



DISPATCH

Welcome to *Dispatch*, your Flag Institute newsletter – a monthly communication from your CEO Leigh Wetherall, bringing you updates, news, and information on all things flags and Flag Institute.

Plans for the FI Spring 2025 Conference, 17/18 May in York are now confirmed. Saturday 17 May will bring a full programme of speakers and presentations to the [Bar Convent Living Heritage Centre](#). The conference weekend continues on Sunday 18 May with two special visits.

A full weekend ticket costs £47 and includes the Saturday Conference, President's Drinks and river cruise, and the two Sunday guided tours. You can [register via Eventbrite](#), where you will also find options for Saturday-only or Sunday-only tickets.

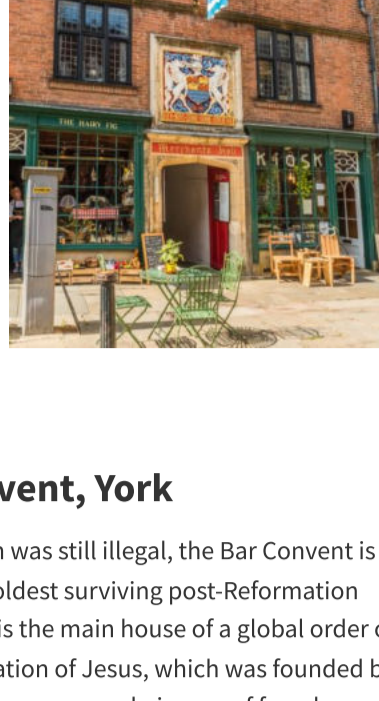
We also extend a huge welcome to recent new members ...

- Dylan Dean, UK | Simon Allen, UK | Edric Kerr, UK | Saman Athena Mehmood, UK | Francis White, UK | Manuela Schmöger, Germany | Clare Dimyon MBE, UK | Richard Thomas, UK | Jonny Stephens, UK | Keith Pace, UK | Professor Adam Beaumont and AQL, UK | Aftab Khan and the Kashmir Development Foundation, UK | Elizabeth MacDonald and Griffin Flags, UK

FI Spring Conference 2025

...Registration at the Bar Convent opens at 10.30am, with the first speaker scheduled for 11am. Find all info on speakers and presentations on the [FI website](#). In the evening we head for the river Ouse, to enjoy President's Drinks while we cruise through the historic heart of the city, with views of medieval landmarks, the waterfronts, and countryside.

On Sunday we take a guided tour of the medieval [Merchant Adventurers' Hall](#), right, and its heraldic craft guild banners, led by Museum Director Lauren Marshall. In the afternoon we visit [York Army Museum](#), opening outside normal hours for a private tour led by Museum Director, and curator of the Royal Dragoon Guards collection, Major (Ret'd) Graeme Green.



Bar Convent, York

Founded in 1686, when Catholicism was still illegal, the Bar Convent is the UK's oldest living convent and oldest surviving post-Reformation place of Catholic worship. Today it is the main house of a global order of sisters, now known as the Congregation of Jesus, which was founded by Mary Ward (1585–1645), a Yorkshire woman and pioneer of female education. Her followers continued her work and opened the UK's first schools for girls in London (1669), then here at the Bar Convent, and there are now over 200 schools in Mary Ward's name across the world.

Flags have played only a minor role in Bar Convent history, but there are a few symbolic connections worth noting. Catholic institutions often used religious banners or papal flags to signify allegiance to Rome, but until the late 18th century the Bar Convent had to operate in secret, disguised as a private house, so as not to draw unwanted attention from the authorities and from anti-Catholic mobs. Only with full Catholic Emancipation in 1829 could the convent use such symbols more openly.



Staying in York



York is rich in both history and places to stay. The city offers a range of accommodation options, from luxury hotels to budget-friendly choices. Visitors can also find charming guesthouses, historic inns, and self-catering apartments in the city centre and surrounding areas.

[Lil's on the Waterfront](#) is a cosy riverside hotel in York offering budget-friendly accommodation with scenic views and a central location.

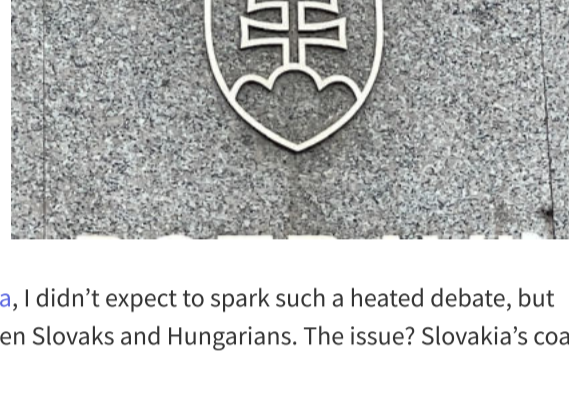
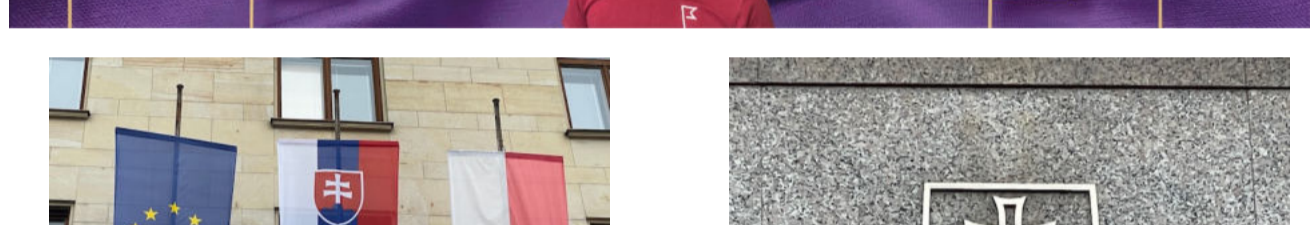
[The Bootham Tavern](#) is a traditional pub with rooms, offering comfortable accommodation, live sports, and a lively atmosphere near the city centre, and immediately opposite our Bar Convent venue.

[Premier Inn York City \(Blossom St North\)](#) is a budget-friendly hotel offering comfortable rooms in a central location, just a short walk from York Station and the historic city centre.

[Abbey Guest House](#) is a charming bed and breakfast offering comfortable accommodation with a central location near the River Ouse and historic attractions.

For a full range of options go to comparison sites, e.g. <https://www.trivago.co.uk/en-GB/srl/cheap-hotels-york-united-kingdom?search=200-20139;coord=53.958412170410156,-1.0804280042648315;dr=20250517-20250518;sds=4828;rc=1-2;so=1>

Guest contributor: Flags in Focus



When I released my [Flags in Focus](#) episode on the flag of Slovakia, I didn't expect to spark such a heated debate, but the comments section quickly turned into a battleground between Slovaks and Hungarians. The issue? Slovakia's coat of arms and its historical roots.

The emblem, featuring a double cross on three blue hills, is a proud national symbol for Slovakia. But many Hungarian commenters pointed out that this design was historically used in the Kingdom of Hungary, where Slovak lands were once part of a larger whole. Some argued that the three hills; Tatras, Fatra, and Matra, don't entirely belong to Slovakia, as the Matra Mountains are actually in Hungary.

For Slovaks, the coat of arms is a powerful statement of national identity, especially after centuries under Hungarian rule. For Hungarians, it's a reminder of the territorial shifts that followed the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, which saw Hungary lose Slovakia and other regions.

The discussion revealed deep-seated emotions on both sides. Some Slovaks defended their right to use the symbol, while some Hungarians saw it as an appropriation of shared heritage. It was a fascinating, if sometimes fiery, glimpse into how historical symbols still shape modern identities. Something I truly was not expecting.

This debate proves one thing: flags and their symbols are never just about design. They carry history, politics, and pride, sometimes enough to set a comments section ablaze!

FI Council Meeting, Monday 3 March

The FI Council gathered online for its quarterly meeting earlier this week. The main talking points were:

- Upcoming conferences: the FI AGM & Winter 2025 Conference will be free and online, Saturday 15 November. Also save the date for the FI Spring 2026 Conference, Saturday 30 May. We're exploring UK host cities, but please let us know your recommendations.
- We're reviewing our FI social media presence. In coming months we'll be transitioning from X to our new BlueSky account. Follow us at: [@flaginstitute.bsky.social](#)
- We're also looking for publishers to develop *The Colours of the Fleet*, created and compiled by FI President Malcolm Farrow OBE. COTF is the most comprehensive list of flags and ensigns bearing the Union Flag. If you know of any publisher(s) who may be interested in working with the FI, please do let me know.



NAVA 59 call for papers

The [North American Vexillological Association](#) (NAVA) is inviting submissions for presentations at NAVA 59, its 59th Annual Meeting, scheduled to take place in Seattle, USA, 10–12 October 2025. Please send your submission(s) for consideration by the NAVA selection committee to vp2nd@nava.org by 15 May 2025.

For full submission guidelines and more information about NAVA 59, please visit the official [NAVA website](#).



Visit this month



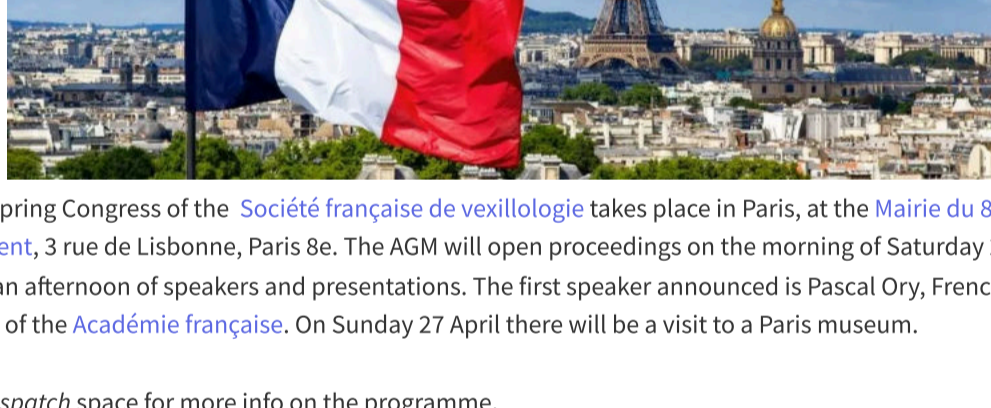
... [Malvern Indoor Militaria Fair](#), 23 March: held at the Three Counties Showground in Malvern, this event showcases military memorabilia, including historical flags and banners. It's an opportunity for enthusiasts to explore military history and collectibles.

This event is one of the UK's best-established militaria fairs, featuring a vast array of stalls from leading dealers and private collectors. Attendees can explore and purchase a wide range of military memorabilia, including uniforms, weapons, medals, and historical artifacts spanning various periods and conflicts.

Whether you're a dedicated collector, history enthusiast, or simply curious about military history, the Malvern Militaria Show provides a unique opportunity to delve into the past.

Adult tickets are priced at £7.00, with free entry for under-14s if accompanied by an adult.

Save the date - 26/27 April 2025



...when the Spring Congress of the [Société française de vexillologie](#) takes place in Paris, at the [Mairie du 8e arrondissement](#), 3 rue de Lisbonne, Paris 8e. The AGM will open proceedings on the morning of Saturday 26 April, followed by an afternoon of speakers and presentations. The first speaker announced is Pascal Ory, French historian and member of the [Académie française](#). On Sunday 27 April there will be a visit to a Paris museum.

Watch this *Dispatch* space for more info on the programme.

Fly those flags

... this March! Here are this month's UK flag days:

- 1 March:** Wales: St David's Day
- 5 March:** Cornwall: St Piran's Day
- 10 March:** Commonwealth Day (second Monday in March; the Commonwealth Flag is flown)
- 10 March:** Birthday of Edward, Duke of Edinburgh
- 17 March:** St Patrick's Day (in Northern Ireland)
- 20 March:** County Durham: St Cuthbert's Day
- 29 March:** West Riding (Yorkshire): Battle of Towton, 1461

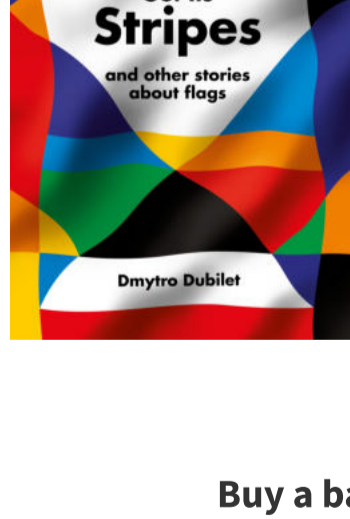


The County Flags of England, Scotland and Wales

...for over a decade, the FI's Chief Vexillologist Graham Bartram and Communities Vexillologist Philip Tibbetts have mentored flag design competitions in the historic counties of the UK. To date we have admitted over 50 county flags to our [UK Flag Registry](#), and Jason Saber's new book, released in October by Amberley Publishing, takes us on a tour of them all.

From Caithness to Cornwall, Pembrokeshire to Suffolk – and including the latest flags from Berwickshire, Moray and Banffshire – Jason explores the stories behind the designs and opens a window into local pride and local history.

Grab your copy now for just £11.99 – a big FI saving on the list price of £16.99. Please email me to order and to confirm postage costs.



How did the tricolour get its stripes?

...Dmytro Dubilet ([@FlagsbyDubilet](#)) has the answer. With 200 colour illustrations, his 'sparkling tour' through the stories of the symbols we know so well! (Tim Marshall) travels the world using flag design styles as a guide. Each chapter starts with a well-known flag and shows how that flag led to other flags – so, for example, how the French tricolour led to the red, white and green tricolour of Italy, and then to a host of other tricolours around the world.

We're down to our last few copies, on sale for just £12.55 – offering another big FI saving on the list price of £18.99.

Please email me to secure your copy and to confirm postage costs.

Buy a back issue

... of *Flagmaster*. Do you have gaps in your collection? Did you spill coffee on FM 164 and would like a fresh new copy?

If so, then you need our new *Flagmaster* shop. Updated after every sale, [this link](#) to view a list of all available back issues. Updated after every sale, so what you see is what you can get.

To find issues covering a particular subject, check our online [Flagmaster Index](#). To view a table of contents, [login to the FI website](#) to access the full *Flagmaster* PDF archive

To order, please email me: £3 per copy OR £10 for 4. 5+ copies - please contact me (all prices + p&p).

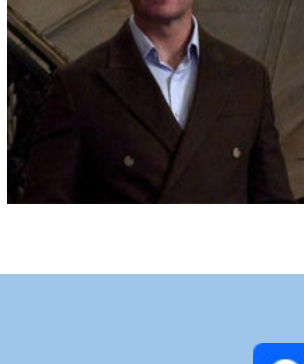


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As always, I'd welcome your thoughts and comments. Please do get in touch.

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