**To the Irish Political Review**

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[Published with a Paul Hyde reply in IPR December 2020. I did not have access to Forces Records beyond one page glimpse so my reference to 1918 and HMS Violent was copied from Hyde’s article which he now disputes in relation to where Clipperton was in 1918. “Since Clipperton was on the Queen Elizabeth in 1918, it follows that he was not on HMS Violent at the same time... This is not true as his service record lists several onshore establishments and vessels covering 1914 to 1920 wherein there is no mention whatsoever of HMS Violent.”

On closer inspection, this time of the TNA records, Clipperton was recorded as being on Queen Elizabeth from 1917 to February 1920 where on 1 March 1918 he was advanced to Leading Telegraphist. He was indeed on ‘Columbine (Violent)’ from 15 October 1920 to 2 August 1922, contrary to Hyde’s certainty – ‘no mention whatsoever’. HMS Columbine was a naval base at Port Edgar on the Firth of Forth between 1917 and 1938. ‘Forces Records’ do indicate he was on ‘Hms Violent’ in 1918 but that may be where he was when he received a particular war medal. He became CPO (Chief Petty Officer), formerly PO, in April 1934 and was pensioned on 27 December 1938. He was presented with the Royal Victorian Medal (Silver) 1 November 1934. “The medal has been historically used to recognise the service of police officers who work in protective services, gardeners, housekeepers, drivers, valets and other similar type staff. Non-commissioned members of the military may also be awarded the medal for services. (Wikipedia)” Also the NGS (Naval General Service) Palestine Medal 26 January 1940 clasp awarded for service during the 1936-39 Arab revolt in Palestine. This re-engagement was something we both failed to mention. The DSC not awarded more than 7 times between the wars and Clipperton only became warrant officer rank in 1934. Another distinction without a difference or piece of Hyde fact-pedantry. ]

Dear Editor,

In his mammoth 7-page article in November 2020’s *Irish Political Review* entitled ‘Insider Knowledge’, Paul Hyde inflates a second-hand remark from one Sidney R. Clipperton, that Captain Blinker Hall of Naval Intelligence fabricated the Casement diaries.

His ‘proof’ is a document listing Room 40 operatives - wherein Clipperton does not figure - a list originating, according to Hyde, from Admiral William James, occasional deputy to Captain Hall. It was typed by Kevin MacDonnell from his notes of talking to Clipperton in 1965, which in 1998 he sent to Angus Mitchell whom he had recently met.

The list was headed with the words, “B. R. Clipperton MVO, DSC, RA eventually commanded H.M.S. Violent”.

This is trebly unconvincing. The first initial in that heading is wrong as Paul acknowledges, while the RA may be a mistake for RN. However the other two decorations are senior and quite distinctive. An MVO is a personal award from the King. The Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) was a military decoration awarded only to officers. Clipperton retired in 1938 as a chief petty officer, a rank equivalent to sergeant major, and could not have been so decorated. Anyway, both would have shown up in the ‘UK Naval, Medal and Awards Rolls’ in Clipperton’s record. They don’t.

He was a Leading Telegraphist on HMS Violent in 1918 when he was only 20, not then in command of the ship, nor later, it not being mentioned in ‘Forces Records’, as Hyde admits. But by twisted, circular logic he also writes that, “The reference to HMS Violent refers to his command of that vessel, albeit perhaps nominal, as confirmed in the copy list obtained from Admiral James.”

In the event, it all boils down to a remark in 1965 by someone who at best had tenuous connections to Naval Intelligence, indicating Hall fabricated Casement’s diaries but who added he was about to charge his son with homosexual offences before he was killed in a 1942 German air raid in Aberdeen.

There is a whiff here of modern public health practitioners devoted to evidence-based medicine when we know they only seek out evidence that justifies their existing opinions. In this case, Hyde believes he has proved all parties are otherwise telling the truth and in Clipperton’s case he had the ability to be aware of fabrication. Ergo, fabrication occurred.

Paul makes much of proving the likelihood that Kevin MacDonnell did speak to Clipperton, who then said what he said, but that is hardly worth bothering about when what Clipperton said was so insubstantial and unevidenced.

On a couple of points I can confirm Hyde’s speculations, ‘Essie’ in Hall’s letter on the death of his son was Blinker's wife, Ethel Abney, the mother of their three children. The ‘Mary’ mentioned was indeed divorced from their son, John Abney Hall, so Blinker was effectively his young grandson’s nearest Hall relative and had therefore to arrange John’s burial.

Hyde seems unaware that a new biography, *'Blinker' Hall – Spymaster,* written by David Ramsay was published in 2008, although as I wrote in my book’s 3rd edition it was something of a hagiography with a less than accurate segment on Casement.

I had come across the Clipperton material in the NLI and wrote this in 2002: “When de Valera was told, third-hand, in 1966, of one Commander Clipperton who could attest to Naval Intelligence fabrication (by Blinker Hall), he wisely replied ‘the important thing is to get some positive proof. Nothing else will suffice.’” None appeared. (NLI MS 18776)

Clipperton's story that “much later on in the last war Intelligence put me on the job of bringing a charge against Hall's son who was mixed up with a group of other young officers” and which involved phone tapping is all wrong for several reasons. Lt. Commander John Hall was 44 and not 'young'; he was based far away in Aberdeen when killed; and hunting down gay sailors would have been a naval or possibly civilian police job yet Clipperton was in the Home Guard in the south of England during the war, not the police or intelligence.

The only mystery is why Clipperton should have been so aware of the death of Hall’s son.

That Hyde on the strength of his legalistic and mechanical deductions can announce there is “no reasonable doubt that the Black Diaries were fabricated and that Hall was the mastermind behind the plot” is masterful nonsense.

The words of George Bernard Shaw in a 1934 letter to Gertrude Parry, Casement’s cousin, on similar efforts are advice that should be followed: “I have read Dr Maloney’s book (*The Forged Casement Diaries*). It is a monument of zealous industry; but it does not clear the ground: it rather overcrowds it. It takes more trouble to put the British Government in the wrong than to put Roger in the right.”

Maloney, he wrote, uses Casement “as a stick to beat a regime which has been extinguished by the establishment of an Irish Free State, and which is consequently regarded by the reading public as a back number. The book that is needed to rehabilitate Roger must be written on a carefully cleaned slate. Dr Maloney has written his on one crowded with old sums.” (NLI MS 17601-12-3)

Regards

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**(Author of *Roger Casement: The Black Diaries - With a Study of his Background, Sexuality, and Irish Political Life*)**

[See P150 Eamon de Valera Papers UCD – correspondence between President de Valera and Kevin McDonnell, [MacDonnell] London on McDonnell’s discovery that the ‘Tricolour flag that flew over the GPO during Easter Week is in the vaults of the Imperial War Museum’ and his suggestion that an official request be made for its return; and disclosures about the fabrication of the Casement diaries–‘I was informed by an ex-British Naval Intelligence source, whose name I cannot reveal, that the Casement Diaries were fabricated by his chief, Admiral Hall. He has had the matter on his conscience ever since and though he has great respect for Hall in all other ways he feels this was an evil piece of work’ (7–22 January 1966, 4 items, 1p each).]