



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

September 2020

The 2019-2020 Heraldry Society year has been an extraordinary year in many respects. Soon after I took over tenure as Chairman I received some medical news which made me decide that it would be better for the society if I stood aside while I received treatment. My place was very ably taken by our Deputy Chairman, Peter O'Donoghue, York Herald. My treatment was successful and I resumed office again in December. I am very grateful to Peter for stepping in to the breach at such short notice and his advice and support throughout the year has been invaluable.

The Council lost one of its most valued members with the unexpected demise of Alan Fennely. Alan had been a very loyal and hard working member for many years and he was a vital link between us and local heraldry societies. The void left by Alan has now been successfully filled by the co-option on to Council of John Titterton and I am very grateful to John for stepping into the breach. The Council also lost by resignation, for personal reasons, Wendy Ingle and Sebastian Craig and I thank them for all their hard work. We are extremely fortunate to have Paul Jagger and Martin Davies co-opted on to Council. Paul has been given responsibility for social media and Martin is responsible for risk management and he is the new company secretary.

The two most important problems facing the society at the beginning of the year were the decline in membership and the slow but sure diminution of the society finances. I am very pleased to report that the decline in membership has been reversed and we are on the increase again and that the financial position has, for the first time in a long time, broken even.

The new subscription rates are now in place and inevitably there were some members that did not renew. This initial loss in members has been reversed, thanks largely to the dedication of our Membership Secretary Jane Tunesi, our Treasurer Michael Fowle and our new and vastly improved website under the guiding hand of our webmaster, Andrew Grey. Unlike many similar societies our membership is now increasing which is very encouraging.

The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown threatened our lecture programme and in order to combat this a Communications sub-committee was formed to explore the way we could reach out to our membership. One of the very few unexpected bonuses of the new situation was the introduction of lectures being held online via Zoom

which meant that we could include almost the whole membership, nationally and internationally. It has also allowed us to include extra lectures in addition to those on the programme card. Thanks to the tremendous hard work of the sub-committee the Zoom lectures have proven to be a great success. The society is very lucky to have David Phillips as its Programme Secretary. He has worked so hard to make the lecture programme stays on track and is such a great success.

Under the new subscription rates *The Coat of Arms* is available in print or online for members, depending on the level of your chosen subscription, and it is a superb publication. My grateful thanks to all the contributors and to the Editor Paul Fox for all his hard work. Stephen Ashley has maintained a steady and expert control on the publications aspect.

Jane Tunesi has continued to produce *The Heraldry Gazette* to a very high standard. The Gazette is vital to the welfare of the society as it reaches out to all members, irrespective of whether they have a computer and internet access or not and Jane makes the Gazette informative and fun to read.

Both *The Coat of Arms* and *The Heraldry Gazette* rely upon articles submitted by members and I would urge all members to consider submitting articles for publication.

Andrew Gray has continued his excellent work with the society Image Library and Archive. He is also our webmaster and under his expert stewardship the new website has been one of the main instruments of the increase in membership. He is very ably assisted by Graham Bartram and Graham will succeed Andrew as webmaster when Andrew's period of office expires at the AGM.

The Corporate Heraldry Award and the annual Photographic Competition continue to be run by our very capable Clive Alexander. Under his hand these events are increasing in popularity and are very successful. This year's Corporate Heraldry Award was won by the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers and the Photographic Competition by Andy Wolstenholme. I am very grateful to David Hopkinson for his beautiful artwork on the certificates.

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.

The importance of social media has been sharpened by the pandemic and lockdown. Paul Jagger, a newly co-opted member of Council responsible for this area, has taken his brief with enthusiasm and made great strides, not only with being a guiding force with the Zoom lectures but also pushing the society presence on other platforms such as Twitter, Reddit, Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook. It is paying dividends.

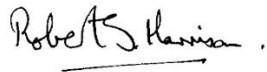
The AGM will witness the change over of Treasurer. Michael Fowle has been an exceptional Treasurer. Under his firm guidance he has steered the society away from the

financial brink. When he took over there was falling membership and a slow but sure financial drain on the society. Under his expert advice and financial management there has been a turn around in our fortunes and I am so grateful to him for all his hard work. He will be replaced by Colin Lafferty-Smith, an accountant who has great experience in the City and he is a trustee of similar charities such as ours. The society has been and is very fortunate to have such experts.

John Tunesi, our Secretary and Jane Tunesi our Membership Secretary, Librarian, Shop Manager and Editor of *The Heraldry Gazette*, are a remarkable and very capable double-act and I and this society would be lost without them. They put in so much hard work on behalf of you all and I am so grateful to them for everything they have done.

I was deeply saddened to have to make the decision to cancel the bi-annual Heraldry Society Congress. This was due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This should have taken place in August in Bristol but there was little choice but to cancel it. The health and welfare of the members must be our top priority and so, in line with government guidelines, the decision was made to cancel the congress. Instead we hope to hold it in 2021.

Finally, I should like to record my very grateful thanks to all members of Council. They have worked so hard on your behalf. I have only managed to scrape the surface in the above review on all that has been done and by whom. Much, much more work has gone on behind the scenes. It is like the proverbial swan gliding serenely and peacefully along but underneath the webbed feet are going like the clappers!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Harrison". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Robert Harrison  
Chairman