



MEMBERS' BULLETIN NO. 39

of July 1, 2026

ASSOCIATION FOR THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MURDER OF SOPHIE TOSCAN DU PLANTIER née BOUNIOL

A WORD FROM THE ASSOPH PRESIDENT, JEAN-PIERRE GAZEAU

Reports of new developments in the investigations conducted in Ireland continue to emerge. They remain fairly enigmatic, however, as the police authorities – the Cold Case Review Team and the Investigation Team – continue to maintain great discretion regarding the progress of their work. One may nonetheless assume that the search for DNA traces, carried out using cutting-edge techniques used for the first time in Ireland in this type of investigation, has not produced the decisive results that were hoped for.

Moreover, new media positions are once again attempting to rewrite the judicial history of this case.

Even so, after almost thirty years of waiting, we can neither give up nor resign ourselves to abandoning our quest for the truth. Despite the disappointments, the moments of discouragement, and the gradual disappearance of key witnesses – including, most recently, Shirley Foster, Sophie's neighbour who discovered her body on the morning of 23 December 1996 – we continue the vigilance and the actions that our association has carried out steadily for eighteen years. Now more than ever, our determination remains intact: to finally understand what happened at Toormore during the night of 22 to 23 December 1996, and to ensure that the full truth is established about Sophie's murder.

But this bulletin also carries some very moving news. Thirty years after the tragedy, an editorial project will soon allow the public to discover a previously unpublished text by Sophie, a testimony to her deep love for Ireland. This publication will be a particularly moving tribute to her personality, her talent as a writer, and her sensitivity.

THE IRISH TRUTH, ERIN'S ARLÉSIENNE?

The rumours of a breakthrough in the Irish investigations, reported in the previous bulletin, ultimately appear to have been nothing but hot air. Jim Sheridan's "fake news", meanwhile, no longer causes any stir, so that nothing has in fact come out of Ireland. After thirty years of investigation into the search for Sophie's murderer, killed on 23 December 1996, only the French truth remains: that of a guilty Ian Bailey, convicted in absentia to 25 years in prison.

DNA analysis, the Irish authorities' last hope?

The M-Vac method, a cutting-edge DNA analysis technique

Much hope arose from the widely publicised use of a new American DNA analysis method for "difficult" samples – for example, porous materials: the M-Vac method, headquartered in the United States.

The method consists of vacuuming up dust or other deposits present on porous materials in order to make them suitable for DNA testing.

This cutting-edge technique was used in Ireland for the first time in the context of Sophie's case.

On the exhibits in Sophie's murder case: much effort, but results are still awaited!

The Cold Case Review Team wished to apply the M-Vac DNA analysis method to exhibits collected since December.

- Desmond McTiernan, then head of this team, travelled to Bantry to draw up the list of 246 exhibits, select those of interest for the method, and search for certain missing items – including the barrier closing off the access track to the house. The number of items analysed thus fell from 246 to 104, then to 19, and finally to only 8 (a stone, a slab, a breeze block, another stone, a hammer, boots...). DNA collection also included Pierre-Louis Baudey-Vignaud, in order to be able to rule out certain traces.

- The Irish forensic services were mobilised, and all three Irish police services cooperated well with the M-Vac company, based in Salt Lake City. In July 2025, Jared Bradley, the originator of this method, travelled to Dublin to work on the exhibits; Desmond McTiernan, for his part, travelled to the United States in liaison with the FBI.

- At this stage, no precise DNA match has been obtained, but analyses are continuing, in particular on one of Sophie's boots.

THE 1 MAY 2026 MEETING BETWEEN ASSOPH AND THE IRISH INVESTIGATORS

At the request of Jean-Pierre Gazeau, a meeting was held on Thursday 1 May at the office of James MacGuill, in Dublin, with the Irish police teams. Jean-Pierre Gazeau had travelled from Poland; Alain Spilliaert took part by videoconference. Present on the Irish side were: Desmond McTiernan, until recently head of the Cold Case Review Team and now responsible for new duties; Paul J. Murphy, his successor; Eamonn J. Brady, head of the Bantry Garda; Patrick J. Keegan, of the Garda; and Jennifer Kavanagh, James McGuill's assistant, who was absent as he was required in court.

The meeting lasted nearly two hours and provided a full overview of the work carried out by the Irish police since 2024. Unfortunately, the answers given to ASSOPH's questions cannot be considered satisfactory:

- No conclusive results for the DNA analyses, even carried out with tools as advanced as the M-Vac method (see above).
- Regarding witness statements: 340 people have been interviewed, and the search is not yet complete.
- The search of Ian Bailey's home, in early 2024: we do not know its possible results.
- Nothing new regarding victimology, i.e. research concerning the victim herself.
- No date has been set for the end of the investigation, and we have no timetable.

In conclusion, the meeting – which nonetheless helped keep pressure on the Irish investigators – did not produce any genuinely tangible result with regard to the investigation itself.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S PROCEDURE AGAINST IRELAND REMAINS PENDING

The formal notice sent to Ireland by the European Commission in October 2020, requiring it to bring its legislation into line with the requirements of the European directive on the European arrest warrant, led on 7 May 2025 to a reasoned opinion being issued to Ireland. This was to be followed, on 7 July, by referral to the Court of Justice, raising hopes of a likely ruling against Ireland – but this step has publicly led to nothing.

According to the latest information, the procedure nonetheless reportedly remains open at the level of the European Commission, dormant.

ASSOPH REFERS THE MATTER TO THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE

In recent weeks, several articles in the Irish press have reported on the initiatives of Robert Sheehan, former solicitor for the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), taken up by Mr Frank Buttimer, Ian Bailey's former solicitor, seeking to call into question the conviction handed down by the Paris Assize Court.

In response to these steps, the President of ASSOPH sent a letter to the French Minister of Justice, Gérard Darmanin.

This letter notably recalls that:

- The conviction of 31 May 2019 resulted from a regular judicial procedure, conducted in accordance with the rules of French law;
- The scientific investigations currently under way in Ireland are still ongoing and do not permit any definitive conclusion;
- It would be particularly worrying if individual interventions by former foreign officials could suggest that a final decision of the French justice system might be called into question on the basis of mere speculation.

Our association remains deeply committed to the search for the truth, but also to respect for the independence of French justice.

A TEXT BY SOPHIE TO BE PUBLISHED IN IRELAND

Amid the difficulties of recent years, one particularly moving piece of news deserves to be shared.

Thanks to the initiative of journalist Lara Marlowe, the Irish publishing house *Lilliput Press* wishes to publish *L'amour de la terre* ("Love of the Land"), a text written by Sophie Toscan du Plantier, accompanied by illustrations by Dermot Flynn.

Lara Marlowe, who received this manuscript from Marguerite Bouniol shortly after the tragedy, will write the preface.

This publication is planned to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Sophie's death.

Far more than a tribute, this book will allow the Irish public to discover the woman whom many today know only through the tragedy of December 1996: a woman passionate about nature, deeply attached to Ireland, and possessed of genuine literary sensitivity.

For her family, as for our association, this project is a source of particular emotion. Making Sophie known as she truly was, in the full richness of her humanity and her artistry, is undoubtedly the finest response that can be given to those who would seek to reduce her memory to the mere circumstances of her murder.

THE ASSOPH GENERAL MEETING OF DECEMBER 2026: TOWARDS THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Our next annual general meeting will be held at the end of the year. As the thirtieth anniversary of Sophie's murder approaches, ASSOPH will continue its commitment along three priorities:

- Vigilantly monitoring the investigations conducted in Ireland;
- Defending the judicial truth established by the French courts;
- Preserving and passing on Sophie's memory.

Our fight is not limited to the search for judicial truth: it is also a duty of remembrance. The time will then have come to ask ourselves, as well as Ireland, fundamental questions such as: "Why such a failure on the part of the Irish authorities, in the face of a crime so violent and so far from discreet?"

CALL FOR MEMBERSHIP DUES AND POSSIBLE DONATIONS

With Ian Bailey's death, and despite his conviction in May 2019 to 25 years in prison by the Paris Assize Court, the fight for truth and justice for Sophie is not over. ASSOPH will still need to call on its French and Irish lawyers to help it get Ireland to stop its delaying tactics. This fight will also involve a firm response to attempts – which some now appear tempted to pursue – to rewrite a pseudo-truth with no basis in fact.

If you wish to support ASSOPH's fight for truth and justice regarding Sophie's murder, you may pay your 2026 membership dues (€30) and, if you wish, make an additional donation.

Surname:First Name:Tel : (.....).....
email @.....
Address:.....

Additional donation (optional):€

Date :

Signature :

IMPORTANT

Bank cheques made out to "ASSOPH" should be sent, together with the membership and/or donation form, to ASSOPH's NEW ADDRESS:

**ASSOPH - c/o Mr Jean-Pierre GAZEAU
5 rue des rocs – 86300 - Chauvigny**

A bank transfer is also possible, to:

LA BANQUE POPULAIRE VAL DE FRANCE Account holder: **ASS ASSOPH**
IBAN : **FR76 1870 7007 3132 3214 5691 860** BIC : **CCBPFRPPVER**

Membership dues and/or donations can also be made via HelloAsso :
www.helloasso.com

(<https://www.helloasso.com/associations/association-pour-la-verite-sur-l-assassinat-de-sophie-toscan-du-plantier-nee-bouniol/adhesions/bulletin-d-adhesion>)

(NOTE: the French administration has unfortunately dropped the "i" from "association" in the web address)