

OUR COUNTIES

The Association of British Counties Annual 2012
www.abcounties.co.uk



Patrons:

Russell Grant Esq. Peter Luff MP John Randall MP
Andrew Rosindell MP Angela Watkinson MP

The Association of British Counties

President: Michael Bradford

Chairman: Peter Boyce

Vice-chairman: Rupert Barnes

Treasurer: Tim Butterworth

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 of people living in them will change.”

From the Editor:

I hope you will be as pleased as I am about the new format of the Association of British Counties magazine, now renamed “Our Counties” and made all-colour. I also hope that this will help to inspire our members to do more to preserve and promote our counties and also to introduce new and future members to what it is we do. Remember: this magazine is for all of us and if it is to continue people need to contribute articles, poems, ideas or whatever they can.

2012 is a very exciting year for Britain with the Queen’s Jubilee and the Olympic Games in London which I am very excited to be attending. We need to take our chance now to advance our cause and make our fellow Britons aware of their intrinsic county heritage.

ABC Member’s Meeting

We had a very successful members’ meeting last October at The Link in Water Orton, Warwickshire, B46 1QU. Several people did insightful talks some of which you can read here. We are hoping to do something similar this year and the meeting is to be held at the same venue on Saturday the 13th of October 2012. If you would like to give a presentation please contact Peter at peterboyce@ntlworld.com. Further details will be sent to members nearer the time and are also available on our website.

Want to Get Involved in ABC?

ABC is an entirely voluntary organisation. We need as many active members as possible. If you want to get involved, contact the chairman at peterboyce@ntlworld.com. There is a lot of work to be done nationally such as:

- Lobbying the government and heritage organisations for proper recognition;
- Encouraging UK tourism bodies to make better use of the counties;
- Lobbying for changes to local government terminology to make clear the distinction between counties and local government;
- Lobbying the Dept. of Transport for the proper provision for road signs marking historic county borders;
- Working on IT and publishing projects to further the use of counties;
- Working with address management software suppliers to enable the proper use of county names in postal addresses;
- Dealing with public and media questions about the counties.

Alternatively, there is vital work to be done at local level, too. For example:

- Developing and promoting county flags;
- Instigating and promoting a county day;
- Working with local authorities to erect county border signs;
- Lobbying the local/national media to get references to your county correct;
- Encouraging local businesses and residents to use the county name within their address;
- Producing educational material about your county.

You could also get involved with one of our member organisations:

Friends of Real Lancashire www.forl.co.uk

Yorkshire Ridings Society www.yorkshireridings.org

Saddleworth White Rose Society

www.whiterose.saddleworth.net

Oxfordshire www.oxfordshire-association.org.uk

Sussex www.sussexassociation.webs.com

Editor: Mari Foster

Editorial Address: 340 Warrington Road, Glazebury, Warrington, Lancashire, WA3 5LB

E-mail: thecounties@yahoo.co.uk

Cover Photos (clockwise from top left): Dunnet Head, Caithness; Hadrian’s Wall (Willowford) at Gilsland, Cumberland; Omagh Town Hall, County Tyrone; Caerphilly Castle, Glamorgan.

Caernarfonshire: www.caernarfonshire.org

Westmorland: www.westmorland-association.org.uk

Monmouthshire: www.monmouthshire-association.org.uk

Huntingdonshire: www.huntingdonshire.org.uk

Warwickshire: www.facebook.com/warksassoc

If your county does not have a group in the above list, why not think about setting up your own ABC "county association". Even a very small group can make a big impact on a county's profile so if you think your county needs promotion, get organising.

We are always on the lookout for fresh, innovative ideas for reaching out to people and getting our message across!

New County Flags Registered

During 2011, five further county flags were registered with the Flag Institute and included in their flag register (www.flaginstitute.org). Registration is important since it brings general recognition to a flag and, importantly, means that commercial flag suppliers will supply the flag at a reasonable cost.

The new Monmouthshire flag was promoted by the Monmouthshire Association and is based on the reputed arms of the Ancient British Kingdom of Gwent. The Monmouthshire Association has a limited supply of these flags available at no cost. They are for any organisation or individual in the county who wishes to fly one. Please contact: info@monmouthshireassociation.org.uk if you are interested.



In Nottinghamshire, the flag was the result of a competition run by BBC Nottingham. The final design was made up of elements from the many entries sent to the station for consideration. A major flag supplier has confirmed that there has been a huge demand for the flag and it seems set to become a familiar feature throughout the county.

The new Westmorland flag was promoted by the Westmorland Association and is based on the coat of arms of the former Westmorland County Council. Following the flag's registration, it was featured in the Westmorland Gazette. We purchased 100 flags and distributed them to town and parish councils, castles, stately homes, clubs and societies, etc. throughout the county. Early indications are that the flag is catching on fast, with many of those we supplied to expressing thanks and with a promise to fly the flag. We have also had numerous other enquiries.

Sussex's flag was promoted by the Sussex Association and registered on the grounds that it is a traditional design. It dates back to at least the 17th c. when John Speed displayed the design in his book 'Theatrum Imperii Maganae Britanniae' as one of the

Saxon heptarchies. The Sussex Association, with the support of ABC, has been supplying a flag to every parish and town council in Sussex. It has been doing this in tandem with promoting the celebration of Sussex Day on 16 June. As with Westmorland, the association has received many positive responses to the initiative. Sussex Day 2012 should see the flag flying proudly throughout the county.

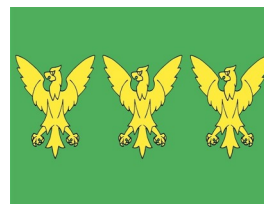
A Buckinghamshire flag has been registered by the flag institute also on the grounds that it is a traditional flag of the county. It features a chained swan on a bicolour of red and black. The Swan emblem dates back to Anglo-Saxon times when Buckinghamshire was known for breeding swans for the king.

County flags are a brilliant way to promote a county's identity throughout that county and beyond. The designs also make a great basis for car stickers, mugs, key-rings, etc. Currently, 23 counties have registered flags. We are working with the Flag Institute to develop further flags.

Caernarfonshire Association Set Up

Yet another new ABC affiliate county association has been established this time in Caernarfonshire. The association has the following aims:

- To see the flag officially recognised by the Flag Institute and to promote its use in the county;
- To promote the use of the historic county;
- To encourage the media and local governments (such as Gwynedd Council and Conwy Borough Council) to make correct use of the county name and its boundaries;
- To see Caernarfonshire signage erected around the county just as it exists in Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire, and Breconshire.



The Association is currently promoting its flag, three gold eagles on a green field, which is the banner of arms attributed to Owain Gwynedd and has long been a symbol of the county.

The Caernarfonshire Association can be found on Facebook and also has a stunning website at: www.caernarfonshire.org.

Local county organisations are the lifeblood of ABC. Whilst ABC can lobby centrally for changes to local government terminology, traffic sign regulations, etc., the greatest positive impact can be made by a group within the county. Promoting a flag and a county day are just two tried and trusted methods of making an impact. We are always keen to see new county associations set up. Please contact the chairman if you are interested in doing so.

County Identity in Relation to National Identity

Philip S. Tibbetts

Identity has always been a major issue for humanity whether it is religious, linguistic, social, legal or national. However, the 21st century has seen a whole new range of dilemmas facing our concept of identity. At a time when the population of planet Earth is tipping seven billion, the sheer scale of the global populace causes many to fear being lost in the masses. Furthermore, electronic communication means that we are more likely to know a wider group of people thus being exposed to more ideas. In turn, ideologies, philosophies, languages and cultures all now compete much more freely. Finally, individuals are more compelled to move, and whilst this movement can be the source of cultural development and innovation it also runs the risk of the loss of knowledge (and thus identity) from particular areas.

So in this modern age we are left with an unprecedented challenge to our identities which are eroding and evolving. All of this is not necessarily a bad thing as it also gives us the opportunity to improve or add to our culture and identity. However, such opportunities are not always taken and instead some of our identities may be eroded to the point where they are forgotten altogether.

In particular, with respect to the more local levels of identity, we find further pressures. Modern attitudes of cynicism are combining with the more traditional problem of 'not appreciating what you've got' and thus are undermining local identity. Some elements of modern media make it almost fashionable to dismiss or deride one's locality rather than see its pleasures or work towards its betterment.

The centralisation of politics has run, and looks set to continue to ride, roughshod over local identities. It has led to severe confusion of individual identities in respect to counties and other traditional regions in particular. So for our counties this has often led to a loss-or at best a misunderstanding-of county identity with greater emphasis on the state/national identities. When I'm working on community or regional flags I often hear the complaint, "Why do we need this flag when we have the English one?".

Now, that question is indicative of the mindset that has become prevalent in recent times-that identity has become a rigid 'either/or' concept. As such this seems to have led some people to concentrate on one main identity like the increasing numbers that reply with 'English', 'Scottish', 'Welsh' or 'British' and not both when asked what nationality they consider themselves to be. This is at odds with the historical norm of having a much more layered and fluid attitude to identity.

Counties, especially, seem to be suffering from

this perceived competition with national identity. Certain county identity elements have been forgotten when overshadowed by this emphasis on national identity. Sometimes entire areas are put at cultural risk by the administrative meddling of central politics, such as the 'overwriting' of some counties.

This modern emphasis on state identity is not without reason and to be fair it is only sensible for leaders to try and ensure the stability of the state. However, this appealing looking reason hides a number of dangers. Overwriting local identity with national identity may cause internal social friction; for example the Sovietisation of nationalities/ethnicities which ended up showing how hollow such forced national identity can ultimately be. Overemphasis of national identity loses a level of depth that adds richness to our overall sense of identity, resulting in a shallow, clichéd view of national identity. You can think of this like a computer picture: you require lower level details in order to avoid the overall picture becoming pixellated. Over-promotion may also set a dangerous precedent, after all we wouldn't accept a UN edict to replace all national flags with its own so why should we allow national identity to ride over regional identity in the same manner? We need to understand that although this development of human society towards a more global entity has a number of risks it also carries a number of benefits. We cannot afford to simply hanker for conservatism and nostalgia. Indeed this social development has happened many times in the past as individuals became families, became tribes, became towns, became regions/provinces/counties, etc. We simply now stand at the next phase as countries move towards continents with bodies like the Gulf Cooperation Council, African Union, Union of South American Nations and Association of South-East Asian Nations all looking at continental integration first hinted at by the European Union and United States of America. Interestingly, this movement is causing national identity to face the same issues that have affected county/regional identity and the philosophical structure in which they sit.

We should never forget that despite our island status such philosophical issues affect the whole globe and as such we should try looking elsewhere to see how they can be effectively addressed. Indeed, practically next door to us countries like Switzerland and Belgium commonly fly the flags of their communities, counties, countries and continents side-by-side. This is a wonderful example of the idea of multiple layers of identity all complimentary to one another.



**Flags flying over town hall in Leuven, Belgium
Brabant, Europe, Belgium, Flanders, Leuven**

Like all good ideas this concept need not be constrained by a border. Indeed, this bold and visual example of layered identity is not just Continental, but is actually a perfectly British approach as well. Perhaps the best and usefully patriotic example is the symbolic hierarchy of the British Army. The names, colours and emblems of different army units all engender a local pride and identity of sorts which then build to a unified force. This technique has the practical purpose of inspiring loyalty, passion, competition and teamwork. And it is an approach we may all be more familiar with due to its use at schools as in the house system. From this it becomes clearer that the role of counties with respect to identity is like that of a regiment in the army-to interface, focus and channel identity between lower and higher levels.

Without such a 'bridge' between layers of identity the jump can simply be too far and the link between these levels becomes broken. This comes back to the issue of the identity of certain groups being lost in the crowd. An identity of a village of hundreds is just as likely to suffer the same problem as a country of tens of millions might. An intermediate county identity allows individuals to interface with national identity and groups of individuals can be focused and then channelled up to national identity together.

By establishing county identity as a foundation of national identity itself it becomes clearer to see that a healthy regional identity has to benefit national identity. Firstly, it helps to preserve a shared culture/heritage which in turn is one of the jigsaw pieces of national identity. Secondly, it may act as a support to national identity, as the flag of the United Irish Provinces serves as an acceptable pan-Irish symbol. Finally, as touched on before, by focusing and channelling it makes the jump more accessible and as such national identity feels closer and more relatable.

We can see this in politics as often the peripheries of a nation feel detached from the central decision makers and often desire a level of devolution or independence.

To restore this fundamental yet neglected layer to our identities we need to reassert county culture and identity from the mess it has found itself in. However, what I feel my thinking has shown is that we need to take particular pains to show county identity as complimentary rather than competitive. If you force a straight choice between national and local you'll probably not get the result you want. As can be seen in football a club's supporters are outnumbered by a country's supporters as they all come together to support a national team. We need to ensure that a county identity does not trip over national identity.

Instead, as with the European flag-waving protocol of Belgium and Switzerland, we need our county identities to be both visible and side-by-side with national identity (and with local identity where possible). This has the further benefit of allowing our county identities to be seen as friendly to draw off local and national pride. Obviously flags are a particularly good and visual way of doing this but other methods have a valuable role to play such as in postal addresses and sports (in particular the County Championship).

To conclude, regional/county identity is far more than just a nostalgic yet irrelevant issue that many see it as. It is fundamental to the very health and foundation of national identity. These two levels, as in all levels of identity, have a symbiotic relationship to each other and a synergistic effect upon one another. By cultivating our county identities we strengthen our national identities against the possible erosion of heritage. But counties are not just emblems of our past; they may be crucial to our wider sense of identity and the basis for a sustainable philosophy in our transition towards the more global society of the future.

County Quote

"An acre in Middlesex is better than a principality
in Utopia."

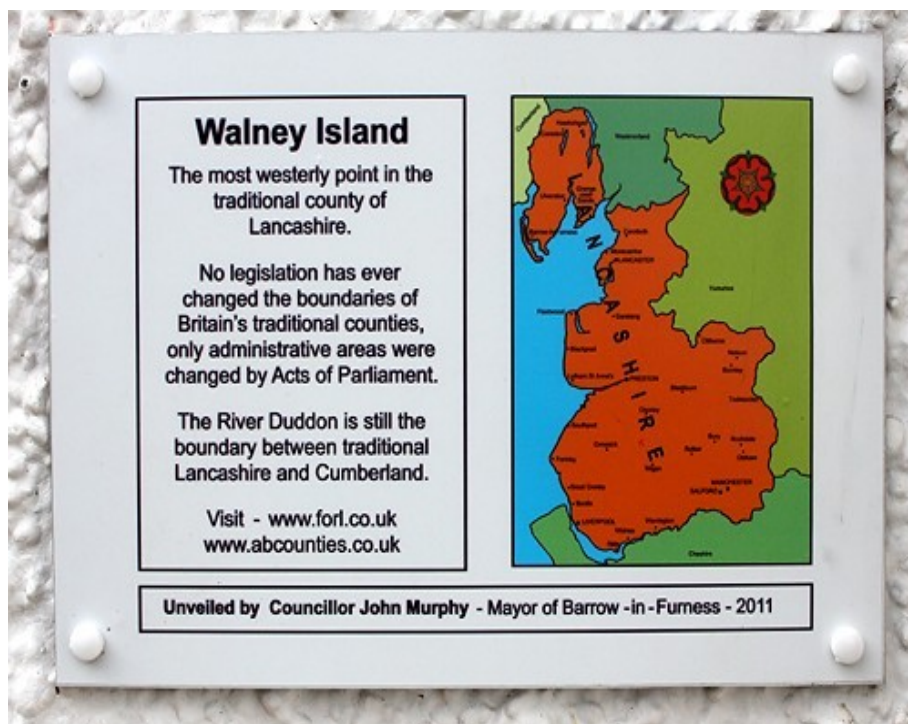
Thomas Babington Macaulay

Marking the Four Extreme Points of Lancashire

Chris Dawson

The Friends of Real Lancashire have embarked upon a project to mark the extreme points of the traditional county of Lancashire-north, south, east and west-with information plaques.

On 19 August 2011, members of Friends of Real Lancashire travelled to Walney Island to mark Lancashire's most westerly point. Cllr John Murphy, the mayor of Barrow-in-Furness, had obtained permission for us to fix plaques at Earnse Point, the Round House Restaurant and the Queens Arms pub at Biggar Village. At 1:00pm Cllr Murphy unveiled the plaque at the Queens Arms, after which he said how important our history and heritage is. It was good to be able to meet a number of members who had been able to attend the ceremony. The following day Cllr Murphy led a walk at low tide from Walney Island to Piel Island, the home of the King of Piel who is also the landlord of the pub there.



The sign as seen at the Queens Arms at Biggar Village

Hale Head

The most southerly point in the traditional county of Lancashire.

No legislation has ever changed the boundaries of Britain's traditional counties, only administrative areas were changed by Acts of Parliament.

The River Mersey is still the boundary between the traditional counties of Lancashire and Cheshire.

**Visit - www.forl.co.uk
www.abcounties.co.uk**



The plaque marking Lancashire's most southerly point

On 1 October 2011 members of FoRL then travelled to Hale Head to mark Lancashire's most southerly point. Two plaques were placed on the fence bounding land belonging to the Fleetwood-Hesketh Estate close to the lighthouse that stands on the banks of the River Mersey. At 2:00 pm Freeman Peter Kelly, the Lord Mayor of Hale, unveiled one of the plaques in the presence of members of FoRL and the Freeman of Hale. It is claimed that Hale is the only village in the world with a Lord Mayor, an office that dates back to 1317.

There are plans also to mark the most easterly and northerly points of the county in the near future. Marking the most northerly point, Nabb Island, has proved difficult as the true point is inaccessible. Alternative sites are being investigated. There has also been a discussion during the recent committee meeting about marking the highest point in Lancashire, the Old

Man of Coniston. However, concerns were made about marking this point as it may affect the beauty and tranquillity of the area. In addition, only those able to climb to the peak would be able to see the marker so a spot at the bottom of the hill may be considered. It is unlikely that approval would given for a plaque to be placed at the summit in any case.

Protecting Boundary Signs

Rupert Barnes

It is barely a yard high: a rough-hewn lump of stone with ten letters carved in it, sticking uncertainly out of the pavement in the High Road, but it is Grade II listed. It is a boundary stone, in Bushey Heath, with "Herts" on one edge and "Middx" on the other; it is a living witness to the county boundary of that oft-forgotten shire, Middlesex.

Many more boundary stones and plaques remain across the land, in a variety of styles: stones, pillars, plaques, 'lollypop' posts, bridge markers and so forth, in stone, cast iron or concrete. A trip around the edges of a county may reveal interesting markers which might have been forgotten and which may now be in danger.

Some boundary stones are overgrown, neglected, unpainted. Many are in danger from jealous local authorities and development: revamping of street furniture and entrances to new buildings bursting across pavements will call for a clearance of clutter and those precious witnesses to ancient counties are often swept up and away. A few months ago in Bushey Heath another "County of Middlesex" sign was torn down and the local council shows no interest in its fate. At least the stone in the pavement remains, protected by its listed status.



The Milestone Society may be able to assist us. It was founded in 2001, with the aim to "identify, record, research, conserve and interpret for public benefit the milestones and other way markers of the British Isles". Its interests spread far wider than just milestones, for way markers

also include boundary markers, fingerposts, coal posts and much else besides. They have published heritage walks, conservation guides and postcards. The Society is an influential body and has advised the government on conservation of fingerposts, for example.

Fingerposts themselves are a distinctive

marker; they used to stand at every junction, often with a ring at the top, marked with a county name. New designs for road signs saw most of the fingerposts swept away, leaving just a few still



proclaiming Westmorland or Yorks WR. These posts can now be protected, if we can locate them and where they have become damaged, councils may be prepared to restore them, with the original county destination on the finial.

The Society's conservation guidance is particularly useful. Where a way marker has fallen into a poor condition, highway authorities rarely know what to do as it is not their usual fare. Whether you wait for a man in a council van to come along eating money or you sort it out yourself, this experienced practical guidance is invaluable. I found this out recently when getting a local fingerpost fixed. The Hertfordshire branch determined how the post would have looked in its original condition and advised on how to clean and mend it. It is now being restored accordingly.

Protection for county boundary stones, markers and fingerposts is vital, but we need to find them first and we cannot do that from the comfort of our living rooms. This then is the challenge; get out into the lanes, comb over the boundaries and find these witnesses to our county heritage. Get them on the Milestone Society's database. Then the Society may assist to get the boundary stones listed which will keep the bulldozers at bay.

Boundary stones are heritage items in themselves but even more so are the counties which they mark and this heritage must be defended. Let us do whatever we can to protect them.

County boundary marker photo courtesy of Peter Nelson. More photos can be seen on his website:

<http://pnelson.orpheusweb.co.uk/>

Fighting for the True East Riding

Yorkshireman and East Riding resident Andy Strangeway is taking on the council in an attempt to have any erroneously marked 'East Riding of Yorkshire' council signs removed whilst having all of the Riding's boundaries properly marked. At present the council's signs are causing confusion as they do not contain the word 'council' and thus do not differentiate between the council's boundaries and the

East Riding's true boundaries. Andy believes that he has the law on his side. He is hoping to gain support from all 67 of the councillors and if this does not happen wants to seek out candidates who support his claim to oppose them. He would like to achieve his aim before the council elections of May 2014. For more information please visit: www.facebook.com/SaveTheCulturalHeritageOfTheEastRidingOfYorkshire.

Scotland's Far North: Ross-shire, Sutherland, Caithness & Orkney

Mari Foster

There is no point in trying to convince me of the benefits and delights of a foreign holiday. While I have visited many Continental countries my true love and first holiday destination choice is for points north. My love for Scotland begins at Dumfriesshire and wends its way northward through Lanarkshire, Argyllshire and Inverness-shire. It takes a diversion east through Perthshire, Aberdeenshire, Banffshire and Morayshire; some of the most unspoilt and truly loveliest parts of the world. I hesitate to talk enthusiastically of holidays in the northeast lest the secret gets out. Thousands may begin flocking to these unspoilt lands which easily rival those further west for scenery and exceed them in manmade wonders. But beyond all these great areas, my passion is for those counties of the far north, the most unblemished of all of this stunning part of the British Isles.

My journey here begins in Ross-shire, often intermingled with Cromartyshire and difficult to separate geographically. For ease of purpose I shall talk of Ross-shire solely. The first feature you come to after crossing the Kessock bridge out of Inverness is the Black Isle. Technically not an island, rather a peninsula, it extends out into the Moray Firth about 20 miles culminating in the lovely little fishing town of Cromarty, one of the most pleasant places in Britain to wile away a few hours. But if you prefer beauty inland, head left at the junction with the A382 towards the Muir of Ord. Stop for awhile in Beaulie, named by Mary, Queen of Scots for its pleasing aspect. Another pleasant diversion is the spa town of Strathpeffer. People began coming here in the 18th century to sample its sulphurous and ferrous waters and there were even claims of miraculous healing. You may want to continue north-westward from here to Ullapool the gateway to the Outer Hebrides. But for this journey I would like to rejoin the A9 and head north past the Cromarty Firth up to Tain which claims to be the oldest Royal Burgh in Scotland. There are several interesting buildings here to investigate including the Tollbooth (1706) or if you are so inclined, Glenmorangie has its distillery nearby. I would also suggest, if you have the time, of making a detour along the Tarbet peninsula to stop at Portmahomack, a sweet little harbour nestled by small fishing cottages and with pleasant, far-reaching views.



Portmahomack

Crossing over the Dornoch Firth you also cross over into Sutherland. My great love is this stunning and remote county with its small coastal settlements and almost empty interior. I

imagine myself one day owning a static caravan on the cliffs of the north coast with the North Sea expansive before me. But for now I will stop a short while at Dornoch and walk down to the beach where the soft golden sand is interspersed with various sized stones, some large enough to sit upon and gaze out to sea. This is also apparently a good place for bird watching, especially waterfowl.



Dornoch Firth

There are further pleasant towns to explore if you have the mind to, and the time to, but one of the most worthwhile is Helmsdale. It was once a centre of salmon fishing but as with most of the old ways this is now gone. The only connection now with fish is the excellent fish and chip shop on the high street. (Okay, as a vegetarian I've only actually had the chips but they were lovely.) There is a good informative museum here, Timespan, which tells of local history and culture such as crafting and the Highland Clearances. You can also pick up a leaflet which guides you along the town with its fascinating buildings such as the icehouse. Timespan also tells of the gold rush at nearby Kildonan. Gold was found here in 1868 and it wasn't long before hundreds of prospectors were flocking to Strath Kildonan to try their luck. At *Baile an Or* (Township of Gold) they set up their tents and let their minds roam to the hoards of gold they would find. More gold was found but by 1870 the gold rush had ended. Today, panning for gold is allowed as a leisure activity and many people make an annual pilgrimage here to try their luck.

From Helmsdale I like to drive along the A897 which is my favourite road in Britain if one has such a thing. Whereas in most parts of the country you'd be hard-pressed to drive a mile without seeing another car, I drove for 30 miles along it once without encountering another vehicle. Only the sheep had use of the road and they were alert enough and polite enough to move aside at the approach of a car.

This road cuts through the interior of the county and after 40 miles reaches its destination at Portskerra. West of here it gets even more remote, if that's possible, and a drive along the coast takes you through barren but beautiful hills on the left with the water stretching away to the right. Then you begin to drive inland a bit after reaching Bettyhill, the place where I one day hope to have my caravan overlooking Farr Bay. There is another reason to stop here; to visit Strathnaver Museum, housed in the Old Parish Kirk of St. Columba. It is packed full of artefacts relating to

the archaeology and history of the area. The churchyard is also worth a visit for the 8th century Farr Stone. Weaving the way along twisty remote roads you then approach the Kyle of Tongue which has been bridged for the last 40 years. Then further west to Loch Eriboll, a sea loch, and arguably one of the most beautiful of these. The road skirts the loch twisting and turning its way through this most breathtaking solitary scenery. My journey along this road ends at Durness although I am told that the most wild and uninhibited area is at Cape Wrath although somewhat inaccessible at this time in early spring. But none the less inspiring is the cove at Sango Bay where one could well imagine 18th c. smugglers unloading their booty in this remote hideaway. The beach is a stunner but there is more of interest here. Smoo Cave has the largest entrance of any British sea cave, standing around 15 m high. Braving your way inside the main



Sango Bay

chamber the reward is a splendid waterfall. There used to be boat tours here to the inner caves but these have been suspended for being too dangerous. Still it is worthwhile to climb down to

the entrance and have a look inside.

Several museums in the county cover the Highland Clearances of the 18th century when families were removed from their lands by the Duke of Cumberland to make way for sheep grazing. To get closer to this part of history, take a walk around Rosal Township in the heart of Strathnaver. There are information boards to direct you around this once thriving village where you can almost sense the desolation they faced at being taken from their homes so forcibly. You'll be taken into the depths of the county where the serenity of the place competes with its isolation.

Somewhat smaller than its neighbour, Caithness is also completely isolated from the rest of Scotland by it. There is still plenty to see here though it is in its Neolithic heritage that Caithness offers the most to the visitor. Chambered cairns (tombs) are amongst the most spectacular of these and Caithness, Sutherland and Ross-shire can boast around 140. Two of the the largest and best preserved, standing side by side, are the Grey Cairns of Camster south-west of Wick on a minor road. The entrances into both the round (20m) and long (60m) cairns can be accessed but you must get on your knees to do so. Unfortunately, I was there in early spring and the ground was much too wet to allow entry so I was only able to get a mere glimpse of how they appear inside. There are many other cairns worth seeing such as the Cairn of Get which is approached by a path through the foothills surrounded by sheep. The cairn affords magnificent views around it so one gets double the

value by visiting it. There are also plenty of standing stones and brochs to explore; one of the best of the brochs being the Carn Liath in Sutherland which affords views along the coast as well as the remainder of its foundations which rise to a height of 4 metres.



Carn Liath

Caithness is also home to one of Britain's extreme points. The most northerly point of mainland Britain is at Dunnet Head, an imposing cliff alive with puffins, guillemots, razorbills and other birds. A lighthouse, built in 1831, overlooks the Pentland Firth and slightly further inland you can see the remains of a Second World War radar station. Many people erroneously think that John o' Groats is the the most northerly point. Many guidebooks refer to it as 'tacky'. It is, but it's a good place to visit for a postcard collector like myself. If you stop there just don't forget to carry on a little further east to imposing Duncansby Head and its coastal stacks. Even windswept it is most impressive.

While in Caithness also take time to visit some of the seaside villages and harbours, Lybster on the east coast being one of the most picturesque. Or even pass a little time in one of the county's two larger towns, Thurso and Wick. You can catch your ferry to Orkney from either Scrabster, west of Thurso, or at Gills Bay around 20 miles further east. The ferry from Gills Bay takes you to St Margaret's Hope on South Ronaldsay where you pass beside the tiny islands of Stroma and Swona. Once alighted from the ferry drive north towards Mainland crossing over the magnificent Churchill Barriers built by Italian Prisoners of War in 1942 to protect Scapa Flow. Heading past Scapa Flow you can just see the tops of some sunken German ships poking out of the water.

No visit to Orkney would be complete without a visit to Skara Brae. Buried in sand until it was blown away by a mighty storm in 1850, this Neolithic village lay undiscovered for at least 4,000 years. Once excavated a staggering amount of mostly intact rooms were discovered leaving archaeologists with plenty of insight as to how the people in this village lived. On a changeable day in early April the wind here could blow you over if you aren't careful but perhaps adds to the feeling of the isolation of this marvellous place.

As you should not miss Skara Brae when on Orkney, likewise you should make it part of your plans not to miss the Ring of Brodgar, the third largest stone circle in Britain. There are also the Standing



Ring of Brodgar

Stones of Stenness which rise majestically into the sky. They are bigger than the stones at Brodgar but as there are only four left standing are not quite as impressive as a whole.

As well as all the fabulous ancient heritage sites a trip to Orkney is not complete without spending a little time at Kirkwall, the county town. The majestic 12th c. Cathedral of St. Magnus is built of reddish stone and dominates the town's skyline. Nearby are the remains of the Bishop's Palace and Earl's Palace

(both Historic Scotland) and there are plenty of shops to have a wander about as well.

Even though I've barely scratched the surface of all that is glorious about Scotland's northernmost counties, I hope that I've given you a flavour of their beauty, heritage, and intrigue.

Andy Strangeway's Extreme Yorkshire Adventure

While most Yorkshire folks had been tucked up at home trying to keep warm during the winter of 2010/2011, Andy Strangeway was braving sub-zero temperatures to sleep overnight on each of the four extreme points of Yorkshire. In addition to this, he also spent a night on top of each of the three Ridings' summits. His extreme schedule read:

1. **Northernmost**-Tyke's Way (30/31 October 2010)
2. **Yorkshire and North Riding Summit**-Mickle Fell (6/7 November 2010)
3. **Westernmost**-Greave Clough Head (13/14 November 2010)
4. **West Riding Summit**-Whernside (23/24 November 2010)
5. **East Riding Summit**-Bishop Wilton Wold (28/29 January 2011)
6. **Easternmost**-Spurn Point (29/30 January 2011)
7. **Southernmost**-Holt's Syke (Grange Farm) (5/6 February 2011)



However, braving such wintry conditions has brought its own rewards because, by doing so, Andy has become the first person to not only sleep on the summits of the three Ridings but also the first person to sleep at the seven extreme points of Yorkshire.



Spurn Point, East Riding

While undertaking his research for this extreme adventure, Andy discovered that very few people could actually name the locations of the four extreme points of Yorkshire. Andy suspects

that this is in part due to the local government change in 1974 and other subsequent changes. "This raises an interesting debate about the erosion of our Yorkshire culture and identity," he said. "Is it right that Yorkshire children are taught about the states of Australia and the USA yet they are not taught about the 39 counties of England and especially the great county of Yorkshire?" He added, "Yorkshire is still the same county it has been for over 1100 years. It has never been abolished and the Ridings still exist.



Andy Strangeway
Island Man

Although new administrative areas were created and came into effect in 1974 they never replaced our counties. I am pleased that my latest adventure will serve to highlight this fact."

Andy's exploits have also taken him beyond the boundaries of Yorkshire and he has undertaken several extreme tasks around the British Isles. He has slept at the extreme points of Lancashire on consecutive nights and has also completed the amazing feat of sleeping at all the extreme points on the British mainland starting at Lizard's Point, Cornwall. He also stayed at: Holme Fen, Huntingdonshire (lowest); Lowestoft Ness, Suffolk (easternmost); Corrachadh Mor, Argyllshire (westernmost); Dunnet Head, Caithness (northernmost) and Ben Nevis, Inverness-shire (highest). He also completed this solo journey on consecutive nights which makes it all the more compelling.

Andy is also known as the Island Man and over the course of five plus years he slept overnight on nearly 170 Scottish Islands.

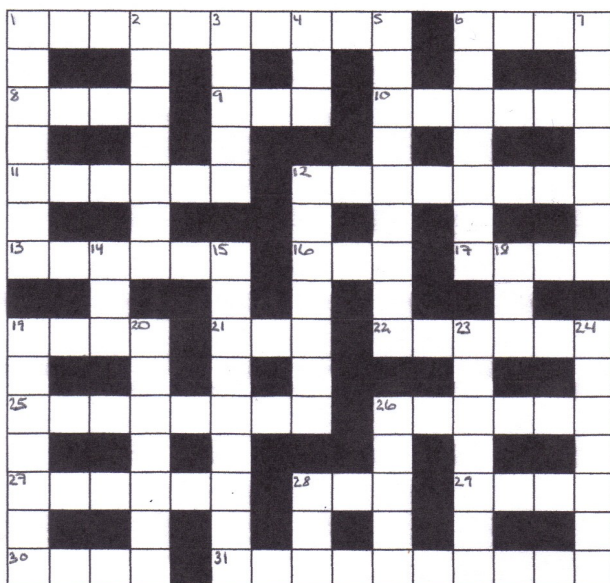
More information on him can be found on his website: www.island-man.co.uk.

County Fact

There are 24 ways to spell the name of the village of Cholmondeley, Cheshire.

County Crossword

Mari Foster



Answers on page 12

Across:

1. Smallest Welsh county, county town Mold
6. Scottish church
8. Six deliveries make this
9. Island south of Skye, part of
Inverness-shire
10. Louis Blériot landed first cross-Channel
flight in this Kent town
11. Celts associated with Stonehenge
12. Area in a town generally closed to traffic
13. ____ Stowey, Somerset or
____ Haddon, Derbyshire
16. Old English letter representing *th*
17. 19th century Shakespearean actor Edmund
19. Channel Island east of Guernsey

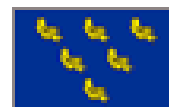
21. Abbreviation for volume
22. A building which exhibits objects to
the public
25. Followers of John Wyclif
26. River connected to Trent & Mersey Canal
by Anderton Boat Lift
27. Annoyingly slow to understand
28. Abbreviation for 8th month
29. Someone from north of the border
30. County, home to Strongford Lough
31. River valley near Tomintoul, Banffshire (6,4)

Down:

1. 1513 battle near Braxton, Northumberland
2. East Anglian home to two yellow items
3. Agricultural labourers bound by feudal ties
4. Abbreviation for island off coast of Lancs.
5. Renfrewshire village, landing site of Rudolf
Hess's aeroplane
6. Cumberland town at the head of
Derwent Water
7. Herefordshire market town on the west
side of Offa's Dyke
12. County town on the River Tweed
14. Hill or rocky peak such as at Glastonbury
15. Southern boundary of County Durham (5,4)
18. Main river of Devon
19. Lancashire city west of Manchester
20. Part of North London but traditionally
in Middlesex
23. Glamorgan city at the mouth of the Tawe
24. Dorset village, the burial place of
TE Lawrence
26. Part of Hampshire, the Isle of ____
28. First Scottish parliament held here in 1315

The Flight of the Sussex Martlets

Brady Ells



The Sussex county flag was finally registered and adopted on 20 May 2011 by the Flag Institute as a 'traditional county flag'. This was the result of a nine month campaign with help from ABC.

I have always been interested in flags and have always been aware that other counties such as Cornwall and Kent had their own flag but my county, Sussex, didn't. After a trip to the small fishing village of Beer in Devon, I realised that from nearly every shop and pub a Devon county flag was displayed. Inspired by this I decided to do the same for Sussex. In August 2010, aged 17 at the time, I decided to do something about this flagged-up issue. I researched

on the internet and in the local library on what a Sussex flag should feature. It soon became obvious that the traditional emblem of Sussex is six gold martlets on a blue field.

Martlets are mythical and heraldic birds thought to represent swallows. They are shown at rest, wings closed and without feet, possibly because of the old belief that the swallow could never land. There are six on the traditional emblem of Sussex each representing the six mediaeval administrative areas of Chichester, Arundel, Bramber, Lewes, Pevensey and Hastings. There is no absolute proof of how the link between the martlets and Sussex arose; the best guess

of historians is that they appeared on many leading landowning families' coats of arms. An example is the arms of the Arundell family: six silver martlets on a black field, 'Arundell' coming from the French 'hirondelle' meaning 'swallow'.

The first known recording of the traditional emblem was in 1611 in John Speed's atlas "The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine" to represent the Kingdom of the South Saxons. I realised that other emblems in the atlas had become county flags such as the three white seaxes on a red field which is the flag

of Essex. It didn't feel right that Sussex wasn't being represented in the same manner.

There is currently a modern misunderstanding that a blue field represents western Sussex and red the east due to the coats of arms of the county councils. There are many modern examples of where a blue field has been used in eastern Sussex such as on the village sign of Ringmer.

In May 2011, members of ABC attended the Flag Institute's spring meeting. They took along the proposed county flag and my research. They successfully demonstrated to the Chief Vexillologist why six gold martlets on a field of blue should become the flag of Sussex. A week later the flag was added to the United Kingdom flag registry.

The flag was first flown officially at Lewes Castle on 28 May 2011. Since the flag was registered, family and friends have helped to promote it. In February 2012 we donated flags to all 261 Sussex parishes and town councils; this was funded by ABC. Many more have been sold or donated since. The county flag has become very popular and a welcome addition to Sussex flagpoles as people instantly recognise the martlets. When it comes to flags, Sussex will soon be able to rival Cornwall!

ABC Online

Keep up to date with the latest news, and have your say, via our Facebook and Twitter sites:

www.facebook.com/abcounties

www.twitter.com (username: britishcounties)

See the latest news, read a whole load of information about the counties and get involved in the discussion boards via our website: www.abcounties.co.uk

Don't forget to spread the word about the Gazetteer of British Place Names, the standard reference source for UK geography: www.gazetteer.co.uk

Encourage everyone to get the correct county for postal addresses via the Traditional County Postal Directory: www.postal-counties.co.uk

The historic county borders of England and Wales can be downloaded in GoogleEarth (kmz) format from the Historic Counties Trust's County Border Project:

www.county-border.co.uk. The county borders can also be displayed within GoogleMaps by typing the following into the search box at the top of the screen and clicking 'search': http://www.county-borders.co.uk/Historic_Counties.kmz.

Crossword answers

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F | L | I | N | T | S | H | I | R | E | | K | I | R | K |
| L | | | O | | E | | O | | A | | E | | | I |
| O | V | E | R | | R | U | M | | G | A | S | T | O | N |
| D | | | W | | F | | | | L | | W | | | G |
| D | R | U | I | D | S | | | P | R | E | C | I | N | C |
| E | | | C | | | | | E | | S | | C | | O |
| N | E | T | H | E | R | | E | T | H | | K | E | A | N |
| | | O | | | I | | B | | A | | | X | | |
| S | A | R | K | | V | O | L | | M | U | S | E | U | M |
| A | | | I | | E | | E | | | | W | | | O |
| L | O | L | L | A | R | D | S | | W | E | A | V | E | R |
| F | | | B | | T | | | | I | | N | | | E |
| O | B | T | U | S | E | | A | U | G | | S | C | O | T |
| R | | | R | | E | | Y | | H | | E | | | O |
| D | O | W | N | | S | T | R | A | T | H | A | V | O | N |

Join the Association of British Counties

Membership to ABC costs just £5 per annum. You can join ABC via our website www.abcounties.co.uk where you can pay by credit/debit card or via PayPal. Joining this way saves us time and money. Alternatively, you can join by post. Please send a cheque for £5 payable to 'Association of British Counties' and post to: ABC Membership, 28 Alfreda Road, Whitchurch, CARDIFF, Glamorgan, CF14 2EH

Name: _____

Address: _____

(Please feel free to photocopy this form.)