

THE WORST 'BEST MAN' EVER

PETER GORDON

At the tender age of 55, a first cousin of my mother decided it was time for him to get married. He travelled from his home in Edgeworthstown, Co Longford, to our home in Mohill to ask my mother's permission for me to be his Best Man at his forthcoming nuptials. For some reason, best known to himself, he did not bother consulting me. My mother gave him the green light and wished him all the best.

A few weeks later I headed for Dublin and Wynne's Hotel where the reception was due to be held. I arrived at the hotel on Friday evening. After the usual pleasantries, he handed me two little purses — one containing a gold sovereign and the other a gold ring for the marriage ceremony. I put them into my wallet and duly forgot about them. Being 20 years of age I decided to go to a dance in the upmarket Metropole Ballroom where Phil Murtagh and his fifteen-piece orchestra were on the rostrum. I arrived back to the hotel around 2am having had a great night of dancing.

Next morning we got ready for the Church — St Michael & St John on the Quays. I stood at the Altar beside my cousin. During the ceremony he whispered to me to "Get the ring and the sovereign." I had not the faintest idea what he meant. I said, "Pardon?" He repeated what he'd already said. I said, "I don't know what you're talking about." He then jogged my memory by saying,

"Remember the little purses I gave you last evening?" At that point, I took out my wallet to retrieve the sovereign and the ring. The Sacristan was very impatient and told me to hurry up. My hands started to shake — so much so that I could not open the wallet. I handed my cousin the wallet and told him that the two items were in it. After the Ceremony, it was time to go to the Sacristy to sign the Register. I made an error and signed in the place for the Celebrant. My name then needed to be deleted after which, I signed in the proper place.

Some photographs to record the occasion were taken outside the Church. Afterwards, the whole party returned to Wynne's Hotel for the Reception. In the interest of balance, I should mention that the bride was also of a tender age. Next to me at the table was Erskine Childers — guest of honour. At the time Mr Childers was the T D for Longford and Minister for Tourism and Fisheries. Later he was President of Ireland from June 25th, 1973 to November 17th, 1974.

The Wedding happened to be scheduled for the same weekend as the Horse Show in Ballsbridge. I was anxious to attend the Show to view the exhibits and listen to the Garda Band or the Army No.1 Band. Earlier in the year, there had been a General



Aogán Ó Fearghail President of the GAA autographing a copy the History of Mohill GAA Club. In the centre is Peter Gordon, in the company of Jerry McGovern, President of the Connacht Council GAA.

Election and Mr Childers spoke at the platform in Mohill on behalf of the local Fianna Fail candidate. That time he spoke for an hour — either he had a lot to say or he was filibustering to keep the candidate from the opposition party from speaking — take your pick. My thinking was that if Mr Childers was to repeat his marathon speaking of Mohill then the Show would be over by the time I'd reach Ballsbridge. After he had spoken for about two or three minutes he paused for a few seconds — either for effect or to draw breath. At this, I jumped up, thanked Mr Childers and introduced the next speaker. The speeches were all concluded in about half an hour. After the meal, I headed to the Horse Show which proved to be just wonderful.

Strange to relate I have never been asked to be Best Man since that eventful day in 1956. I wonder why?