

Ralph Heyward Isham's life has been chronicled as follows:

1916: Ralph Isham obtains a US passport for the purpose of traveling to England.

Isham was head of a British army intelligence unit known as A-2, G.H.Q. When British soldiers were not demobilized immediately after the armistice in November of 1918, some disgruntled troops conducted "strikes" and refused to parade or obey orders. Isham's work in dealing with disaffection among troops at his command was brought to the attention of Field Marshall William Robertson who appointed Isham to his staff in 1918 to investigate and suppress Bolshevik activities which were believed to be responsible for the strikes. In order to assist him in accomplishing these goals, Robertson authorized the formation of the A-2 branch at General Headquarters. **Isham was named director** with a major and six other officers under his command. Through undercover investigations of suspected Bolsheviks and lectures to troops on the dangers of Bolshevism, the A-2 Branch was successful in ending and preventing strikes among servicemen. Subsequently, the A-2 Branch was placed within the Home Office so that Isham could conduct investigations and take disciplinary action against non-military British citizens who were believed to be involved in traitorous activities.

1917 (August) Lands in France.

1919 (January 7) Temp. 2nd Lt. R. H. Isham, R.E., to be temporary Capt.

(without pay or allowances of that rank), while employed as a specialist

1919 (March 8) Temp. 2nd Lt. (temp. Capt.) R. H. Isham, R.E.. to be temp. Lt.-Col. While specially employed.

1919 (September 4) Arrives in UK from New York on SS Lapland. He is given as an "army officer"

1919 (November 26) Churchill, in his capacity as Secretary of State for War, writes to C. G. S. Home Forces and authorizes the dispatch of an aide to Dublin. The brief missive, penned on a lined sheet, reads in full: "Col. Isham is authorized to proceed to Dublin under instructions from the Home Secretary. Please take the necessary steps." It is signed "WCS" in black fountain pen.

1919 (December 7) A secret committee report recommended that spies who were unknown to any members of Irish Police forces be infiltrated into Dublin. This was the reason why Isham was wanted by Thomson. The official justification for Isham's transfer to Thomson's Directorate was expressed by Isham : "As the moving spirits among the forces of disorder were in civil life and as a soldier may not, under British law, take disciplinary action against a civilian, Mr Shortt, then Secretary of State for Home Affairs, in agreement with **Mr Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War**, gave me a status in the Home Office which conferred upon me the necessary authority. My immediate superior in the Home Office was Sir Basil Thomson."

During the following couple of weeks A2 dispersed. Because its key personnel were being transferred to other secret service work, in a sense A2 did not disappear but rather underwent a metamorphosis.

The officers shared a farewell dinner and **were presented by Isham** with an engraved silver match slide apiece.

1919 (December 18 – 25) Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Isham became embroiled in secret negotiations over a transfer which would involve him carrying out a leading role in Thomson's Dublin operations. But tempers were frayed when Winston Churchill, at Basil Thomson's behest, despatched a note to Major-General Sir Cecil Romer, in the War Office Staff, seconding Isham to Edward Shortt, the Home Secretary. Field Marshal Haig, who only had a few weeks left as Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces angrily balked at Shortt's pillage of GHQ Staff. It was to no avail and Haig was overruled by Churchill after the Home Secretary (accompanied by Isham) personally lobbied the Secretary of State for War on 26 December 1919.

In 1920 (January) **Lieutenant-Colonel Isham R.E. made arrangements to be presented with his CBE**, transformed himself into "Heyward Isham Esq." travelled with his valet to Dublin and liberally toasted the New Year at the Shelbourne Hotel.

A2's other fulltime spy was demobilised on 29 December and saw in 1920 as ex-Private Raymond Gray.

1920 – The Isham/Gaynor Divorce The couple's divorce, as reported in *The New York Times*

Divorces Isham, Magnate's son

Daughter of Gaynor, former New York mayor, freed

Simple story of desertion is told in court here

Marriage was sensation of year in social world

A plain tale of desertion won for Mrs. Marion Isham a divorce from Ralph Heyward Isham in Judge Craig's court yesterday. It was such a simple story, a story of a petty quarrel that caused her young husband to leave her several years ago that the morbidly curious spectators in the courtroom yawned. They did not know that the 1914 marriage of the sad little woman on the witness stand created the greatest surprise of the year in society circles.

Mrs. Isham before her marriage on January 28, 1914 in New York (Manhattan, certificate 3051) was Miss Marion Gaynor, the 16-year old daughter of the late Mayor Gaynor of New York. Her husband, the 23-year-old son of Henry Heyward Isham, capitalist and railroad president, was then known as "the millionaire reporter."

Miss Gaynor married Mr. Isham at the earnest wish of his father, who was then critically ill at his Santa Barbara home.

Mr. Isham became a reporter on a New York newspaper after his graduation from Yale University. His father was reputed to own nearly all of Elizabethtown NJ and about half of Newark besides railroad holdings in Ohio and other properties.