**ORIGINAL**

**Published in Irish Times in slightly amended form 17 August 2016**

<http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/letters/roger-casement-s-schooling-1.2758217>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/environment/eileen-battersby-on-a-bid-to-halt-demolition-of-casement-s-school-1.2756140#comments>

See also centenary 2016 article by Battersby: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/roger-casement-a-romantic-defender-of-the-oppressed-1.2743055>

Sir,

The article ‘Eileen Battersby on a bid to halt demolition of Casement’s school’ (Irish Times, Monday 15 August 2016) is seriously lacking in the fact department and probably inaccurate. There is no mention in records of Roger Casement attending school at St Paul’s National School, in Dublin, or elsewhere. Roger had instead a peripatetic, and difficult, childhood.

He certainly did not go directly from Dublin to Ballymena after the death of his mother in 1873, as stated. Indeed he did not go there until 1876, at the age of 11 or 12, just a year before his father, Captain Casement, died in the Adair Arms Hotel in the town. Casement’s mother Anne, a north Dublin Protestant whose progressive mother Jane Jephson ran girls seminaries in north Dublin for many years, died away from her family in Worthing.

There is a revealing 1876 letter from John Young jnr. of Wellington Street which I quote in the 2nd edition of my Black Diaries biography. In it, he wrote of the boy Roger who stayed with him while attending the Diocesan School in Ballymena, “not having been at school for 3 years before”. This correspondence is in the possession of the Casement family.

The earlier evidence indicates that although Roger was born in Sandycove in Doyle’s Cottage in 1864 the greater part of his childhood was spent in England. He was baptised on the Isle of Man in 1865 while there is a mention of the family being back in Ireland in 1867 at the time of the Fenian rebellion. Anne is recorded as having her three boys [re-]baptised in Rhyl in Wales as Catholics in 1868 when Roger was three.

However letters from Captain Casement, seeking funds from his relatives in Ballycastle, tell of the children being at a series of addresses in and around London in Lambeth, Dalston and Surbiton from 1872 to 1876. The recent revelation from digitised newspapers that Roger at the age of 11, and his older brother Tom were in court in London in January 1876 on a charge of stealing books suggests this prompted the Captain to come home with his youngest child a few months later.

These details matter when myths, big and small, get repeated and while the provenance and authenticity of Casement’s diaries is a political issue of some significance.

Yours faithfully

Jeffrey Dudgeon

56 Mount Prospect Park

Belfast

BT9 7BG

[jeffreydudgeon@hotmail.com](mailto:jeffreydudgeon@hotmail.com)

Tel 079 2125 1874 / 028 90664111

15 August 2016