**The Apprentice Boys**

The Apprentice Boys of Derry is the oldest of the Loyal Orders. Its first club was founded in 1714 to commemorate the Siege of Derry in 1688-1689. 13 apprentice boys closed the gates of the city againist King James II in December 1688. The governor of the city, Robert Lundy, favoured surrender, but he was replaced by George Walker. For the next 105 days Derry refused to surrender, in spite of hunger, and constant bombardment by James's army from the hills around the walled city. The Siege of Derry became a powerful symnol of Protestance resistance against Catholic domination.

The Apprentice Boys which is a separate organisatio form the Orange Order are governed by a General Committee. This is represntative of the eight Parent Clubs and of the Amalgamated Clubs. Each of the Parent Clubs has branch clubs in other parts of Northern Ireland and in Canada, Scotland and Australia. New members are initiated within the Derry city walls, usually on 12 August or 18 December. Lord Brookeborough, Terence O'Neil, Brain Faulkner and Ian Paisley were all initiated as members. The apprentice boys hold celebrations on 18 December to commemorate the Shutting of the Gates, and 12 Augest to commemorate the Relief of Derry

There was a growth in the membershipof the Apprentice Boys from 1940s to the

1990s. About 1,000 new members were initiated each year. There were 178 branches in 1971 and this grew to over 200 in 1989. There was also an increase in numbers visting the city for parades. The Apprentice Boys made efforts to broadenthe appeal of their tradition by holding the Maiden City Festival to involve all Derry people. In 1989 the 300th anniversary of the Siege was celebrated with widespread festivities in the city in conjunction with the nationalist city council.

The Apprentice Boys celebrations were flashpoint for riots which brought conflict with nationalist and Catholics in the late 1960s when the civil rights campaign began. Catholics looked on the Seige as a defeat of Catholic King James leading to Protestant Ascendancy and the defeat of Catholics in Ireland. The Apprentice Boys said they had a right to parade, that the parades were 'traditional' and central to Protestant identity.

In October 1968 the civil rights march was planned for Deryy, this became a source of conflict/tension. The ApprenticeBoys planned a march on the same route at the same time. This gave William Craig, Minister for Home Affairs, the excuse to ban civil rights march. However the civil rights march went ahead and this resulted in a clash with poilice (RUC). The Apprentice Boys march in Augest 1969 was the spark which led to the Battle of the Bogside.

The Apprentice Boys parades were banned in 1970 and 1971, church service were held instead. Parades were restricted to the Waterside for the next few years. After the Apprentice Boys were allowed into the walked city but not on the walls because they overlocked the nationalist Bogside. Walking on the walls was banned until 1995, by witch time significant efforts had been made to restore peace to Northern Ireland.

**What was the contribution of the Apprentice Boys to the celebration of religious and cultural identity among that city’s Unionist minority?**

The purpose of the Apprentice Boys of Derry was to commemorate the Siege of Derry, 1688. The story of the siege became a symbol of heroic defence for the Unionist’s freedom in Ireland. It was also of mass cultural importance as Nationalists were trying to find their cultural identity as Irish citizens rather than British. The nationalist taught the Irish language and Irish history in their schools despite it not being on the curriculum. They also had strong ties with the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). Cultural identity was a much more difficult issue for Unionists. This is why the Apprentice Boys celebration was of mass importance to the cultural identity of Unionists. Some of Northern Ireland’s most well known leaders were **members** of the Apprentice Boys, including Ian Paisley, Terence O’Neill and Brian Faulkner. The main aims of the celebrations were to celebrate the Civil and Religious Liberty defended by the Derry during the siege. “No Surrender” and of course, to celebrate their Protestant Religion, culture and identity. **(**

The war was between Protestant King William of Orange and his **C**atholic father-in-law King James II. It is clear from just their religious beliefs why this was celebrated. The unionists who are (were?) in a minority of Ireland (Unionists are a MAJORITY in Northern Ireland!!!!) see it as a symbol of how they can stay strong even when they are in a minority. In 1688 when the war began Protestants came to Derry for refuge. King James II ordered his men to enter the city. While the city’s leaders tried to decide on what to do. 13 apprentice boys closed all the gates surrounding Derry city on the 7th of December. When King James arrived in April the governor of the town suggested they surrender but the people insisted on “No surrender”. King James then ordered his men to surround the city, cutting off all food supplies. People had to eat dogs and rats to survive. Approximately 4,000 people died of hunger and disease. The siege lasted 105 days. It ended when a ship called ‘Mountjoy’ broke through one of the barriers that the enemy had set up. The siege ended on the 28th July 1689. For the Unionists this is a massive victory. They never surrendered and they beat the Catholics who were the majority in Ireland.

During the early 1700s the siege was commemorated with parades but these parades became more elaborate in the 1880s, possibly as a response to the growing threat of the Catholics/Nationalists. The organisation consisted of 8 ‘Parent clubs’. The clubs were based in Memorial Hall. There was the Apprentice Boys club, the No Surrender club and the other six were name after leaders of the siege. Member ‘is open to anyone who professes Christ through the reformed Protestant faith’. Each club had branches scattered throughout the country, England, Scotland and Canada. There was about 200 branches altogether and about 12’000 members. It had two main events, in December and the main celebration which is on 12th of August. At its height up 40,000 people came to watch the parade. The Apprentice Boys dressed in crimson collarets. The march began on the Mall way which overlooked the Catholic ghetto of the Bogside. This was a symbolic way over show supremacy over the Catholics within the city. The marches included bands while they walked around Derry walls and attended a mass in the Church of Ireland Cathedral, St. Columb. In December an image of the traitorous Governor is symbolically burned. These marches had massive significance to the cultural identity of the Unionists. However, they did cause major trouble.

**Last sentence is VERY vague= trouble? To whom? Why?**

Although the Orange Order and Apprentice Boys both had major parts in the cultural identity there was no formal link between them, although many men belonged to both. The Apprentice Boys were more religious than political. While they did hold some seats on the Ulster Unionist Council during the Stormont years they withdrew in the 1970’s. It was not essential for politicians to be a part of Apprentice Boys, **yet** many leading Unionist politicians were, including Ian paisley who remained a member of the Apprentice Boys even when he left the Orange Order. This emphasises how much the Apprentice Boys contributed to the Unionist cultural identity. Even when Ian Paisley was setting up his own order he remained faithful to the Apprentice Boys of Derry.

The troubles with the Apprentice Boys began in 1969. In October 1968 civil rights demonstrators planned a March in Derry. In retaliation the Apprentice Boys called for a special parade. The Home Affairs minister who was strongly unionist, ban**ned** both marches. This led to much violence. On the 12th of August, 1969 the parade caused a lot of violence. It sparked off the ‘Battle of the Bogside’. Throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s, the marches were banned completely or restricted. It was only in 1989, when relations between the Nationalist and Unionists improved that the parade was allowed resume around the city walls. This parade occurred at the centenary of the siege. This was huge step forward in the Nationalist/ Unionist relationship as the parade was such a huge part of the Unionist cultural identity.

It is clear that the Apprentice Boys of Derry was a huge part of the Cultural identity of the Unionists. Even as far back as the 1700s the siege was being celebrated. The Apprentice Boys held a key role in many people’s lives then as it does today. Even after partition, Unionists felt like a besieged minority. Unionists felt that Britain and the state of Northern Ireland protected them from the Catholics as the walls of Derry did during siege. This was mentioned in many speeches throughout the years including this one in 1958 ***“ the border is a secure bulwark to religious faith and his political freedom under the ample folds of the Union Jack, as the old grey walls of Derry were nearly three centuries ago”.***

The essay needs more discussion on the recent history of its significance i.e. from 1960’s to late 1990’s: the uniqueness of Derry i.e. majority Catholic city, siege of Derry, Civil Rights centre of the late 1960’s etc.   
Background historical contextualisation of the topic is excellent.

**Case Study: Apprentice Boys of Derry**

**Context/ Origins:** To commemorate the Siege & Relief of Derry (1689)

* Clubs established in 19th Century
* Members were/ are of the **Reformed Protestant Religion**, Loyal to the **Throne of England** & Active in celebrating/ commemorating **their Protestant religious & political identity**
* Celebrations centre on **two events**:

***Closing of the Gates by 13 Apprentice Boys*** (18th of December)

***Lifting/Relief of the Siege*** (12th of August)

* All clubs named after 13 Apprentice Boys except

For the ‘No Surrender’ Club

* Headed by a **General Committee** which oversees

The **Parent Clubs**

* Branches in Scotland/ Australia & Canada

***Lord Brookeborough***

**Aims:**

* ***To celebrate the Civil & Religious Liberty defended by the Derry people during the siege = “No Surrender”***
* ***To celebrate their Protestant Religion, Culture & Identity***

***Terence O’ Neill* Apprentice Boys**

***Brian Faulkner***

***Ian Paisley***

**1971** = 178 branches  ***Possibly due to perceived threat***

**1989** = 200 + branches ***to Protestant Religion & Culture***

* ***Siege Mentality***?
* ***No Compromise***/ ***Intransigence***? (Majority Rule?)
* ***No Surrender***?

***during civil & political struggle of the ‘Troubles’?***

**Commemorations:**

1. ‘Roaring Meg’ fired
2. Visit to Derry Walls\*\*\*
3. Initiation of new members into Apprentice Boys

***Conflict during the ‘Troubles’: Differing Perspectives***

**Nationalist Civil Rights (NICRA)**

**Apprentice Boys of Derry**

***Traditional*** & ***Cultural*** Rights ***Humiliation*** (Walk on City Walls) by &

**1968** – *Civil Rights Protestors clash with RUC*

**1969** – Led to ***‘Battle of the Bogside’***

**1970/71 *–*** *Parades banned (restricted to church services)*

***Political*** & ***Civil*** Liberties  ***Sectarianism*** of Apprentice Boys

Underlined Unionist ***‘domination’*** of Nationalist/

Catholic population of Derry (***Gerrymandering***)