



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

October 2025

The year has been marked by a very successful programme of in-person and online lectures, with the Society continuing its strategy of a mixed programme to make our educational content widely available, whilst also providing the social interactions and other benefits that meeting in person can bring.

A reception and talks at St John's Gate in Clerkenwell, London, home of the Order of St John saw Dr Simone Monti discuss some notable heraldic materials from the Order's library and Robert Harrison gave a masterful explanation of the heraldic decorations.

Lilian Cailleaud introduced the Society to Japanese mon; Adrian Ailes spoke on the heraldry of medieval civic and corporate seals; and Mark Duggan gave a very stimulating Constance Egan Lecture on the armorial banners in Michael Drayton's 'Ballad of Agincourt'. David Griffiths spoke on heraldry in the Household Division; Nathaniel Nagar lectured on the 17th century Darell pedigree roll; and by the time of the AGM Stephen Keevil will have spoken on the intriguing subject of Heraldry and Radiology. It has been gratifying to see these in-person and online lectures being so well attended. My grateful thanks go to David Phillips, Programme Secretary and now Deputy Chairman, and to our Honorary Secretary, for their hard work in arranging the lectures.

In addition to the lecture programme, the Society also delivers enjoyable social events for its members and their guests. The Heraldry Quiz was a light-hearted chance to show off our knowledge or remember how little we knew, over the Christmas period. The Anniversary Lunch at the RAF Club was delighted to welcome Gillian Black, Carrick Pursuivant, and to hear her speak. The occasion also marked the retirement of Robert Harrison as Chairman of the Society. Robert during his reign steered the Society through the difficult waters of the pandemic with calm wisdom and kindness, backed by unmistakable steel, and we are all grateful to him.

By the date of the AGM Meeting we shall have enjoyed the Society's Autumn Dinner at the RAF Club, with Rafe Heydel-Makoo as our guest of honour and speaker. Future events in forthcoming year will include the Anniversary Lunch at the RAF Club on Wednesday, 18 February 2026; and the Society's Biennial Congress at Hatfield College, University of Durham, which takes place from 6 to 9 August 2026.

I was delighted in June to present David Phillips with his certificate of appointment as an Honorary Fellow of the Society, in recognition of his years of service both to the Society and to heraldic scholarship.

The publications of the Society continue at their high standard, with the recent issue of *The Coat of Arms* being ably edited by Paul Fox, and the *Heraldry Gazette* by Jane Tunesi. Many thanks to them and to all the contributors.

The Society's photographic competition has attracted some promising entries this year, and the winners will be announced in due course. The Corporate Heraldry competition is also in operation, and again we hope to be able to announce an award later in the year. All members should bear these competitions in mind and are encouraged to enter. I am grateful to Jenny Baker for her work in administering the competitions.

I am pleased to report that the current position of the Society is healthy, with membership stable or slowly growing. Jane Tunesi has continually tirelessly to correspond with members and handle the administrative paperwork - she is for many the first and main point of contact with the Society and we are fortunate to have her dedicated support. Considerable work has been done behind the scenes on the Society's website, where the Society is moving to a new membership management system. This will offer a members' area of the website, and easier administration for the team. We shall be asking all members to engage in this new system in due course. Considerable work has been done on this by Council members David Phillips and Graham Bartram, and I thank them for their labours.

The website continues to act as the marketplace for selling new and second-hand heraldic books, and digitized libraries of books, managed again by Jane Tunesi with help from Andrew Gray. The online bookshop is one of very few specialist sellers of books on heraldic subjects and I commend it to all members looking to expand their libraries.

We are very fortunate to have the Society's finances so well managed by our Treasurer Colin Lafferty-Smith. I am grateful to him for his hard work. The accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2025 have been approved by Council and are commended to members. These suggest that the Society needs as always to husband carefully its resources; but they also indicate that it should look to support its charitable purposes a little more generously in the coming years.

As an example of that support, we were pleased to make a grant towards the Yorkshire Heraldry Society's Heraldic Symposium at The Royal Armouries in Leeds, which took place in June. All members of the Society are encouraged to support their local heraldry societies, and to pass to Council proposals for how we might support them.

We were delighted to co-opt Mads Prøitz to Council in November 2024. He is developing links with overseas heraldry societies and has already forged connections with a number of these, so that the Society can broaden its reach, and the cause of heraldic study worldwide can be promoted. Paul Jagger and David Griffiths continue to work on the Society's social media presence. This provides a vital shopfront promoting the Society and its events to those who are not yet members; my thanks to them for this work.

Council is continually evaluating those risks which might in the short or long term threaten the Society. A risk register logs and assesses those risks that have been identified and logs the mitigation actions that have been put in place to diminish them. In this way the Society hopes to protect itself and ensure its long-term survival and success in meeting its charitable purposes and serving its members. Martin Davies and Tony Willenbruch have

been valuable and experienced members of Council, who have helped us improve our governance.

We aspire as members of the Council of your Society, to maintain engagement, organize high quality educational events and social events, and issue publications of the highest standard. In my view the past year has succeeded in these aims, thanks in large part to the hard work of the members of Council I have mentioned here, and in particular to John and Jane Tunesi.

I am grateful to members of Council for their work in the past year. I also thank our many speakers and contributors. In particular I thank all members of the Society for paying their subscriptions, attending our lectures, asking intelligent questions, and making our social events so enjoyable.

Peter O'Donoghue

Chairman