

# Scallop Dancing – The French Connection

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In an exciting new development destined to take the folk world by storm, new and compelling evidence for the spread of the original Manx Scallop Dancing from its place of origin to the rugged coastline of Finisterre, Brittany has recently come to light.

Historically, the Isle of Man and Brittany have age old links through their Celtic culture and language and their love of shellfish. Fishing communities from both areas have developed a strong friendship over the centuries. Indeed, the fact that the two largest areas of European shellfish husbandry are off the Manx coast and in the seas around Finisterre, has developed a spirit of co-operation rather than conflict between the two peoples.

Whilst browsing through some old papers deep in the vaults of “*La Ferme Marine*”, formerly known as the Museum of Oysters and Shellfish at *Cancale*, I chanced upon an extraordinary document which gave hints to the origins of Scallop Dancing in Brittany during the late nineteenth century. The evidence seems to point to the dance being imported from the Isle of Man through the tiny fishing village of *Prenant-le-Michel*, not far from *Douarnenez*, where the accompanying photograph was taken in 1890.



**M. Bulot, Grand Maitre des Compagnons de Coquilles St Jacques de Bretagne**

The document names M. Bulot as the first Grand Master of “*Les Compagnons de Coquilles St Jacques de Bretagne*” or “The Friends of the Brittany Scallop”. (I think you will agree, it loses something in the translation!)

It is also known that M. Bulot so valued the Manx connection that he called his first-born son Douglas.

Sadly, as yet, we have no further information about the dances and there is no evidence that the custom of Scallop Dancing is still practised in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century but we give below an artist’s impression of what a modern-day Frenchman might look like if he were dancing “Le Coquille” (as it was colloquially known) in the modern era.



***Artist's Impression***  
©Auguste Moules

These documents are truly an amazing find and should further evidence be forthcoming, will constitute a significant breakthrough for researchers of the European Folk-Dance Diaspora.

It is, however, early days and there will be much to do. “*La Ferme Marine*” at Cancale has some 500 archive boxes of material to sift through and it is rumoured that there are further archived treasures to be found in Rennes and the French National Library in Paris.

We are currently seeking sponsorship from several large International Corporations. Since negotiations are currently in delicate balance it would be indiscreet to mention names, but the following icon might give you a clue.

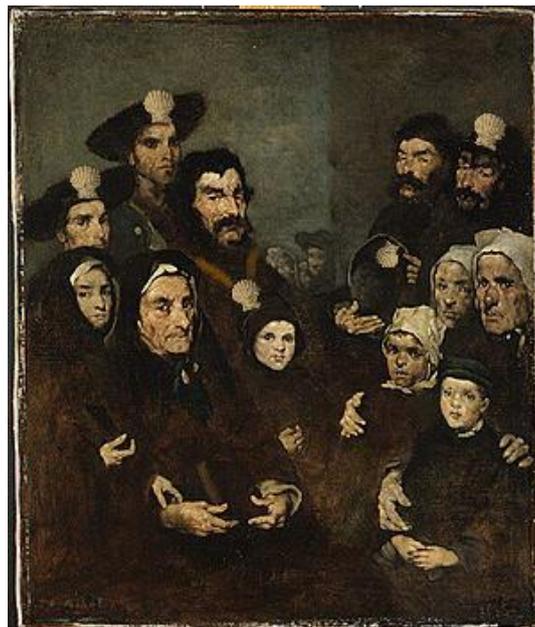


## BREAKING NEWS – AMAZING REVELATION

The following photograph shows the painting “*Breton Fishermen and Their Families*” painted by the French artist Augustin-Théodule Ribot (1823–1891).



But take a closer look at what X-Ray technology has shown:



Note particularly le Maitre’s fine Medallion. Why were these scallops painted out of the original? Religious persecution? Scallop Tax avoidance? Fear of being called silly? Sadly, we may never know.

Reference:

[www.ville-cancale.fr](http://www.ville-cancale.fr): La Ferme Marine in Cancale, Brittany. Admission charged. Tours in English from mid-June to mid-September at 2:00pm. Email [ferme-marine@huitres-francaises.com](mailto:ferme-marine@huitres-francaises.com). Yes, folks, it DOES exist! In their own words: “*Musée de l’huître et du coquillage, la Ferme Marine vous proposera et vous invitera à admirer la technique élevage et de production de l’huître et tout cela, accompagné d’une superbe exposition de plus de 1500 espèces de coquillages.*”