

## **List of Suspected Civilian Spies Killed by the IRA, 1920-21**

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*Note about the form of entries in this database: Each of the entries in the Cork Spy Files follows the same format: (1) the name of the suspected spy, including certain variations in the forename or surname that appear in the sources; (2) the victim's age (if known, and usually as derived from the 1911 census); (3) the victim's residence if known and given without parentheses; (4) the place of death, given within parentheses; (5) the exact date of the incident, i.e., the date on which the suspected spy was killed or mortally wounded, or the date on which the victim was abducted or otherwise disappeared, though death took place on a later date; (6) the full range of our sources for each death, with abbreviations as needed, and for which a full list will soon be supplied on the website as part of a comprehensive bibliography; and (7) a note providing all valuable information about the victim available to us and considered relevant.*

### **1. Civilian Timothy A. Quinlisk** (aged about 25), (Ballyphehane, south suburb of Cork city)

Date of incident: 18 Feb. 1920 (ex-soldier executed as suspected spy by IRA)

Sources: Death Certificate (Cork No. 1 Rural, St Finbarr's), 18 Feb. 1920; *CE*, 20, 24, 25 Feb., 4 March 1920; *CWN*, 28 Feb. 1920; *IT*, 28 Feb. 1920; WS 719 of Maurice Ford et al., 9 (BMH); Daniel McCarthy's WS 1457 (BMH); Michael Murphy's WS 1547, 12-18 (BMH); Jeremiah Keating's WS 1657, 3-4 (BMH); Joseph O'Shea's WS 1675, 7-8 (BMH); O'Donoghue (1971), 166; Borgonovo (2007), 31, 76, 100 (note 71); Murphy (2010), 40; McCarthy (2012), 45-62; <http://www.irishbrigade.eu/recruits/quinlisk.html> (accessed 27 July 2015).

Note: An ex-soldier, Quinlisk was shot in nine different places at close range; his 'head and body were literally torn with revolver bullets'. See *CE*, 20 Feb. 1920. The murder took place late at night on 18 February 1920. The body was found by a local herdsman, who notified the police; they in turn informed military officials. Soldiers then recovered the body and took it to the city morgue, where it lay unidentified for three days before burial. The death certificate was issued for an unidentified male whose body had been found at Ballyphehane with laceration of the brain and right lung resulting from bullet wounds. See Death Certificate (Cork No. 1 Rural, St Finbarr's), 18 Feb. 1920. Quinlisk claimed to have been a member of the brigade formed in Germany by Sir Roger Casement. He was well educated and spoke French and German fluently. He was a native of County Wexford. After the war he was discharged from the British army. He lived for a time in Dublin and then in Cork city. See *CE*, 24 Feb. 1920. Quinlisk comes first on John Borgonovo's list of twenty-six civilians executed as spies by the IRA in Cork city in the years 1920-21. Borgonovo indicates that Quinlisk was shot dead at Tory Top Lane, which became a place favoured by the IRA for carrying out such executions. See Borgonovo (2007), 31, 76, 100 (note 71).

Quinlisk was an inept spy. City Volunteer leaders had quickly placed him under close surveillance and found more than enough reason to execute him. The Cork No. 1 Brigade Council agreed that he should be shot. The execution party consisted of Michael

Murphy (O/C, Second Battalion), Frank Mahony (Intelligence Officer, Second Battalion), and Jimmy Walsh (a company captain in the same battalion). Murphy coldly recalled of the not-quite-dead Quinlisk, 'I then turned him over on the flat of his back and put a bullet through his forehead.' Murphy later cited some of the damning evidence against Quinlisk in his BMH witness statement: 'I might here state that on the same evening [that Quinlisk was executed], following a raid on the mails by some of our lads, one of the letters written by "Quinn" [as he called himself] in [Volunteer Albert] de Courcey's house (presumably) and addressed to the County Inspector, R.I.C., was found. In that letter Quinlisk stated that he had got in touch with a prominent I.R.A. officer (meaning me, I suppose), who told him that Mick Collins was in Clonakilty, and this Volunteer officer was to introduce Collins to Quinlisk when he (Collins) arrived back in Cork. On the morning following the execution of Quinlisk, I took all the letters and papers we had taken from him to Florrie O'Donoghue, brigade adjutant. One of these letters was addressed to the R.I.C. authorities, saying that he (Quinlisk) now had information about Michael Collins and would report again in a few days when the capture of Collins seemed imminent. . . . The Cork No. 1 Brigade Commandant Seán Hegarty got in touch with G.H.Q., Dublin, immediately following the identification of "Quinn" as Quinlisk, and word was received back from Mick Collins that Quinlisk was definitely a spy in the pay of the British, as he (Collins) had received within the past few days certain papers from a source connected with the British authorities in Dublin Castle, which included Quinlisk's application for service as a secret agent of the Castle and his acceptance as such by the Castle authorities.'

Hundreds of people went to view the body while it lay for identification purposes at the Cork city morgue for 'at least three days' under the guard of an RIC man, 'but, of course,' said Murphy, 'nobody identified him. He was then taken from the morgue by police and military and buried in the burial ground for paupers at the top of Carr's Hill, Cork.' When Quinlisk's father came from Waterford to claim the body about two weeks later, he had a confrontation with Murphy, who had been informed by the clerk of Cork poor-law union of the father's application to the workhouse authorities: 'I asked the man his name but he refused to give it to me. I said to him: "Now, Mr Quinlisk, I know you well; your son John [*sic*] was shot here as a spy, and you had better take him and yourself out of this town within twenty-four hours or you will meet with the same fate.'" See Michael Murphy's WS 1547, 16-18 (BMH).

According to a newspaper report, Timothy Quinlisk's father Denis Joseph Quinlisk of 5 Rose Lane, Waterford, applied to the master of Cork union workhouse for the exhumation of his son's body, buried on 21 February 1920 at Lapland (better known as 'Carr's Hole') in Cork city, so that the remains could be reinterred in Wexford, his native county. See *CE*, 4 March 1920. At the time of the 1911 census the victim's father Denis had been an 'acting sergeant' in the RIC residing at 10 Cathedral Square in Waterford city. He and his wife Alice were then the parents of five children (three sons and two daughters), ranging in age from 7 to 16, all of whom were co-resident with them. Timothy Quinlisk (then aged 16) was their eldest child. The Quinlisks were Catholic.