



Saddleworth White Rose Society

Newsletter 42

Champion Brass Phil Beck Promotions and Gilbert Symes.

Spring 2009

Phil Beck Promotions, Gilbert Symes and the Navigation Band conducted by Mr Derek Broadbent, did a great service for both the Saddleworth Branch, (West & South Yorkshire Region) Royal British Legion and the Saddleworth Yorkshire Day Group and is very much appreciated by these organisations. This wonderful concert held at the Saddleworth Civic Hall, Uppermill raised £600 for each organisation and Mrs Kath Airey ran a very successful stall for Saddleworth White Rose Society.

Gilbert who, as usual, kept the audience transfixed with a constant stream of jokes and with his wide knowledge of brass bands and music has a more than usual interest in both these organisations. He is not only a keen member and supporter of Saddleworth White Rose Society and regularly reads the "Yorkshire Declaration of Integrity" on Yorkshire Day at the ceremony at Saddleworth Museum but his three sons are currently serving in the Army, one of whom is in Iraq.



From left sons Cpl. Ian Symes, Light Cavalry Band, stationed in Dorset. L/Cpl. Mathew Symes, Royal Logistics Corps, Germany, Gilbert and Cpl. now Sgt. Steven Symes also Royal Logistics Corps and serving in Iraq.



Mrs Kath Airey left Mrs Brenda Cockayne centre and Mrs Joan Bradbury of the Saddleworth Yorkshire Day Group with their £600 cheque from Phil Beck Promotions. Mrs Kath Airey also ran the SWRS stand.



Gilbert Symes entertaining the audience between pieces. Mr Derek Broadbent, conductor and the Navigation Inn Band



The audience show their appreciation at the end of an excellent performance by all who took part.

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The Perrin Lecture: The Development of County Flags in the United Kingdom

Speaker: Graham Bartram – Chief
Vexillologist, The Flag Institute

Palace of Westminster – 4th November 2008

A Report by Peter Boyce, 6th Jan 2009

These notes present a summary of Rupert Barnes and my trip to the Perrin lecture in November and our subsequent discussions with the Flag Institute about the registration of county flags. Actually, most of the notes about the lecture itself I have lifted more or less directly from a review Rupert wrote. My thanks and apologies to him. I haven't credited his name to this report, since all of the value judgements and recollections of conversations in it are mine and I didn't want to misrepresent him!

The lecture was hosted by Andrew Rosindell MP, a patron of both ABC and the Flag Institute. About 40 people attended the lecture. Ann Winterton (MP for Congleton) turned up half way through. Aside from her and Andrew (and us), all of those present were FI members or associates.

The Flag Institute is dedicated to the study of flags, or “vexillology”. It has become a respected authority in the field. Seeing the recent, spontaneous appearance of “county flags”, the Flag Institute has taken upon itself to bring order to the field; to regulate and improve the quality of county flags. They have created “the UK Flags Register”, to be the definitive record.

The Association of British Counties stands for traditional counties and county traditions. County flags are not traditional though; only Cornwall's is very old, most are 21st century. Nevertheless, the local pride and identity they represent are very much our thing. Our concern is to ensure that a “county” flag represents a real County, not a transient local government concept.

The meeting was opened by the Institute's President, Michael Farrow OBE. Mr Farrow launched straight into the matter at hand. County flags are a new phenomenon, and a fascinating one. The task of getting some order to such things he compared with herding cats, and after hearing the story of county flags so far, one could understand why. For that though he handed over to the main speaker; Graham Bartram, the Chief Vexillologist of the Flag Institute.

Mr Bartram was born in Montrose, Angus and now lives in Pinner, Middlesex, two eminent Counties to give a sound perspective. Flags are about Identity, he explained. A man may have many overlapping identities; Mr Bartram claims identity as a man of Montrose, of Angus, as a Briton and as a Scot, amongst others. We all have the Union Flag to express our identity, but a part of anyone's identity is his county, and this has been reflected in the adoption of county flags.

The Flag Institute will accept only historic Counties as founts of County identity. The men of Angus are attached to their county, but no man felt attached to “Tayside”, and none will identify with “Bath and North-East Somerset”. Therefore all county flags must be for historic counties, not for local government areas which, as Mr Bartram observed, change seemingly every week.

County flags differ in their origins. They have arisen individually, not as a nationwide project. It is instructive to look at how they arose.

The oldest of the flags is that of Cornwall; a plain white cross on black, quite ubiquitous in Cornwall now and devised in the nineteenth century. Essex and Kent have older designs (as badges if not as flags); three seaxes and a white stallion are the arms anachronistically attributed respectively to the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms of Essex and Kent since at least Elizabethan times. Derived from the Essex arms are those granted in 1910 to Middlesex County Council. That design has flown as a flag for many years, and may still be seen flying at the Middlesex County Show each summer.

The Pembrokeshire flag came from activism and local acceptance. The idea of local stalwart Peter Stock, when his beloved county was scrubbed from the maps in 1974, it has flown ever since. The Yorkshire Ridings Society and the Friends of Real Lancashire have promoted their respective white and red rose flags for many years. All three flags were registered in 2008.

A Shetland flag has been flown since 1969, the 500th anniversary of Shetland's transfer from Norwegian to Scottish rule. In Scotland though all flags are controlled by the law of arms and it was not until 2005 that the Lord Lyon made an official grant of the flag to the local council. He granted Orkney a flag too in April 2007.

The registered Northumberland flag is a banner of the arms of Northumberland County Council, which is to say the design of the Council's shield spread onto a flag. Under heraldic law, such a banner is the strict property of the armiger, the County Council. The Council "released" the banner for general use by Northumberland folk in 1996 and so the Flag Institute felt able to register it (noting on the register that Northumberland is wider than merely the county council area). Since the lecture Hertfordshire County Council too has released its own banner.

Mr Bartram has reviewed other councils' arms and considers many unsuitable to serve as flags. That gives scope for creative ideas to step forward.

The latest flurry of county flags began in Devon in 2002, the idea no doubt spurred by the success of neighbouring Cornwall's flag. A public competition was held through the BBC, and a striking design chosen. Local businesses created a "Devon Flag Group" to make and sell them, and soon the flags were flying all across Devonshire. (The same year a competition in the Scilly News in 2002 created a local flag for the Isles of Scilly, showing that it is not just counties which may have flags.)

Since then, the BBC has run public competitions for flags in Lincolnshire (2005), Derbyshire (2006) and Sussex (2008, unregistered). The latter was the initiative of ABC member Ian Steedman. Elsewhere other routes have been followed; the Sheriff of Gloucestershire initiated a competition which resulted in an interesting green, blue and cream flag known as the "Severn Cross" (2008). In Dorset a flag was chosen by a public competition held by the County Council. The "St Wite's Cross" is certainly the brightest and most cheerful flag so far.

So far 16 counties of 92 have flags. There are more current proposals, promoted by individuals or groups. Rupert was cheered to hear the positive reaction to the Huntingdonshire proposal he developed.

The meeting concluded with Andrew Rosindell encouraging all those present to seek the registration of further county flags with the aim of getting a flag registered for all 92 Historic Counties.

Note: The Flag Institute does not recognise the administrative areas created in 1974, (*otherwise known as Mickey Mouse counties*) as real Counties. The UK Flags Register only registers flags to the Real, Historic Counties. The Yorkshire flag covers the whole Historic County of Yorkshire right up to County End where Springhead, Yorkshire meets Lees, Lancashire. Both of these places were under the administration *only*, of Greater Manchester Council until that body was abolished in 1988. They are both now administered *only*, by the joint borough council.

Presentation of the Yorkshire Flag to the City of York



(photo G Bayley Chairman SWRS)

On Wednesday 7th January 2009 a ceremony was held in the ancient Guild Hall of York, which is the official residence of the Lord Mayor of York, the Rt. Hon. Councillor Brian Walker (black and gold robe). The official Yorkshire flag was presented to the Lord Mayor in the presence of Hon Alderman David Wilde, Sheriff of York (red and gold robe). The flag is now on permanent public display in the Guild Hall.



(photo G Bayley Chairman SWRS)

Cllr Chris Abbott left Chairman Yorkshire Ridings Society and the Hon Alderman David Wilde, Sheriff of York.

The Saddleworth Morris Men (West Riding of Yorkshire)



Saddleworth Morris Men with their drum bearing the White Rose of Yorkshire.



The Saddleworth rush cart on it's way up to Saddleworth Church, pulled by Morris Men from many different Counties.

The Rushcart Story

The origins of the Rushcart are unknown but it is thought to be pre-Christian. In the Christian era it became the practice for each village and hamlet in Saddleworth to build a cart of rushes and take them to the local church where the rushes mixed with fragrant herbs would be spread on the floor as insulation against the cold of winter. The Rushcart grew into a festival held on the annual wakes or mill holidays. There would be music dancing and other entertainments. Each village community in Saddleworth would try to outdo the others by building a bigger or more elaborate structure with the front covered by a sheet decorated with tinsel and artificial flowers and hung with polished copper, brass silver and household items.

The coming of the railways led to a decline in interest in Rushcarts as the local population were able to travel further afield for their annual break. The Rushcarts eventually died out in the early 20th century.

The Rushcart tradition was revived in 1975 by the newly formed Saddleworth Morris Men. The story of the Rushcart can be found in Peter Ashworth's book 'Rushcarts in Saddleworth'. It records how Harold Buckley encouraged Peter and the other Morris Men to move beyond dancing and to re-establish the Rushcart. Doubt turned into determination and a cart was found at a local farm, stangs were bought from a timber firm and a rope acquired. With the help of old plans, books and Harold, the Rushcart was built in the traditional location of the Commercial, Uppermill. Despite being dismissed by one old timer as 'nowt like one' the first Rushcart for over 50 years was ready and on the Saturday morning emerged from behind the Commercial to renew the old tradition. The 1975 audience of about two is in contrast to the hundreds who now gather in Uppermill. The Rushcart is built onto a two-wheeled cart into a slightly conical shape. It is 13 feet high and weighs 2 tons. it is trimmed and decorated with heather and then on the Saturday morning the front is dressed with a banner made by a man chosen from the ranks of Saddleworth Morris Men who sits astride the Rushcart with only two Rowan branches to support him. He is supplied with Ale for the day in a copper kettle. The cart is then pulled around the Saddleworth villages by Morris Men from all over the UK and sometimes from abroad. There are usually 150 men in the stangs fixed to the cart by a strong rope. On Sunday the Rushcart is taken to St Chad's Church above Uppermill where the top is dismantled and in keeping with tradition the rushes are mixed with fragrant herbs and flowers and then symbolically spread in the aisles. The Rushcart is now firmly established in a Saddleworth Calendar that includes the Whit Friday Procession of Witness, Band Contests, Beer Walk, Saddleworth Folk Festival and Yorkshire Day.

(Edited material used by kind permission of Saddleworth Morris Men)

Yorkshire Country Women's Association

Saddleworth Branch meetings 2nd quarter 2009

29th April 09 AGM.

27th May 09 Customs & Cultures of Malaysia.

30th Jun 09 Home Made (Bring & Buy)

Meetings commence 7.0 pm at the Methodist Hall, Uppermill.