

The Green and White Army's foreign legion

It will not be just the dedicated fans from around Northern Ireland packing Windsor Park for the European Championship openers against Iceland and Spain next week — there will be at least one Italian and one Croatian cheering Laurie Sanchez's boys on.

And they are coming to Belfast all the way from Canada as enthusiastic members of the Toronto Northern Ireland Supporters Club.

The recently-revived TNISC has proved a huge success and its chief organiser Gord Victory says: "Over recent years the club membership dwindled, probably due to the team's lack of success, although some of us still travelled to watch some games.

"But last year myself and John Browne, another Belfast man, started the club up again and the response has been tremendous.

"We have new members wanting to join every week."

But they aren't all natives of Northern Ireland.

The Italian and Croatian members travelled to the US tour matches in New York and Chicago and liked the atmosphere so much they paid their subscriptions straight away.

Victory will miss the opener against Iceland — one of his brothers picked that date to get married — but he will rush across the Atlantic for the Spanish game, and for the October game in Denmark.

There would have been more members making the trip from Canada but they couldn't get tickets!