**PAUL HYDE ARTICLE ‘WHO FRAMED ROGER CASEMENT?’ AND SYDNEY CLIPPERTON**

 **RESPONSE BY JEFFREY DUDGEON (unpublished)**

Lieut-Commander John Abney Hall

Birth 1897 Kent England

Death 08/08/1942

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| 77/3575/845  |
| **Description:** | Divorce Court File: 845. Appellant: Mary Dorothy Hall. Respondent: John Abney Hall. Type: Wife's petition for divorce [wd].  |

Old Manor, Witley

Letter sent to editor@village magazine.ie

17 July 2020

Dear Editor,

I refer to Paul R. Hyde’s five page article in the July issue of *Village* entitled ‘Who Framed Roger Casement?’ with its story of diary forging by Naval Intelligence and, fifty years on, of an unevidenced assertion as to who did it. The details were passed to Eamon de Valera by a Irish-born journalist Kevin MacDonnell in 1966.

Given that Paul Hyde’s first sentence was wrong I wasn't expecting to be impressed by the rest of his article. Casement did not grow “up in South Dublin”. He was certainly born there but spent most years until his teens in and around London where he was convicted at the age of 11 of book stealing with his older brother. His mother was a Dublin Protestant and his father an army officer. They were married in Belfast. Only at the age of 12 did Roger return to Ireland and Ballymena in particular, where he was soon to become an orphan.

I had come across the same de Valera material in the National Library of Ireland and in my book *Casement - The Black Diaries* wrote this:

"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.” The informant added gratuitously that Hall’s son had been about to be charged by Clipperton as he was “mixed up with a group of other young officers” but had been killed in an air raid." (NLI 18,776).

Paul Hyde has certainly done some great research, especially to unearth Blinker's remarks on his son John's death in 1942. They seem cold until you realise what his manner probably was in general.

Admiral Hall wrote, “I have told him that our Jack has no wife, I should like him buried up there; as you know I don’t like funeral bake meats; legally speaking I am his nearest relative as Mary has control of Pt. I like to think the lad may now be with Essie again!” I can confirm Paul’s supposition that Essie was Blinker's wife Ethel. This seems like the draft or copy of a letter to a relative or close friend.

My reading of the words about ‘Mary’ would be that John may have been divorced from Mary [he was] while 'Pt' was their child and thus the closest relative and heir but he, Blinker, as an adult, was effectively in charge of arrangements.

Hyde makes far too much of the document. To me, Sydney Clipperton who was 18 in 1916, and a boy telegraphist, may have had some naval connection to Blinker Hall. However he was, at best, uninvolved with the work of Room 40, whatever was going on there. In 1916, he was on the Dreadnought 'Iron Duke' which saw service at the Battle of Jutland.

It may have been navy gossip that he picked up although I accept he was mysteriously aware of and interested in the blitz death of Lt. Commander John Hall in Aberdeen in 1942.

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.

Hall was 44 and not 'young'; he was based at a shore establishment, HMS Bacchante, way north in Scotland; hunting down gays in the navy would have been a Royal Navy Police job or possibly civilian; but strongest of all, Clipperton as Hyde says, was in the Home Guard during the war, not MI5 or Naval Intelligence.

Also when he retired to Hastings from the navy in 1938 he was a Chief Petty Officer, the naval equivalent of a sergeant, not a Commander.

Paul makes a lot 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 tenuous and insubstantial. That he then clammed up is most likely because he knew that his story was exaggerated or false.

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

Professor Eunan O'Halpin's quoted remarks on doubts about Blinker Hall’s reputation are very sensible and would encompass my view of the man whose achievements seem grossly inflated, not least in relation to Ireland. He sounds rather like J Edgar Hoover except he went on to get elected a Conservative MP, illustrating his predisposition to bias.

 I suppose I can take solace from the fact that Paul has responded to my longstanding challenge in relation to the total absence of evidence of the forging of the four Casement diaries. However an assertion made in 1966, fifty years after the event, by an uninvolved, retired and lonely ex-serviceman does not dispel all, or indeed any, doubt about the diaries’ authenticity.

Case certainly not closed.

Yours sincerely

Jeffrey Dudgeon

Former UUP Belfast City councillor and author of *Roger Casement: The Black Diaries – with a Study of his Background, Sexuality, and Irish Political Life* (3rd edition 2019)