

National Flags



One of the surprising features of Summer 2025 was the appearance on our streets and road network of national flags, both the Union Jack and the Cross of St George. I for one have been an admirer of other countries where the national flag is flown in gardens and alongside front doors, as well as public buildings and spaces, as a mark of patriotic pride and identity. Earlier in the year I came across a lone homestead in the middle of nowhere in the heart of Sweden, the only splash of colour in an otherwise bleak landscape was the yellow and blue of the national flag, fluttering proud and true. It was cheering.

National flags have long been used as symbols around which to unite a country. Both the Union Jack and the Cross of St George speak, without the need for words, about who we are as a people and the common values and culture we share. The courage to stand up against evil, depicted in St George slaying the dragon, and the coming together of the peoples of the disparate British Islands, expressed in the design of the Union flag, both emphasise that, overall, we remain better together than apart.

Symbols are, of course, subject to interpretation. Some will want to accentuate a particular angle or value. Which particular value does the flag represent for you? Duty? Loyalty? Sacrifice? English or British first? Whatever your response and however you feel, what is true, is that, as a symbol, a national flag is not owned by any one group in society. No political group or party can claim exclusive rights over its use or interpretation. The national flag is owned by everyone and no one group has the right to sully its reputation in such a way as to leave others feeling that they don't belong. To do so is to deny the rightful place of the flag in helping to generate community cohesion.

Flags have flown from the top of church towers and in churchyards ever since anyone can remember. In the fourth century the Roman Emperor, Constantine introduced the red cross on a white background to symbolise the resurrection of Christ; the triumph of life over death. The Swiss businessman, Henry Dunant, chose the same symbol when founding the Red Cross Society after witnessing the suffering of soldiers and others at the Battle of Solferino in 1859. In the same vein, our national flags are there to promote and encourage the best of who we are and what we can be as a people, united in purpose, affirming the common good, looking out for each other.

God Bless.

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