

A Brief History...

The Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall



At a meeting on 18th December 1867 in the Corporation Hall, the Diamond, Londonderry a resolution, proposed by the then Governor of the Apprentice Boys Bro. John Guy Ferguson, was passed.

By 1871 a design in the Scottish fortified baronial style of architecture by J G Ferguson CE was adopted. The site previously known as Foy's Factory at the corner of Magazine and Society Streets was made available. The site had cost £300.

Working plans were prepared in 1873, encouraged by a generous donation of £300 from CE Lewis Esq MP. On 12th August 1873, the Memorial Stone for the new Hall was laid by Alderman John Ewing Miller MD JP in the presence of a huge crowd of Apprentice Boys, citizens and people from all over the country.

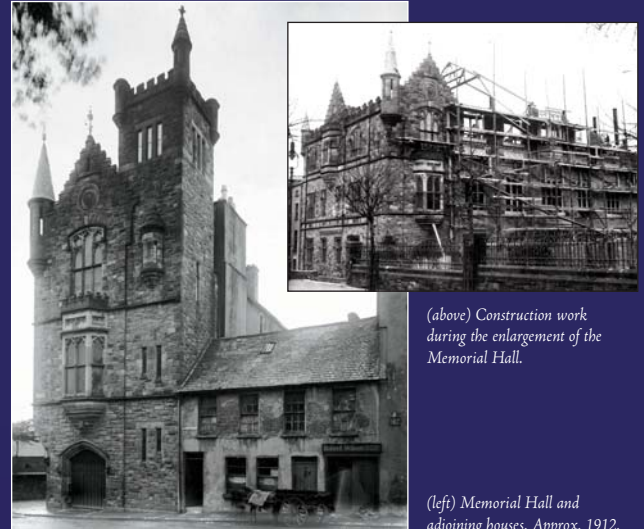
The building was dedicated to the Memory of the Brave Thirteen Apprentice Boys who had closed the gates in 1688.

The builders were McClelland & Co, Matthew McClelland and Joseph Ballantine.

Plans for the enlargement of the Hall were considered in 1912, commencing with the purchase of two small houses adjoining the original Hall. The total cost of purchase was £1,150. A further purchase of Ye Old Besieged Inn took place in 1918 at the cost of £600.

It was not until 12th August 1936 that the first Foundation Stone for the new extension was laid by Senator Capt. JM Wilton MC JP Mayor on behalf of the Apprentice Boys of Derry. The second Foundation Stone was laid on behalf of the Orange Order the following year on 13th July 1937 by Bro Matthew Kerr DGNI CGM on behalf of the City Grand Lodge.

It stated that: "We the Apprentice Boys and Citizens here assembled pledge ourselves to take immediate steps to provide a Hall for Protestant Meetings and Commemorative Purposes."



(above) Construction work during the enlargement of the Memorial Hall.

(left) Memorial Hall and adjoining houses. Approx. 1912.

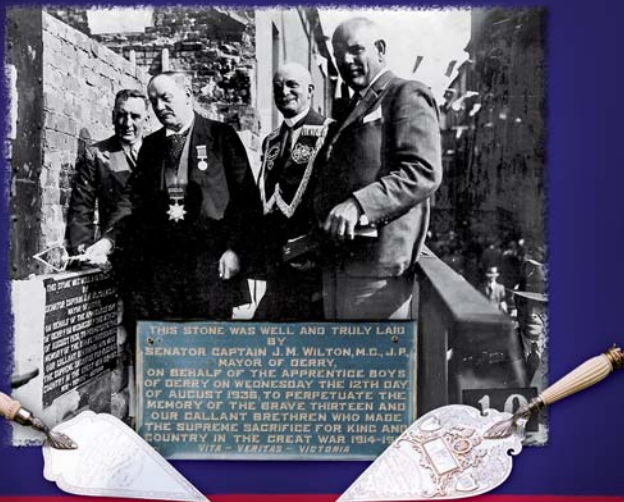
The architect for the extension was JA Davidson Esq, FRIBA and the builder was FB McKee & Co. Ltd of Belfast.

The Opening and Dedication Ceremony for the newly extended Hall took place on Sunday 12th December 1937, with full Civic Honours. The Hall was officially opened by Viscountess Craigavon.

Over the years the local weather took its toll, and the period 1969 through into the early 1990s saw additional stress on the building from bombs in the vicinity – not least a shake from the destruction of the IRA bombing of Walker's Pillar in 1972.

1995 saw the completion of £400,000 of repair work, and a Re-dedication and Service of Thanksgiving on Sunday 4 June 1995, in St Columbs Cathedral, conducted by The Very Rev. DC Orr MA, Dean of Derry & Rector of Templemore.

As with any large building of its type, and age, upkeep and repair work is endless. It would be hoped that all those who appreciate the importance of the Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall will assist in the upkeep of the Hall by way of a donation or other gift.



The Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall

The Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall has one of the finest collection of rooms for the use of the three Loyal Orders in the country.

It is the Headquarters and seat of the General Committee of the Apprentice Boys Association which meets regularly in the Apprentice Boys Room (*below*). The décor of the room reflects the Apprentice Boys colour Crimson.



The Hall also hosts a very fine Orange room (*below*), which caters for Orange Lodges from Derry City No. 4 District.



The Black Room, (*below*) is used for Royal Black Preceptory meetings each month.



A Ladies Orange Lodge Room (*left*) doubles as the home of the Londonderry Society Credit Union.

The Memorial Hall is home to the Society Social Club which organises social events throughout the year in both the minor and upper halls, and offers snooker and pool as well as a relaxed lounge bar environment (*right*).



The Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall

The Apprentice Boys Memorial hall is the start and end point for the two major commemorative events related to the siege of Derry'.

Lundy is constructed each year (*below left*), ready for ceremonial burning as part of the 'Shutting of the Gates' Commemorations, and the Relief of Derry Celebrations that takes place in August (*below right*).



The Crimson Players use the Hall for rehearsal space for its annual Relief of Derry Pageant, which is an integral part of the Relief of Derry Celebrations. At other times, the Crimson Players perform a pantomime each winter and provide period-costumed support to a variety of events throughout the year.

The Apprentice Boys Museum

The Memorial Hall is also the home of the Apprentice Boys museum collection of memorabilia and artefacts that have been collected and donated over decades. *The Museum Committee opens the collection on request and throughout the summer months.*



Affectionately known as The MEM, the Hall was a central meeting place for young people from all over the City in the swinging 1960s. While the conflict of the period following saw the Hall decline in use as the safety of the area was uncertain, in recent years the MEM has started a slow return to greater use and wider access through the work of the Apprentice Boys Maiden City Festival (www.maidencityfestival.com).

This has seen a broad range of entertainment, from cabaret to lectures, from nostalgia nights to highland dance competitions.



The Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall remains an important place for Protestants within the Derry City Council area, and represents a meeting point in Londonderry for Apprentice Boys and friends from all over the UK, Ireland and beyond...

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Derry City Council is working with the Apprentice Boys of Derry and other venues to make the city's rich history and culture entertaining and engaging for visitors.

For further information log onto the following websites:

www.derryvisitor.com for information on Derry

www.derrycity.gov.uk/museums for information on the City and its heritage.

This project in part-financed by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board through the EU PEACE Programme and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister through the Integrated Development Fund.



WWW.MAIDEN CITY FESTIVAL.COM/THE MEM