DO flags interest you? We think they are very interesting, and so do a lot of other people, because there are flag societies all around the world. These are groups of people who come together to share knowledge and find out more about flags.

The history of what we recognise as flags today, a piece of cloth with a distinctive design and colours, dates back thousands of years. You might therefore think that the study of flags, which is known as vexillology, would have existed for a long time also. But the term vexillology was coined by American Dr Whitney Smith in the late 1950s. Dr Smith founded the Flag Research Centre in Boston, USA, in 1962, and many other flag associations have been established since then.

Vexillology comes from the Latin word vexillum, which was a square flag carried by Roman soldiers. A person who studies flags is called a vexillologist, and a person who designs flags is a vexiographer.

One popular use of flags is to represent countries. If you watched the Olympics in Tokyo you would have seen many different flags. Some of these are older than others, and some nations have adopted elements of other flags. The flag of Denmark is the oldest national flag still used, and the cross design was adopted by several other Nordic countries - Norway, Finland, Sweden and Iceland.

The flag of the Netherlands is the oldest tricolour flag (red, white and blue in this case), but it inspired several other nations’ flags, including France, Russia, Italy and Mexico.

The flag of Turkey was the inspiration for flag designs in several other Muslim nations. The National Flag of Australia, of course not the only one people associate with this country, is of course not the only one people associate with this country. The Australian Aboriginal flag, designed by artist Harold Thomas in 1970 to represent the Aboriginal people of Australia and their spiritual connection to the land, is also recognised as an official ‘Flag of Australia’. The top half of this flag is black to symbolise Aboriginal people. The red in the lower half stands for the earth and the colour of ochre, which has ceremonial significance.

Your challenge is to design a flag that represents your school. Children’s University Tasmania members can earn stamps in their passports for this challenge, at the discretion of their school coordinator.

To help you design your flag, vexillologist Ted Kaye has developed five principles of a good flag.

It is National Science Week and UCTV Alive for Kids is collaborating with the Department of Education to present a series of live shows on food, insects and energy.

Find out more on page 2 of today’s edition of The Wonder Weekly.
The Peter Underwood Centre and the Department of Education Tasmania will be broadcasting the following interactive Zoom webinars as part of National Science Week:

Monday, August 16, 9-10am - A Whole World of Energy (Years 5-6), presented by Evan Franklin. Register: https://bit.ly/3jDPxZU

Tuesday, August 17, 9-10am - Can we eat insects? (Prep – Year 2), presented by Shasta Henry. Register: https://bit.ly/3CuwRo8

Wednesday, August 18, 9-10am - Can we eat insects (Years 3-6), presented by Shasta Henry. Register: https://bit.ly/3Cxqq3s

Thursday, August 19, 9-10am - Can we eat insects (Years 7-10), presented by Shasta Henry. Register: https://bit.ly/2WZRloo

Friday, August 20, 9-10am - Energy sleuths (Years 5-6), presented by Evan Franklin. Register: https://bit.ly/2VtJFKZ

Have some fun with your own design

From Page 1

These principles are:
1. Keep it simple.
2. Use meaningful symbols.
3. Use two or three basic colours.
4. No lettering or seals.
5. Be distinctive or be related.

In other words: don’t make your design too complicated; think about what symbols and colours best represent your school; don’t use writing on your flag; avoid copying other flags, but you could use a similar design to show a connection between your school and other flags (e.g. you might like to include elements from the National Flag).

Of course flags have long been used to represent things other than countries. A white flag is associated with truce, peace or surrender. There’s also the Olympic flag with its five rings to represent five continents.

You are no doubt also familiar with the flag, pictured left. The ‘Jolly Roger’ - a skull and crossbones image on a black background - is the flag associated with pirate ships, but in reality the designs used by a number of infamous pirate captains during the 1600s and 1700s varied greatly and included other symbols.

They were all quite scary though, and were raised when the pirates had a target ship within firing range to give its captain the opportunity to surrender.

Match the flags above to the locations below