**The Black Diaries: the Case for Forgery**

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The term the “Black Diaries” was first coined in the 1950s. It refers to a small number of diaries of varied physical size and a cash book which were the property of Roger Casement round or about the period he was investigating atrocities against native peoples in the Congo in 1903 and the Putumayo area of Peru in 1910/1911. Among them is a field notebook from 1902, which is without sexual content. The 1903 diary which records Casement’s journeys of that year and his investigations of atrocities contains brief references to homosexual musings and encounters interspersed among the material. The 1910 Putumayo diary is similar, but the scale and detail of the sexual references has noticeably increased. The 1910/1911 cash book, as well as containing expenditure on everyday items, also details expenditure on sexual favours. There is also some text of a sexual nature in the cash book. The 1911 diary is mainly devoted to the recording of sexual observations and experiences.

There are a few archival items, principally in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin which associate Casement with homosexuality, such as photographs, poetry, postcards and personal letters. All of these have or conceivably could have passed through the hands of British Intelligence at some time.

“A thick rolled manuscript ... the sheets were ragged at the top as if they had been torn from a composition book” was described by former Associated Press correspondent Ben Allen in *The Times* of Aug 6th, 1960. This was how Allen described the “Casement diary” that had been shown to him by Captain Sir Reginald Hall of Naval Intelligence in 1916. He said the sheets were “at least twice the size” of what has now come to be understood as the much discussed Casement diaries. This document has never been seen since those days in 1916.

Photographs of parts of the diaries, typed transcripts, the rolled manuscript and occasionally the hardback bound diaries themselves were circulated surreptitiously in the weeks leading up to Casement’s execution. The evidence, such as it was, of promiscuous homosexual indulgence undermined the growing wave of sympathy for Casement’s plight.

After the execution, the photographs and diaries abruptly vanished. Until the late 1950s the British Home Office would neither confirm nor deny the existence of the diaries. In 1959 the Olympia Press published an account of Casement’s life titled *The Black Diaries* by Peter Singleton-Gates and Maurice Girodias, in a limited edition. The diaries, with the exclusion of the blatantly sexual 1911 diary, had been published. No longer could their existence be plausibly denied. Soon they were put on limited release at the Public Record Office (now the National Archives), at Kew in London. Permission to view was limited to those who, in the eyes of the archival authorities, were deemed to be legitimate Casement scholars. Such permission was not always granted.

During the twentieth century the diaries were at times decried as portraying Casement, a well-regarded idealist, as a “moral pervert” or “degenerate”. There was an implication that homosexual activity, *per se*, denoted moral fault. We now live in more enlightened and tolerant times. Is there cause, approaching the diaries with a contemporary frame of reference, to find them objectionable?

If they are in fact forgeries, then we have a false historical record and this will impede us from knowing Casement authentically and realistically. The diaries, with their portrayal of a covert homosexual lifestyle, have enabled a pseudo-psychoanalytical deconstruction of Casement’s political motivation which allows his choices and views to be explained away as the reactions of an alienated outsider; a man inwardly ill-at-ease who felt he did not belong.

The diaries, in terms of modern norms, besmirch his character and reputation. Two affairs with boys in their early teens are narrated; Teddy Biddy in Barbados and José Gonzales in Peru. Attraction and approaches to pre-adolescent boys are recorded, though no sexual acts with this age group are mentioned. The diary protagonist would appropriately belong on today’s sex offenders’ register.

Were Casement to have behaved in the manner described for 1910 and 1911 in the town of Iquitos, Peru, the administrative centre for the rubber-gathering enterprise overseen by Julio Arana, it would have been recklessness of a superhuman kind. The ruthless, wealthy and influential Arana dominated the area politically. Arana and his henchmen knew who Casement was and what he was about. To have engaged in then illegal activities in such an environment would have been the height of folly. The likelihood of being found out would have been extraordinarily high. Given his much expressed concern for the welfare of the Indians suffering outrageous abuse, such behaviour would have been either extravagantly irresponsible or brazenly hypocritical or a combination of both.

The most sexualised diary by far is that for 1911. This covered when Casement revisited the Putumayo region of Peru to attempt to ensure those behind the horrific cruelties were brought to justice. Sexual observations as well as exploits are recorded, involving a multiplicity of males of varying ages. These observations are usually described as “fantasies”. Individuals both clothed and exposed are referred to. However, fantasies are not bounded by circumstances of time and location. These written recordings are situated exactly contemporaneously within the context of date-specific sexual “cruising” activity. When the action occurs in Peru Spanish words appear and likewise in Brazil Portuguese words intrude into the text. But these observations are not realistic. So, we can better describe them as delusions or hallucinations. The narration is robotic and repetitive. Here are some examples, via heavily edited snippets from the text.

Between September 13th and 18th, 1911 our protagonist observes in Pará (now Bélem), Brazil “ … huge one…Huge exposure…” (13th), “…huge…long one (about 7 ½” lying)” (15th), “Sereno called at 4. Huge one.” (16th), “Huge ones on several ... Huge one in café on moço…” (17th), “Huge – thick as wrist…” (18th). An exception was the 14th, where what he described was “enormous…”.

In Iquitos, Peru for October 31st, he encounters a boy; “…Also small boy to cigarette but he would not…”

On Nov 7th, in the same town, he records a boy exposing himself in the street “Saw small mestizo boy of about 9 (tall & slim maybe 10) ., from window – close to me It was fully 7” long and sticking out about half a foot – a huge one and a very nice looking boy indeed, but quite a child”.

The narration provides comic self-parody for November 24th in Iquitos: “Saw the Cholo policeman again going to lunch and it was huge, half down his thigh and he 6 foot & lovely Then the small policeman passed & his too enormous Then Parades young Editor also very big ...”

That one might come upon such a prodigious array of anatomically gigantesque individuals on a day to day basis is not statistically plausible. Our narrator is more than overly impressionable. He is a victim of a form of derangement.

The diaries provide a ready distraction from Casement as a commentator on his times. Also, with his stability called into question his value judgements and opinions are devalued. They enable his views on responsibility for the First World War, which he placed principally on the British Empire, to be ignored. Today articles on his life tend to avoid his published book of essays *The Crime against Europe*. In similar vein his stature as a moral idealist becomes tarnished.

The diary protagonist is unbalanced, willing to prey on the young, obsessed with body parts to an intense degree and emotionally stunted. He embodies a negative stereotype of the homosexual. In this sense the diaries can be viewed as homophobic.

A close friend and comrade, Bulmer Hobson, wrote in the 1950s that Casement had been romantically involved with Gaelic revivalist Ava McNeill and that but for Casement’s financial difficulties they would have become engaged. Hobson’s sister, Florence Patterson, who was well acquainted with both Casement and McNeill substantiated this in her papers.

Even proponents of the authenticity of the diaries mention that the 16-year-old Casement had been infatuated with a young woman. Long years spent in Africa where eligible women were rare (when eligibility was defined by class and race), financial problems and the depredations of a variety of tropical illnesses made the achievement of a marital relationship problematic. This is not to absolutely rule out a homosexual aspect to Casement’s makeup. However, the case for homosexuality on the part of Casement rests mainly on the pillar of the authenticity of the diaries. Without the diaries the case is weak.

A memorandum from Michael Francis Doyle, the American member of his legal team, is kept in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin. Doyle entered Casement’s cell on his own and told him about the diary rumours then circulating. Later he related what happened to Gavin Duffy, Casement’s main solicitor. Doyle wrote:

He was astounded at first and then he became bitterly indignant. He said many angry things about England’s methods of fighting Irishmen, and spoke of the conspiracy in the British Legation at Christiania (Oslo) to have him ‘knocked on the head’. He referred to the reputed habits of certain individual Englishmen among his persecutors. But still he said he could not get it into his mind that the British would stoop to such a forgery to destroy his character ... It was clear to Gavan Duffy and to me that the diary was not his; and he emphatically repudiated it.

In the poem “Roger Casement” by Eva Gore-Booth, published in the 1918 collection *Broken Glory*, she wrote:

I dream of one who is dead,  
As the forms of green trees float and form in the water,  
The dreams float and form in my mind.

I dream of him hearing the voice,  
The bitter cry of Kathleen ni Houlihan  
On the salt Atlantic wind.

I dream of the hatred of men,  
Their lies against him who knew nothing of lying,  
Nor was there fear in his mind.

The close companion of Gore-Booth, Englishwoman Esther Roper, wrote in *Prison Letters of Countess Markievicz*, originally published 1934: “Relentless foes sat in seats of power and they poisoned the public mind by circulating lying stories (that had nothing to do with the case) against the personal character of Roger Casement. Only those who did not know him believed them, and it was a vile way of hunting a man to death. It is often called un-English but it was done in London in 1916.

The first Casement biography appeared in 1930 authored by Irishman Denis Gwynn. He commented: “but that it was Casement’s own diary is at least doubtful. Those who spent months in terms of closest intimacy with him are utterly incredulous concerning it; and two of his closest friends have special grounds for refusing to believe that it was what it was purported to be.

Another biography appeared early in 1936, by the Englishman Geoffrey Parmiter, which also treated what was then referred to as a “diary”, (in the singular) with a similar scepticism. A likeminded reviewer in the Conservative-leaning *Spectator* commented:  “It is significant that since Casement’s death, whenever the question has been raised by enquiry, the Home Secretary of the day has always refused to discuss that document.”

Later in 1936, *The Forged Casement Diaries* by Dr WJ Maloney, a Scottish-born doctor of Irish descent, was published in Dublin. It was demonstrated how a number of accounts of the discovery of the diaries left by Special Branch head Basil Thomson, the man who reputedly found them, were significantly mutually contradictory. Maloney showed the documents had not been legally proven to the degree that they could be considered authentic in law. He suggested that if the writings of what he termed the “degenerate Diarist” were authentic there would be no need for the Home Office to refuse access.

Given that the proposition that the diary/diaries had been forged had emerged from the time Casement lingered in his prison cell and enjoyed wide currency thereafter, it is astonishing to read the explanatory back cover text for *Roger Casement in Death* (2002) by Dr WJ McCormack, where it is suggested that the idea took hold on account of the publication of Maloney’s book in 1936. *Roger Casement in Death* appeared as McCormack was fresh from organising “forensic tests” which “have confirmed beyond all reasonable doubt that they were indeed … not forged by British intelligence, either in part or wholly” as the back cover text puts it. The reader was also treated to the notion that, regarding Michael Collins, “military leader of the IRA”, and John Redmond, the Irish politician, “neither ... declared that what they saw was bogus”.

However, Collins never was “military leader of the IRA”. Rather he was the IRA’s Director of Intelligence. While he did not declare the diaries bogus, he was no proponent of authenticity. He did view some of the diaries in 1921 during the Anglo-Irish negotiations in London. Fr P Doyle, in a witness statement, said “Collins told me he was very familiar with Casement’s handwriting and that if the book was not authentic it was a devilishly clever forgery.”

*The Accusing Ghost*, an eloquently written book by English poet and academic Alfred Noyes appeared in 1957. The argument based on multiple contradictory descriptions of the discovery of the diaries on the part of Basil Thomson was further developed. Other questions such as Casement’s own attitude to the diaries issue were dealt with. As a propagandist during the Great War, Noyes had disseminated in the US the notion of a scandalous Casement diary. Stung into action by a rebuking Yeats poem in the 1930s he was to change his opinion.

Herbert O Mackey was a Dublin dermatologist and author of a textbook which had gone into many editions, *A Handbook of Diseases of the Skin*. He was chairman of the Casement Repatriation Committee. With the 1959 limited release of the documents he carried out a detailed inspection. The newspaper The Irish Press interviewed Mackey under a front page banner headline (note quotes) ‘Black Diary Forged’, on August 15th, 1959:

I hope it will not be taken as self-praise to say that for many years I have carefully studied the art of handwriting and graphology, which is aimed at the detection of forgery and the falsification of documents and manuscripts.  
I had a course in this subject at a well-known technical bureau.  
I took with me today very efficient optical equipment, consisting of matched prisms, a magnifying lens capable of giving a ten times enlargement, and an electrically lighted magnifier with a three lens system for examining the paper surface for erasures and the strokes of letters for evidence of alteration.  
My findings can be expressed briefly. The passages in the diary indicating that Casement was a moral pervert were not written by Roger Casement. They were the work of another penman. The result has been obtained by erasure, bleaching out of letters, and interpolation of new material in handwriting resembling Casement’s and inserted for the purpose of deceiving the reader, by altering and corrupting the sense and meaning of the text.

Mackey wrote a number of pamphlets and books on the issue, the most important being *The Truth about the Forged Diaries* (1966). Here he listed dates for diary entries where he believed was evidence of forgery. He also described inconsistencies in the script and narrative pointing to alteration.

A reference to a walk in London which should logically have referred to ‘Albert Gate’ apparently became ‘Albert (10/-)’, indicating 10 shillings paid for sex. However, the ‘(10/-)’ is noticeably in different ink. A pencilled note states ‘Albert aged 15 ½’, so the reader gets the implication. For March 1910 a character “Ramon” appears, but in fully acknowledged Casement writings the Spanish name Ramón is always spelt with its accent.

Mackey’s writings are now dated in moral outlook. Some, but by no means all, of the textual discrepancies he touted have been debunked. Not being a professional document examiner his close examination, while significant, could not be definitive. However, to understand the forgery debate without familiarity with Mackey’s work is impossible.

It is contended that material in pencil or ink was added at the end or above authentic diary entries. Some pencilled writing was erased and replaced with new material. Inked writing was erased using bleach to create space into which new material could be added within blocks of existing text. This is the standard conceptualisation of how the forgery has been envisaged to have been done since Mackey’s examination in 1959. Some of the writing so added necessarily need not have been of a sexual nature. In such a forgery project it would have been more efficacious to add in innocuous material to provide legitimising points of comparison for the newly introduced handwriting. As well as interpolative forgery on diaries it is assumed that matter such as photographs and forged postcards were planted among the vast amount of Casement’s papers which had been confiscated prior to his trial and later released to his cousin Gertrude Parry. There is a lingering suspicion that private correspondence which would have negated the impression the forgery sought to create was impounded and destroyed.

Prof Roger McHugh, a major influence on the evolution of the study of Anglo-Irish literature and Irish Studies, also viewed the diaries in 1959. He expressed his opinion in a detailed and closely argued article, “Casement: the Public Record Office Manuscripts”, in the Belfast-published periodical *Threshold*, in 1960. The diaries, with the exception of that for 1911, appeared to be more than 90 per cent Casement’s own work into which sexual references had been interpolated. The 1911 diary appeared mainly forged. He believed a full forensic examination was required. His line of argument differed from that of Mackey. He concentrated on what he saw as the implausibility of the diary entries related to Casement’s sojourns in the Putumayo. It was exceedingly strange that an alleged wildly promiscuous homosexual lifestyle could have escaped the eyes of powerful interests in the region who wished to do him down. Casement, a well-respected and capable man, was hardly likely to conduct himself in such a self-defeating way. Parts of the 1911 diary suggested the diarist was deranged.

A newspaper report of McHugh’s contribution to a symposium on Casement in 1976 gives a brief picture of his position:

They (the Putumayo diaries) show a pathological condition and wildly promiscuous behaviour, while what is known of Casement at the same time establishes his moral integrity and reputation. Common-sense would suggest that Casement was hardly pursuing policemen and employees of the very company he had come out to destroy.

The violence in Northern Ireland in the 1970s provoked a questioning of basic assumptions about Irish nationalism in the rest of Ireland, which had been a recognised independent state since 1922. With this came a readiness to question assumptions about nationalist heroes from the early twentieth century. Nationalism came to be blamed as a cause of the violence. The Irish media and academic world began first slowly and then with more vigour to repudiate the previously generally accepted official nationalist ideology. An atmosphere prevailed that was censorious of any expression that might be construed as promoting sympathy for the armed militancy of the IRA. Those inclined to believe forgery had occurred became reluctant to take a stand. Now the forgery contention, rarely aired publicly by members of the professional classes and associated with an unfashionable militant nationalism, fell out of fashion itself.

Meanwhile, outside the realm of the professions, activists, principally Eoin Ó Máille, kept arguing in favour of forgery in letters to newspapers and pamphlets. Thus arguments for forgery were maintained in public view. An example is *The Forged Diaries Exposed* from 1993. Ó Máille’s pamphlet can be criticised for a certain eccentricity and disjointedness. However, there are tables displayed showing the frequency of certain words much used by Casement in his attested writings and their absence from the questioned material. The use of word frequency analysis was the major idea he contributed to the controversy. However, the diaries consist mainly of textually economic jottings down of names, places and events. These cannot usefully be compared with normal narrative prose for purpose of comparison of vocabulary used. Only a fraction of the contentious material consists of normal prose suitable for this type of comparative analysis.

*The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement* (1997) by Angus Mitchell reignited the controversy. It contains a 40-page section specifically devoted to the forgery question, in which the author explains how he came to the conclusion that forgery had occurred. Among many aspects discussed is the simple question as to why a man might keep an incriminating document on his person when he realised he was being watched and he moved through “an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and death”.

The book reconstructs Casement’s 1910 investigative journey up the Amazon to the Putomayo from material collected from a number of disparate archives. Events in the diaries did not tally with other narratives such as Casement diary fragments and letters and the journal he kept from September 23rd to December 6th, 1910, Mitchell claimed. What is most interesting is that in his footnotes he details what he claims are forty-two examples of inconsistency. According to the contentious diary for Aug 31st, 1910: “ ... Took room ‘Le Cosmopolite’. Hotel dreadful …”. A letter from Casement dated September 3rd states “On arrival at Iquitos the members of the Commission took up their quarters in the house of the Peruvian Amazon Company while I became the guest of Mr Cazes.”

One can argue that what happened here was that Casement had accepted a room at the hotel and then rejected it on closer inspection. However, no text describes this turn of events. Such a happening would be better described by a different choice of words, such as “found room unsuitable, left…” or suchlike. Yet, this explanation which preserves the plausibility of the diary can be, just about, with some pain, squeezed in. Textual discrepancies can be met with many explanations, such as mistakes due to stress, tiredness and the oppressive tropical climate. Some of the so described inconsistencies are more convincing than others. But the very purpose of a day to day diary is to record faithfully or it is nothing. These anomalies, particularly due to their number and frequency, cast a grave lingering doubt upon the plausibility of the 1910 diary.

The sport of attempting to spot textual discrepancies enlivens the lives of theorists of forgery. On the Irish Historical Mysteries website of genealogist Seán Murphy there is an example. The Putumayo Journal or white diary which Casement maintained from September to December 1910 reads: “Sent John Brown and S Lewis to Prefect at 10am and Gusmán, but again he could not see them”. The entry for the same date in the black diary gives an account which is at variance with this: “ ... sent for John Brown to go to Prefect and Lewis and Gusman. They all went as far as I know at 10am but have not seen one of them since. They are lazy swine.”

In 1997 a couple with a background in the theatrical world, Jack Moylett and Alison Mullen, founded, in Dublin, The Roger Casement Foundation, dedicated to the memory and historical reputation of Casement. Yearly symposiums were organised around various themes. The forgery contention was much aired and usually with full approval. The Casement Foundation published in 2000 Mairead Wilson’s *Roger Casement: a Reassessment of the Diaries Controversies* (republished 2005 Athol Books); a well researched 32-page pamphlet with extensive information. The championing of authenticity on the part of various Casement biographers and commentators was confronted.

Who were these writers and what did they say? Since the 1950s quite a number of writers have written biographies or works on aspects of Casement’s life where the diaries are assumed genuine. Some, such as Singleton-Gates and Montgomery-Hyde, have had a background in the world of intelligence. These writers have become the main mediators of Casement’s story to the public. They can be credited with bringing new information on his life to light. Regarding forgery, an uninterrogated dogmatism has tended to prevail. Arguments for authenticity usually revolve around demonstrating how events related in the contended documents are corroborated elsewhere. However, as forgery proponents claim most of the material contained in the diaries was written by Casement himself or was influenced by his correspondence and writings; these observations are essentially beside the point. What mainstream opinion regards as a classic, *Roger Casement* (1973) by Brian Inglis, set the pattern for later biographers. This was the first widely distributed full biography which portrayed Casement as a homosexual and where the diaries were taken as genuine. The 1966 work by Mackey, *The Truth about the Forged Diaries*, appears in the bibliography but goes unmentioned in the text, despite a 20-page chapter set aside to discuss forgery as a possibility. Jeff Dudgeon outdid Inglis in this. In *Roger Casement The Black Diaries* (2002) he managed a 70-page chapter on forgery where the 1966 book went unmentioned. Biographies by Reid (1976), Sawyer (1984) and Ó Síocháin (2008) likewise deal with pro-forgery arguments in a cursory manner. What is striking is the lack of evidence of basic knowledge among the writers as to how forgery was technically possible by means of the erasure of inked writing with bleach followed by overwriting onto the dried out surface.

A feature of the controversy since 1959 has been the “forensic examination” which establishes authenticity. These usually emerge at approximately decade-long intervals, though there can be exceptions. They are centred on an analysis of handwriting, though again exceptions can apply. The individual doing the examining is always somebody with some sort of present or past association with the British security establishment. A Dr Harrison did the honours in 1959. Sometime in the 1970s Peter Singleton-Gates, overseen by Letitia Fairfield, in an atmosphere of secrecy, carried out, or apparently carried out, tests on the diaries using the “Ultra-Violet ray machine”. It was reported on in *Roger Casement, the Flawed Hero* (1984) by Roger Sawyer. There is no way of knowing if either or both of these individuals had the technical expertise to carry out or to validate the carrying out of such an operation. In 1993 a Dr Baxendale spent two days carrying out a handwriting comparison. This formed the centrepiece for a BBC Document radio programme.

During the next decade the controversy became enlivened. In 1994 the restrictions on viewing the diaries by the public were lifted. In 1997 *The Amazon Journal* by Angus Mitchell appeared. In 2000 German historian Reinhard Doerries published *Prelude to the Easter Rising, Sir Roger Casement in Imperial Germany*. The archives in Germany recorded that the Irishman had been shadowed by the Kaiser’s secret service, for they suspected he might be a spy sent by the British. There is no reference in the archives to any clandestine homosexual lifestyle. In April 1999 taoiseach Bertie Ahern, with the encouragement of his adviser on Northern Ireland, Dr Martin Mansergh, made an announcement before a gathering of his party colleagues commemorating the Easter Rising: “ ... in justice to the memory of Roger Casement there is now a compelling prima facie case for a new and rigorous enquiry into the provenance and genuineness of the so-called ‘black diaries’. The issue is not one of interpretation but of fact. The truth ought to be possible to determine, using modern forensic and analytical techniques.”

As a follow-through from Ahern’s announcement The Royal Irish Academy (RIA) in May 2000 oversaw a symposium: Roger Casement in Irish and World History. Advocates of both forgery and authenticity were participants. Various aspects of Casement’s activities on three continents were discussed by an international panel of scholars. The possibility of a forensic examination was discussed. James J Horan, an American forensic scientist connected with the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, gave his views on what such an examination should entail in a paper titled: How Forensic Science would approach the Casement Diaries. Under the heading of “Chemical Analysis” he explained: “Recently instruments that can do non-destructive analysis have been introduced. The Raman Spectrometer and FTIR allow the examiner to obtain spectra of the ink without taking samples from the document.”

Following on from the RIA symposium, political will (assuming it ever existed) to proceed purposefully to investigate the Casement diaries evaporated for reasons that are as yet unclear. Prof WJ McCormack, a literary historian, chaired a committee of academics, none of whom possessed qualifications in document examination. An examination of sorts was then attempted (a forensic examination, in the proper sense, is one leading to a written report of such detail and quality as to be admissible before a court of law). It was financed by the British state broadcaster, the BBC, as well as by RTE, the Irish state broadcaster. A handwriting analysis was carried out by Dr Audrey Giles of London, a document examiner. The results of the examination were rather dramatically made public on television in March 2002 on the BBC production *Roger Casement: Secrets of the Black Diaries*. RTE also provided a documentary, Alan Gilsenan’s *The Ghost of Roger Casement*, which covered similar territory. The diaries were pronounced genuinely and solely the work of Casement.

The media duly disseminated the result. The appearance of Bertie Ahern on both documentaries gave the appearance of official acceptance. Practically speaking, however, Ahern merely politely acknowledged the outcome. All this had an influence, both on public and specialist opinion. The report received no mention in specialist forensic science periodicals. While there was limited use of instrumentation for the detection of erasure and interpolation such as the Video Spectral Comparator, the examination relied mainly on the old and not very reliable art of handwriting analysis. Strangely, the report stated: “Destructive testing, using a variety of modern analytical techniques, including Raman Spectroscopy, may reveal more consistent differences between the inks.” This contrasted with the recommendations of James Horan at the RIA symposium.

The report itself is cautious and reticent in its analysis and conclusions and does not reflect the unrestrained assurance with which the outcome was trumpeted before the media. It would appear adequate finance and resources to support a comprehensive examination were not to hand. The scheduling requirements of programme production do not leave available the open-ended time-span which committed scientific endeavours require.

Surprised at the conclusions, forgery proponent and researcher Kevin Mannerings requested the report be peer-reviewed. The request was granted. In the pages of the newsletter of the British Association of Irish Studies in July 2002 Horan wrote: “To the question, ‘Is the writing Roger Casement’s?’ on the basis of the Giles Report as it stands; my answer would have to be ‘I cannot tell’.”

The relentless Mannerings invited document examiner Marcel Matley to assess the report. His reaction formed part of the 3rd Virtual Graphology Conference in 2002 and was published in Graphodigest 2002 edited by Nigel Bradley of the University of Westminster. Matley concluded: “Even if every document examined were the authentic writing of Casement, this report does nothing to establish the fact.”

This writer, while researching the technical backdrop to the 2002 report, was surprised to discover an article in the British forensic science journal *Science and Justice* for 2000 by Claybourne and Ansell titled “Using Raman Spectroscopy to solve crime: inks, questioned documents and fraud where the technique in question was being recommended as ‘non-invasive, non-destructive’”. An article in the Dublin-published *Sunday Tribune* for June 3rd, 2007 added to this surprise. Since 2005 a team at Trinity College, Dublin had been using Raman Spectroscopy on the Book of Kells to analyse the chemical ingredients in the pigments used on the famous medieval artwork. Dr Bernard Meehan, Keeper of Manuscripts, Trinity College, was happy to confirm to this writer by telephone in November 2007 that Raman Spectroscopy was not destructive to the materials under examination.

Thanks to a process initiated by Bertie Ahern, two famous Irish historical documents have been brought together in a strange conjunction. We have the Casement diaries, for which Raman Spectroscopy would denote an element of destructiveness and The Book of Kells for which there would be no such concern.

Soon after the report had been released, *Roger Casement in Death*, by the steering committee chairman, Dr WJ McCormack, was published which touted the outcome of the “forensic tests”.

At the 2006 Roger Casement Foundation symposium Kevin Mannerings provided interesting information on the pink glue-like substance which covers about ten pages of the 1910 diary and most of January 1911 and a few more 1911 diary pages. It has previously been represented as a form of restorative treatment. It is mentioned briefly in Angus Mitchell’s *The Amazon Journal* (1997). The Giles report and an associated article by Peter Bower concerning the paper, upon which the diary text was written, were published in 2005 by the RIA, along with a collection of papers connected with its May 2000 symposium, Roger Casement in Irish & World History. There was no discernible direct reference on the part of Giles or Bower to this visually obvious feature of the documents.

Mannerings’s queries to the Public Record Office/National Archives in Kew met with a reply that this substance was polyvinyl acetate. The substance was applied in 1972, a year when some restorative work was carried out on the diaries. Further investigations revealed that polyvinyl acetate is not a substance normally used for purposes of preservation and restoration of handwritten matter. Contact with a laboratory in London brought a response that testing for evidence of erasure followed by interpolation using Infra-Red or Ultra-Violet light would be frustrated by the presence on the paper of such a substance.

In light of the above, rigorous attention would need to be focused on the paper surfaces of the documents as part of any future investigation.

*The Devil and Mr Casement* (2009) by Jordan Goodman describes in detail the story of Casement’s Putumayo investigations. Casement was pitted against the immensely politically powerful and ruthless Julio Arana. Discernible is the fearfully dangerous situation Casement found himself in. The reader will find it hard to imagine how anybody in such a threatening atmosphere would, or indeed could expose themselves to danger by engaging in daily homosexual escapades and by the keeping of an incriminating diary. The contentious diary material was not employed as source material for the book.

The theory that forgery was carried out explains elegantly the many-faceted litany of anomalies and inconsistencies that attach to the Casement diaries and their history. It has the qualities of a good scientific theory. All the questions and riddles are answered. All the jigsaw pieces are made to fit together and click into place. A clear and comprehensible picture is made to emerge.

*An abridged version of the above essay was a contribution at the conference Roger Casement (1864-1916) The Glocal Imperative, Oct 24-26 2013, in Tralee, Co Kerry, organised by Notre Dame University & University of Limerick.*

- See more at: <http://www.drb.ie/essays/the-black-diaries-the-case-for-forgery?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The+Dublin+Review+of+Books+Issue+50+February+24th+2014&utm_content=The+Dublin+Review+of+Books+Issue+50+February+24th+2014+CID_0ada8577a6a1c54bda491e265693c658&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=The%20Black%20Diaries%20the%20Case%20for%20Forgery#sthash.IAgdGSSm.dpuf>