



THE ATHELSTANEFORD SALTIRE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SCOTTISH FLAG TRUST No.5 • JUNE 2001



VIEWPOINT SEATING AREA COMPLETED



- A circular stone plinth, with engraved centrepiece - Athelstaneford, Birthplace of Scotland's Flag
- Semi-circular green oak bench seating
- An interpretative visitor panel
- A new base for the flagpole in wrought iron and derived Pictish lacework



On Friday 27 April, Trustee Dr Winnie Ewing MSP officially opened the final phase of work at the Flag Heritage Centre in Athelstaneford - a viewpoint which overlooks the scene of the ninth century battle which led to the adoption of the St Andrew's Cross or Saltire as Scotland's national flag.

The opening marks the culmination of many years of effort by the Trust. The original design for the Heritage Centre included a viewpoint, but this was never implemented through lack of funds. Now, thanks to the generosity of the sponsors, visitors will be able to enjoy the stunning views over the East Lothian countryside towards the site of the battle by the Peffer Burn.

The works at the viewpoint, which cost about £16,000, comprise the following:-

Fittingly, the stone plinth also incorporates an inscription in memory of the two men without whose inspiration the project at Athelstaneford might never have been realised - former Trustees, the late Dr Allan Macartney MEP, and the late Nigel Tranter OBE.

Over 100 guests assembled in Athelstaneford Church to hear the speeches, including an enthusiastic group of primary four, five and six children from the local primary school. After the Rev Kenneth Walker had welcomed everyone, Trust Chairman David Williamson expressed his special thanks to the bodies who had provided funding for the project including Viridor (formerly Haul Waste), Tesco (Haddington) and to Bill Macpherson of MKW Design Partnership.

ATHELSTANEFORD
Birthplace of Scotland's Flag



The Scottish Flag Trust would like to express its thanks to the following organisations who so generously contributed between 1996 and 2001 to the creation of the Flag Heritage Centre and viewpoint at this historic site.

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Historic Scotland
- East Lothian Council
- Viridor Waste Management
- Scottish Enterprise
- British Energy Torness
- Tesco Haddington
- East Lothian St Andrew Society
- Athelstaneford Kirk Session
- Scottish Life

Dr Winnie Ewing then spoke and described her "sense of history" in opening the viewpoint. She referred to the day in 1999 in which the Scottish Parliament had opened, and the great joy she had felt at seeing the Saltire hanging from every window and every flagpole - it had made Edinburgh look like the capital city it is again. Mrs Ewing added that "we are all indebted to the Trust for spreading the story of Scotland's flag".

Rehanging of Copper Panel

In 1993, the Saltire Memorial within the churchyard at Athelstaneford was upgraded. This included the replacement of the original copper panels dating from 1965, which had badly deteriorated, with granite panels. The main panel depicted the 9th century battlescene, while the smaller panel provided a brief narrative.

Few people know that the copper panels were then taken by Scottish Nuclear to Torness. The main panel was painstakingly restored in the workshops, prior to being placed on display in the Power Station foyer.

Earlier this year, the new Station Manager, David Williams, offered to return the main panel to Athelstaneford. This offer was gratefully accepted by the Trust, and the restored panel has now been rehanged within the Heritage Centre where it can be admired by visitors.

The battlescene was made to a design by the late Dr F.R. Stevenson. It shows the two armed hosts facing each other, the one about to claim victory, the other already accepting defeat, under the sign in the sky of the St Andrew's Cross. There is practically no surviving pictorial art from the 9th century, so the style is that of the romanesque art (Gislebertus of Autun) of a somewhat later period.



More Friends Needed!

The Trust is responsible for the annual upkeep and operational costs of the Heritage Centre, as well as for tourist promotion. It is an expensive business! Some £2,500 is needed every year, to cover items such as the maintenance of the audio visual and CCTV equipment, insurance, electricity, leaflets, newsletter etc.

The many existing Friends of the Flag Trust have been magnificent with their support, which is mainly by way of annual subscriptions of £10 (minimum) and by donations. However, the Trust needs to recruit more Friends, and a target of an additional 100 has been set. So, if you know anyone who might be prepared to add his or her support, please let us know and a Friends application form will be sent off!



The elegant vimpel of St Andrew, named after pennants of this style commonly seen in Scandinavia, at the Heritage Centre. A full size St Andrew's Cross flies permanently at the Saltire Memorial.

Captions to photographs on page 1:

1. Winnie Ewing and piper Peter Aitchison at the opening ceremony.
2. John Creed putting finishing touches to the wrought iron work.
3. New multilingual welcome sign in Heritage Centre.
4. Work in progress at the viewpoint and flagpole.
5. New plaque with names of sponsors.

Colour of the Saltire

The Trust, when asked about the colour of the Scottish Flag, has taken the stance that the proper field for the flag should be a lighter rather than a darker blue. There is certainly clear historical evidence, as confirmed by the Flag Institute, that the original colour of the Saltire was a lighter blue. It was only from the 17th century that a darker blue was used in the Union Flag, and this may well have been for no other reason than to prevent early fading. The use of a lighter blue certainly accords with the traditional celestial origins of the Saltire at Athelstaneford.

It is accepted that there is no legal definition of the proper blue, though both the St Andrew Society and the Saltire Society have written to the First Minister to urge that the Scottish Executive, with the approval of Parliament, issue guidance on this. In the meantime, the Trust, in one of its information sheets, advises that a lighter blue close to Pantone 300 be used.



Thanks to Alan Gray

The Trustees would like to express their thanks and best wishes to Alan Gray who is standing down as Trust Treasurer. A chartered accountant, Alan has kept the Trust on a steady financial footing during a period of substantial expenditure on the Heritage Centre and associated works.

Alan will be continuing his association with Flag Trust, in his role as Treasurer of the St Andrew Society.

TRUST CONTACTS

For information about the Scottish Flag Trust (Scottish Charity NO: SC002778) and its activities, including School Information Packs and T-Shirts, write to **PO Box 84, Edinburgh**. Key contacts are:-

- **David Brittain**, Clerk 0131 225 1092
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