

POLITICAL FLAGS AND EMBLEMS OF SCOTLAND

Norman Logan



(This account of Norman Logan's presentation has been reconstructed by the editor of *Cruis Australis* from audience notes, in the absence of a transcript from the author.)

Scottish nationalism has been at Cross purposes with the English since the Middle Ages. It should not surprise that traditional emblems continue to find expression today. A range of these banners and flags displayed at various rallies and processions were illustrated by some of Norman's slides.

Congress members were left the indelible memory of Norman in full Scottish regalia, as he celebrated the thistle, the timeless emblem of Scotland the Brave. A contemporary version of this is depicted in the lapel badge design above.

This design combines in stylised form two enduring national symbols of Scotland - the thistle and the saltire of St Andrew. It apparently evolved from the earlier symbol of the Scottish Liberal Party (Fig. 1) which features the national blue and white St Andrew's saltire flag and the letters S and L, red on yellow (the royal colours of Scotland).

The simple twist of the design also evokes other elements in the history of Scottish symbolism. The thistle shape seen on its side is also the fish symbol of early Christianity, established in Scotland from the northwestern isle of Iona by the Irish monk Columban.

The national party also uses the thistle-saltire symbol in gold on black flag - this may hark back to the Celtic origins of the nation, for black persists in two of the Celtic flags mentioned briefly - Kernow (Cornwall) and Breizhe (Brittany).FN

Another of the earliest Celtic symbol sometimes displayed, often in association with the Saltire, is the Knot of Crinan - an entanglement of symmetry and filigree forming a mandala.

In its simplest form of three segments, (Fig. 2) it sometimes is associated with the Trinity (cfr the legend of St Patrick and the shamrock) but the provenance is probably older (as with the Trinacron on the flag of Mannin).

FN - The others were Cymry (Wales) Eire (Ireland) Mannin (Isle of Man).

One of the curiosities brought to light is that there is no standard set for the shade of blue in the national flag of Scotland. The thistle emblem lapel pin features a background of deep navy, but generally favoured for the flag is a brighter mid-blue. This was in fact the colour used in the first Union flag of the 1600's (note the Scottish version Fig. 3) as also in the original flag of the Old Scottish National Party (Fig. 4) combining the royalist red lion with the nation Saltire, blue and white.

The national colours also surface in yet another people's flag, commonly seen in the Shetland's Islands (Fig. 5). Lord Lyon, the Chief Herald for Scotland objected, observing that "it was too much like that of Greece" and "too much like the national flag of Scotland". Heaven forbid!

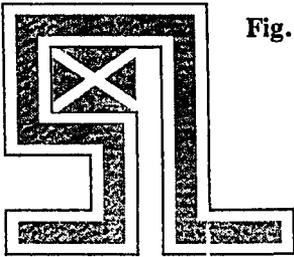


Fig. 1

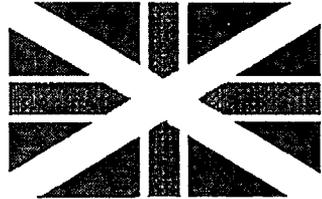


Fig. 3



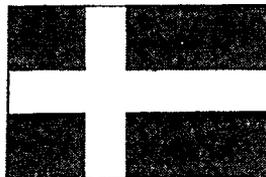
Fig. 2



Fig. 4



BRITTANY (BREIZH)



SHETLAND ISLANDS

Fig. 5