



## Public Vote on an East Lothian Flag

A growing number of areas in Scotland have designed and registered their own distinctive civic flag and recent examples include not just counties (eg Caithness 2016) but islands (eg Barra 2017) and even towns (eg Denny & Dunipace 2016). Civic flags allow individuals and groups to express pride in their community, celebrate their heritage, and raise awareness of their locality.

Early in 2017 during preparation for *The Story of St Andrew & the Saltire*, Museums officers pressed the Trust to include in the exhibition something interactive for people attending to engage with. This led to the Flag Trust considering a possible civic flag design competition for East Lothian. Research made it clear, however, that best practice should be followed, with experience elsewhere suggesting it is best to both to form a partnership with others and to involve the public in designing/choosing a new flag.

So rather than go it alone, the Trust approached East Lothian Council and the Lord Lyon, and was delighted to get a positive response from both. A petition was duly lodged with the Lyon Court, and on St Andrew's Day 2017, the East Lothian Flag Competition was launched. One of the boards in the Trust's exhibition was able to highlight the competition.

Guidelines were published and distributed, providing advice to aspiring flag designers with an emphasis on the need to keep any design simple, not to use too many colours, or any words, or be as intricate as a formal coat of arms. The guidance asked that the design should try to be recognisable and reflect the county as a whole.

By the deadline of 28 February, over 600 entries had been



Launch of the Flag Competition in the Town House, Haddington

submitted, many from schools, and some from overseas. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a large number of entries were based on or included in the design a Saltire, in various sizes, shapes and colours, – recognition that East Lothian is the birthplace of Scotland's flag.

A judging panel, comprising the Lord Lyon, the Lord Lieutenant of East Lothian and the Provost of East Lothian Council and the Flag Trust Chair, subsequently met and began the difficult task of whittling the entries down to a short list of the very best designs. Preparations are underway to put these out to a public vote over the summer. The intention is that the winning flag design will be officially registered, and then publicly launched at a ceremony in November 2018. Watch this space!

## Farewell to Joanne

The Rev Joanne Evans-Boiten, Parish Minister of Athelstaneford for the last 8 years, has said her goodbyes and left for France where she is setting up a spiritual retreat in the town of Montcuq, north of Toulouse. She was a great friend to the Scottish Flag Trust throughout her stay, and on her arrival in 2009 initiated a special service for St Andrew at the

end of November, which grew to become an annual event. At the end of the service, Joanne and the congregation, led by pipers, would process from the Church to the Saltire Memorial. There she would bless the flag before it was raised to the top of the flagpole to the singing of the Saltire Anthem. She will be greatly missed, and the Trustees wish her well.

*Flowers are presented to Joanne after the Trust's March meeting.*

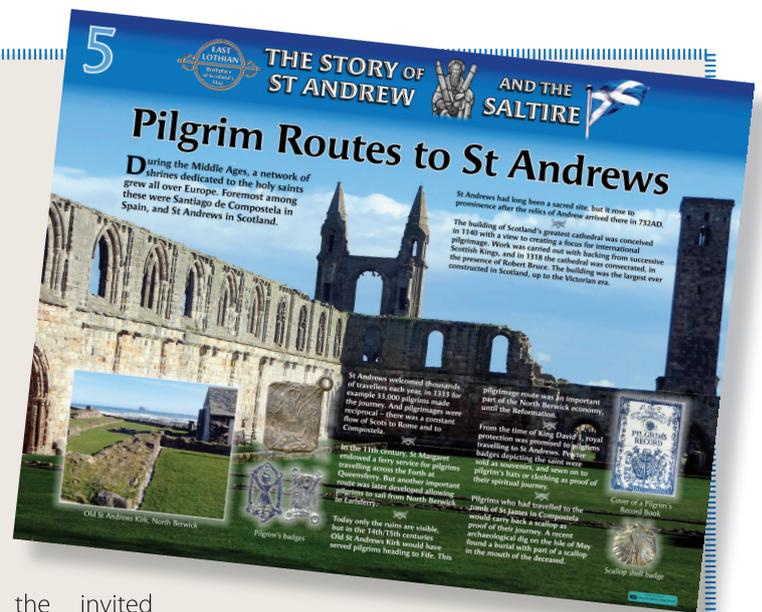


# Exhibition Success



To mark the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Flag Heritage Centre in Athelstaneford in 1997, the Trust staged a public exhibition in the John Gray Centre Gallery, Haddington, which ran from November 2017 to January 2018. The exhibition, entitled *The Story of St Andrew and the Saltire*, proved a major success and attracted many visitors. East Lothian Council's Museums Service, which has responsibility for the Centre, was delighted with the display and attendance figures.

The Trustees were honoured when Cabinet Secretary Fergus Ewing MSP accepted the invitation to formally open the exhibition and he did so on 31st October. Fergus has represented Inverness in the Scottish Parliament since 1999, and is the son of the Trust's Patron, Winnie Ewing. In addressing



the invited audience, he echoed the words of former Trustee and author/historian, Nigel Tranter, in describing Athelstaneford as a special place *"It can be given to few, if any nations, other than Scotland, to be able to point to a locality where its nationhood was conceived, if not yet born, its patron saint adopted, and its national flag established"*. The Cabinet Secretary added he was thrilled to discover that that he was named after Angus mac Fergus, High King of Alba, the victor of the 9th century Battle of Athelstaneford.

Visitors to the exhibition were able to enjoy some significant display items which had been kindly loaned from other other collections, including the National Museum of Scotland and Fife Museums.

The Trust is indebted to graphic artist Scott Ballantyne for his fine work in designing all of the exhibition material, including the boards, one of which is shown.

## STOP PRESS

\* **Trustee:** Historian and author Michael Turnbull stood down in March 2018, after 4 years as a Trustee. Michael's books include *Saint Andrew: Myth, Legend and Reality*. He contributed a great deal to the work of the Trust, including giving lectures to local groups, and providing content for the Trust's recent exhibition, in particular the relevance of Constantine to the legend.

\* **Friends:** In the 1990s *Friends of the Scottish Flag Trust* was set up to provide support for the work of the Trust in maintaining/promoting the birthplace. The minimum cost of becoming a Friend was set at £10 which has remained the position ever since. In March this year, however, the Trustees decided to increase the minimum charge to £25.

\* **Toilet:** Over the years, East Lothian Council has provided generous support to the Trust in the form of organising the weekly cleaning of the toilet behind the Kirk which serves visitors to the Heritage Centre. However, due to budgetary cutbacks, this support has been withdrawn for 2018. Thankfully, the Trust has been able to source a local cleaner to continue the service.

\* **Used Flags:** There continues to be a steady demand, much of it from the US, for used Saltires which have been flown at the flagpoles by the Saltire Memorial and the Heritage Centre. Depending on the severity of winter gales, flags tend to be replaced every 6 months or so. Waiting times for a flag flown at this historic site are currently running at between 18 and 24 months.

## Flagpole Repairs

The Scottish Flag has proudly flown above Athelstaneford Kirkyard since 1965 when the Memorial was erected to mark the flag's origins, and there has hardly been a day since when the flag has not been flying. So when the flagpole rope broke and the flag came down in late November, this was a disaster! The only time the Trustees had managed to lower the flagpole before had taken days of organisation, 4 people, and lots of ropes. The decision was therefore taken to put out an emergency call to the professionals, Stevensons Flags of Glasgow, who thankfully were able to respond promptly. Their operator Brian not only took the flagpole down single handedly (to our amazement!), but he took the opportunity to replace the finial and fit a stronger rope, so there should be no maintenance problems for years to come.



Trustee David Johnston and grandson learning the ropes from Brian