



THE ATHELSTANEFORD SALTIRE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SCOTTISH FLAG TRUST

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Toilet Re-opens After Dry Rot Scare

“Friends” will recall last year’s crisis when an outbreak of dry rot was discovered in the void beneath the toilet which serves the Heritage Centre and the Church. A funding package was put together at the time which allowed the fungus to be successfully eradicated, though at a cost of around £7,000. This did not, however, leave sufficient funds to complete the reinstatement of the toilet which remained closed throughout 2003.

Happily, the Trust managed to secure additional funding to complete the task, such that the toilet re-opened for visitors part way through the 2004 season. This included a very welcome £1,000 from the Council’s “Local Priorities Fund”, and thanks are due for this to the Session Clerk Emily Armatage. The contributions from local landfill operator, David Hamilton, are also greatly appreciated. Thanks too to Charlie Blair who demonstrated his prowess with a paint brush in completing the work!



Trust Custodian Charlie Blair inspects the refurbished toilet.

IMPACT OF NEW A1 EXPRESSWAY



Prominent signposting for the Heritage Centre on the A1 at Haddington

In April 2004, the eight-mile section of the new A1 Expressway between Haddington and Dunbar opened ahead of schedule. The significance for the Flag Heritage Centre, and for other nearby tourist attractions, is that there are no junctions along the entire length of the new road. Previous signposting for Athelstaneford on the A1 was a mile to the east of Haddington where visitors would turn onto the B1347. Now, signposting is 3 miles away for east-bound traffic which must exit the A1 at Haddington, while signposting is 11 miles away for west-bound traffic which must exit the A1 at Dunbar. Any visitor who misses the signposts and exits for the old A1 and Athelstaneford is unlikely to turn back at the end of the Expressway section.

It is too early to say whether the new Expressway and the more distant signposting will have any impact on visitor numbers. Most visitors to Athelstaneford are thought to be day trippers from the Edinburgh area, and the fact that the Heritage Centre is particularly well signposted from that direction is reassuring. One further brown tourist sign is still needed, however, for motorists approaching the Athelstaneford turn-off on the old A1 from the east.

Despite a 5% upturn in visitor numbers at attractions across the Lothians at the start of 2004 (Source: VisitScotland), numbers at Athelstaneford were initially down. Might this have been attributable to unfamiliarity with the new road? Fortunately, by mid-summer visitor numbers had picked up, and by August they were higher than in previous years. On a similarly positive note, it is speculated that the arrival of Concorde at the Museum of Flight, a mile to the west of Athelstaneford, will help to boost visitor numbers next year when the plane is ready for display, and this will be closely monitored. The Trust has prepared and is distributing posters to local libraries and supermarkets to help raise the profile of the Heritage Centre.

STOP PRESS:

VisitScotland has just confirmed, following its 2004 inspection, that the Flag Heritage Centre has successfully retained its 4 Star Visitor Attraction rating.



VISIT THE WEBSITE

Information about Athelstaneford can be found via the St Andrew Society Website at

www.st-andrew.org.uk

CCTV to be Upgraded



The Trustees were delighted to learn this summer that their application for a Heritage Lottery Fund Awards for All grant had been successful. This will allow for the supply and installation of a new state-of-the-art CCTV system at the Heritage Centre. The grant is for £1,768.

The present system is now starting to fail, and although to date there has never been any incidence of theft or vandalism within the Heritage Centre (or at the Saltire Memorial), the presence of a CCTV camera on site is felt nonetheless to be an essential deterrent. The new system should be fully operational prior to the 2005 visitor season.

SALTIRE CHOSEN TO PROMOTE SCOTLAND ABROAD



Many "Friends" will have noticed with a wry smile the Scottish Executive's news release in June 2004 about the Saltire. It seems that marketing agencies, having been commissioned (at a cost of no less than £300,000) to come up with an inspiring new symbol to be used to promote Scotland abroad, had concluded that the most appropriate and recognisable symbol is

none other than the Saltire. Surprise, surprise! The Flag Trust could have given this advice at no cost. BBC Scotland came to the same conclusion and covered the story by sending their cameras to Athelstaneford - thereby ensuring that the birthplace of the Saltire achieved some television exposure!

It seems that the Executive will be capitalising on the positive symbolism of the Saltire by sending a flag to every UK embassy, consulate and public building overseas, and officials will be asked to fly the Saltire when appropriate.

It is to be hoped that the Executive will ensure that the dispatched flags are the correct colour. A "Friend" of the Trust, retired accountant and amateur historian George Reid, successfully persuaded the Public Petitions Committee of the Parliament in 2003 that the most appropriate colour for the field of the flag should be a blue compatible with Pantone 300 (Unglazed). This is a much lighter blue than that incorporated in the Union Flag, and much more in keeping with the traditional celestial origins of the St Andrew's Cross associated with Athelstaneford. The Committee agreed that an advisory flag code setting out the colour and proportions of the flag (copies available from the Trust) could be promoted, even though it carries no statutory force.

David Brittain Stands Down

At the June meeting, David Brittain intimated he would be demitting the office of Clerk to the Trust at the end of the year. David has not only administered all the meetings for 15 years, but he has provided invaluable legal advice to the Trust on a number of issues over this period. David took his law degree at Aberdeen University, saw active service with the Royal Navy at Suez in 1956, thereafter worked in various legal offices in Edinburgh, and started his own practice in 1971. The highlight of David's career came earlier this year when, after 25 years of research and having been turned down 3 times by the Lyon Court, he succeeded with an appeal to the Court of Session to have his client recognised as MacDonald of Keppoch, Chief of Clanranald of Lochaber.



The Trustees would like to put on record their appreciation and thanks to David for his substantial contribution to Athelstaneford, and wish him well on his retirement as he devotes more time to his passion of fishing.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Friends Update: The main income stream for the Flag Trust remains the generous support of its "Friends". There are present around 130 "Friends", and subscriptions together with associated Gift Aid (which Treasurer Malcolm Duncan assiduously chases up!) provide just over £3,000 per annum. Remember that with Gift Aid every £10 of subscription is worth £12.81 to the Trust. Should you know of anyone who might be interested in becoming a "Friend", just contact the Trust and a new application form and details can be forwarded.

Scottish Power: The Trust is pleased to acknowledge the generous contribution of £100 from Scottish Power towards the annual costs of floodlighting the Saltire which flies above the Memorial. Treasure Malcolm Duncan is hoping to persuade the company to give further support next year!

T-Shirts and Tea Towels: The Trust is still selling the distinctive Athelstaneford T-Shirts. Adult T-Shirts cost £10 (S,M,L,XL,XXL); long-sleeved ones cost £12.50 (M,L,XL); and kids ones cost £7.50 (state age). Cheques should include postage (50p for single orders, £1.00 for 2 or more). Consideration is now being given to producing an Athelstaneford Tea Towel which would make an excellent present - watch this space!

ABOUT THE TRUST

The Scottish Flag Trust, which is a registered charity in Scotland (No:SC002778), was established in 1984 with the following objectives:-

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

For information about the Trust and its activities, or to request a copy of the School Information Pack, write to the Scottish Flag Trust at PO Box 84, Edinburgh.

Key contacts are:-

David Williamson, Chairman
(Tel:01368.863.239)
Charlie Blair, Custodian
(Tel:01620.880.297)
Malcolm Duncan, Treasurer
(Tel:01620.880.306)

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