



SALTIRE

New Look and Sound for Flag Heritage Centre

The Trustees are delighted to report that the first major upgrade of the Flag Heritage Centre at Athelstaneford since its opening in 1997 has been successfully completed.

While visitors to the Centre have enjoyed the short audio-visual presentation of the traditional origins of Scotland's flag, in recent years there have been signs that the equipment was starting to fail. Accordingly, in 2008, the Trust set about the task of investigating ways in which the system could be replaced and enhanced using the latest technology.

Douglas Bolton and Sheena Irving of Edinburgh-based firm AVC, a division of Electrosonic Ltd, devised proposals for a new system that would make the presentation more accessible to a wider audience. This involved the story of the Saltire being told in seven languages, with an induction loop for those with impaired hearing. Whereas in the past the show was triggered simply by anyone entering the doocot, the centrepiece of the upgraded system is a stylish new console, allowing the visitor to start the presentation at the push of a button in the language of choice. In addition to English, the story can now be heard in Gaelic, Spanish, French, German, Italian and Polish. The system also incorporates an electronic counter that will provide the Trust with useful information about visitor numbers.

The work was carried out over a 12 week period up to March 2009, such that the new system was in place for the

April opening. Entries in the Centre's visitors book already confirm just how much the new multilingual format is appreciated by overseas visitors.

Over the winter, the Trust took the opportunity to replace the two high-level screens located in the roof space of the doocot which were showing signs of wear. The screens allow the Saltire to appear dramatically above the visitors towards the end of the presentation, mirroring the cross in the sky above the 9th century battle. Thanks are due to Chick and Sandra at the Sail Loft for devising the ingenious fixing arrangements for the Saltire screen, and to local artist Carmen Ambrozevich for painting the screen. Thanks too are due to David Ogilvie for the aerial acrobatics involved in installation!



Overall, the upgrade cost in the region of £30,000, and this could not have been achieved without the generous support of Viridor and the Tyne Esk LEADER programme. Thanks are also due to East Lothian Council and the St Andrew Society for top-up funding.



Gateway Signs Unveiled

The profile of Athelstaneford has been given a major boost by East Lothian Council's recent decision to replace the signs on roads leading into the county. The new sky-blue design incorporates a St Andrew's Cross together with the Council's peregrine falcon symbol, and it highlights for motorists that East Lothian is the birthplace of the national flag.

Tartan Week In Athelstaneford

As part of Homecoming Scotland 2009, East Lothian Council promoted a week of celebrations in early April, culminating on Tartan Day – the anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320. One of the key events involved a massed band, made up of the pipe bands of Haddington, North Berwick, Prestonpans and Tranent, plus the Penston Brass Band, which held a series of parades in the county over the weekend of 4/5 April.

The final parade, and by far the best attended, was in Athelstaneford on the afternoon of Sunday 5 April. In glorious sunshine, hundreds of people lined both sides of Main Street as the massed bands marched towards the Saltire Memorial where they were met by waiting dignitaries including the Duchess of Hamilton. The pipe bands thrilled the crowds as they went through their repertoire, including the public launch of East Lothian's new county 'anthem'.

On Tartan Day itself, Monday 6 April, a Saltire was hoisted each hour at the flagpole by the Saltire Memorial. These were then sold, together with certificate and photograph, to people who had expressed an interest in owning a Scottish flag which had been flown at the birthplace on this special date. The proceeds were generously donated to the Trust.

Massed bands leaving Athelstaneford Churchyard.

Amazingly, 15 minutes before the start of the parade, a perfect St Andrew's Cross appeared in the blue skies above the Memorial!



Sheena Welcomed

The Trustees of the Scottish Flag Trust were delighted to welcome East Lothian Council's Provost, Councillor Sheena Richardson, at their February meeting in Athelstaneford. Sheena has accepted the invitation to become a Trustee, and she brings a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to the position.

Quick Thinking Saves Day

Special thanks are due to local resident Fred Mackenzie. Some months ago, while walking past the Churchyard, Fred happened to notice that the main granite panel on the Saltire Memorial was hanging free. He immediately fashioned wedges which he inserted to temporarily hold the panel in place, before notifying the Trust. It turned out that the top metal bolts had sheared, and but for Fred's prompt action, the panel could easily have fallen and shattered. The Trust has subsequently had the granite panel securely fixed in place by grouting.

How to Contact the Trust

The Scottish Flag Trust was established in 1984 and is a registered charity (No: SC 002778). Its objectives are:-

- To maintain and upgrade the Saltire Memorial and Flag Heritage Centre at Athelstaneford
- To raise public awareness about the origins of Scotland's national flag.

For information about the work of the Trust, about school information packs, or about merchandise (mouse mats, T-shirts), write to:- The Scottish Flag Trust, PO Box 84, Edinburgh EH3 8LG, or visit the website.

Key contacts are:-

David Williamson, Chairman (Tel: 01368.863239)

Charlie Blair, Custodian (Tel: 01620.880297)

Malcolm Duncan, Treasurer (Tel: 01620.880306)

Stop Press

- The Flag Heritage Centre will feature in East Lothian Council's Doors Open Day, which is to be on Sunday 13 September 2009. This should raise interest locally and increase visitor numbers.
- The Trust's website has been upgraded, and this will allow schools to directly access information packs and help the general promotion of the Trust's work. Thanks are due to Mike and Finn Moore for their technical expertise.
- On 4 April the Trust was represented in St Giles Cathedral at the Memorial Service for Francis David Charteris, 12th Earl of Wemyss who sadly passed away last December. Lord Wemyss led the campaign to erect the Saltire Memorial in the 1960s, and he was a founder Trustee in 1984 and served until 2003.