

An Introduction to the Association of British Counties

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Introduction

The Association of British Counties (ABC) is a society dedicated to promoting awareness of the continuing importance of the 92 historic (or traditional) Counties of the United Kingdom.

The ABC believes that the historic counties are an important part of the culture, geography and heritage of The United Kingdom. The ABC contends that Britain needs a fixed popular geography, one divorced from the ever changing names and areas of local government but, instead, one rooted in history, public understanding and commonly held notions of community and identity. The ABC, therefore, seeks to fully re-establish the use of the historic counties as the standard popular geographical reference frame of Britain and to further encourage their use as a basis for social, sporting and cultural activities.

More information and resources can be found on our *Press and Media* page (abcounties.com/press-and-media) where you will also find a *Guide to the historic counties for Press and Media*.

Please contact us with your enquiries at: press-enquiries@abcounties.com

We promote the Historic Counties

The Association of British Counties believes that the link that the historic counties provide between our present and our distant past adds great value to the life of the nation and therefore deserves to be preserved and enhanced.

The 39 historic counties of England have mostly existed largely unchanged since before 1066, the 13 Welsh ones (including Monmouthshire), like the 34 in Scotland, have been fixed in name and areas for over 400 years, whilst the arrangement of the counties of Northern Ireland we see today dates to 1613. Historically speaking, having been adopted or created in mediaeval times for the exercise of a kind of administration, Essex, Yorkshire, Pembrokeshire, Fife and the rest have long since come to represent something much wider than that. They have become bedrocks of the history, culture and geography of Britain.

They provide an instant means of reference to different parts of the country, to a set of cities, towns and villages; to distinctive scenery, architecture and wildlife; to particular industries and pastimes, accents and dialect, tourist attractions, weather and so on. A large literature focuses on each of the historic counties; they give their names to clubs and societies, to teams people play for, to regiments they serve in; they are familiar holiday and business destinations. Above all else, they are places - places where people live and “come from”, where they “belong”. And they often provide a family link with past generations.

Our County heritage is something to be treasured and nurtured by society, not tossed aside simply because the historic counties are no longer considered suitable as a basis for administration.

More information about the historic counties can be found on County-Wise and in the Guide to the historic counties for the Press and Media, which is available on the Press and Media Page.



*The Counties of
Great Britain & Northern Ireland*

Our vision for the Historic Counties

The ABC contends that Britain needs a fixed general-purpose geography, one divorced from the ever changing names and areas of local government, but instead rooted in history, public understanding and commonly held notions of community and identity. The ABC, therefore, seeks to fully re-establish the use of the historic counties as the standard general-purpose geographical reference frame of Britain.

We contend that:

- the borders of the historic counties should be marked on maps and appropriately signed;
- the geography of the historic counties should be adopted by writers, editors, publishers, organisations, and businesses for all suitable (non-administrative) purposes;
- the historic counties should be the standard for use in studies of history, local history, historical geography and genealogy, and to be that used in cataloguing, indexing and organising historical records and documents;
- the historic counties should be used as the county line in all UK postal addresses.

The ABC wishes to see the main governmental and non-governmental heritage organisations of the UK (e.g English Heritage, the National Trust, CADW, Historic Scotland etc.) fully recognise the importance of the historic counties to our heritage and culture, make full use of them in publications, display boards etc. and to promote them as a vital part of our living, common heritage.

The ABC seeks to promote the fact that the historic counties have an existence and importance totally separate from any set of administrative areas. We wish to see a form of local government names and terminology which draws a clear distinction in the public mind between the historic counties and local government. We therefore, seek an end to the naming of local authorities after the historic counties, and an end to the use of the terms 'county' and 'county council' to describe a local authority or its area.

The ABC wishes to see the continuation and extension of the use of the historic counties as a basis for sporting, social and cultural organisations and activities.

The ABC wishes to see each of the historic counties have a registered flag and for this flag to be commonly flown within the county and recognised as a symbol of that county.

The ABC wishes to see each historic county have a “county day” on which all aspects of the history and culture of that county can be celebrated.

The ABC contends that an appreciation of the history and culture of the historic counties should form a part of the national curriculum and be taught in an appropriate manner to all schoolchildren.

The ABC seeks fair access to public funding for organisations based upon the historic counties and fair representation for organisations based upon the historic counties on governmental and quasi-governmental advisory bodies, panels, committees, consortia etc. in relation to the arts, sport, and other social or cultural issues.

The ABC wishes to see the historic counties fully used by the tourism industry as a basis for promoting tourism.

What we do

The Association of British Counties provides resources to enable the use of the historic counties and promotes them through projects and campaigns.

Our resources include:

- [Gazetteer of British Place Names](#) - a comprehensive listing of the historic county of the cities, towns and villages of Britain. An interactive [web map](#) can also be found on the Gazetteer, including county border data in GoogleEarth (KMZ) and Shape formats.
- [Historic Counties Postal Directory](#) - a directory of the historic counties indexed by post town. The directory can be used to integrate historic counties into address data and look-ups.
- The [County-Wise](#) website - promoting an understanding and appreciation of the history, geography and culture of the historic counties, and providing advice for individuals, businesses and organisations as to how to use them.

Our projects and campaigns include:

- Establishing county flags to promote and reaffirm a historic county's identity. Over 30 county flags have now been registered and we hope in time that all the nation's historic counties will raise one. We support county flags through the [ABC Flag Blog](#) and flag competitions.
- Promoting the establishment and celebration of a "county day" for each of the historic counties.
- Working with local authorities, organisations and land owners to mark historic county borders and places of interest.
- Promoting the use of the historic counties as a basis for social, cultural and sporting purposes.
- Lobbying government for a change to local government terminology to make clear the distinction between the historic counties and local government units.

- Persuading the media, publishers, government, heritage and other organisations to use the geography of the historic counties for all suitable (i.e. non-administrative) purposes.

Promoting the historic counties as tourist destinations and encouraging the tourism industry to do likewise.

Who we are

The Association of British Counties is a voluntary, non-party political and non-sectarian society. We exist to maintain, enhance and promote the identities of the historic counties of the United Kingdom and their role in the cultural life, geography and history of the nation. We do this through the combined effort of our Members, who come from all walks of life.

Our Patrons

Russell Grant Esq

Peter Luff MP

John Randall MP

Andrew Rosindell MP

David Taylor MP

Angela Watkinson MP

Where we are

Whilst the Association is a national organisation, we have a number of affiliated groups and associations, which act as county branches. These *county groups* host events, meetings and engage with their respective counties. More information and links can be found on our website: <http://abcounties.com/about/where-we-are/>