the bagad of Orvault which is nearby, an Irish music school, a pipe-

band, a federation of Breton music groups, and perhaps the Nantes branch of Ofis Publik ar Brezhoneg. And also welcome would be a new Diwan school now under consideration for the 2015 school year.

The Mayor's office of Saint-Herblain flies the Breton flag, and the town has signed onto the Ya d'ar Brezhoneg campaign to promote the Breton language in public life.

And yet, a campaign goes on to brainwash people of the Loire-Atlantique to look at themselves as people of the Pays de Loire and forget their Breton identity. The fight to reunify the department of Loire-Atlantique (detached in 1944) with "official" Brittany goes on.



Skol Uhel ar Vro

The Cultural Institute of Brittany gathers Bretons with expertise to share knowledge and create events to engage the public on a range of topics – Breton music, dance history, trade and industry, sports,

environment, literature, language, religion, etc. Besides encouraging publications and organizing conferences and lectures, members of the Institute are active in the summer at several major festivals to help produce events that attract a wider public. They had a stand at the Festival de Courouaille in July as well as at the Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient this August. For the Lorient Festival they worked with Emgleo Bro Orient (a federation of cultural organizations of Lorient) to organize a very interesting series of presentations for the Université Populaire Bretonne. Held at Lorient's Chamber of Commerce during four days. Here's a quick summary of the programs:

Laurent Bigot – Binious and Bombards before the BAS (Bodadeg ar Sonerion)

This presentation explored the state of Breton music in the pre-World War II era before the explosion of interest and activity stimulated by the work of BAS and the creation of the bagad.

Mikael Bodlore-Penlaez – Breton "traditional" music and Breton "classical" music

This presentation featured eleven composers of Brittany who drew inspiration from the folk tradition. Mikael Bodlore-Penlaez co-authored a bilingual (Breton/French) book and CD with Aldo Ripoché called *Musique classique bretonne / Sonerezh klasel Breizh* (Coop Breizh, 2012). During the festival 8 panels were also on display to present the classical side of the Breton musical heritage.

Erwan Chartier-Le Floch – Two centuries of Breton Pan-Celtism

This presentation explored the different phases of inter-Celtic activity in Brittany since the 19th century. Erwan Chartier-Le Floch recently published the book *Histoire de l'interceltisme en Bretagne* (Coop Breizh, June 2013).

Jean-Jaques Monnier & Olivier Caillebot – Brittany and Celts of Iberia

Music accompanied this presentation of Asturias and Celtic culture – with Asturias the honored country for this year's Loirent Festival.

Patrick Malrieu – Polig Monjarret, his life, his works, his influence.

On this 10th anniversary of the death of this great figure in Breton music, Patrick Malrieu's talk included films and the participation of Nolwenn Monjarret, one of Polig's daughters. A third volume of music transcriptions - traditional tunes and melodies collected by Polig Monjarret - has now been published.

Bob Haslé – A look at the BAS after 70 years of activity. The Bodadeg ar Sonerion celebrates its 70th anniversary and this presentation evoked the important role it has had in a number of ways – societal, economic, patrimonial, and in fostering creativity.

Tudi Kernalegenn – The associative movement

This presentation looked at the role of associations and organizations after World War II in fostering a regional identity and action to support all aspects of Breton society, economy and culture.



Brittany and Asturias

For many years both Asturias and Galicia have had annual representation at the Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient, but year round Bretons keep strong contact with their Celtic cousins through a number of activities. You can find information about the action of the Association Bretagne-Asturies on their blog bretagne-asturies.blogspot.com



Brittany and Galicia

Particularly active is the Comité Bretagne-Galice (Kevredigezh Breizh-Galiza / Asociación Breaña – Galicia) which fosters the twinning of cities and a number of exchanges to foster friendship and learn about each others history and culture. Check out the website www.bretagne-galice.com for information about this organization and check out their newsletter <http://bretagnegalice.blogspot.com> for a wealth of more information.



<http://www.kenstroll.org/>

You don't need to go to a festival to find interesting talks and presentations. Book stores can be the site for all sorts of activity and Kenstroll is grouping of a few smaller stores where Breton and Celtic culture is celebrated.

Kenstroll was created in 1999 to serve to support smaller independent book stores which specialized in Breton and Celtic materials. It allows professionals to share ideas and support, and to collectively organize and promote events for the public (book signings, talks, etc.).

In each case the book stores have a particular specialty and strong selection of books featuring local history and culture. All carry books for children as well as adults in Breton, French and sometimes Gallo as well as other languages, on nearly any topic related to Brittany and the Celtic countries. Most have a selection of CDs as well as jewelry and gifts crafted in Brittany. Ti ar Sonerien (House of Pipers) has a focus on music recordings and scores, musical instruments and accessories, as well other materials. Here are some stores you should visit if you travel to Brittany:



Librairie Ar Vro - in Gwaien / Audiernne

Librairie Penn da Benn – in Kemperle - Quimperlé



Librairie Gweladenn - in Sant Nazer / St Nazaire

Librairie Lenn ha Dilenn - in Gwened / Vannes



Ti ar Sonerien – in Konk Kerne / Concarneau

Breton and Harvard University

The Université de Rennes 2 has signed an accord with Harvard University that prepares the way for Breton to be taught at Harvard as part of the offerings for Masters and Doctorate students in the Department of Celtic Languages and Literature. This will involve an exchange of students who will travel to Rennes for “crash courses” in Breton and the integration of regular seminars by Breton scholars at Harvard.

Currently Harvard offers modern language study courses for Irish, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, so this will greatly enhance the program with another Celtic language for students. To get a look at the Harvard Celtic Studies program, see their website: www.celtic.fas.harvard.edu

KENTEL 20 / LESSON 20

Natalie Novik

Given the materials available today for English speakers to learn Breton online, this will be the last lesson I offer for Bro Nevez. I believe a language is acquired better and faster by listening and speaking than by reading and writing. Therefore, since it must be assumed that most of Bro Nevez readers have access to the Internet, the written lessons will be a thing of the past. However, as materials evolve and new sites appear, I will continue to update the information so that ICDBL members willing to put some effort in learning Breton are given the best choices to do so.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Breton is a Celtic language, the closest one to Welsh. If you are a Welsh speaker, you will have no problem learning Breton. It's like a Spanish speaker learning Italian... When compared with Gaelic (Irish and Scottish), the grammar is very similar, and although the spelling is different, you can recognize a lot of words.
2. Breton is a very ancient language, it pre-dates English and French, and although it was written by monks starting in the 10th century, its dialectal differences were unified only in the 20th century in the written form called KLT. This explains the complexity of the language particularly in its written form.
3. Knowing languages like Latin or German, where the word order is not that of English, will help considerably. If you know Russian, you will understand the mutations, i.e the way consonants change depending on their surroundings.
4. Although French has permeated Breton and is today spoken by all Bretons, it would be wildly exaggerated to imagine you can “bretonize” French words and be

understood by Breton speakers. The two languages are distinct and not mutually intelligible. At the border between the two, a Romance language called Gallo contains some ancient words of Breton, and resembles mostly French.

5. While the French government balks at giving Breton its place in Brittany, the language is spoken in many areas and used intensively by artists. There are immersion schools (Diwan, among others) and the University of Brittany has Breton courses. It is possible for people to find jobs linked to the knowledge of Breton, like teachers, translators, radio DJ's, workers in hospitals and retirement homes, linguists, etc.
6. The number of Breton speakers in North America is not known, but between the 1950's and the 1980's there was a strong emigration from Central Brittany to the U.S. and Canada. Many emigres were actually fluent Breton speakers, and some of them might still be found in places like New York, Boston, Toronto, etc.

Online

www.kervarker.org: has so far 19 lessons, more are obviously being developed. It also lists all the materials you can find in English (more often than not, in British English). It is very exhaustive, and will probably expand even further. They are to be commended for turning to English speakers to do the English section of the site, something our readers will certainly appreciate

www.brezhoneg.org (the site of Kuzul ar Brezhoneg, the Breton Language Council, it features a wealth of information and links to all the Breton language sites, including a downloadable English-Breton dictionary)

<http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk> (only four lessons, but they promised to develop it...in 1998!)

www.loecsen.com: beware, I could tell right from the start that it was not put together by fluent speakers...

www.youtube.com features the five-minute language cartoons with Spot, the little dog. No translation, but it's easy to understand and the merit of these "spots" is that they have been recorded with fluent Breton speakers, so you get a good sense of what Breton sounds like.

www.radiobreizh.net lists all the Breton-speaking radio stations (RKB in Central Brittany, Radio Kerne in Quimper, etc.). There is no English on the website in spite of the English button on top of the page, it comes out in Breton which is the default language of the site. One may hope that English will be developed in the near future. The stations play a lot of Breton music, but it is mixed with all kinds of other things, French, minorities' music, jazz, rock... The commentaries are either in

Breton or French. I think that even if you don't know Breton, you will learn to distinguish it from French because of the more guttural sounds vs. the flatness of French. There is a grid of programs for each station (in Breton, French and Gallo) that tells you which language will be used.

Music

Since one of the most efficient ways to learn a language is to learn songs, and since singing is an intrinsic part of Breton life, you would be very inspired to visit sites that feature Breton music.

I found a site called Son ha Ton (http://per.kentel.pagesperso-orange.fr/frame_par_recueil.htm) which gives you for every song the music, the lyrics and the translation in French. There is a blue button on top of each page, called Selaou (listen), where you get the melody played very simply. It features 746 Breton songs, some of them very well known, some less, but you might want to use this to learn to match the words to the music.

Another thing to remember is "kan ha diskan", the traditional overlapping singing used for dancing. One singer starts with a sentence, and before it's over, the second one finishes the sentence with him, repeats it, then the first one ends with him, and goes on, etc. etc. If you learn these songs as the diskaner, i.e. the second singer, you will find that it is usually easy to repeat the first sentence (they are short) and to finish the sentence with the kaner (first singer) once you know the song, even a little bit. The above site has a chapter called Digor an Abadenn (let's party!), where songs 186 to 209 are typical kan ha diskan songs. You will find a lot of them featured in CD's by the Goadeg Sisters or the Morvan Brothers, two sibling groups from Central Brittany, whose repertoire focused almost exclusively on this genre. Sing along and before you know it, you will have the pronunciation, the rhythm and the vocabulary etched forever in your brain!

Do Not Give Up!

Breton is a difficult language, I will be the first to admit it. But it has its rewards, and in particular the opportunities to practice it in Brittany. Numerous organizations put together Breton classes in immersion form (where you don't need to know French), and you can also find Bed and Breakfasts where the host pledges to speak nothing but Breton to you. Fun! Trust me, after the first day, you will find words to describe your hunger...

Watching movies is another approach. Thank God for the Internet! Vimeo features a series of movies in Breton listed on the site of www.kalanna.com, they are downloadable and can be watched on a computer screen with a rather good resolution and French subtitles. What I recommend for watching movies if you are not an

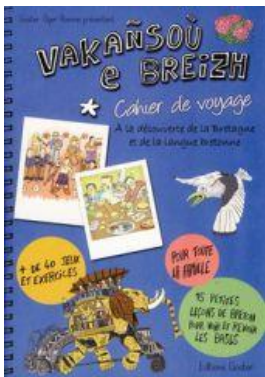
advanced learner is to play them over and over by sections until you start recognizing words, match them to images, and at some point you can figure out all the dialogue in a particular scene.

A new resource for Breton Learners.

The second volume of Tugdual Kalvez's popular manual *Brezhonegomp* has been published the Skol Uhel ar Vro (Cultural Institute of Brittany). This is directed to older teens and adults to get up and running quickly and effectively in using Breton. Both volumes include 35 lessons with an audio CD and a booklet that translates texts into French and includes answers to exercises. Annexes include useful grammatical information and a lexicon of vocabulary. The books focus on a fictional family, the Tanguys, who live in Ergué-Armel (a community annexed to the city of Quimper). The audio by native Breton speakers brings out everyday use of the language. Illustrations enhance the learning experience as well.

Biskoazh kemend-all – A Breton Learning Experience for Teens, August 21-31, 2013

A new summer programs for teens was launched this August by the organization Studi ha Dudi. Three different levels of classes were offered for two hours a day to attack grammar, pronunciation, oral expression, etc. And during the rest of the day young people could practice their Breton in learning kung-fu, canoeing, taking long walks or bike rides, cooking and participating in evening music, storytelling and theater. A great way to improve language skills and have fun at the same time.

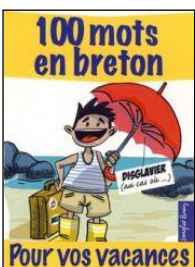


Two New Books to Learn Breton While on Vacation

Vakañsoù e Breizh, Cahier de Voyage, by Jean Marie Goater and Fañch Oger (Goater Editions)

This 36-page book includes 16 lessons in Breton to help travelers discover tourist

destinations, Breton identity, tradition and other aspects of Brittany. There are 40 games and exercises and the book is fun for any Breton learner.



100 Mots En Breton Pour Les Vacances. (Emgleo Breiz), 5 pages

This little booklet includes 100 expressions related to leisure time activity of the summer (and year-round),

Other pocket guides in this series include 100 words in Breton for: gardening, St. Valentine's, politics and elections, the seaside, naming your house, talking to your children, and basic conversation.

Tamm-Kreiz

www.tamm-kreiz.com

Tamm-Kreiz is a website done by a team of volunteers to promote Breton culture in general and to help people find performances of Breton music – especially festoù-noz. Since 2001 this site has noted some 20,000 events!

This includes 25,939 fest-noz and fest-deiz, 3,524 concerts, 4,460 musical groups, 4,785 individual artists, 1,057 recordings, 359 workshops, 72 classes, 395 teachers and 3,772 media links.

You can search the site by the name of an individual singer or instrument player, by the name of a group (Tri Yann, Barzaz, An dud nevez, etc.), by musical instrument, or by the name of an album. You can go to calendars for concerts and for festoù-noz and find the name of the location and with a quick tap, the name of featured performers. Maps will help you locate where the site is located. And this website will help you find workshops and teachers. In short this encyclopedic site will help you find music in some corner of Brittany on every day of the year, and it will introduce you to musicians with descriptions, photos and sound bites.

Summer Festivals of Brittany – Dance!

There are many festivals throughout the summer in Brittany (and throughout the year). I have included here a few which feature dance! These festivals are often contests where dancers vie for the glory of being the best dancer, but they always include a variety of great musicians and singers and the opportunity for everyone to dance (and learn to dance).



Fisel Rostrenn - 41st year

www.fisel.org

The *fisel* is one of the most challenging dances of Brittany, with flying feet and a funky rhythm with an ebb and flow between frenetic footwork and calm, gavotte-like dance steps. The ladies have a less

flamboyant style, but it is still packed with energy and a certain odd beat that has always eluded me. Not only does this festival include a heated contest for one of the most difficult dances of Brittany but also several fest noz to show off all styles of music to which this dance can be enjoyed from traditional paired kan ha diskant singers to

electrified rock bands. Young and old enjoy both styles in Brittany ... just so the musicians keep the beat going! And there is certainly the conviviality found in all of the smaller festivals of Brittany where friends and dancers gather.



Festival Plinn – Danouët – 38th Year

www.daouet.free.fr

The *plinn* is much “simpler” than the *fisel* but certainly still a very challenging dance with subtlety and a condensed motion which requires physical endurance. Try jumping up

and down for 20 minutes on both feet and then one foot to the other and see how long you last. Like the festival for the *fisel*, dancers here compete to show their skills, and the festival includes lots of music and other events for those who love Breton music but may not be up to competition level dancing! It is held to raise funds to support the maintenance of the chapel of the town of Danouët.



Nuit de la Gavotte – Poullaouen

www.danstro.com

This festival is organized by the organization called Dans-tro. There are dozens of versions of the *gavotte* and while the local *gavotte* danced in the village of Poullaouen (not far from Carhaix) is featured, there’s a diversity of music and dances at this

event held this year September 13 to 16. Included are smaller café gatherings, concerts and *veillées* where those present share stories and songs. The “main event” is the Night of the *Gavotte* – an all-nighter for dancers.



Festival Danse Bretonne – Saint-Loup

www.dansebretonne.com

Held August 10 to 18 this year, this festival organized by the organization Kendalc’h gathers some 3,000 pipers, singers, and dancers from Brittany and the Celtic world with concerts and activities through the town of Guingamp during the festival. This festival features a competition for Celtic Circles and dance groups to present traditional dances and innovative arrangements of them.

This year the contest winners were *Eostiged ar Stangala* from Quimper-Kerfeunteun. Created in 1948 this group

(the *Nightingales of Stangala*) are not strangers to the winners circle and this is their 12th win. Second, third, and fourth in this competition were the groups *Eostiged*, *Kandarded Sant Evarzeg* and *Auray*.



Gouel War'l Leur

www.warleur.org

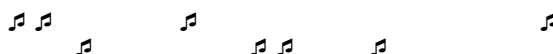
Like *Kendalc’h*, the organization *War'l Leur* has served as a confederation of dance groups for decades, fostering a love for dancing among Breton youth and innovative performances rooted in tradition. The weekend of October 13 will celebrate the end of a season of dance contests and performances at the *Amzer Nevez* cultural center in

Ploemeur (56).



Concours Kas abarh – Carnac

Since the beginning of the 1980s, the town of Carnac has hosted a contest for the dance *kas abarh* (and you will see various spellings for the name of this dance). Like other dance contests this mini-festival held November 4 will gather singers and pipers of the region of Carnac and will feature the particular style for the *kas abarh* done in Carnac.



**Heard of but not Heard
Notes on New Recordings from Brittany**



Bagad Saint-Nazaire.

Embarquement. Self-produced. Bagad-saint-nazaire.com

One of the top bagads of Brittany takes an inter-continental voyage with this CD and book evoking the exotic cultures of the cities of New York, Shanghai and Agadir (Morocco). A beautifully produced book full of images nicely complements the creative work of this *bombard*, bagpipes and percussion ensemble.



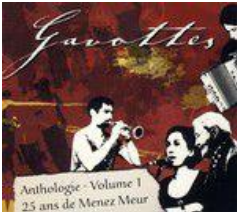
Damouidam. Fest noz au verger.

This is the second CD by this group composed of singers Marie-Renée Berthelot, Rozenn Caillard, and Anne Couturier with Henri Labbe on button accordion, acoustic guitar and

harmonica. They perform 12 dances from the *Ile et Vilaine* area where they have performed for *festoù-noz* with some excursions to a few other parts of Brittany as well.

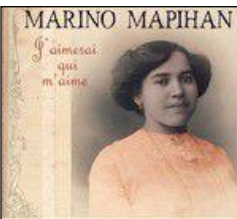


Breskenn. A l'orée du bois.
This is a fest-noz band made up of Jean-François Bertru on guitar, Guy Chevalier on bombard, clarinet and saxes, and Catherine Raoutt with song and accordion. They perform a variety of dances including plinn, Scottish, dans pourlet, gavotte and cercle circassien.



Gavottes – Anthology, Vol. 1, 25 ans de Menez Meur.
This is a double CD of singers, sonneurs and accordion players from the Menez Meur contest/festival for the gavotte dance held since 1989 in Hanvec.

This even attracts some 500 competing dancers and 2,500 “viewers.” This CD includes 13 performers with suites for the gavotte of several different styles. Paired singers are: Louis Lallour & Robert Bizien, Bastien Guern & Jean-Claude Talec, Yves Le Floc’h & André Moal, Quere brothers, Sylvie & Christian Rivoalen, Ifig & Nanda Troadec, Gilles Le Goff & Pierre-Yves Petillon with Serge Riou. Sonneurs (bombard & biniou koz or braz) are: Serge Riou & Hervé Irvoas, Guy Madec & Louis Guedes, Hervé Irvoas & Cédric Moign, and Tristan Gloaguen & Gaël Le Fur. You also have paired clarinet and accordion with Emilien Robic and Jérôme Guillaume and accordion by Erwan Le Meur.



Marino Mapihan. J'aimerai qui m'aime. Productions TVV TVB 2013.
This CD features 14 traditional songs in French from the Loudéac area performed by Marie-Noëlle Le Mapihan, founder of the group Les

Mangeouses d'Oreilles. She is accompanied by a variety of combinations of musicians: Yannick Harouin on bass, Marc Anthony on hurdy-gurdy, Delphine Quenderff on bass fiddle, Neven Sebille Kernaoudour on uilleann pipes, and Pierrick Lemou on fiddle, mandolin and guitars – a talented line-up of great performers.



Nouguet Robert Quartet. Voyage en diatonique.
This group includes two accordion players, Yannig Nouguet and Ronan Robert, with bass fiddle player Simon Mary and percussionist Jérôme Kerihuel. They perform 13 traditional and composed dance tunes and melodies.



Plantec. Best of. Aztec Musique CM 2304.
Yannick and Odran Plantec started in 2002 with their guitar and bombard partnership and this CD features the “best of” their arrangements of traditional dances and composed tunes.

Included are 16 selections of music for the an dro, gavotte, rond de Loudéac, kas a barh, Scottish, pile menu, fisel and others.

A new publication on Sonneurs

"Les sonneurs bretons" by Martial Le Corre.
(Alan Sutton Editions, 134 pages. 2013)

Both a musician and an avid collector of old post cards, Marial Le Corre has put together a collection of postcards of biniou and bombard players from the 19th and 20th centuries. These exotic musicians were a favorite subject for post cards which rarely identified their names. Working with descendants of those pictured on the post cards the author has identified the musicians, providing a valuable resource for those interested in the history of Breton music.



Deep Inside A Breton Skull 39 Pardons and pilgrimages

Jean Pierre LE MAT

This year the Bretons were very lucky.

It was the year of the “Grande Tromenie” in Locronan. Tromenie means “tro-minihi”, the procession around the sacred place where Saint Ronan lived. Once every six years this tour of 12 kilometers, around 7.5 miles, takes place. Historians and sociologists who studied it say that this old tradition could be more ancient than Saint Ronan. It is maybe the remains of a solar cult. I don't know if they are right. Thousands of people come here, some with traditional costumes.

This year was also the centenary of the coronation of the statue of Saint Anne la Palud. There were thousands of people for the pardon of Sainte Anne, in the dunes near the sea, not far from Douarnenez. Here, people say that the tradition came from the cult of Ana or Dana, the mother of the ancient Celtic gods. I don't know. Why change the place, anyway? This one is impressive. More than a century earlier, the Poet Tristan Corbière was singing:

« Bénite est l'infertile plage
Où, comme la mer, tout est nud.
Sainte est la chapelle sauvage
De Sainte-Anne-de-la-Palud... »
(Blessed is the barren beach
Where, like the sea, everything is naked.
Blessed is the wild chapel
Of Sainte-Anne-de-la-Palud ...)

We were lucky this year in our relation with the sky. In Locronan and in Sainte Anne la Palud, the sun was shining...



The pardons are part of the Breton folklore. They are something a tourist "must see". Onlookers are not interested by the religious offices, but they flock along the processions out of the church, where they can photograph golden banners, traditional costumes, shrines containing mysterious relics. They converge to the most famous events, like the pardon of Sainte-Anne d'Auray or the Tromenie of Locronan.

These big events are the trees hiding the forest. In Brittany, thousands of other pardons attract people, but only the faithful ones. The few foreigners who are taking part are not here out of curiosity, but driven by devotion.

There are here countless pilgrimages, around the humble chapel or towards the proud cathedral. You can follow, in the streets of a town, the statue of the Virgin in Majesty. You can also follow in the country trails, with fellow peasants, the worn banner celebrating a poor local hermit. The average tourist does not feel at ease there, where those involved don't try to achieve a performance in front of those watching.

There are "pardons" only in Brittany. This practice does not have a Breton origin, and you can find religious ceremonies similar elsewhere, under other names. Formerly it was a religious ceremony to get your sins forgiven.

From the Middle Ages until nowadays, Breton pilgrims, together with other European people, have been travelling for indulgences to very remote places, like Rome or St Jacques de Compostela. But these long trips are not necessary to get a place in Heaven. Pious Bretons can also stay in Brittany. Then they perform the "Tro-Breizh". It is a circular pilgrimage. You have to walk from a bishopric to another. You worship at each turn the seven founding saints of Brittany, on his grave or in his cathedral. According to the old people, it's better to do this when you are still alive. Otherwise, the Bretons have to perform it after their death. But it lasts longer. You cannot move more than the length of your coffin during a year. If you cannot do the pilgrimage by yourself, you can pay somebody to ramble the Tro-Breizh for you. The 19th century writer Anatole Le Braz wrote a story about a poor woman who did this job during all her life.

From the late fourteenth century, it has been possible to obtain the forgiveness of sins, or a decrease in your time in purgatory, through donations for the erection of a chapel or a church. Many religious monuments in Brittany benefited from these financial flows, where the gold of the nobleman mingled with the copper of the poor guy.

We, Bretons, believed that we were good Christians. But, in the seventeenth century, missionaries came and told us that we had neglected or misunderstood the teaching of the church. These missions, led by tireless preachers, Dom Michel an Nobletz or Father Julien Maunoir, gave a new impetus to pardons. They organized annual festivals to make us recall the divine message. Pardons became a collective and periodic ceremony. Apparitions of the Virgin and miraculous healings impressed us and put a climax to the work of missionaries.

Moreover the Bretons are probably masters of positive thought. Pardons were used, not only to ask forgiveness for our sins, but also to get divine favor. Today, popular pardons address local saints who heal, help or protect, rather than God who forgives.

These numerous local saints have colored the Breton religious tradition. Until the beginning of the 20th century, the book "Buhez ar Zent," which chronicles the life of Breton saints and some others, was the only book held by Breton families. In this book, the stories of our old saints have the flavor of wonderful adventures. Saint Herbot, Saint Cornely, St. Ninog, Nolwenn, Eflam, Enora, Meriadec, Goulven, each parish has his own protector. He is the familiar ghost and the special adviser, the intermediary between us and the great Unknown. This revered figure probably lives in Heaven, but his

warm shadow extends on our houses, fields, woods and fountains.

The Catholic Church was too often focused on intellectual issues. It neglected and even rejected the saints it did not certify itself. Sure, the deeds of our old saints in the fight against Satan look sometimes farcical. Meantime, they are close to us. We can love them, not only admire or worship them. They can understand us when we are looking for friendship of our woman, or calming a baby. We can rely on them. And that is why the Bretons are still naming their children Ronan, Herve, Enora, Klervi or Gwenaël.

The Catholic hierarchy has seen in their names a deformation of a more controlled appellation. Thus the Breton Saint Igno became Saint Ignatius, Saint Pol became St. Paul, St. Jacut was translated in Saint Jacques. We don't believe that. Everybody, in the town of Saint-Pol-de-Leon, knows that Saint Pol came from Wales and killed the dragon of the Batz Island. He was not the same as Saint Paul who wrote the epistles which are part of the New Testament.

Some disgruntled people tell us that most of the Breton saints were never recognized by Rome. It is true. They are too old. Most of them lived in the 6th century. The papacy got the monopoly of canonization in 1234. Why should we expect for centuries that distant prelates decide about heroism or holiness of protectors we know better than they do?

The pardons and the cult of the saints show that the Bretons are not able to draw a precise boundary between sacred and profane matters. In traditional pardons, there is a mix between religious ceremony and, after, drinking and playing between friends. This day is devoted to celebrate human relationship: with divinity, with nature, with other humans. The holy places are familiar to us, even when we don't attend mass every Sunday. Our pardons celebrate local heroes. And the country all around is full of old stone crosses, calvaries, menhirs and dolmens evoking an ancient religion.

If you are looking for Breton identity, you will not find it in the photos of the pardons with golden banners, traditional costumes, shrines containing mysterious relics. It is in the relation the Bretons nurture, deep inside their skull, between sacred and profane, nature and the supernatural, past and present.

Travels in Brittany in 1854 and 1885

Not surprisingly pardons are often described by travel writers who contributed articles to popular magazines of the 19th century. Here are two particularly interesting ones:

"Modern Ancients," *Household Words*, A Weekly Journal Conducted by Charles Dickens. No. 213, April 22, 1854. Pages 223-224

I have alluded to the great religious meetings of the Bretons called their Pardons. They are quite popular to the province, and they date their origin back to the early ages after Druidism had disappeared. In fact they are remnants of the ceremonies of the ancient pagans, of which a great number of vestiges occur in Brittany.

Every great Pardon lasts at least three days. On the eve of the first day, all the bells of all the churches are set ringing; all the chapels are adorned with garlands and vases of fresh flowers; the saints in their niches, and over their altars, are dressed in the national costume; and in particular, the saint who is the patron of the district, is dressed like a bride or bridegroom, as the case may be. If the saint be a female, she has a white coif put upon her head, ornamented with a multitude of little mirrors, such as earthly brides in Brittany wear on the wedding-day. If the saint be a gentleman, he wears in his breast the customary bouquet, gay with floating ribbons, which distinguishes a bridegroom in his glory.

Towards evening the chapel is swept, and it is customary to throw chapel dust up into the air, in order that the wind may be favourable to those who are coming in from the adjacent islands on the morrow. Immediately afterwards all the gifts that are to be offered to the holy patron of the place are spread out in a conspicuous part of the nave. These gifts are generally sacks of corn, banks of flax, fleeces of young lambs or ewes, new hives of honey, and such rustic treasures. Less than a century ago it was usual at this time to dance in the chapel; but at present the dance takes place on the green in front, where there is sure to be a fountain dedicated to a saint.

Formerly the bonfire never was omitted late at night, but of late years even the bonfire has fallen a good deal into disuse. In some hamlets, however, it is still abided by, with all the rites thereto belonging. A high pole adorned with a garland is set up in the midst of light wood shavings and heather. To the light shavings fire is set, and the whole company, with wild cries, songs, and prayers watches until the flame shall have leaped up high enough to catch the garland at the top. Directly after this has happened, all dance twelve times round the pole, and then the old men place a circle of stones round the fire, in the midst of which there is a cauldron fixed. Formerly meat for the priests used to be cooked in that pot, but now people content themselves by filling it with water. Children throw into the water, as it boils, pieces of metal, and then fixing bits of reed to the two handles, they cause the whole machine to discourse excellent music.

By daybreak the next morning visitors come in bands to the Pardon, from all parts of Brittany, singing and shouting prayers. As soon as each band gets within sight

of the church spire, all the people in it go down on their knees and make the sign of the cross. If the Pardon be held in a town near the sea, the water is at this time covered with vessels, from every one of which proceeds the same chorus of prayer. Sometimes whole cantons arrive at once, bringing the banners of their parishes, and headed by their priests. The clergy of the Pardon always advances to receive and welcome them.

After vespers there takes place a grand procession. The young men and the maids, in all the pomp of costumes, walk in long close lines, with infinite devotion, followed by bands of sailors, who go barefooted and sometimes almost unclad, if they happen to have made vows when in fear of shipwreck. The procession pauses at the cemetery of the town, where prayers are said, and in these prayers it is usual for the lord of the manor and his family to join.

The whole level plain is covered by this time with tents, under which pilgrims pass the night in vigils, and in listening to the religious songs. The minstrels go from one part to another of the whole encampment, singing no songs that are not of a serious kind, because the whole of the first day of the Pardon must be spent in holy thoughts. Worldly amusements are to follow.

At dawn on the second day worldly thoughts and pleasures are permitted to rush in; then begin all the amusements of a fair, and its excesses. The Kloers may then sing their love songs for the last time, if they mean to hold by their choice of the priestly calling. Then it is that those famous dramas are performed, which last several days, and which are the last existing remnants of the Mysteries and Moralities that were the delight of our forefathers in almost all countries.

The Pardon here described I saw at Rosporden in Finistère.

H. R. Robertson, "Through the Côtes du Nord," *The English Illustrated Magazine*, Vol. 3, December 1885, pages 166-169

While at Callac I had the good fortune to hear of a Pardon within accessible distance, and one with a very distinctive popularity – a Pardon *des Chevaux*! I could not get a very explicit account of what was to take place, but heard on all hands that there would be crowds of horses at the Pardon, so I determined to "assist" at the ceremony, whatever it might be. Properly speaking, the Pardon is that of St. Gildas, a bishop who is said to have emigrated from Great Britain in the sixth century. The chapel dedicated to him is near Carnouet, and lies back not very far from the high road between Callac and Carhaix.

On our way to the Pardon we noticed at all the by-roads groups of pilgrims, generally riding or driving the small white or grey cart-horse of the country; occasionally there

would be two women astride on the same horse, which looked odd. To the saddle-bow there was to be usually seen dangling, head downwards, a fine barndoor fowl, the purpose of which we afterwards ascertained. My driver, though a Breton, was somewhat of a free-thinker, had been in the navy, and had seen the world, and so was quite above the superstitions of the district. He even derided with some playfulness those horses that we saw quietly at pasture in the fields, as being wanting in proper devotional ideas, and when the shower peculiar to the country happened to come down very heartily, to the discomfort of the pilgrims, he stigmatized it as "a tempest of the most anti-clerical." At the last turning of the road, as we approached our destination, stood a *troue* for the saint, an alms-box stoutly clamped with iron.

The chapel itself is picturesquely situated at the side of a beautifully wooded hill – the building being small, and chiefly noticeable on account of certain grotesque life-size nude figures, which do duty as gargoyles. Like many others of these smaller chapels, the only service that takes place in it is on the anniversary of the saint to whom it is dedicated; the fact being that these buildings are private property, and belonged in former times to the noble families of the locality. At the present day the owners are very often unable, through want of means, or it may be unwilling, to spend the money required to keep the edifice in proper repair, and there seem to be no public funds for the purpose. The extent to which this chapel of St. Gildas had been allowed to get out of repair was extraordinary, and I wondered how it could be tolerated by any officiating clergy. The holes in the roof had let in so much wet that the floor was all in puddles, and the walls were green with damp. The said floor was of mud, like the poorest cabins of the district, and very uneven. Here and there a bit of old stained glass remained in the windows, while indications of faded paintings might still be traced in places on the walls. It is curious amongst such an undoubtedly devout people that as much work as would keep the place decent is not done by the worshippers themselves.

The sacred spring, which attracts so many pilgrims to this Pardon, is situated in a corner of the churchyard. It is in the form of a shallow well, and has two troughs attached to it, both of which had been filled with water from the sacred source. The ecclesiastical element held aloof – the quasi-priestesses of the shrine being three old hags who might have served well for the witches in Macbeth. On the edge of the well they had ready several small basins and tumblers filled with the water, also some small phials. The tumblers were for any of the faithful to drink from, while the contents of the basins were emptied on the withers and croups of the horses. The water from the phials was poured into the ears of the horses, and this is considered the essential point, the tumblers and basins being often dispensed with. As many horses are sensitive to interference with their ears, there is occasionally some lively plunging about on the part of the animals, and

always a great deal of shaking of the head after the operation.

At one of the troughs a curious ceremony took place while we were looking on. An anxious mother had brought with her a little chemise belonging to her infant, who was dangerously ill. This was gravely laid on the water of one of the troughs by the old woman, who piously ejaculated in Breton, "May God bless your little one!" while the careworn parent watched with painful anxiety the gradual soaking and sinking of the little garment. The point of interest is this: if, after the immersion, the body of the garment should sink before the sleeves, the child will recover, but if the sleeves sink first, it will die. In the case we witnessed the attendant assured the mother that the augury was good, and that the child would undoubtedly recover, which we will hope it has done. However, the old hag told us confidentially that there was not much in it, for a case had just happened to which the sleeves had floated unmistakably, and yet when the hopeful father reached his home it was only to find his child already dead. A woman came and bathed her feet at the other trough; I don't know what may have been the matter with them, but they certainly looked the better for it. The reverences paid to so many, so-called sacred wells in Brittany is said to be a relic of the old pagan worship of water. The modern Breton's regard for the element seems to be in a general way of so reverential a nature, that he employs it as little as possible for secular purposes. That there is a small fee for the saint in acknowledgement of the miraculous benefits is a matter of course.

In a little transept or side chapel stood a gilded statue of the saint himself in the costume of a bishop; he seemed to be represented in a sort of pulpit, and a small model of a dog, about six inches high, stood on either side of him on the ledge of the pulpit. It was these little dogs (or other animals, one could not be quite sure what they were, as the artist had not been realistic) that received attention at the hands of the worshippers. They rubbed the palms and the backs of their hands against the side and backs of the little animals, and retired apparently lightly satisfied with the performance. I failed at the time to gather what special benefit was supposed to attach to the proceeding, but have heard since that it is believed to be a safeguard against rheumatism.

After vespers there is a sale by auction of the fowls in the cage. They are disposed of at once if a purchaser can be found for the whole lot, but failing that they are sold separately, so that it not infrequently happens that the previous owner carries back his own bird, having left the price of it for the benefit of the church. From the sale one bird is always reserved – the strongest-looking specimen. One of the peasants is then told off at the statute price of ten sous to mount the church tower, and to throw the fowl into the air. In the churchyard and facing the tower, all the sturdiest of the male portion of the crowd are ranged in line ready to scramble for the poor fowl, only one

representative of each family being permitted in the lists. The object is to catch the creature by the head, and these good people believe that the happy man who succeeds in doing this will have assuredly preserve the household to which he belongs from misfortune for the year.

The presentation of a cock at the Pardon of St. Gildas is supposed to be especially efficacious against whooping-cough, and one man told me, in a resigned sort of way, that his wife had insisted on his investing in a matter of thirty sous in the purchase of one with that idea. The resemblance of the noise made by a child suffering from whooping-cough to the crowing of a cock was given as a reason for the proceeding, and is as sensible as many of the directions in old herbals where we find such assertions as that a leaf which resembles the shape of an adder's tongue is a specific against the bite of that reptile.

I have never met anywhere with a precise definition of what a "Pardon" is, though the scenes that occur on the occasion are tolerably familiar to all through the pictures of Jules Breton and other French painters. Guide-books occasionally mention the fact of the Pardon of a particular place as being one of unusual interest, but always take for granted that the reader is informed on the subject of Pardons in general. I take it to have been at first the simple *fête* day of the saint to whom a church was dedicated, his intercession being regarded as likely to be particularly effectual in obtaining pardon for the sins of those worshippers who honored his special day. In certain places the idea of absolution is connected with the practice of remaining in prayer for some definite period of time, as for instance while a long taper is burning, which is laid all round the cornice of the chapel. At the village of St. Bulac, not far from Callac, there is a Pardon to which the pilgrims go barefoot, and as scantily clothed as decency will permit – the men in shirt and drawers, and the women in chemise and petticoat, all carrying candles in their right hands, and their sabots and headgear in their left. At eight o'clock they march in procession to the church with their candles lighted, which must make an impressive spectacle, many of the poor people having walked barefoot long distance from their homes. The Pardon usually winds up with dancing and drinking, and is sometimes followed up the next day by a fair with more merry-making.

Editor's Note: Contrary to the concern of this 19th Century traveler that local people did not take care of their chapel, one can be assured that today the people of Carnoët are doing their best to protect this part of their heritage. The organization Kevredigezh Sant Gweltaz was created as a non-profit organization in 1998 for just this purpose and raises funds to keep the chapel in good repair through events like an annual *fest deiz* and choral concerts. This is one of many organizations throughout Brittany that work with their local town government to insure that architectural treasures and important sites in the history of Brittany are protected.

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

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

Who are the Members of the ICDBL?

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

What the does the U.S. ICDBL do?

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

Quarterly Newsletter for Members and Subscribers

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

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

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

On our website we have published a guide to Breton music (updated in 2006), a guide to learning materials for

the Breton language, an introduction to and map of the Celtic languages, a presentation of the Diwan Breton language immersion schools, and two documents presenting the Breton language and why it is endangered and what is being done about it. Bretons themselves have created many great websites to present their country and its culture, and we provide links to a large number of excellent and reliable sites created by Bretons themselves.

Other Action

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

More direct support for the Breton language ...

The U.S. ICDBL has supported Diwan—Breton language immersion schools-- for over ten years with a small annual contribution from our Members. We have maintained a personal link with the children of one particular Diwan school—Skol Diwan Landerne—since 1992 when Lois Kuter, the U.S. ICDBL Secretary, was invited to become the school’s “godmother.”

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

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

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

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

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