

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

October 2019

The 2018-2019 Society year has again been a very busy one and the Council has been working very hard on your behalf. At the Annual Lunch in February Arline Fisher stood down as Chairman and I took office. I should like to thank Arline very much for all that she has done for the society. She has proven to be a most capable and hard-working Chairman and so much has been achieved under her leadership. She will be a hard act to follow.

The most important problems facing the society over recent years have been a fall in membership and a slow reduction in the society's finances. Membership organisations like ours around the country also are facing the same problems. I am pleased to report that the Council has faced up to the task and every member of The Heraldry Society should try and encourage prospective members to join. Thanks primarily to the new website there has been a steady flow of new members and so we hope to have turned a corner on this issue. Here my thanks go to our Membership Secretary Jane Tunesi, our Treasurer Michael Fowle and our website manager Andrew Gray.

Over the years our financial position has gradually weakened because of rising costs and falling revenue from membership subscriptions. Membership is now slowly growing but costs, including those of postage of publications, continue to increase. The annual subscription was *last increased twelve years ago in 2007* and this was unsustainable, so it had to change. Thanks to the very hard work of the Treasurer the new subscription and postage rates have been introduced and these will apply for the forthcoming year. **Please note that all members must ensure that their email address is communicated promptly to the Membership Secretary; and that she will need to know whether you wish to receive the publications in hard copy as well as digital format.** The costs of hosting the lectures at Burlington House have continued to increase and the Council has taken the view that we should reduce the number of lectures per annum, continuing to hold half the lectures there, and to hold the other half at the RAF Club. This is situated also in Piccadilly and thanks to our Secretary John Tunesi, very advantageous rates have been secured. We are continuing to explore further financial measures.

The programme of lectures for the past year has been a great success with excellent and learned lectures. My grateful thanks go to the immediate past Programme Secretary Roger Whitworth for putting that programme in place. Roger demitted office during the year and has been replaced by David Phillips, who has produced a very interesting programme for the forthcoming season. He is now working hard on the following season of lectures. The lectures, as we know, are open to all, including non-members. I would encourage as many members as possible to attend lectures and to bring their friends; with the new arrangements please do check the recently issued programme card or the website for the venue.

Two issues of *The Coat of Arms* have now appeared in the revised annual format, and it is an excellent publication. A lot of hard work has been put into its production by the Editor Paul Fox and I am very grateful to him. *The Heraldry Gazette* goes from strength to strength under the very capable hands of Jane Tunesi. Both these publications rely upon articles submitted by members and I would urge all members to consider putting articles forward.

Our publications are under the care of Stephen Ashley. The society has assisted with the publication of the tribute to the great heraldic artist John Ferguson, Stephen Friar's book *The Heraldic Art of John Ferguson*, and other works of scholarship will appear in the forthcoming year as publications of the Society.

The Society's Image Library and Archive continues to grow, thanks to the very hard work of our Heraldry Archive and website manager Andrew Gray, and these can be accessed on our website. Please do have a look and you will see the huge amount of work that he has done. The new website has proven to be a great success and Andrew has been ably assisted by Graham Bartram.

As you are aware, the society is a registered charity, and therefore has to comply with charity law. Risk management is a vitally important issue and Wendy Ingle has done a superb job in putting in place the framework for the society. I am most grateful to her for all her hard work.

The Society's Corporate Heraldry Award and the annual Photographic Competition continue to be run by the very capable Clive Alexander. He has also assisted with so many other projects and events, such as the society visits to Pewterer's Hall and Stationer's Hall. Grateful thanks are given to member and Stationer Martin Lawrence for enabling the latter. Clive has also worked hard on the Copped Hall project, where a Heraldry Society display can be enjoyed by visitors; and assisted me and John and Jane Tunesi at manning the society stall at the Family Tree Live exhibition at Alexandra Palace. My thanks also to member David Hopkinson for his splendid artwork on the Corporate Heraldry Award certificates.

The society's Twitter account is gathering pace thanks largely to the efforts of member Paul Jagger with assistance from Clive Alexander. It can be followed @TheHeraldrySoc. The Society also has a Facebook page, with details of forthcoming events. Paul will be also hosting a meeting and lecture on digital heraldry at the Information Technologists' Hall in December (see *The Heraldry Gazette* for further details).

The society examinations are managed by Richard Baker, who also has been of great assistance to the society in his capacity as Principal of the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies, where some of the Society's library is accommodated.

The society Council has been very fortunate in having Alan Fennely amongst its membership. He has travelled from Bolton in Lancashire to each meeting of Council to

give his report as the liaison member for the North of England. I am very grateful to him for all his work and advice.

The Council has also been fortunate to welcome amongst its number Sebastian Craig, who has great experience in the arrangement of exhibitions. This is a field I am keen to explore as it would be an excellent way of publicising the society and promoting heraldry.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to single out three members who have really kept the show on the road: our Treasurer, Michael Fowle, our Secretary John Tunesi and our Membership Secretary, Librarian, Shop Manager and Editor of *The Heraldry Gazette*, Jane Tunesi. They are the real powerhouse behind the society. All three having been a huge tower of strength and have worked so hard for the benefit of us all in the society. I, and the society, owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

In July, due to unforeseen personal circumstances, I had to step aside as Chairman temporarily, probably until the end of November. My place has been taken by Peter O'Donoghue, York Herald, and he is now the Acting Chairman until I resume duties. I am most grateful to him for stepping into the breach. I should also like to thank those members of Council who are now stepping down, for all of their assistance over the years.

So much hard work goes on behind the scenes that is never normally seen by the members; I can assure all members of the society that the Council is working very hard on your behalf. It also relies on your input, help and support. If anybody would like offer their help or to be a member of Council when a vacancy occurs, then please do not be shy in putting yourself forward.

Robert Harrison
Chairman