

Musselburgh Racecourse flies the flag for St Andrew's Day

Musselburgh Racecourse is helping to fly the flag in advance of St Andrew's Day at its next meeting on Monday.

The Saltire Raceday, which is being staged behind-closed-doors, is supporting the Scottish Flag Trust and four out of the seven jumps races will be named in honour of Scotland's national flag.

East Lothian has long been associated with the Saltire and legend has it the small village of Athelstaneford near Haddington is the birthplace of the St Andrew's Cross or Saltire.

The Trust was set up in 1984 by the St Andrew's Society and has a remit to maintain the Saltire Memorial in the village churchyard and to encourage proper use of the national flag, which is Europe's oldest flag.

It is said that as King Angus led prayers for his outnumbered army prior to a battle against the Picts north of Athelstaneford in 832AD that a white cross against a blue sky. This resembled a saltire and the King pledged that if victory was achieved St Andrew would become the patron saint of Scotland.

Monday's meeting, which features prize money of £40,000, includes the Saltire Festival Handicap Chase, the Athelstaneford – Birthplace of the Saltire Handicap Hurdle, the £10,000 The Legend of the Saltire Handicap Chase and the Saltire.scot Handicap Hurdle.

David Williamson, Chairman of The Scottish Flag Trust, said: "We are delighted to be so well supported in Musselburgh Racecourse's Saltire Raceday. It seems fitting that the Saltire Memorial, situated just along the coast at Athelstaneford, is celebrated as we approach St Andrew's Day.

"The Trust has recently launched a restoration appeal to support a number of exciting onsite initiatives which will help restore this nationally important site so that we can continue to share the story of Scotland's flag with the world."

Sarah Montgomery, Senior Operations and Commercial Manager at the racecourse, added: "We are delighted our long-standing Saltire Raceday can play a small but significant part in promoting the fascinating and important story of our national flag."

More information on The Scottish Flat Trust and its renovation project can be found at www.saltire.scot