The Flag Society of Australia

The Flag Society of Australia was founded in August 1983 and incorporated in February 1984. We are the first such society known to have been formed in the Southern Hemisphere.

Vexillology (the study of flags) is a comparatively recent addition to the field of knowledge as a separate and distinct discipline. It was first established in an organized form in 1692 when Dr. Whitney Smith founded the Flag Research Centre in the United States. Since then, flag societies have been formed in a steadily growing number of countries; among them are Great Britain, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, and Spain.

The Flag Society of Australia is not only a-political but is also strictly neutral in the 'great Australian flag debate' as to whether or not Australia should have a new national flag. Written into its constitution the Society has three principal aims:

1. To record and preserve any and all information relating to flags in general and Australian flags in particular.
2. To undertake research and study programmes, and to exchange information on flags and related matters with similar societies both within Australia and overseas.
3. To act as an information source for the general public and any interested bodies on all matters pertaining to flags.

The study of flags embraces a wide variety of separate elements. Not only are there different types of flags, such as signal flags, commercial flags, military flags, municipal flags, and national flags; but also many different branches of learning are involved, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, semiotics (signs and symbols and their relation to meaning), heraldry, history, art, and politics. Countless thousands of flags have been designed and flown, discarded and forgotten since the first known flag - a metal standard 5000 years old which has been discovered in Iran. Even Australia has had a surprisingly large number of flags during its relatively short period of recorded history.

It is evident, then, that the study of flags is a subject of great range and diversity; and we hope that this brief introduction has been of interest.

It might be appropriate to mention here that the Flag Society publishes a bi-monthly journal 'Crux Australis' (Southern Cross), which is the first, and only, authoritative flag publication produced in Australia.

For those wishing to know more, inquiries may be directed to any of the committee members listed below.

John Edwards (President)  
Kirk Bradbury (Secretary)  
Ralph Bartlett (Treasurer)  
Steve Duke (Memberships)  

John Christian Vaughan, J.P., "Craigallion," 46 Raeburn Avenue, Castlecrag 2068, New South Wales, Australia, has devoted twenty years of research into a poster on Australian flags.

His research into the history of Australian flags, an invaluable item in any vexillological library, is in the form of a fully-illustrated poster which is being widely distributed by Woolworth's to celebrate 60 years as an Australian company.

The poster includes 38 designs of the flags which have been used since 1788. They include the first Union Jack, the national colonial flag of 1823 which first combined the Union Jack and the Southern Cross, and the winning designs of the 1901 competition which formed the basis of the flag used today in Australia.

Mr. Vaughan, who is president of the Willoughby District Historical Society, has given 250 talks on the history of flags.

Anyone who is interested in securing a poster should remit six dollars in Australian currency to: Woolworth's Limited, 540 George St., Sydney, Australia. The poster will be sent to you in a cylinder container. You won't be disappointed in this unique vexillological item.

'An Introduction to the Flag Society of Australia' was written by John Edwards and authorized by the committee of the Society, May 1984.
NOTES from
Grace Rogers Cooper
NAVA President

Don't you like to tell people that you are a member of the North American Vexillological Association? I do. I have had some wonderful responses. Invariably they ask what the word means and many times how to spell it. Recently my husband was having a check-up and as he was leaving the doctor said, "What is the name of that flag organization that your wife belongs to?" San told him and Dr. Wooster replied, "I was telling a colleague about it and he never heard the word either." At least my new Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language has the stem word "vexillum" listed so more people should begin to understand what we are all about.

What are you all about, vexillologically speaking? Have you prepared a paper for NAVA 18 in Vancouver? Research is never completely finished so please don't feel you have to wait until you have asked every question and found every answer on your subject before you can present it to our group. We can all learn from each other. Presenting an idea or research findings to a group helps to clarify them in your own mind. Are you a collector? The story of why, how, and when of your collection would make an interesting exhibit for our annual Meeting. How did you get interested in vexillology? Write a paragraph and tell us about yourself and we will include it in this column in a forthcoming issue. Histories of the flag manufacturers would make good copy; let us have a story about your company. And I'm sure we would all like to hear the stories about requests for strange and different flags from the distributors. Each of you has a story to tell. Let us hear from you.

ARE YOU UP TO DATE ON YOUR NAVA DUES?
THE FLAG HOUSE IN BALTIMORE

O, say can you see . . .

Competing with a national monument is not an easy thing to do, especially if the national monument is Fort McHenry, the birthplace of our national anthem. But that is the role of a small house at 844 East Pratt Street in Baltimore known as the "Star Spangled Banner Flag House and Museum, 1793".

Not everyone knows that the huge 30 x 42 foot flag with fifteen stars and fifteen stripes was born in the small house at the corner of Pratt and Albemarle.

The flag was made by Mary Young Pickersgill, a young widow who had recently moved to Baltimore from Philadelphia where she had been a designer and maker of ships’ flags and bunting. Her mother, Rebecca Young, who had accompanied Mary to Baltimore, had made the Grand Union, the first flag of the American Revolution, for General George Washington.

In 1813 while Baltimore was preparing for an expected attack by the British in their attempt to regain control of their former colonies, Mary Pickersgill was commissioned by Major George Armistead, Commandant of Fort McHenry, Commodore Joshua Barney and Brigadier General John S. Stricker to make the flag.

At dawn on September 17, Francis Scott Key who was interned on one of the British man-of-war, saw that the "Star Spangled Banner yet waved," and the British had failed in their attempt to capture a foothold. The British then retreated.

Mary’s historic house, built in 1793, served as her home until her death in 1857. The house is furnished with authentic pieces of the period, many of which were belongings of Rebecca Young and Mary Pickersgill.

The house and adjoining 1812 museum are open to the public Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. Please call (301) 837-1793 for additional information.

From: Maryland Roads
March 1984

Embalmed Heart Attached To Flagstaff

In 1792, during the burial in exile of Mirabeau-Tonneau, brother of the great Mirabeau, an unusual ceremony was added to the traditional rites. The embalmed heart of the viscount, which had been placed in a lead box, was attached to the flagstaff of the volunteer battalion (the Mirabeau Legion, which he had trained).


FLAG DESIGN BLOUSES
NO MATCH FOR ‘PATRIOT’

Vicki L. Travis of Springfield, Oregon, a part-time delivery person and mother of three, took offense when she saw some $15. blouses on sale at a Montgomery Ward’s Valley River Center store that were decorated with American flag designs. A lifelong "true blue" patriot, she went home and considered what action to take.

She phoned the store manager and, as a result, Ward’s removed the blouses from 350 stores nationwide.

Travis said she believes that the ideals represented by the flag are important enough to defend and knows that many Americans agree with her that more respect needs to be shown towards Old Glory.

From: NAVA NEWS/JULY-AUGUST 1984 Page 3
THE national flag and emblem were first formally used on October 1, 1949, with the founding of the People's Republic. They had been unanimously adopted by the First Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference held on the eve of the birth of the new China.

In June of that year, the standing committee of the preparatory committee for the CPPCC set up a special group to be in charge of proposing a national flag and emblem. The group solicited suggestions from around the country, and in less than a month 4,912 flag designs and 1,120 emblem designs were submitted.

The flag ultimately chosen has five gold stars on a red background. The proportion of its length to its width is 3:2. The stars are in the upper left-hand corner—one large one, and to its right four smaller ones, with a point of each of the four pointing to the center of the large one.

The red color stands for revolution, and the gold of the stars the dawn of a new day over the vast land of China. The five stars symbolize the unity of the Chinese people under the Chinese Communist Party.

The national flag was first raised in Tian An Men Square on October 1, 1949, when the new China was established. Its shape, design, manufacture and use are specified by law.

The national emblem of the People's Republic of China shows Tian An Men (Gate of Heavenly Peace) at the center, illuminated by five stars from the national flag and surrounded by ears of grain and a cogwheel. The 500-year-old Tian An Men, which stands in front of the old Forbidden City at the center of Beijing, has considerable symbolic significance. From the rostrum on top of the gate, the birth of the new People's Republic was proclaimed in 1949. Tian An Men Square in front of the gate, cleared and enlarged after liberation, is one of the largest squares in the world. It was the birthplace of the May 4th Movement of 1919—the beginning of China's new democratic revolution. Around or within it are such structures as the Great Hall of the People, where the National People's Congress and other important bodies meet, and the Monument to the People's Heroes.

The cogwheel and the ears of grain on the emblem symbolize the working class and the peasants of China, and the five stars again symbolize the unity of the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party. The national emblem thus strikingly manifests the nature of the People's Republic of China—a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship, led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants.