

## What is the Orange Order



We are a Protestant fraternity with members throughout the world. Autonomous Grand Lodges are found in Scotland, England, the United States of America, West Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Our name comes from William III, Prince of Orange, and is kept because his victory over despotic power laid the foundation for the evolution of Constitutional Democracy in the British Isles. Support for William of Orange in the British Isles led to the formation of Orange Societies to commemorate his victory at the Battle of the Boyne in July 1690, but the largest and longest lasting groups were the Boyne Societies in Ireland.

## When was the Orange Order Formed

The Loyal Orange Institution was formed in September 1795, following the culmination of attacks on Protestants in County Armagh at the Battle of the Diamond, in which Protestants routed those who had attacked them and attempted to burn properties, it was decided to form an organisation which would protect Protestants. This body, drawing on existing Orange Clubs in the neighbourhood, was named the Loyal Orange Institution.



## What is the function of the Orange Order

In modern times the Loyal Orange Institution continues to function, with thousands of members in Ireland and many others across the world. Today defending Protestantism is not so literal as it was in 1795, but it requires us to take a stand for truth in an age of secularism and in order to defend our culture and traditions.

## The tradition of Parades

Commemoration of the Battle of the Boyne, through parades, is something which predates the Orange Order, for an account from July 1791 in County Armagh has survived. This was four years before the formation of the Orange Order, which first commemorated the Battle of the Boyne anniversary in July 1796.

Orange Lodges also parade to mark anniversaries such as the First World War Battle of the Somme, the anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and other occasions.

The parading tradition which the Orange Order upholds is an honourable and historic tradition, which was the norm for other fraternities in the past. The parades of the Orange Order are the largest public Protestant witness of their kind anywhere in the world.

Some ten months after its formation in September 1795 it held its first Boyne Commemoration Parade, on 12th July 1796.

Parades therefore are very much part of the Orange tradition and heritage. However the concept of parades by the community that gave birth to the Orange Institution was well established long before 1796 and it is a matter of historical record that parades were a feature of that community for many years prior to the formation of the Orange Institution.

The Protestant community is not in any way unique in that aspect. People the world over love to parade. There is a seemingly endless list of parades throughout the world ranging from the Carnival in Rio through Mardi Gras in New Orleans, 4th July across the United States of America, Bastille Day in France, St. Patrick's Day in Dublin and New York to the Lord Mayor's Show in London.



Orange Parades are commemorative. Various events in the history of the people are commemorated by parades that take different forms. These range from the solemn remembrance of the fallen at the Somme in



the First World War to the cultural extravaganza that is the 12th of July commemorating the Glorious Revolution secured at the Battle of the Boyne.



The parades are a glorious display of pageantry. The colour of the collarette or sash, the uniforms of the bands and the beautiful paintings on the banners combine to make an Orange Parade a visual kaleidoscope.

### **Orange Order - Flags & Banners**

The Flags and Banners are full of religious, cultural, and political symbolism depicting, biblical scenes, famous people or events in history and in themselves portray the rich cultural heritage of our people in picture form.

### **A Musical Tradition**



The music provided by the accompanying bands is of a very high standard and you will find countless competition bands including world champions in the ranks, of flute, brass, accordion, and pipe bands participating in Orange Parades. Of course you will also find, particularly in rural areas, the

instrument that in many people's minds is synonymous with Orangeism - the Lambeg Drum.

### **A Charitable Organisation**

The Orange Order is deeply committed to helping those in need. Charitable giving is an essential part of Orangeism and it is not insular. Certainly we have our own charities but we have also raised large sums of money for various deserving causes such as equipment for local hospitals, holidays for disadvantaged children and "third-world" relief.

Of course we do not only give financially we also give of our time and talents. It is central to our ethos that as part of the community we provide a service to that community.

Annually the Order raises tens of thousands of pounds through its collections at church parades and similar functions to assist those in need.

## **Orangemen & Service**

When the Orange Order was formed in 1795 many of its early members had seen service in the ranks of the Volunteer movement.

That early link with the military has been maintained to the present day and Orangemen and women have worn the uniform of their country with distinction in all the arenas of war and peace.

It is estimated that in excess of 200,000 Orangemen from across the world saw service during the first War some 80,000 from Canada alone. This has been described as Orangeism's greatest triumph and its heaviest defeat. Triumph in the number of volunteers who joined the war effort but defeat in that the Institution lost so many of its young men.

Many Orangemen have been decorated for their bravery and the first Orangeman to win the Victoria Cross in World War I was Bro. Private Abraham Acton of Whitehaven who received his award for "conspicuous" bravery on 21st December 1914 at Rouges Blanc.

Coleraine has a long history with the Orange Order with several of the Lodges, including Coleraine LOL 316 and Killowen LOL 930, dating back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century.



# Ulster and the Somme

While many Southern Irish wished to be separate from Britain, with their own parliament in Dublin, for the people of the North of Ireland, this Home Rule for Ireland would spell economic disaster.

Belfast, long regarded as the Northern capital was very different from other Irish cities, because Belfast was an industrial city with the world's largest shipyards, linen mills, rope works and tobacco factory. Hundreds of thousands of ordinary people depended on these industries for



employment. If Ireland would separate from Britain, they saw their jobs disappearing, unemployment would rise and for many it would mean leaving Ireland to find work elsewhere in the world. With economic disaster, coming with Home Rule, the ordinary people of Ulster began a campaign aimed at stopping Home Rule and so saving their livelihoods. These protests began with marches and rallies, but the British government of the day, who depended on Irish Nationalists to keep them in power, paid little or no attention.

Failing here, the 'Unionists' as they were called because they supported the Union of Great Britain and Ireland now organised the Ulster Covenant, where nearly 500,000 men and women signed a petition asking the British government not to give them away but to keep Ireland British.



Despite this huge number of signatures the government continued to ignore their appeals.

Failing once again, the Unionist people realised that they would have to fight to remain British. To this end they set up the Ulster Volunteer Force; 100,000 men who if need be would fight to keep the North of Ireland British. Men were drilled and guns imported from across Europe.

In other parts of Ireland which supported Home Rule, nationalists set up the Irish Volunteers to oppose the Ulster Volunteers.

For a time it seemed that Civil War might break out but the arrival of World War I brought a temporary end to the Home Rule question, as the problem of winning the war and defeating Germany became much more important.

With the outbreak of war, many thousands of men in the Ulster Volunteer Force joined up to fight German aggression in Europe and to bring freedom to the peoples of Europe. In fact so many Ulster Volunteers joined that they were given their own division, the 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division. Ulster men fought throughout the war but it would be the Battle of the Somme, which began on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916, which would see a huge sacrifice of young men from Ulster.

July 1<sup>st</sup> would be the bloodiest day in the history of the British army and the 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division would fight and die in great glory. Of all the divisions taking part, it would be the Ulstermen who alone would capture



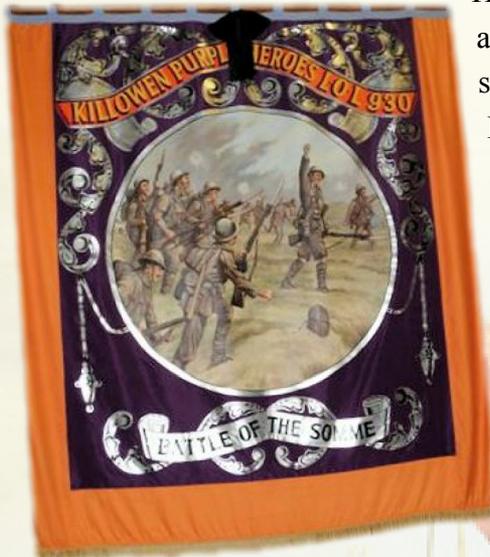
their objective.

Left alone, holding the German lines, they would be slaughtered in huge numbers.

Of the 4,900 men from Ulster who moved forward,

over 2,000 would die and the rest mostly injured, many severely. This would be Ulster's finest hour in battle, a blood sacrifice of her young men – men who would give their lives for others across Europe who they never knew, men who were prepared to die to bring freedom to the peoples of Europe who were living under German occupation and aggression.

A few days later the names of the thousands of dead came home and all across Ulster blinds were drawn across windows as towns and villages realised they had lost a whole generation of young men.



However not all Irishmen fought against German aggression. In the south of Ireland the Republican Movement sided with the Germans. They were given arms by the German government and carried out the Easter Rising of 1916, to bring British troops back from Europe to fight in Ireland. They saw the war as an opportunity to break from Britain and shared no concern for the occupied peoples of Europe.

It is indeed ironic that 1916 would see thousands of young Ulstermen dying in the battlefields of Europe fighting Germany while the republican movement in Ireland in the same year would ally themselves with the Germans.

In Ulster today the memory of that 'lost generation' of young men is remembered on July 1<sup>st</sup> with parades and services across our towns and villages. The Unionist community is proud of the sacrifice; a sacrifice which brought freedom to Europe.

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