

~THE COUNTIES~

ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COUNTIES
NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN/WINTER 2009



WINCHESTER, HAMPSHIRE

GOVERNMENT STATEMENT 1974:

"THE NEW COUNTY BOUNDARIES ARE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS
AND WILL NOT ALTER THE TRADITIONAL BOUNDARIES OF COUNTIES,
NOR IS IT INTENDED THAT THE LOYALTIES OR PEOPLE LIVING IN THEM
WILL CHANGE."

The Association of British Counties

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Editorial

Welcome to the somewhat new-look newsletter for the Association of British Counties. I have taken over this job from Robert Hawley and hope that it will be a greatly rewarding and enjoyable experience. Any mild criticism or (especially) approval would be appreciated.

A big thank you must go to Robert for all his endeavour over the last 9 years. I hope that I can create an interesting and thought provoking newsletter.

It often seems a struggle to get the general public to understand why our counties are so important and whether you call them true, historical, real, or traditional we need to get the message out wherever and whenever we can. The frustrations of living in a county like Lancashire is that it has been chopped and changed so much that some people don't even *know* that they live here. The local news broadcast is pretty depressing and I generally try to avoid it. How can we convince people that the dreaded GM (I won't even say if I can avoid it) is not a county and has absolutely no historical or social value whatsoever? It is nothing more than a black hole, sucking up everything in its path.

A visitor to Britain must find themselves bewildered and beleaguered when consulting a tourist guide or reading a map. Driving on the roads must be the most infuriating of all as many council areas are trumpeted by rather pointless signs. Most people couldn't care less what council area they are driving through. Even when traditional counties are recognised at the roadside they may be conflicted with other nearby signs or even signs on the same pole! Recently, while travelling down south, I passed the sign for the Royal County of Berkshire but beneath it was another sign

claiming, "Welcome to West Berkshire". Is Berkshire even big enough to have a 'west'? (There does seem to be a trend for dividing counties by compass points.) And last year, whilst on my annual pilgrimage (holiday) to Scotland I was delighted to see a sign for Nairnshire. However, I was slightly bemused to see, on the bisecting road, a sign for administrative 'Moray'. You can see what I mean about it being confusing for foreign tourists!

I'm not really sure when my interest in counties arose but I'm confident I know the 'why'. It stems from my interest in British history and culture and also I suspect, from my keenness for organisation. I'm a collector of postcards (14,000+ at last count) many of them depicting geographical locations in the British Isles. I organise them properly but that is no easy task. Combining the internet, maps and Russell Grant's exceptionally useful book, The Real Counties of Britain, I am able to codify my collection successfully. I've even divided my German, Austrian, and Belgian cards by *länder* or provinces but I find this more straightforward especially with Austria as the 'land' is nearly always printed on the card's reverse. How I wish things were that simple with my British cards!

When I first came to Britain I had little idea of the meaning and history associated with our counties. Unfortunately, I think that is the problem with much of the population. Either unintended ignorance, a lack of interest in things British, or sheer obstinacy are factors in the exiguity of county knowledge from the general populace. When we try to get the word out through avenues such as the internet we are often scuppered by those who are nothing more than mean spirited.

I was born and raised in the southern part of the American state of Wisconsin and I can assure you that if the state boundary had suddenly been raised northward and we found ourselves in Illinois there would have been an uproar. People complain about government control but yet seemingly they are more than willing to let county reorganisation go unchallenged. I find that odd.

One of the arguments I've seen recently against traditional counties (if there could even be such a thing!) is that it is mostly nostalgic older people who are against modern 'counties'. The argument against coin decimalisation was cited as an instance of their supposed penchant for the status quo. But if ABC's last meeting was anything to go by there are certainly plenty of younger, university aged people who share our ideals. Even I, if I had lived in Britain, would only have been around 6 or 7 at the time of the reorganisation so it is not sentimentality on my part.

I would love to see historical counties taught in school, used on news broadcasts, found in tourist guides, and signposted on every major road. It may be a pipe dream but I'm willing to carry on fighting for it for as long as it takes.

Mari Foster

News from the Committee

Turnout was good for the 20th Anniversary meeting held in Banbury, Oxfordshire on 13 June 2009. The meeting was opened with a few words from ABC President Michael Bradford who was one of the original members of the organisation when it was founded in 1989. Our guest speaker for the event was Graham Bartram, Chief Vexillologist at the Flag Institute, who gave an interesting talk about the work of the Flag Institute and the aesthetics behind flag design.

Work with QAS (Address Management Software suppliers) continues apace, with ABC wanting to improve the quality of the data they provide. It is hoped that we will be able to establish the correct county town for postal addresses even when they lie in a different county to the postal town.

Peter Boyce has met with Ordnance Survey Senior Research Officer Glen Hart concerning the OS's Vernacular Project. Mr Hart is sympathetic to ABC's concerns and would consider using the traditional county boundaries in any products that Ordnance Survey might develop in the future.

There were some new unitary authorities formed on 1 April 2009, some of which have been approved by ABC. However, there is still some use of the word "county" in some council names and ABC is keen to avoid this by suggesting some possible acceptable alternatives. Recommendations have also been made for naming new unitary authorities in Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk.

ABC is also trying to have several "Cheshire" signs removed as Cheshire County Council is now defunct. One of these is on the M6 southbound carriageway near Warrington. There are also several other 'Cheshire' signs near Warrington on the A57 at Hollins Green and at the northern end of Glazebury village that need removing.

Martin Phillips is continuing his survey of local authority attitudes to the historic counties. He is now tackling the counties in the north of Wales. Many of the responses he has received have been positive. He also reported that Lancashire/Cheshire border signs will be erected by Trafford Council on the A56 where it crosses the River Mersey. Unfortunately, the crossing of the A6144 does not have space for a similar sign. Martin has also written to the Highways Agency, seeking the removal of the last remaining 'West Midlands' sign on the M6 and the aforementioned 'Cheshire' signs.

It has been put forward to ask Clare Russell, Lord Lieutenant of Banffshire to become a patron of ABC as it was she who was instrumental in achieving the signage for the historic county boundary.

News from the Counties



BANFFSHIRE: Historic Banffshire signs have now been erected around the county's boundaries by the local council after a lot of work by the county's inhabitants and the Lord Lieutenant of Banffshire.

At the entrance to Craigellachie Bridge, marking the border with Morayshire.

BERKSHIRE: The Berkshire Flag Group has been working to promote a flag designed by David Ford Nash. This design depicts a circular white hart & oak tree motif on a background of white. However, Graham Bartram of the Flag Institute has given counsel on the matter and has advised that the current design may not be suitable. The crescent shape suggests a county beginning with 'C' and parts of the central motif are yellow and will meld with the white background. Work will have to be done before an agreed flag design can be reached.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE: A flag for the county has been designed by the Huntingdonshire Society which they hope can be registered with the Flag Institute. This pattern was approved by Graham Bartram from the organisation.



Proposed Huntingdonshire flag—a yellow horn on a green background.

LANCASHIRE: Friends of Real Lancashire hosted their Biennial General Meeting at Myerscough College recently with around 50 members attending. The meeting was concluded with a talk on Lancashire Dialect. ♦ The new FORL calendar is now available with images from Lytham, Lancaster, Ulverston and Warrington among others. It can be purchased through shops or FORL. ♦ Friends of Real Lancashire have also announced the naming of a new president. Janet Anderson has stepped down after five years and will be replaced by Sir Bernard de Hoghton.

OXFORDSHIRE: ABC member Edward Keene has announced the launching of The Oxfordshire Association. The group has hopes of being able to establish a county flag and to put markers at each compass point of the county's true boundaries. The website can be found at: www.oxforshire-association.org.uk although it is currently under construction.

PEMBROKESHIRE: Recently there has been a debate in the Welsh Parliament over concerns that Royal Mail is still using 'Dyfed' as a postal address despite its dissolution. The issue has been raised by MP Stephen Crabb who says that Pembrokeshire business and tourism is being affected. The only problem attached to this is that the MP for 'Ceredigion' wants this change made as well for his constituency. More information can be found at: www.publications.parliament.uk

WILTSHIRE: A Wiltshire flag has been designed by ABC member Chrys Fear. The design depicts the Cherhill White Horse placed on a background of green. The horse image comes from Penderleath's The White Horses of the West of England (1885). This flag would be a better option than the copyrighted one designed and sold by Mike Prior as the county flag must be in the public domain.

YORKSHIRE: The Yorkshire Ridings Society has produced a True Yorkshire Credit Crunch calendar for 2010 which includes cost-saving recipes. The calendar can be purchased through YRS. ♦ In celebration of the battle of Minden (01.08.1759), Roger Sewell (Vice-Chairman of YRS) and his wife Chris left York in July to walk to the city of Minden, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany a distance of 250 miles. The journey took just over two weeks. ♦ On 25 April in Fenwick, West Riding 3 white rose bushes (one for each riding) were planted in honour of the late Colin Holt, founding member of both the Yorkshire Ridings Society and the Association of British Counties. The North and East Riding roses were provided by YRS with the West Riding rose donated by Saddleworth White Rose Society. The rose was specially grown and is called 'Saddleworth' variety.



Planting white roses at Fenwick

Hampshire-a Short History

Mari Foster

Lying between its more well-known neighbours of Dorset and Sussex, Hampshire may often be overlooked but it is a county of pleasant countryside, handsome villages and a varied history. It is the birthplace of notable personalities Charles Dickens, John Everett Millais, Jim Callaghan, Isambard Kingdom Brunel and Peter Sellers.

Pre-history

In the county's pre-history, the Romans had a settlement in the north near Silchester which they called Calleva Atrebatum, occupied during the 3rd to 4th centuries. This was formerly Calleva, an Iron Age settlement of the first century BCE, home of the Atrebates tribe. It is interesting in that unlike other Roman towns this one was completely abandoned around 400 CE and never built over. Its defensive walls survive (in a complete circuit), many to a height of around four metres although none of its interior buildings remain above ground. At the eastern edge of the town is an amphitheatre which dates from 50-70 CE. Excavations were first undertaken by the Society of Antiquaries in London from 1890-1909. Later, smaller excavations took place into the 1980s.



Calleva: the east wall

The Middle Ages

The Saxon name for Hampshire was 'Ham-tun-scire', the name coming from the 8th/9th century port and market town of Hamwic, which was near Southampton.

Hampshire was designated one of the first Saxon shires in 755, the west of the county growing into the centre of the Kingdom of Wessex, birthplace of several Saxon kings. Indeed many Saxon kings can be found buried in Winchester Cathedral including the Danish king, Canute, and his wife, Emma.



Winchester Cathedral

The earliest name for the Domesday Book was 'Liber Wintoniensis ('Book of Winchester') as it was kept in the King's treasury in Winchester which had been the capital of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. But surprisingly, the city itself was not included. This may be because the city enjoyed tax exemption due to its royal connections. The New Forest and the Isle of Wight were assessed separately from the rest of the county. In the case of the Isle of Wight the reason is fairly obvious but no one is really sure why this applied to the forest

The New Forest was created 'new' by William the Conqueror in 1079 as a royal hunting ground. William Rufus was killed here in Canterton Glen, shot by an arrow in 1100. Whether this was an accident or assassination ordered by his brother Henry I is still subject to debate. A stone marking the location can be seen at Fritham but there is speculation that it may have happened closer to Bolderwood or Stoney Cross.

Fortresses

Many great castles have been built in Hampshire over the centuries, many of them commissioned by Henry VIII. However, the greatest of the earlier castles must be Portchester some of which was built in the 3rd century CE. It is one of the best preserved Roman 'Saxon Shore' forts and its walls stand nearly all at their full height of 6 metres. Subsequently, it was a Saxon settlement and then a Norman fortress when the tower keep was added.



Portchester Castle

Henry VIII's coastal fortresses defended along the Solent: Southsea, Hurst and Calshot. He designed many of his castles himself using a clover-leaf like design which helped to provide the best field of vision owing to its curved walls. He also had built Yarmouth Castle to protect the Isle of Wight. Uniquely, this was constructed in a square shape with a moat on two sides rendering it impenetrable. Oddly, Henry considered Portchester Castle as an insignificant defence and did little to modernise it.

Civil War Hampshire

Before the Civil Wars Hampshire was bucolic, both its agriculture and cloth trade were thriving. However, war on the continent along with a 1614 ban on the trade of un-dyed wool badly affected the cloth trade. Worse was to come with the passing of the Enclosure Acts which cleared land for sheep herding. Many people were displaced and with little work to be had soon became destitute. Because of this it was easy to recruit for the armies even though people hadn't really thought about the ideologies of war beforehand.

Basing House, near Basingstoke, was central to Hampshire's war efforts. At the time it was owned by John Paulet, 5th Marquis of Winchester. Although a supporter of the King he was not vociferous about it. The house was attacked by Parliament three times and was finally breached by Cromwell's troops in October 1645 killing up to 100 people. The house was ordered demolished but after the war the land it stood on was returned to Paulet.

One important battle that took place in Hampshire during this time was the Battle of Cheriton on 29 March 1644 where the Parliamentary forces were double that of the Royalist. Countering the Parliamentary advance towards Winchester, Royalist troops reached Arlesford where they camped overnight. Battle ensued the following day in the neighbouring village of Cheriton and the resulting defeat halted the advance towards London of the Royalist troops from the south west. Previously, in December 1643, local skirmishes led to a pitched battle at nearby Alton which also resulted in a Royalist defeat. Hampshire certainly was not a happy hunting ground for the King's supporters.

Home of Cricket?

It is often cited that Hambledon is the birthplace of cricket. Perhaps a better epithet would be 'Cradle of Cricket'. The town's team was first mentioned in 1756 making it the first cricket club but some form of the game has existed since at least the middle ages. Still, Hambledon and indeed Hampshire hold an important place in the development of the game as the club devised batting and bowling techniques that are still used to this day.

Hampshire County Cricket Club played its first championship match in 1895 against Somerset at Taunton. Here they achieved a surprise victory after it looked as if the result would be an easy win for the home side. They have since won the County Championship twice along with several one day titles, the most recent being in July 2009.

Moving into Modern Times

Hampshire grew and changed during the 19th and 20th centuries, though it was little influenced by the Industrial Revolution. Having said this, it should be noted that an influential 18th century figure William Cobbett, a radical journalist, lived in the small market town of Botley. He gave voice to the trial and tribulations of the oppressed countryside inhabitants.

Bournemouth rose up during the early years of the 19th century and soon was to become a popular seaside resort after the railway line finally passed through it in 1870. Many of the Isle of Wight's seaside towns gained piers during the 1870s and 1880s which surely helped to invigorate them and pull in the tourists from the mainland. Queen Victoria's visits to Osborne House will also have been a draw.

Notable Names

The City of Portsmouth is birthplace of several famous Britons including our most celebrated engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 1806. Six years later, on Old commercial Road, Charles Dickens was born in the house which is now a museum dedicated to his life. Exactly one hundred years on the former Labour Prime Minister, James Callaghan, was also born in the city. Although Arthur Conan Doyle was not himself born in neighbouring Southsea, his great creation Sherlock Holmes can be said to have been. A Study in Scarlet, his first novel featuring the detective, was written there.



Portsmouth harbour

Second World War

Even during the Second World War Hampshire can boast an influential history. Most obvious is the army camp at Aldershot which only became a town with setting up of its first military camp in 1854. Most important was probably Portsmouth's Royal Navy Dockyard (now known as simply a Naval Base) home of the Royal Navy. It was of course, heavily bombed. The county's other important port, Southampton, also suffered heavy blitz bombing as a strategic target for the Luftwaffe. It was attacked some 57 times with tens of thousands of buildings being destroyed.

Hampshire was also instrumental in the planning of the D-Day landings and was chosen as the launching point for the allied invasion. This was due to its proximity to Normandy as well as having the two ports and a good railway infrastructure. The troops were housed and fed in the county and which put great strains on its resources but people coped.

Modern Hampshire

Once a poor and largely rural county, Hampshire has grown richer and more affluent over the centuries and its outlook is one of optimism. The county cricket ground, The Rose Bowl, has staged several one-day internationals and is set to hold its first test match in 2011. Portsmouth's naval dockyard with its magnificent collection of vessels including the breathtaking ruins of the Mary Rose attracts visitors from all over the world and Southampton is a vibrant south coast city. The Isle of Wight has a music festival which is world renowned. The New Forest was designated a National Park in March 2005, the first in nearly 50 years. Bournemouth is still a popular seaside resort even to this day and often hosts conventions for the main political parties.

Visit the Milestones museum in Basingstoke to see Hampshire's glorious history laid out in front of you. There will be much more to add in the county's not yet lived history.

County Quote

"I did not set out deliberately to make use of my origins. Shropshire is simply in my blood, and in the course of creation the blood gets into the ink, and sets in motion a heartbeat and a circulation that brings the land to life."

Ellis Peters

Letters

Dear ABC,

I greatly enjoyed your County Portrait of Monmouthshire in the last edition of the newsletter. Andrew Hawley's provocative description of the towns, places and qualities of that ancient county brought back fond memories of happy summer holidays spent there. However, keen to rectify a lamentably common fallacy about Monmouthshire, I must take issues with the article's second paragraph

The assertion that Monmouthshire has long occupied a peculiar limbo, being neither English nor Welsh, is untrue. Two acts of Parliament have officially designated the nationality of the country. First was the Statute of Raglan (1542) which created the county out of the petty marcher lordships that has previously occupied the territory. Second was the infamous Local Government Act of 1972. Of these, the Statute of Raglan defined Wales as consisting of twelve counties, whilst the other moved the 'official' boundary of Wales from the Rhymney to the Wye, the encompassing Monmouthshire (administrative 'Gwent'). Up until this time, the Statute of Raglan was fully effective in respect of all matters over which its authority had not otherwise been overridden. This included the delineation of the Wales-England boundary. For this reason, various intervening acts such as the 1933 Local Govt. Act, specifically referred to the county as English. No limbo there!

The reason it was mentioned by name in many acts of Parliament is because although officially English it had increasingly looked to Wales and sought inclusion in Welsh legislation. A majority of the county is rural and culturally contiguous with neighbouring Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. However, the western quarter is mountainous, desolate, and culturally associated with Glamorgan. For most of its history the east of the county was the 'hip and happening' half where county squires and noble families held the reins of power. This changed in the 19th century when in quick succession the valleys' coalfield industrialisation exploded the population of west Monmouthshire and democratisation put power firmly in their hands. The old Monmouthshire County Council was controlled from 1925 to its dissolution in 1974 by representatives of the west of the county where 80% of the population now reside. This council lobbied throughout the 20th Century to have the county included in initiatives and legislation affecting the south of Wales.

Between the presumed democratic desire that this was taken to show and the Heath government's need for the parliamentary support of south Wales Labour MPs, the county's official nationality was quietly reassigned by an eleventh hour amendment from standing committee D to the 1972 Act. The only objection raised to this was by Gerald Kaufmann MP (still sitting today for Manchester Withington) who was appalled at the cynical patriarchal tamper-

ing with simple loyalties and ancient geographies. He recently told me that "I have no doubt that if such a change were to be proposed now, there would be advance consultation and much furor. Remarkable what governments could get away with in those days".

Mr Hawley's later assertion that Monmouthshire's soul is essentially Welsh is also untrue. Rather, the essential national identity of the county is split on numerous levels. The geographic, topographic, demographic and industrial aspects of this have already been address. Toponymically, there is a Landsker Line (dividing English and Welsh place names) running right through the middle of the county. Linguistically, the west of the county is the only part with any tradition of indigenous Welsh speaking. Historically, the east's experience of conquest by and subservience to Norman barons contrasts with the east's long unsuppressed independence. Ancestrally, most county residents are of Saxon, not Celtic stock. All this accumulatively manifests itself in differing political persuasions, the west being naturally collectivist, the east conservative.

In an ideal world the England-Wales border would be drawn somewhere down the middle of Monmouthshire-along the Usk, perhaps. Then, truly, old Monmouthshire would live up to the motto of the dissolved local council-'Ultrique Fidelis' ('Loyal to Both').

Edward Keene
Oxford



Raglan Castle, Monmouthshire



Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire

County Calendar

For the autumn and spring

1 August 2009 **Yorkshire Day**

1 October 2009 **Lincolnshire Day**

27 November 2009 **Lancashire Day**

25 April 2010 **Huntingdonshire Day**

County Facts

Sussex County Cricket Club was the first county team to be established in England, playing its first game against the MCC in 1839.

The first Earl of Westmorland was Ralph de Neville (1364-1425), appointed in 1397.

The longest lawsuit in an English court was over lands in Gloucestershire. It began during the reign of Edward IV (1461-1483) and was settled at the beginning of James I's reign.

During the time of King John only three counties were without forest-Kent, Norfolk and Suffolk.

County Websites

Some interesting websites that use traditional counties.

Institute for Name-Studies: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/ins/kepn/>

Curious Fox (Genealogy assistance): http://www.curiousfox.com/sitemap_2.html

Francis Firth (Photography): <http://www.francisfrith.com/scotland/>

Andrew Cusack (Wonderful article about County Confusion):

<http://www.andrewcusack.com/2007/02/07/county-confusion/>

Mountains in Scotland: <http://www.hill-bagging.co.uk/Scotland/CountyTopsHistoric.php>

County Quiz

1. Which six counties border Herefordshire?
 2. How many battles have been fought in Sussex?
 3. To which Scottish county does the Isle of Lewis belong?
 4. Which Irish county is divided into ridings?
 5. What is the biggest town in Cheshire?
 6. How many English counties have coastlines?
 7. Which is the second smallest county in Scotland?
 8. Which county was subject of the first earldom in 1020?
 9. Which county is known as Sir Frychieniog in Welsh?
 10. In which counties can the following interestingly named towns be found?
 - a. Westly Waterless
 - b. Sixpenny Handley
 - c. Studley Roger and Skutterskelfe
 - d. Hanging Houghton
 - e. Papplewick and Scrooby
 - f. Kingston Bagpuize
 - g. Great Snoring and Little Snoring
 - h. Hamstall Ridware, Pipe Ridware and Mavesyn Ridware
 - i. Nether Wallop
 - j. White Ladies Aston
- (Answers on back page)

20 Years of ABC

On 1 April 1989 a group of people got together in Llantilio Crossenny, Monmouthshire. This was home to Russell Grant the astrologer, media personality and passionate defender of Middlesex, his county of birth.

Fifteen years earlier, the government set about destroying country heritage by muddying borders and creating new 'counties'. A group of people, hailing from all over Britain decided to do something about it. And so ABC was born.

Also at this inaugural meeting were Michael Bradford, current ABC chairman and member of the Yorkshire Ridings, Roy Faiers-editor of "This England" magazine, Colin Holt, Hilary Holt and Howard Walker, all founder members of YRS and Mr Grant.



L to R: Roy Faiers, Michael Bradford, Hilary Holt, Russell Grant, Colin Holt, Howard Walker

Quiz answers

1. Breconshire, Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Radnorshire, Shropshire, Worcester-shire
2. Three. Hastings (1066), Lewes (1264), Haywards Heath (1642)
3. Ross-shire
4. Tipperary-North and South
5. Birkenhead
6. 18
7. Kinross-shire
8. Kent
9. Breconshire
10. a. Cambridgeshire, b. Dorset, c. Yorkshire, d. Northamptonshire, e. Nottingham-shire, f. Berkshire, g. Norfolk, h. Staffordshire, i. Hampshire, j. Worcestershire