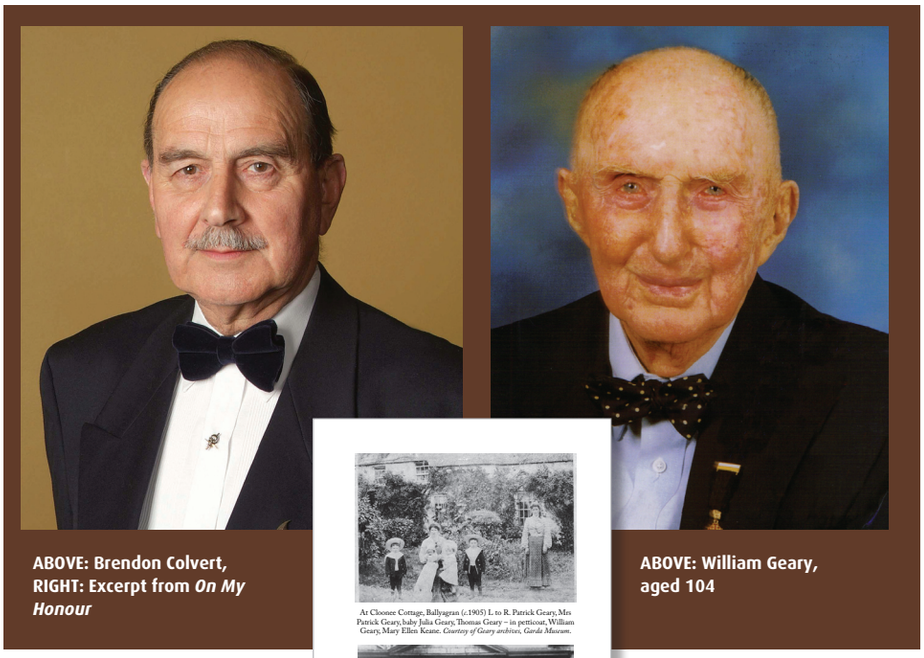
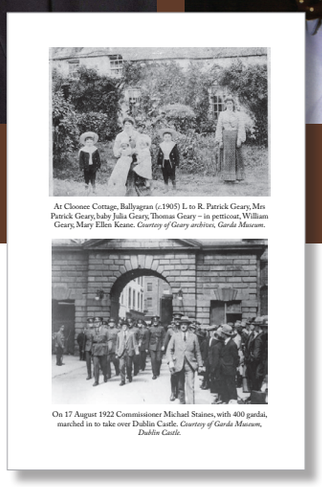
Geary's honour was brought into question over the supposed taking of an IRA bribe during his time in volatile Kilrush, making him a traitor to the cause; a sharp blow to a man of honour and integrity who immediately and vehemently protested his innocence. Colvert offers us detailed access to the elusive files that depict his downfall. We see how former colleagues and men of standing within the new An Garda Síochána played their part in sealing his fate, upon scant proof, using evidence provided by the IRA in such a way that leaves many questions unanswered as to how and why it was believed and what other agendas were at play.

In *Green Zone* the hero, Miller, in his role as chief warrant officer, is shown in a deadly search for the truth behind the premise of Iraq's threat to the world via weapons of mass destruction; finding however the deadliest of enemies are within his own infrastructure. The ongoing search for truth is the most elusive thing. Whole countries are at stake, innocent lives are being torn apart yet from within their roles as journalists, government officials and various figures within the army and in Geary's case, the police, truth is shown to be as flexible and subjective as an opinion on art.



ABOVE: Brendon Colvert, RIGHT: Excerpt from *On My Honour*

ABOVE: William Geary, aged 104



At Cloonee Cottage, Ballyagran (c.1905) L to R. Patrick Geary, Mrs Patrick Geary, baby Julia Geary, Thomas Geary – in petticoat, William Geary, Mary Ellen Keane. *Courtesy of Geary archives, Garda Museum.*

On 17 August 1922 Commissioner Michael Staines, with 400 gardai, marched in to take over Dublin Castle. *Courtesy of Garda Museum, Dublin Castle.*

> "My message to you is to wear the uniform with pride and serve with honour – guardians of the peace, unshakable pillars of justice – in a world often unaware of your great contribution to the well-being of society." - William Geary

Colvert introduces the two protagonists who condemned Geary; Chief Superintendent David Neligan and Commissioner Eoin O'Duffy. They are not offered as heroes. Colvert traces Neligan through his career of subterfuge, intelligence work and dealings with the British and IRA. He was known as someone with "a reputation for cruelty and torture." He headed the special branch, which could be described Colvert says "as a lawless parallel police force." He was widely understood to regard "men as expendable to achieve his purpose." Whereas O'Duffy in 1936 proclaimed himself to be 'the third-most important man in Europe after Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini.' His fascist tendencies are shown to get the better of him and justice is upheld with his removal from office five years after Geary.

Having met Neligan and Geary during his years as a journalist and post graduate student, Conor Brady the former *Irish Times* editor adds, "There were a great many things in David Neligan's career that he felt were best left unvisited and unexamined. Whereas Geary shone out in positivity and lack of bitterness." In his foreword he adds that Geary's story "is a moving narrative of official cowardice and obfuscation, maintained over decades."

Having relocated to New York and worked his way through his circumstances to achieve an education and secure work, despite the prevailing conditions of the Great Depression, Geary began his quest to clear his name. Colvert takes us through his many unfruitful attempts to carve a way through the decision to sack him for treachery to find a foothold in the legal system to start from. His voice of innocence was stated clearly from the beginning and persisted throughout the treachery and bungling that ensued. A voice that wouldn't be heard.

Again and again the perception of Geary's case as closed and having been a full and fair hearing was restated and engrained in administrative truth, thus becoming historical fact... no one was questioning the evidence or Geary's perspective of injustice and innocence. Like Orwell's *1984*, history had been re-written and was now fact; the fact it wasn't true didn't seem to matter.

We see this scenario played out over and over again across society, from the playground to the boardroom. Had Geary had the legal representation he should have had, as dictated by the regulations at the time, he would not have had to endure the ensuing disgrace and frustration. However, as Colvert says, his dismissal probably saved his life; he was far too efficient at his job and had secured great success in his short tenure in the volatile Kilrush. This did not suit everybody and in the neighbouring district another superintendent had been killed for the same crime.

We get a dim and tainted view of the justice that was experienced by Geary; upheld by the institutions of justice over the decades until teased open and apart by the intervention of players at a high level both here and in USA. It's an illuminating look at tenacity and the purposeful quest to obtain 'a clear name' having been banished and exiled so thoroughly by the country and people he loved. How fortunate that his circle included a judge, a newspaper editor and many other high profile figures; we are left to wonder how many people further down the tree are left in powerless limbo wronged by a system of justice so easily skewed.

To restate the honour and dignity still prevalent in many hearts including Geary's he leaves a message to his An Garda Síochána colleagues in a letter after his victory and now in his 90s: "The performance of duty well done has its own reward and requires courage, fortitude, dedication and to be conscious that you uphold the dignity of the State and the safety of the people – the alternative is chaos.

"My message to you is to wear the uniform with pride and serve with honour – guardians of the peace, unshakable pillars of justice – in a world often unaware of your great contribution to the well-being of society." (William Geary's letter to *IPA Journal*). ■

Brendon Colvert's On My Honour is published by Mercier Press.

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