

Chairman's Report

October 2026

I am pleased to report to members that the Society is healthy, active and well-maintained, with its finances in good shape. We have enjoyed an excellent range of in-person and online lectures in the past year. The strategy of offering lectures in both formats, as well as one combined lecture that was in-person and simultaneously streamed online, means that our educational purposes are as well-served as possible, whilst also bringing heraldic enthusiasts and those new to the subject together.

Stephen Keevil examined the history of heraldry associated with Radiology in the charming surroundings of the Art Workers' Guild in London, where the names of many heraldic and other artists and craftsmen can be found on the walls. The same venue hosted a talk by Jeremy Hodgkinson, which introduced many members of the Society to the fascinating subject of British iron firebacks, often a venue for heraldic display. Duncan Sutherland spoke to our online audience about the use of academic dress in heraldry, and Jovan Jonovski gave a valuable online lecture introducing the subject of heraldry in Macedonia. And at the Warburg Institute Margaret Joachim addressed an in-person and online audience on the subject of heraldry in English medieval psalters, revealing the many ways in which this deliberate and sophisticated use could tell a detailed story, to anyone able to decode the combination of different coats of arms and their placement within the text.

In October 2025 and again in March 2026, members of the Society were treated to heraldic tours of Westminster Abbey, kindly arranged by Society member and long-serving volunteer at the Abbey Rosemary Kennedy, assisted by her colleagues there. We are most grateful to her and them for these fascinating tours of this national heraldic treasure-house.

I am grateful to David Phillips, Programme Secretary and Deputy Chairman, for his hard work in making these lectures and visits happen.

The lecture programme is a key part of the Society's work in delivering our charitable objectives. An important contribution is also made by our biennial Congress, held in August this year in the superb surroundings of Hatfield College, University of Durham. The theme was monumental heraldry.

The publications of the Heraldry Society reach a wide audience, and include the premier English-language scholarly journal devoted to heraldic studies, *The Coat of Arms*, as well as our quarterly magazine *The Heraldry Gazette*. Many thanks to Paul Fox and to Jane Tunesi for their labours in ensuring these appear regularly and at a consistently high standard.

In addition to the educational purposes of the charity, the Society also provides social occasions, where fellow heraldists can meet, learn and become friends. A key occasion is the Anniversary Lunch, held this year at the RAF Club in London. Phillip Bone, Rouge Dragon Pursuivant, was the guest of honour, and we were fascinated to hear him speak about The Franceschini Arms in Browning's *The Ring and the Book*. All members are encouraged to attend the 2027 Anniversary Lunch, which will be held on 11 February.

The Anniversary Lunch is the occasion when the Society presents its prizes. In 2025 the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers and their branding and design agents Silverback Studios were recognized with the Society's Corporate Heraldry Award, for work in reinvigorating their visual identity whilst preserving their heraldic heritage. Jenny Baker was given her certificate

and our congratulations as the winner of the 2025 annual photographic competition. This year's competition has now closed, but I encourage all members of the Society, and those who are yet to join, to enter this competition in 2027: entry is free and there is a prize of £100. I am grateful to Jenny for her work in making these competitions happen.

Our membership numbers have continued to increase gradually over the year. As membership secretary Jane Tunesi handles the administrative work tirelessly, and maintains friendly relations with our members at home and overseas. The new membership management system is now in place: all members can now log in to the members' area of the Society's website, where they can manage their subscription. We hope that more resources will be made available to members in this way in the future. If any member has yet to engage with the new system I would encourage them to do so; and to get in touch if there are any difficulties. David Phillips and Colin Lafferty-Smith, as well as webmaster Graham Bartram, have spent a lot of time in getting this system operating, and I am grateful to them.

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.

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 2026 have been approved by Council and are commended to members.

Mads Prøitz continues to develop and improve our relationships with fellow heraldry societies overseas and at home, so that the Society can promote heraldic studies worldwide. Paul Jagger has continued to oversee the Society's social media presence and we hope that a new member of Council will be joining the team shortly to take this over. A new presence is the Society's LinkedIn account, which joins the Facebook page and group, and other accounts, to promote the Society and its programmes of events. Members are encouraged to follow and share posts on these platforms.

The work of improving our governance is ongoing, and the identification and mitigation of risks are a key part of this. We are continuing to check that our decision-making processes are sound, with interests declared, responsibilities made clear, decisions recorded and actions taken promptly. Our legally literate Council members, in particular Martin Davies and Dewdney Drew, continue to assist with this and other work.

Past Chairman Robert Harrison, as well as Graham Bartram and myself, step down from Council at this meeting; I am grateful to them and to all members of Council for their hard work and support of the Society over many years. In particular I would like to thank John Tunesi, our Honorary Secretary, and Jane Tunesi, for their hard work and dedication in enabling the Society to continue to thrive. If we have maintained engagement, organized high-quality educational events and social events, and issued publications of the highest standard, it is thanks to their work, to our Deputy Chairman David Phillips, to our editors, and to the other members of Council, that we have been able to do so.

Finally, many thanks to all members of the Society for their continued friendship and support, for attending events and bringing their friends, and making our events so enjoyable.

Peter O'Donoghue

Chairman