



Equality of Arms Campaign

Tuesday 27 August 2024

Cc: The Rt Hon. The Lord Mayor of London; respective chairs of the Livery Committee; the Fellowship of Clerks; the Lady Masters Association; the Association of Past Masters' Associations; the City Consorts and our Campaign supporters.

To the Master / Prime Warden / Upper Bailiff, Court and the Livery.

We write to you on behalf of the Equality of Arms campaign team, listed in full below, to provide you with an update on the progress made by the campaign since our Open Letter and Position Statement to the Livery of November 2023.

By way of reminder, we are a group drawn from across the Livery seeking reform of [heraldic law and practice](#) (convention) to remove such discriminatory elements as have survived prior reforms, particularly women's limited ability to transmit their arms and to bear certain parts of a coat of arms. As ardent supporters both of heraldry and the [College of Arms](#) (part of the Royal Household), we consider this reform necessary to preserve and protect both institutions and to allow them to flourish in the modern world.

The campaign team has engaged in a polite and professional manner with successive Garter King of Arms (head of the College), since 2018. During that period, we have shared arguments in favour of reform, invited the College to bring forward its own suggestions, presented our own proposals, and met with Garter several times to find a mutually agreeable way forward. Regrettably these efforts have not resulted in progress, or agreement on the need for reform.

Most recently Garter has questioned his own authority, and that of the Earl Marshal, to enact reforms. This of course calls into question the legality of all past rulings by the Kings of Arms such as that issued for same-sex marriages (2014).

We are disappointed by this outcome and are querying the basis for these views with him. Meanwhile we will continue to work towards heraldic equality, assisting and encouraging the College and the Kings of Arms wherever possible, while continuing to elevate awareness of and support for reforming the discriminatory nature of heraldic law among the College's stakeholders including among the Livery.



Discrimination stands and will continue



We therefore draw to your attention the [Diversity Charter](#) shared by the City's Livery Committee, particularly item 16 in the list of diversity issues for Livery Companies:

"Consider all organisations with whom you are connected and consider if they meet the standards that you are going to set for the Livery or challenge them if appropriate – including professional advisers, affiliates, trade bodies, suppliers, charities, military, schools, fellow Livery Companies and the City Corporation. Review all such contacts and ask them about their diversity and inclusion policy."

We also remind you that the City's Sheriffs (2023-24) opted not to petition for armorial bearings having endeavoured to encourage Garter to treat them as equals. Garter declined to do so, and the personal decision of the Sheriffs received support from within the Court of Aldermen.

We invite you to:

- 1) Consider carefully all relations with the College of Arms until sensible reform is achieved.
- 2) Join our network of influential supporters (email us at equalityofarms@virginmedia.com)
- 3) Circulate this letter to your membership.

Fiona Adler
Keith Bottomley CC
Paul Jagger
Kerri Mansfield JP
Dame Fiona Woolf DBE DStJ DL

Lars Andersen
Christopher Colman
Alderswoman Dame Susan Langley DBE
Luke Clifford-Roper-Smith VR

David Broomfield
Dr Jan Collie
Martin Lawrence MBE
Erica Stary
Alderman Gregory Jones KC

Patron – The Rt Hon. The Baroness Hale of Richmond DBE, PC, FBA



Anticipating your questions



Q1) Does Garter accept that discrimination exists in heraldic convention such that men and women are not treated equally?

A1) Garter does not deny that discrimination exists in heraldic convention.

Q2) What legislation constrains Garter from enacting reform to achieve equality of the sexes in heraldic convention?

A2) Garter has not identified any legislation that constrains his power to act.

Q3) What public statement has Garter made regarding the inequality present in heraldic convention?

A3) Garter has declined to make any public statement on this matter.

Q4) Has the campaign considered pursuing reform through Parliamentary channels?

A4) Enquiries in the previous parliament confirmed that heraldic convention (sometimes called heraldic 'law') is a matter of the Royal Prerogative, and not a matter that Parliament will seek to reform.

Q5) What was Garter's response to the Campaign's presentation of the legal, logical, historical, and practical arguments in favour of reform?

A5) Garter has not responded.

Q6) What proposals has Garter presented to enact reform of heraldic convention to move closer to equality of the sexes?

A6) Garter has not provided any.

Q7) How does Garter explain the fact that Scottish heraldic convention as governed by the Court of Lord Lyon in Edinburgh has managed to embrace greater equality of the sexes?

A7) Garter has stated *'the College has chosen a different path'*

Q8) How does Garter explain that Canadian heraldic convention as governed by the Canadian Heraldic Authority (part of the Governor General's office in Ottawa), has fully embraced equality after breaking away from the governance of the College of Arms in 1988?

A8) Garter has not responded.

Q9) How does Garter explain that a man who has never served in His Majesty's uniform is entitled to the martial device of a heraldic crest, yet a woman who is a General in the British Army is not?

A9) Garter has stated that a crest is a martial device traditionally associated with men.

Q10) Why would Garter question his own authority and that of the Earl Marshal to enact reforms to achieve equality?

A10) Garter has not explained.

Q11) Who does Garter believe has the authority to reform heraldic convention if not he, or His Majesty's Earl Marshal?

A11) Garter has not given an answer.

Q12) What was Garter's response to the Campaign's comprehensive proposal for reform?

A12) Garter has provided no substantive response.

Q13) In the history of English and Welsh heraldry which dates from the 12th century, how many women have been appointed as an Ordinary Officer of Arms?

A13) None.

Note: Ordinary meaning a substantive, paid practitioner who is a member of the College and on its governance board. We are aware that Professor Anne Curry was recently appointed as an Extraordinary Officer of Arms; such extraordinary appointments are akin to an honorific.

