

By Paul Hyde

The Devil and Mr Roger Casement

Conclusive proof of forgery, finally

Among the diaries attributed to Roger Casement there is a cash ledger for 1911 which is also part diary. This has been scrutinised by several authors, most closely by Jeffrey Dudgeon, the Belfast researcher who is today the leading forgery denier.

In 2002 Dudgeon published the first edition of his book bearing the title 'Roger Casement: The Black Diaries – with a study of his background, sexuality and Irish political life'. This substantial volume purported to add rich detail and colour to the already widely established view that the diaries were authentic. Dudgeon was able to present much information about the north of Ireland in relation to Casement and also to provide something missing from other studies – what it was like to be an active homosexual in the North (and elsewhere) a hundred years ago.

Dudgeon's history recipe freely mixes fact with speculation and 'in-the-know' innuendo to promote his desired conclusions of authenticity which are guided more by an obvious bias than by impartial analysis. His book although stylistically challenging and idiosyncratic has gathered both attention and praise.

Dudgeon has never doubted the diaries are genuine and he no doubt believes he has demonstrated their authenticity to the highest degree possible. As the years passed his reputation grew as a veteran crusader who knew 'the inside story' and he became an influential expert consulted by authors, academics, journalists, guest speaking at conferences and appearing on the media. Such was the success of his story that by the centenary year of 2016, he produced a second edition to meet steady demand. Then, only two years later in early 2019, he produced a third edition. There was however one small difference in this third edition. A certain sentence on page 285/6 had disappeared. The



Roger Casement being escorted to the gallows at Pentonville Prison, London, having been found guilty of treason

27-word sentence, apparently insignificant, had been in print for 17 years but was deleted in 2019.

To discover the motive for this unexplained deletion is also to discover its significance for the entire controversy about the diaries. The devil is in the detail, we are told, so let us look at the detail to find the devil.

The detail concerns an alleged affair between Casement and a young Belfast bank clerk called Millar; Casement did indeed know Millar and his mother through shared friends and acquaintances in Antrim but they had little in common politically.

Readers of 'Anatomy of a Lie' will recall that

the widely believed story fabricated by MI5 agent Major Frank Hall and promoted by Dudgeon is logically demonstrated to be manufactured evidence.

The purported affair features in the 1910 diary and in the 1911 ledger with events located in Belfast and environs. The story also involves a motorcycle owned by Millar in 1911 which vehicle was identified by Hall in 1915 along with the full name of its owner, Joseph Millar Gordon. Hall passed this information to the cabinet meeting on 2 August 1916 to overcome lingering doubts about the expediency of an execution next morning. Hall's tactic succeeded.

In the ledger the following appears dated 3 June: **“Cyril Corbally and his motor bike for Millar. £25.0.0”.**

Cyril Corbally was a noted croquet player from County Dublin who in 1910 worked at Bishop’s Stortford Golf Club in Essex. In 1910 he acquired a second-hand Triumph motorcycle registered with Essex County Council. In 1911 Corbally sold the machine and in July Millar registered ownership with the same Council.

The sentence is understood to mean that the diarist is paying £25 to Corbally to purchase his motorcycle for Millar.

Research has confirmed that £25 is a realistic price in 1911 for a three-year-old Triumph motorcycle; a new machine in 1908 cost around £50.

However, as a simple record of a purchase the sentence is suspect because it contains four items of information when two would have been sufficient.

It was not necessary to record the vendor’s name, the item bought, the purpose of the transaction and the sum paid.

The vendor’s name and the price would have been enough to record the purchase.

The extra information - purpose and item bought - is superfluous unless intended for third parties who the diarist knows will read the ledger. In short, the sentence is an artifice.

There are two further references to the alleged transaction in the ledger – one on June 8 which reads: **“Carriage of motorbike to dear Millar. 18/3”**, and another at the end of June: **“Epitome of June A/C Present etc. to others Cyril Corbally...25.0.0”.**

Outside of the ledger there is no evidence that Casement ever contacted Corbally; nor is there any reference to the purchase of a motorcycle.

Here is the sentence which Dudgeon deleted from his third edition of 2019:

“It is possible that Millar bought the motor bike from Corbally and that Casement was repaying him as a separate note listing expenditure simply reads ‘Millar 25.0.0’”.

This sentence published by Dudgeon from 2002 to 2019 fatally compromises his overall endeavour to persuade us of authenticity.

It signifies serious confusion: *he does not know who paid for Millar’s motorcycle.*

It also signifies that he admits the possibility that Casement did not pay Corbally as alleged in the ledger which therefore would be a forgery.

This confusion signals that Dudgeon is unable to make sense of the ledger and consequently has lost faith in his project. He cannot explain why, if Millar paid Corbally, the ledger records that Casement also paid Corbally. It is possible that an astute, well-meaning reader alerted Dudgeon to the fatal implications of that sentence but after 17 years it seems improbable that he suddenly discovered the gaffe by himself.



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With regard to the Millar payment it is a fact that Millar had his 21st birthday on 23 June, 1911; however, the suggestion that the money was a birthday gift cannot be confirmed.

The ledger account and the NLI Millar note share several features which deserve attention. It might be coincidence that both refer to an identical sum of money - £25. And both refer to Millar – perhaps another coincidence. Then of course both involve Casement. And the ledger and note are understood to be written around the same time - June 1911. Lastly, both payments seem to be gifts.

If these are coincidences, we now have a chain of five coincidences. Simple coincidence is defined as the intriguing idea that two unexpected events did not happen by chance but share a hidden link or meaning. In this case we have five apparent coincidences in concurrence which strongly suggests the causal nexus which is missing from simple coincidence.

While ordinary coincidences are infrequent, chains of coincidences are almost unknown. Indeed nothing other than a causal link can explain these apparent coincidences which are not due to inexplicable chance but are the result of *human intention acting as sufficient cause*. Coincidences do happen but they cannot be made to happen.

Explaining that causal link would expose how the ledger and the NLI note are related. If both were written by one person then the first written acted to bring about the other as cause produces effect. But they don’t record the same facts; the ledger records payment to Corbally while the NLI note records payment to Millar. It is necessary to determine which was written first.

If the ledger precedes the NLI note in time we must explain why the diarist recorded payment to Corbally but, soon after, contradicted that by recording the payment of an identical sum to Millar. If the ledger entry was written *after* the NLI note, the above contradiction is eliminated but a second contradiction appears with the references to Corbally and the motorcycle which are not present in the earlier NLI note and which contradict it. This fact clearly shows there is a double contradiction afflicting the documents *regardless of which was written first*. Either sequence produces contradiction which signals we have made a hidden assumption which is responsible for the contradictions. That prior assumption is

That ‘separate note’ is a single handwritten page in the National Library of Ireland (NLI) described as Rough Financial Notes by Roger Casement (MS 15,138/1/12). It is inscribed on both sides with records of outgoing payments.

Many of the ten undated payments record substantial amounts so that Millar’s £25 is not exceptional.

The NLI file holds fourteen used cheque books and in many cheque stubs we find comparable payments; but there is no used cheque book for the May/June period. Casement certainly wrote cheques in that period but the used cheque book and dated stubs has disappeared.

A stub with Corbally’s name would be conclusive evidence of the Corbally payment but there is no such stub and no used cheque book.

None of the payments are recorded in the ledger nor do they seem to be in chronological order; the purpose was probably to sum up the amounts paid before leaving for South America in mid-August 1911. The figure of £105 is the cumulative total of three £35 quarterly payments to his sister Nina so its date is around the end of June.

It is clear that most if not all were made in June and July and one payment to a Belfast friend is confirmed by a July 12 thank-you letter in the NLI file. The list was written in July and updated in August.

On the reverse side, payment totals are recorded for July and August.

that the two records were written by one person.

As soon as we consider that the records were written by two persons, not by one, the contradictions are eliminated.

Since the NLI note was indeed written by Casement it follows that the ledger entry was written by a second person, by someone other than Casement and is, therefore, a forgery. In short, Casement's authentic record of payment to Millar is a *de facto* negation of the alleged payment to Corbally.

It was the most influential biographer Brian Inglis who in 1973 wrote "(and if one was forged, all of them were) ..." – the common law principle is *falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*.

Therefore it can now be stated with categorical certainty that all of the Black Diaries are forgeries and that this ultimately simple proof is irrefutable and conclusive.

Two aspects add charm to this proof – its disarming simplicity and its debt to a crusader for authenticity without whom it might never have come to light.

Let us give the devil his due and grant that it was the most ardent forgery denier, Jeffrey Dudgeon MBE who revealed the vital evidence that led to this proof and it was a most supreme irony that he did so by concealing that evidence too late.