

SATURDAY JULY 22, 1995

Glenstal monk throws light on Treaty's 'mystery man'

By **PATRICIA FEEHILY**

A BOOK to be published this week throws light on the "mystery man" of republicanism at the time of the Treaty.

Among the less documented facts of republican history between 1920 and 1923 were the attempts by the IRA to secure assistance from both Mussolini and from Hitler.

Both missions are recounted for the first time in the new book, *John Chartres - Mystery Man of the Treaty*, by Glenstal monk, Brian P Murphy.

John Smith Chartres, a one-time British intelligence chief became secretary to the conference on the Irish side.

According to the author, Mussolini, in 1920, promised to provide free arms if a boat and crew could be found to transport them, and in 1923 contact was made by the IRA with Hitler's Nazi organisation in Munich, where it was ascertained that the Nazis were prepared to sell arms.

It is recorded, however that business, if done, would have to be concluded



Brian Murphy . . . new book on Treaty. (LL)

months before the Munich putsch.

But Brian Murphy's book is about John Chartres, the man who told Sean T O'Kelly that the response to the Easter Rising among his colleagues at supper made him realise that he was not an Englishman but an Irishman.

"All my sympathy was with Ireland, and I decided that I would have to fight for her," he is reputed to have stated.

The now famous Treaty photograph of the Irish plenipotentiaries and the secretary contain the well known names of Arthur Griffith, Collins, Duggan, Barton, Gavan Duffy and

name him.

"He stands on the extreme right of the photograph, upright, portly and middle-aged. He was John Chartres, the second secretary to the conference. Frank Pakenham, in his masterly work on the Treaty, said that he was a mystery man throughout the Treaty negotiations. He has remained a mystery man to this day."

Brian Murphy's attempt to unravel the mystery is fascinating.

Mr Chartres, a native of Birkenhead was called to the Bar in 1908. In 1915 he joined the Ministry of Munitions and became a section chief in the Ministry of Labour after the war.

Both departments had offices in Dublin, and Mr Chartres travelled over and back several times. His work was mainly focused on the activities of civilian subversive groups. But his attitude to the English war effort changed after seeing the way in which the Easter rebellion was suppressed.

The author traces the initial contacts between Mr Chartres and Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, and his appointment as republican envoy to Berlin in 1921. A gun running connection between Mr Chartres and Joe McGarrity, an American IRR leader, is also put

ticular responsibility for drafting the formula of the Oath and on matters to do with Irish recognition of the Crown.

But the question posed by the author remains: Was Mr Chartres a genuine convert to the Irish cause or was he, as anti-Treaty republicans still claim, a plant of British intelligence?

The mystery of Mr Chartres has not been solved, but his life and work has been opened up in way in which his contributions can be assessed. Incidentally, the story of John Chartres by Brian Murphy also sheds new light on Michael Collins at a time when the Collins legend has become the stuff of Hollywood glitz.

John Chartres - Mystery Man of the Treaty, by Brian P Murphy, is published this week by Irish Academic Press, and costs £24.99 in hardback.