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[**http://www.historyireland.com/uncategorized/roger-casement/**](http://www.historyireland.com/uncategorized/roger-casement/)

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Dear Editor,

Martin Mansergh, in hisreview (May-June 2014) of Angus Mitchell’s biography *16 Lives - Roger Casement*, makes great play of the only reported denial by Casement of the Black Diaries: “A US attorney visiting Casement in Pentonville with Gavan Duffy, made him aware of what was going on and recorded Casement’s indignant disbelief of the slur. Nor did this deter him from high-minded self-vindication till his death.”

That report by the American lawyer, Michael Francis Doyle, is also significantly relied upon by Mitchell (pp. 328-9) **[Wrong NLI reference number provided of 5388. It should be 5588. See original in 17601.]** who describes it as “one of the few surviving documents about Casement being aware” of the rumours that were then circulating. Doyle, in his 1932 statement, recalled that Casement after referring to the reputed habits of certain of his English persecutors “could not get it into his mind that the British would stoop to such forgery to destroy his character,” adding “it was clear to Gavan Duffy and me that the diary was not his; and he emphatically repudiated it.”

The only problem with this report is that it is not true on two counts.

Casement made frequent references in Germany to the fact that the British would or could do just that, as he knew well his correspondence and diaries were scattered around the UK, and his lovers around the world. Too many hostages to fortune to be unprepared for, although oddly the Foreign Office did not utilise their first knowledge of Casement being gay when it first came to them, unexpectedly, from Norway in 1914. It took the discovery of the diaries after his capture in Kerry for that to happen. Casement also took steps from Berlin to have his papers stored in Belfast hidden.

George Gavan Duffy, a treaty signatory and Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1922 conspicuously failed to endorse Doyle’s remarks when they were first made. In 1933 in relation to Doyle’s version of events, he wrote, “I am wholly unable to corroborate it.”(NLI MS 17601/5) Duffy did not call anyone a liar but he was adamant about the precise truth of the matter. Having had considerable experience in 1916 of trying to stop friends talking to Casement about the diaries and of matters homosexual, he would have had a clear memory of any such conversation.

It is also the case that Doyle did not see Casement alone – Duffy, his solicitor, always accompanied him and a warder had to be present. Indeed the Brixton governor sat in on the visit of 15 June and sent a report of what he heard to the Home Office, including that Doyle was giving the impression of being uninvolved in Irish political matters.

A good example of Casement’s mode of dealing with such potential eruptions comes in a letter to Gavan Duffy of 14 July 1916 (Maloney Collection of Irish Historical Papers, NYPL Box 1 Fol 3) where he only alluded to the diaries, asking him “to protect my name” and saying “I left it to you and those other friends to protect my name after all was over - and you know why I kept silent and why I did not refute many things as I might have done.”

Interestingly another of Casement’s lawyers, Serjeant Sullivan, finally admitted in the Irish Times (25 April 1956) that Casement “told me nothing about the diaries or about himself,” after initially suggesting that he had spoken of homosexuality “as a mark of distinction”.

Yours sincerely,

Jeffrey Dudgeon