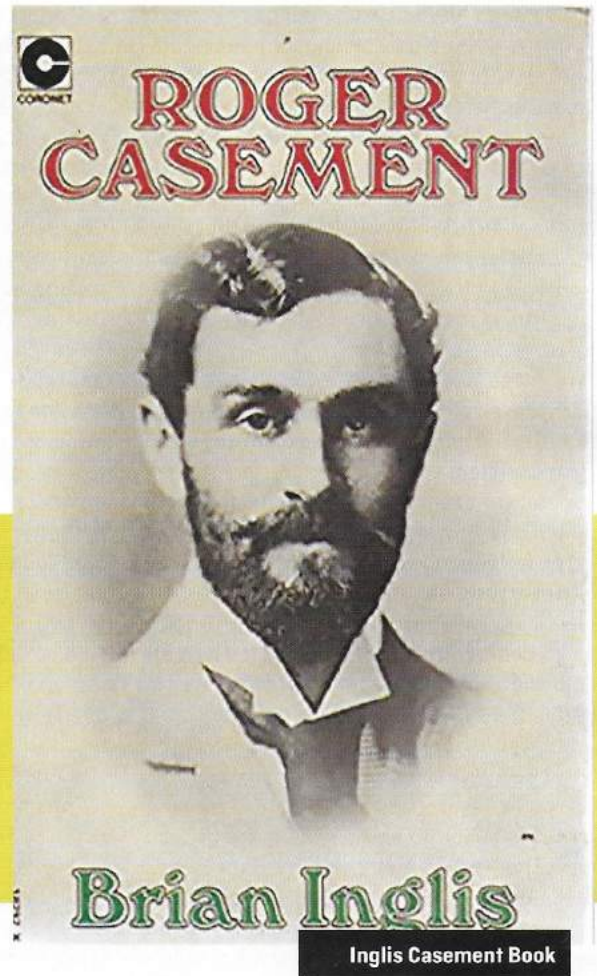


# How Gay Byrne betrayed Roger Casement

*Casement's most influential biographer, Brian Inglis, featured on the 'Late Late Show' but was a verbal Houdini, liar and intellectual crook*



By Paul Hyde

IN MAY, 1973, Brian Inglis, author of a new Casement biography, was interviewed on RTE's *The Late Late Show* by the doyen of Irish broadcasting, Gay Byrne. The biography had received positive press reviews and was warmly approved by Byrne which ensured its success. Byrne's imprimatur had consequences which still resonate today. It has dictated the popular narrative.

Inglis created a new and convincing template for the interpretation of Casement's life and the diaries. His study is typical of what became the mainstream 'understanding' of the Casement controversy. Often reprinted, it is now available as an ebook. Inglis remains the dominant authority on Casement and the diaries.

The Inglis template was convincing, detailed, clever and *false*. It remains unsurpassed for the subtlety of its deceptions. The absence of any source notes helps to conceal those deceptions by obliging unconvinced readers to travel to Dublin to check sources, typically in The National Library. But even this is frustrated because the usual reference numbers in the text are missing so that the reader cannot know in advance if there is a source on the list in Dublin. No other Casement study is without source notes.

Reid's biography three years later, from a smaller press, contains over 1,100 source notes occupying 24 pages. Indeed, it is difficult to find any credible historical biography without source notes.

At the centre of the web of deception spun out by Inglis we find his portrayal of Casement's manservant Adler Christensen who becomes a key figure in the new template.

Foreign Office documents released in 1967 were available to Inglis and these reveal the role played by British Minister, Mansfeldt de Cardonnell Findlay, in Oslo from late 1914 to spring 1915. The documented facts in those files do not support the Inglis portrayal of Christensen as a treacherous villain plotting to betray Casement. On the contrary, the Foreign Office documents show very clearly that Christensen followed Casement's instructions faithfully in misleading Findlay with false information about Casement's plans, a strategy which finally produced Findlay's handwritten bribe of a £5,000 reward.

Many of Inglis' subtle deceits are revealed in Chapter 6 of my own recent book on

Casement, 'Anatomy of a Lie'. In recent months others have been discovered. Inglis cited the second stanza of a poem entitled 'Quo Vadis', which he attributed to Casement. No source for this poem is given in the book, but the original version of that stanza differs significantly from the version published by Inglis. Inglis altered the punctuation and a crucial preposition in line 3. The manuscript in the National Library dated 10 February 1906 was published by Herbert Mackey in 1958. In brief, Inglis altered the text so as to present it as evidence of forbidden desire, a meaning consistent with his overall plan to verify the scandal allegations of 1916. Tens of thousands of trusting readers have been deceived for almost half a century.

The 'authority' of Inglis remained unchallenged not only by readers but also by other historians and the fateful false line from 'Quo Vadis' re-appeared in a Casement article by Robert Kee published to coincide with the open release of the diaries in 1994: "...the diaries did indeed confirm what Casement, in his own tortured words on the subject, described



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in a verse as his ‘hunger for things unholy...’”.

This is not the only example of Inglis tampering with original texts to alter their meaning. Referring to the 3pm meeting on 30 October between Christensen and Findlay in the legation at Christiania (Oslo), Inglis wrote: “But he [Findlay] transmitted Christensen’s information to Whitehall, enclosing the material Christensen had handed over. It included a letter in which Casement described his servant. ‘I am glad I brought him, indeed — he is a treasure’...”.

In these lines there are four deceits. 1 - Christensen did not hand over any material. 2 - Findlay did not take possession of any letter from Christensen. 3 - The letter mentioned had not yet been written. 4 - The letter mentioned does not state “he is a treasure”.

The letter in question was written in Berlin in November, some days — if not weeks — after it was allegedly handed over to Findlay on 30 October. This letter is also cited by MacColl and Doerries as being written later in Berlin.

Internal evidence demonstrates that the letter was written later in November and was one of the fake letters prepared by Casement for Christensen to show Findlay to mislead him. This fact is confirmed by Casement’s Berlin Diary entries for 17 and 24 November; Casement recorded: “I will send this tonight by the man, who returns ... to visit his people”. Christensen was to post these letters from Christiania. Christensen left Berlin for Norway on 22 November.

Although Inglis was certainly aware of the correct citation from the letter, published by MacColl in 1956, this did not deter him from altering Casement’s original text to obtain an innuendo that has deceived thousands of readers for decades. Nonetheless, Inglis claimed that Christensen handed the letter over to Findlay before it existed. Once again, Inglis lied.

Findlay’s 26 November account to the Foreign Office of his meeting with Christensen on that day, refers to this letter as a postscript to one of three letters shown to him by Christensen at that meeting. Findlay writes: “Informer arrived from Berlin today with letters from Casement to be posted here. I have obtained copies”. Since he confirms that he made copies, it follows he did not take possession of the letters. On 4 December Findlay sent his own copies of the fake letters to the Foreign Office. Findlay did not claim that material was “handed over”, and did not mention the phrase “he is a treasure”.

The phrase went unnoticed by Findlay but not by Inglis, who noted its potential for innuendo. By changing the verb tense from past to present, Inglis shifted the meaning from simple appreciation towards an innuendo of endearment. The version cited by both MacColl and Doerries differs significantly from Inglis: “I am glad I brought him indeed — he has been a treasure”.

The shift in meaning is so subtle as to escape most readers but it did not escape Inglis, who changed the text for the purpose of manipulating his readers’ understanding. Further proof of Inglis’ duplicity is that the relevant Foreign Office file does not contain the letter allegedly “handed over” and enclosed.

Accepting Inglis’ portrayal of Christensen

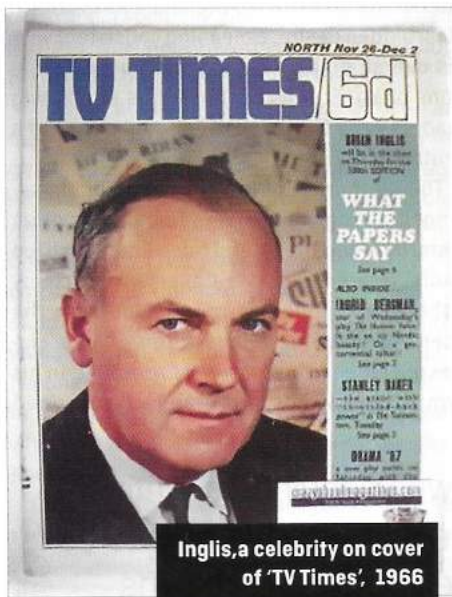


Roger Casement being escorted to the gallows from the Bow Street court that would order his execution for treason

as a double-dealing betrayer is now *de rigueur* for most academics. The Inglis lie is related faithfully by Lucy McDiarmid in ‘The Irish Art of Controversy’, including the false details of Christensen handing over documents to Findlay and of his alleged indication of ‘unnatural relations’. There is no evidence whatsoever in Findlay’s extensive correspondence with the Foreign Office to support this invention by Inglis.

Inglis’ deeper motives for these deceptions cannot be determined. But the systematic pattern of deception — including the alteration of documents, selective framing, omissions and distortions — indicates a calculated intent to mislead. It follows that Inglis *KNEW* that the diaries were not authentic; otherwise he had no need to resort to so many deceptions in order to convince readers that they were genuine. There are, therefore, solid grounds for describing Inglis as a *negationist historian* since he deployed all the standard techniques of negationism. These are explained in a Wikipedia article as follows:

“Historical negationism applies the techniques of research, quotation, and presentation for deception of the reader and denial of the historical record. In support of the revised history perspective, the negationist historian uses false documents as genuine sources...the revised history is used to negate the validity of the factual, documentary record, and so reframe explanations and



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perceptions of the discussed historical event, in order to deceive the reader, the listener, and the viewer; therefore, historical negationism functions as a technique of propaganda... negationist historians...use logical fallacies to construct arguments that will obtain the desired results, a revised history that supports an agenda – political, ideological, religious, etc”.

Inglis’ book has conditioned the discourse for almost half a century and is a remarkable example of how low-level propaganda masquerading as impartial biography can accomplish long-term results. At the time British propaganda was controlled by the Information Research Department of the Foreign Office which commissioned the media including book publishers. Almost certainly, Inglis’ commission by major publishers Hodder & Stoughton originated there. No-one should underestimate the achievement of Inglis which can best be measured by the number of distinguished Irish academics – mostly historians – who have fallen under the spell of his deceptive template: Paul Bew, Roy Foster, Patrick Geoghegan, Michael Laffan, W.J. McCormack, Sean McConville, Séamas Ó Síocháin, Mary Daly, Eunan O’Halpin, Lucy McDiarmid and David Norris.

It is not surprising to find that leading journalists, broadcasters and other opinion-makers in politics, law and the arts have also fallen under the spell cast by the Inglis study. There is no reason for them to contest the popular spread of the judgement of the academic elite, none of whom have challenged the Inglis template. The result is a consolidated consensus in Ireland that the diaries are genuinely the work of Casement. Any residual reservations were dispelled by the 2002 Giles investigation. For those many whose opinions are media-conditioned it seems that authenticity has received what amounts to an *imprimatur*.

In the authoritative ‘Dictionary of Irish Biography’ the Casement entry contained gross errors of fact several of which derived from Inglis.

We read that “British officials circulated portions of diaries”. This is untrue; only police typescripts were *shown*. We read of people “who were shown the diaries”, and this is untrue since there is no evidence of the bound diaries being shown to anyone at that time. We read that “Smith offered them to Casement’s counsel for inspection” and this is also untrue. Smith offered the police typescripts only. We read that the Giles investigation was “scientific”, although comparative handwriting analysis is far from scientific since its results cannot be tested and verified. Such analysis is merely the expert *opinion* of one person and is unreliable as demonstrated in the case of the forged Hitler Diaries.



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Yet these errors appear almost insignificant beside those published on the ‘Decade of Centenaries’ website where not a single basic fact was reported correctly. That this garbled misinformation (now withdrawn) was authorised on a State website remains to be explained. It seems that the climate created by Inglis has made reading his book unnecessary; it is sufficient now to *inhale* the dogma of majority opinion.

Here is the balance sheet for the external evidence considered by Inglis to be ‘so strong’:

1. a poem attributed by Reid to Casement but in fact written by a third person,
2. an exclamation point in Casement’s hand said by Reid to indicate homosexuality,
3. a poem attributed to Casement by Inglis who altered the original text,
4. a poem attributed to Casement by Inglis the provenance of which is unknown.

Having failed to find external evidence, Inglis turned to illusion by literary allusion. He referred to Proust and Gide, both homosexuals but, fearing these were too highbrow, cited a sexually explicit paragraph from bestseller Robin Maugham’s novel ‘The Link’ of 1969. This passage, Inglis wrote “comes close to expressing what he [Casement] felt”.

This vile illusion insinuating Casement’s alleged attraction for native boys was intended to substitute for the external evidence which Inglis could not find.

These desperate attempts to furnish external evidence to support authenticity are in fact



British Minister, Mansfeldt de Cardonnel Findlay

evidence of the duplicity which characterises propaganda. Two generations have been trapped in Inglis’ web of illusions and deceit, misled by innuendo, logical fallacies, selective framing and lies. He is at last exposed as a negationist manipulator who preyed upon the innocence of his readers and abused their trust. We can only hope that there will be no third generation equally deceived.

What would it take to close the controversy? In less than fifty years Ireland has changed from being a church-dominated conservative society struggling with a painful past to being an outward-looking, liberal multi-ethnic state comparable to other European countries.

Confronting the facts about the diaries would *not conflict* with the tolerant and broad-minded attitudes of modern Ireland. The present generation can accept the abundant evidence that the diaries are forged and can safely remain as tolerant and broad-minded as before.

Ireland would not become an intolerant country by accepting the fact-based evidence; it has survived much worse. **LE**