

**Commemorating the Siege: The Williamite  
Marching Tradition in Nineteenth Century Derry\***

Neil P. Maddox

Orange parades on the twelfth of July, which celebrate the victory of William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne 1690, have been a regular and contentious feature of Irish life for over two hundred years. However, in Derry a separate Williamite parading tradition has developed preferring to commemorate the events of the Siege of Derry 1688. The aim of this article is to trace the development of this tradition during the nineteenth century.

The Siege occupies a unique place in Irish history. Representing, as it did, a vital turning point in the Irish Williamite wars of succession, the city became a focal point for a multi-faceted conflict that encompassed the entirety of Europe. William was fighting, not just against James II, but to frustrate the overarching imperial ambitions of Louis XIV. He was fighting for Britain; he was fighting for Protestantism, and for a few months at the end of 1688 the front line of the battle was traced firmly along the walls of Derry.

In view of this, it is understandable that the Boyne commemorative tradition of Orange or twelfth of July parades was slow to spread to the city and such displays were of little note there until as late as the 1860s. Derry Protestants could look much closer to home when setting their commemorative calendar and 12 August and 18 December, dates which marked the opening and closing of the city's gates, became far more popular days of celebration.<sup>1</sup>

During the eighteenth century, the population of the city was overwhelmingly Protestant. Although few records of parades exist during this time, it is likely that the Siege dates were commemorated from as least as early as 1759, when the first Boyne parade is recorded.<sup>2</sup> Derry was to undergo a major demographic change in the aftermath

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\* The author has used the terms Derry and Londonderry interchangeably throughout the article.

<sup>1</sup> T.G. Fraser, 'The Siege: its history and legacy, 1688-1689' in Gerard O' Brien and William Nolan (eds.), *Derry and Londonderry: history and society* (Dublin, 1999), p. 379.

<sup>2</sup> T.G. Fraser, 'The Apprentice Boys and the relief of Derry' in T.G. Fraser (ed.), *The Irish parading tradition: following the drum* (London and New York, 2000), p. 173 at p. 174.

of the Napoleonic wars; large numbers of Catholic workers came to the newly industrialised city from Donegal. By 1851, Derry had a Catholic majority. The new arrivals had little empathy with the bi-annual siege commemorations, seeing them as another manifestation of a repugnant Orange tradition that gloried in triumphalism. On arrival in the Bogside, Catholics were confronted with the Walker pillar looking down upon them.<sup>3</sup> The monument was a testimonial to George Walker, joint-governor of Derry during the Siege. Its location physically confronted Derry Catholics with the fact of ascendancy and was a constant reminder of the integral part the Siege played in securing it. The celebrations of the event came to reflect religious tensions within the town in much the same way as the Twelfth had done in the rest of Ulster. From an early stage in the nineteenth century, there were indications of the trouble to come. On 12 August 1811, a number of Londonderry yeomanry left their posts in protest at the wearing of Orange lilies in their ranks. In 1813, a Catholic priest, O'Mullan, was removed from his post for publicly describing the city corporation as Orange. The bishop who removed him, Charles O'Donnell, was known for his attempts to promote harmony between the two communities. These attempts earned him the nickname 'Orange Charlie'. After O'Mullan's departure, O'Donnell was set upon by a number of his supporters and was forced to take refuge in the local courthouse.<sup>4</sup>

From the 1820s onwards, arguments were being entertained that the celebrations were to be abandoned and the participation of yeomen was forbidden in 1824.<sup>5</sup> There was little Williamite opposition to these events, as the city had no single Orange society. Instead, it had a number which fractured and weakened the Orange voice. The Apprentice Boys had been founded in 1814 with the purpose of commemorating the Siege and stated in their objects that they were not 'actuated by factious or sectarian feeling' in doing so.<sup>6</sup> As with the Orange Order, the society suffered during the 1820s and 1830s when the

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<sup>3</sup> Fraser, 'The Apprentice Boys and the relief of Derry', p. 174.

<sup>4</sup> Colonel Colby, *Ordnance survey of the county of Londonderry* (Dublin, 1837), p. 70. Both Colby and Thomas Larcom, under-secretary at Dublin Castle, would be key figures in the mapping of Ireland during the nineteenth-century, see J.H. Andrews, *A paper landscape: the ordnance survey in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Oxford, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> Fraser, 'The Siege: its history and legacy', p. 390.

<sup>6</sup> Fraser, 'The Siege: its history and legacy', p. 392.

disillusionment in Westminster with Irish secret societies resulted in increasing legislative hostility. There was little controversy in Derry with the passage of the Party Processions Act in 1832, which imposed a ban on processions of a 'party' or divisive character, and it was seen as necessary by many. The displays were beginning to take on an increasingly sectarian character and one contemporary commentator noted that 'the perpetuation of such customs ha[d] become a subject of contention, it is well that the legislature interfered to smooth down a cause of useless dissension'.<sup>7</sup>

The Apprentice Boys was reconstituted in 1835 and in 1839 a committee was formed among the different Orange societies of the city to co-operate in the celebration of the day. It was not, however, until 1860 that the first serious incident of sectarian strife connected to the celebrations occurred. The reason for the trouble was the proposal to amend the Processions Acts to encompass the display of party emblems. This measure was destined to become the Party Emblems Act 1860. On 12 August of that year, and before the bill had been passed into law, the Church of Ireland bishop of Derry, a member of the House of Lords, forbade the flying of the crimson city flag from the Cathedral.<sup>8</sup> He felt it was his duty, as a member of the Lords, to carry into effect a measure which that house had approved, even though it had not yet passed into law.<sup>9</sup> The Apprentice Boys acted quickly on their indignation at this decision. They seized the keys to the tower and flew the flag from it defiantly. The local police declined to intervene, as they did not believe the law could interfere with the ancient usages of the city.<sup>10</sup>

The legislation was in force by the time of the second commemoration in December. Trouble was widely anticipated and 400 police, 600 infantry and two troops of cavalry were dispatched to ensure the enforcement of the new act whose passage had been followed closely in the city.<sup>11</sup>

It was thought that the Government was in possession of some special information and that trouble was being planned. The Apprentice Boys were remonstrated with to show

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<sup>7</sup> Colby, *Ordinance survey*, p. 196.

<sup>8</sup> Fraser, 'The Siege: its history and legacy', p. 395.

<sup>9</sup> John Hempton (ed.), *The Siege and history of Londonderry* (London, 1861), p. 453.

<sup>10</sup> Fraser, 'The Siege: its history and legacy', p. 395.

<sup>11</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 20 December 1860.

restraint, and a large group declined to fire off cannon from the city walls. They also sought legal advice on the application of the new act and were assured that it would not be applied to such a 'civic demonstration'. Perhaps it was felt that the Siege celebrations were analogous to those of St Patrick's Day, the latter were often regarded as national as opposed to party or sectarian occasions.

When presented with the impressive display of force that the authorities had mustered, the Apprentice Boys were divided on how to proceed. One particularly brave group managed to haul a cannon onto the walls and let off seven rounds before being stopped by the police. It was unclear whether the new act applied to the firing of the cannon and the actions of the group were primarily a means of testing the legislation. The city was reasonably calm until the victory of Gladstonian Liberals in the election of 1868 inflamed religious passions once again. The Apprentice Boys had supported the Conservative Episcopalian Lord Claude Hamilton. The Liberal Richard Dowse, who enjoyed the backing of the Catholic community and wealthy Presbyterians, opposed him.<sup>12</sup> During the campaign, Dowse planned to give a lecture in the corporation hall to his supporters. Threats had been made and a small force of police arrived as a precautionary measure. A quarter of an hour before the meeting was due to begin, at eight o'clock, fifty Apprentice Boys left in procession towards the hall. On their arrival, they broke rank and drew sticks and bludgeons from under their coats. The police were so few in number that they were powerless to resist, but a body of unarmed workmen had been sent to the hall as a second line of defence and they put up sterner resistance. They tore out the banisters of the staircase to use as weapons, and successfully repelled the attack before the military arrived and restored order. The incident had little effect on the outcome of the race, and Dowse was returned to parliament on 23 July.<sup>13</sup>

The usual celebrations took place on 12 August and 18 December with few problems. Part of these celebrations involved the discharge of a cannon close to the Bogside area. This was a visceral reminder to Catholics of the significance of the day and

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<sup>12</sup> Later Baron Dowse of the Court of Exchequer.

<sup>13</sup> *Report of the commissioners of inquiry 1869 into the riots and disturbances in the city of Londonderry with minutes of evidence and appendix*, p. 411 [C. 5], H.C. 1870 xxxii.

unquestionably contributed to their resentment of the anniversaries. By Christmas of 1868, they wished to repay the insult and a counter-demonstration was organised for St. Stephen's Day. The Bogside formed a procession with a band that played the notorious party tune 'The Wearing of the Green' and carried a flag that would cause the deepest offence among many of the Protestant community. It was white with a blue fringe and bore a harp without a crown, a wreath of shamrocks and the inscription 'Hibernia flute band'. When one of the local police, a sub-inspector Stafford, encountered the processionists and attempted to get the flag from them, they agreed to unfurl it. Aside from a few shots being fired from the crowd, the parade passed off peacefully.<sup>14</sup>

A petition had been presented against Dowse's victory and it was not until 9 February that he was declared by a court to be 'duly elected'. A large number of his supporters organised themselves together in a procession with a band and torches to celebrate his success. The magistracy were concerned that the parade, coming as it did as the result of a highly controversial election, would lead to a serious breach of the peace if it entered the town. They decided not to allow the procession through the city walls and they posted 140 men at the gateways and 'adjoining points' including Butcher's gate, the entrance to the Bogside. It was here that violence erupted and the determination of the crowd was such that they were able to break through the police cordon and parade through the town. This resulted in an affray involving the Apprentice Boys and the Bogside residents in which a number of shots were fired. However, this resulted in no fatalities.<sup>15</sup> The recent disestablishment of the Irish church by the new government had also enflamed matters. In April of 1869, in the worst incident of sectarian strife yet, three men died in clashes associated with the visit of Prince Arthur. The rival groupings in the town attempted to use the occasion as another opportunity for a colourful demonstration.

The Apprentice Boys fired a twenty-one gun salute for the Prince at corporation hall. Not to be outdone, the Bogside formed a large procession and escorted him to his hotel. They carried banners with the harp and no crown and the Hibernia band played 'God Save the Queen', 'The Wearing of the Green', and 'St. Patrick's Day' en route. The flag

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<sup>14</sup> *Report of the commissioners of inquiry 1869*, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Report of the commissioners of inquiry 1869*, p. 12.

and choice of song were not popular among the local Protestants and generated a good deal of resentment. Later that night, the band, clearly unsatisfied with the day's festivities, marched back through the town and passed the Apprentice Boys offices playing 'St. Patrick's Day' and letting out shouts for an Irish republic. The Apprentice Boys reacted by positioning themselves in front of the Imperial Hotel, where the prince was staying, and calling out their support for the queen and the union of church and state.

Such divisiveness led to a predictable affray in which three people were shot.<sup>16</sup> At the resulting inquiry, the two principal witnesses on behalf of the Apprentice Boys, architects Fitzgibbon Louch and John Guy Fergusson, rejected the idea of parades as an incendiary factor in these disputes. They contended that the election of Dowse was to blame and that no long-term opposition to the parades existed.<sup>17</sup> It was not a view with which the inquiry was inclined to agree. It noted that the people of Derry were an orderly, quiet, well conducted, neighbourly population and that the governance of such a population should not be problematic if animosities were not generated through celebration of victory in the Williamite wars.<sup>18</sup>

The difficulty, in the view of the inquiry, was that academic and intellectual explanations for discrimination between Orange and Green parades may have influence amongst an educated class, but would carry little weight with the ordinary man in the street. The law must not only be fair, but it also must appear to be fair to the majority of those affected by it. In spite of this reasoning, the inquiry still called for a ban on all outdoor processions and displays with banners. It accepted that the Apprentice Boys would feel aggrieved as they were attached to the celebrations, but thought that the majority would accept the ban, as it would apply to Catholics also. Legislative intervention on a national, as opposed to local, scale was thought most appropriate. Another cause of dispute was thought to be the tendency of railway companies to run trains to the town on the Orange anniversaries, causing an influx of Orange strangers and a large amount of resentment amongst the local Catholics. Furthermore, the segregation

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<sup>16</sup> *Report of the commissioners of inquiry 1869*, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Fraser, 'The Siege: its history and legacy', pp. 396, 397.

<sup>18</sup> *Report of the commissioners of inquiry 1869*, p. 15.

of the two communities into discreet neighbourhoods, as was the case in Belfast, did little to heal these community rifts.<sup>19</sup>

Whatever the cause, the violence was getting worse. The town's Catholic inhabitants formed the Working Men's Liberal Defence Association as a counter-point to the Apprentice Boys and a rival march to the relief parade was announced for 12 August. The government's response was phlegmatic and 1,000 police, six companies of infantry and a squadron of dragoons were drafted from the Curragh to give assistance to the city police force. Excursion trains from Belfast were banned, but two flute bands from Coleraine were unaffected as they decided to travel on the regular service.

The enormous military and police presence ensured that the Apprentice Boys were kept within the city walls and the Catholics kept outside them.<sup>20</sup> The measures were only partially effective and Derry was the scene of sporadic violence throughout the day. By the following December, the desirability of preventing such displays was not lost on the city magistracy, and they issued a proclamation declaring any assembly, procession or the burning of any effigy forbidden for a month.<sup>21</sup>

There was an attempt at negotiations and a proposal was made that the Apprentice Boys would be allowed to march without banners or music, but this came to nothing. Instead, they occupied the corporation hall and begun a fife and drumming performance which continued until the arrest of their leaders. A year later, in 1870, both commemorations were banned and the Apprentice Boys clashed with police on both occasions. In 1871, William Johnston of Ballykilbeg attended the front of the processional line. Johnston was a County Down landlord and Orangeman who led the campaign for the repeal of the Party Processions Acts. The march was stopped and the police requested that Johnston remove his sash. He refused and a magistrate was summoned. The parade continued for a short time but it was stormed by the cavalry in Bishop St. and a pitched battle ensued.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Farrell, *Sectarian violence*, p. 152.

<sup>20</sup> Fraser, 'The Siege: its history and legacy', p. 397.

<sup>21</sup> Fraser, 'The Siege: its history and legacy', p. 398. It was common to burn effigies of Derry's treacherous Governor Lundy who was tried for treason after recommending surrender early on in the Siege, see *Lundy's Case* (1690) Holt 333; 90 E.R. 1084.

<sup>22</sup> Kevin Haddick-Flynn, *Orangeism: the making of a tradition* (Dublin, 1999), p. 372.

The repeal of the Processions Acts soon after meant that a ‘kind of peace descended on the siege commemorations’.<sup>23</sup> Such peace would not last. The contentiousness of the parades had not diminished and it was not long until trouble flared again on the party anniversaries. A common feature of Ulster life in the aftermath of the repeal of the Acts was the renewed interest it generated amongst the Catholics in political parading. Both St. Patrick’s Day and Lady’s Day (on 15 August) were now the occasions for such displays. Confronted with such overt and nationalistic parades, the Orangemen soon forgot the temperate language they had used towards such demonstrations in the campaign for the repeal of the Processions Acts. No longer were they advocating equality of treatment between Orange and Green commemorations. Rather, it was felt that such meetings were got up for seditious and treasonous objects and, as such, should not be allowed to proceed. Derry was no different in this respect and the St. Patrick’s Day procession now represented as great a threat to the public peace as the Siege commemorations ever did.

The events of 1877 are illustrative of this. Though the St. Patrick’s Day parade passed off peacefully that year, a minor incident that occurred during the celebrations that day would serve to break the uneasy truce that existed between the parties since the 1872 riots. A half-gallon jar of gunpowder was left on a church wall along the proposed route of the parade. The gesture was seen as an attempted attack on the march and was not forgotten. Though the Twelfth passed over with relatively little trouble, there seems to have been a party fight in the town after nightfall.<sup>24</sup> There were also many disturbances in Canada connected to the celebrations that year, and these were widely reported in the Ulster press. It seems that the July celebrations were particularly provocative and complaints were voiced about some of the practices employed by the Williamites. The suspension of pendants of Orange lilies across village streets and the perception that Roman Catholic areas were deliberately targeted for such displays led to deepening enmity in those communities. One observer noted that the Orangemen, uncontented with the ‘bravado of Twelfth’, left these arrangements hanging for a week so that the Catholic

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<sup>23</sup> Fraser, ‘The Siege: its history and legacy’, p. 397.

<sup>24</sup>*Londonderry Standard*, 18 July 1877.



inhabitants of the neighbourhoods were forced to walk beneath them on their way to church the following Sunday.<sup>25</sup>

By the time of the relief parade in August, a change had come over both parties and the relative peace of the past five years was to be shattered. Two eminent Orangemen, William Johnston and Stewart Blacker, were in attendance that year and personally circled the city walls on the day before the relief parade. On the day itself, cannon was heard from the early hours of the morning. Church bells were rung and the streets were decorated with Orange and crimson flags. Crimson was the city colour. The marchers formed at ten o'clock in the morning and halted at two o'clock at the new memorial hall. The processionists were then addressed by their leaders.

Later that evening, at Lough Swilly railway station, a number of Orangemen were attacked while returning home by Catholic cattle-drovers and quay labourers. Another group was attacked in the train at Inch station and decided that it would be wiser to proceed home by road. They were given an escort by the Derry Apprentice Boys and with good reason, as they were met at Ship Quay by an organised mob of Catholic labourers. A group of mounted police succeeded in driving the assailants down the quay and the procession passed on for a short distance. However, successive attacks at the rear of the procession caused the Williamites to turn and face their assailants, and they succeeded in driving them back a good distance before the police could intervene between the sides and restore order. After leading the country people about a mile out of the town, the Apprentice Boys turned and marched back about a hundred strong. At the bottom of Waterloo St., they encountered an angry mob which shouted loudly but did not attack them, as there was a large force of police present.<sup>26</sup>

Later that day, the approach to the bridge was taken by the Bogsiders who set upon anyone who attempted to pass over it. The police made several attempts to charge the mob, but each time they retreated and regrouped. The city became gradually quieter as night approached with some intermittent violence. Two men were stabbed during the course of the day and a dozen people were sent to prison for between one and two

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<sup>25</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 21 July 1877.

<sup>26</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 15 August 1877.

months. The peace was undoubtedly broken and the *Standard* lamented the fact that Derry was once again gripped by sectarian violence:

Of late people had begun to indulge in the belief that Derry had repented of its bad ways and become respectable, but the cruel rioting which alarmed the community on Monday last effectively dispelled the delusion. From the early afternoon till near mid-night the principal streets were, as it were, in a state of siege...Organised bands of ruffians clustered in riotous knots at nearly every street corner...and their pastime for the time being was to pounce on passers by and trounce their victims...The main objects of the attack were the processionists who had that day figured in the Apprentice Boys demonstration.<sup>27</sup>

It seemed to many that every new anniversary would bring old animosities freshly to the surface and provoke fresh retaliation. The attribution of blame was pointless as both parties exercised the right to walk and both were more than willing to accept the challenge to fight. Even within the Protestant community, there was a considerable body of opinion that disapproved of the constant battling on the party anniversaries.<sup>28</sup>

The only remedy appeared to be the employment of a large police force. Such was the approach of the authorities for the shutting of the gates ceremony on 18 December 1877. 250 extra police were drafted in and the public houses were shut for the ceremony. The day passed off far more peacefully but the concern of the authorities did not diminish in 1878. Dublin Castle had been anxious about the possibility of violence on St. Patrick's Day. Inflammatory placards were placed throughout the town by parties on both sides of the community and it became clear that the Apprentice Boys were planning a counter-demonstration. A supplemental force of about 300 men was sent to keep the peace and the extra police would not lie idle during the day. From the early hours, explosions of dynamite were heard in the Catholic area of the city. The Catholics did not have cannons but, not to be outdone by the Orangemen, they improvised and Green arches were erected on Waterloo St. carrying the names of the Manchester Martyrs, placards such as 'Autonomy for Ireland' and the tricolour was displayed.<sup>29</sup>

In an unusual move the magistracy, normally reluctant to interfere with such displays, resolved to pull down the arches as they regarded them as an 'offensive and disloyal

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<sup>27</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 15 August 1877.

<sup>28</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 18 July 1877.

exhibition'. They further resolved to protect the Roman Catholic procession from opposition. It was felt that this was 'their day' and that they should be entitled to march on it. They forbid any crowd from assembling around Walker's pillar, but 1,000 Apprentice Boys congregated defiantly. One newspaper remarked that it had 'never before seen the flag of England in the centre of a less impressive squadron'.<sup>30</sup> They attempted to march to the pillar and this led to the reading of the Riot Act, upon which the crowd immediately dispersed. The Roman Catholic procession was enormous. Estimates of the crowd ranged from 10,000 to 15,000 people. Despite this numerous display the march was, for the most part, peaceful and orderly.

Outraged by the day's events, the Apprentice Boys returned to their memorial hall and passed a number of resolutions. First, they called for an investigation into the decision to protect the Nationalist parade. Secondly, they said that Captain Stokes, the officer in command, deserved condemnation by all loyal subjects for taking down the Union Jack at the pillar and giving full protection to the banners of rebellion. Thirdly, they pledged to bring their grievance before the Commons and obtain redress for this seditious behaviour. It appeared that the right to march, in Orange eyes at least, meant the right to march on the Twelfth and associated days.<sup>31</sup>

The day itself would not pass completely free from trouble and, in the evening, a number of the Catholic processionists were attacked as they passed by the memorial hall. Revolver shots were fired and four arrests were later made. The following day, at the opening of the spring assizes, Judge Keogh, a Catholic, addressed a grand jury in the town and congratulated the magistracy for the way in which they had handled 'the double barrelled procession' on 17 March, saying they had only interfered with such movements as were calculated to breach the peace. The decision to escort the Catholics around the city walls had been taken after consultation with the government's legal adviser. Keogh

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<sup>29</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 20 March 1878.

<sup>30</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 20 March 1878.

<sup>31</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 20 March 1878.

remarked that he deplored and condemned such processions and believed they should no longer be tolerated or encouraged.<sup>32</sup>

These were strong words indeed from the judge, who further elaborated that such days were merely taken advantage of as a kind of retaliatory commemoration. He was of course, in this particular regard, referring to the St. Patrick's Day celebrations. However, so long as they were kept within the law, he felt they had a right to protection by the magistracy.<sup>33</sup>

This was a ringing endorsement of the approach taken by the police and magistracy and it is likely that most neutral observers supported the judge's views. The *Standard* certainly agreed. It stated that only those gatherings which were an affront to a legal assemblage were circumscribed and considered the notion that the walls of Derry were consecrated ground, reserved to the use of one party alone, as nonsensical. It questioned the motives of the Apprentice Boys by asking what precisely they had to commemorate by marching on St. Patrick's Day? The only discernable purpose was to prevent the Catholic march and to incite a breach of the peace.<sup>34</sup>

Such a sympathetic view of the actions of the magistrates was not shared by all. The seizure of the Union Jack by Stokes' men at the pillar generated some controversy. Keogh was criticised in parliament for his remarks, which were taken to be an attack on St. Patrick's Day. He vigorously denied the accusation. It was not the commemoration of the bringing of Christian faith to Ireland that he had sought to lambaste, rather the glorified remembrance of the murder of a police constable in Manchester by Fenian agitators.<sup>35</sup> It was also the hijacking of the day by Nationalist political groups that he was referring to and it was his belief that such political parading was dangerous.<sup>36</sup>

Derry was not immune from the divisive political forces that incited both sides of the Ulster community to violence in the early 1880s. Signs of trouble had been apparent in

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<sup>32</sup> *Copies of the charge addressed by Mr. Justice Keogh to the grand jury of Londonderry on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 1878, as reported in the Derry Sentinel the following day*, H.C. 1878 (112), lxiii, 463.

<sup>33</sup> *Copies of the charge...by Mr. Justice Keogh*, p. 463.

<sup>34</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 20 March 1878.

<sup>35</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 23 March 1878.

<sup>36</sup> Keogh to the attorney general, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1878 in *Copies of the charge...by Mr. Justice Keogh*.

the city at the Apprentice Boys demonstration on 12 August 1883. A Parnellite candidate, Tim Healy, had been returned at the Monaghan by-election in July. Successive speakers made provocative and insulting comments about the land leaguers, further contributing to party animosities in the city.<sup>37</sup>

A few short months later, on the first of November and at the request of Derry's Catholics, the lord mayor of Dublin, Charles Dawson, arranged to deliver an oration in the corporation hall.<sup>38</sup> It was widely expected that the mayor would use the occasion to speak in favour of Home Rule and Parnell. The Apprentice Boys were unhappy that such a seditious meeting would be allowed in the symbolic heart of Protestant resistance in Ireland.

Under the circumstances, an affray was inevitable and 500 police were placed in the city, with a like number at the disposal of the authorities if so required. However, no police were placed on the door of the building itself. The lord mayor was to be received by a monster Nationalist demonstration that would convey him to the place of speaking. As the day progressed, his chances of delivering the speech were steadily declining. The city officialdom were coming under increasing pressure not to allow the meeting to proceed and a meeting was summoned at midday to determine whether permission to use the hall should be rescinded.

As anticipated, the Apprentice Boys staged a counter-demonstration and between 200-500 marched from their offices, through the streets of Derry, and arrived at city hall in the early afternoon. They held aloft placards bearing the name of Robert McClintock, city grand master and Justice of the Peace, and rushed the hall at 2 o'clock. The midday meeting was still in progress and the Williamites quickly discovered that the corporation was going to rescind the permission that they had extended to the Dublin lord mayor anyway. McClintock and several other J.P.s sympathetic to the Apprentice Boys actions entered the hall and united with their brethren. The city grand master took the main chair and it was decided, in spite of the corporation's decision, that they should 'remain

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<sup>37</sup> Frank Wright, *Two lands on one soil: Ulster politics before Home Rule* (Dublin, 1996), p. 487.

<sup>38</sup> *Copy of correspondence relating to the action of certain magistrates mentioned in the report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the origin and cause of certain disturbances at Londonderry on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1883*, p. 491, [C. 4010], H.C. 1884, lxiii.

steadfast in their occupation' believing the hall would be taken over by the Nationalist marchers on their departure.

There was discontent at the failure of the substantial police presence to intervene. It was thought odd that the noise of the crowd rushing the stairs and their cheering in the assembly hall led to no 'observation, inquiry or complaint in reference to the forcible occupation of the hall'. The magistracy argued that they were powerless to interfere unless there had been a breach of the peace, forcing of the outer doors or a request from the mayor to such effect. In any case, a line of constables and soldiers attempted to divert trouble by directing the nationalist promenade away from the hall and into the Bogside. The procession approached headed by two bands and allegedly playing party tunes. They were stopped about sixty yards from the Orange occupied hall. At this stage, a number of the Apprentice Boys had broken open the council chamber door and could now look out the window to Bishop St. A number of their colleagues had taken positions on the roof and hoisted flags.<sup>39</sup>

As the lord mayor's carriage arrived, a revolver was discharged from one of the hall's windows. As if this had been a starting signal, other shots proceeded to ring out from all the windows overlooking the street. The Catholics responded in kind and were then showered with slates and stones hurled at them from the roof by the Williamites. Two Catholics received serious gunshot wounds and one Orangeman was identified and indicted for firing from the window.<sup>40</sup>

When the Catholic procession was eventually diverted to the Bogside, a period of calm ensued and the magistrates set about ousting Orange party from the building. A deal was struck whereby the military and police would occupy the hall until the following day so as to prevent the lord mayor and his party re-occupying it as soon as the Apprentice Boys returned home. The lecture which was the cause of all of the above events was eventually given in the rooms of the National League on the Bogside.

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<sup>39</sup> *Report of the commission appointed to inquire into certain disturbances in the city of Londonderry on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1883 together with evidence taken before the commission*, p. 515 [C. 3954], H.C. 1884, xxxviii.

<sup>40</sup> *Report of commission to inquire into disturbances...1883*, p. ix.

Serious rioting broke out during the night in various parts of the city and many blamed the Apprentice Boys for the trouble. The commission of inquiry into the disturbances lamented the repeal of the Party Processions Acts in 1872, as it was much more difficult to take steps to prevent violence at such meetings under the common law.<sup>41</sup> In the view of the commission, there was nothing illegal in the Orange meeting but the actions of the Williamites (abandoning Walker's pillar, the original place advertised for holding the meeting, taking over the hall) were provocative. It took the view that the hall's occupation was the 'proximate' cause of the disturbance, while the original cause was the determination of the Nationalists to hold a 'party demonstration'.<sup>42</sup>

The problem of party processions had clearly not gone away with the repeal of the Processions Acts. Despite the abject failure of such special measures for over half a century to curb the problem, there were still some who believed in their reintroduction. The behaviour of McClintock and the magistracy was also called into question. He had only recently irritated Dublin Castle by signing a provocative notice on St. Patrick's Day called for a Williamite counter-meeting on St. Patrick's Day.<sup>43</sup> This authorship of this placard and involvement in the events of November were considered in some circles as unfit behaviour for a Justice of the Peace. The lord chancellor, Edward Sullivan, called on McClintock to account for both of these actions stating that the language of the St. Patrick's Day placard was 'most objectionable and irritating and it expressly states that the original demonstration or meeting "is to be met and counteracted"'. This, he believed, was sufficient to render any meeting resulting from the placard a danger to the public peace.<sup>44</sup> In his reply, McClintock admitted signing the placard and went on to say that the history of exceptional agitation in Ireland began with the land league carrying out its activities through violence and intimidation which resulted in a rapid spread of crime and outrage. He argued that the Orange policy of counter-demonstrations were merely a means of counteracting this. He pointed to the fact that there was nothing illegal in the

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<sup>41</sup> *Report of commission to inquire into disturbances...1883*, p. x.

<sup>42</sup> *Report of commission to inquire into disturbances...1883*, p. x.

<sup>43</sup> *Copy correspondence between the Lord Chancellor of Ireland and Robert McClintock, ESQ, D.L., J.P., in reference to his conduct as a magistrate in signing and issuing certain placards under which a counter-demonstration was summoned to assemble at Londonderry on the 17<sup>th</sup> March last*, p. 511 [C. 4057], H.C. 1884, lxiii, 3.

Apprentice Boys demonstration and said he found the assembly room occupied by an 'orderly and respectable audience'. Any illegal acts that were committed, he argued, were done by 'a few turbulent spirits'. Such arguments were dealt with by Sullivan issuing a swift rebuke.<sup>45</sup>

One of the most extraordinary manifestations of party feeling in Derry occurred in November of 1883. The female Roman Catholic employees of a Foyle factory, Messrs Tillie & Hendersons, demanded that a new doctor be appointed to the business in place of Sir William Miller. The shirt-makers and machine-sewers took grave offence when Miller had voted against allowing the use of the corporation hall for the visit of the lord mayor.

Hundreds of the women turned out en-masse and secluded themselves, loudly, in the vicinity of the factory. Infantry police were summoned and half a dozen mounted men kept watch while the protesters threw stones at them. By the evening, the shirt-makers got tired of striking and they marched through the town. By this time, the police had been withdrawn and they were left unchecked in their subsequent rampage. They smashed the windows at the Salvation Army quarters, they assaulted a solitary Welsh guard who came across their path and moved further through the night smashing property as they went.<sup>46</sup>

Three days later, on 6 November, the Catholics of the town attempted to hold an outdoor demonstration in response to the Guy Fawkes celebrations. So bad were party relations in the city that the magistrates immediately intervened to forbid the display. The continued policy of preventing counter-demonstrations was broadly welcomed.<sup>47</sup>

In Derry, as in other parts of Ulster, the memory of the Williamite Wars evokes vastly different emotions from different sections of the community. The defeat of James II secured the Protestant ascendancy and the freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights of 1689. It also led to the introduction of the penal laws and the subjugation of Catholics under a system that would be called apartheid in modern parlance. Commemorations of the wars, and particularly of the Siege of Derry which was so central to Williams victory,

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<sup>44</sup> *Copy of correspondence between the Lord Chancellor and McClintock*, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Copy of correspondence between the Lord Chancellor and McClintock*, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 3 November 1883

<sup>47</sup> *Londonderry Standard*, 6 November 1883.



have naturally been sources of violence and sectarian strife since the eighteenth century. In nineteenth century Derry, such parades were a means by which the Protestant community expressed its opposition to the loss of Protestant freedoms under Gladstone's guiding hand. The ability of a section of the community to march and dominate the shared city spaces was an expression of community strength. Not to be outdone, Derry Catholics took to the streets to agitate for various and increasingly nationalistic political causes.

Caught in the middle was the magistracy who were constantly confronted with the problem, one which continues to the modern day, of regulating such displays. A complete ban on marches of a 'party' character was in force from 1832-44 and 1850-72 under successive Party Processions Acts, but did little to prevent violence in Derry during the 1860s. Nor did the repeal of the Acts lead to a period of enduring calm as violence flared again in the late 1870s and during the Parnellite agitation of the 1880s. The blatant partiality of some Justices of the Peace did little to help matters. However, in nineteenth century Derry at least, the intractability of the problems surrounding parades was often more reflective of the fact that such marches were outlets of broader political and sectarian tensions within communities. Until such issues were addressed, it would seem that any attempt to prevent violence at party processions by the imposition of legal penalties was doomed to fail.