

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

Dr Andy Bielenberg, University College Cork

Professor Emeritus James S. Donnelly, Jr, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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.

7. Civilian Séan or John O'Callaghan Jr (aged about 27) of 13 Picketts Lane, Bandon Road, Cork (Farmers Cross, south of Cork city)

Date of incident: 15 Sept. 1920 (abducted and killed as suspected spy by IRA)

Sources: Private Persons Injured (CO 905/15, TNA); British Casualties (A/0438, Military Archives); Executions by IRA in 1920 (A/0535, Military Archives); Jeremiah Keating's WS 1657, 5-6 (BMH); Patrick Collins's WS 1707, 9 (BMH); Borgonovo (2007), 51, 76, 100 (note 71), 165, 168, 169-70, 174, 179; Murphy (2010), 41; Ó Ruairc (2016), 119.

Note: A civilian clerk in Victoria Barracks, O'Callaghan 'was overheard by a barman in a city public house giving information to the military over the phone'. Séan Hegarty, vice-commandant of the Cork No. 1 Brigade, gave the order for the execution of O'Callaghan, which was carried out by Volunteers Jeremiah Keating, Patrick Collins, and John O'Connell. They took him 'to the Thomas Ashe Hall on Father Mathew Quay, where he was detained until about three o'clock in the afternoon. When we were bringing him out to a car outside the door of the hall, he made a bid to escape but was chased and tripped up by one of our lads. We then got him into the car and took him out the country to the Farmers Cross district, where he was shot and his body buried.' See Jeremiah Keating's WS 1657, 5-6 (BMH).

O'Callaghan appears on a list of twenty-six civilians killed by the Cork city IRA in 1920-21. His name is given in the Compensation Commission Register under 15 September 1920, with 'L' for Liability, and with a note that £950 in compensation was awarded. See Ó Ruairc (2016), 119. John O'Callaghan Jr was in 1911 one of the four living children (five born) of the Cork city groom John O'Callaghan Sr and his wife Mary of 13 Picketts Lane. These children (a daughter and three sons) were all co-resident with their parents in that year. John O'Callaghan Jr (then aged 17) listed his occupation as 'machine boy' for the census-taker. The O'Callaghans were Catholic.