

The Secret marriage of Rose Anna Shedlock and Émile Roux

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Frances Hoggan (née Morgan, 1843-1927) was linked to two secrets that remained hidden for over 130 years. She was responsible for the first but may have been unaware of the second.

She was from a rich and influential Carmarthenshire family – the Philipps of Cwmgwili. When in 1870 she graduated MD Zurich she was the first British woman to acquire an MD in Europe, and her marriage to George Hoggan (MD Edin) in 1874 was the first between two qualified doctors in Britain. She subsequently had a relatively short but distinguished medical career, and had an important influence on the education of women, on public health matters and on the ill treatment of coloured people and vivisection. However none of this would have been possible had she not hidden the fact that in Brussels in October 1861, after time spent studying in Paris, she gave birth to a daughter, named Elise Morgan, who was brought up by her and her own mother, Georgiana, who many believed to be Elise's mother. Elise married a Welsh Anglican minister and the family emigrated to Canada in 1911. Her descendants were convinced that Elise did not realise Frances was her mother; but some realised that the details of Elise's Belgian birth records had clearly been fabricated, and two of them placed an equally inaccurate version in the Mormon Genealogical Index to try and hide the evidence for Elise's illegitimacy.

The other secret involved Rose Anna Shedlock, a witness at the Hoggan wedding. In 1872, she was one of the female medical students in Edinburgh and was sent by Jex-Blake to Italy to obtain documentary evidence about the admission of women to its universities. When it became clear that women would not receive a medical qualification in Edinburgh she, and others, moved to Paris (where she did not qualify). Apart from details about her family, little information could be found about her; but a marriage certificate issued on 8 August 1878 recorded her marriage in London to Pierre Paul Émile Roux (1853-1933), a man destined to become one of the great scientists of France. However, Roux's obituaries and biographies suggest that he was a confirmed bachelor. His niece, Mary Cressac, suggested in her biography *'Le Docteur Roux, mon oncle'* that he had been infatuated with an Englishwoman called 'Mary' who died in the 1880s from tuberculosis transmitted to her by Roux. In fact Rose Anna died in Madeira in 1879 and, as she been 'sickly' when at Edinburgh, it seems more likely that she had infected Roux who became a chronic consumptive.

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