**‘I hope I’ve restored my grandfather’s reputation’**

**Growing up, Maureen Waugh didn't hear much of Gerald Hoy, whose name was banned form the house. But by doing her own research, she found clues that would absolve him among their family**

**Celine Naughton**

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Maureen Waugh with her grandparents' pictures

When Maureen Waugh set out to trace the history of her grandfather, she uncovered a dark secret the family had concealed for decades. Gerald Hoy from Dungannon, Co Tyrone was said to have betrayed Roger Casement, the Irish republican who had secured his release from a German prison camp while recruiting volunteers for the Easter Rising. To his staunchly nationalist family, this was an act so treacherous, his name was never mentioned again. But now his granddaughter wants to put the record straight.

A language teacher living in Berlin with his German wife and their two children, Hoy was one of 4,000 British nationals interned in Ruhleben racecourse at the outbreak of World War I.

"Conditions in the camp were appalling," says Maureen. "They kept the men in horseboxes 10 feet square by 10 feet high, six men per stall. Others, like my grandfather, were put in haylofts overhead, hopelessly overcrowded with barely space to stand upright."

It was here Gerald met an old schoolfriend, John Bradshaw from Ballymoney, Co Antrim, and William Coyne, a law student from Mayo. Following interventions by Sir Roger Casement, these and three other internees were released on grounds of 'ill health,' something the British doubted.

Their suspicions were valid - in his letters to German officials, Casement wrote of his intent to exploit the three men to his political advantage back in Ireland. Overall, however, his attempts to recruit Irish volunteers from PoW camps in Germany ended in failure.

"Casement made a lot of strategic errors," says Maureen. "His PR was poor, for a start. He arrived at these camps with a German chauffeur. At the time, the vast majority of Irishmen were anti-German. He misjudged the strength of Irish loyalty."

But Hoy, Bradshaw and Coyne were impressed by Casement's visit.

"Coyne wrote to him on February 15 1915 to the effect that 'Ireland has no quarrel with Germany, and we support your belief that Ireland should be an independent state,'" says Maureen. "He went on to ask Casement to 'use your great influence to secure our release and permission to return to Ireland.'"

The following month the three were released. Bradshaw and Coyne went home to Ireland and Gerald joined his wife Luise Kaufmann Hoy in England.

"My grandmother had been left destitute. As she'd married a British national she was ineligible for welfare in Germany. She had to rely on the kindness of her sister and sister-in-law to share their meagre rations with her.

"Then in January 1915, Sir Edward Grey negotiated for the wives and children of internees to be deported to England. Luise went to Preston, Lancashire.

"My grandfather's uncle, Hugh Cleland Hoy, worked as a secretary at the Admiralty, where British Naval Intelligence was based. They knew Roger Casement was involved in planning an uprising and, keen to impress his superiors, Hugh thought he'd get some intelligence on Casement from his young nephew.

"Gerald had a dilemma: he had no money, and he had to look after his wife and family, so where did his loyalties lie? It wasn't as if it was a stranger talking to him, it was an uncle who said he'd help him out financially if he'd tell him what he knew.

"In truth, Gerald knew very little, so he made stuff up. He said he was the main person to approach Casement, even though it was Coyne who'd made the initial move. He said he'd visited Casement in his hotel, yet he'd never even met the man.

"He gave Casement's alias and address in Berlin, but these were already known to the authorities as they'd been intercepting his mail since 1914. So what he said in his five-page statement wasn't worth a hill of beans."

Hugh Cleland Hoy made the betrayal claims public in a book he wrote in the 1930s.

"I was eight when my grandfather died. My father wouldn't speak his name, and then four decades later I discovered why - he was ashamed of him. Gerald was no saint, the family knew that. But even though he was a womaniser and a poor provider, this perceived betrayal of Casement was considered the worst offence of all. It was unforgivable.

"From what I can gather, my grandfather was a clever, articulate and charming man, but those qualities hid a weak character.

"However, Hugh Cleland misrepresented him; he persuaded him to make a statement and exaggerated what he had to tell. By putting the story in context, I hope I've managed to reinstate his reputation in the family to some extent."

Hanged for treason in London's Pentonville Prison in August 1916, Casement was the only Rising leader to be executed outside Ireland.

"Casement knew the Rising was a lost cause, and returned to Ireland to try to prevent it," says Maureen. "However, even though the Rising failed, the British chose to martyr its leaders and martyrs bring recruits, just as they do to this day.

"To me the Rising was a tragic event, but it paved the way for negotiations to start up again with the Treaty. I don't agree with partition, but at least it was some kind of solution. I think Ireland should be one island independent of mainland Britain, but that's for another day.

"The peace process in Northern Ireland showed how much can be achieved when people talk, negotiate and resolve things diplomatically.

"Ballymoney Museum has invited me back next year to give a talk about my grandfather, and I'll be watching the 1916 commemorations with great interest from my home here in Leicester."