

Governor General James McNeill's Resignation, 1932

The walkout of Sean T O'Kelly and Frank Aiken from a function, 23rd April 1932, because of the arrival of Governor General Joseph and Josephine McNeill, was not only an unnecessary act that made a political argument personal it was also a major discourtesy to the French Envoy Extraordinaire and Consul-General, Charles Alphan, at whose (extraterritorial) residence the dance was being held¹.

This essay describes the dance, explores the cultural context from a French-Irish perspective, and analyses the walkout and subsequent correspondence until McNeill's resignation. Appendices cover the dance guests, the Fitzgeralds and the Paris wedding.

The Dance

The walkout wasn't the only 'surprise'. First, the Alphanes asked all the ladies to wear white to the dance. "The innovation caught the fancy of the guests and some lovely creations in white materials were seen". Josephine McNeill wore diamante-trimmed satin jackets over her gown of white georgette; hers is the only specific description.

The evening progressed to the "delightful" music of Charles Harvey and his Capitolian Band; then "About midnight a surprise was created when Monsieur Alphan and Madame Alphan, complete with tambourines and streamers of the French national colours, and Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald with tambourines decorated in the Irish Free State colours, led the first figure of a French cotillion². This diversion was followed by a lavish distribution of every conceivable variety of carnival novelties"³.

The *Irish Independent's*⁴ Our Lady Representative wrote "It was a very novel function and the first to be held at the legation since Mrs M Fitzgerald's wedding. It was also the farewell party for M Andre Alphan who is leaving for France to enter military service. All the ladies were asked to dress in white, and the uniformity of the scheme, with the black-coated men as a foil, was most unusual and striking. Coloured lights were played on the dancers, transforming the dresses from one hue to another. A French cotillion added to the merriment and was danced by all with verve."

¹ Saturday was the final day of Punchestown Week. Elsewhere in Dublin there was the annual dinner of the Royal Society of St. George, Metropole Cinderella Dance, Clery's Supper Dance and Old Comrades Dance.

² It sounds more like a French variation of the popular German cotillion, rather than the original French cotillion (*contredanse*); replaced by the quadrille in the early 19th century. The Irish cotillion is unconnected

³ *Irish Times* 25/04/1932

⁴ *Irish Independent* 25/04/1932



The *Irish Independent* has a striking group photo of sixty ladies in their white dresses with Josephine McNeill sitting beside Madame Alphand. Fashion writers were, no doubt, relieved that that this never caught on as describing smart ladies was their bread and butter. They were an essential ingredient of fashionable events where considerable coverage was given to who wore what. Presumably the morning papers were avidly searched to see if one's name was mentioned; it was ammunition in discreet gentlewomanly (perhaps) status and fashion rivalries.

The French Connection

Charles Alphand was no lightweight. Born in 1872, he was the son of Jean-Charles, an engineer and Director of Works in Paris who, from 1850 in collaboration with Baron Haussman and Leon Say, was responsible for the redesign of Paris and some of its most famous landmarks; his maternal grandfather was astronomer Herve Faye. Educated in Law, he specialised in private international law and arbitration; he joined the Diplomatic Service in 1902 to become chef de cabinet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for twenty years. He was one of the Ministry's main representatives at international conferences, viz. private law, bills of exchange, white slave traffic and assistance to foreigners, before 1914, and to the Armistice, Cannes, Genoa and Franco-Soviet conferences after 1918.

He was appointed Envoy Extraordinaire⁵ to Ireland, indicating how important France considered the relationship and received a fulsome government welcome, almost equivalent to a state visit.⁶ He was accompanied by his wife, son and three daughters in their late teens; another son, Herve, was by this time Inspector of Finance. He was economic advisor to De Gaulle during WW2 and later had an illustrious Ambassadorial career to NATO, UN and USA.

Madame Jeanne Alphanand was the daughter of the Comte Margerin de Cremont whose family traced their ancestry to a Leinster McGrian family who settled in France in the 14th century. Her father was an ardent Hibernophile, a co-founder, and later president, of L'Association de St. Patrice (Association of St. Patrick) in Paris, 1893. He was "a sensitive poet" who had "written verses on Ireland inspired by the very noblest sentiments".

Its inaugural meeting, presided by Viscount O'Neill de Tyrone, included Antoine d'Abbadie, Charles de Kirwan, A. Lecoy de la Marche, Canon E Connelly, General MacAdaras, Colonel MacBrady, A O'Callaghan, Nemours Godre, Charles O'Keenan, General O'Farrell, Count O'Kelly de Galway and Admiral O'Neill. Its aim was "to organise manifestations of sympathy for Nationalist Ireland with regard to her past and to her future, especially by the religious and patriotic celebration of the Irish Feast of St Patrick". It became "for Frenchmen and Irishmen alike a bond of sympathy between France and Ireland, a visible symbol of their union of soul, a renewed echo of the glorious past which consecrated, throughout the centuries, the brotherhood of the two noble nations".

Their 1910 AGM, "remarkable for its large attendance", included Maud Gonne, Mlle Barry O'Delaney, Count and Countess MacGregor de Glenstroe, M de Courcy MacDonnell, Princess Odescalchi, Viscountess de Milleville, Countess des Grottes, Countess de Ploeuc, Viscount du Coudray, Mlle Bouhon, Madam de Lannoy and Count du Hoix. On St. Patrick's day they "saw a monster gathering on the occasion of the Franco-Irish pilgrimage and in the evening a huge banquet and ball" attended by the "large Franco-Irish Colony in Paris, a colony professing the warmest sympathy with the Nationalist movement".⁷

It was this vision that informed the French minister's enthusiastic welcome by the Irish government and his effusive response when presenting his credentials to Governor General McNeill: "Ireland's nearest continental neighbour derives from the same ancient Celtic source that ardent patriotism and

⁵ The French consulate general had been promoted to a legation; he was the first Envoy Extraordinary. A consulate had been established in Ireland before 1921; consular agents back to the early 19th century were primarily French and found in most Irish ports (*Thom's Directories*)

⁶ He was only to stay three years, leaving Ireland in late 1932 to become Director of Office and Personnel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A commercial treaty and rugby match were successfully negotiated; the former was completed when a doubling of wine tax in 1929 was cancelled in the 1930 Budget

⁷ *The Irish abroad, a record of achievements of wanderers from Ireland*, Elliott O'Donnell, London, 1915 p. 256-8, available online – these influential émigré communities around Europe sometimes had an influence on their host country's recognition of the Irish Free State, Belgium being another example

love of liberty which are common to our two peoples.” It was the symbolism of shared history promoted by French émigrés of Irish descent and Irish who took pride in shared European ancestries and for whom it complemented their sense of identity as newly-independent citizens.

And to top it all their daughter, Suzanne, married Michael E Fitzgerald⁸, a Dublin solicitor, in Paris, on the 27th January 1932; officiated by Cardinal Jean Verdler, Archbishop of Paris. The reception, held at the Irish Free State Legation, was hosted by Madam Alphand and Countess O’Kelly, wife of the Irish Free State Minister.⁹ The occasion was redolent of nationalist fraternal symbolism also found in the host’s cotillion introduction.

The Walkout

This is who O’Kelly and Aiken were disrespectful to in their walkout on the arrival of the McNeills¹⁰. Whether they were accompanied by female companions is unknown¹¹. Some later commentaries say that they stormed out, or something similar, but the evidence suggests that they made their departure quietly, discreetly and early in the evening as the McNeills are recorded as arriving ‘early’. The dance was also attended by Francis Cremins and Sean Murphy¹² representing the Department of External Affairs, but whether they played any role in the departure, or subsequently, is unknown.

Presumably the Consul-General would have been taken aback but, being a consummate diplomat, would have passed over it in silence. The other diplomats would have certainly disapproved and may have seen the incident as an insult to McNeill, as he, a gentleman like them, was on friendly terms with the most senior ministers having received their letters of credence and welcomed them to Ireland. The incident would have made the diplomatic community a little wary and more diplomatic in their diplomacy. The placement of Josephine McNeill beside Madame Alphand in the group photograph (above) was hers by right, as the Governor General’s wife; it can also be taken as a subtle and silent reproof by the Alphands in recognition of their friendship epitomised by the wedding gift (app. 3).

However, it was the rest of the guests, which included two¹³ previous Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Desmond Fitzgerald and Patrick McGilligan, other luminaries of the previous government and a

⁸ For a note on the Fitzgerald family, see appendix 2

⁹ For a description of the wedding see, appendix 3

¹⁰ Accompanied by his ADC, Captain P Wall

¹¹ Mary Kate O’Kelly and possibly Maud Davin, director of the Dublin Municipal School of Music, who married Frank Aiken in 1934

¹² I have assumed he is the Mr Cremin (Department of Foreign Affairs) who only appears in the *Irish Times* list, rather than Con Cremin, who only joined the Department in 1935. Next on the list is Sean Murphy, presumably the future Ambassador, though not designated as DEA

¹³ Three, if Michael Hayes, the previous Speaker, is included. He served as acting Minister of Foreign Affairs for two months in 1922 between Arthur Griffith and Desmond Fitzgerald. Ireland wasn’t theoretically supposed

miscellany of some of the most important people in Irish life, who would have set Dublin buzzing over the next days.¹⁴

Monday's media reports of the dance have no mention of the incident bar an obscure reference in Monday's *Irish Press*, the last line "Later the Governor-General arrived: this was a surprise, and Mr. O'Kelly and Mr. Aiken then left". Why was it a surprise? Surely O'Kelly and Aiken would have known this event would be attended by the McNeills, particularly given their known friendship with the Alphands. They could have checked beforehand unless they were planning it in advance but then it wouldn't be a surprise. Or was it solely the *Irish Press* that was surprised and what would that imply with regard to the accuracy and political nous of its editors? Or was the newspaper trying to cover up that it had been planned by calling it a surprise?¹⁵

The Letters

It was this sentence that attracted McNeill's ire¹⁶. According to Joseph Walshe, in a July 8th letter briefing de Valera, McNeill wasn't aware of the incident on the night nor knew of it the following day, Sunday, when he was visited by Walshe, unless "he managed to conceal it perfectly from me if he did know", but only found out later. McNeill had asked Walshe, 23rd April, to lunch as "I am rather bothered about my official and personal self-respect, and you are the only person to whom I can explain my views".

This implies that McNeill only discovered the incident when he read the newspapers the following day and was one of the last to know, which would have hardly improved his temper when he wrote demanding an apology from de Valera on "discourtesies to the Governor General".

Did he overreact? Maybe he did, maybe it was the final straw of tension that was building up between him and government members since the election. Perhaps, because the incident had happened in such surroundings among personal friends, it was a humiliation too far. Could he have reacted differently?

to have a Minister of External Affairs at this time as the Irish Free State only came into existence in December, 1922. As Speaker he officially welcomed foreign dignitaries on behalf of the previous Government.

¹⁴ For guest list, see appendix 1

¹⁵ De Valera denied any involvement in the report in his reply to McNeill, citing the newspaper's independence

¹⁶ Conor Cruise O'Brien's version in *The Roots of my Preoccupation*, *The Atlantic*, July 1994, isn't correct; it's surprising that he didn't know given his experience. It therefore calls into question his interpretation of Walshe's continuation under de Valera when he had reputedly provided the media with anti-de Valera material prior to the 1932 election. There was continuity of all senior civil servants in the Department of External Affairs; de Valera was reliant on their expertise as their new (inexperienced in foreign affairs) Minister

Probably, if cooler heads had prevailed the whole incident could have been passed off as a misunderstanding or at least as an incident of little importance.¹⁷

However, many senior Fianna Fail politicians was hell-bent on publicly destroying the office at McNeill's expense, in spite of protestations to the contrary, when a rapprochement might have been more appropriate; where a compromise could be found that allowed McNeill the dignity of his office as Ireland's ceremonial representative until his term of office expired at the end of the year.

Though he stood by O'Kelly and Aiken, de Valera's first reply was conciliatory; he said that "The incident was no less embarrassing for them¹⁸ than for the Governor General, and the publicity which ensued might have seriously affected the public interest" and admitted that "The whole affair was unfortunate and regrettable, and should never have been allowed to occur".

It seems that there were beginning to be second thoughts; the treatment of McNeill was attracting negative publicity, something the new government was keen to avoid as they were still in the process of overcoming the internal and external disquiet caused by their election. There were also serious misgivings within Fianna Fail as well as outright disagreement from the Opposition, diplomatic disapproval¹⁹ and mixed feelings from Church hierarchies; plus it provided ammunition for Unionists.

De Valera requested that McNeill keep him informed regarding potential public affair clashes so they could be avoided and "There are other reasons why it is advisable that I should be kept informed of the Governor General's public engagements. It might very well happen on occasion that the attendance or non-attendance of the Governor General at a public function would have serious reactions which the Government might desire to avert". He concluded: "The entire situation is, as you are aware, delicate and difficult. Understanding and co-operation between the Governor General and the Government is essential."

Thus he gave McNeill first refusal on social engagements but maintained the right of veto over attendance. On the other hand, without consultation, he put the onus on McNeill to provide the information. It might have been more sensible to set up a (neutral) joint committee to supervise the acceptance of invitations and decide who went where and if functions, such as the forthcoming Eucharistic Congress, could be jointly attended.

However, further letters were exchanged to no effect as McNeill refused to compromise. There was no truce for the Eucharistic Congress in June; McNeill was not invited to the main Government reception in Dublin Castle, though he kept his links with the Catholic Hierarchy by attending Cardinal

¹⁷ The 1976 resignation of Cearbhall O'Dalaigh is another example of the potential conflict that can arise between heads of state and government within the Irish context

¹⁸ But whether they were embarrassed at the incident or the publicity of the incident is not clear

¹⁹ De Valera, as Minister of External Affairs, would have wanted to continue good relations with the diplomatic community; involving an embassy in an internal political issue wasn't a good start

McRory's reception and making the Vice-Regal Lodge available for the Phoenix Park Mass. At the same time he was hosting small parties at the Vice Regal Lodge, one at the beginning of the Horse Show in August included diplomats, presumably without consultation with the Government. Finally, came his threat to publish the correspondence.

Walshe completely misread McNeill when he wrote advising de Valera, July 8th, "that I regard the G. G.'s threat to publish as the purest bluff caused by annoyance at the withholding of an invitation from the State Reception. No G.G. with a grain of sanity would so jeopardise the very foundations of his office - and I can't imagine the very wildest advisers urging him to such a course. It would be exceedingly detrimental to the whole institution in the Commonwealth. And unless he gets quite out of hand he has no intention of carrying out his threat. We have other and better means of getting rid of the institution and I believe that a firm letter from you, refusing to agree to publication, will finish this phase."²⁰

But once McNeill, standing on his principles of not having received the apology to which he believed he was entitled, published the confidential correspondence in the *Irish Times* in July, against the "formal advice and direction from the Executive Council", there was no turning back. De Valera immediately demanded of King George V that he dismiss McNeill, refusing to say why, and it is somewhat ironic that it was the King who acted as mediator²¹ in the denouement of the acrimonious and messy stalemate by where de Valera retracted his demand on condition that McNeill would resign early, which he did on the 1st November.²²

Political and Constitutional Aftermath

Certainly the issue of foreign accreditation caused confusion for the Fianna Fail leadership; it is obvious that these practical consequences had not been considered. Domhnall Ua Buachalla accepted the letters of credence from the new French Minister in 1933 but subsequent acceptances devolved to de Valera (on his orders), as President of the Executive Council, until the accession of Douglas Hyde to the presidency in 1938.

²⁰ These letters are published in Documents on Irish Foreign Policy vol. IV <http://www.difp.ie/browse-volumes/volume.asp?VolumeID=4&st=nu>. It was an interesting editorial decision to include this correspondence on what was fundamentally an internal Irish dispute in a volume on foreign policy purely because one of the disputants theoretically owed his allegiance to a foreign power, viz. the King of England. It could equally be argued that the Irish Free State was a Dominion within the British Commonwealth with the same monarch as titular ruler, in other words he was King of Ireland as an independent Dominion and therefore not a 'foreigner' (unlike the Government of the UK).

²¹ Such were the constitutional ambiguities of the time, one can ask in which kingly role: King of England, Ireland or the Commonwealth?

²² De Valera Papers UCD P150/2220 for copies of the correspondence, newspaper cuttings and several memoranda with legal opinion regarding the Governor General's status, role, functions and responsibilities with discussions of "alternative lines of action". De Valera was later to regret his government's treatment of McNeill

Thus the nation's (de jure Irish Free State/de facto Irish Republic in conflicting and paradoxical counterpoise post Statute of Westminster) status changed from a de facto parliamentary republic (since McNeill was the de facto head of state²³) to a de facto presidential system and then back again. Given the political circumstances of Ireland's separation from the United Kingdom, innovative in terms of British Commonwealth constitutional development, there was bound to be teething problems.

It wasn't until 1949 that the de jure status of the nation and head of state was settled; and put to bed for once and for all, the constitutional contradictions that bedevilled and bewildered politicians from the Anglo-Irish Treaty till then, not to mention the occasional historian since.

Epilogue

After the resignation the McNeills lived privately until his death in London, 1938. Subsequently, she led an active life as media commentator and was involved with the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland, as honorary secretary, and Irish Countrywoman's Association, as chairwoman. She was a member of the advisory committee of the Department of External Affairs and represented Ireland at a UNESCO general assembly, Paris, in 1949. Under the Inter-Party Government she was appointed (Ireland's first female) Minister to the Netherlands in 1950 and subsequently served in Sweden briefly in 1955 followed by Switzerland and Austria, jointly, from 1956 until retirement in 1960.

She is said as having reconciled with de Valera when she sat him with him while recuperating from an eye operation in Switzerland when she was Minister there²⁴. However he wasn't in the country nor have any such operations in the years 1956-60, he last consulted a Swiss eye doctor in 1951. He did, however, have eye operations in Utrecht in 1952, while Taoiseach, when she was Minister to the Netherlands²⁵.



²³ It is difficult to argue that Domhnall Ua Buachalla was a head of state as his Gaelic title, *Seanascal* (from the Anglo-Norman meaning steward), makes it very clear that he was a servant of the state and was treated as such

²⁴ *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 2009, Josephine McNeill,

²⁵ Eamon de Valera Papers, UCD, P150, descriptive catalogue, p. xxxviii

Appendix 1 – The Guests

The dance was attended by c. 300 guests; this partial list comes from the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent*. Their spellings were not always accurate; i.e. Yann (Goblet) is rendered Guan.

The diplomats were Ministers, Consul-Generals, Consuls, Vice-Consuls, Chancellors, Commercial Attaches and Secretaries representing Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Uruguay and the USA. The married came with their wives; the unmarried sometimes came with an Irish person as dance companion. As the list shows, it was not de rigueur to come with a partner. They, not including Irish Honorary Consuls²⁶, made up c. 10-15% of total guests.

Others included: Lord Mayor Alfie Byrne, Lord and Lady Glenavy, Hon Briget Campbell, Lord and Lady Trimblestown, Miss Nixon, the McGillicuddy, Dr W Lombard Murphy, Miss Eva Murphy, Desmond Fitzgerald, Marquis, Marchioness and Miss MacSwiney, Patrick and Mrs McGilligan, Judge and Mrs Murnaghan, Donal and Mrs O’Sullivan, Miss Nancie Starkie, Mr and Mrs Fottrell, Master and Mrs Horan, Misses Grace, Mr and Mrs Molne, Sir Robert and Lady Tate, Miss Lowry, Mr and Mrs Orr Denby, John Gregg, Prof Yann and Madame Goblet²⁷, Prof J M O’Sullivan, Miss O’Sullivan, Mrs Reddin, Mr K Reddin, Miss Ringwood, Mr and Mrs Butler Bentley, Mr and Mrs Tindell, Mr and Mrs McGonigle, Mr and Mrs Sherlock, C and Mrs Lavery, Dr and Mrs Redmond, Dr and Mrs Meade, Dr J and Mrs Cunningham, M and Mrs Fitzgerald, J and Mrs Fitzgerald, Mr F Sutherland, Dr and Mrs Reddin, Dr and Mrs Bodkin, Dr H and Mrs Moore, Michael MacLiammor, Hilton Edwards, Dr J Magennis, Mrs and Miss B Cantwell, Major Kirkwood, Miss Joly West, Kevin and Mrs O’Sheil, Mr M J Walsh, Mr Cremin (Department of External Affairs), Sean Murphy, Prof Chauvire, L and Mrs O’Neil, Mr P Glynn, Miss Nora Little, Mr D Coffey, Miss Elaine Lambert, M and Mrs Jammet²⁸, M and Mrs Hayes, Prof and Mrs Eoin McNeill, Mr and Mrs Gavan Duffy, Mr and Mrs Hayes, Mr and Mrs Alibert, Master of Court and Mrs Horan, Miss Sheila Horan, Mr and Mrs Crampton, Miss Elaine Lambert, President and Mrs Coffey, Mr M Scott, M S Murphy, Mr and Mrs Ferguson, Mr and Mrs Cleary, Miss Lowry, D J McGuinness, Mrs Moore, Mr J Wilson, Vincent Kelly, Mrs Hanley, D and Mrs Johnston, Dr F and Mrs Lavery. Mr W Gilligan, Laurence and Mrs O’Neill, Mr Glynn, Mr and Mrs Macaulay, Miss Delaney, S and Mrs Spratley, Miss U Greene, Robert Greene, Louis Roche, Don Coffey, Mr A Nolan.

²⁶ Austria, Canada, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Norway, Roumania and Estancia, Uruguay

²⁷ Author of *La Transformation de la Géographie Politique de l’Irlande an 17 Siècle*; he gave two lectures on Petty ‘s Survey of Ireland the previous week and was given a reception at Earlsfort Terrace, hosted by Dr D J Coffey, President, University College, Dublin

²⁸ Were they responsible for the catering? <http://arrow.dit.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=jamres>

Appendix 2 – The Fitzgerald Family

Michael E Fitzgerald, solicitor, of Elm Park, Rathfarnham, “well known in legal and hunting circles”, was son of the late Michael E (Dublin merchant) and Agnes Fitzgerald (nee Flannery) of Lansdowne Road, Dublin; both born in County Mayo. They married before 1901 and had two children, twins Michael and Joseph, born 1905. Their mother died before and father after 1911²⁹. His and his brother’s guardian and tutor, Fr John Hooke, Curate of Haddington Road Church, celebrated the Mass in Paris. An aunt and probable male cousin were Mrs and S MacDonald.

His uncle was Martin Fitzgerald, wine merchant and last proprietor of the *Freemans Journal* (1919-24). He was imprisoned for a month in 1920 for publishing an article on British Army brutality and had the newspaper’s presses by the ‘irregulars’ destroyed for his denunciation of them and support of the Treaty, 1922. He appears to have been an intermediary between the Sinn Fein and the British Government, via Dublin Castle, at the beginning stages of Treaty negotiations. In 1922 he was nominated to the Senate by the Government, for his services in the dissemination of government propaganda, where he served until his death in 1927.³⁰

It was a busy time for that side of the family too; his eldest daughter, Brigit, married Brendan Robinson, Shropshire, UK, earlier in the month in Dublin.

Appendix 3 – The Paris Wedding

The wedding took place, 27th January 1932, at the Church of St Honore d’Eylau, Paris. The great nave was draped with French and Irish flags and decorated with arum lilies and white hortensia, and crowded with diplomatic and high society guests. The organist was Maitre Rangell backed by a full choir. The bridegroom entered to the peals of the Irish national anthem, accompanied by his aunt, Mrs MacDonald.

The bride’s wedding dress, a Jean Patou creation, was a white crepe robe of simple Grecian lines, made with 29 yards of material; and covered with a veil of Carrickmacross lace eight to nine yards long – a gift of Governor General James and Josephine McNeill. The bride’s train was borne by Mlle de Gerus and Jean Paul Alavy.

The bridesmaids, Marie Victoire Alphand, Marie-Elisabeth Stevenson, Annie de Sommervault, Marguerite Bouet-Williamel, Simone Rose, Micheline Destalleurs and Lydie Konigsberger wore white silk dresses with large dark red hats and carried white bouquets. The guard of honour, Andre Alphand, Michel Rose, Gerard le Pau de Ligny, Frederick Boland, Marc Morlet de Wengi, Jacques Wild, Jean Huet and S MacDonald wore Eton suits.

²⁹ 1901 Census, Northumberland Road and 1911 Census, Lansdowne Road

³⁰ Felix Larkin, ‘A great Daily Organ’: the Freeman’s Journal, 1763–1924, *History Ireland*, May/June 2006

The service was conducted by Rev John Hooke, Curate, Haddington Road Church, (previously guardian and tutor to the bridegroom), to the music of *Veni Creator Kyrie* (Beethoven), *Largo* (Handel), *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* (Bruckner), *Trinity Cantata* (Bach) and *Te Deum* (Handel). Cardinal Jean Verdier, Archbishop of Paris, officiated and spoke of the Alphan's brilliant career and "made happy allusions to Irish heroism and sacrifice and the traditional friendship with France, to which he said that this union and residence of the happy pair in Ireland would contribute".

The witnesses were Phillipe Berthelot, Secretary General of the French Foreign Office, General Bourgeois, Institute of France, Count O'Kelly, Irish Free State Minister and Dr J B Magennis. The civil ceremony was conducted by the mayor of the Marie, 16th Arrondissement, with the same witnesses.

The wedding reception and luncheon, hosted by Madame Alphan and Countess O'Kelly, was attended by 300 guests including Francis Cowley, Secretary to the Irish Legation, Mr Boland, Irish Legation, Mrs Meade, Mr and Mrs Rooney, P T Beasley and Mr S MacDonald. Of the 900 wedding presents, 200 came from Ireland. The honeymoon was spent in Switzerland, 'secret location', or France, Switzerland and Spain, according to the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* (who brought a photographer³¹) and *Irish Press*, 29th January; they all appear to have sent reporters.



Declaration of Interest

Three of the author's grandparents and an aunt attended the dance; the fourth could not, having died in 1925. These were my mother's parents, Polish Consul-General W Tadeusz and Janina Dobrzynski, and my father's mother and sister, Kathleen and Brenda Cantwell. I am 100% sure of the first two, but only 95% sure of the second. To explain, the *Irish Independent* lists Mrs Cantwell only; which fits as she was a wealthy Dublin merchant widow (Anglophile until it became unfashionable) who was very fond of high society events (she was also at the Robinson-Fitzgerald marriage, probably through the Cantwell and McDonald³² wine merchant connection). The *Irish Times* lists Miss B Cantwell only, which acted as a confirmation.

³¹ Marriage photo <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90270446>

³² He may be related to Peter McDonald MP founder of McDonalds, prior to the Cantwell partnership, though an Alexander MacDonnell, nephew, is listed as chief mourner at his 1891 funeral – the two surnames were interchangeable and often confused. One of his executors was Michael E Fitzpatrick, 20 Westland Row Dublin (Fitzgerald & Co., rectifying spirits and wine merchants). Dublin wine merchant families were interlinked and well-connected, i.e. Rev. John Hooke, before he entered the priesthood, and two brothers were wine merchant commercial clerks in 1901 (Census, Mount Pleasant Avenue). The Cantwell-McDonald magnetotelluric conductivity model is unconnected