

# Letters ‘Lost’ for 133 Years Could Rewrite History of Condemned Man

*Author Gavin O'Donnell shares his family name with a man condemned to be hanged for the murder of James Carey, the infamous Phoenix Park Killer.*

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, November 2, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- History tells us

“

He was a real person, but how I draw him is how I imagine him to have been as he faced his lifelong challenges and as he sat in his death cell.”

*Author Gavin O'Donnell*

that in December 1883, Patrick O'Donnell was hanged for the murder of James Carey, the leader of the infamous Phoenix Park Killers and the most notorious and hated informer in Irish history. Carey had brutally slain one of England's highest, and there would be a price to pay.

O'Donnell, who never concealed his killing of Carey, spent his final days in the death cell of Newgate Prison. But there is much more to his story than was ever revealed — until now.

In his unforgettable new book, [The Execution, Life and Times of Patrick O'Donnell](#), author Gavin O'Donnell reconstructs the story of Patrick's remarkable life using a series of letters purportedly written by Patrick as he awaited the hangman's noose — letters that apparently remained undiscovered for 133 years.

“There has in my family always been a belief that we are related to a man named Patrick O'Donnell,” Gavin O'Donnell explained in an interview. “There is some evidence to support this but it's patchy and not strong. ... but it is the reason I took an interest in the man.”

Gavin O'Donnell blends real world events, biographical information about Patrick and his own imagination to create a compelling narrative that follows Patrick's path through the Great Hunger to the typhoid sheds of Quebec; from his service in the Confederate army and capture at Chattanooga in 1863 to the grisly O'Donnell massacre at Wiggan's Patch, Pennsylvania; and ultimately to that fateful day off the coast of Port Elizabeth where Patrick put three bullets into James Carey, and in so doing sealed his own fate and his place in history — but for the wrong reasons.

“He was a real person, but how I draw him is how I imagine him to have been as he faced his

lifelong challenges and as he sat in his death cell,” Gavin O’Donnell said.

Included are accounts of letters of clemency sent to Patrick’s trial and indeed to Queen Victoria herself by Victor Hugo, (the great author but also well-known campaigner against capital punishment), and from U.S. President Chester Arthur. Interventions which hint at an extraordinary life for an Irish peasant.

“History tells us that Patrick O’Donnell was hanged in Newgate Prison in December 1883 for the murder of James Carey,” Gavin O’Donnell added. “History, however, tells us almost nothing of his remarkable life. Was he a British agent, hero of Ireland or something else altogether?”

#### About the Author

Gavin O’Donnell grew up in Wales, Ireland, North Africa and England. A selective mute until age 5, he was unable to read properly at age 11 and was classified as “Educationally Sub Normal.” He studied Construction Management in Limerick, obtaining a degree, and later, at age 40, by way of distance learning, he obtained a Bachelor of Laws honors degree at Nottingham.

While vacationing in Bordeaux in 1990, he and his wife lost their daughter in a fire, and their son was badly injured.

Later diagnosed with bipolar disorder and PTSD partly as a result of the trauma, he retired from his career in Project Management and concentrated on property development.

He and his wife, Linda, refurbished several cottages in Southern France and built up a small holiday business before selling up and returning to rural South Wales. They now reside in a self-built stone cottage along with three cats, Jess, Bob and Kpo; a few thousand bees, whom they have not named; and several chickens. Two grown children and one grandchild live nearby.

For more information, please visit <https://www.patrickodonnell.uk> or <https://www.facebook.com/executionpatrickodonnell>.

Amazon link: <https://www.amazon.com/Execution-Life-Times-Patrick-ODonnell/dp/1399951327/>

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In his new book, *The Execution, Life and Times of Patrick O'Donnell*, author Gavin O'Donnell draws from 26 letters purportedly written by the condemned man himself as he awaited the hangman.

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