

OLLSCOIL na hÉIREANN

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY:

PROFESSOR RONAN FANNING, on 2 December 2015 in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*, on **SIR DAVID GOODALL**

A Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

Sir David Goodall was educated at Ampleforth and at Trinity College Oxford where he achieved a first class honours degree before entering the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1956. He had served in Austria, Germany, Indonesia and Kenya before his appointment in 1982 as the Foreign Office's representative in the Cabinet Office.



Sir David and Lady Goodall

Although David Goodall had no previous professional involvement in shaping Irish policy, he was already very well informed about Ireland because of an enduring interest in Irish history and genealogy. He had published widely on the history of the Goodall family in County Wexford in the eighteenth century. Among his more colourful discoveries was the

response of John Goodall when he was disqualified from voting for an anti-Castle candidate in a Wexford by-election in 1754 because he was married to 'a "popish wife": he protested that his wife had formally recanted before their marriage and had a certificate of conformity to prove it. When accused of having been married to her before that, he made the memorable reply that "there was a ceremony or sort of ceremony, but he did not look upon it as a marriage as there was no consummation in consequence of it, nor even a ceremony of marriage as he was drinking all the time".

Such was David Goodall's expertise in historical research that he was appointed President of the Irish Genealogical Research Society from 1992 until 2010. A frequent visitor to Ireland, he is also a gifted watercolourist one of whose paintings immortalises the charm of Howth Harbour before the construction of the marina.

David Goodall wanted an end to the corrosive sterility that had long characterised exchanges on Northern Ireland between British and Irish governments. The point was well illustrated by his exchange with a distinguished professor and former member of the Senate of this university, John A. Murphy, that I chanced to overhear in the bar of Balliol College during the 1983 conference of the British-Irish Association. 'Are you', asked John A. – for it was a time of night when as those of you know John A. will understand he was as interested in singing as in serious conversation – 'are you addressing your remarks to me, or are you merely talking to yourself?' 'I am talking to myself in the hope that I may be

overheard' replied David Goodall. 'It seems to be the only way of conducting Anglo-Irish relations.'

But the path to another way had opened only days before after the inaugural meeting in Dublin of a 'co-ordinating committee' of Irish and British officials mandated by Garret FitzGerald and Margaret Thatcher to identify areas for closer co-operation between their governments when Michael Lillis, then the Assistant Secretary in charge of the Anglo-Irish division in the Department of Foreign Affairs and the head of the Irish team, invited David Goodall 'to take a quiet walk with him along the Grand Canal'.

David Goodall immediately recognised what he has described in his fascinating but as yet unpublished memoir on 'The Making of the Anglo-Irish Agreement' as Michael Lillis's 'astonishingly far-reaching ideas' involving 'the possibility of radically new arrangements for Northern Ireland'. The Grand Canal dialogue evolved into what became known as the Nally-Armstrong negotiations, named after Dermot Nally and Robert Armstrong, the British and Irish Cabinet secretaries, that culminated in the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed by Garret FitzGerald and Margaret Thatcher at Hillsborough Castle on 15 November 1985.

The 'basic equation' underpinning the Agreement has been best described in the Goodall memoir: 'according the Irish some form of political involvement in Northern Ireland in return for a formal Irish recognition of the Union'. It marked the moment when, again in David Goodall's words,

'an inter-governmental relationship that had been adversarial became co-operative'. The other essential element of the Agreement was its immunisation against the fate of the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973: that what the two governments had agreed could never be overturned by the opposition of Northern Ireland's Unionist majority. Unionists were consequently persuaded that sharing power with the nationalist minority was their only escape route from the Irish government's continuing involvement in the governance of Northern Ireland. And Unionists know to this day that the Hillsborough Agreement remains the default position of both governments if the power-sharing executive established under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 were to collapse.

A remarkable aspect of the Nally-Armstrong negotiations, as Charles Moore has pointed out in the second volume of his biography of Margaret Thatcher, 'was that the essential aim of both the British and Irish official machines was to persuade' a staunchly Unionist British prime minister 'into doing what she did not want to do'. And he records how David Goodall, 'who, of all the participants, probably gave the greatest intellectual attention to the entire subject and recorded it most fully', acknowledged that "'It is very fair to say that we were all trying to persuade her... We did a bit conspire... We did have moments when she was being terribly difficult and unreasonable.'" But that acknowledgement went hand-in-hand with a flinty determination to advance Britain's national interest.

When David Goodall was recently interviewed for an RTE documentary to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement he concluded on this note:

'My paternal grandfather came from Wexford and I think we were on both sides in the 1798 rebellion. And I'd always hoped to be to do something to improve relations between Britain and Ireland. So I felt a good deal of satisfaction.'

Those of us gathered here today feel much more than satisfaction. The honour that the National University of Ireland now confers upon him is but a token of our appreciation of his role in bringing about an agreement that transformed the British-Irish relationship. And for that both countries should be forever grateful.

**PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE
UNIVERSITAS:**

**Praesento vobis hunc meum filium, quem scio tam moribus quam
doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad
gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque
tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.**

