

Redland Past Revisited for the Redland Directory - No. 12

'CUBA - Redland's Black Flag day!'

©Julian Lea-Jones April 2008

How many can remember the black flag flown annually over 'The Old Barn' at Luccombe Hill? Apart from Pirate flags, coloured signal flags also form part of a military warning system in which a black flag is flown warning personnel undertaking strenuous outdoor activities of potential heat stress; not usually a problem in Redland! So what was the occasion? To find the answer we need to travel back to 1373, when King Ed III granted Bristol County status, making it responsible for its own affairs separate from Somerset and Gloucestershire. Bristolians are proud of this status and in 1973 celebrated the 600th anniversary. But local government reorganisation soon saw black clouds gathering over Bristol. Loved by the new bureaucrats, but hardly anyone else, Bristol, parts of South Gloucestershire and North Somerset became the 'County of Avon'. Local feeling was reflected by the late Reverend Springett-Nicholson, owner, builder and renovator of the 'Old Barn' (complete with its idiosyncratic decorations), who annoyed the civic authorities by flying a large black Flag from his rooftop to mark the demise of Bristol's County status. I am pleased to say that he had the last laugh, living long enough to see Bristol regain its cherished County status. However Avon has left a couple of odd legacies. Development maps can be found which describe this region as CUBA, which, stands for the County that Used to Be Avon, also very annoyingly, business addresses and junk mail is still in 2010, addressed as Avon, because the business software packages that identify addresses by post codes are based upon the defunct county.

