



FLAG INSTITUTE

# FLAG MASTER 162

**GOLD**

**50 Years  
Flag Institute  
1971-2021**



## AUTHORS



**John Hall** is chairman of the Flag Institute, of which he is a lifelong member. The reverend's vexillological interest lies with personal flags of heads of states and dignitaries.



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## FM'S COVER



There is a future for The Flag Institute and vexillology. Children are still interested in flags, like 9-year old Calum Alasdair Munro who designed a flag for his home island Skye. (Photo by his father Calum Munro)

## IN THIS FLAGMASTER GOLDEN BUMPER ISSUE

### NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

- 4 **Athelstaneford:** the Scottish Flag Trust launched an appeal to save the memorial at the birthplace of the Scottish Saltire, by Malcolm Good.
- 7 **Column Philip Tibbetts:** around and about with the Flag Institute's Communities Vexillologist.
- 8 **Code Flag over H:** flags in the news from around the globe.

### THE FM INTERVIEW

- 13 **Lord Lyon King of Arms Dr Joseph J Morrow** talks to James Floyd about his involvement with Scottish flags.
- 15 **The on-line question:** have your say on the governments love for the Union Flag.

### IN HOME WATERS

- 16 **The Flag Institute 1971-2021:** the history of the Flag Institute through the eyes of John Hall, one of its oldest serving members.
- 28 **Flags and standards of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.** John Hall looks back at the life of the Prince through his flags.

### DISTANT SHORES

- 36 **The use of gold in flags** Leigh Wetherall looks at the many nations that use gold to symbolise in flag design.
- 42 **Look Away, Look Away.** Malcolm Good talked to Patrick O'Connor, who made a documentary about the Mississippi flag controversy.

### SPEAKER'S CORNER

- 44 **FM Mailbox:** Letters to the editor and The Flag Institute
- 45 **FM's flag matters** with Malcolm Farrow and Alan Hardy

### THE LONG READ

- 46 **Through difficulties to the stars:** Ian Sumner found proposals from a century ago for an ensign for the Royal Air Force

### ALSO NEED TO KNOW...

- 54 **FI Gazette:** news from the Flag Institute
- 56 **Flagmaster Specification Sheet:** State of Qatar

**OOPS...** In the article 'Chasing rainbows' in the previous edition of *Flagmaster* (Winter 2020), two captions were mistakenly transposed. The caption on top of the image on page 17 should read: Display of the Rainbow Peace Flag. The caption under the page 18 image should read: Display of the Progress Pride Flag.

### COMING IN FUTURE FLAGMASTERS

• Like the Flag Institute, the flags of Bangladesh and Papua New Guinea are also 50 • Flag history of North Macedonia • The Cross of Lorraine • Flag history of the Ionian Islands • A Belgian-German flag war • Plus all the regular features

## MASTHEAD

### Flagmaster

Vexillological magazine of the Flag Institute  
ISSN 0142-1271  
Vol. 51, No. 1. Issue 162, Summer 2021

Flag Institute members receive *Flagmaster* twice yearly (Summer and Winter).

### The Flag Institute

Founded by Dr William G. Crampton in April 1971, the Flag Institute is a UK charity (CIO 1152496) working to document, celebrate and promote flags in all their variety. Independent, inclusive and informed, the Flag Institute shares knowledge, opinion and ideas in person, in print and online. It publishes a twice-yearly, 48-page, full-colour journal *Flagmaster*; organises twice-yearly international conferences at different UK venues; runs the William Crampton Library, one of the world's leading flag research and documentation centres; and offers a unique free source of advice, information and guidance.

In the absence of a UK Flag Act, the Flag Institute forms the de facto authority on flags flown in the UK, its Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories, serving as adviser to the UK Government and UK Parliament. It promotes the creation and adoption of new community flags and maintains the UK Flag Registry as the official record of designs.

The Flag Institute is also proudly international in scope and outlook, with members from all six continents. It is a full member of the International Federation of Vexillological Associations (FIAV) and the three-time host of the biennial International Congress of Vexillology (ICV), most recently in London in 2017.

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### COVID-19 update

HQS Wellington and the William Crampton Library are closed until further notice. For any urgent enquiry, please contact the Flag Institute by email.

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*Flagmaster* 163 will be published in December 2021.

The *Flagmaster* team welcomes new contributions. The deadline for submissions is 31 October 2021. For a copy of the author guidelines, please contact the Chief Editor.



# The need for a Flag Institute

It is hard to believe that our Institute is now 50 years old, but it is very evident that we have most certainly come of age. From our modest but visionary beginnings in 1971, thanks to the enthusiasm and imagination of Dr William Crampton our illustrious founder, we now bestride the national vexillology scene with increasing impact. That we are able to achieve what we do is entirely due to the zeal and energy of our small core of volunteer members including our trustees and members of council. Indeed, the only limiting factor to our output is the time this small group has available to devote to the Institute's business and vexillological matters. We have enjoyed many successes to date and flags are undoubtedly more evident around the land than they were. Meanwhile we try to ensure flags are flown correctly and treated with respect, always mindful that we have no mandate and no formal authority. All that we achieve is through persuasion.

I am especially delighted with the strides we have made in developing the culture of community flags. All over England, and increasingly throughout Scotland and Wales too, we have facilitated the registration of flags for counties, cities, islands, regions, towns and villages. These flags are flown with pride by communities large and small and their continued development is something we very much encourage. Together they provide a new and colourful addition to our nation.

The need for symbols is embedded in our human DNA. The importance and significance of this is relevant in all corners of our cultural life for community cohesion, nation building and increasing our sense of common purpose. So, it is most encouraging to see more attention now being given to our flags by those in authority. I like to think the Flag Institute has played a part in this educational development and, with your help, it is something we will strive to continue doing for the next 50 years.

Malcolm Farrow OBE FF FFI  
*President Flag Institute*

# From Athelstaneford to Murrayfield

Malcolm Good

**Legend has it that the Scottish Saltire flag was 'born' in Athelstaneford, east of Edinburgh. Since 1965 that historic event has been marked with a memorial in the village churchyard. It is in urgent need of restoration. The Flag Heritage Centre, which runs the monument has started an appeal to raise £100,000 to pay for repair work.**

The last Scottish rugby victory on English soil came in 1983, one year before the Scottish Flag Trust was formed. The Trust was created to conserve a memorial which had been placed at the 'birthplace' of the St Andrew's cross, also commonly referred to as the Saltire, as Scotland's national flag. David Williamson, Chairman of the Trust, explained that the memorial was placed in the kirkyard of Athelstaneford Church to mark where a confederation of Picts and Scots were said to have defeated a force of Northumbrians led by Athelstan. As the present memorial states: 'Tradition says that near this place in times remote Pictish and Scottish warriors about to defeat an army of Northumbrians, saw against a blue sky a great white cross like Saint Andrew's, and in its image made a banner which became the flag of Scotland.' Attached to the memorial is a flag pole from which a St Andrew's cross is flown permanently, including the hours of darkness when it is floodlit.

Athelstaneford today is a quiet village which lies about twenty miles east of Edinburgh. It has a slightly elevated position that provides sweeping views across East Lothian to the Firth of Forth, including North Berwick Law. The Law is a volcanic plug which retains the scars of human habitation from as far back as the Iron Age. It remains an imposing part of the landscape, as imposing now as it no doubt was in 832 when the





*The Memorial viewed from the South.*

battle of Athelstaneford is thought to have taken place.

Prior to the battle, the leader of the Picts Angus mac Fergus prayed for divine intervention. His prayers were answered in the form of a St Andrew's cross which stretched across the sky and Angus vowed that if his forces won the day then Andrew would become the country's patron saint. The coalition of the Picts and the Scots did prevail and St Andrew became the patron saint of Scotland and his cross its national flag.

However, a lack of written material from this period in history has led to debates about when the battle took place and even in some instances whether there was a battle at all. There are though written references to the battle in the late medieval period even if there are differences between these accounts. For example, some have



*A fluttering St Andrew's cross.*

the cross of St Andrew appearing in the sky just prior to the battle, others have the cross appearing as part of a dream while some incorporate both versions with the cross formed of light and not from clouds as is often assumed. These though are not straightforward historical accounts, but have a degree of, as David puts it, 'political spin.' This is due to the desire of medieval Scottish scholars and historians to provide a religious narrative that aligned St Andrew and his symbols with an independent and unified Scottish Kingdom.

In more recent times, the battlefield site is noted on the first Ordinance Survey map of the region which dates from 1854 and refers to an area close to Athelstaneford as 'Bloody Side.' It even goes as far as to state where Athelstan was killed. Apparently the surveyors came to that conclusion after being informed by a local farmer of a



*Depiction of the battle scene as used on the original copper panel.*

two opposing forces, one submitting to the other under the cross of St Andrew. The plate was attached to a stone plinth but became badly weathered over the years. Despite the Trust's efforts to protect it by installing a Perspex cover, the East Lothian weather continued to take its toll and in 1993 it was removed and replaced with a



*The 16th Century Hepburn Doocot which houses the interpretative centre.*

granite stone on which the same image was depicted. The Trust also restored a nearby doocot and transformed it from its original purpose of housing pigeons to a visitor and information centre.

Christian long cist grave at that spot.

The original memorial to the battle and the genesis of Scotland's national flag was erected in 1965. It consisted of a copper plate etched with an image depicting the

two opposing forces, one submitting to the other under the cross of St Andrew. The plate was attached to a stone plinth but became badly weathered over the years. Despite the Trust's efforts to protect it by installing a Perspex cover, the East Lothian weather continued to take its toll and in 1993 it was removed and replaced with a

granite stone on which the same image was depicted. The Trust also restored a nearby doocot and transformed it from its original purpose of housing pigeons to a visitor and information centre.

The doocot, which dates from 1583, is now though once more in

improve access and interpretation across the site, saw the Trust launch an appeal to raise funds to carry out all the required work. As David puts it, 'this fresh investment will ensure that the site, which is of national importance, is maintained and can be enjoyed for many years to come.' The site itself in a normal non-Covid year attracts about 5,000 visitors from across the globe who, as the Lord Lyon, Dr Joe Morrow, says, 'have a tremendous attachment to Scotland's flag and its birthplace - Athelstaneford.'

That attachment to the St Andrew's cross is demonstrated by the number of requests the Trust receives to own a flag flown at Athelstaneford. Flags are replaced when weather-worn, usually three times per year, and there is also a wimpel which flies nearby and is normally replaced annually. However, anyone who wants one of these flags will have to join a waiting list, such is the demand.

The Trust also promotes standardising the use of the St Andrew's cross. This included input to Scottish Government guidelines that provide the flag's preferred dimensions and specify the shade of blue to be used, specifically Pantone 300u. This Pantone colour is a sky blue rather than the darker shades of blue which are sometimes seen. A navy blue is though used on the Union Flag, Pantone 280c, which stems from darker tones being preferred historically due to their being more durable and less susceptible to fading when used by ships for extended periods at sea.

Coming back to our rugby game. Next year's Scotland versus England international fixture will be played at Murrayfield in Edinburgh, the home of Scottish rugby. No doubt the cross of St Andrew will be on prominent display that day and some supporters might just think for a moment of the flag's origins in the quiet village of Athelstaneford before roaring on their team in what in what will be the 140th match between these two sides. □

**More information** on the plans to re-develop the Athelstaneford site can be found at <https://saltire.scot/>

Philip Tibbetts FFI  
Communities Vexillologist, The Flag Institute  
Honorary Vexillologist at the Court of the Lord Lyon



As we celebrate the Flag Institute's golden anniversary you will undoubtedly read elsewhere in this issue, or hear at one of the events we have throughout the coming year, of our great achievements over the past 50 years. For the most part I will leave these stories to those that have been around the Institute for longer than I, although I cannot help but admire the position we have found ourselves in as an adviser to the government and peoples of a nation.

In addition to this national success, the Flag Institute has been a positive influence on a personal level to many - not least of all to myself. The Flag Institute gave me a unique opportunity that has led me to some incredible experience - seeing not only parts of my country that I may not otherwise have done but seeing a different side to them than simply visiting as a tourist. My flag work has even seen me learn some Scots Gaelic, engage with Japanese

diplomats and, of course, work in a heraldic court.

So, what is it about the Flag Institute that enables it to achieve such institutional and personal successes? A significant element is of course the giants upon whose shoulders we are standing. I may never have met William Crampton but I feel his principles continuing to guide us to this day. Part of this is the willingness of the Flag Institute to encourage and even support our fellow volunteers. I owe a great debt to all the knowledge and wisdom that was given freely and abundantly over the last fourteen years.

After 50 years of such success the question now becomes what else is there to do and how can it be achieved. To begin with the first part of that question, vexillography is an incredibly broad field with many fronts to be expanded. I would encourage any new member to find their niche and

see how it can be advanced. In hindsight this is where my vexillological journey started, even if I did not know it at the time.

Perhaps the most important thing for the Institute and Individuals to keep in mind for the next fifty years is that whatever we do, we are giving service to our nation. Ultimately whatever successes we achieve for ourselves or for the Flag Institute, they are secondary to the ultimate benefit for the community we are supporting. Putting the needs of those we help before our own is key to our mission, principles, and future.

# Code Flag over H

'Heave to, I have something important to communicate'

Contributions from Malcolm Good, John Hall, Jos Poels and Ian Sumner

**England and Wales** (1) Recent changes in flag-flying rules and in the flag-flying behaviour of the Government have produced some controversy. The new rules are intended for UK Government buildings only, but local authorities and other organisations have been encouraged to follow suit.

The Union Flag should now be flown every day, rather than simply on a list of permitted days. Government buildings should fly the Union Flag if no other flag is being flown. The practice of 'dual flagging', flying two flags on the same flagpole is now



permitted without prior consent, providing one is the Union Flag. The new advice applies only in England and Wales. Scotland and Northern

Ireland each have their own flag-flying regime.

Meanwhile, the Union Flag is now invariably on display behind any government minister making an appearance on television. At the same time, some MPs proposed flying the Union Flag over hospitals and other National Health Service buildings as well. Another proposed flying the flag outside schools, and that anyone who opposed the suggestion should be 'educated' into thinking otherwise. Critics countered by saying that such overt displays were actually un-British, characterising the move either as unhealthy nationalism, post-Brexit insecurity or cynical politics.

**Antarctic Expedition** (2) In December of last year a sledge flag taken by Eric Marshall on the British Antarctic Expedition of 1907 was acquired by the Scott Polar Research Institute which forms part of the University of Cambridge. The expedition was led by Ernest Shackleton who along with Marshall, Jameson Adams and Frank Wild made it to within 97.5 miles of the South Pole, a then record furthest south. Marshall donated the flag in the 1950s to his former school, Monkton Combe in Bath, which placed it up for

an auction in February 2019. It was purchased initially by an overseas buyer but was deemed of national importance and a temporary export embargo was placed on it by the United Kingdom Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. This allowed the National Heritage Memorial Fund to facilitate its acquisition by the Institute which holds a number of flags flown in Antarctica, including the sledge flag taken by Shackleton on that same expedition.



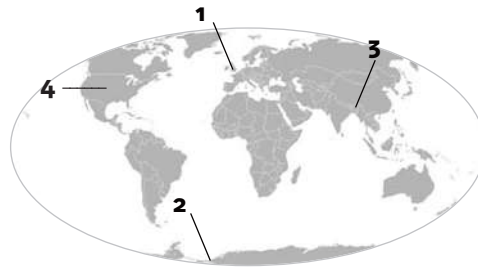
**Nagaland** (3) The legal acceptance of a flag and a constitution for Nagaland are proving to be major obstacles to a final peace agreement between the insurgents in this Indian state and the government in New Delhi. According to the Nagas, a flag and a constitution were promised by the Indian government in November 2015, when an agreement was signed to end the hostilities.



At the end of last year, and the beginning of this year, several reports appeared from supporters and opponents of both flag

and constitution, suggesting that the peace process has stopped due to disagreements about these symbols. New Delhi stands firm. The Indian government does not allow its states to fly any flag other than the national flag.

The Nagas are mainly Catholic and have not felt at home in the Hindu state since India's independence in 1948. They unilaterally declared independence on 14 August 1947, one day before India became independent. Since then, the Naga homeland in the mountainous area that borders > [continued page 10](#)



**US states adjust their flags** (4) After the new Mississippi state flag was approved in a referendum to coincide with the US presidential election in November 2020, it was officially inaugurated on 26 January this year. It replaces the flag containing a small Confederate battle flag, associated with the slavery past. Several other US states are following Mississippi in changing their flags, but their plans have different origins.

**South Carolina** has been working on a uniform shape of the palm tree for three years. In mid-March, the State Flag Study Committee sent two proposals



to the State House of Representatives, who will soon make their choice. South Carolina became the first southern state to secede from the United States in December 1860. The flag was adopted a month later.

In **Massachusetts** in January, Governor Charlie Baker created a committee to scrutinize the state's seal and motto. The results of the survey have repercussions for the flag of the state, since the seal is displayed on the flag.



The seal depicts a Native American holding an arrow in one hand and a bow in the other. Above the shield is an arm grasping a sword.

In mid-March this year, the **Maine** House of Representatives rejected a 2020 initiative bill by Republican Sean Paulhus to restore the state's first flag. That flag was adopted in 1901, but was replaced eight years later by the current blue flag bearing the state's coat of arms. According to Paulhus, the 1901 flag was much more beautiful and striking than the

current one. The flag bore a large, green pine tree, the symbol of New England, on a buff field. In the canton was a blue five-pointed star, representing the North Star.



**Utah** has a blue flag defaced with the coat of arms in the centre. This flag which dates from the beginning of the previous century, is continually criticised as a boring design, difficult to distinguish from other American blue state flags with arms or seals. In February 2018, the Organization for a New Utah Flag was established to promote a new flag for the state.



The House of Representatives and the Senate agreed in March to make this flag promoted by the Organization for a new Utah Flag the commemorative flag for Utah's 125th anniversary as a US state. The flag has five parts, which represent the five Indian tribes, the original Utah inhabitants. The yellow beehive in the blue disk represents Utah, which is known as the beehive state. The white star is a reminder that Utah joined the United States in 1896.

The blue in the flag represents the Great Salt Lake located in Utah. The white recalls the snow-capped peaks of the Rocky Mountains, and the red - Utah Red - represents the red rocks found in the national parks in the south of the state.

# Code Flag over H

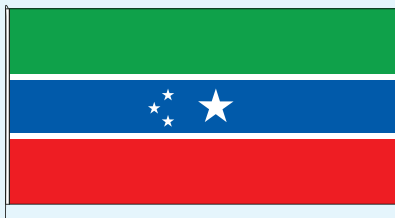


'Heave to, I have something important to communicate'

Myanmar has been restless. Nagaland became the sixteenth Indian state on 1 May 1963.

The flag proposed for Nagaland is blue with a white six-pointed star of Bethlehem in the top left corner. A red-yellow-green rainbow rises from the bottom left corner to the top right corner. This flag was first hoisted in Parashen, north of Kohima, on 22 March 1956. The flag is seen as a gift from God. The blue represents the sky over Nagaland, the star of Bethlehem is a reminder of the Nagas' beliefs, while the rainbow represents hope.

**Sidama** (5) became Ethiopia's tenth regional state on 18 June last year. On that day, the flag was hoisted



for the first time in the state capital Awassa, alongside the Ethiopian flag. Sidama was created from the regional state of

Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, a mixture of dozens of peoples.

The new administration of Sidama rejected the flag previously used by the population in demonstrations to express their desire for their own state. That flag consisted of bands of green, blue and red with a circle with five stars placed on the blue central stripe (See *Vlag!* 25, page 6). The new flag retains the colours and one of the stars.

According to the scant information about the Sidama flag that has appeared, the green stripe represents the state's lush vegetation. The blue central stripe represents *Halale*, the 'true way of life', the centre of the Sidama social system, as well as astronomical knowledge and the connection with the sky. The stars are in the middle of the sky. The white lines above and below the blue indicate that Sidama is a large and peaceful people. The red stripe is a reminder that the area was sacrificed for centuries and

is now a region of freedom. The large central star indicates the position of the *Songo*, the council of elders, where any problems are solved peacefully. The white of the star signifies Hope - far away when a star is small, but close when the star is large.

**Head of Chechnya** (6) Decree 53 of 23 March

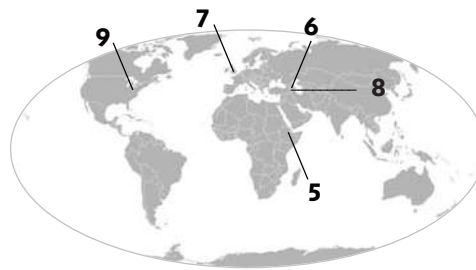
2020 created a new standard for the Head, formerly called President, of the Chechen Republic. Chechnya is situated in the Caucasus and is part of the Russian Federation.

Appendix 1 of the decree describes a horizontal tricolour in the proportions 6:1:4 green over white over red. Along the hoist is a white stripe, one eighth of the overall length, containing the Chechnya national symbol in yellow.



The shades of all colours being as per the republic's national flag. Overall, in full colour is a copy of the national arms. A black and white drawing is produced in Appendix 2 of the decree.

The decree not just creates a design, but authorises the creation of a single specific standard, to be housed in the presidential office. This standard will be the symbol of the authority of the Head of the Chechnya Republic. This standard is to be presented to the Head of the Republic as he assumes office (in a similar way to presidential sashes are passed over in South America). This standard is specified as having a gold fringe, a gold spearhead finial and a gold plaque engraved with the full name and dates of tenure of the office holder (it is implied but not specified, that each succeeding holder will add an additional plaque). The decree further authorises duplicates of the standard, presumably without the accoutrements, to be flown from buildings and cars used by the Head of the Republic to signify their presence.



**Elstree and Borehamwood** (7) Last December, the winner of the competition to design a flag for Elstree and Borehamwood Town Council in Hertfordshire, England, was 11-year-old Lily Saron. The twin town is famous for the Elstree Film Studios.

The green and yellow background of the flag reflect the colours of the fields and woods where Lily Saron lives. The black silhouette of a tree also refers to the local natural environment.



The judges who shortlisted Lily's design noted that the tree also can be seen as referring to elements in the names of both Elstree and Borehamwood. Elstree is derived from a Saxon personal name, and means 'Tidwulf's tree'. Borehamwood comes from the old English term for a farm on a wooded ridge. The golden crown in the tree is that of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia, in which Elstree and Borehamwood was once situated.

**Artsakh** (8) The flag of the so-called Republic of Artsakh is still flying, but on reduced territory. Between September and November 2020, Azerbaijan used



military force to try and recapture the territory also known as Nagorno-Karabakh. With help

from Russia a cease fire agreement was agreed on 9 November.

Artsakh - the name became official in 2017 - is one of several frozen conflicts, resulting from the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Under the

Soviets, Christian Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh was an autonomous enclave within the largely Moslem Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic.

During the dissolution for the Soviet Union, Nagorno-Karabakh unilaterally declared its independence on 2 September 1991. But its independence is only recognised by Armenia. The flag of Artsakh was adopted on 2 June 1992. It is a copy of the Armenian red, blue and orange tricolour. In its fly end it shows a white five-toothed stepped V-pattern, pointing towards the hoist. This is a stylized formation of cranes suggesting flying westwards towards their Armenian homeland. The movement urging for union with Armenia in 1992 was called *Krunk*, Armenian for crane.

**United Nations** (9) On 20 November 2020, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres issued a revised edition of the Flag Code for the organisation. The revised Flag Code (UN Document ST/SGB/2020/4) consolidates the previously separate Flag Code and Flag Regulations into a single document, and it regulates the use of the UN flag.

The UN flag was adopted on 20 October 1947 by the General Assembly. Its design is described in Article 1.1 of the United Nations Flag Code as: 'The United Nations flag shall display the official emblem of the United Nations in white on a light blue background (colour code: Pantone Matching System 2925). The United Nations emblem shall in all cases be one half of the hoist (width) of the flag and entirely centred.'



The dimensions of the flag may vary to fit with local traditions. Article 1.5 states: 'The flag shall be made of nylon or another quality non-absorbent material.' □

## Lord Lyon King of Arms

Dr Joseph J Morrow CBE QC FRSE is the Right Honourable Lord Lyon King of Arms and, as such, heads the Court of the Lord Lyon, which regulates heraldry and heraldic flags in Scotland. The Court is governed by various Acts of Parliament, and in particular the Lord Lyon King of Arms Act 1867.

**T**he office of Lord Lyon in the history of Scotland dates back as far as the Celtic period when the King's Poet, or High Seanchaidh, recited the genealogy of the King of Scots at his coronation. Flags and other ensigns have long been part of the established responsibilities of the Lord Lyon, and the design of these flags and their recording within the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland are part of his duties.

Dr Morrow was responsible for appointing Philip Tibbetts as the first Honorary Vexillologist to the Court of the Lord Lyon, in time to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Flag Institute.

### **Q: What made the Lyon Court go ahead with community flags and with competitions in particular?**

When I took up the office of Lord Lyon in 2014, I was very keen to engage with the wider community of Scotland the Scottish diaspora. I was also committed to bringing the whole aspect of heraldry in Scotland into the 21st century and to engage with individual communities at every level. For me, Scottish heraldry in its broader sense, including flags, is the 'garden' of Scottish history and, if it does not maintain community support, then we cannot speak to its power in our own generation. The visual symbols, colours and messages of flags create a strong sense of pride and belonging within communities.

For centuries, the Lord Lyon has had very particular discretionary powers, which have again recently been upheld by the Court of Session, Scotland's supreme civil court, and this breadth seems to encourage local involvement in the creation of community flags. It is through the efforts of our Honorary Vexillologist that the introduction of competitions for the design of community flags has been such a success in Scotland.

### **Q: How were the Community flag competitions organised?**

In those areas where groups got together to petition for a flag, sometimes over 300 designs were submitted from children in school to individuals in Scotland and overseas. For the County of Caithness, flag designs were submitted all the way from Brazil right through to Wick, the county town of Caithness. This is an exciting development and bears witness to the engagement with the flags by individuals at every level in Scotland and beyond. The main issue for me as Lord Lyon is that, when we come down to a vote by the people to take ownership of their own flag, the proposed flags should comply with traditional heraldic rules regarding tincture and design. This has been achieved in every competition that we have held and has provided a lively and living sense of heraldry and flags to those involved.



*"I have been as active as I could be in working with and encouraging communities in choosing their flag."*

PHOTO: LORD LYON'S OFFICE, Image editing Theun Okkerse

**Q: Why is it important to include communities to make decisions around their flags, and to what extent does the Lord Lyon like to be engaged with the communities?**

As mentioned, the two most powerful community drivers behind the flag movement are community pride and belonging. This is because many of those who seek to have a sign or symbol within a flag to represent their community are the people who strive to make it a better place to live in. The mobilisation of that local initiative of service, as focused around a symbol of pride and belonging such as a community flag, is essential to empowering a community to develop its sense of worth and direction. As Lord Lyon, I have been as active as I could be in working with and encouraging communities in choosing their flag. Sometimes I have been involved from the shortlisting through to the voting stage, while at other times my input has been limited to the final stage of the competition, when I was asked to ensure that the submitted flags conformed to the principles of heraldic design.

What I have found exciting is the role which our Honorary Vexillologist Mr Philip Tibbetts has taken, through promotion of heraldry and flag design within our schools and local communities.

**Q: How do efforts on flags reflect on the Lyon Court and the perception of heraldry in Scotland?**

Flags in various forms have always been granted by the Lord Lyon, and have therefore been regarded as part of the broader heraldic tradition within Scotland. It is therefore a significant aspect of the work of the Court of

the Lord Lyon to regulate, promote, educate and encourage best practice in the use of flags. Through the competitions to create community flags, an increasing number of people are now aware of heraldry within Scotland and of the work of the Court of the Lord Lyon. I regard this as a vital move in engaging with 21st century Scotland and promoting our great tradition of heraldry.

**Q: Given the long-held position by the College of Arms in England of not being able to grant arms to non-legal entities such as communities, how did the Lord Lyon find a way to do this?**

It will be no surprise to those who know Lyon Court that the approach taken by Scottish heraldry is firmly based on matters of jurisdiction which are well founded in law. The Court of the Lord Lyon is governed by both Scots law and the established practice of the Court itself. The question of jurisdiction is the first question which the Lord Lyon requires to answer in the affirmative before accepting a petition for a grant of arms or, for that matter, any form of ensigns armorial. It has long been the practice within the Lyon Court that petitions may, for example, be accepted in the name of individuals "for and on behalf of a community". Many of the community flags have been granted through the existence of community councils or through the Lord Lieutenant or other organisations representing the people in the broadest sense. In Volume 1 of the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland, the national flag of Scotland, namely the Saltire, has been recorded for and on behalf of the people of Scotland. This is the approach taken by the Lyon Court with regard to accepting jurisdiction for communities who wish to have their own flag and the legal entity which may be entitled to the grant of a community flag could consist of a number of individuals; a community council or the Lord Lieutenant for and on behalf of a community.

**Q: Could you comment on ecclesiastical flags, particularly Diocesan flags in Scotland?**

At present, the Church of Scotland is the principal church in Scotland. However there are two other

churches which have Diocesan structures, namely the Roman Catholic Church and the Scottish Episcopal Church. The latter has seven Dioceses, most of which have recorded arms and some have assumed arms. The Roman Catholic Church has two Archdioceses and six Dioceses, all of which have recorded arms.

I have recently had an approach from a Diocese to look at the separate grant of a Diocesan flag, however under the rules of Scots heraldry any owner of a coat of arms is entitled to use the shield and make this into a flag for their use. This practice is well trodden in Scots heraldry and I have been very privileged, for example, to take part in the presentation of new arms to the City of Glasgow College, who also chose to create a flag from their Coat of Arms.

The answer to this question is therefore that those Dioceses with recorded arms can simply expand the contents of their shield within the coat of arms onto a flag to display and use.

**Q: What are your views on the nature of the dynamic relationship between heraldry and vexillology, and does the Flag Institute have a role to play in this?**

I have always tried to promote and encourage cordial relationships between the Flag Institute and the Court of the Lord Lyon, and the appointment of the Honorary Vexillologist, who is also the Community Vexillologist of the Flag Institute, has helped in this regard. I think that by working together we can best promote these matters of mutual interest and, while we must never forget our own interests and responsibilities, we can do some constructive and innovative work to promote our common objectives.

There is great potential for such collaborative work, including design and 21st century approaches to flag usage. Over the last few years, the relationship between the Honorary Vexillologist to the Lyon Court and the Flag Institute has allowed this to develop. I would firmly say that I am delighted to work with the Flag Institute, subject to that work remaining within the laws of Scots heraldry, which are part and parcel of our traditions. □

# Q

**The  
on-line  
question:**

**Politician office flag  
backdrops - unpatriotic  
empty symbolism or love  
for one's country?**

Take part in the discussion on the  
Flag Institute's Facebook page:  
[www.facebook.com/FlagInstitute](http://www.facebook.com/FlagInstitute)



# The Flag Institute 1971-2021



John Hall FFI FF, chairman Flag Institute

**I am certainly not the oldest member of the Flag Institute, nor the longest serving member, but as the Council of the Institute convened to discuss what to do about the 50th anniversary of the Institute and came up with the bright idea of writing a history, I discovered I had the lowest membership number amongst those present. So, somehow, as my back was turned, it was voted that I should write a history of the Institute. There are many ways this could have been done. A chronology, or a bus timetable of events and personalities; a regurgitation of 50 years of AGMs and council minutes,' but in the end I have chosen a more personal reflection spiced with a few anecdotes and insights along the way. They are naturally from a personal perspective and as in the art of any good story telling, maybe a little out of sequence, and with the odd illustrations polished a little, in the hope of making a point.**

Throughout its history the Institute has had its cast of major players: William Crampton, Ted Barraclough, Michael Faul, Graham Bartram, Malcolm Farrow, Robin Ashburner, Bruce Nicholls, Hugh Witherow, Doug Southern, Geoff Parsons, Charles Ashburner, Ian Sumner, Maggie Sumner, Barrie Kent, Kath Kearney, Leigh Wetherall – to name but a few, all of whom in their time have had a major influence in its shaping, as well as those of us with humbler bit parts. Together their

time and energy has been generous to the Institute and without them the Institute would not be as it is. To all, we are grateful, I hope as we go along to name a goodly number, if somebody is missed, I take the responsibility solely to myself and ask your forgiveness. As I say this is a personal account and not everyone's great works are always visible to others.

## Overture and Beginners

In starting this article, I am reminded of an essay assignment in seminary which asked the apparently simple question, 'When did the Church of England begin?' Well in vexillology, as in theology, answers are not always as simple as first thought. Yes, with good cause we claim the Golden Jubilee of the Flag Institute's foundation in 1971, but in many ways this was but an inevitable staging post on the road of British vexillology. The phrase 'standing on the shoulders of giants' comes to mind. Can we really say that 'Vexio-Albion' sprung, whole, complete and in fullness, out of the mind of Dr William Crampton one spring morning on 23 April 1971 (to misquote Archbishop Ussher, 'at 9 o'clock in the morning')? The Flag Institute may well have been the inevitable conclusion, but British vexillology existed way before that date.

Would it be legitimate to begin the story of the



William Crampton in 1981.

Flag Institute with its precursor the Flag Section of the Heraldry Society? Or the moment the toddler William Crampton was attracted to pretty coloured pictures in Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopaedia* in the 1940s? Or what about the Flag Circle of Louis Mountbatten, Walter Perrin and Edward Barraclough in the 1920s? Or Hulme's publication of *Flags of the World* in 1897? Or Samuel Pepys, obviously interested in the reform of flag use as Chief Secretary of the Navy in the 1660s? Or Sir Richard and Sir Henry St George, the father-and-son team of heralds who studied flags in preparation for the creation of the Union Jack in 1606? Or the medieval heralds creating the crosses of St George and St Andrew? Or in the mind of the Roman standard-bearer who threw his vexillum onto British soil to encourage Julius Caesar's men to disembark in 55BC? Or dare we even say, the unknown caveman and his planting of a deer-skin marker to signal 'I was here'?

So wherever we start the story of British vexillology, it feels somewhat arbitrary, but as we are celebrating the Institute's Golden Jubilee, let us start with its founder and first Director, William Crampton. William was born on 5 May 1936.<sup>2</sup> A graduate of the London School of Economics, he was to become a lecturer at Gravesend Technical College (now part of North Kent College), then at a college in Ghana, and finally a local adult education organiser for the Workers' Educational Association.

When quizzed about the beginnings of his interest in flags he would often reply that it was like being

asked when he had started breathing, for he could never remember a time when he wasn't interested in flags. At the age of fourteen however he had realised that flags change, new ones appear while old ones disappear,<sup>3</sup> and so began his lifelong thirst for flag knowledge and his scouring of libraries and bookshops for flag books and information.

In 1963, he 'discovered' Whitney Smith, described as the 'Father of the international vexillological movement' and entered into correspondence with him. By 1967 he was able to organise a meeting in London between the two of them, and Captain Ted Barraclough, then editor of the standard British reference book *Flags of the World*. Out of this meeting William became active in the Flag Section of the Heraldry Society, editing its magazine when it was introduced in 1969. Tension however grew (in, I am sure, a very gentlemanly way) between the heralds and the vexillologists, in their respective understanding of the nature of flags. Were they, as the heralds believed, merely an expression of heraldry, bound to and by the rules of heraldry and by extension, by the College of Arms? Or were they a separate if related branch of symbolism?<sup>4</sup> The party lines between the Heraldry Society and its Flag Section drew further and further apart, until in 1971 William crossed the heraldic Rubicon and the Flag Institute was born. William was appointed as its first director, and Ted Barraclough as its first chairman. The Flag Section newsletter became the Institute's journal *Flagmaster*. And later in the year at the Fourth



*Camberley 1989: some of the attendees, including William Crampton, John Hall, John Ford, Paul Wason, David Lister, Brian Leigh Davis, Robin Ashburner and Malcolm Farrow.*

International Congress of Vexillology in Turin, the Flag Institute joined FIAV and successfully proposed that the 1973 Congress be held in London. The Flag Institute was born...

The Flag Institute itself was based in William's home in Chester, first in Newton Lane, and later in Vicarage Road. The entire ground floor of these large Victorian townhouses comprised two Flag Rooms containing William's collection, made up of books and other resources, all of which he had collected or had obtained by begging, borrowing (and, I would not be surprised, stealing... in the broadest sense of the word of course!) from contacts around the world. Remember this was pre-internet days, and information and documents were only available through the laborious trial and error of writing to people. Indeed, that was the prime reason he was so keen on the organisation being known as 'The Flag Institute', rather than as a club or society or association. An institute, he believed, had a certain gravitas and gave an authoritative look and sound to a letterhead when asking for information.

So began an era of letter-writing to authorities and organisations about their flags, sometimes eliciting a plethora of information and gifts, but at other times receiving no answer at all. On one memorable occasion he proudly announced he had represented the Institute at an Independence Day anniversary celebration for the Government in Exile of the Republic of South Moluccas, brandishing photos of him standing next to the President, and for a number of years afterwards a large South Moluccas flag hung



*Canterbury 1990: Michael Faul, John Ford and John Hall in deep discussion.*

in his house. It seems the poor South Moluccans had fallen hook, line and sinker for William's ruse about the Institute, and had assumed he was some kind of Government or Royal appointee, and his attendance somehow revealed Britain's favour towards them.

Occasionally this sleight of hand led him into trouble. He often told the story of how in trying to find out about British regimental flags, he simply decided to write to every Regimental Colonel in the British Army. A few weeks later came a knock on his door from two officers from Special Branch. Apparently they spent a couple of hours with him in the Flag Room, learning about flags, and enjoying William's wonderful tea and cake. My guess is afterwards he was simply listed in the 'harmless' files of MI5 (it is with a certain irony that in later years the Flag Institute was involved in the creation of an MI5 flag).

It would also have been around this time too, he developed the maxim, never ever trust what any embassy might say about their own national flag, with some replies either simply not received, or others enclosing blatantly incorrect information. In one case, a document he himself had written was presented to him as the authoritative document to answer his question.

His information-gathering took him on many strange adventures. He spent a long sabbatical studying for his PhD in East Germany, and loved to tell long shaggy dog stories of visiting national institutions to get flag information related to his interest in the German national *Flaggenstreit* (a famous anecdote recounted



*Chatham 1992: inside The Flag Loft.*

how he had visited the headquarters of the Nationale Volksarmee to photograph flags, only to be misdirected into a room with lots of soldiers in gold braid moving little Soviet and Warsaw Pact flags around a big table map of Western Europe).

It was this love of the shaggy dog story, told with a twinkle in his eye, that both endeared him to some and infuriated others. During his visit to San Antonio in 1992 to mark the 25th anniversary of the foundation of NAVA, he concocted a story that amongst the items rescued from the fire at Windsor Castle earlier that year had been written evidence of a previously forgotten English colony along the American West Coast. He claimed two settlements had been founded by Sir Francis Drake, namely the City of the Queen of the Angles (i.e. Los Angeles) and Francis Town (San Francisco). So, just as the New England colonies had flown the St George with a pine tree in the canton, this Western colony had flown a St George Cross with a bear in the canton... He then went on to 'prove' the story by suggesting the present-day California flag was in fact originally a remnant of an old colonial flag, where everything but the canton and a small piece of the red cross had rotted away. The story was met with a mixture of awe, intrigue and good humour as the listeners cottoned on. As the weekend continued, the saga was exaggerated and lengthened as his imagination added yet more layers.

So, you might imagine therefore with this foundation, the Institute had a certain feel of a club for eccentrics. It met twice a year - once in London, based in Astor College, just off Tottenham Court Road, and secondly

in various locations around the country. The meetings normally involving a day of socialising and lectures, followed by an evening meal and a Sunday morning visit to an institution or museum, often with privileged access to flag-related materials.

Members of the Institute from the start included David Thomas, a director of Zephyr Flags, for many years the Institute's Treasurer; David Lister, a solicitor from Grimsby, the second Chairman, who was also a leading light in the world of origami; Norman Logan, the Heraldic Advisor, a medical doctor from Scotland, a staunch Scottish Nationalist before it became fashionable, and an expert of Scottish heraldry, but perhaps most famous for always wearing a kilt. Later Bruce Nicholls, a retired Naval officer and expert on all things nautical, become Membership Secretary and added an otherwise scarce professionalism to the organisation. John Simmonds, the Director of River Mill Flags, would take over as Treasurer from David Thomas.

Much time at these meetings was devoted to William's dream project - the ultimate informative and authoritative book on British flags, containing absolutely all information on all possible British flags, totally up-to-date and totally accurate. This of course revealed William's other side, an eye for absolute detail, which meant nothing was ever quite ready. Occasionally we got within sight of a finishing line, but he would change his mind about presentation or style, and the whole thing would start all over again... The guide would eventually appear, created in 2004 by Graham Bartram, seven years after William's death, and the Institute's first great publishing endeavour.

It was almost inevitable that in such a small environment as vexillology in the 1970s that the two great English-speaking master vexillologists William Crampton and Whitney Smith, both with such differing opinions and backgrounds, both looking to be full-time vexillologists in a world that had hardly room for one such post, should move away from cooperation to rivalry and commercial competition.

It was at this time that a certain young individual, who still possessed hair, joined the ranks of these eccentric vexillologists, attending his first meeting at Astor

College one Sunday morning in November 1983. My mum would not let me go for the whole weekend, so I could only attend the AGM in the morning, and had to return after the Institute's visit to the National Army Museum in the afternoon. I entered the college building and was directed to the library, expecting to find a vast array of grey-haired world vexillologists on high tables in academic gowns. I was confronted with what I have described above... Welcome to the world of vexillology!

In 1995, after ten years of part-time study William was awarded his long-worked-for PhD from the University of Manchester, for a thesis entitled *Flags as Non-Verbal Symbols in the Management of National Identity*. He used the example of Germany, and to a lesser extent South Africa, to show how a choice of national colours was used to project a political understanding of nationhood. His was only the third PhD thesis on a vexillological topic, after Ottfried Neubecker's *Das deutsche Wappen 1806-1871* (University of Berlin, 1931) and Whitney Smith's thesis, *Prolegomena to the Study of Political Symbolism* (Boston University, 1968). In many ways this was the height of William's prestige and authority as a vexillologist on the world stage: he was President of FIAV, a prolific author in what was a Golden Age of flag

*York 1993: some of the attendees, including Bruce Nicholls, Robin Ashburner, William Crampton, Paul Wason, David Lister and John Hall.*



Flagmaster 162, Summer 2021 | In Home Waters

books before the dawn of the internet, a renowned expert, and a respected authority. He was the go-to man for media interest in flags, and the source of advice to a number of Government departments and international bodies.

By now, however his health was beginning to fail. His last hurrah was at the Institute's meeting held on 17 May 1997 at St John's College, Durham. After a particular 'well entertained' evening at the Royal County Hotel in Durham, William spent a long evening at my home talking about flags... and the meaning of life. After he had gone to bed, my wife, a senior nurse specialising in palliative care, said to me, 'You do know how ill he is don't you? You don't have that medication unless it's near the end...' After seeing him off the next morning from the station, it was perhaps no great surprise to hear that he passed away a mere eighteen days later.

The funeral took place in Chester Crematorium attended by family, friends and vexillologists from around the world. In a kind of stunned silence Britain's vexillologists gathered just outside the kitchen door of William's home in Vicarage Road, Chester and heard the Institute's president Robin Ashburner say the immortal words, 'Well, if we are to continue we must say the King is dead, long live the Republic'.

## The Second Phase

It was a hard time - the Institute had been William Crampton, and William Crampton had been the Institute. Many of our colleagues across the seas naturally assumed that British vexillology was now dead, for how could it survive his death? There was no obvious successor. Even the Institute's library and facilities had been William's private possessions, and since they were a major asset in his estate, delicate discussions would need to take place with his family. Luckily it seems nature abhors a vacuum and very quickly four members of the Council rose to the occasion: Robin Ashburner, the Institute's Honorary President; Michael Faul, the newly appointed editor of *Flagmaster*; Hugh Witherow, the newly-appointed General Secretary and Graham Bartram the soon-to-be Chief Vexillologist. These four had very different



Hull 2003: Michael Faul, Graham Bartram and David Lister at the opening of the FI Library

Birmingham 2013: West Indian veterans display their associations' standards.



personalities and skill sets, yet somehow managed to transform the potentially moribund Institute from a one man band (without the man), to a more collegiate-style organisation.

Robin Ashburner was the managing director of a Welsh flag manufacturer, whose family has flagmaking in their blood. It's not an unfair comment that Robin is one of those larger-than-life characters, a giant in both stature and flamboyant personality. In many ways he was the driving force and strategist for the next stage of the Institute's life, mostly through sheer force of personality, and a laugh that would echo down the phone from the moment somebody answered. He was determined that the Flag Institute should thrive, and that it should have a strong media presence: 'if we have not been quoted on the news for a month I'll phone the BBC myself and find out why the bloody hell not'.

Michael Faul, a retired ex-Rhodesian public schoolmaster, was the Membership Secretary and the new Editor. He was probably the world's leading expert on African flags and second only to William in his encyclopaedic knowledge of flags - as his infamous quizzes at Institute meetings would prove. Michael provided the intellectual and multilingual vexillological skills that the Institute needed (he spoke near a dozen languages fluently and had a jolly good stab at perhaps another dozen), and was a regular and well-known attendee at national and international vexillological gatherings,<sup>5</sup> filling the gap caused by the loss of William. A sharp wit and quick with his anecdotes of life, such as the time he had arrested King Leka, the pretender to the throne of Albania, for gun-smuggling on the Zimbabwe border... And like

William, he loved a shaggy dog story.

Graham Bartram, like Michael, was a product of an African childhood, this time in Ghana rather than Zimbabwe. He had been much influenced by Ghana's independence, occurring during his family's sojourn there. Graham witnessed the creation of a new national flag, taken rapidly to heart by the citizens of the newly independent state. He also remembered the sudden influx of new embassies opening up around his home, each flying a different flag. As a young Scottish patriot at heart, he was immediately surprised that Scotland did not have its own embassy: a problem quickly resolved by his mother's skill in sewing a saltire, and his painting of a sign on their front door, announcing the residence of the Scottish Ambassador... no doubt to the amusement of the Soviet diplomats in the embassy opposite. As he grew up this interest in flags had waned (as if such a heresy could happen to a Chief Vexillologist!), but it was reawakened through his introduction to William Crampton. As an IT graphics consultant, Graham was working on a newfangled CD-Rom *3D Atlas*, published by Electronic Arts. He had the brilliant idea of including the national flags of each country as a clickable resource. The idea grew like Topsy and this soon expanded to include states and provinces, districts and towns. Graham's imagination went wild and the need to fill the data space loomed... He worked with William to transform the Institute's meticulously drawn paper images into vector images for digital use, correcting and improving as he went along. He quickly established himself as the go-to man to supply and design artwork, which soon led onto a role of advising and designing flags for major events and organisations.<sup>6</sup>

Robin, Michael and Graham were held together and marshalled to achieve their full potential by the superb organisational skills of Hugh Witherow, the General Secretary. A retired Squadron Leader in the RAF Regiment, Hugh held it all together and transformed great expectations into practical realities.

So began what might be considered the second phase of the Institute. Membership numbers began to grow, *Flagmaster* was produced regularly and developed into a full-colour production, meetings took place twice a year, often at the St John's Ambulance County Headquarters in Stevenage in the winter and elsewhere around the country in the summer. Robin also introduced an annual weekend abroad, mostly to France,<sup>7</sup> often visiting the Breton society, who were always most hospitable.

At this time the world witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union and her client states. Suddenly flags were on the news, and designing flags became an important skill. As red stars began to lose their lustre, the hunt for new national symbols began, sometimes looking towards to past glories but often starting afresh. To make matters worse, these were often not one-off changes but incremental developments. Turkmenistan, for example, went through three nearly, but not quite, identical versions of its national flag in the 1990s. Ethiopia went through eight! Each needed to be documented and the artwork produced.<sup>8</sup>

Naturally therefore, Graham began to inherit some of William's projects. The by-now infamous *British Flags and Emblems* book, so cherished by William over the previous twenty years, landed on his lap with a thud! However, thanks to the combination of Graham's graphics skills, Robin's persistence, and the profits from the 2001 ICV in York looking for a good investment, the long-anticipated book was finally published by the Institute in 2004.

Soon afterwards the venerable BR20 *Flags of All Nations*, the Ministry of Defence's definitive work on national flags, was also under Graham's care. Along with it came what Graham describes as the 'Great Sorting Out'. Unbeknown to the powers that be, Britain underwent probably the most sweeping reform and rationalisation of its flags since the days of Samuel

Pepys (I wonder if Graham will publish his diary? I would love to know where he hides his cheese). Ensigns were standardised, the 'Victorian virus' of white disks<sup>9</sup> was abolished, allowing their tiny badges

**What did not change was its content...**

1969, Heraldry Society Flag Section Newsletter

1971, Flagmaster

1977, Flag Institute Bulletin

1978, Flagmaster

1983, Flagmaster

1995, Flagmaster: A Year to Remember Part Two: War in Asia

1998, Flagmaster: English County Flags

2005, Flagmaster: After 50 Years, A New Design for Europe

2020, Flagmaster 160

2020, FIAV's new President Zeljko Heimer, Blue Ensign for Welsh Fisheries, Origins and meaning North Korean flag



London 2016: attendees including Tom Randall, John Gale, Philip Thompson, Lesley Ross, Philip Tibbetts and Kath Kearney.



Manchester 2019: attendees, including Al Cooper and Hannah Patton, learn about the restoration of flags in the People's History Museum's studio.

to be enlarged and finally made visible. Colonial Governors' flags were standardised.<sup>10</sup> The Flag Institute was no longer just reporting and recording designs but was fast becoming the authoritative voice on correct design. The forerunner of the UK Flag Registry was developing.

At the same time, flags had begun to loom larger in the UK's national consciousness. In 1996 England hosted the European Football Championships, reaching the semi-finals.<sup>11</sup> For the first time flags of St George (previously the preserve of vicars on their church towers and of right-wing nationalists) bedecked England's houses and cars - a scene to be repeated in 2002 when the World Cup<sup>12</sup> coincided with the Queen's Golden Jubilee. For a whole month England was festooned with St George crosses for the football, rapidly replaced by Union Jacks for the Jubilee. This sudden interest in flags touched all the home nations. In 1997 Tony Blair and the Labour Party swept to power in a landslide election and began a wholesale process of constitutional reform. Devolution gave power to the governments of the home nations, each eager to display its national flag. The devolved governments looked for help in codifying and clarifying the use of their flags and it was the Flag Institute they approached - Robin Ashburner in Wales and Graham Bartram in Scotland.

In 1997 only the English counties of Cornwall and Northumbria (at opposite ends of the Kingdom) used any form of county flag. Today in 2021 only Leicestershire remains flagless, and even there progress is being made. The majority of Welsh

counties and a good number of Scottish counties also have their own flags, along with some more 'regional' or 'cultural' flags such as those of the Black Country, the Fenlands, Wessex, Exmoor and East Anglia. And rather than expensive one-off sewn flags flown purely on town halls, they are often readily and cheaply available in flag and sticker and even teddy bear form! It has been a tremendous piece of work carried out by Graham as Chief Vexillologist and later by Philip Tibbetts, appointed Community Vexillologist to spearhead this movement. Philip often travelled around the country, talking flags and encouraging local areas to develop their ideas. Since 2008 all the flags are entered by the Flag Institute on its UK Flag Register, now seen as the authoritative list of community flags.<sup>13</sup> Partially in recognition of this great work Phillip was appointed Honorary Vexillologist to the Court of the Lord Lyon in 2019. As far as we are aware, he is the first and only state-appointed Vexillologist in the world.

Under Michael Faul's editorship, *Flagmaster* grew in both quality and quantity. Michael was fully dedicated to its regular production, and slowly and steadily the Institute increased the number of pages per issue and the quality and number of colour pages, until in 1998 it became the first vexillological society to publish a magazine in full colour.

With the growing recognition of the Institute as the authoritative source for flag information, an authority increasingly used not just by flagmakers and historians, but by diplomatic and government agencies, the Council realised the need to support its



ICV 10, London 1973

authority with a library of vexillological resources. At William's death, he had left the vast bulk of his papers and books to the Flag Institute. But this needed delicate handling, for it was not abundantly clear what had belonged to William, and what had actually belonged to the Institute all along. In his lifetime it had made little difference; but in the world of probate, inheritance tax and liability, such questions needed an urgent answer. Additionally William's family rightly desired vacant possession of his house. As the song almost goes, 'How do you solve a problem like..... several hundred packing cases needing immediate removal and storage?'

So in a scene not un-reminiscent of the Ark of the Covenant being temporarily housed in locations around the Promised Land, the library was stored in various lock-ups and outbuildings as members made space to be available for a limited time. The Council was eager to keep it as a whole and accessible to vexillologists both nationally and internationally. One location after another was discussed and explored, until a vacant room in the James Reckitt Branch Library in Hull was discovered by Council member and Librarian, Ian Sumner.

The location was not only affordable, but was set in a city with a long maritime tradition, including many of its own flags and institutions. The final clincher was that it lay within easy travel distance of Ian's home, and Ian was a librarian by profession. Who else could have been a candidate for the role of custodian? The books, papers and materials were moved in, and with much pomp and circumstance, the William Crampton Library

## Flag Institute hosted three International Vexillological Congresses



ICV 19, York 2001

was officially opened by the Lord Mayor of Kingston-upon-Hull and William Crampton's daughter Elanor during a specially held Flag Institute Meeting at the Royal Station Hotel in Hull in May 1999. The Library has remained in Hull ever since, although over time it has moved buildings. The William Crampton Library continues to be the largest flag documentation centre outside the United States<sup>14</sup> and is now based in the Georgian splendour of the city's Museum Quarter.

As can be seen, the Flag Institute had overcome the fears of the mourners gathered in a damp Chester in 1997. Following William's death, the Institute had grown and indeed become stronger. To affirm that it was alive and kicking, to present itself to the wider vexillological world, and to mark the bicentenary of the present Union Jack, in July 2001 the Flag Institute hosted its third<sup>15</sup> FIAV International Congress of Vexillology, the 19th, in York.

A group of 106 attendees, representing 28 countries, enjoyed one of those glorious English summer weeks of blue skies and bright sunshine, in the grand surroundings of the Yorkshire History Museum, in the centre of the city itself. It began on the Sunday evening with a civic reception hosted by the Lord Mayor in the Guildhall, before an official opening by the Flag Institute President Robin Ashburner, who maintained his bonhomie through the whole week. The ceremony was followed by a walking parade of flags around the city streets before returning to the Museum for the first lecture, from the esteemed British vexillologist Bruce Nicholls, on British Naval flags. Thirty further lectures were delivered over the week



ICV 25, London 2015

before a final gala dinner was held on the Friday night. Here, the British vexillologists Barrie Kent, Michael Faul and Bruce Nicholls were all made Fellows of FIAV, and Michael - in recognition of his hard work in organising the congress - was made a Fellow of the Flag Institute. The Flag Institute had shown itself to be an active, vibrant organisation of continuing relevance to the world of vexillology.

## Changing Times

The following decade could be considered a golden age, as the Institute went from success to success, increasing membership and attendance at meetings. *Flagmaster* grew in quality and appeared regularly, while the Institute was frequently consulted not only about flag use, history and identification, but for the design of new flags. Among those created by Graham were the flags of the British Antarctic Territory, the newly established UK Supreme Court, and the UK Border Agency.

With the arrival on the scene of Charles Ashburner, son of Robin, as General Secretary and later Chief Executive, the Institute's influence on national life was enhanced. Inheriting much of his father's doggedness and perseverance, Charles was determined that the Institute be among the movers and shakers, not only the place to come for flag information, but also an authoritative voice on flags in the UK. An election had ushered in a new government and a newly created Department for Communities and Local Government. The new Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP

(now Lord Pickles), revealed himself to be a flag enthusiast. His interest had come to light early in his tenure, when he ordered that the new county flags were to be flown on their appropriate county days from his Ministry's buildings. In 2011 the Secretary of State attended the Institute's Spring Meeting, using the platform to announce a long-awaited Government consultation and review of flag use in the UK, covering flag flying days, flag design, and planning law. He wanted to reform how flags were used and displayed. It was the culmination of much hard work by Charles and made a huge impact on flag use in the country.

Before the review, restrictions were placed on flagpoles and flags alike. Flagpoles were limited to c.3 meters in height, with strict planning permission needed for anything taller. Even national flags could be deemed to be an advertisement whose display required planning permission. To top it all, the list of officially sanctioned flag flying days produced by the Lord Chamberlain's Office<sup>16</sup> had been interpreted by many local authorities as the only days on which flags could be flown.

The reform of November 2012 liberalised the whole flag flying regime: taller and extra flagpoles could now be installed; a wider range of flags no longer needed planning permission;<sup>17</sup> and citizens and local authorities were expressly allowed to fly the national flag on *any* day, not just on those days sanctioned by the Lord Chamberlain.

The Flag Institute has always had the ability to grow and develop, evolving as it found people willing to

come along on its journey – sometimes confusing to outsiders, but making perfect sense to the organisation itself. I was once asked by a confused representative of a fellow vexillological organisation, 'Who do I speak to if I want to speak to the Flag Institute? The President, the Chairman or the Chief Executive?' 'Well', I replied, 'that all depends on what answer you want!'

After many years of abortive plans, and extremely hard work by then Chairman Geoff Parsons, who fought a David-and-Goliath struggle against the bureaucracy of the Charity Commissioners, the Flag Institute was granted charitable status in 2013. This allowed it certain tax privileges and a formality of existence that had otherwise been missing. In consequence, the Institute's Constitution needed complete revision. Rather than a ruling council elected by members, Trustees were elected by members in a three-year staggered line of succession; the Trustees in turn appointed officers who formed a council... Byzantium had reached the Institute! The result looked much as it had before, but everyone had changed seats and a few lucky folk added another ring round their sleeves and one more feather in their cap.

## Onwards and Upwards

The United Kingdom of the Institute's Golden Jubilee year is in so many ways a different nation to that of William Crampton in 1971. In and out of the European Union, a much more devolved nation and one whose its citizens carry multiple identifications. It is perfectly possible and delightful to see a proud Pakistani-British-Black Country lad marry a Welsh-Exmoorite-Lincolnshire girl... or any of a huge number of other combinations. These changes were brought home to

*Michael Faul at home, with his Fellowship of FIAV certificate and ICV19 memorabilia.*



the Institute by the problems faced by some Council members in Scotland and Wales. They faced difficulties in gaining access to the officials of the devolved Governments, because the Institute's logo was perceived as English not British. So, after a broad consultation of members, in 2016 a decision was made to amend the Institute's symbols to reflect this new era. Multiple designs were explored<sup>18</sup> and developed before the new flag was introduced on 26 November 2016, tongue-in-cheek called the Institute's Flag Day! The design, based on the lower hoist of a Union Flag, also resembles an arrow on the ascendant... the future is upwards!

This new design had to be ready for the 27th International Congress of Vexillology in July 2017, hosted by the Institute at Imperial College, Kensington, London. The congress was attended by 137 delegates and partners, from 27 countries. A magnificent team led by Leigh Wetherall, Maggie and Ian Sumner, and Kath Kearney hosted and administered the event on behalf of the Institute. London's weather didn't quite live up to my memories of York, and there were several soggy vexillologists not least on the day trip to Greenwich, and at the rooftop BBQ at Baden Powell House. It was full of excellent

1 Members may recall such an event happening, a number of years ago at a President's Dinner, when the original minute book of the Institute was read, verbatim for about 20 minutes ... shudder!

2 On the date later to be called Europa Day by the Council of Europe, and he would claim this as the reason for his strong pro European views... he often wore a Council of Europe flag pin, and his car had a 'Europe My Country' sticker, to counter the 'England My Country' stickers given out by *This England* magazine.

3 Which he attributed to the coloured flag plates in the *Children's Encyclopedia*.

4 Or to put it another way, was a flag valid on its

own, or must it have a heraldic basis? And if the latter, was it even possible to have a flag without a coat of arms?

5 His final meeting was a day trip to ICV 27 in London in 2017. He passed away a few weeks later.

6 Through accident or design he became the father (or at least the midwife) of the Antarctic flag. Having filled the world with flags, he found a gaping hole at the bottom of the globe, so for completeness he created a symbol for Antarctica. Little did he realise this would then be taken up as an authoritative design, and displayed as such.

7 Remember this was the time of the infamous 'booze cruises', so a late autumn visit was

immensely popular to many members, and luckily Robin had a big van! The occasion when Brian Leigh Davies's cheese developed a life of its own was particularly memorable.

8 All too soon Graham fell into the trap of believing embassies would be a good source for such information, only to find he was often the first person to tell the ambassador that his national flag had changed several months earlier!

9 Graham believed the white disk on ensigns was a simple misunderstanding. The Victorian publishers of BR20, in an attempt to give clarity and visibility to badge designs, had cleared a white circle around them. These white circles had

talks, and, as if purposely planned by the Institute, a national flag changed during the week of the Congress. As delegates breathed into paper bags to subdue their excitement, the Chairman of the Institute solemnly announced that in the previous hour, Mauritania had passed legislation adding red stripes to the top and bottom of its national flag. The final gala dinner was held at the National Liberal Club and the whole organising team was rewarded by appointment as Fellows of FIAV – titles well deserved.

In the newly created role of Convenor, Leigh<sup>19</sup> has gone on to revamp and revitalise the twice-yearly meetings that have always formed a such key part of Institute life. Great venues, a wide range of international speakers, ample opportunities to socialise and talk flags have all made the Spring and Autumn Conferences a 'do not miss' - and members attend for free! Meanwhile Social Media Officer Bernard Muscat has also been hard at work developing the Institute's Twitter and Facebook profiles. With lively feeds, and initiatives like the 2018 World Cup for national flags and 2020 World Series for community flags, the sites attract attention from a worldwide audience – enthusiasts, media and wider public alike. The Flag Institute Facebook page now has over 1,200 followers; its Twitter feed, almost 6,000 followers.

In the years following the retirement of Michael Faul, the Institute struggled to maintain *Flagmaster's* regular publication schedule. Tom Randall took up the position of Editor, and produced excellent editions in a revised format and style. But faced by production difficulties and by mounting work pressure (not least his election as a Member of Parliament), a hiatus in publication began. *Flagmaster* remains the shop window of the Institute. Behind the scenes great

efforts were made, yet no matter how many other great things were achieved, for many members the lack of the journal was a bone of contention. For some it was taken as a sign of the Institute's demise. Nothing of course was further from the truth. The Institute is grateful to Tom for his sterling efforts and his help in creating a new editorial board.<sup>20</sup> The appointment of Jos Poels as Editor-in-Chief, backed by the diverse skills of a talented editorial board, marks a new beginning for *Flagmaster*. A revised twice-yearly publication schedule, a bigger 48-page full-colour format, longer articles and interviews are all on offer. Since the Summer of 2020, three issues have appeared to gladden the hearts of vexillologists everywhere amidst Covid-19 gloom, with future issues in active preparation.

## Here's to the next fifty!

St George's Day, 23 April 2021, saw the fiftieth anniversary of the birth of the Flag Institute. As Chairman, I can report it is thriving. It is full of the most amazing and talented members and officers. It bursts with energy and enthusiasm; we have undergone a transformation and we are now in the hands of a third generation of vexillologists with the vision and skills to carry it forward.

If there is a cloud of witnesses from Vexillological Valhalla, they are, I am sure, waving their bunting, cheering us on, and driving the angels mad as they endlessly discuss whether a British Colonial Governor's flag should have a gold ring or not. Should it be called the Union Jack, or the Union Flag? Why is there a different shade of blue for Luxembourg? And of course the eternal 'what are the best proportions for a flag?' God bless them, every one! □

then unintentionally been incorporated into the flags by manufacturers using BR20 as a template.

<sup>10</sup> Another aberration that had gone unchecked over time was the sheer randomness of the layout of the garland on a Governor's flag, and whether or not it included a gold ring as well as a wreath.

<sup>11</sup> Inevitably losing to Germany on penalties!

<sup>12</sup> Losing in the quarter-finals to Brazil!

<sup>13</sup> Even more important following the revision of planning law, which exempts local and county flags from needing planning permission.

<sup>14</sup> Only the Whitney Smith collection, now based at the University of Texas in Austin, is larger.

<sup>15</sup> ICV5 London, 1973; ICV10 Oxford, 1983 (jointly

with the Heraldry Society); ICV19 York, 2001; and ICV27 London, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Mostly royal birthdays and wedding anniversaries.

<sup>17</sup> Mostly national, county and regional flags. This allowed the Flag Institute to develop the UK Flag Register as the formal record of this rapidly evolving field.

<sup>18</sup> Two broad categories emerged: those designs based upon the FIAV knot, and those based on a variant of the Union Jack. My favourite had to be a design that included a heraldic martlet – a bird conventionally portrayed without legs, because to the medieval mind it was always flying!

<sup>19</sup> Leigh originally got in touch to say that as a child he had been interested in flags, that he now lived in London and would like to know more. In typical Flag Institute style, this innocent email was transformed within a matter of moments into his becoming the bedrock of Institute meetings!

<sup>20</sup> In many ways the Institute had been spoilt by Michael Faul's professionalism and dedication. Realising the full work that the editorship carried, the creation of a collegiate editorial board to spread the load, rather than leaving it all on the shoulders of a single individual was an inspired idea, carried forward by the great choice of Jos Poels as Editor in Chief.

Probably the most 'flagged' man in the world

# The Flags of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

John Hall FF FFI

**The death of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, on 9 April 2021 has been marked by numerous magazines and institutes, each telling his story and his connections with each institute.**

It is known that the Duke was interested in flags, and his uncle Lord Louis Mountbatten (later Earl

Mountbatten of Burma) had been a member of the Flag Circle along with vexillologists Gresham Carr, Perrin and Barraclough. Perhaps this was the way he became infused with the gentle drip, drip of vexillology. He was certainly sufficiently interested to be kind enough to write the foreword to the Institute's book *British Flags And Emblems* in 2005. Like many vexillologist he collected flags, but the big difference compared to many vexillologists was that *his flags* were literally his flags. There must be every chance that in his lifetime, HRH was the greatest flag bearer in the world. Certainly while most gentleman of a certain age might be known as having a tie for every occasion, HRH seems to have a flag for every occasion. And so it seems appropriate that the Flag Institute should pay honour to the



1. HRH The Duke of Edinburgh (1921-2021)

Prince's life story through the history of his flags. Originally I had thought to start this article with a list of his titles and roles, but after the briefest of hits on the Royal and other pertinent websites, the list, in small print, occupied two whole sides of A4 paper,<sup>1</sup> so those with such an interest are asked to look it up for themselves. Of course, many of these titles and honours came from being the husband of reigning monarch for so many years, but it should be remembered that Prince Philip was a prince in his own right, of both Denmark and Greece,<sup>2</sup> indeed at one point being in serious 'danger' of inheriting the Greek throne.<sup>3</sup> He was the oldest living great-great-grandchild of Queen Victoria, and at the time of his death, somewhere around the 500th in line for the British throne.

For vexillologists, the greatest interest must be the vast number of flags that these many honours and titles brought with them. Indeed it is highly likely that the Duke was the person with the entitlement to fly the most rank and positional flags in the world. I hope to tell his story through these flags.

## The Duke of Edinburgh

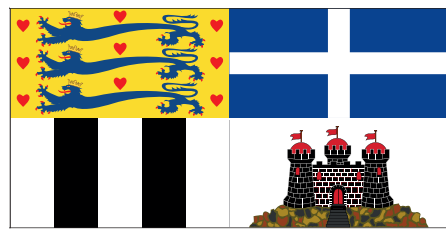
The first and probably most common flag used by the Duke is of course his personal standard. The flag is an heraldic banner of his arms. The four quarters represented aspects of the Duke's life and heritage, namely, Denmark, Greece, the Battenberg family, and the city of Edinburgh.

2. The arms granted in 1951. Arms: Quarterly; 1st, or semée of hearts gules three lions passant in pale azure ducally crowned of the first (Denmark); 2nd, azure a cross argent (Greece); 3rd, argent two pallets sable (Battenberg); 4th argent upon a rock proper a castle triple towered sable masoned argent, windows, port, turret caps and vanes gules (Edinburgh). Crest: A plume of five ostrich feathers alternately sable and argent issuant from a ducal coronet. Supporters: Dexter, a representation of Heracles girt about the loins with a lion skin, crowned with a chaplet of oak leaves and holding in the dexter hand a club proper; sinister, a lion queue four-chée ducally crowned or and gorged with a naval coronet azure. Coronet: A coronet composed of crosses patée and fleurs-de-lys alternately or. Motto: God is my help.



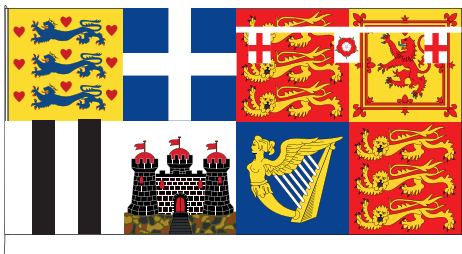
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Arms of Philip Mountbatten (1947-1949).



3a. Banner of the arms granted in 1951.

3b. The banner covered the coffin during the Prince's funeral, 17 April 2021



5. Banner of the arms approved in 1951, impaling those of Princess Elizabeth, used as a car flag (William Crampton Library).

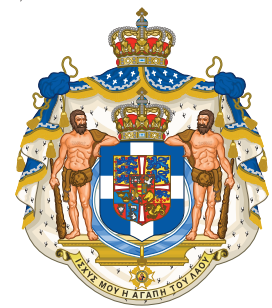
However, research reveals this was certainly the second, and quite possibly the third personal standard the Duke had used. His first arms were created for the rather unusually-titled 'HRH Sir Philip Mountbatten' on

the day before his wedding to Princess Elizabeth. They are a brave attempt to combine his Greek and Danish royal heritage with his connections to the British Royal family through his mother, Princess Alice of Battenburg.<sup>4</sup> The supporters, compartment and motto are the same as his present arms. It is unclear whether these arms were ever translated into a banner.<sup>5</sup> The design however was found to be unsatisfactory (whether this was to the College of Arms, to the Duke, or to the King, who had a strong interest in flags and heraldry, is unclear).

Hence in November 1951, the second, now famous, coat of arms was approved by the King, possibly in readiness for the upcoming Commonwealth Tour in 1952. The College of Arms impaled the Duke's new arms with those of his wife, the then Princess Elizabeth (the Royal arms differenced with a label of three points, bearing two St George's crosses and a rose). Unusually, this standard placed the royal arms in the subordinate position, which raised a number of heraldic eyebrows at the time. Quite possibly it was the shortest-lived Royal standard in history. The archives of the William Crampton Library reveal a single photograph of the standard used as a car flag during a visit to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in November 1951. However, a mere ten weeks after its creation, the Queen's accession to the throne on 6 February 1952, made the impaled arms redundant, and the Duke began to use a banner of his arms alone.

**Prince of Greece**

With Prince Philip being so often thought of as the archetypal Englishman, it can be easily forgotten that he was born a member of the Greek Royal family. In theory at least he would have been entitled to fly the distinguishing flag of a Prince of Greece. The Greek Royal family, as an offshoot of the Danish Royal family,<sup>6</sup> continued to use the Danish Royal arms as their personal family arms,<sup>7</sup> and



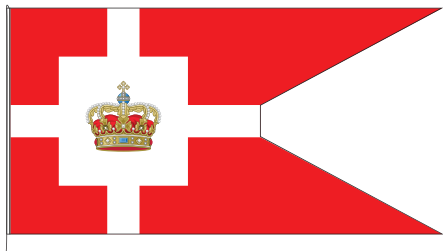
6. The flag of a Prince of Greece and the coat of arms of the kingdom of Greece. (Wikipedia)

it was these arms, rather than the Greek arms proper, that were displayed on their distinguishing flags. The flags comprised of the old Greek alternative national flag, i.e. a blue field with a white cross overall, with the Royal arms placed centrally. The distinguishing feature between family members was the number of crowns that appeared on the flag. The King had four crowns, one in each corner; the Crown Prince had one crown in the canton; while the other members of the Royal family, such as Prince Philip, went crown-less. These flags existed, at least in theory, until the abolition of the monarchy in 1973.

### Prince of Denmark

As stated above, by historic chance all Greek Princes were also Princes of Denmark.<sup>8</sup> It is of course highly unlikely that Prince Philip ever had any need or occasion to signify this particular privilege,<sup>9</sup> but for the sake of completeness, there is a standard to which he might have been entitled. The design dates from 1905, when to answer the need to distinguish between royal and non-royal use of the Dannebrog, a swallow-tailed

flag defaced by a royal crown was adopted by the Royal household. This in turn led to the 1907 Danish Flag



7. The flag of a member of the Danish Royal family (Wikipedia).

Commission regulating the use and proportions of the Dannebrog, with particular regard to the use of swallow-tailed variants. As a result the present suite of Danish Royal flags was adopted in May 1914. The flags were defaced swallow-tailed Dannebrog, the monarch using the greater Royal arms, the heir the lesser form of arms, and the remaining members of the Royal family used the 1905 flag, simply bearing the crown.

### Admiral of the Fleet / Field Marshal

The Duke was recognised as a talented Naval officer, which may well have led to his advancement to Flag Rank in any case, but his career was of course curtailed when King George VI died and the Duke found himself consort to the reigning monarch.

In 1953, his wife appointed him to the five-star ranks in all three British armed forces: Admiral of the Fleet, Field Marshal and Marshal of the Royal Air Force. Each has its own rank flag, and a schedule of occasions on which it can be used.

The present system of British naval rank flags dates from 1898, which itself was a reform<sup>10</sup> of the system introduced in 1864, which also abolished the squadron colour system. As a holder of the rank of Admiral of the Fleet the Duke was entitled to fly a Union Flag as his rank flag (indeed, this was common practice when he was the most senior member of the Royal Family aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia.)

There are however a number of controversies concerning this flag. The first is related to the proportions of the flag. In BR20, the Ministry of Defence's flag book, all naval rank flags were given in the proportion of 2:3, but the Royal Navy website and other sources show this flag as being in the normal 1:2 size. The controversy has its origins in the question of whether an Admiral of the Fleet uses a Union Flag as his rank flag, in which case a portion of 1:2 would be correct; or whether he flies a rank flag *in the design of* the Union Flag, in which case all naval rank flags are in the proportion 2:3. In recent years it appears that the former argument has prevailed.

The second controversy, again theoretical you might say, but with no definitive answer, revolves around the



8. Distinguishing flag of an Admiral of the Fleet

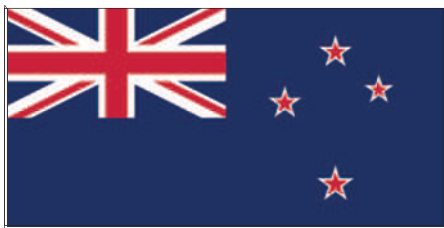
9. The Royal Yacht Britannia. (Wikipedia)



fact that apart from being an Admiral of the Fleet in the Royal Navy he was also, and quite separately, an Admiral of the Fleet in both the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal New Zealand Navy.<sup>11</sup> This must therefore raise the question what is the appropriate five star rank flag of these two navies? Although they follow British practice up to the rank of Admiral, what happens above this rank has never been properly spelled out. Should in theory the Duke have appeared aboard a warship in one of these navies, as a five star ranking admiral, would a Union Flag or the country's National Flag be used? The closest hint appears in the pages of the *Album des pavillons nationaux et des marques*



10. Simply the flag of Australia, or that of an Australian Admiral of the Fleet as well?



11. Simply the flag of New Zealand, or that of a New Zealand Admiral of the Fleet as well?

*distinctives* which include the cryptic comment next to the flag of the Chief of the Naval Staff, 'Australian rank flags from Admiral to Commodore are the same as in the British Royal Navy'.

Similar questions might well be raised by his appointment as Field Marshal, which again traditionally has used the Union Flag in the proportion of 3:5 as a rank flag. Appointed as a Field Marshal in 1953, the Duke could fly this as his rank flag. However he was also the only Field Marshal in the Armies of Australia (since 1954) and of New Zealand (since 1977), which again prompts the same question of what was his flag in those circumstances?

### Marshal of the RAF; Marshal of the RNZAF

Again, since 1953 the Duke also held the five star rank of Marshal of the RAF and, since 1977, a similar rank in the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

It is common practice in the RAF for rank flags to be made in only one size – 2 feet by 3 feet (0.61m x

0.91m). And traditionally they are flown at the masthead of a fully rigged flagpole to indicate the rank of a station commander. The Royal Air Force ensign is then flown from the gaff.<sup>12</sup>

There are a couple of rather disparaging beliefs as to the choice of 'Air Force Blue' used by the RAF. One popular rumour is that the procurement division of the new service discovered that the Russian Revolution of 1917 had forced the cancellation of an order for a large



12. The distinguishing flag of a Marshal of the Royal Air Force and of the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

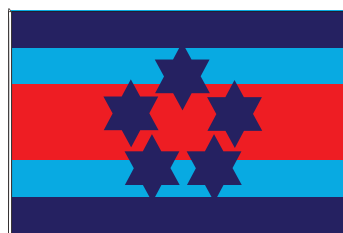
quantity of light blue cloth for the uniforms for the Czar's bodyguard, and the cloth was therefore brought at a vastly discounted rate. The other equally scurrilous rumour was that light blue and gold braid was the favourite colour combination of the mistress of a high-ranking civil servant in the War Office.

Whichever might be true, or if it was really chosen to represent the sky, the colour has been used ever since the service's foundation.

The basic make-up of the rank flags is light blue with dark blue stripes at the top and bottom, and a number of red stripes of various thicknesses in-between, representing the rank. The designs themselves, although not in strict correlation with the rank insignia of RAF officers, certainly reflect their apparent complexity – the Duke of Edinburgh was blessed with twenty stripes in six different thicknesses on the sleeves of his RAF uniform.

### Marshal of the Royal Australian Air Force

The RAAF made an attempt to overcome these confusing designs, retaining the basic theme but replacing the barcode effect of red and azure stripes



13. The theoretical distinguishing flag of a Marshal of the RAAF.

with a system of blue six-pointed stars indicating the rank.

The designs are laid out in Chapter 11, Annex J of the *RAAF Manual of Ceremonial*, AAP 5135.002. However, the *Flags of the World* website reports Australian sources as saying that the Duke was the only 5-star ranking officer in the RAAF, and since, whenever he visited an RAAF station he flew his personal standard, this flag may exist only on paper.

### Admiral of the Royal Canadian Navy

In 2011 the Duke was appointed as an Admiral in the newly recreated Royal Canadian Navy. Again, we may be only following a paper exercise, in that it is probably very unlikely that a situation arose within the last ten years when he would fly the flag of a Canadian Admiral, rather than his own personal standard, but the flag exists!

The year 2011 marked the re-establishment of a separate Army, Navy and Air Force in Canada, which had been merged together as the Canadian Armed Forces since 1968. The rank flag system for this united force was introduced in 1975, and is described in the



14. The rank insignia worn on the sleeve of a Marshal of the Royal Air Force.

1999 National Defense Ministry publication *The Heritage Structure Of The Canadian Forces*. The flag of an Admiral and Vice-Admiral is a white rectangle with the Canadian flag in the canton (a rear admiral has a swallow-tailed version, while a Commodore also has a swallow-tailed flag but with the bottom edge cut to slope from the hoist to the fly).<sup>13</sup> If the admiral in question holds a specific command, the badge of that command may be used to deface the flag in the fly. It is these flags, not the previous flags identical to those of the Royal Navy, that are now used by the RCN.

However, *Flagmaster 96* reports that flag officers in the RCN's Atlantic Command were using, at least informally, a rank flag system comprising blue flags with a varying number of maple leaves reflecting the

16. HRH The Duke of Edinburgh in Royal Canadian uniform.

15a. The distinguishing flag of an admiral of the Royal Canadian Navy.



17. The unofficial admiral's flag reportedly used by the RCN's Atlantic Command.

star rank of the Admiral, based it seems upon the car plates of flag officers. No photographic evidence is readily available for this practice, but it does sound as if whenever HRH was in one of those difficult social occasions, when he just wanted to be seen as an 'ordinary' admiral, he may have had a choice of flags!

### General of the Royal Canadian Air Force

At the same time as being appointed an Admiral, the Duke was also appointed as a General in both the Royal Canadian Air Force and in the Canadian Army. The legacy of the unified armed forces is that the command flags of all flag officers of each of the newly independent services has remained unchanged. The white flag used by an admiral is also used by generals in the Air Force and Army.

But it is worth noting that the RCAF did once have a separate tradition of rank flags. As the Second World War began there was a growing sense of 'Canadian-ness' amongst her armed forces, prompting a move to make her symbols less British and more Canadian. The RCAF had recently amended its ensign replacing the central red circle of the RAF ensign with a red maple leaf, and pressure was on to amend the rank flags in a similar way.

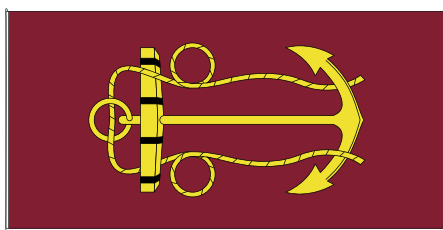
In 1940 the leading proposal had been to simply insert a golden maple leaf in the centre of the RAF rank

flags. The design was deeply opposed by Air Commodore Robert Leckie<sup>14</sup> as producing 'indistinguishable distinguishing flags'. He proposed a system based on the RCAF ensign, where the Union Jack was replaced by a series of red vertical stripes of various widths. A Marshal of the RCAF (the equivalent of a modern general) had one thick stripe and three narrow stripes. Lesser ranks bore fewer thin stripes, corresponding to the rank insignia rings around the officer's sleeves. These designs were adopted and used until the abolition of the RCAF and its replacement by the Canadian Forces Air Command.

### Lord High Admiral

To mark the Duke's 90th birthday, he was appointed to the office of Lord High Admiral of the United Kingdom, an office previously held by HM Queen. Her Majesty had held the office since 1964, when it had been revived after spending the previous 136 years as an 'office in commission' as the Board of the Admiralty.

The office itself is an ancient one, dating from the early fifteenth century and was considered one of the great offices of state, the titular head of the Navy. A full and detailed history of the flag of the office is described in W.G. Perrin's monumental work *British Flags*.<sup>15</sup> The earliest known orders, dating from 1535, directed the Lord High Admiral to fly the 'Arms of the King's Majesty' to fly from the top of the main mast and St George's cross from the foremast.<sup>16</sup> From the time of



18. Distinguishing flag of Lord High Admirall of the Fleet (Wikipedia).

the Stuart restoration in 1660, the anchor flag was used as an alternative to the Royal Standard on those occasions when both the Lord High Admiral and the King were present in the fleet, to distinguish between the two. Hence over the next forty odd years the modern understanding began that the Royal Standard was used solely by the monarch themselves. This was confirmed in 1702, almost immediately after the accession of Queen Anne, when the recently appointed Lord High Admiral, the Earl of Pembroke, countermanded an order issued less than a month

previously to outfit the new flagship HMS Britannia with royal standards for his use, and replaced them with anchor flags.<sup>17</sup>

The design of the fouled anchor itself seems to have been taken from a badge of office used from c.1588 by the Earl of Nottingham, the then Lord High Admiral, and was taken up by his successor the Duke of Buckingham who in 1623 was supplied with an ensign with the design. Following Buckingham's assassination in 1628, this design was taken up by the Admiralty Board that took over the office when it became vacant. The rest, as they say, is history.

### Master of Trinity House

As Captain Barraclough, the first president of the Flag Institute and the author of *Flags of the World*, put it, 'The Corporation of Trinity House, London, is one of those peculiar bodies that are found in few places other than Great Britain.'<sup>18</sup> The corporation is in effect a private organisation performing a public function. The grant of arms dating from 1573 comprised four black Elizabethan sailing ships, one in each canton of a St George's cross, and is the basis of all Trinity House flags.



19. The distinguishing flag of the Master of Trinity House, London.



20. The jack of Trinity House, used as a distinguishing flag by an Elder Brother.

Following his appointment as Master of Trinity House in 1969, the Duke was entitled to fly the Master's flag (an unusual combination of the whole achievement of arms centred on the banner of arms in proportions 1:2). Traditionally the flag is flown whenever the Master is embarked on a ship<sup>19</sup> and on the Trinity House in Tower Hill, London, whenever the Master is present.

It should be noted that prior to his appointment as



21. The distinguishing flag of the Deputy Master of Trinity House.

Master, the Duke had been an Elder Brother of Trinity House since 1956, and as such had been entitled to use the privilege that dated from 1928 of using the Trinity House jack (an heraldic banner of the arms in proportions of 4:5) as a sign of rank. (It is also worth noting, just to finish the story, that since 1952 there has also been a flag for the Deputy Master<sup>20</sup> who uses the banner of arms in proportions of 2:3 defaced with a red disc charged with the Corporation's Crest.)

As always with Royal protocol, much is based on precedence and there is a certain controversy over the limitations placed on the flying of these rank flags outside of waters under the jurisdiction of the Corporation.<sup>21</sup> Two competing and contrary judgements exist. An Admiralty letter dated 24 October 1921 in reply to a request for procedural clarification from Admiral Sir Lionel Halsey, Comptroller to the Prince of Wales, stated that, 'It is the view of Their Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that the Trinity House jack or burgee should be flown only in the waters of the United Kingdom where Trinity

House has jurisdiction. It is not a flag authorised to be flown on His Majesty's Ships.'<sup>22</sup> However a Trinity House Board Order of 26 June 1928 states 'An Elder Brother of Trinity House is entitled when afloat to fly the Trinity House Jack at the Masthead of the Vessel he is aboard, when he is on official duty in the service of the State or of the Corporation of Trinity House.'<sup>23</sup> And certainly there is plenty of evidence of the Trinity House rank flags being used by the Royal family outside of the Corporation's jurisdictional waters.<sup>24</sup>

### Admiral of the Royal Yacht Squadron

Following the wish of King William IV, the Royal Yacht Club, founded in 1815, was renamed the Royal Yacht Squadron in 1833. Since 1829, its members have been allowed, via an Admiralty Warrant, to the fly a White Ensign as their ensign - a privilege that became unique to the squadron, at least *de jure* since 1842.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to an ensign nearly all yacht clubs also fly a distinctive burgee or membership flag, which might be likened to a commissioning pennant on a warship. Often triangular in shape, the Royal Yacht Club's burgee reflects its unique privilege of using a white ensign by being a triangular version of a St George Cross with a crown placed centrally.

It is this burgee which in turn is used as the basis for the Squadron's rank flags for Admiral,<sup>26</sup> Commodore,<sup>27</sup> Vice-Commodore and Rear Commodore as appear in the Squadron's own *Year Book* (see Illustration 22). In 1955, the

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### Notes

1. A list of his titles, honours and appointments can be found at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_titles\\_and\\_honours\\_of\\_Prince\\_Philip%2C\\_Duke\\_of\\_Edinburgh#Honoratory\\_military\\_positions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_titles_and_honours_of_Prince_Philip%2C_Duke_of_Edinburgh#Honoratory_military_positions)

2. According to the Wikipedia these royal titles were abandoned to allow him to serve in the Royal Navy, but were not renounced. This was not done until 18 March 1947 when, as part of the preparations for his marriage to the then HRH Princess Elizabeth, he renounced his allegiance to the Hellenic crown, became a British citizen, converted from Greek Orthodoxy to Anglicanism, and changed his surname from Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg to Mountbatten ... a hard day's work by any stretch of the imagination.

3. If I have done my calculations correctly, between the years 1935 and 1940 he was fourth in line to the Greek throne, behind a series of elderly uncles. It was only with the birth of the future King Constantine II to King Paul in 1940 that the succession was secured without reaching the cadet branch to which Prince Philip was heir.

4. The Royal arms differenced by a label of three points charged with rose between two ermine spots, as originally granted to the Duke's grandmother Princess Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse, and Queen Victoria's daughter.

5. Possibly as a Garter banner, but so far no photographic evidence has been found.

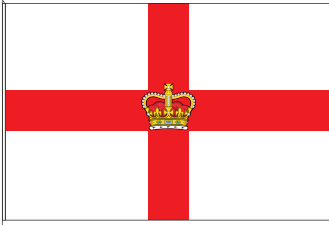
6. HRH Prince George of Denmark, the second son of King Christian IX, accepted the offer of the Greek throne in 1863.

7. There was a subtle difference between the Royal Greek and Royal Danish arms. The Greek arms are the Danish arms of 1863 and did not change when, in 1903, the arms of Iceland (appearing at the bottom left corner) were changed from a crowned stockfish on red to a crowned falcon on blue; nor when Iceland was dropped from the Danish arms altogether in 1948; nor when the Danish arms were simplified in 1972.

8. HM Queen Margrethe II of Denmark's letter of condolence to HM Queen specifically mentioned that Prince Philip had been born a Prince of Denmark.

9. Although during the period of the Second Hellenic Republic (1924-1935) being a Prince of a functioning Royal family, rather than a Royal family in exile might had had advantages.

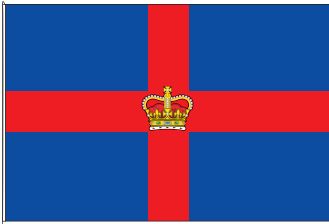
10. By 1898 the decline in the number of masts on battleships had made impractical the age-old tradition of the Vice-Admiral's flag on the foremast and Rear Admiral's on the mizzenmast. Hence the need to make the flags more distinctive by enlarging the red disk defacements and by transferring the second disk on a Rear Admiral's flag from the canton to the lower hoist.



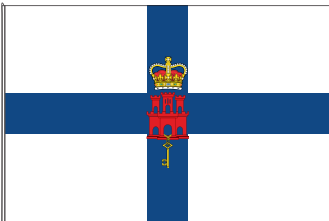
22. The ensign and distinguishing flag of flag officers of the Royal Yacht Squadron.



24. Theoretical flag of the Admiral of the House of Lords Yacht Club.



23 The distinguishing flag of an Admiral of the Royal Yacht Squadron.



24. Capture

Admiralty reluctantly agreed that the Duke's rank of Admiral of the Royal Yacht Squadron might be

acknowledged when he was on board *Britannia* in certain circumstances,<sup>28</sup> and the use of the Admiral's flag on *Britannia's* mizzen has been photographed at least once.<sup>29</sup>

This pattern of rank flags for yacht club officers has been a pattern adopted by other clubs, and so at least in theory the Duke may well have been entitled to fly flags for a number of his other yachting appointments. Looking at the list of appointments, and piecing together those where he was an Admiral of a yacht club with a distinctive burgee, it might be possible to wander into the world of speculative or theoretical vexillology, in which the following flags may well also exist, at least in theory.

Of course, the question does arise as to how often some of these flags have been flown, and when might one flag 'out rank' another. But nonetheless, there does seem to be serious consideration as to how and when the most appropriate flag might be flown. The archives of the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, the most obvious and visible place where multiple flags were flown, are quite specific in the arrangements, positions, sizes, geographical and chronological appropriateness of flags to be flown by various members of the Royal Family.

In the person of HRH Prince Philip one feels certain we had probably the most 'flagged' man in the world. I wonder who it is now? □

11. He was appointed to the three five star ranks in Australia in 1954, as Admiral of the Fleet in the RNZN in 1958, and as Field Marshal and Marshal of the RNZAF in 1977.  
12. See Hugh Witherow, 'Flags of the RAF', in: *Flag Bulletin* 23 (107) 1984: 164-74.  
13. Full illustrations of these flags can be found in *Flagmaster* 96 (1999): 20.  
14. At the time on secondment to the RCAF as the Director of Training of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, and later Chief of the Air Staff RCAF.  
15. Published by Cambridge University Press in 1922 and now available on line at: <https://archive.org/details/britishflagstheiooperrich/page/n11/mode/2up?view=theater>  
16. Including the period of the Civil War, when the Earl of Warwick, a resolute opponent of the King, and appointed as Lord High Admiral by Parliament against the King's wishes, continued to fly the Royal Standard.  
17. It might be speculation, but one can not help but wonder if some internal politicking, or point making was going on in the newly ascended Queen Anne's mind. She appointed her husband Prince George as Lord High Admiral, but perhaps emphasising her role as the ruling monarch, forbade him from using her standard. The day of the joint

monarchy of William and Mary, were gone!  
18. *Flags of the World* 1965 edition p62.  
19. According to Chris Ellis in his chapter 'Royal Yachts', which appeared in John Brooke-Little's *The British Monarchy* (1976), the common practice on *Britannia*, when the Duke of Edinburgh was the senior Royal aboard was: Foremast: Union Flag (Admiral of the Fleet); Mainmast: Personal Standard; Mizzen: flag of 'office', normally the Master of Trinity House.  
20. Certainly since the Second World War the rank of Master has been an honorary title held by a member of the Royal family hence the true Chief Executive of the Organisation is the Deputy Master.  
21. According to their website, Trinity House's jurisdiction covers a sea area from Berwick-upon-Tweed on the north-east coast to the Solway Firth in the north-west, as well as the Channel Islands and Gibraltar. It is the General Lighthouse Authority for these waters, and provides over 600 aids to navigation, from lighthouses and buoys to satellite-based systems, to assist safe passage for vessels of all classes.  
22. National Archives ADM 1/8614/191] as researched by David Prothero.  
23. From *The Trinity House from Within* (1929) by Captain Thomas Goulding as researched by

Christopher Southworth.  
24. For example the Trinity House jack was flying from the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, when the Prince of Wales (an Elder Brother) was aboard (or nearby) during the handover of Hong Kong in 1997.  
25. The saga of how this came about the about and the bureaucratic incompetence as to how it was handled and the resulting furore took seventeen years to bring to conclusion, by way of a special paper set before the House of Commons, can be pieced together via Perrin (1922): 137-39 and Barraclough (1965): 154-56.  
26. King William IV could be considered the first Admiral of the Royal Yacht Squadron: having conferred that name on the Club in 1833, he constituted himself its head. The idea was revived in 1901 on the death of Queen Victoria since the Prince of Wales could not continue to be Commodore once he became King Edward VII. The practice of the monarch being Admiral as well as Patron continued with subsequent monarchs until the accession of the Queen when she became Patron and Prince Philip became Admiral. See <http://www.rys.org.uk/da/49594>.  
27. Office held by the Duke 1962-68.  
28. National Archives ADM 1/26072 researched by David Prothero.  
29. See Madge (1997): 173.

The mineral that exhibits wealth, sunshine, beaches, the future, and good and bad virtues

# Gold Standard

Leigh Wetherall FF

**It is a colour of extravagance, of wealth, and of grandeur; that of success, achievement, and triumph. A warm colour that can be bright and cheerful, or sombre and traditional. The colour-cousin to yellow and brown, it is also associated with illumination, abundance, prosperity, luxury, prestige, sophistication, and elegance. But when it comes to national flags, how is gold represented and what represents gold? A special investigation in the use of gold in flags for the golden anniversary of the Flag Institute.**

Follow three main threads. Firstly, flags where the colour is actually gold. Secondly, where the colour is a reference to material gold. And lastly, where the flag depicts the colour gold, no matter what actual colour it is - vexillology tries to distinguish between gold and yellow, but in heraldry they are both *Or*, or Gold.

## Colour Gold

For actual gold we look to the fine display of Pantone 117C on the flag of Montenegro. A flag based on the royal standard of King Nicholas I who from 1860 would rule Montenegro for 58 years. The flag was red with a silver border, bearing a silver royal cipher in the centre. The current flag with its gold border, with the Montenegrin coat of arms in the centre, is blazoned with a golden crowned two-headed eagle, a golden lion passant on its chest, and a golden crown atop its head. A gold sceptre and

orb grasped in each claw completes the eagle's bling.

The flag was adopted in 2004 when Montenegro was still in federation with Serbia. Two years later, following the dissolution with Serbia, it became the national flag. It was a flag representing a new democratic republic but maintaining a regal feel. This could be down to the Montenegrin law on state symbols.

Throughout its history, the symbols of the state have been of high artistry and aesthetic quality. While they are new - modern symbols of the state - they should be based on the authentic historical symbols of Montenegro.<sup>1</sup> Based on Montenegrin war flags of the Petrović Dynasty (1697-1916) which regularly included borders, when the eagle was changed from silver to gold, so too was the border, it is thought to differentiate it from the Serbian eagle. Gold is the colour of the winner. Silver is, well, not.

Montenegro's neighbour Kosovo uses gold prominently on its flag. Another country intrinsically linked with Serbia, the flag of Kosovo was adopted in 2008 from a thousand-entry UN-backed international competition. In the centre is a gold map of Kosovo, said to represent the nation as a rich and peaceful country. In both countries the flag uses gold to commemorate the departure of Serbia.

A gold eagle also appears on the flag of Moldova. Another flag charged with the coat of arms of the country, the eagle is symbolic of the country's historical connection with Byzantium, via



Montenegro

the Romanian coat of arms, a country of which Moldova was once a part. The eagle was an emblem most associated with the later centuries of the Byzantine Empire. The flag of Egypt also depicts an eagle in gold. The eagle is a symbol of strength, and one adopted by Saladin (Salah al-Din Yusuf) (1138-1193) who ruled over Egypt, the Hejaz, Syria and Mesopotamia. Although it must be said that the use of Saladin's eagle on Arab flags is very much a modern emblem.<sup>2</sup>

## Au

A colour of reverence and revered itself, metallic gold's allure lies in its scarcity and uneven distribution. Although mines have been discovered all over the world, gold rushes mean that they are quickly exhausted and abandoned in favour of those that have been newly uncovered. Europe has relatively few gold deposits and, historically, has relied on gold traded from the Americas, as well as from Africa and the East.<sup>3</sup>

The Pan-African colours include yellow as a reference to gold, the resource. This is the case for the 'treasures' of Benin as a reminder to preserve the country's wealth. Since 1961, the flag of Mali has referred to gold and mineral wealth on its central stripe. Since 1973 so too has the upper fly of the Guinea-Bissau flag.

Ghana, when the British colony of Gold Coast pre-1957, colonially divulged its mineral wealth in its name. Upon independence, Ghana adopted the Pan-African colours with their minerals represented by the middle yellow of its horizontal tricolour, and in the hope British rule had left some gold behind. Senegal goes



Ghana

one further with its use of yellow on the centre stripe - a reference to wealth by symbolising economic progress, which in turn it is hoped will improve the nation culturally. This is also linked to Senegalese teachers who are known to wear yellow blouses, symbolic of literature, the arts, and intellect progress.

A special mention must go to Togo, which not only refers to gold and mineral wealth on its flag, but (now) uses the golden ratio for its proportions (research suggests that this attribution of the divine ratio post-dates the flag's adoption in 1960, but I am hesitant to remove this *gold standard* of flag trivia, despite the possibility it is *fool's gold*).

Other African countries refer to gold and wealth, not using colours of Pan-African ideology. The yellow fimbriations of the flag of Democratic Republic of Congo represent the country's natural assets and so too does the yellow of Angola's machete and gear. Eswatini, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe all have mineral wealth and richness of resources symbolised on their flags in various shades of Or.

## Crowns

The use of a crown introduces gold to a flag. In the case of Liechtenstein, the canton's crown is the only gold on the flag, which is said to represent that the people of Liechtenstein, the country, and the princely House are united in heart and spirit. One ponders which was solid gold first, the upper hoist or the nation's GDP. The flag of San Marino's gold crown sits at the top the country's national coat of arms in the centre of the flag, symbolising the republic's continuing independence and sovereignty.

A Spanish royal crown sits on the shield of the arms,



Serbia



Ecuador

a corona tumular of Or and precious stone. The coat of arms on the flag of neighbouring Andorra, a shared representation of the bishop of the local diocese and the French President, includes a gold mitre and crosier. A Yellow Vest movement in sync with Macron's co-princely duties. The present Swedish flag, adopted in 1906, but which dates back to the sixteenth century, uses yellow thought to come from the national coat of arms of three crowns.

The crown on Serbia's flag, again on the national coat of arms, is a Serbian monarchist symbolism and is matched in colour by double-headed eagle's tongues, beaks, legs, and claws, between two golden fleurs-de-lis. It is a heraldic design used by the Serbian state since the Middle Ages. Tajikistan also bears a gold crown in its central white band, representing Tajikistan's sovereignty, under an arc of gold stars symbolising friendship. Again, they are taken from a coat of arms of the country, but Tajikistan opted not for the full state emblem at the flag's adoption in 1992 after the collapse of the USSR. Special mention goes to the Vatican, for it not only depicts a triple crown signifying the three types of power vested in the Pope, but also a set of golden keys. Keys not for the Popemobile, but of divine authority bestowed on the apostle Peter.

### Golden Arrowhead

South American flags symbolising wealth and natural resources include *The Golden Arrowhead* of Guyana, representing the country's mineral wealth and the bright future it is hoped resources bring. The yellow of both the Colombian and Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda flags are symbolic of the riches of the country,

their gold and resources. Bolivia this year celebrates 150 years of its tricolour in its current form and has for all those years used a yellow centre band to represent mineral wealth. Aruba, off the north coast of South America, uses two narrow parallel horizontal yellow bands in its bottom half to represent economic abundance historically founded on gold.

A *gold star* goes to Brunei with a flag that of all national flags, uses the most yellow (54.6% of the flag area). It was adopted in 1959, but for centuries the



Brunei

sultanate of Brunei's flag was wholly yellow. An absolute monarchy, the yellow represents the sultan of Brunei, for in much of south-east Asia, yellow

is traditionally the colour of royalty. A flag representing a country but symbolising the riches of the sultan and not of the nation.

Bhutan's secular realm is represented by the upper yellow on its flag. Malaysia's yellow crescent and 14-point star is symbolic of the rulers of the individual states of the Federation Federation, although, *Yellow of the Sovereign, the country's protector*, is sung aloud during *Jalur Gemilang*, Malaysia's flag. A second special mention is for Sri Lanka and it impressively symbolic flag. Among its multitude of representations is the two front paws of the yellow lion, specifically represent 'purity in handling wealth'. A unique representation to money on a national flag; it seems



Germany



Dominica

no other nation could commit to purity with their riches. Yellow was used originally on the flag of Vietnam for dynastic reasons and has been a traditional colour of Vietnam for over 2,000 years, appearing on Vietnamese flags since the eighteenth century. The dynastic houses of Pedro I (1798-1834) and his consort Maria Leopoldina of Austria (1797-1826) are the reason we see yellow on the Brazilian flag.

### Gold in the eye of the beholder

Attempts were made to unite the feudal states of Germany into a single country in 1848, and although no union was established, a flag was. The black, red, and yellow horizontal tricolour we know today as the flag of Germany has colours allegedly taken from the uniforms of German soldiers of the Napoleonic Wars. Uniforms of black coats with red facings and gold buttons.

The German constitution states, 'The federal flag shall be black, red, and gold'. When the flag was adopted during the Weimar Republic, the colour was greatly criticised by the far right and was referred to as *Schwarz-Rot-Gelb* (black-red-yellow), *Schwarz-Rot-Senf* (black-red-mustard) or sometimes more negatively as *Schwarz-Rot-Scheiße* (black-red-shit).

When the German flag returned to its black, red, and gold colours after the Second World War, the German Federal Court of Justice stated that the usage of the name 'yellow' and the like had 'through years of Nazi agitation, attained the significance of a malicious slander against the democratic symbols of the state' and was now considered to be an offence. Even though the official colour looks a lot like yellow - Cadmium yellow - it is gold.<sup>4</sup>

### Beaches

Golden sands and land bathed in golden sunshine are heavily represented in national flags. A representation of richness and wealth, just not in immediate monetary terms. This is so in the Caribbean for Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Curaçao, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. For the Bahamas, the yellow alludes to the shining sun and sands, as well as other natural resources. This too applies to Dominica's yellow stripes representing the sun and the island's agricultural fruit crop. Jamaica's golden yellow represents the sun, although in 1996 additionally, the wealth of the Jamaican people was added to the saltire's symbolism. Since 1967 (although the flag of the colony of St Lucia used yellow, dating back to 1939) the flag of St Lucia now uses yellow to symbolise both the sun and prosperity.

The yellow of Pan-African flags is also used to reference sun, sand, and savannah. This is true of Cameroon, Guinea, Mauritania, Seychelles, and São Tomé and Príncipe. Other similar symbolism in African national flags includes Uganda, which in fact symbolises the sunshine of the whole continent. For Chad, it is the gold of the sun and desert. Gabon, much like the equator and sun it symbolises, is yellow and equatorially appears on its flag. Eritrea's wreath nods to the country's natural resources. Ivory Coast's orange represents savannah grasslands. Niger's orange band is said to represent the Sahel with orange central disc depicting the sun.

In the Pacific, the synergy of the sun and island nations is displayed on the flag of Marshall Islands, which unique design has white and orange bands representing the *Ratak* (sunrise) and *Ralik* (sunset)



*Bosnia-Herzegovina*



*Argentina*

chains. The Solomon Islands flag's yellow diagonal depicts the sun and its rays separating the land and the ocean across blue and green flag sections. Vanuatu symbolises sunshine in its y-shape design.

In cooler climates when the sun is represented on a flag, it takes on alternative meaning. Originally on Bosnian revolt flags of the 1830s, the triangle of Bosnia and Herzegovina now represents the sun as a symbol of hope. Lithuania's top yellow tricolour band designed in 1918 and which was almost changed to gold in early years of its adoption, represents the rising sun and is today seen to symbolise prosperity.

### **Sunshine**

For Argentina, it may be necessary to introduce a fourth category of gold on flags. A flag that not only displays the sun, but a symbol of once legal tender itself, for the 'Sun of May' is a replica of an engraving which appears on early Argentine currency. The Sun of May is also the national emblem of both Argentina and Uruguay. The latter's flag includes the golden yellow sun in its canton with 16 triangular rays to Argentina's 32. Uruguay's reference is less to money and natural riches, but to *Inti*, the sun god of the Inca religion. North Macedonia's uniquely designed eight-rayed flag with sun represents the 'new sun of Liberty', the name also for the nation's national anthem. A nod of Or surely to the colour of liberalism.

Namibia's golden yellow canton sun brings vexillological life and energy; and shining in Rwanda's upper fly, golden sunshine is a source of enlightenment bringing unity and fighting ignorance, accompanying a yellow band in the pursuit of economic growth. The flag of Kyrgyzstan's depiction of the sun, representing peace and prosperity, is viewed

through a *tunduk*, the opening in the centre of the roof of a yurt, as if in the interior of the yurt. This viewpoint and incorporation of the yurt on the flag is seen to symbolise life, unity of time and space, and the history of Kyrgyz people.

Some nations choose yellow to represent richness, prosperity, and abundance in agriculture. This is so with the flag of Ecuador and the nation's crop and fertile soil. The simple blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag tell a complex story. One thousand years ago, Ukraine was a powerful independent state. It has subsequently been part of the Russian Empire and eventually of the USSR, during which millions of Ukrainians died from war and famine. This beleaguered history gives special significance to the fields of golden corn represented by yellow. The flag of Fiji's fly centre coat of arms features bananas in the fourth quarter for the country's natural resources, plus a gold lion representing Fiji under colonial rule. The only two golden features on the flag and which both represent abundance and eventual rot. I tip my hat to you, Tessa Mackenzie, the designer of the flag, for that subtle vexillological comparative reference.

For fauna we first have the flag of Kazakhstan hosting a steppe eagle and a sun, whose 32 rays resemble grains of wheat, all in Pantone 102U, symbolising wealth and plenitude, and the national ornamental pattern, *koshkar-muiz*, again in 102U, a gold inherited from the Soviet flag by the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. Among the nomadic Kazakh tribes, the eagle is culturally important and has appeared on Kazakh flags for centuries. For the modern nation of Kazakhstan, the eagle is now symbolic power and astuteness and the Kazakh people's 'flight to the future'. Kiribati's armorial banner



Kazakhstan



Fiji

also depicts bird in flight: a golden frigate bird commands a vexillological ocean.

### Conclusion

It can be said the use of gold on a flag is to symbolise richness. This differs depending on what one considers 'rich' to be. We look to Brunei and its yellow most bountiful, statistically, which is unashamedly representative of a sultan and his wealth. It is said that too much gold (in this case on a flag or in pockets), can lead to egotism and self-righteousness in quests for power and influence. There are then nations that consider their wealth in the form of nature, agriculture,



Suriname

and the power of the sun. We look to yellow of other flags like the wisdom and warmth of Grenada, peace and love of Ethiopia, and the golden future and unity of Suriname. This is gold referencing higher ideals of knowledge, compassion, and understanding. Be it money or enlightenment, who really is the winner with a display of gold?

At the point of a flag's adoption, yellow is used to not only represent current ideals, but hope for the future. Or has been used consistently in national flag

design. Be it the flags of Gran Colombia adopted in the 1820s or latest addition to national flags, that of Mauritania in 2017, gold continues to be used. But in the past decade, yellow is more frequently used to symbolise hope. As well as Mauritania, South Sudan's flag (adopted in 2011) represents unity, hope, and determination for all people; yellow represents solidarity on the flag of Myanmar (adopted in 2010). We now see a change in use of yellow in national flag design and of what nations consider their 'wealth' to be, or wish to be.

Flags show a history of wealth, of money, and dynasties of long ago, but is the use of gold representative of a nation today? We look to the economies of African countries and the use and symbolism attributed to the colour. When applied to mineral wealth, it serves to advertise mineral deposits - in most cases, a depleting source. If we look at the flags of nations with the largest gold reserves, whether in total<sup>5</sup> or per capita<sup>6</sup> or even according to the demand for gold jewellery,<sup>7</sup> none use yellow to symbolise the mineral. If we look to the flag of the largest gold hoarder we see its flag using white bands to represent purity and innocence - it would perhaps be difficult to fit on a flag representation of *gold digger* with all those stars and stripes. Is a colour on a flag representative of a nation today? Has a flag now become a vestige of symbolism of what a nation once wanted others to think of it? Does a flag now paint a picture of a history a nation wants us to see? □

#### Notes

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Patrick O'Connor listened to supporters and opponents controversial flag

# 'Look away look away' exposes Mississippi flag dilemma

Malcolm Good

**F**ollowing the very positive reaction to Patrick O'Connor's talk on his documentary film *Look Away* *Look Away* at the Institute's 50th anniversary party, Flagmaster caught up with the filmmaker to hear more about the documentary film dealing with the Mississippi flag controversy.

*Look Away Look Away* follows the debates about replacing the state flag of Mississippi during what was close to a five-year period ending in November 2020. The title of the film and the imagery used to promote it encapsulate what the documentary is about.

The words 'Look Away Look Away' are taken from the chorus of 'Dixie', the *de facto* national anthem of the Confederate States of America, and are displayed on a Confederate battle flag in the film's promotional material. This gives the historical context from which opinions about the flag's removal stem and points towards the opposing views which the film explores. In particular, how people identify with symbols, in this case those used by the Confederate States of America which fought for its existence during the American Civil War (1861-1865).

The documentary opens with the

racist murder of parishioners at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina in June 2015. As the film explains, this led to a rethink on the use of Confederate symbols because of the negative connotations associated with them through their connection with slavery, which the Confederacy sought to defend, and their more recent use by racist groups. This is underlined by footage showing the removal of the Confederate battle flag, the most recognisable symbol of the Confederacy, from the grounds of the South Carolina State Capital in July 2015. The film then turns its attention to Mississippi and its use of the Confederate battle flag in the design of its state flag.

## Passion

Although filmmaker Patrick (Pat) O'Connor is married to a Mississippian and has lived in the state for six years, he is originally from Illinois and thus brings an outsider's perspective to proceedings. That even-handedness allows viewers to see and hopefully understand the passion and reasoning from activists on both sides of the debate. One side believes that the design incorporating the

Confederate battle flag should be retained as it does no more than show pride in their Confederate and southern US heritage. Against that, others agitate for the flag's removal, arguing that the battle flag is a divisive symbol of oppression.

This is something Pat describes as a 'parallax', when the same object can appear to be different depending on the perspective it is viewed from. He expands on that by saying, 'two well-intentioned people can look at the same symbol and see something different', but adds 'that isn't to say that ill-intentioned people don't use Confederate flags as a symbol of hate'.

Pat further explains that 'differences in how we perceive ourselves, in this case from our interpretations of the history of the American Civil War, shaped how people viewed the Confederate battle flag and the Mississippi state flag'. This comes through very clearly in the film where those seeking to retain the flag see its potential removal as part of a wider range of measures that will erase their historical perspective. This includes moves to take down statutes which commemorate the Confederate States. The film highlights this through the violent

scenes in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017 where clashes over the proposed removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee left one protester dead. That incident was inflamed by the presence of a large group who supported retaining the statue espousing white supremacist views.

While the mass rally and killing in Charlottesville garnered headlines, the removal of Confederate statues has seen flashpoints across the southern United States. Pat was on hand to witness opposing groups at a Confederate statue in New Orleans, Louisiana. There he captures on film an activist who he has interviewed previously and who is in favour of retaining the Mississippi state flag being arrested as tempers flare.

The film also demonstrates how well organised the opposing sides are, including efforts to force Mississippi legislators to take a vote on the flag under their preferred terms. All of these twists and turns are shown in *Look Away Look Away* through footage of unfolding events, interviews with activists, opinions from state legislators, recordings of public debates and the views of flag designers. The film then reaches its expected conclusion in April 2020, a continuing impasse with the flag remaining unchanged. Pat describes that lack of a resolution as 'dispiriting'.

### George Floyd

However, in May 2020 George Floyd was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis and Black Lives Matter demonstrations swept the globe. Pat explains how this

impacted on the Mississippi legislature - which would normally have been in recess, but was still in session due to Covid-19 - placing immense pressure on legislators to act. And act they did, the flag containing the Confederate battle flag was removed and designs were invited for its replacement.

Even at this point in the story, *Look Away Look Away* provides us with yet another twist. A flag designed by Laurin Stennis was increasingly used as an alternative



to the now removed state flag and it seemed that flag would be the next flag of Mississippi. However, Laurin Stennis is the granddaughter of former Mississippi US Senator John Stennis who supported segregation. Despite his granddaughter making clear that she opposes her grandfather's views and that being acknowledged by some of those who support changing the flag, her design was rejected due to this family connection. Thus, not only was it important what the replacement flag looked like but also who, or more precisely who did not, design it.

The film does though reach its end point with the introduction of a new state flag which was approved by an overwhelming public vote in November 2020.

The replacement of the Mississippi state flag of course disappointed some but elated others. Pat's sense is that the wider public, perhaps those who leaned one way or the other but did not hold their views strongly, just wanted this to be over and for Mississippi to look forward and not backwards into a history that divided opinion. He does not though see the change of flag as overly commendable, saying that 'the fact it took the killing of

another black man to force the legislature to find a solution is nothing to celebrate'. That said, Pat very much hopes the new state flag will be supported by all Mississippians. This is happening to some degree with businesses and state institutions, including universities across Mississippi, starting to embrace the new design.

Above all *Look Away Look Away* is about identity. It demonstrates how people associate with symbolism through their own sense of self which is informed by their historical perspective and how flag design and the use of flags remains relevant to debates about identity, culture and nationality. □

For more on *Look Away Look Away*: <https://lookawaylookaway.com/>. For more on Confederate symbolism in US State flags: *Flagmaster 161*, Winter 2020, pages 28-35.



Letters, which may be edited, should include a full name and address. See the Masthead on page 2 for address and/or email details.

## NAVA

*As one of 'the group that took over' the North American Vexillological Association in 2017, I was distressed by Scot Guenter's comments in Flagmaster 161. He asserted that NAVA has 'sought to de-emphasize scholarship ... in favor of freedom to make up new flag designs.' That is emphatically not so.*

*If Dr. Guenter had attended our 2020 Annual meeting, he would know that it included the presentation of eight excellent peer-reviewed papers on various aspects of flag history and cultural usage, and several shorter presentations. Those will be published in NAVA's academic journal, Raven (which Dr. Guenter founded during his term as our president), or in our quarterly magazine, Vexillum, as contributions to vexillology. That's what NAVA was founded to do, and we are proud to continue its legacy.*

*Dr. Guenter also mischaracterized NAVA's involvement in flag design. We do not encourage members to 'tell other people how to make flags.' However, we assert that the design of a flag can contribute to its success as a cultural symbol, and that lessons from past efforts can be analyzed and applied to future flag-design projects. Apparently, Dr. Guenter believes that approach lacks 'legitimacy' and 'academic focus.' That's a little like saying that meteorologists should study weather but not provide forecasts.*

*In his seminal 1975 book, Whitney Smith defined vexillology as 'The scientific study of the history, symbolism, and usage of flags, or, by extension, any interest in flags in general.' NAVA will continue to welcome anyone sharing those interests.*

*Peter Ansoff  
President, North American  
Vexillological Association (NAVA)*

## New Flags

*It has been a couple of years since I last wrote, seeking information about various sub-national flags - the librarian was particularly helpful in some Latin American cases, and a few more have come to light elsewhere.*

*I regard Flagmaster in part as a journal of record, sorting out truth from fantasy, and noting developments in the world of flags, be they 'new' flags or historical developments. While other interpretations are often interesting, it is key to know what flags are actually being used, officially or unofficially.*

*My role is mostly as a consumer, but I do like to inform you of flags that I have come across, and of which I do not recall as having appeared in Flagmaster.*

*My recent discoveries include the flags of St. Albans Museum, the 19th century Boer Republic Upingtonia (now in Namibia), Elba (white with a red diagonal, upon which are shown three bees,*

*doubtless a reference to Napoleon), and Somerset House. I also found a meaning of the V-pattern in the flag of Nagorno-Karabagh or Artsakh.*

*Flagmaster has always been very up-to-the-mark on the British 'Confetti of Empire', so as Flagmaster has not mentioned it, I assumed Ascension Island did not have a flag. Thus, I was surprised to see an illustration of it in a large 2016 book Britain's Treasure Islands: A journey to the UK Overseas Territories, by Stewart*



*McPherson. It is a Blue Ensign bearing the Ascension coat of arms. The illustration is not very clear, so one of Flagmaster's drawings would be appreciated - as long as this flag is a reality\*.*

*I hope these notes will be of some use, helping to answer queries over unusual current flags, or of historical gaps. I would like to express my gratitude to all those who helped to produce the most recent, newly-designed Flagmaster, and I look forward to receiving many more of similar quality and interest.*

*Michael Kings, Watford*

\* The Ascension Blue Ensign obtained royal approval early 2013, and was first hoisted 11 May 2013.

Two vexillologists give their opinion on a burning flag issue of the day. You can join, by emailing your view to *Flagmaster*. The question this time is: **Is it ever acceptable - however laudable the sentiments - to deface a national flag with a slogan?**



### The short answer is 'no'

The national flag is the embodiment of the nation's spirit, combining a visual history of the country with the collective aspirations of the citizens. Defining the flag is often one of the first actions taken by a new country emerging from a troubled past. Flag, name, language: these things define people and are fundamental to the concept of citizenship. People fight for their flag and celebrate peace by displaying it with joy. So, is it appropriate to write on your flag? Words on a flag are bad vexillography. They cannot easily be read in any conditions, can be back to front on the reverse and are only in one language which not everyone may speak, and so on. These reasons alone rule out their use but there are further arguments against slogans.

All nations contain groups with a huge

diversity of interests, differing experiences, contrasting political and religious views, and differing cultures. This is even more evident today than in the past whilst nation building, and community cohesion are higher on the agenda than ever before. Symbols under which these diverse groups can hold hands in common purpose are fundamentally important. So, is it acceptable to deface those symbols with slogans reflecting special interests, because different views will always exist however widespread a slogan's appeal may be. A few words can never tell the whole story. Even a slogan with obvious universal relevance needs expanding in conversation and not left hanging as a few words blowing in the breeze awaiting misinterpretation.

So, the long answer also is 'no'.



**Malcolm Farrow** spent 39 years in naval uniform. The Flag Institute's president is currently the Regional Director of ASDIC.

### Yes, why not?

I can sense a thrust from 'them-in-the-know' against words on flags, that is greater than the required push needs to be. Visually I guess most of us prefer flags without text, but from where I stand, polling the public about good design splits two ways. That subgroup having the proviso - 'If it looks good, it earns its right to remain.'

Come on you marching bands - make your text GREAT.

Over the last two years or so, I have been working within a body of folks, looking at how the State Flags of the US could be improved. I believe we can sort most designs into three groups - Good, Bad and Ugly. So far having looked at 31 'underperforming' states, only Alabama has slipped into the study project that currently has no words.

So, I will address the Ugly group first.

Everyone from Arkansas down, really has to address the issue. It's not just a Kansas, Montana, Wisconsin, Oklahoma issue. Words on flags print the opposite way round on the reverse, AWOL almost reads Absent WithOut Leave. Washington state compound the error and ask that the text ring is resewn on the reverse doubling the work required to make the item correctly. 18 words on South Dakota point out that they have a big problem.

The 'bad group' is the smallest subset of these. One word as a slogan, 'Dirigo' or 'Hope' place us directly in New England. At a push, with historical familiarity it can stay but only with consent (come-on-down Pine Tree Flag).

Then you have the 'Good Group' - CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC, Colorado's big 'C' and Ohio's hidden 'O'.



**Alan Hardy** from Nottingham is an industrial designer. US State Flag redesign is his main vexillological interest.

# Through difficulties to the stars

Ian Sumner FF FFI

Thanks to David Prothero for his research assistance

*Drawings by the author*



**O**n 7 April 1918, the newly-created Air Ministry received a letter from an officer, Wing Captain Oliver Swann, in far-off Orkney, enquiring about the appearance of the flag of the Royal Air Force. No-one was able to tell him, because there was no such flag. In fact it would be two years before it would be created, after more than twenty designs were considered and rejected, and involving a cast of characters from King George V to a Devon schoolboy.

The Royal Air Force had been formed only a week before, on 1 April 1918, by the amalgamation of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), an Army formation, and the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS), to form a single independent flying service. The new service may have had many things to worry about following the amalgamation, not least the sudden German advances in France; but in London, someone was able to turn their mind to the question of a flag.

## Early attempts

There was little tradition of flag flying in military aviation circles. A 1913 report entitled *Flags For Aircraft* suggested that all airships, both naval and military, should have a White Ensign painted or

stuck to the envelope, in addition to flying a White Ensign with a commissioning pennant. As for aircraft, it concluded, it was sufficient to identify individual aircraft by a number on the rudder; 'no other marking seems useful or desirable at present'.

The first RFC aircraft to go to France in August 1914 carried no national markings at all. But because aircraft were fired on by friendly and enemy ground troops alike, some form of identification became necessary, and this took the form of a shield-shaped Union Jack, painted on the wings. Since these were painted at the pilot's discretion, they varied greatly in size and artistic ability. By October, British Expeditionary Force (BEF) Headquarters had decided that something larger was required, and the shields were replaced by 'flag-shaped' Union Jacks, which extended across the full chord of the lower wings, and were also painted on the fuselage sides. This was not satisfactory either, for the design was too complicated for easy recognition, and from a distance could be confused with the black cross on German machines.

The flag was abandoned in December 1914 in favour of the French roundel, but with the colours reversed.



*The final design.*

In France, the Headquarters of the RFC did not use a flag at all at first. A flag was devised for the Officer Commanding the RFC in France, Major General Hugh Trenchard, and this first appeared in a BEF General Routine Order of 1 July 1917. It was light blue with a dark blue top and bottom edge and a central horizontal red stripe below the letters 'RFC' in dark blue. This became the headquarters flag for the RFC, but following the creation of the RAF it would become the basis for rank flags, and not of the Service as a whole. The origins of the colours are unknown, but may have at least a partial origin in the colours of the full dress uniform of the Royal Flying Corps, which was dark blue with red facings.

### **The Admiralty intervenes**

In May 1918, following Wing Captain Swann's enquiry, Brigadier Albert Fletcher, Head of Air Quartermaster Services at the Air Ministry, wrote to the War Office, asking if they had any objection to the RAF adopting as a flag either a White Ensign, but with the red cross omitted, or alternatively, a plain light blue ensign. They did not. It would not be such an easy passage, however, with the Senior Service.

The Admiralty objected to both designs, on the

grounds that they were both closely connected with the naval service, and suggested that the RAF might adopt a Union Flag with 'some appropriate added device' instead. Suitably chastened, on 14 June 1918, Fletcher's deputy ordered a specimen flag from Messrs. Unite, of Edgeware Road, London, specifying a Union Flag defaced in the centre with a shield bearing a crown over an eagle. The blue of the central design (the shield) was to be 'in harmony, or of a similar colour to the authorised blue employed in the rest of the flag'. The result was not good, and the flag was declared insufficiently distinctive. The Air Council returned to the idea of a White Ensign without a cross, and asked Lord Weir, Secretary of State for Air, to intervene with his opposite number, Sir Eric Geddes, First Lord of the Admiralty, on their behalf.

Geddes was unable to achieve anything, for Their Lordships were adamant. On 18 July 1918, the minutes of the Air Council, the governing body of the service, record that 'the Admiralty experts were getting out a design'. A fortnight later, those 'experts' suggested a Union Flag with a white margin, defaced with 'emblematic wings on a white surround' in the centre. The Air Council agreed, with the proviso that the 'wings' were to

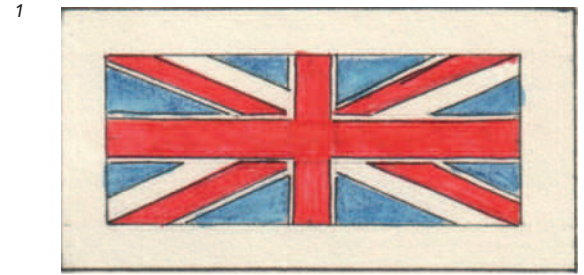
be the newly created RAF crest, which consisted of the RAF eagle within a strap inscribed *Per Ardua Ad Astra*, all ensigned with a crown. The Ministry returned to Unite on 1st August, and asked for a new flag to be made up.

An Admiralty memo of 16 August 1918 commented that the proposal rather resembled the King's Harbour Master's flag, or, without the badge, letter D in the Naval Code, also known as the Pilot Jack. The writer of the memo did not seem too unhappy at this prospect, stating that the King's Harbour Master's flag was only rarely used, and that the Pilot Jack was hard to distinguish and costly to make. Yet this view did not hold throughout the rest of the Admiralty, for within a month, another section of the Admiralty was stating its objections, which were exactly the same as those of 16 August; they could not therefore approve of the new flag they had themselves designed.

On 27 August, the Air Council chose the white bordered Union Flag, but then the Board of Trade also voiced their objections, because of the similarity to the Pilot Jack. In a memo, Fletcher's deputy gave vent to his frustration, 'I suggest the Air Council take a definite stand and decide on the RAF blue ensign'.

In fact, the Air Council returned to the idea of a White Ensign without a cross, and wrote again to the Admiralty, stating that they failed to see what the Admiralty's objections were, since it was not proposed that the RAF flag should be used at sea, only at RAF stations on land (a little fib, since the RAF operated a large number of small craft supporting seaplane squadrons).

The Air Council advanced the argument that the Admiralty had no legal right to object to such an ensign in peacetime. In wartime, certainly, matters were different: the Admiralty had exclusive use of the White Ensign under Defence of the Realm Regulation (DRR) 25c, not only at sea, but also on rivers 'as far as great ships go', and on Naval stations on land. The Air Ministry was also able to quote the example of the Royal Yacht Squadron,



who were permitted to fly a White Ensign as their club flag. They asked the Treasury Solicitor to intervene, but that office decided it was not a legal problem, unless it was deemed that the flag somehow contravened DRR 25c.

In November 1918, the Norwich Coastguard reported to the Admiralty that the RAF training school at Aldeburgh, Suffolk, was flying a White Ensign, as was the nearby former RNAS aerodrome at New Hazlewood. As naval establishments, RNAS stations would have routinely flown a White Ensign, and the Air Ministry had never countermanded the orders.

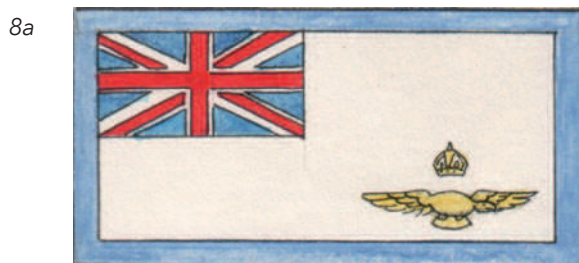
In December, the Air Ministry tried to refer the whole matter to the King to try and break the impasse. But the King refused to get involved, saying the matter should be referred, if anywhere, to the War Cabinet.

Yet despite the problems that had arisen in the previous year, on 14 April 1919, the new First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, wrote to Jack Seeley MP, Under Secretary of State for Air, suggesting a number of designs, one of which was a Union Flag with a white border - the same design that had provoked so much opprobrium from the Admiralty and Board of Trade in the previous year (Figs. 1-5).

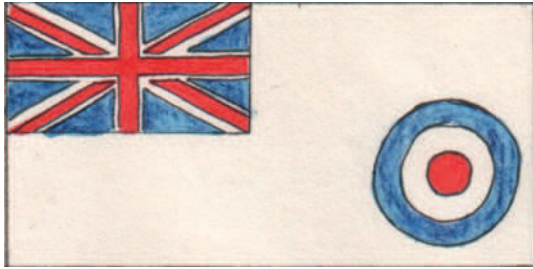
Two further proposals may be shown here. They are undated, but stylistically seem to be on a par with Wemyss' proposals (Figs. 6-7).

### St Michael's Cross

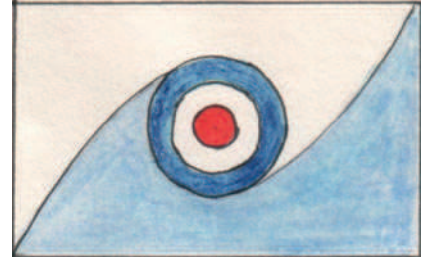
The RAF was not to be dismayed. A further design, consisting of a white flag with a Union canton, and a wide dark blue cross throughout, bearing a crown above an eagle in yellow in the centre, was made up to be shown to the King by Seeley (Fig. 8). The RAF were so confident of the flag that it was taken by airship to the King at Windsor with great ceremony. But the King rejected the design, for he thought it inappropriate for the RAF to have an ensign, as it would lead to confusion with the Royal Navy's White Ensign with its (slightly narrower) red cross. This was doubly disappointing, for it would appear that, at one stage, the King was not completely opposed to such a flag. Seeley expressed his disappointment to Lord Cromer, the King's Private Secretary, 'the cross was made



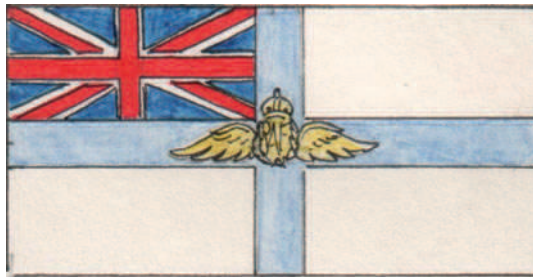
twice as broad as the red cross on the White Ensign, as suggested by the King ... and the crown and wings were placed in the centre of the cross on the blue ground instead of on the white diamond - the latter alteration made on the advice of the Herald's College.' Not even referring to the blue cross as 'St Michael's cross', instead of a blue St George's cross, helped. Another proposal, seemingly from around this period was from a Flight Lieutenant W. Su... (the name in the original is illegible). (Fig.8a)



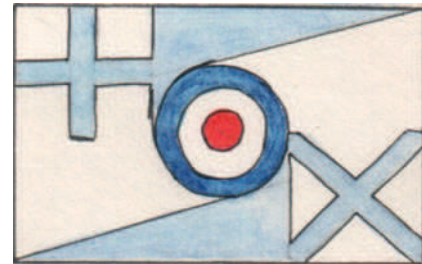
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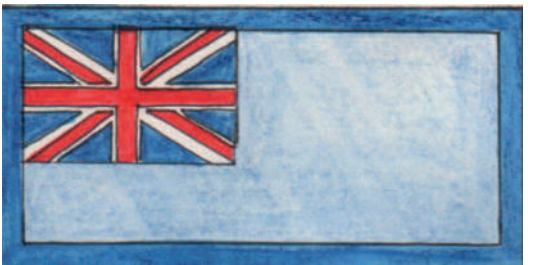
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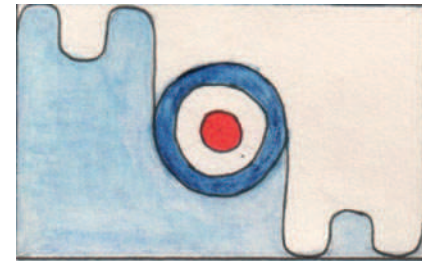
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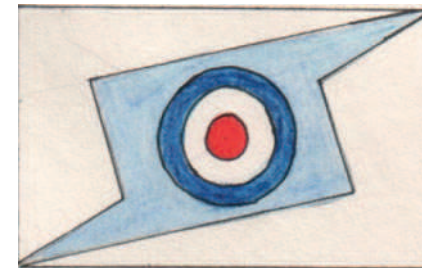
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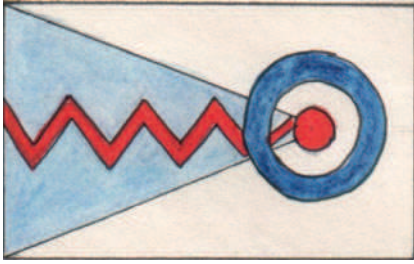
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The flag issue was then referred to a committee consisting of senior officers and politicians, formed to sort out the conflicts that had arisen over the various jurisdictions of Army, Navy and Air Force, in the hope that it might be able to devise a suitable flag. But in vain.

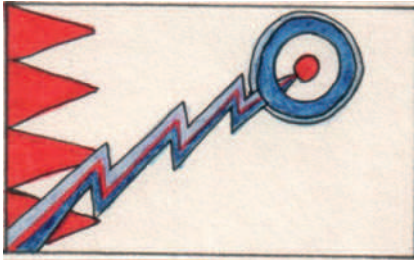
It would appear that news of the RAF's difficulties had become more widely known. On 4 October 1919, an enterprising schoolboy, Master D.A.G. Smith, of Blundell's School, Tiverton, wrote to the Air Ministry, enclosing four designs for an RAF flag (*Figures 9-12*). At the end of the same month,

the Air Ministry wrote to Smith, thanking him for his interest, but declaring that none were suitable.

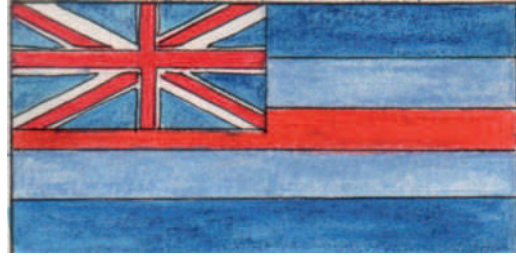
In the same month, the Air Ministry were forced to admit to the Admiralty that no design had yet been chosen. The Admiralty were able to riposte with a complaint that strange flags had been sighted flying from the Air Force Pier at Inverkeithing in Scotland. In February 1919, a white ensign with a blue cross [sic] had been flown together with a pennant, and in September this has changed to a more conventional naval ensign. They insisted that such practice must



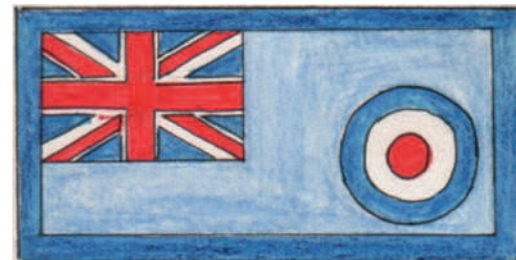
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come to a halt. The following month came the rejoinder from the Air Ministry: on 21 November, Air Force Weekly Orders forbade the flying of White Ensigns, and ordered that Union Flags were to be flown instead, until further notice. On the 28th, the Air Ministry was able to write, rather disingenuously, to the Admiralty that, 'It is now some time since a White Ensign was flown by the RAF at Inverkeithing Bay, and it would therefore appear you have been misinformed on the matter.'

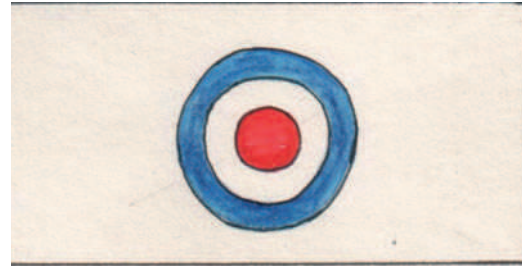
### 'Modern aeroplanes'

In November 1919, an Air Ministry official noticed that an artist named E. McKnight Kauffer had designed a poster which included a 'modern aeroplane' for the Daily Herald newspaper, and suggested that he be asked to submit designs for a flag, if terms could be agreed. Kauffer duly submitted three designs, of which the Ministry acknowledged receipt on 14 January 1920. Kauffer followed this up by asking for a fee of fifty guineas (£52.50p, or about £5,989 in contemporary values), which the Ministry thought excessive. The drawings no longer appear to be in the file, although there are several with a signature that might be Kauffer's (Figures 13-16).

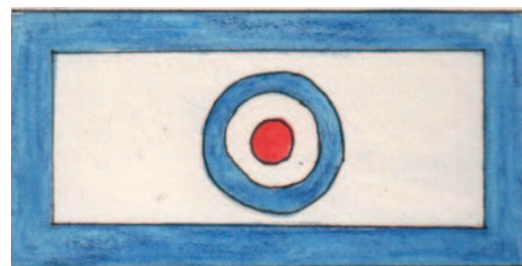
There are two further drawings, in a similar



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'modern' style, which may also be by Kauffer, but are unsigned and undated (Figures 15-16). At the King's suggestion, a submission was compiled in January 1920 to lay before the War

Cabinet, and a suggested flag was included. This was little more than a modified version of the old RFC Headquarters flag, with a Union in the canton (*Fig.19*). Nothing more was heard of this, for after all the new RAF was more than just the RFC.

Work still went on within the Air Ministry, and further designs were gathered. An unsuccessful one came from the Air Ministry's own Director-General of Supply (*Fig.20*). But on 6 February, surely influenced, if only indirectly, by young Master Smith, the Air Council was able to report that three designs had been selected (*Figs. 21-23*). Flag manufacturer Edgingtons was asked to make an example of each of the three designs, and senior officers were asked for their opinion.

Air Vice Marshal Hugh Salmond, commanding Southern Area, preferred the design on white, but complained that there was no Union. It was important, he said, that there was a Union on the flag in order to demonstrate 'British Authority' abroad, especially to 'native populations'. He suggested adding a Union in the canton, and moving the roundel to the lower fly. Air Vice Marshal Arthur Vyvyan, commanding Coastal Area, preferred the white flag with the blue border, with the plain white one as second choice. Only these two replies survive, but on 5 May 1920, the Air Council noted that the preference of senior officers was for the white flag with the roundel.

### **The final design**

Nevertheless, the white flag was not the final design that was chosen. But it was a combination of that flag, plus Salmond's suggestion of a Union Jack, all placed on a light blue background (*Fig.24*). This was taken to the King for approval on 10 June 1920. He gave his approval, subject to the roundel being larger, one week later. A formal Order in Council establishing the flag was issued on 24 March 1921.

Only at this point, perhaps mindful of previous

exchanges, did the Air Ministry approach the Admiralty. Their Lordships could do nothing to object, since the King had already given his approval, but they remained unhappy, stating that according to the College of Arms, there was no difference between shades of blue, therefore the proposed flag was simply a defaced Blue Ensign. They suggested the RAF fly the Union Jack on land and on aircraft a Union Jack defaced by the roundel, 'instead of attempting to adapt one of the Maritime Ensigns. As however the matter has already been submitted to HM the King, who has



24

expressed His approval of the proposal of the Air Council, Their Lordships find themselves precluded from pressing their view, of the soundness of which they remain convinced.'

Although it stated that it would not press its view, the Admiralty Board continued to do so, and minuted that the RAF should, like other departments of State, use the Union Flag ashore, and on aircraft the Union Flag with the roundel.

The new flag was promulgated in Air Force Weekly Order 1130 of 31 December 1920. It was to be hoisted daily at headquarters, areas and independent commands, airstrips and stations as appropriate. The size was given as six feet by twelve feet, although in bad weather, and at the discretion of the commanding officer, a half-size version could be flown. A style of mast to be erected was also included in the order, where the RAF flag flew at the peak, whilst the rank flag of the commanding officer flew at the masthead.

Within days of the new flag being hoisted, young Master Smith of Tiverton wrote to the Air Ministry expressing his surprise at seeing the adoption of a flag that was very similar to one of his suggested designs, after he had been told that none of his designs were suitable. The matter had occurred to someone in the Ministry in the previous August, who minuted, 'I do not know that any particular person was responsible for the final design of the ensign. I think that Master D. Smith was the first who suggested the circles, and although he was told that his design was not being adopted, I think he might be awarded £5 and informed that the first of his proposals has been embraced.' This view was not echoed in January, when another official expostulated, 'This boy did not invent this flag.' Nevertheless, the Ministry wrote to Smith acknowledging his contribution (but not giving him any money).

### The Ensign afloat

The flag was also used on RAF vessels, although this too was not without its problems, as the Admiralty continued to strive to have the last word. The 1921 Order in Council provided that the Ensign could be worn at sea in such a manner and on such occasions as the Air Council might order, and the Air Ministry Order that established the flag also stated that it might be used on RAF vessels. Yet, in 1947, the former German vessel, the *MV Friesland*, taken over by the RAF after the end of the Second World War, was boarded in the Firth of Forth by Customs officials who refused to recognise the validity of the ensign. Passed to the Naval Law Branch of the Admiralty, the latter commented that although King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions permitted the use of the RAF ensign, it was open to question whether this superseded section 573 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894, which stipulated the use of a Red Ensign, unless there was a special Admiralty warrant, which in this case there was not. The high-speed launches used by Air-Sea Rescue services avoided the issue by flying the ensign from the mast, rather than the ensign staff, but the matter remained unresolved until the RAF's Marine Branch was disestablished in 1986. □



*The Ensign in use to-day, flying with the rank flag of an Air Vice-Marshal. Photo: Sgt Ralph Merry ABIPP RAF/MOD*

### Sources

National Archives, Kew.  
AIR 2/34 Air Ministry: *Flags for aircraft: report of an inter-departmental committee 1913-14.*  
AIR 2/155 Air Ministry: Use of RAF flag.  
AIR 5/333 Part II Air Ministry: Flag and crest for the Royal Air Force.  
ADM 1/12493 Admiralty: Flags for the Royal Air Force: discussion on various designs including ensigns.  
ADM 1/19970 Admiralty: RAF merchant vessel *Friesland*: query concerning regulations governing wearing of RAF ensign.  
ADM 1/21665 Admiralty: request for information concerning exact status of HM Air Force vessels.  
TS 27/67 Treasury Solicitor: Royal Air Force: question of right to use White Ensign without St George's Cross.

## Events, Conferences, and Meetings

The FI 50th Anniversary Golden Jubilee programme begun on St George's Day, 23 April – 50 years to the day from the FI's creation by Dr William Crampton. It was a celebratory evening of FI grandees and guest speakers including FIAV and Croatian Heraldic and Vexillological Association President, Lt. Col. Dr Željko Heimer and Chairman of the Flags and Heraldry Committee APPG, Andrew Rosindell MP. There was also a presentation from Patrick O'Connor, a film-maker, director, and producer who presented his *Look Away, Look Away* documentary about the Mississippi flag controversy. A memorable evening with FI members past and present from around the world.

With events still restricted to the virtual world, the event was held on Zoom with the scheduled David Game College event postponed until 23 April 2022, which will close the FI Jubilee programme.

The 12-month programme of Golden Jubilee events continues throughout the 50th anniversary year. More details of these events and how to register will be sent in advance of each event.

**Thursday 15 July 2021** for a special online event in collaboration with Heraldica Slovenica.

**Friday 3 September 2021** for a special online event to celebrate Merchant Navy Day.

**Saturday 20 November 2021** for a return to in-person conferences at the FI 2021 AGM and Winter Conference to be held at the People's History Museum, Manchester. Preceded by a Council meeting the evening prior.

**Saturday 23 April 2022** is the close for the Jubilee programme at the FI 2022 Spring Conference to be held at David Game College, London. Preceded by a Council meeting the evening prior. An FI Council meeting of 11 January 2021 (online) with main talking points the arrangements for the Flag Institute's 50th anniversary programme, the Athelstaneford Appeal, online availability of *The Colours of the Fleet and Badges of the British Commonwealth*.

An FI Council meeting of 22 April 2021 (online) with main talking points a draft of a new FI strategic plan and the ongoing 50th anniversary FI programme. Next Council meeting is Tuesday 24 August 2021 (online).

### William Crampton Library

The latest journals to arrive in the library:  
*Banderas* 157 (2020), 158 (2021);

*Der Flaggenkurier* 52 (2020); *Drapeaux et Pavillons* 146 (2020), 147 (2021); *Flaga* 50 (2020), 51 (2020); *Flagmaster* 161 (2020); *Gaceta de banderas* 226 (2021), 227 (2021), 228 (2021); *Heroldi* 8 (2019), 9 (2020); *Info-FIAV* 52 (2020); *Macedonian Herald* 15 (2020); *SAVA Newsletter* 89 (2020); *Vexi.info* 172 (2020); *Vexil.la Catalana* (in its third incarnation) 1 (2021); *Vexilla Italica* 91 (2020); *Vexilla Notizie* 38 (2021); *Vexilloid Tabloid* 86 (2021), 87 (2021); *Vexillum* 12 (2020), 13 (2021); *Vexiloargentina* 8 (2020); *Vexilologie* 191 (2019), 192 (2019), 193 (2019), 194 (2019), 195 (2020), 196 (2020), 197 (2020), 198 (2020); *Vlag!* 28/286 (2021); *Zászlómúzeum Info* 2020/2, 2020/4, 2020/5, 2121/1.

The library catalogue is now available online on the FI website at <https://www.flaginstitute.org/wp/explore/library-catalogue/>. The catalogue will be updated twice a year with the next update due in November 2021. FI members can download the *New in the Library* document to highlight new arrivals. The list of journals with all available issues in the FI library are now fully indexed to include *Blazon 'kaj flag'* bulteno (Czech Republic), *Flaga* (Poland), *Flagwaver* (USA), *Grb i Zastava* (Croatia) and *Vexilokontakt* (Czech Republic). □



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