**A Statue of Roger Casement**

**Irish Times**

**26 June 2020**

Sir, – Further to “Sanitising Britain’s imperialist past would require collective amnesia” ([Michael McDowell, Opinion & Analysis, June 24th](https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/michael-mcdowell-sanitising-britain-s-imperialist-past-would-require-collective-amnesia-1.4286466)), would the “decent statue” of Roger Casement, “to commemorate his struggles for Ireland, against imperialism and for the cruelly enslaved people of the Congo and Amazon basins”, also detail his sexual exploitation of vulnerable young boys in South America, just to complete the picture? No historical figure is either all good or all bad. – Yours, etc,

GERALD FLYNN,

Ranelagh

Replied to by Angus Mitchell although his letter was unpublished. See *Irish Political Review* August 2020 for text.

“Flynn acknowledges the contradiction at the heart of Casement’s remembering…the exploitative language within the sexed-up diaries undermines his authority. That is exactly what they are intended to do. The “Black Diaries”, as they are popularly and problematically styled, were constructed to promote a distorted and sanitised view of the imperial past by denying the high moral ground to a determined whistle blower…Recognising the sexed-up diaries as forgeries should not exclude the important role that the conversation about Casement’s sexuality has played in the movement for LGBTIQA+ rights…Where Casement is concerned, history, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder.

Angus Mitchell

July 2020”

**Irish Times**

**Mrs Frank O’Connor**

**Casement Diaries**

18 October 1997

Sir - My late husband, Frank O'Connor, was always very interested in anything written about Roger Casement and, for this reason, became involved in the controversy about the authenticity of the so-called "Black Diaries". He even said that "the mystery of the Diaries is to the 20th century what the Dreyfus Case was to the 19th."

Like Angus Mitchell ("The Casement conundrum", The Irish Times, October 14th), he concluded that they were a forgery. But, unlike Mr Mitchell, he did not have access to the papers in the Kew Public Record Office or the Franciscan Library in Killiney. He based his conclusion not only on the testimony of the American newspaperman Ben Allen, and on the conflicting stories about where the diaries had been found, but also on his own textual analysis. He spent hours studying the Black Diaries (as published by Maurice Girodias in Paris in 1959), searching for clues that Casement's own words had been manipulated to convey a meaning which Casement never intended. He felt there was sufficient evidence of tampering to conclude that there had been forgery, and wrote publicly about this conclusion. Needless to say, not everyone agreed with him, and I can remember many heated private and public arguments on the subject.

In the end he thought that the only way to settle the controversy was by the establishment of an Irish court of inquiry, consisting of three judges, with power to summon witnesses and demand production of documents. He thought that such an inquiry would most probably find against the authenticity of the diaries, but even if it didn't, at least the matter would have been decided by disinterested parties in Casement's own country.

Perhaps it is not too late, and Angus Mitchell's book may help make an official inquiry feasible. Otherwise, "the accusing ghost of Roger Casement" (as Alfred Noyes wrote) may continue to haunt us for years to come. - Yours, etc.,

Harriet O'Donovan Sheehy,

Dalkey, Co Dublin.