

## Appendix 4.10 Festival Interceltique in Lorient

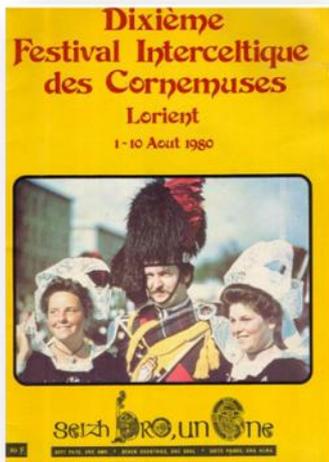
### Participant observation and correspondence

The author first attended this festival in 1980 at the invitation of Polig Montjerrat, then a festival director . He witnessed a workshop on Cornish dance in the 1979 Pan Celtic festival in Cill Airne and encouraged the presenters to put together a display team in order to represent Cornwall at Lorient the following year. The author has attended this festival on a number of occasions since as both performer and ticket holder. The most recent years have been 2000 when I took a Cornish youth dance group to perform, 2002 as a ticket holder and 2010 as a performer in an adult dance group.

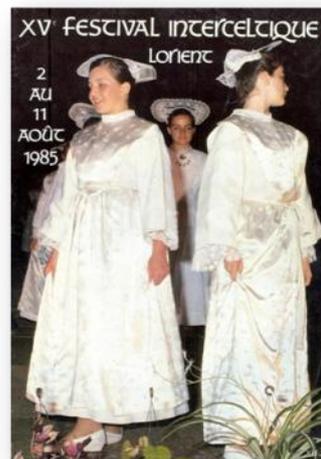
### 1980—2010

These programme covers illustrate how the festival has changed and developed in the way that it has been presented: 1980 bagpipe festival (Cornemuse = Bagpipes) / Celtic solidarity (Seizh Bro, Un Ane = Seven Nations, One Soul) > emphasis on folk traditions and costume (1985—Breton Coif, 1994—Asturian Gaitero) >2010 Celtic Iconography

1980



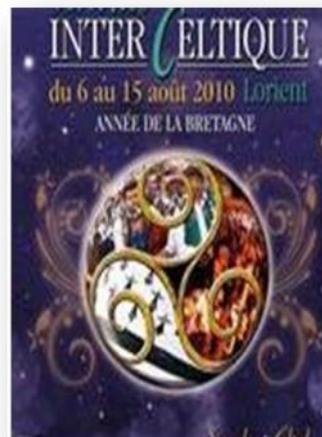
1985



1994



2010



## Correspondence

The Email below was sent to people who performed at Lorient in the early nineties, around the date of Malcolm Chapman's published his description of the festival in *The Celts : The Construction of a Myth*, (London: St Martin's Press, 1992) and also to people who attended in 2009. It was neither practical nor necessary to undertake grounded research here but it was useful to test out some reactions to Chapman's comments in the light of the authors own, very different, experience of the festival.

Sent: Tuesday, November 10, 2009 10:27 AM

Subject: Interesting Festival Descriptions Help!

In the course of my research I came across I came across the description of the Lorient Festival below in an academic publication - this is not a description of the festival that I have been to!

*The Festival Inter-celtique in Lorient gathers 'Celts 'from all the 'Celtic nations'. Self styled, highly educated, intellectual and youthful 'Celts'(many of them studious language learners) come to share their identity, to drink, dance , play music, listen to music, deplore oppression, fight nuclear power, oppose colonialism, lament militarism, buy craftwork and so on. "*

My recollections involve Rock bands, Spectacular "Nuit Magiques" and an awful lot of very drunken pipe bands. As I write up my thesis I want to show that below is not a real experience of Lorient but I need to be able to quote other people's experiences rather than my own - any chance of a couple of lines agreeing or disagreeing with below?

Many Thanks Merv

### **1990s Attendee - Cornwall**

Hi Merv,

The Lorient Festival that I remember was one where there were pipe bands everywhere. The city even had a P.A. system around the Centre Ville that pumped out bagpipe music. It was the only Celtic festival that I have been to that had a 7th Celtic Country! Gaelicia.

It was great from a participants point of view. In the early days we had the all important festival passes that got you free into 3 meals a day in the Pala de Congress (Not sure if that's spelt right) It also let you use the bendy bus all around town and even as far as a beach 12 kilometers to the north.

Of course the accommodation was free as well, in the form of school dormitories. We saw Alan Stivell's keyboards setup in the football stadium which occupied a large area of one side of the stadium seating. Then there was all those Bretons doing their ver-

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sion of a dance we had just discovered in Cornwall (Turkey Rhubarb) There was always one free day in the festival for you to relax and look around the place. There was also massed Breton dancing in the Celtic Village. I also remember seeing and listening to another Breton group called Tri Yann.

The only negative bits that I remember was Radio Cornwall reporters who were always looking for the bad news. They were not interested that this was a festival of Celts getting together and sharing their music and dance.

There was also a great language moment when Julian Drew from Penzance who speaks Cornish but not French got in conversation with a Breton who spoke no English but did speak Breton. They seem to understand the majority of what they were both saying.

Yes we did enjoy some wine at the various bars along the street to one side of the central gardens. We also enjoyed performing music and dance and listening, watching and joining in with the other Celts do the same . We made some new friends from different Celtic Countries. We looked forward to coming back on a future occasion. So I would agree with that part of the statement below but not the rest.

Best regards,

Mark

**1990s Attendee – Isle of Man**

Dear Merv,

LORIENT ..... Although I quite agree with your recollections of Lorient I don't think that the example quoted is necessarily wrong. I think the Lorient you find is the one that you seek and that there are many young people who attend the lectures and workshops and take away with them a very different experience to the one that we found. ( And are very happy with.)

I have passed a copy of your email onto Carol Hayes ( Perree bane's dance leader) who has a degree in Manx Studies and who has attended Lorient over many years and asked her to send you her views as well. Let me know if you want me to poke her with a sharp stick !! All the best to you and yours.

Lhiats Caroline

**1990s and 2009 attendee**

From: Hevva [mailto:info@hevva.co.uk] Sent: 09 November 2009 21:58

Hi Merv,

This apparent figment of imagination does not describe the festival that I have recently experienced, although there is a truth that can be extracted from it:-

"The Festival Inter-celtique in Lorient gathers Celts from all the Celtic nations who come to share their identity, to drink, dance , play music and listen to music."

The highly educated and intellectual contingent must have been keeping themselves to themselves, as I didn't come across them. Yes, many of those there could accurately be described as youthful, and I'm sure that many of the others like me wish they

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could be too! I don't believe I witnessed any of the words 'oppression', 'nuclear', 'colonialism' or 'militarism' over the whole of the ten day festival. However, there was plenty of craftwork available to buy. Oh, and the only Celtic nation I spotted promoting its language was Cornwall! Oll an gwella, Rob Hogg Secretary, Hevva

### **2009 Attendee: Cornwall**

Hi, Merv,

I'd have to agree with both statements ... bearing in mind, of course, that drinking reduced significantly when Spingo and Guinness were taken off-limits due to health reasons for both of us!

My recollection some 15 years ago, as I travelled through Lorient to check out this festival, was a field full of bagpipers tuning up, a strange bagpipe competition in a huge stadium, and discovering the "Port de Peche", with stage after stage next to each other, and huge crowds watching a famous Breton maritime duo, and a group of curly-headed young Irish dancers at the next stage ... a festival to go back to someday.

This year, anticipating finding a field full of bagpipers tuning up & stage after stage at the Port de Peche, I was struck by the sheer size of this festival: some 650,000 visitors (more than the whole population of Cornwall!), 4,000 performers, huge media coverage across Brittany, France & the rest of the world, hundreds of stalls selling everything and anything linked with the celtic world, from instruments to jewelry, shirts, carpets and incredibly fine artwork, dozens of crepe stalls, marquees for each celtic nation, ranging from the huge Galicien marquee, with food, net-making and a stage with free music running daily, the Acadian marquee, with the t-shirt printing machine & free black & gold pens from the respective tourist board, to the tiny Cornish marquee with Spingo, pastys, saffron cake, Cornish language books and literature (in English) from the Cornish Tourist Board, and pictures taken from the calendar and stuck on the walls.

It's like Glastonbury 4 times over (or the Royal Cornwall Show 5 times over, except without the tractors & animals!) in a city, centred around the harbour, with more stages in the city squares, and the nightly "Nuit Magique" showcasing a few of the celtic nations, with pipe bands, rock bands and dance troupes who are as fit as footballers and the most amazing fireworks! Lorient resonates almost 24-7 with the sound of bombardes, and sample songs of each nation through the loudspeaker system, the smell of crepes & smoked fish, and the sheer quality and volume of celtic music, art & culture in the Palais, marquees, the stages outside each pub, the paths and open spaces. It's incredible, and you'd need to spend the full week to experience everything the festival has to offer! This is a place to taste some of the very best in culture from each celtic nation, speak French, Spanish, Italian and maybe a spot of Cornish, eat plenty of fish, crepes & frites, drink Asturien cidre, and to showcase whatever your celtic nation has to offer (and even have an economic benefit to your local tourist industry!).

Hope that helps you! See you soon! Oll an gwella,

Carmen

## 2009 Attendee – Cornwall

Kekezza

Here's a couple of things from the girls.

From Jade (wtf!!!!!!)

- 'Lorient Festival is an amazing opportunity to meet new people, learn about different traditions and make friends from all over the world. The festival draws together a combination of music, dancing and singing and is enjoyed immensely by both performers and observers. The lighthearted festival is looked forward to by thousands every year, and never fails to disappoint.'

From Ellen, I'd say more like,

- 'A gathering of the most bizarre, and probably the coolest people in the Celtic (whole?) world, drinking, dancing and generally having a good time. In an evening I bumped into a Viking called Manix, an Asturian who looked like Mr. Bean, and a Scotsman in traditional costume.... and converse sneakers. '

There's also a couple of accounts from Ellen and Lauren on our website about the last two years. Hope that's ok as a start.

Lowenna

## Festival Impressions 2010

The Flags of the "Celtic Nations" included Australia and Nova Scotia. There was an element here of the Celtic Diaspora and a recognition of migration to the Americas and Australasia



Palais de Congrès, Lorient, which serves as festival office  
and information point for the festival

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Festou Noz

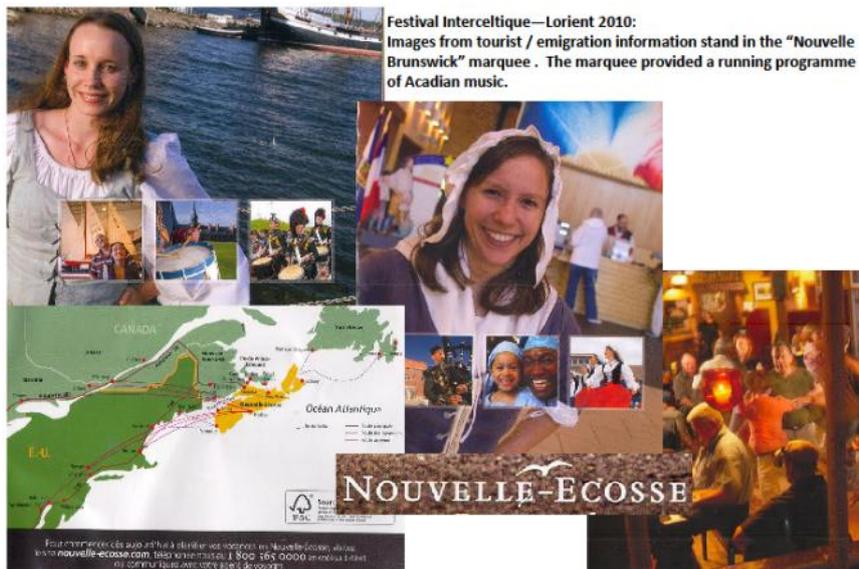
Celtic Flags at the Fest Noz Venue were more representative of the “1980s” eight Celtic Nations which added Galicia and Asturia from Northern Spain to the conventional linguistic six of Scotland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Wales Cornwall and Brittany.



The New Brunswick /Acadian Marquee represented their own Celticity as one nested in a mixture of France and Scotland. With a mixture of Breton, French and New Brunswick flags and a stage which featured Acadian bands playing music in their own style but with tunes recognisably derived from Scottish and Irish traditions such as Drowsy Maggie.



The information stand provided a series of images promoting tourism as below but when asked about Breton Language and music influences in Nova Scotia and Cap Breton they showed little understanding of either.



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The archway to the Quai de la Bretagne marked the entrance to craft stalls, food stalls and bars focussing on Breton Culture. A large marquee at the end of this are staged a continuous programme of mostly Breton music and dance but with representation from the other Celtic nations at various points in the programme.



A meeting with the festival director, Lisardo Lombardia provided insight into the current aims of the festival. Whilst there was a desire to continue to celebrate the links between the Celtic communities there was also a commitment to providing a professional format with high performance standards. Lisardo is an Asturian and had some understanding of Cornwall and the Celto– Cornish movement as he played bagpipes with a group called Belena who attended the Lowender Peran festival in the 1980s.