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## 1917 Lunchtime lectures

### Professor Matthew Seligmann

Brunel University London

Wednesday May 10th 1.00 – 2.00

### The war at Sea 1917

For the war at sea, 1917 has been called 'the year of decision'. Since the start of the conflict in 1914 both Britain and Germany had been looking for ways to maximize the pressure they could put on the other, an aim that, in terms of naval warfare, required at the very least bending and in many cases flagrantly breaching international law. Thus, for both sides, the war at sea up to 1917 had been about finding ways to circumvent accepted norms without suffering unacceptable consequences in reputation and relations with neutral states. 1917 would be the moment when both British and German naval policies were taken to their logical conclusion with consequences that would set in motion the wheels that would bring ultimate victory for the Allies a year later.



### Dr. Timothy Bowman,

University of Kent

Wednesday June 7th 1.00 – 2.00

### 'Messines / Mesen, 1917: battle, myth and memory'

The Battle of Messines / Mesen in June 1917 was the major British offensive of that year and, by First World War standards, it was very successful. For the first time the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions, consisting of Irishmen from all over Ireland, attacked together. This shared sacrifice has led to some myths about Irish involvement in the war and has been the focus for memorialisation, perhaps most famously the Island of Ireland Peace Tower, unveiled in 1998.



### Professor Diarmuid Ferriter

University College Dublin

Wednesday July 19th 1.00 – 2.00

### "I hope we can stop it!"

The Rise of Sinn Féin in Ireland in 1917. In September 1916, General John Maxwell, the man charged with overseeing the suppression of the 1916 Rising, wrote to Henry Duke, Chief Secretary for Ireland about the Irish Volunteers: "a strong effort is contemplated to bring the force into being again



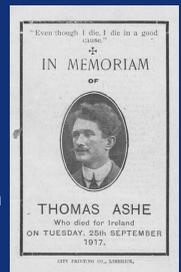
as a political factor. I hope we can stop it!". They could not. The following year not only saw the reorganisation of the Volunteers but also the dramatic rise of Sinn Féin as a political movement. This lecture looks at the rise of Sinn Féin one hundred years ago; how the party was built, why it proved appealing and how it managed to mask internal tensions and contradictions.

### Dr. Tomás Mac Conmara

Wednesday September 13th 1.00 – 2.00

### Drawing the Naked Sword:

The Mountjoy Hunger Strike of 1917 and the death of Thomas Ashe The lecture will explore the transformation of the Irish political landscape in 1917 and examine the impact of the Mountjoy hunger strike of 20-30 September. The illustrated presentation will particularly focus on the death during that episode of a thirty-two year old republican from Kerry, Tomás Ashe, the first Irish republican to die on hunger strike. The lecture will trace the roots of new phase of Irish Volunteer activism to county Clare in early 1917 and track the gradual realignment of political support from the Irish Parliamentary Party to Sinn Féin, against the backdrop of major international turmoil and change.



## Professor Geoffrey Swain

University of Glasgow

Wednesday October 11th 1.00 – 2.00

### “Joe Boyle’s Adventures in the Russian Revolution”

This is the centenary of the Russian Revolution, when the Tsar was overthrown by Kerensky in February 1917 and Kerensky was overthrown in turn by Lenin in October. The world was turned upside down, and a key player in these events - a man who, unlikely as that might seem, helped both Kerensky and Lenin - was Lieutenant-Colonel Joe Boyle. Joe Boyle’s parents emigrated from Armagh to Canada, but Joe himself returned to Ulster once his war was over. He arrived in Russia with the Canadian Army as a railway specialist, and, as Kerensky prepared for his ill-fated June offensive, Boyle struggled to make Russia’s trains run on time. Then, once the Bolsheviks had seized power, Boyle joined a small group of Allied officers whose mission was to ensure that military action continued on the eastern front, even after Lenin had



signed a separate peace treaty with Germany. In an increasingly chaotic international situation, Boyle found himself, in early spring 1918, trying to keep both Russia and Romania in the war by resolving the bitter dispute between those two countries over the future of what today is Moldova. To this end, he personally took command of Romania’s state gold reserve, and ended up flying a biplane backwards and forwards between Russia and Romania as he negotiated the text of the Treaty of Odessa. All this drama proved futile, however. Despite Boyle’s efforts both Romania and Russia agreed peace terms with Germany.

## Michael Longley

Wednesday November 8th 1.00 – 2.00

### ‘Their Spirits’ Shadow: Poetry of the Great War.’

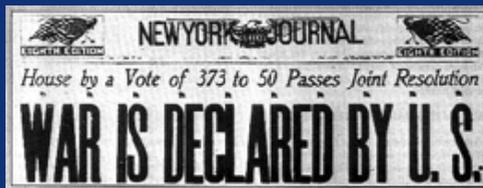
In each of Longley’s eleven poetry collections he has written about the Great War and, in particular, his father’s experience of it as a boy-soldier. He will be reading and talking about those poems as well as work by some of the combatants.

## John Lee

Thursday November 9th 1.00 – 2.00

### “The Yanks Are Coming! How the AEF prepared for war in 1917/1918”

In April 1917 the USA faced the same problems as the British Empire had in 1914. A small, professional army had to expand rapidly to meet the demands of mass,



industrialised warfare. In training the citizen’s army, two divergent approaches to battle developed. How that issue resolved itself on the battlefield will be explored in this talk.

## Booking Information

All events will take place in the [Lecture Theatre at the Ulster Museum](#)

All events are free but advance booking is recommended

To find out more about these events and to book tickets please go to [www.nmni.com/um](http://www.nmni.com/um)

Telephone 028 9044 0000  
(lines open Tuesday – Sunday 10.00am – 5.00pm)

Email [ulstermuseumreception@nmni.com](mailto:ulstermuseumreception@nmni.com)

[www.livinglegacies1914-18.ac.uk](http://www.livinglegacies1914-18.ac.uk)