**PATRICIA CURRAN MURDER**

**EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE WITH AUTHOR KIERAN FAGAN 2017 AND 2019**

kfagan99@yahoo.com

Sun 08/12/2019 18:45

Dear Jeff.

Thanks for sending on your letter. I was sorry about the election result. I think you can take comfort from the fact that your place in the history books is assured and it is on the credit side of the page.  I should say if I haven’t already done that your book on Montgomery Hyde is very welcome.

As I said to you I began work on the Curran murder with a gut feeling that the family was not involved. My end position is that it was and I don’t expect you to welcome that. But I hope you will see that there is common ground between us.  I won’t say anything about my use of tissue of lies except that I may have got it right by accident rather than design.  We’ll see if you agree.

The earliest my book will be in print is Sept 2020.

You have been very helpful to me. I appreciate that.  As I’m now being head-butted by an overweight ginger cat looking for more food I’ll leave it at that.

Regards Kieran

Kieran Fagan

On Sun, Dec 8, 2019 at 1:28 PM +0000, "Jeffrey Dudgeon" <[jeffreydudgeon@hotmail.com](mailto:jeffreydudgeon@hotmail.com)> wrote:

Kieran

Thought I should send you my recent letter, prompted by the Belfast Telegraph story on your presumably imminent book.

I have just checked the definition and origin of the phrase a 'tissue of lies'. It is, surprisingly, 'a complex, interwoven series of lies, not a flimsy and unconvincing one'.

I hope you have solved some of the dozen or so smaller mysteries that have grown up over the events of those days since we met a couple of years ago.

The defamation law (unreformed sadly) may make some things unsayable.

I saw your brother in law, Jonathan Bardon, at a recent meeting of the Lonely Poets Society, which I addressed on my career and the UUP (now ended). He was very kind and informative.

When looking again at the subject I re-read the letter Iain Hay Gordon sent to Desmond Curran shortly after the murder (which you provided).

It was remarkable, if impossible to define precisely but creepy, distant, and unfeeling. Sociopathic?

I came across this Curran family gravestone photograph on the internet.

Best wishes

Jeff

Dear Editor

In a Belfast Telegraph news article (20 November 2019) about the imminent new book by Kieran Fagan on the Patricia Curran murder it was stated, “Iain Hay Gordon, a young Scottish RAF technician, was later found guilty of the killing, but he was cleared in 2000 after the case against him was exposed as a tissue of lies.”

This is not borne out in the appeal judgement in 2000 by Lord Chief Justice Carswell. There was no tissue of lies. Indeed the only mention of anyone lying in the judgement concerned the alibi Iain Gordon gave for the time of the murder. There was however a dispute over whether he had dictated his confession or, as the police averred, it was taken down in question and answer form.

Lord Carswell made it plain that the procedural safeguards to which a suspect would now be entitled, including the provision of a solicitor were not afforded to Iain Gordon. His questioning was also seen as oppressive in that the police sapped the will of someone “vulnerable to suggestion” and also when interrogating him on his sexual proclivities. Using modern standards, and legally that was what had to be used, he said the confession would be ruled inadmissible. What was left, consisted “of a certain amount of circumstantial evidence and some suspicious behaviour”.

The Judge therefore concluded “that the jury's verdict cannot stand. There can be no question of ordering a retrial after this length of time and we therefore allow the appeal and quash the finding of guilt.”

I have written before about the murder of the daughter of a judge who had been a Unionist MP. Others have dramatised or novelised the events. I would caution that the same standards of evidence and fairness that were applied to Iain Hay Gordon in his 2000 appeal are applied to a family who lost their daughter in 1952 and can no longer answer back.

Yours sincerely

Jeffrey Dudgeon

23 July 2017

Kieran

Thanks for the messages and information.

I have now finished the 'Framing of Harry Gleeson', finding it a great read and terribly sad.

He sounds rather a noble character, if somewhat disengaged.

If the murder involved four men it is amazing that none revealed any trace of guilt.

The lawyers come out of it badly, as do the politicians.

I see you are particularly well qualified to write about the Patricia Curran murder and lay out the facts methodically and thoroughly as in Moll McCarthy's case.

The result should be valuable. Hopefully the number of characters is smaller.

In a couple of areas in Gleeson I was not entirely enlightened or clear.

Because I read it over three days by the end, I had lost track of why the Guards were so corrupt and cruel and determined to hang an innocent man.

Perhaps you needed to lead or point the reader more often.

I recall now the name of the guy in the Slugger O'Toole web threads. It is Roland Spottiswood of Ardrigh Press and he may be 'Catcher in the Rye'. He is also a Casement diary denier or at least a sceptic.

Best

Jeff

20 July 2017

Jeff

Thanks for the cat photo. A very handsome domestic tiger. I’ll pass it along to Sally.

Here’s a fragment of the Gordon-Desmond Curran correspondence. It makes, or should do, uncomfortable reading for those who believe that Gordon was a dim half-wit who knew nothing at all about Patricia’s death.  I’m still looking for the 11-page letter Desmond refers to.

Regards

***Kieran***

19 July 2017

Kieran

Great to meet up and looking forward to another time.

Photo of my ginger cat Ted attached for your daughter.

The name of the Casement author was something you were to send me.

Desmond in the photograph - in 1936, not 1939 as I wrote, is the only boy not smiling although he is the smallest.

Best wishes on your endeavours

Jeff

**From:** Kieran Fagan <kfagan99@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** 19 July 2017 13:15  
**To:** Jeffrey Dudgeon  
**Subject:** Photo of school group in 1939

Jeff

Thanks for that. Quite apart from the historic interest having Desmond Curran in it, it’s a great photo of a bunch of schoolboys. All captioned too!

When I’m putting together the Gordon letters, I’ll send a copy on to you. They are scattered at present.

I’ve a feeling there’s something else I said I’d send you but I can find no note of it.  If you recall it, will you let me know please.

Regards

***Kieran***

16 July 2017

Kieran

I have attached the Fr Curran letters. Sadly he did not reply to my subsequent requests for information and gave no answer to the questions I posed which I thought were key.

They may have seemed forward to him but he did appear on TV with Iain Hay Gordon.

I live at Mount Prospect Park, BT9 7BG, so will expect you at around 12.30.

Best wishes

Jeff

**From:** Kieran Fagan <kfagan99@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** 16 July 2017 11:34  
**To:** Jeffrey Dudgeon  
**Subject:** Re: Belfast meeting re Curran murder Tuesday July 18, 2017.

Hi Jeff

Thank you. Whatever suits you best. I realise you are busy and I appreciate you making time for me.

My train gets to Belfast Central just about mid-day.   I can get a taxi to City Hall or lower Lisburn Road as you wish.

If that time doesn’t suit, I have stuff to do in the Linen Hall library and/or PRONI and can meet you later.

 Indeed it happens that your day totally unravels, I have plenty to do in Belfast.

I’m grateful also for the attachments.

Regards

***Kieran***

15 July 2017

Yes Tuesday would work.

At my house or perhaps City Hall.

I live off the lower Lisburn Road.

Some more items attached.

Father Curran correspondence to come where I distilled the key questions he needed to answer.

Jeff

**From:** Kieran Fagan <kfagan99@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** 13 July 2017 13:45  
**To:** Jeffrey Dudgeon  
**Subject:** Re: Patricia Curran murder 1952

Jeff

Thank you.

I shall be in Belfast on Tuesday after 1230pm.

Is there any hope of having a cup of coffee with you then?

If not, I’ll be back within a fortnight.

Best wishes

***Kieran***

5 July 2017

Jeff

That material is very useful, thank you.  I spent much of yesterday reading the Carswell appeal judgement.

And the will details from PRONI are very interesting, thank you.

I’ve never jumped to conclusions about Desmond’s motives in becoming a missionary. He was a God-botherer - I think that phrase is from Graham Greene. He tried the MRA shop, didn’t find what he wanted there and went elsewhere. The point you make about high church gay men fits. I’m determined to keep an open mind on this. I do wonder about the missing brother, Michael or Miles. Sometimes he's there, he was rude to Gordon and treated him like a servant, but then he’s gone.

I’ll contact you before my next trip and time it to suit you. I very much appreciate the help you have given me.

Regards

***Kieran***

4 July 2017

Kieran

The mystery certainly needs a definitive account although the material is now vast.

I have attached some family will details which are quite interesting. Also some recent discussions on the Slugger O'Toole website where all the theories are laid out.

The fact that the Judge's father had I think been born a Catholic [grandfather maybe] - I don't know when or why the changeover happened - can explain why Desmond Curran himself converted, in that the family tradition may have appealed, and made it less of a jump for him. He was of course in MRA.

The family seem to have coped anyway which was not always the case in those days.

There were other upper class Unionist family conversions in those times like the Halls and Montgomerys, in the latter case he also became a priest.

The Hall case was because of marriage to a Spaniard. Many gay men also went over to Rome in the Victorian era, and later. That was almost a tradition.

Do advise me when you are in Belfast next and we can meet.

Best wishes

Jeff

From: Kieran Fagan <kfagan99@yahoo.com>

Sent: 29 June 2017 10:08

To: Jeffrey Dudgeon

Subject: Re: Patricia Curran murder 1952

Dear Jeff

Thank you for replying and taking the trouble to send me your enclosures.

I come at this with an open mind. I don’t see it as opportunity to create a new genre of crime writing. I want to get this subject back from fiction, so to speak.

I intend to go where the evidence takes me.

Nor am I on an anti-Curran crusade. After all the family lost a precious daughter and sister.

I’d like to have a quick chat with you. I’ll get in touch before my next visit to Belfast to see if you can let me have a few minutes.

Best wishes

28 June 2017

Kieran

Holding reply as busy for another week or so.

You could not make it up or improve on it in novelist's terms until Iris Robinson's affair with the teenager Kirk McCamley came along.

Remember of course the libel laws are relevant so long as Hay Gordon lives. He is the only survivor since the death of Fr. Curran with whom I had a short correspondence.

I wrote the attached before the final appeal verdict. You may have seen it and of course the 2000 judgement.

My concern has been the demonisation of the Curran family and of the Unionist legal and political class which was and is merciless.

Not sure of Montgomery Hyde's involvement. It sounds likely but possibly undocumented. It would have interested him.

Hay Gordon would normally have been hanged. I think the Unionist establishment view was that because Patricia was the daughter of a Judge and former Attorney General it would have been inappropriate to exact that penalty.

Not very vengeful but leaves the matter open for endless malicious speculation.

I'll go over the outstanding mysteries later which may never be solved but should be rationally addressed.

Happy to talk or meet.

Best wishes

Jeff Dudgeon

**From:** Kieran Fagan <kfagan99@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** 26 June 2017 10:53  
**To:** jeffreydudgeon@hotmail.com  
**Subject:** Patricia Curran murder Whiteabbey 1952

Dear Mr Dudgeon

I know you are a busy man, so I’ll keep this brief. I’m trying to put together a factual account of the Curran murder case and its consequences. I’m trying to strip away the miasma of “pub talk” and speculation, and peel back the unfortunate extra layer of confusion  added by Eoin McNamee’s  otherwise fascinating  literary explorations. .

I’ve had this bee in my bonnet for a very long time. Now that I’m retired from the grind of daily journalism, I can devote some time to this. It’s been with me since  since 1953 in fact, when as an eight year old I devoured the  court reports in my father’s Irish Press, in fact. Somewhere in the intervening years I seem to recall Montgomery Hyde getting involved in this case, probably in the run up to Gordon being sent home to Scotland in 1960. My (flaky) memory is of him and perhaps Henry Brooke, father of Peter, persuading the Home Office that something needed to be done.

My question therefore to you - because you have covered ground similar to that travelled by the prolific Mr Hyde - does this chime with anything you know about the case?

PRONI has lots of stuff on Hyde, but unless its index is faulty, nothing on him getting involved in Gordon’s release. I drew a blank at the Public Record Office in Kew also.

As I said I know you are busy. So I’ll take your silence as a no, if that’s the way it is.

Regards

***Kieran***

Kieran Fagan

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journalist and media consultant