



■ Clockwise from top right: Sophie Toscan du Plantier who was murdered 20 years ago next month near Schull; Ian Bailey, who denies any involvement in the killing; and Marguerite and Georges Bouniol, parents of Sophie Toscan du Plantier.

# Toscan du Plantier family meet 20 years on from killing



**Lara Marlowe**  
in Paris

Friends and family feel let down by the Irish legal system as they continue to seek justice

The mood was unusually cheerful at the annual general assembly of the Association for the Truth About the Murder of Sophie Toscan du Plantier (ASSOPH) on Monday night.

Since the last general assembly, the French judge Nathalie Turquey has issued an *ordonnance de renvoi* summarising evidence against Ian Bailey, a British citizen living in west Cork, and sending him to trial for voluntary homicide in the Paris *assizes* high criminal court.

ASSOPH was created nine

years ago to help Georges and Marguerite Bouniol, the ageing parents of the French woman who was murdered 20 years ago next month near Schull.

Monday night's meeting was held in the neo-Renaissance wedding room at the town hall of Paris's second district, where Mrs Bouniol, who was then deputy mayor, married her daughter to the film producer Daniel Toscan du Plantier in June 1990.

Mrs Bouniol opened the assembly by thanking some 50 members of ASSOPH "from the bottom of my heart" for attending.

The victim's uncle, Jean-Pierre Gazeau, said ASSOPH's objective was truth and justice. "For the time being, we have neither truth nor justice, but now we have a suspect who is also an accused... If he is convicted, we can really fight to obtain justice, because a convict must be punished."

## Scratches

Alain Spilliaert, a lawyer for Ms Toscan du Plantier's family, listed elements that led Judge Turquey to charge Mr Bailey: "The presence of scratches on his hands and a cut on his forehead, absent on Sunday night and present on the morning of December 23rd; the absence of

an alibi during the night of December 22nd-23rd, his statements having been confused and contradictory and refuted by credible testimony; his knowledge before everyone else, aside from the investigators, of the scene of the crime and his rapid presence on the scene; repeated confessions before third persons; Marie Farrell's withdrawal of her testimony in suspicious circumstances; a bonfire on December 26th where witnesses said clothing was burned..."

Mr Bailey has denied any involvement in the murder of Ms Toscan du Plantier, and denies ever making admissions of such involvement.

Speaking at the Paris event, James McGill, ASSOPH's Irish lawyer, said: "I feel a certain sense of trepidation defending Irish procedures here, because they have been truly abominable."

The office of the Director of Public Prosecutions concluded years ago that it did not have sufficient evidence to put Mr Bailey on trial in Ireland. In 2012, the Supreme Court overturned a High Court decision to extradite him to France.

Judge Turquey has now issued a second European arrest warrant. One of the Supreme Court's objections, that the orig-



**“Twenty years is a long time. Some of us who were children are parents today. Our lives have changed, evolved, and yet this room is still full Pierre-Louis Baudey, Sophie Toscan du Plantier's son**

inal warrant did not make clear the purpose was for trial, no longer stands. But the second reason, the court's interpretation of the Irish law transposing the EU's 2002 framework accord on European arrest warrants, still stands.

"It is absolutely foreseeable that a further request for his surrender on the basis of the existing law will fail," Mr McGill said. Under Irish law as it now stands, Ireland cannot extradite Mr Bailey to France because he is British.

Circumstances have changed since the last Supreme Court ruling. "The political landscape has changed considerably since the UK decision to leave the EU," Mr McGill said. "Our politicians will be very conscious of that."

Three of the five justices who took the decision have passed away or retired, and an intermediate court of appeals has been established between the High Court and the Supreme Court, further complicating extradition.

## Defective

Mr McGill believes the warrant will be rejected again, unless Dáil Éireann changes what he regards as a defective Irish law transposing the EU directive. The process could be completed "easily and quickly", he said.

Laurent Pettiti, another lawyer for ASSOPH, said the association was filing a third suit with the European Commission, over what it regards as Ireland's failure to fulfil its obliga-

tion under European law to extradite Mr Bailey.

The commission rejected two earlier suits, but Mr Pettiti believes the fact that Mr Bailey has been charged and is wanted for trial in France may make a difference.

## Violent deaths

Anne Delcassian, an Irish woman whose sister, Irene White, was murdered in Ireland 11 years ago, said that according to records kept by Women's Aid, 209 women have died violently in Ireland since 1996.

"In 33 cases, including those of Sophie and Irene, no one has been held accountable... It's clear that the justice system in Ireland is not working. The Irish system is rotten," she said.

Pierre-Louis Baudey, Ms Toscan du Plantier's son, was a teenager when his mother was murdered.

"Twenty years is a long time," he said. "Some of us who were children are parents today. Our lives have changed, evolved, and yet this room is still full."

Mr Baudey spends holidays at his mother's home in west Cork. "Ireland is part of my life. It's part of my children's lives. We are not against Ireland. We are asking for a public debate on the evidence."