

# CORK 1918

## Exhibition

The City Library | September 2018



# LIFE IN CORK IN 1918

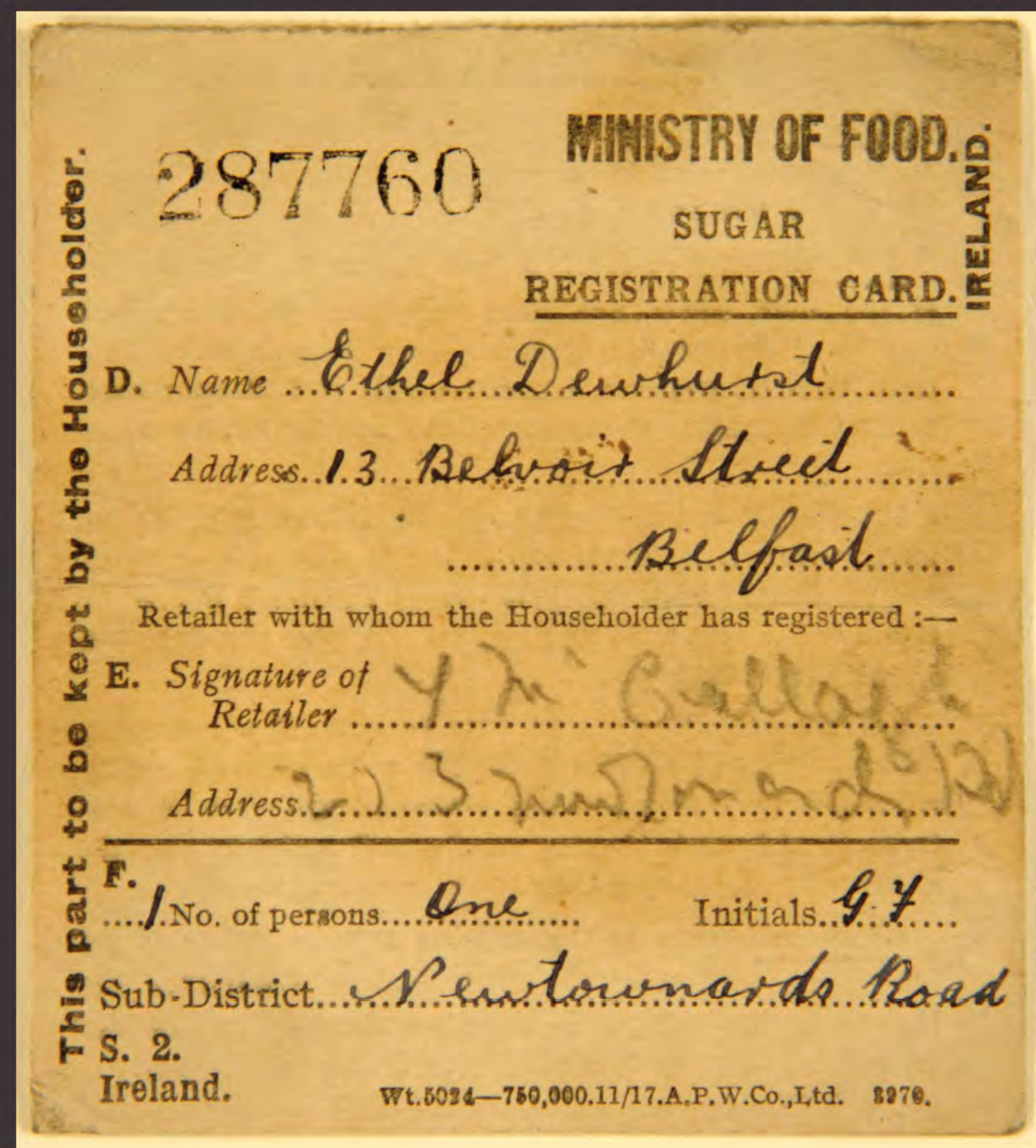
**World War I** was still raging in 1918, and by now many thousands of young Cork men had left to fight on the battlefields of Europe, some never to return. Though many had enlisted with the aim of furthering the cause for Home Rule, the political landscape at home had changed during the war years. The concept of Home Rule was dead and there was now broad support for the type of independent state advocated by Sinn Féin.

Right: Zonnebeke by William Orpen



**By 1918** many significant improvements had been made to the city's water and sewerage systems. Nevertheless, contagious disease was still common in the early part of the twentieth century, with many hundreds admitted to the fever hospital on the city's northside over the course of the year. Typhus, diphtheria and scarlet fever were relatively widespread. With improved sanitation and better water treatment, as well as the clearing of the city's slums, public health would improve in the city in the years leading up to the Second World War.

**Rationing** was implemented in Ireland during 1918. The British Ministry of Food had set up a food control committee for Ireland in August 1917. Sugar was rationed under the terms of The Sugar Order (Ireland). Sugar cards were distributed to all households by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). Sugar card holders had to register with a grocer for the supply of sugar. Adults were allowed half a pound of sugar per week, with children allowed slightly more. The public were also urged to conserve bread, butter and milk where possible.



Right: Excerpt from *The Cork Examiner* newspaper of 8 January 1918 reporting the sugar scheme

Left: Example of a sugar ration card issued in Ireland during 1918

## The Cork Electric Tramway Company

began running electric trams through Cork in 1898. These replaced the horse-drawn trams that had previously operated in the city. By 1918, the lines extended to Blackpool in the north, Douglas in the south and Blackrock in the east. The trams would continue to provide an efficient means of transport in the city until 1931, when they were phased out due to the rise in popularity of cars and buses.

Below: St Patrick's Street in the early 1900s



...for by retailing... are necessary there will be a sub-... than exporters, however, speak strongly of the competition, with attendant exploitation of prices caused by the English purchasers, and demand strong action by the Ministry of Food, as the Irish consuming public, who are not in receipt of such large incomes as was conditions here, but able to meet the calls on their purses which such inflation entails.

The shortage of pigs in Ireland is very much more marked in the North of Ireland generally than in the South, and even granted relief from the present unsettled circumstances within the next three months, the encouragement and stimulation of Irish pig breeding is an absolute necessity.

**IRISH SUGAR SCHEME**

The distribution of sugar cards in Cork by the members of the R.U.C. entrusted with the task is completed, except for a few cases where persons were absent from their places of abode during the Christmas holidays, or where some "last moment" procrastinators were just too late in making their needs known to the authorities; but even for these provision has now been made.

By next Saturday all sugar card holders in Ireland must have registered with their respective grocers, who will retain half the card, and who will in the intervening weeks before the scheme comes into operation make their arrangements with the Ministry of Food for a regular supply of sugar to meet the needs of their customers, as shown by the number of cards lodged with them.

The scheme of distribution for this country does not become operative before the 3rd of March, but in the meantime the machinery regulating it will have to be perfected. For instance, it is not quite certain yet in what quantities sugar will be apportioned to adults and children. It may be taken for granted that the adults' ration will be half-pound per week, as in the case in England, but it is believed that in the case of children, 2oz. is a slighter, larger allowance will be made. In the next month these matters will be determined, as will also the system of receipts and checking of the rations as sold by the retailer to his customer.

**GORK MILK PRICES.**

It has from time to time in this journal been made abundantly clear in articles on the prices of milk in Cork, subsequent to the issuing of the Milk (Ireland) Order, that the maximum price of 3d per pint—2s per gallon—applied to whole milk delivered to the houses of consumers. The clause formerly fixing the maximum wholesale price of milk at 1s 4d per gallon has been suspended, leaving the fixing of the wholesale price as a matter for negotiation between the parties concerned, subject to the maximum price of 2s per gallon delivered to consumers.

Following the suspension of that clause, the Cork Dairy Farmers' Association recommended to the Irish Food Control Committee that Cork shopkeepers be allowed to sell over the counter at the rate of 1s 10d per gallon.

No decision on that point has yet been issued by the Irish Food Control Committee.

**BUTTER PROSECUTION.**

The summonses (nine) at Methry, under the Butter Order, against the Lakelands Dairy Co., Cork—two for selling butter exceeding the maximum price to James Evans, Carrmarthen Street, Methry, on November 28th, and December 8th, four similarly for selling butter to William Harris, High street, Methry, and three for entering into artificial or fictitious transactions respecting the sale of butter, have been adjourned by consent until Friday at the request of Mr Harold Lloyd, Cardiff, who is retained for the defence.

**PRICE OF CHEESE.**

The Food Controller has decided that for the present the first-hand prices of British-made cheese will remain as set out in the schedule attached to the British Cheese Order, dated 31st October, 1917.

**IRISHMEN! Do Your Duty to Your Country.**

**Smoke Primrose Cigarettes**

**IRISH MADE.**

10 FOR 4d. BOXES OF 50s FOR 1/10.

TOBACCONISTS.

**DUBLIN.**

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR.**

**SUGAR BEEF PRODUCTION.**

Sir,—Seeing how much the poor, especially the old people and the children, are suffering from want of sugar, it is suggested that a club should be formed to set up machinery near Kiltarney and Cork for extracting sugar from beetroot, each member subscribing a shilling or upwards monthly. Beetroot grows well in Ireland, and what remains after the sugar has been extracted is excellent for feeding cattle, and nothing is needed to induce everyone in the country to grow it but a little enterprise in setting up the necessary local machinery. Hoping your readers, who work so wholeheartedly in all good causes, wherever opportunities arise, will respond quickly to this suggestion.—Yours truly, KILKARNEY, MACKENZIE KENNEDY.

**NOMINATIONS TO MARES.**

**PREMIUM BULLS AND BOARS.**

Notice is given in our advertising columns that applications in connection with the above will be received up to the 26th January. Entries will not be accepted after that date. Applicants for premium bulls and boars will be selected in accordance with the needs of their districts and the priority of their applications. Full particulars may be obtained from the Secretary, County Committee of Agriculture, Court House, Cork.

**GUY'S ALMANAC AND DIRECTORY.**

Messrs Guy and Company, Cork have just issued their Cork Almanac and Directory for the year 1918. This is the forty-fifth issue of an annual publication which has become an absolute necessity, not only to professional and business men and traders residing in Cork City and County, but to all outside who have commercial relations with them. The Directory has, as usual, been brought up-to-date, and contains changes that took place while the volume was being printed. There are classified lists of the clergy, University College, Colleges and Schools, Agricultural and Technical Schools, Barristers, Solicitors, Medical and Surgical Practitioners, Civil Engineers, etc., with qualifications. Under the head of Local Government are given lists of the members of the County, Rural and Urban District Councils, Boards of Guardians, with addresses. The directories of local financial institutions are set out. The lists of fairs and markets for Munster give, as well as weekly half-holidays or early closing days in each town, will prove exceedingly useful. Particulars are given of Stamp and other Duties, local Rates and Taxes, Postal rates and regulations, full list of Irish Post Offices, local railways, steamship services, train services, etc. Summaries are given of the Agricultural Wages Board for Ireland. The accompanying convey only a very inadequate idea of the mass of useful information contained in the 600 pages to which the 1918 Directory has grown. Has anyone who wishes to have at hand a reliable guide to the city and county cannot procure better than the work under review. Owing to the increased cost of paper, etc., the publishers have been obliged to raise the price of the cloth bound edition to two shillings, but at this price it is marvellous value.

**GUY'S MUNSTER DIARY.**

This is a widely known annual publication. The 1918 Diary is up to the standard of its predecessors. All the usual information is given: Postal regulations and rates, Health Insurance, Old Age Pension and Workmen's Compensation regulations, lists of markets and fairs in Munster, dates of Quarterly Sessions for the city and county, moon, sun, tide and lighting up tables. Two foolscap pages are given to record the happenings of each week in the year. The Diary also has a place in offices and every other place where a daily record of appointments, events has to be kept. Owing to the high price of paper, etc., the price has been raised to two shillings, but it is well worth the price.



# POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

## Anti-conscription campaign

When compulsory military service for men aged between 18 and 41 was introduced in Britain in 1916, Ireland was not affected. However in March 1918, facing a major German offensive on the Western Front, the British war cabinet decided to raise the age limit of conscripts to 51 years and extend conscription to Ireland. This decision met with vociferous and violent opposition in Ireland. The Sinn Féin party was positioned at the forefront of the anti-conscription campaign, and enjoyed greatly increased support as a result. The campaign marked the beginning of the end for the Irish Parliamentary Party, who had campaigned for Home Rule and who had actively encouraged young Irish men to enlist since the beginning of the war. The Irish Labour Party organised a general strike on 23 April 1918 and this, combined with other protests, contributed to the decision by the British government to abandon conscription in Ireland by June 1918.



Above: Anti-conscription demonstration in Ireland, 1918

## The Rise of Sinn Féin

By the time of the December 1918 general election the electorate had changed considerably since the last poll eight years before. All men over the age of twenty-one years were now entitled to vote, as were all women over thirty who owned property. As a result, the Irish electorate had swelled from 700,000 in January 1910 to almost 2 million at the time of the 1918 election.

The conscription crisis of early 1918 provided an enormous boost to Sinn Féin's support. It has been estimated that Sinn Féin membership rose by over 20% between March and May 1918. The number of Volunteer recruits increased to an even greater extent, as young men anxious to avoid compulsory service in the British Army rushed to join. By the time of the general election in December 1918, Sinn Féin were in prime position to capitalise on their recent gains. Whereas the Irish Parliamentary Party (who had been elected on a promise to deliver Home Rule) appeared to represent a dated, middle-class view of how Ireland should be governed, the policies of Sinn Féin appealed to younger, working-class voters. The Irish Labour Party withdrew from the contest, allowing Sinn Féin to run a great many candidates unopposed and present the election as a vote on a single issue: independence.

Below: Anti-conscription pledge and poster

### ANTI-CONSCRIPTION PLEDGE.

The following is a copy of the Pledge:—

“Denying the right of the British Government to enforce Compulsory Service in this Country *we pledge ourselves solemnly to one another to resist Conscription* by the most effective means at our disposal.”

### NO CONSCRIPTION NOW! or AFTER the Harvest.

No Economic Pressure!

LA NA MBAN.

The **Woman's Day**, SUNDAY, JUNE 9th.

FOR HOME & COUNTRY.

IRISHWOMEN,

STAND BY YOUR COUNTRYMEN IN RESISTING CONSCRIPTION.

SIGN THIS PLEDGE AT THE CITY HALL ON ST. COLMCILLE'S DAY.

“We will not fill the place of men deprived of their work through refusing military service.”

“We will do all in our power to help the families of men who refuse through refusing military service.”

**REFUSE** to fill Posts vacated by MEN because of Compulsory Military Service.

All Information from Secretary, 18 Kildare Street.



## Suffrage Movement

The Representation of the People Act, passed in 1918, extended the right to vote in parliamentary elections to women over thirty, and the general election in December of that year would offer women their first chance to utilise that right. In that election, Constance Markievicz became the first woman elected to the House of Commons.

Right: Trade union activist Delia Larkin signs the Women's Anti-Conscription Pledge in City Hall, Dublin. Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.





# EMERGENCE OF THE IRA



Officers of the Cork IRA Brigade in 1918

Back row: Daithí Cotter, Seán Murphy, Donal Barrett, Terence MacSwiney, Pat Trahey

Front row: Tadgh Barry, Tomás Mac Curtain & Pat Higgins

(Courtesy of Cork Public Museum)

**During 1918** the Irish Volunteers were reorganising. Michael Collins had become disillusioned with the open warfare tactics of the Easter Rising, and was now preparing for a guerrilla campaign against the British. Local branches were quietly recruiting new members and training. New units were created in places which previously had no Volunteer network, and existing units grew and strengthened. Released prisoners from internment camps in Britain, veterans of the 1916 rising, boosted numbers and brought essential military experience. The conscription crisis of early 1918 also drove the numbers of new recruits significantly. By summer of that year, the numbers in the Cork Brigade stood at 8,000 men. After the start of the War of Independence the Irish Volunteers became more commonly known as the *Irish Republican Army* (IRA).

The expanding Volunteer movement required an improved organisational structure. The smallest unit was a company, which represented a parish or townland. Several companies formed a battalion, and several battalions formed a brigade. In early January 1919, the Cork Brigade was split into 3 parts: Cork City and Mid-Cork (No. 1 brigade), North Cork (No. 2 brigade), and West Cork (No.3 brigade). The Cork IRA brigades formed the main part of the IRA's 1<sup>st</sup> Southern Division. Cork IRA brigades accounted for 16% of total Volunteer numbers during the War of Independence, or 17,976 men.

## Cork Brigade Leaders



### No. 1 Brigade: O/C Tomás Mac Curtain

Based in Blackpool on the northside of Cork City, Tomás Mac Curtain was a member of the Gaelic League in addition to being a brigade commander of the Irish Volunteers. Representing Sinn Féin, he was elected Lord Mayor of Cork in January 1920. In March of the same year he was assassinated in his home by the RIC.



### No. 2 Brigade: O/C Liam Lynch

From Barnagurraha, near Mitchelstown, Liam Lynch, was a member of the Gaelic League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. He joined the Volunteers after the 1916 rising, and was made brigade commander at the start of 1919. He became Chief of Staff of the IRA in 1922, fighting on the Anti-Treaty side. He was killed in 1923.



### No. 3 Brigade: O/C Tom Hales

Tom Hales was born in Ballinadee near Bandon. From a nationalist family, he and his brothers fought for the IRA during the War of Independence in West Cork. He was captured and tortured by British forces, but survived to fight on the Anti-Treaty side in the Civil War. He later became a Fianna Fáil TD for Cork West. He died in 1966.

## Who were the IRA?

Volunteers were generally male, Catholic, single and aged in their late teens or early twenties. Their occupations were varied, as can be seen from the table below (adapted from Hart, 2003).

The table shows occupations of Volunteers outside of Dublin between 1917 and 1919. Figures represent percentages of total

Occupation	Officers	Soldiers
Farmer / Son	27	40
Farm labourer	5	11
Unskilled / semi-skilled	4	9
Skilled	23	16
Shop assistant / Clerk	19	12
Professional	9	1
Merchant / Son	10	7
Student	1	1
Other	2	3

## Attacks on Crown forces in Cork

On 7 July 1918, Ballingeary RIC prohibited a Gaelic League feis from taking place in Cúil Aodha. In a response to this action, local volunteers ambushed two RIC constables and took their weapons. Earlier in the year, a group of Volunteers had successfully taken weapons from Eyeries RIC barracks. On 12 September, soldiers from Victoria (later Collins) Barracks were attacked and relieved of their weapons. In November 2018 a Volunteer named Denis McNeilus was rescued from Cork County Gaol.

During 1918 intelligence gathering was prioritised by the Volunteers, and they developed an elaborate system of communication, designed to avoid attention from the RIC.

Below: Volunteers of Cork No. 2 Brigade





**World War I** ended on 11 November 1918. Britain and its allies won and imposed peace terms on Germany. The conflict took the lives of approximately 7 million military personnel and up to 10 million civilians. 49,000 Irish soldiers died in the war, many of those from Cork. They had enlisted primarily on the basis that their participation would secure Home Rule for their country.

On returning home, however, they would find Ireland had changed utterly. The idea of Home Rule was dead; the public wanted complete independence from Britain and nothing less.

Right: The armistice reported in *The Cork Constitution* of 12 November 1918.

# END OF WORLD WAR I

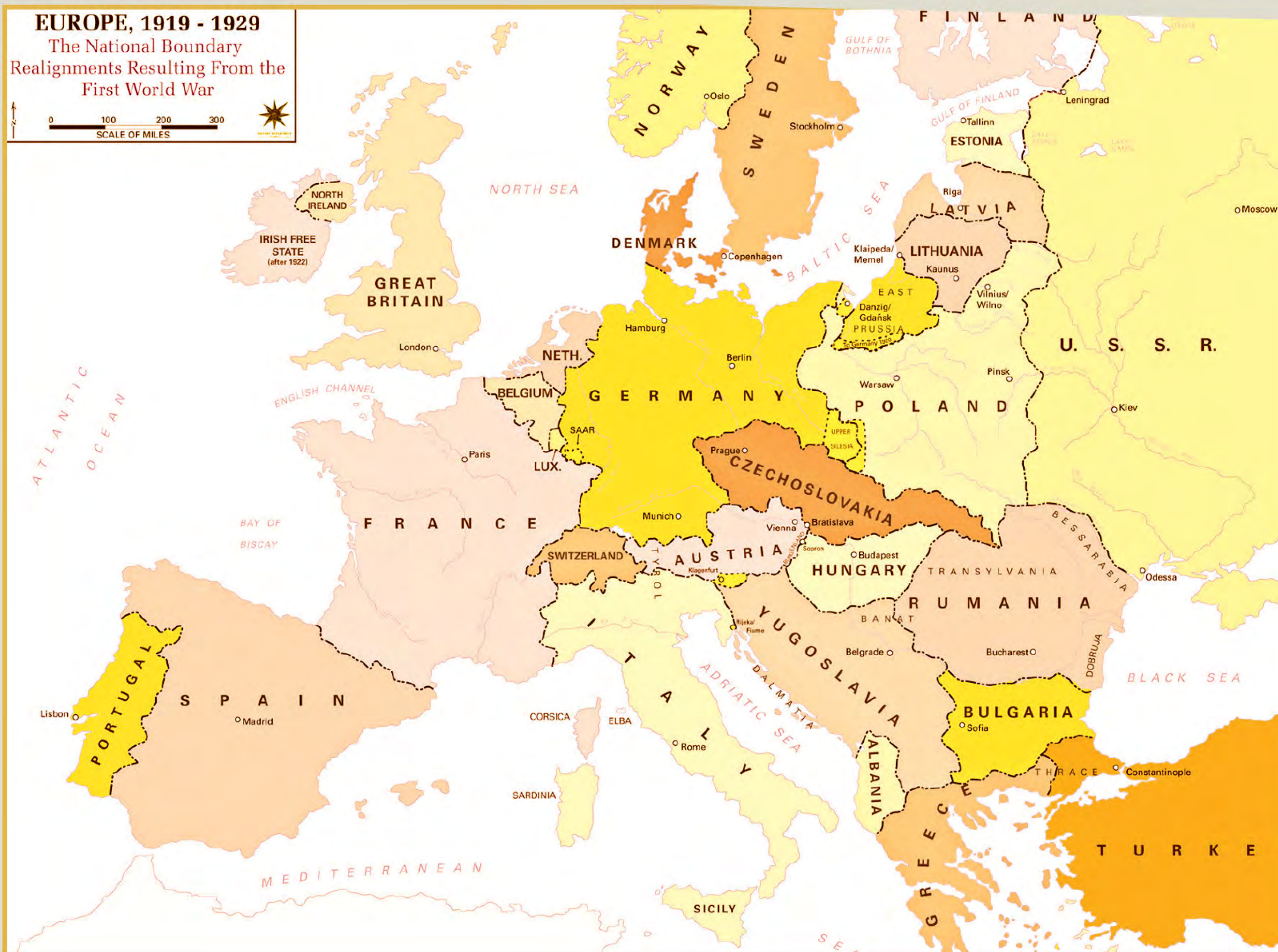


## A new political landscape

The outcome of the First World War caused the landscape of Europe to change irrevocably. Monarchies in Germany, Turkey, Russia and Austria-Hungary were overthrown. The US had emerged as a cultural, industrial and economic world leader. Russia was now ruled by Lenin's Bolsheviks.

In Ireland, a majority of the electorate now wanted a sovereign state, independent from Britain. The Irish Parliamentary Party saw its support base collapse. Sinn Féin was now more popular than any other political party.

Right: Map of Europe after World War I



## What became of the returning soldiers?

100,000 veterans returned to Ireland after World War I. The returning soldiers were in many ways out of place in the new order, having spent the previous four years fighting for the British. Though not specifically targeted by the IRA, they would find it difficult to integrate into society in the years immediately following the armistice.

Some, like Tom Barry, joined the IRA. The son of an RIC officer, he had served with the British Army in the Middle East. His combat skills would prove vital to the IRA during the War of Independence. Many other ex-soldiers trained the IRA recruits in the use of firearms.



Above: Tom Barry

Other war veterans joined the British forces. Most members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) were Irish; 75% of these were Catholic. Approximately 10% of recruits in the Black and Tans were Irish Catholics.



Right: Black and Tans performing a search

Several thousand ex-servicemen joined the Irish Free State Army when it was formed in 1922.

All materials used in this exhibition can be viewed in

# LOCAL STUDIES

2nd floor, Grand Parade Library  
Open Wed to Sat, 10.00 am to 5.30 pm

## Sources used in this exhibition

### BOOKS

- Crowley, J., Ó Drisceoil, D., and Murphy, M. (Eds) (2017) *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, Cork University Press.
- Harvey, D. and White, G. (1997) *The Barracks: a History of Victoria/Collins Barracks*, Cork, Mercier Press, Cork.
- Hart, P. (2003) *The I.R.A. at War 1916-1923*, Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, P. (2015) *Heroes or Traitors?: Experiences of Southern Irish Soldiers Returning from the Great War, 1919-1939*, Liverpool University Press.
- White, G. and O'Shea, B. (Eds) (2010) *A Great Sacrifice: Cork Servicemen who Died in the Great War*. Echo Publications, Cork.

### NEWSPAPERS & JOURNALS

- Lowe, W.J. (2004) 'Who were the Black and Tans?' *History Ireland*, vol. 12, no.3, p. 47-51.
- Cork Examiner*
- Cork Constitution*

Below: Gassed by John Singer Sargent

