

## Chartres, John Smith by Pauric J. Dempsey and Richard Hawkins

Chartres, John Smith (1862–1927), lawyer, civil servant, and diplomat, was born 5 October 1862 in Birkenhead, Wirrall, England, son of John Smith Chartres, staff surgeon in the British army, and formerly of 30 Great Charles St., Dublin, and Margaret Chartres (née Henry) of Clones, Co. Monaghan. The Chartres family, originally French huguenots, had been established in Ireland since c.1650. During the early years of Chartres's life his family were quartered for a time in the Curragh and at Dundalk, Co. Louth, but after his father's death (1875) they resided in England. Chartres was educated at Wellington College, Berkshire (1876–9), the University of London, and the King's Inns, Dublin, and for a short time in Germany. He did not complete either the London or the King's Inns course. Before entering the King's Inns (1884), he worked as a teacher at Glenside, Holywood, Co. Down. In January 1885 he was admitted to membership of the Inn of the Middle Temple, where he was Powell prizeman in common law, but was not called to the bar of England and Wales until January 1908. His practice was on the south-eastern circuit. He wrote several law books, largely of judicial interpretations; these included a book on the Public Authorities Protection Act, 1893 (1912), another on the workmen's compensation act (1915), and two on the munitions of war acts (1916, 1917).

In 1904 he was appointed the first head of *The Times's* intelligence (news research, indexing, and reference) department; he remained there until 1914, when he became an economic correspondent for the *Daily Graphic*. In letters to *The Times* (25 March, 3, 28 April 1915) Chartres proposed the foundation of an industrial reserve to address the labour shortage problem caused by the war; this was done, and he became in time the reserve's honorary commandant. When the Ministry of Munitions was set up (June 1915), Chartres was appointed to its intelligence and record branch; within three years he became a section director in the labour intelligence and statistics section, where his responsibilities included investigating and reporting on subversive labour groups. He is reported to have visited Ireland in 1916–17 on ministry business with Kynoch's munitions factory at Arklow, Co. Wicklow, and to have declined the offer of an OBE in December 1917, but neither assertion can be substantiated. After the war he joined the Ministry of Labour, and became a principal officer of the secretariat and general branch.

Chartres became involved in Irish politics in 1917, when on meeting Arthur Griffith (qv) he agreed to contribute articles to Griffith's newspaper *Nationality*. Fired by the heroism and idealism of 1916, he adopted the pseudonym 'HI' (*haud immemor*, 'let them not be forgotten'). These articles so aped Griffith's style that, when pressed for time, Griffith would publish articles by 'HI' under his own name. Political journalism for Griffith was soon augmented by gun-running for Michael Collins (qv), and in 1918 Collins recruited Chartres as an informant. Sporting a

monocle on a black ribbon, and blessed with the enunciation of the English upper middle class, this middle-aged, lame gentleman was in appearance initially above suspicion. To assist his surreptitious activities he obtained (1920) a transfer to the Irish branch of the Ministry of Labour, as a section chief. As political tension heightened in Ireland, Chartres came under suspicion; he retired from the British civil service, and became the republican envoy or consul to Berlin in June 1921. Between employments he may have worked with the Irish White Cross, but this remains uncertain. In Berlin, in addition to his official links with the dáil's Department of Foreign Affairs, he maintained direct contact with Collins.

Within months of the Berlin appointment, he was recalled to take up the position of second secretary to the Irish treaty delegation. In the London negotiations he sat between Griffith and Collins, and opposite Lloyd George. Aged 59, he was the oldest member of the Irish delegation. He attended all but one of the seven plenary conferences, and was also present at the only meeting of the committee on financial relations. He contributed five personal memoranda for the Irish delegation, and in cooperation with Erskine Childers (qv) made a major contribution to four official Irish memoranda. As a lawyer, Chartres was given the key task of drafting the constitutional terms for Ireland's relationship with the British crown. He pressed hard for the concept of 'external association' espoused by Éamon de Valera (qv), and devised a compromise whereby a free and undivided Ireland, voluntarily associating with the British commonwealth, would acknowledge the crown as the titular head of the commonwealth, but only in matters of common concern. This formula, which became known as 'the Chartres crown', did not go far enough for British sensibilities. However, part of the proposal was embodied in article 4 of the treaty, by which 'true faith and allegiance' was sworn to the constitution of the Irish Free State rather than directly to the king.

Chartres was in Berlin (where he may have been the source of reports that the republican position was being jeopardised in the negotiations) for part of early November, and left London again before the treaty was signed. Though he had been allied with Childers, Robert Barton (qv), and George Gavan Duffy (qv), Chartres supported the treaty, owing to his respect for Griffith and Collins. In January 1922 (when he adopted a Gaelic form of his name, 'Eoin Mac Seartarris', in writing to Collins) he was one of the Irish envoys to the Irish Race Congress in Paris. In the same month his book *The bloody English*, virulently anti-English in sentiment, began serial publication in the US under the name 'Edward Seaton'. For a brief spell (March–June 1922), he replaced Seán T. O'Kelly (qv) as envoy in Paris. In July, however, he came under attack on the initiative of Charles Bewley (qv), with whom his relations had not been good. In the context of intensifying civil war, material prepared by Chartres earlier in 1922 for the *Irish Bulletin* (the official propaganda organ) was represented as equivocal in its support of the provisional government. As late as September he still hoped for a larger role for the Berlin office; but his position was undermined by the support of Ernest Blythe (qv) and Joseph Walshe (qv) for Bewley, by the

appointment of Desmond FitzGerald (qv) as the new minister for external affairs, and by the transfer of Nancy Wyse Power (qv) to other duties. At the end of October his post was terminated, and in December he returned to Dublin.

In January 1923 Gordon Campbell (qv), secretary of the Irish Department of Industry and Commerce, appointed Chartres to the department's statistical committee and later made him the editor of the *Irish Trade Journal*. The two men had worked in the British Ministry of Munitions and the Irish branch of the Ministry of Labour at the same time. In 1927, under the pen name 'Fear Faire' ('The Watcher'), Chartres wrote three articles for the *Nation*, a weekly journal published by Seán T. O'Kelly as a propaganda vehicle for Fianna Fáil. These articles, indicating an alienation from the Free State, were Chartres's last political act, as he died 14 May 1927 at his Dublin home, Lisieux, Dartry Road, Rathgar, aged 65 – so suddenly, that he died alone and intestate, after a short illness, leaving about £480 in Ireland and about £860 in England. He was buried in Mount Jerome cemetery on 17 May. Many allegations have been made that he was a British agent, but to date no evidence whatsoever has been found to substantiate this.

Chartres married (1902) Anna ('Annie') Vivanti, a renowned Italian novelist, poet, and dramatist, and a friend of the writers Gabriele d'Annunzio and Giosuè Carducci. At the Paris peace conference she had worked most effectively as a secretary to O'Kelly. Chartres and Vivanti had a happy though unconventional relationship, largely living apart; Charles Bewley alleged that they met once every year in Vienna, for a week. They had one daughter: Violet, a remarkable child violinist, who at the age of nine had appeared in concert at the Queen's Hall, London, and was a pupil of Otakar Sevcik (1852–1934), professor at the Prague conservatory. Violet died during an air raid early in the second world war; Annie was interned at Arrezzo because of her German Jewish origins, and died (1942) in Turin, shortly after her release.

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*Times* obit., 18 May 1927; Uinseann MacEoin, *Survivors* (1980); Charles Bewley, *Memoirs of a wild goose* (1989); Brendan Sexton, *Ireland and the crown 1922–1936* (1989); Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins* (1990); Frank Pakenham, *Peace by ordeal* (1992 ed.); Brian P. Murphy, *John Chartres, mystery man of the treaty* (1995); Ronan Fanning, Michael Kennedy, Dermot Keogh, and Eunan O'Halpin (ed.), *Documents on Irish foreign policy, i: 1919–1922* (1998).

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