

‘WITH THE IRISH IN FRANCE’: The national press and recruitment in Ireland 1914-1916

In January 1916 a party of journalists from seven Irish newspapers visited Irish regiments serving on the western front. Such a privilege came at a price. Organised by the department of recruiting for Ireland, it was made clear to the journalists that this embedded tour had an agenda: they were ‘to set down what they saw there for the benefit of recruiting in Ireland’. This article examines the extent to which the three national titles included on the tour accepted this role of communicating and legitimising recruitment policy. It sheds light on the involvement of two national newspaper editors in shaping recruitment policy in Ireland, illustrates how each of the three national titles reported the tour, and examines the effects such reportage had on recruiting in Ireland.

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Introduction

The role the British press played in building support for the war effort between 1914 and 1918 has been examined extensively.[1] Similar phenomena in Ireland have not been so analysed despite the large number of Irishmen who enlisted and despite the Irish press – or rather two national editors – playing a central role in shaping Irish recruitment policy. Indeed, the tour of the front by Irish journalists considered in this article is completely absent from the existing historiography.[2] Over the course of the war (and excluding reserves and those already serving) approximately 140,460 Irishmen enlisted in the British Army. The greater number (75,342) enlisted between August 1914 and August 1915. Another 19,801 men joined up between August 1915 and February 1916. Recruitment then declined to 9,323 between February and August 1916 and mostly continued to decline in each subsequent six month period (8,178 for August 1916 to February 1917; 5,609 for February to August 1917; 6,550 for August 1917 to February 1918; 5,812 from February to August 1918) until the period of August to November 1918 when 9,845 men enlisted.[3]

In 1914 Ireland had been poised for the implementation of home rule, but, with home rule suspended at the outbreak of the war, for John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, ‘Irish participation in the war promised the reward of early home rule’.[4] Ultimately, the debate about whether Irishmen should fight in the British Army or remain at home to ensure home rule was implemented split the Irish Volunteers, a military organisation formed the previous year by Irish nationalists over which Redmond sought to exert influence. While the majority of the Volunteers supported Redmond in his assertion that Irishmen should join up and fight to secure the freedom of small nations, a sizeable rump of the Volunteers rejected this position. While Redmond’s fortunes were tied to the war effort, the fortunes of those who opposed enlistment became manifest in the Easter Rising of April 1916. And, as observed by Gregory and Pašeta, while constitutional nationalism initially supported the war effort, this support ‘became increasingly problematic as the costs of war mounted and the demands increased’.[5]

It is no coincidence that the decline in recruitment began after the disastrous assault on Gallipoli in 1915, by the 10th (Irish) Division. As Philip Orr has noted, ‘back in Ireland,

the obituary columns filled and recruitment slumped'. [6] Indeed, as observed by Ben Novick, Irish attitudes to the war were no different to other European countries: 'an early surge of enthusiasm, both by civilians and volunteers; a long period of gradual decline in recruiting, marked first by boredom with the lack of action, and then frustration at the number of casualties; and finally, a general sense of war-weariness as the blood of young Irishmen kept flowing in the fields of France, Flanders, and Mesopotamia'. [7]

Nonetheless, it is pertinent to note that the same proportions in terms of peaks and troughs occurred in Britain over the same time period. [8] One significant difference that did exist was conscription. While mandatory service was introduced in Britain in January 1916, Ireland was excluded. So while the government depended, on both islands, on volunteers and a supportive press to fuel the war effort between August 1914 and January 1916, from January 1916 onwards the role of the press in Ireland was amplified as the voluntary enlisting campaign continued in the absence of conscription.

Thus, in January 1916, the government turned to the Irish press to bring about an improvement in enlistment activity. Some sections of the press had already involved themselves in endeavours to encourage enlistment: the editor and managing editor of two national newspapers, John E. Healy of the unionist *Irish Times* and William J. Flynn of the nationalist *Freeman's Journal*, were involved in early efforts to co-ordinate recruitment through their participation in the Voluntary War Services League and the subsequent creation of the Central Council for Recruitment in Ireland. In 1916 the mechanism chosen to encourage the Irish press to publicise and support recruitment was a four day escorted visit by seven journalists to Irish troops serving on the Western Front. While all seven journalists were exposed to the same conditions and personnel, it is clear that the political ethos of each title influenced how it reported the tour. For reasons of space, this article confines its examination to the three national titles – the *Irish Times*, the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Irish Independent* – represented on the expedition.

In terms of political ethos, the *Irish Times* represented the voice of southern unionism. Established in 1859, its first editorial declared that 'as Irishmen we shall think and speak; but it shall be as Irishmen loyal to the British connection'. [9] As the organ of those who cherished the connection with Britain it consistently editorialised against home rule and viewed the war effort as an example of 'the dream of generations of Irish patriots' with Ireland's population 'united in a great and holy cause'. [10] With a daily circulation of 34,000 in 1914, the *Times* was edited between 1907 and 1934 by John E. Healy. A staunch unionist, Healy believed that Ireland would disintegrate politically and economically under home rule or independence. [11] In contrast, the *Freeman's Journal* was, 'the semi-official organ of the Irish party at Westminster from the early 1880s until the 1918 general election'. [12] With a daily circulation of 35,000 in the mid-1900s it avidly supported the 1914 call by that party's leader, John Redmond, for Irishmen to enlist. [13] Edited by William Brayden, former secretary to paper's proprietor Edmund Dwyer Gray MP, it was 'Brayden's unhappy lot to preside over the *Freeman* during a period of relentless decline in its fortunes and prestige'. [14] The establishment of the *Irish Independent* in 1905 had eaten into the *Freeman's* circulation, and by early 1916, the brutal reality of the war had become apparent and the *Journal* was becoming less confident in its calls for Irishmen to enlist. For its part, the more commercially focused *Irish Independent*, adopted a more analytical approach to the war. Originating from the Parnell–O'Shea divorce scandal that engulfed the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1890 it was acquired and relaunched in 1905 by the former and estranged Irish Party MP, William Martin Murphy. [15] The new-look *Irish Independent* was effectively the voice of moderate-nationalist conservative Catholic Ireland, and, with its display advertising, condensed reportage, illustrations, and serials, quickly became a commercial success. Edited by Timothy R. Harrington between 1905 and 1931, it had a daily

circulation of 56,462 in 1913.[16] While supportive of both home rule and the war effort it was critical of Irish regiments being commanded by British officers and strongly rejected suggestions that Ireland was not contributing enough recruits.[17] In the following sections an overview of recruitment in Ireland prior to the expedition is presented, the role of the press in the recruitment drive of autumn 1915 is examined, and how the three national titles reported the expedition is outlined.

Recruitment in Ireland 1914–15

In the early months of the war, recruitment in Ireland was organised on an ad-hoc basis by voluntary groups. One of the earliest public meetings occurred in Dublin's Mansion House in September 1914 which was addressed by Herbert Asquith and John Redmond. Timed to coincide with this meeting was the opening of a recruitment office on nearby Grafton Street, which, initially at least, did not do well: the *Irish Times* reported that despite the stirring speeches delivered by Asquith and Redmond 'only six men presented themselves' at the office and were booed by a crowd of nationalists as they entered the premises.[18] In early 1915 the government dispatched Hedley Le Bas to Ireland as a special representative of the War Office, with the aim of increasing recruitment. A founder of the Caxton Publishing Company, Le Bas, who specialised in advertising strategies, had placed his services at the disposal of the government, and it was he who was largely responsible for the recruitment campaign that was largely based on an appeal to patriotism. Described by the *Irish Times* as an 'adviser to the War Office on newspaper advertising' and 'a leading authority on advertising' Le Bas knew the central role that newspapers would play in recruitment and to this end he had numerous discussions with the editor of the *Irish Times*, John E. Healy and the managing editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, William J. Flynn.[19]

One of the initiatives organised by Le Bas was the inclusion of Dublin businesses in the recruitment drive. In March 1915 the city's Chamber of Commerce held 'an important and representative meeting...for the purpose of facilitating recruiting in Dublin'. Addressing the meeting, Major-General Field, commander-in-chief of the army in Ireland suggested that it 'would assist recruiting if employers gave their employees a guarantee of employment on return from the war, and filled up their places temporarily by men outside the age of military service, or in some cases, perhaps, by women'. In its editorial, the *Irish Times* declared the general's speech as 'proof of the need of a new and urgent recruiting campaign'. [20]

Upon the return of Le Bas to Britain in April 1915, and in the absence of an Irish equivalent to the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, several prominent citizens, including the Earl of Meath, Sir Nugent Everard, and Dublin's Lord Mayor, J.M. Gallagher, established the Volunteer War Services League 'to act as an information bureau and clearing house for persons willing to render voluntary service in any capacity [and to assist] in the formation of any new voluntary services which the emergency of the war may demand'. [21] One such new service was the creation of an overarching body 'to correlate and extend the excellent voluntary work conducted by the City and County of Dublin Recruiting Committee and similar organisations in Dublin and Cork'. Interestingly, the League noted that several of its members, including William J. Flynn and John E. Healy had been 'actively interested in the negotiations with Mr Le Bas' and it proposed that these members 'be appointed with full power to do whatever is necessary to launch the [recruiting] organisation'. [22] A few days later, following negotiations between these members and the War Office, the Central Council for the Organisation of Recruiting in Ireland (CCORI) was established. This new body was tasked with 'the co-ordination of the existing and the development of new recruiting committee throughout Ireland'. Its chairman was Dublin's Lord Mayor, J.M. Gallagher, and its honorary president was the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wimborne. [23]

One of CCORI's first initiatives was the organisation of a mobile recruitment office. Launched in May 1915, in its first fortnight in operation it was used at recruitment rallies in numerous provincial towns at which its use of lantern war pictures 'created considerable interest'. Reviewing these developments the *Irish Times* observed that 'one of the most satisfactory aspects of the work, so far as it has progressed, has been the constitution of a united platform, upon which leading representatives of both [nationalist and unionist] parties have co-operated in the work of recruiting'. [24] At another rally, a Colonel Lindsay of the Dublin Fusiliers told attendees that unless sufficient recruits enlisted 'the Germans would come to destroy their property, to deprive them of their liberty, and to outrage their women'. [25] Given the involvement of Healy and Flynn in recruitment activism, such rallies were afforded generous coverage by the *Irish Times* and the *Freeman's Journal*, but not by the *Irish Independent*.

However, by autumn 1915 the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wimborne, had adopted a more active role in recruitment policy. In October 1915 he convened a meeting with the lords mayor of Belfast, Dublin, and Cork, and John Redmond at which he reported that since the beginning of the war, 81,000 Irish recruits had enlisted. While he acknowledged the contribution of CCORI he concluded it had 'not been quite so successful as was expected'. The meeting agreed on the creation of a Department of Recruiting for Ireland with the Lord Lieutenant acting as director general of recruiting for Ireland. [26] With its launch timed to coincide with the King's appeal for recruits, the department sought to recruit 1,100 men every week for 'the cause of Irish freedom and honour, the cause of the splendid Irish regiments that now, ravaged by the toll of war, look to Irishmen like themselves to fill their depleted ranks'. [27]

The Press and the Recruitment Drive of 1915

In October 1915 the Lord Lieutenant hosted a gathering of eighty Irish editors and journalists at his official residence. Although the gathering was a private event a *résumé* of the proceedings was issued for publication and both the *Irish Times* and the *Freeman's Journal* reproduced it in detail. Both newspapers went so far as printing the list of the sixty-six newspapers that had sent representatives and the sixty-two newspapers that had sent their apologies. [28]

In his address to the journalists, the Lord Lieutenant outlined 'the broad lines of the policy he was personally directing, the success of which would largely be determined by the adherence given to it in the columns of the Press'. The aim of his policy 'was to secure that no man in Ireland should be able to say in the future that he had not been personally requested to take his share and do his duty in the great conflict in which they were engaged'. To this end, he asserted that 'in order that the facts should be clearly presented to every potential recruit it was essential that the organs of all sections of the community should in their own language put the position before him'. The Lord Lieutenant also informed the meeting that 'there were 36,510 men of military age – 23,481 of them unmarried – who were engaged in domestic or "ill-defined" service, or in no service at all'. He also noted that the number of men of military age in the trading and commercial classes stood at 36,510, that there were 120,726 farmers' sons of whom 119,281 were unmarried, and that there were also 97,651 agricultural labourers, of whom 77,242 were unmarried. He concluded by observing that 'all that was needed was a concerted effort on the part of all sections and all creeds'.

The first press representative to respond was John E. Healy of the *Irish Times* who 'assured him [the Lord Lieutenant] of the complete support of the whole Press in the movement which was being started'. He noted that while the Irish press 'had endeavoured to do justice to the exploits of the Irish regiments in which Ireland's sons are fighting' the Lord Lieutenant's request necessitated 'the furtherance of a common policy' though which the

press 'could create a local atmosphere; they could point out the value of an early rush of recruits'. He assured the Lord Lieutenant 'on behalf of the Irish press of their unswerving support in his policy. What was wanted in this case was a long pull and a strong pull in which the whole weight of the Irish press would be on his side'. William J. Flynn of the *Freeman's Journal* thanked the Lord Lieutenant for having 'chosen to take the editors of the Irish press into consultation, noted how the press 'had furthered recruiting in the past, but emphasised the value of a gathering in which the exigencies of the hour were put before them'. He concluded by assuring the Lord Lieutenant that 'in the furtherance of the campaign, the press would use their utmost endeavours, and would, in their own sphere, do all in their power to bring it to a successful issue'. There were, however, some newspapers conspicuous by their absence. The editor of the biggest selling national newspaper, T.R. Harrington, of the *Irish Independent*, did not attend; neither did the paper send a representative nor did it publish any extracts from the *résumé* of the meeting that was supplied to the press.

Shortly afterwards, the Department of Recruiting for Ireland (DRI) launched its recruitment campaign with a full front-page advert on page one of the national titles. Headlined 'A Call to 50,000 Irishman' it declared that 'it would be a deep disgrace to Ireland, if all her regiments were not Irish to a man'. The advert outlined the pay, pension, and separation rates for soldiers and included an application form that allowed applicants to select which Irish regiment they wished to serve with. In its same day leading article, the *Irish Times* declared that 'never at any time in the long history of the British Army has the duty of patriotism been made easier or more attractive for young Irishmen than it is being made today'. [29] For its part, the *Freeman's Journal* described the drive as 'a call from the gallant Irishmen who have during the past year been mustering to make good their Leader's pledge to ensure the triumph of the Irish cause and defend the freedom of Europe against the designs of a tyrannic [sic] militarism'. It had 'no hesitation in commending the summons to brave young Irishmen' and described the war as one 'of civilisation against barbarism, of self-government against alien domination, of nationality against the territorial ambitions of a monarchical conspiracy'. [30] The *Irish Independent* also editorialised in favour of the call 'to fight for the cause of freedom against embattled tyranny' but also sounded a dissenting note. While it acknowledged that the war was 'Ireland's war too' it expressed 'the earnest hope that the military authorities will place no unnecessary obstacles in the way of recruiting' particularly in relation to the issue of who commanded Irish battalions:

It was a matter of comment that many of the officers on the 10th and 16th Divisions, particularly of the higher ranks, were not Irish. It is now freely stated that a similar mistake is about to be made in the officering of the reserve battalions. If there is any truth in the rumours that are in circulation, it would be well to take immediate steps to set matters right. The reserve battalions for filling up the ranks of the 10th and 16th Divisions will be Irish, and the officers, especially in the higher command, should be Irish. [31]

One of the DRI's first initiatives was to send every man of military age a letter encouraging them to enlist. This was followed a short time later by a second letter in mid-November 1915. A third letter was circulated at the end of November 1915 in which it was noted that 100,000 Irish recruits had so far enlisted. This letter was published in the *Irish Times* along with a report that noted that over 250,000 letters had been sent in the first month of the DRI's existence. [32] Amid the concurrent conscription debates in the House of Commons an Ulster Unionist MP provided the *Irish Times* with the results of the Lord Lieutenant's letter campaign, which indicated that the initiative had resulted in the recruitment of 5,000 men from Ulster and 3,000 men from the rest of Ireland. [33] The publication of these figures

prompted a swift rebuttal from the Lord Lieutenant: the following day the *Irish Times* published a letter from the DRI stating that the proportions mentioned in the report were ‘not even approximately correct and must create an entirely false impression’.[34] Ultimately, conscription was established by the Military Service Act of January 1916 and came into effect in March 1916 with Ireland excluded. Referring to this exclusion, the *Irish Times* observed that ‘Ireland is now pledged to make the voluntary system a success’.[35] With Ireland excluded from conscription the government and the DRI were more dependent than ever on creating an atmosphere conducive to voluntary enlistment. A key part of trying to create this atmosphere was securing the help of the press in convincing men of military age to sign up. To that end, the War Office organised a four day tour of the western front for seven Irish journalists in the hope that their reports would, in the absence of conscription, encourage voluntary enlistment.

Touring the Western Front

The journalists selected by the War Office to visit Irish troops in France were representative of the geography and politics of the island. Among those who travelled were John E. Healy, editor of the unionist *Irish Times*; William J. Flynn, managing editor of the nationalist *Freeman’s Journal*; Cornelius Lehane, later literary editor and chief leader-writer with the nationalist *Irish Independent*; James Crosbie, uncle of Thomas Crosbie proprietor of the nationalist *Cork Examiner*; W.G. Anderson, editor of the unionist *Belfast News-Letter*; T.P. O’Donoghue, a reporter with the nationalist *Irish News*, and T.J.W. Kenny, proprietor and editor of the west of Ireland nationalist title *The Connacht Tribune*. They were accompanied by a Colonel Jameson Davis who had been seconded to the War Office as a representative of John Redmond’s National Volunteers.[36] The party sailed from Dublin to Holyhead in Wales and travelled from there to London by train. The following day they travelled to Dover and sailed to Calais, arriving there on Friday 7 January 1916 and spent the night at British HQ. The following day, kitted out with gasmasks, they were taken on a two hour tour of the trenches, where, whilst using a periscope to view the German lines thirty yards they were fired on. Later that day they witnessed an aerial battle and visited the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles before returning to HQ and being entertained by the Army’s official war correspondents, Henry Tomlinson (formally of the *Daily News*) and Philip Gibbs (formally of the *Daily Chronicle*).[37] On the third day the journalists visited the 2nd Royal Irish Regiment and conducted another tour of the trenches. On the fourth and final day they visited the town of Albert (which had been destroyed by German shelling), visited the Ulster Division and watched a football match played by the troops. The following day, Tuesday, 11 January, 1916 they returned to Dublin.

While all seven journalists were exposed to the same conditions and personnel, the political ethos of each title influenced how the journalists conveyed their experiences to readers. The *Irish Times* published a sharply focused series of three feature articles and one leading article that clearly outlined the need for recruits. In contrast, the *Freeman’s Journal* published no leading article and a series of six wordy feature articles that concentrated more on the logistics of the war than on the need for recruits. The *Irish Independent* published one interview of its journalist, six wordy feature articles and no leading article. From a close reading of the articles, the following issues were identified as being the most salient in terms of comparison; 1) whether or not the titles explicitly stated that the tour was for the purpose of recruiting; 2) the extent to which the titles emphasised the mechanics and logistics of the war; 3) the extent to which the titles mentioned the shortage of Irish tobacco at the front; 4) the extent to which the titles emphasised the need for recruits.

Findings

The *Irish Times* was the most explicit in terms of declaring that the tour was for the purpose of recruiting. In Healy's first article he stated that their 'mission was to visit Irish regiments on the Western Front, and to set down what they saw there for the benefit of recruiting in Ireland'. It was, he declared, 'splendid to move, an Irishman, among Irish soldiers, and to see what they were doing for Ireland and for humanity [and] a bitter reflection that many thousands of Irishmen at home are still indifferent to the glories, and deaf to the call, of the Irish regiments in France'. [38] The *Freeman's Journal* followed suit with William J. Flynn's first article recording that he intended to 'try and drive home to the minds of the public the feelings and the conditions prevailing in the British lines in France, to show the spirit of the men, and particularly our Irish regiments, and to demonstrate the urgent need for supporting them with recruits from home'. [39] In contrast, the *Irish Independent* did not mention the fact that the tour was for the purpose of encouraging recruitment. Indeed, in an interview published upon the group's return, its journalist, Cornelius Lehane, cast doubt on the expected short duration of the war by declaring that the Germans 'still occupy strong defensive positions'. He also noted that the conflict was effectively at a standstill and that there were 'by no means unimportant authorities who consider it not unlikely that we are only about half through the struggle'. [40]

In terms of emphasising the mechanics and logistics of the war effort, both the *Freeman's Journal* and *Irish Independent* devoted the vast majority of their reportage to these issues. In his six articles, William J. Flynn devoted copious space to describing the journey to France, the evening spent with official war correspondents, the aerial fight the journalists witnessed, the troops they passed while travelling, the shape of trenches and the military equipment in use, the conditions within the trenches, the mechanics of how gas masks worked, how the troops recuperated after their spell in the trenches, and logistical issues, transport, supply routes and the conditions of the roads. [41] In addressing the conditions experienced by the troops, Flynn concluded that there was 'no longer any doubt that the State regards each individual soldier as a possession worthy of every attention... they are first class soldiers, splendidly drilled, splendidly equipped, splendidly fed, splendidly clothed, and looked after with a care, a zeal, and an anxiety such as a mother might bestow upon her children'. [42] Similarly, Cornelius Lehane of the *Irish Independent* devoted the majority of his reportage to describing the journey to France, the geography and shape of the trenches, the logistics of communication at the front, the use of artillery and the ruined town of Albert, the role of aviation, transport, ration and ordinance supply, the role of the Chaplain in the forces, and the journey home before finally – and briefly – addressing the issue of recruitment. [43] In addressing the condition of the troops Lehane concluded that 'We found them everywhere cheerful, happy, resolute, and eager as one of them expressed it, to chase "the cursed German" out of the occupied territories'. But he also struck a more sombre note by observing that on their journey they had 'passed a cemetery with numerous graves of the fallen, all marked by crosses, and the whole space neatly railed. In those two hours we witnessed what war in the trenches is, as well as melancholy memorials of what it has been'. [44] In contrast, John E. Healy of the *Irish Times* devoted substantially less coverage to logistical issues and when they were addressed, it was done so in a very upbeat tone. Describing the journalists' visit to the Royal Irish Rifles Healy noted that 'we found them in all stages of *déshabillé*, and all as merry as a party of schoolboys on a holiday... the officers look after their men like elder brothers, with an amazing and successful care for their health and comfort. Their clothing was good and plentiful. Their food was well cooked and ample'. [45]

In terms of addressing the shortage of Irish tobacco at the front, it was the *Irish Times* that was most animated. Healy noted that among all the conversations he had at the front there was but one complaint; while the troops were supplied with tobacco, it was the wrong

type. As Healy noted ‘cut tobacco is alien on the tongues of these hardy Irishmen...they pine for twist and roll – the luscious sorts that are manufactured in Belfast and Dundalk, the sorts that smoulder gratefully in the pipe, and at desperate moments, when even smoking is forbidden, can be chewed’. Healy vowed that the troops would get proper tobacco or else he ‘and some other respectable journalists will be for ever dishonoured men’.[46]

Similarly, but less effusively, William J. Flynn of the *Freeman’s Journal* noted that ‘the only thing our Irish soldiers want and indeed long for is twist tobacco. They are sorted out with a ration of tobacco, but it is cut tobacco, and it gets too dry, and is lacking in body, and is not to be compared to Irish twist. That was the general opinion amongst the men, and they are the best judges’.[47] But, unlike Healy, he did not undertake to do anything about the shortage. For his part, Cornelius Lehane of the *Irish Independent* briefly noted that there was ‘one intimation which [he] should like to make to the many people at home who are in the habit of sending cigarettes to the troops on service. So far as we could ascertain, the Irish troops prefer twist tobacco to cigarettes’.[48]

When it came to addressing the need for recruits, it was the *Irish Times* that led the charge. It strongly emphasised the need for Irishmen to enlist throughout its series; in Healy’s second article he noted that throughout the tour ‘the only criticism that everybody, except the enemy, makes of our Irishmen at the front is that there are not enough of them’.[49] Healy’s third article was the most direct of all the articles published. He observed that ‘Unless one can suspect hundreds of honourable Irish soldiers, officers and men, Unionist and Nationalist, Protestant and Roman Catholic, of a conspiracy to deceive, the Irish regiments on the Western Front are being starved for Irish recruits’. In an emotional appeal, Healy declared that ‘Dozens of men begged us to tell friends at home how urgently they are needed at the front... They know that many thousands of young men are still unlisted in Ireland. Their feeling is not one of anger, but of bewilderment. They simply cannot understand why their countrymen are not coming to their aid’. If, Healy concluded, those at home could ‘move among the Irish soldiers in France and to breathe the spirit of the Irish regiments, nothing could restrain them from throwing in their lot with that glorious company’.[50] In its same day leading article, the paper observed that all the journalists on the expedition ‘agree that the Irish regiments in France are short of their full complement of Irishmen, and that the fact imposes a solemn obligation of honour on the Irish people at home... Wherever they went, the Irish journalists were urged by their fellow countrymen, officers and privates, to send them more and more men from Ireland’.[51]

Similarly, the *Freeman’s Journal’s* series regularly, though briefly, mentioned the need for recruits. In his first article, Flynn noted ‘that the surest way to win this war is by daily strengthening our forces in the field by drafts from home’ while his fifth article noted that ‘The one cry of the Irish regiments – officers and men – was for Irish drafts for Irish battalions’.[52] But, unlike the *Irish Times*, which devoted its entire final article to the need for recruits, Flynn’s final article concentrated on the journalists’ trip to the ruined town of Albert. Flynn left it to the final two paragraphs to grapple definitively with the recruitment issue. But even then, he lacked the passion displayed by Healy in the *Irish Times*. Flynn simply noted that he had witnessed the ‘eager desire expressed by all ranks of the Irish battalions from the officer in the highest command down to the newest recruit, that drafts from home for them should be made up of Irishmen’.[53]

The *Irish Independent* devoted the least space to recruitment. While, in the interview on his return, Cornelius Lehane had noted that ‘The Irishmen are most anxious that the regiments should be kept up to full strength by their own men, that is to say, men who come from the same counties which hitherto have supplied the regiments’ he did not return to this issue until his final article.[54] In this article Lehane noted that ‘Many of the regiments are to-day short of their full establishment; and Irish regiments may be flooded with Englishmen

and Scotchmen if Ireland does not supply more men at once'. But as if to counter this, he also recorded the fact 'that through sound, hard work, many thousands of gallant Irishmen have been brought into the ranks'. He concluded by noting, in unappealing language, that only the officers at the front 'with exact knowledge of the rate of wastage and its effect in depleting the forces under their command...know what resources in man power are required for the purpose of bringing the war to a successful conclusion'. [55]

Discussion / Conclusion

In the early days of the war, the editor and managing editor of two national newspaper titles were centrally involved in the formulation and implementation of recruitment policy in Ireland. In the feature articles that followed the expedition to the western front it was these two titles – the *Irish Times* and the *Freeman's Journal* – that were, to different degrees, most supportive in highlighting the need for recruits. As in the early days of the war, the *Irish Independent* was more circumspect and seemed determined to retain a critical distance from recruiting activity. Unlike the *Irish Times* and the *Freeman's Journal*, it did not report on recruitment rallies and it did not send representatives to the Lord Lieutenant's meeting with the press in October 1915. However, being a commercially-oriented publication, it did accept advertising related to the recruitment drive that followed that meeting.

In terms of the tour to the western front, both the *Irish Times* and the *Freeman's Journal* explicitly stated that the tour was for the purpose of promoting recruitment, thus making public their co-operation with the War Office. In contrast, the *Irish Independent* made no mention of the tour being held for recruitment purposes. Not stating this gave the impression that the tour was a media rather than a War Office endeavour.

In relation to the central issue – that of highlighting the need for recruits and illustrating how the public could help the war effort – the *Irish Times* took the expedition's mission to heart and devoted its energies into publishing a sharply detailed series that demonstrated the need for recruits. But by concentrating in detail on the mechanics and logistics of the war effort over the course of six articles each, both the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Irish Independent* allocated less space to the central issue and allowed the need for recruits to be diluted amid worthy descriptions of the logistics of the war effort. Similarly, highlighting the poor quality of the tobacco at the front allowed the *Irish Times* to prompt people at home to get involved in the war effort by sending Irish tobacco to the front; both of the other titles barely mentioned the issue.

In contrast to the *Irish Times*, which mentioned the need for recruits in all three of its articles and devoted its third article exclusively to this issue, both the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Irish Independent* left it to the final few paragraphs of their series to broach the topic. While the *Irish Times* still viewed the war as a means of strengthening the union between Britain and Ireland, the *Freeman's Journal* was now less effusive. As Charles Townshend has noted, as the losses and injuries suffered by the 10th (Irish) Division at Gallipoli became public knowledge, the Irish Party's support for the war 'was gradually revealed to be a major political encumbrance' – a process that undoubtedly had knock-on effects on the *Freeman's Journal*. [56] For its part, the *Irish Independent*, always mindful of its circulation, remained wary of being too closely associated with recruitment, prompted in part by the July 1915 call by Irish bishops on John Redmond to withdraw Irish Party support for the war effort. [57]. Despite the huge amount of coverage given to the tour by the newspapers it remains unclear what effect, if any, the tour and its associated coverage had on public opinion. [58] In his analysis of the recruitment records, Patrick Callan has noted that recruitment declined significantly between February and August 1916 and continued to do so until the August to November 1918 period. [59] It may remain a matter of speculation as to whether the press coverage of the tour was greeted by war fatigue or whether the Easter Rising of April 1916

derailed the most laborious publicity effort the War Office undertook in terms of Irish recruitment. In his analysis, Callan has noted that the ‘radical improvement in the last period confirmed the view of seasoned recruiting officials that the success of their operations depended more on social and economic factors than on political atmosphere’.[60] Be this as it may, the Rising undoubtedly impacted on press coverage of the activities undertaken by the department of recruiting. While prior to the Rising, reports of the department’s activities were frequent in all three titles (though less so in the *Irish Independent*), it ceased to be mentioned from May 1916 onwards. Ireland, it seemed, was now preoccupied with its own conflict.

Notes

1. Walsh, *News from Ireland*; Farrar, *News from the Front*; Knightly, *The First Casualty*; Marquis, ‘Words as Weapons’; Gibbs, *The Pageant of Years*; Gibbs, *Realities of War*; Montague, *Disenchantment*.
2. The invisibility of the tour in the existing historiography may be due to no mention of it being found in the records of the British National Archives, the Irish National Archives, or the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. This article arises from a comment in the obituary of John E. Healy in which it is mentioned that he was ‘a member of almost the first party of journalists to visit the Western Front, a party which included the editors and other prominent representatives of several Irish newspapers’ (*Irish Times*, 31 May, 1934). A keyword search of the digital *Irish Times* archive returned the articles Healy wrote. Similar searches of the other newspapers represented on the tour followed. Given the paucity of documents relating to the tour in government archives, most of the detail in this article is drawn from the newspapers themselves. While the dependence on newspaper reports may be considered a limiting factor, the fact that such reports comprise the only known surviving account of tour is testament to the utility of newspaper archives in filling in gaps in historiography and examining the history of journalistic practice and professional development (Bingham, 2010).
3. Patrick Callan puts the number of reserves who went to their depot at the outbreak of the war at 30,266. Callan, ‘Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland’, 42.
4. Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland’, 386.
5. Gregort and Pašeta, ‘Introduction’, 4. For overviews of Ireland in the war years see Jeffery, ‘Ireland and the Great War’; Gregory and Pašeta, ‘Ireland and the Great War’; Townsend, ‘Easter 1916’.
6. Orr, ‘200,000 Irish Volunteers’, 70.
7. Novick, ‘Conceiving Revolution’, 17.
8. Callan, ‘Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland’, 43.
9. *Irish Times*, 29 March, 1859.
10. *Irish Times*, September 29, 1914.
11. O’Brien, *Irish Times*, 42.
12. Larkin, ‘Two Gentlemen of the *Freeman*’, 210.
13. Larkin, ‘A Great Daily Organ’, 47.
14. Larkin, ‘Brayden’, 791–92.
15. For an overview of the title prior to its acquisition by Murphy see Maume, ‘Parnellite Politics’.
16. Kenny ‘Tom Grehan’, 59.
17. *Irish Independent*, October 30, 1915 & January 12, 1916.
18. *Irish Times*, September 26, 1914.
19. *Irish Times*, March 27, 1915 & April 21, 1915.
20. *Irish Times*, March 5, 1915.
21. *Irish Times*, April 16, 1915.

22. *Irish Times*, April 21, 1915.
23. *Irish Times*, April 24, 1915.
24. *Irish Times*, May 22, 1915.
25. *Irish Times*, June 14, 1915.
26. *Irish Times*, October 16, 1915.
27. *Irish Times*, October 23, 1915.
28. *Irish Times & Freeman's Journal*, October 29, 1915. Unlike the *Irish Times*, the *Freeman's Journal's* recorded that the event 'was of a private character' but that a resumé had been issued to the press.
29. *Irish Times*, October 30, 1915.
30. *Freeman's Journal*, October 30, 1915.
31. *Irish Independent*, 30, October, 1915.
32. *Irish Times*, November 30, 1915.
33. *Irish Times*, December 22, 1915.
34. *Irish Times*, December 23, 1915.
35. *Irish Times*, January 31, 1916.
36. The composition of the group is listed the *Irish News*, January 17, 1916. John Healy was editor of the *Irish Times* 1907– 1934. He began his career on the *Evening Mail* and later became editor of the *Dublin Daily Express*. For many years he was the Dublin correspondent for the *London Times* (*Irish Times*, May 31, 1934). William J. Flynn began his career on *United Ireland* and later worked on the *National Press*. In 1897 he joined the press gallery of the House of Commons for the *Freeman's Journal*, and was managing editor of the paper during the tour (*Irish Times*, January 30, 1948). Cornelius Lehane began his career on the *Cork Herald* before joining the *Irish Independent*. Called to the Bar in 1901 he practiced for some time but later returned to journalism and became literary editor and chief leader-writer of the *Irish Independent* (*Irish Times*, January 15, 1951).
37. The British war correspondents are identified by name in the *Irish News*, January 17, 1916. The logistics of the tour are taken from the reports published in the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent*, and the *Freeman's Journal*. Other than the town of Albert, the locations visited were not revealed: instead euphemisms such as 'a large French town' were used.
38. *Irish Times*, January 22, 1916.
39. *Freeman's Journal*, January 17, 1916.
40. *Irish Independent*, January 12, 1916.
41. *Freeman's Journal*, January 17 – February 5, 1916.
42. *Freeman's Journal*, January 24, 1916.
43. *Irish Independent*, January 17 – 22, 1916.
44. *Irish Independent*, January 17, 1916.
45. *Irish Times*, January 22, 1916.
46. *Irish Times*, January 22, 1916.
47. *Freeman's Journal*, January 24, 1916.
48. *Irish Independent*, January 20, 1916.
49. *Irish Times*, January 24, 1916.
50. *Irish Times*, January 25, 1916.
51. *Irish Times*, January 25, 1916.
52. *Freeman's Journal*, January 17 & February 5, 1916.
53. *Freeman's Journal*, February 24, 1916.
54. *Irish Independent*, January 12, 1916.
55. *Irish Independent*, January 22, 1916.
56. Townshend, 'Easter 1916', 71.
57. Walsh, 'News from Ireland', 49.

58. Alongside the three national titles the *Connacht Tribune* published an eleven part series between January and April 1916, the *Belfast News-Letter* published a five part series in January 1916, the *Irish News* published a five part series over January and February 1916 and the *Cork Examiner* published a six part series in January 1916.
59. Callan, 'Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland', 42.
60. *Ibid.*, 43.

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