

Athelstaneford

There is a small tranquil village called Athelstaneford just to the east of Edinburgh past the town of Musselburgh, drive into the village and the first words will probably be, where are the shops, Post Office and local Pub, the sad truth is there are none, however, this is the place to live in. It was here around 832 AD when just before a battle between the English and the Scots/Picts, there was a remarkable occurrence, a cloud formation in the shape of the St. Andrew's Cross appeared in the beautiful blue sky. This was taken as a good omen by the Scots/Picts, St. Andrew they thought had a hand in this, so much so that they went on to win the battle, The English King Athelstan whilst running away, was killed nearby, it is suggested at a river crossing, afterwards the Scottish/Picts army adopted this sign from above for a battle flag, then it became our national flag for Scotland. The church on the site is built on top of a much earlier one, the first church to be built here was started by ADA wife to Henry Prince of Scotland, in the 12th century, she was the mother of William the Lion.

The church that exists today was built in 1780, and has stained glass windows with St. Andrew on them, unfortunately I was unable to gain access as there was work being carried out inside. At the rear of the church, there is a wonderful example of a Doocot built in 1583, built by George Hepburn, he was the father of Sir John Hepburn, the founder of The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment), the First of Foot, founded in 1633, merged into the new Royal Regiment of Scotland in 2007.

The Doocot still has the original lintel above the door with the initials and date on it, the building was in poor repair until it was fully restored in 1996 by the Scottish Flag Trust.

The Saltire monument is situated near to the road within the church yard, it was built in 1965. It was designed by the late Dr. F. R. Stevenson and restored in 1993 by the Scottish Flag Trust. Within the monument there is a panel showing the two armies, with the Saltire in the sky above. The Saltire flag flies permanently over the monument, and during darkness the monument is floodlit.

“ Tradition says that near this place, in times remote Pictish and Scottish warriors, about to defeat an army of Northumbrians. Saw against a blue sky a great white cross like St. Andrew's and its image made a banner which became the flag of Scotland “

It is believed the battle took place in one of the fields, I would imagine it took place in several fields, however, the field shown In the photograph would have been fought on.

Whilst I was out in the grounds taking photographs, I was astounded to see the St. Andrew's Cross in the sky, unfortunately this was made by two aircraft crossing leaving their jet streams behind, you might just see it in the photo.

Close by there is Drem, famous during World War II for its airfield, the planes could only land there if they came in at a specific angle, this angle was unknown to the German air force, Drem was once the property of the Knights Templar and I assume a fair amount of land surrounding it, possibly even Athelstaneford.

Chev. Archie Young. KCTpl. FSA Scot.