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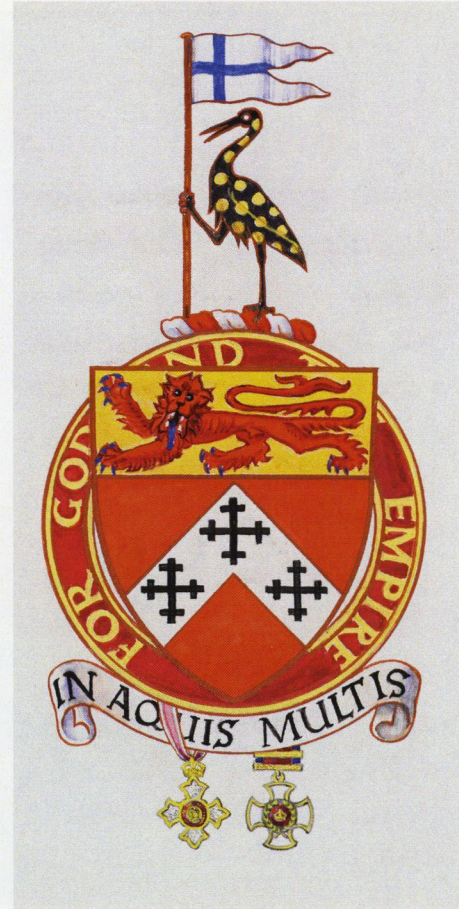
PLATE 3



Hugh Riviere, *Portrait of four Officers of Arms*, 1931. *See page 86.*

Left to right: A. G. B. Russell (Lancaster Herald); A. T. Butler (Windsor Herald);
A. R. Wagner (Portcullis Pursuivant); E. N. Geijer (Rouge Dragon Pursuivant).

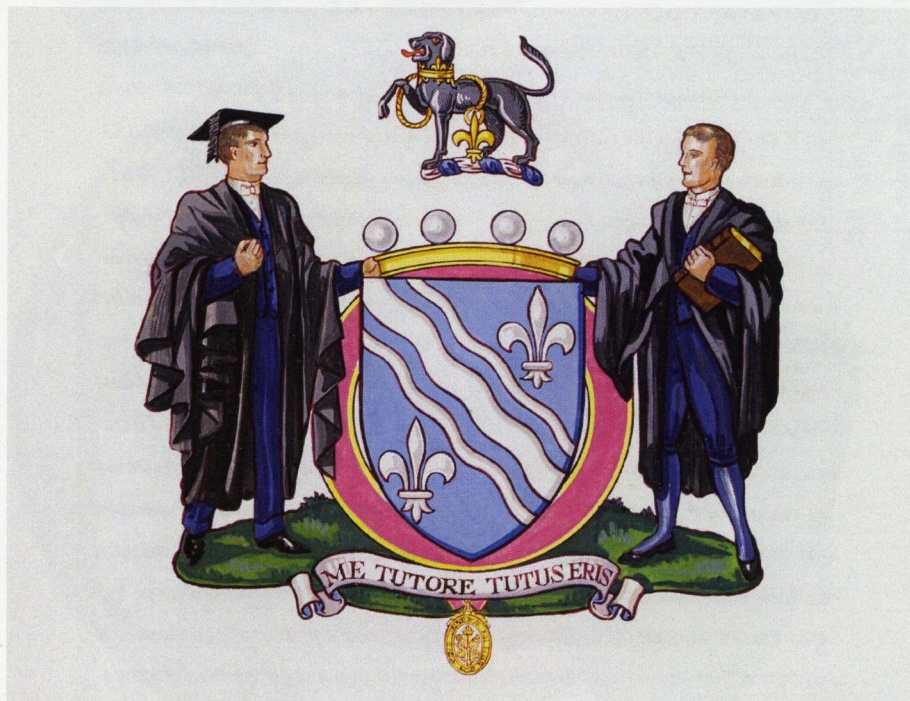
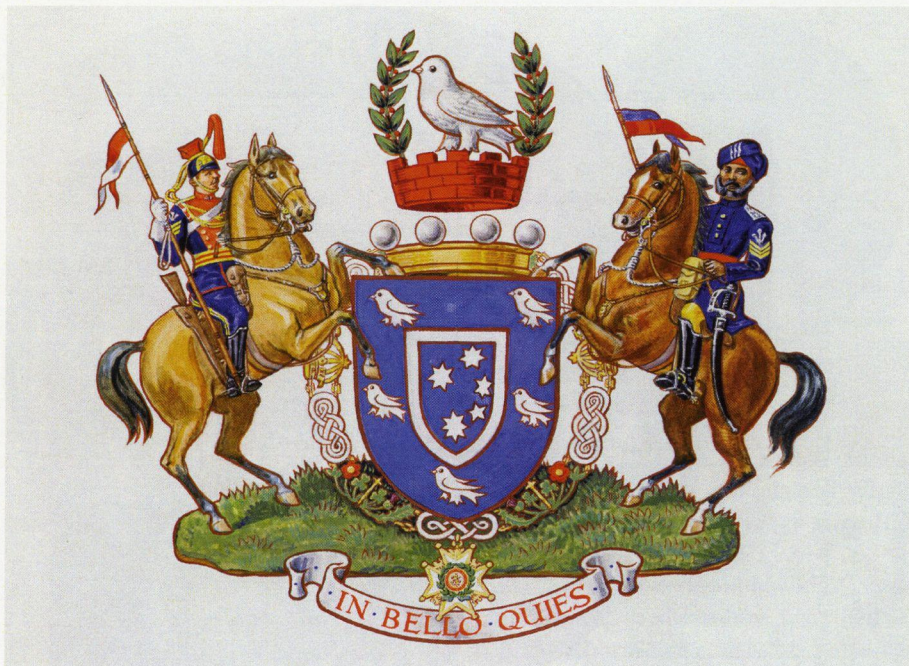
College of Arms: by permission of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms.



Arms and crests granted during the Second World War. Left (a), Sir Benjamin Hansford, KCB: 10 Oct. 1939. CA record Ms Grants 106/21. See page 92. Centre (b), Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, GVO, KCB, CMG: 30 Oct. 1939. CA record Ms Grants 106/52. See page 92. Right (c), Vice-Adm. Sir Malcolm Goldsmith, KBE, DSO: 25 Sep. 1943. CA Ms Grants 107/172. See page 99.

PLATE 5

Images by permission of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms.



Top (a), arms of Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, GCB, GCSI, GCMG, GCVO, CIE, DSO, with supporters granted 1 May 1942. CA Ms Grants 106/343. See page 98.
Below (b), arms, crest and supporters of Lord Keynes, CB, granted 16 May 1944. CA Ms Grants 107/253. See page 99.

THE COLLEGE OF ARMS AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Peter O'Donoghue

During the Second World War the College of Arms had to face the threats of physical extinction, of financial disaster, and of slow expiration through loss of personnel and decline of business. Dramatic changes to the economic and social environment during the war years challenged the institution to adapt; in this paper we shall chart these challenges and assess its reaction, as it displayed the capacity for flexibility and adaptability which may be one reason for its survival over so many centuries. Also of some importance here will be the loyal service of College servants and staff, figures who have featured all too rarely in its historiography, but who during the war at least would prove to be of critical importance.¹

The principal institutional history of the College of Arms, Anthony Wagner's *Heralds of England*, was published in 1967, its author showed an understandable reluctance to discuss there his then colleagues and their recent predecessors.² Whilst he provides a very brief outline of the College's history during the war, there are in comparison with his treatment of earlier periods few details. Wagner was more forthcoming in his autobiography, published more than twenty years later, by which time nearly all of his war-time colleagues had died.³ Whilst personal memoirs are key sources for the history of the College during the war, the most significant documents are its own administrative records, minutes and ledgers, and the records created in the course of its official activities.⁴

To understand what happened to the College during the war, and how it reacted to the challenges presented by that crisis, we need an understanding of the position of the College as war approached. Who, first, were the key figures? Anthony Wagner characterised the Officers of the pre-war College as divided into two factions: gentle-

¹ A version of this paper was presented in February 2013 to the Heraldry Society of Scotland and has subsequently been given elsewhere.

² Sir Anthony Wagner, *Heralds of England* (London 1967). The Second World War occupies page 548 alone. The names and dates of Officers' appointments, promotions and deaths are taken unless otherwise stated from Godfrey & Wagner, *CA*.

³ Anthony Wagner, *A Herald's World* (London 1988).

⁴ In particular, the minutes of meetings of the College's governing body, Chapter. These include a report presented to a Chapter on 3 Oct. 1945 by Alfred Butler, Windsor, on the wartime experience of the College as a whole – see *CA Chapter Book 20* pp. 7-10. Also vital here are the Treasurer's Accounts, preserved in a ledger; and the records of grants of arms made during this period – see *CA record Mss Grants 105-108*.

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men and scholars. The workers, he said, were Archibald Russell, Alfred Butler, Henry Martin, Aubrey Toppin and Eric Geijer, as well as himself (see **Plate 3**). On the other side he placed Arthur Cochrane, Algar Howard, Philip Cary, George Bellew, John Heaton-Armstrong and Philip Kerr.⁵ It is tempting to note that the latter were all to a greater or lesser degree privately wealthy and aristocratic and the former group not so. Wagner did not mention the other category of workers at the College: the clerks, researchers, housekeepers and servants who were employed in some cases by the College and in others privately, by its Officers.

Presiding over these divisions and leading the College through the political crises of the later 1930s, the abdication, and the growing international tension, was Sir Gerald Woods Wollaston. He had been born in 1874, into a family with a long association with the College: his great grandfather and his grandfather had both reigned as Garter. Wollaston was 65 in 1939, and had been Garter since 1930, having only risen to be Norroy the previous year. Wollaston's practice was that of a hard-working peerage lawyer, and he had a great knowledge of precedent and ceremonial; Wagner thought his approach to heraldry and genealogy was rather that of a lawyer than a historian.⁶

Sir Arthur Cochrane, aged 67, had become Clarenceux King of Arms in 1928. As the senior Provincial King of Arms he might have expected to become Garter in 1930, but had been passed over in favour of Wollaston. He then, according to Wagner, opted for an 'easy life', devoting his intelligence and charm 'less and less to College work and more and more to Brooks's'.⁷ He had however been made Advisor on Naval Badges in 1934, and in this role advised on the adoption of hundreds of ships' badges for the Royal Navy. He also served as Treasurer of the College of Arms, a role which would become of critical importance.

The College of Arms received no public subsidy; whilst it was not a profit-making body, it needed to generate sufficient income to cover its operational expenses. The early 1930s had been a difficult time in this respect, with operating losses being made. This was due in large part to a decline in the number of grants of Arms and badges, which had fallen from 229 in 1929, to 128 in 1934. Income generally had fluctuated since before the First World War, as the British economy had risen and fallen. Expenditure during these years had risen continuously.⁸ The number of grants of arms did return to expected levels. But the College's income from each of these was small. The fee paid upon a grant of arms was £76 10s, a sum which had been fixed by the College's governing body, Chapter, on 1 March 1838, and was now firmly entrenched. Of this the College usually received only £5 or £10. Royal licences generated larger revenues for the institution, with recipients paying fees which ranged from £94 to £150; but very few were granted each year.⁹

⁵ Wagner, *A Herald's World*, p. 57.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57. For a summary of his career see 'Sir Gerald Woods Wollaston', *The Times*, 5 March 1957, p. 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁸ CA Chapter Book 19 p. 243 reports a Chapter held to discuss the financial position.

⁹ CA Treasurer's Accounts ledger.

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The College did have a reserve of investments, built up during the nineteenth century, when fees of honour had added significantly to its income. Although the payment of fees of honour had ceased in 1904, these investments were husbanded; despite the financial strains of the depression, by 1939 the reserves had a nominal value of over £13,000.¹⁰

One hundred and twenty-six grants and exemptions of Arms were made in 1938. There were seventeen grants of supporters, and two grants of Arms to women. Eleven badges were granted in addition to arms and crest, and two crests were granted to individuals who already had arms. Two grants of new quarterings were made. Twenty-two changes of name were placed on official record. The operating surplus from all of this activity in 1938 was only £194. This then was, just, an acceptable financial position.¹¹

But there was trouble ahead. As early as November 1937 the cellars of the College had been earmarked by the City of London Medical Officer of Health as a possible decontamination suite, in the case of chemical attack by air.¹² This reflects the widespread fear, perhaps derived from the First World War, that gas attacks, rather than high explosives, would be the greatest danger presented by bombing.¹³ As the international situation worsened over the following months, the College's air raid precautions committee arranged for the purchase of fire extinguishers, sand containers, water containers, and stirrup pumps. They also tried to reduce the risk of fire, clearing any boxes of papers from the attics and basements. Later in 1938, a scheme for microfilming the College records was adopted, as fear for the safety of the College and its archives grew.¹⁴

One item of interest in the archives is a Certificate of Aryan Descent dated 28 April 1938, issued by Algar Howard, Norroy, to Major General Ralph Gore, of the Royal Horse Artillery, and Arabella Godfrey his wife. This is clearly an English version of the document required in Germany for all public sector workers. It is not clear why this document, was issued, but one interpretation is that the Gores, who lived on the Isle of Wight, felt it might be useful in the event of an invasion.¹⁵

On 14 September 1938 the Sudeten crisis erupted, and war seemed inevitable. Algar Howard suggested that the most precious college documents should be taken to his home, Thornbury Castle in Gloucestershire.¹⁶ Howard was nearly sixty at the outbreak of the Second World War and had been Norroy King of Arms since 1931. In 1943 he would become the first Norroy and Ulster King of Arms, and would be promoted to Garter on 2 June 1944. As we shall see in the case of other officers, he had a distinguished record from the First World War, having been awarded the Military Cross in 1918.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Treasurer's Accounts 1930-1936. The accrual of these reserves, known as the Additional Fee Fund, can be traced in CA Additional Fee Fund ledger 1829-1935.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Treasurer's Accounts 1938.

¹² CA Chapter Book 20 pp. 68, 71.

¹³ Juliet Gardner, *The Blitz* (London 2011), p. 52.

¹⁴ CA Chapter Book 20, p. 139.

¹⁵ CAMs Misc. Enrollments 2/43.

¹⁶ CA Chapter Book 20 p. 147.

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The College's muniments had to be listed and despatched as soon as possible, under the supervision of Aubrey Toppin, York Herald. Once boxed, they were taken to Thornbury in a van accompanied by the under porter Arthur Tinson. This left the College at 11.30 p.m. on 15 September, and arrived at Thornbury the next morning.

On Monday 26 September 1938 war seemed to be imminent. At an emergency meeting of Officers it was decided to send all the remaining official records to Thornbury. It seemed probable that war would begin in two or three days' time, when there would be considerable difficulty and danger in transport.¹⁷ To understand the reactions to this crisis it is helpful to recall contemporary conceptions of what a modern war would be like. The Lord Chancellor predicted that the Germans could 'let loose 3,000 tons of bombs in a single day'; whilst respected military theorist Sir Basil Liddell Hart wrote that a more modest 600 tons per day could be sustained by the Germans, producing 250,000 casualties in the first week of a war. A collapse of civil society was feared.¹⁸ In addition to high explosive and incendiary bombs the enemy would possibly or probably use poison gas and even bacteriological warfare. A degree of panic was widespread: 150,000 people fled to Wales during the Sudeten crisis.

The remaining College records left central London in the middle of the night, and arrived at Thornbury on the morning of 29 September 1938. As he already had the unbound original pedigrees, warrants, memorials and sketches, known collectively as drafts, Howard decided to spread the risk by moving some of the register volumes to Tortworth Court, about five miles away, the home of the Earl of Ducie. This was to ensure that if one were lost, the other would remain.¹⁹

Now, almost as soon as the records had arrived in Gloucestershire, the good news regarding the Munich agreement was heard. Amidst the widespread relief and gratitude at this deliverance, the records and manuscripts were brought back from Thornbury Castle and Tortworth Court on 11 October 1938. Perhaps the heralds had panicked unduly?²⁰

Munich however had been a delay rather than a solution; and war became inevitable. Air raid precautions were once more discussed by the College's members. In April 1939, the Officers were asked who would be available to carry on the work of the College during wartime: only five officers admitted to being unavailable, leaving a reasonable complement.²¹ One who declared his absence was Richard Preston Graham-Vivian, Bluemantle, who had served in the First World War, being awarded

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-1.

¹⁸ Sir Basil Liddell Hart, *The Defence of Britain* (London 1939), quoted in Alfred Price, *The Blitz on Britain* (Stroud 2009), p. 2.

¹⁹ Letter to Garter from Algar Howard, 29 Sep. 1938, in CA Garter House papers - correspondence of Sir Gerald Wollaston, 1938. I am grateful to Thomas Woodcock, Garter King of Arms, for alerting me to these papers and providing copies.

²⁰ The National Gallery was one of no doubt many institutions that reacted in a similar way: fifty paintings were transported to Wales from London on 30 September 1938, on the day the Munich Agreement was signed. They were then immediately returned to London. See www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/history/the-gallery-in-wartime/.

²¹ CA Chapter Book 20 p. 169.

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Figure 1: the records of the College of Arms at Thornbury, Gloucestershire, in October 1939, soon after their arrival. CA scrapbook.



a Military Cross, before joining the College of Arms in 1933. He was returning to the Army.

A blast- and splinter-proof bomb shelter was constructed in the porters' lodgings, in the basement level of the College, and it seems likely that this shelter was used throughout the war when necessary.²² The official records and the more valuable of the other bound and unbound manuscripts were removed from the College and were sent once more to Thornbury, and to Tortworth Court, between April and September 1939. The bound official registers were soon to be gathered together at Thornbury Castle (see **Figure 1**). On this occasion the drafts were stored at Tortworth, again due to the desire to keep them separate from the registered copies. When Tortworth was requisitioned by the Navy in October 1940 these papers were moved to another neighbouring house, Old Down, Tockington, Gloucestershire, owned by Algar Howard's own friend and comrade in arms from the first war, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Edward Turner.²³

²² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

²³ CA Chapter Book 20 p. 219.

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Despite the absence of the records, Wollaston remained determined that the College of Arms should continue to function from its Queen Victoria Street home, with Waiting and Chapters, rather than be evacuated *en masse*. Not all members of the College agreed with this decision: some Officers would have preferred to move the whole College, including the entire archive and the large library of printed books, to a country house, shutting up the building in London save for a caretaker. Garter Wollaston knew this to be impossible; his own work entailed constant communication with Whitehall, Westminster and the Palace, often at short notice. Accommodation in country houses moreover was becoming very scarce, as suitable properties were requisitioned. The records of Garter's own office were moved into the Record Room and Muniment Room, the two strong rooms of the College, for greater security.²⁴

Herbert Malcolm Penn, a College employee and clerk for many years, was sent to Thornbury to act as caretaker; he would also be paid by Officers to conduct research in the records for their own practices. Following Penn's death in April 1940, William Arthur Caffall was asked to go to Thornbury. Caffall was another of the College's clerks, a genealogist and local historian, who had worked at the College since 1897. As a result of his move to Thornbury, Caffall was appointed as the College of Arms archivist in June 1940, probably the first to be so designated.²⁵ He spent much of the war at Thornbury Castle, conducting research and compiling lists and indexes, some of which are still in use today. Caffall had trained another distinguished genealogist at the College, Tom Woodard. Woodard joined the College in 1922 aged 18, and worked as clerk and genealogist to John Heaton-Armstrong, then Rouge Dragon. He became one of the most skilled genealogists of his generation. During the War he was commissioned into the Intelligence Branch of the RAF and served in India and the Far East; he would return to the College after the war, becoming senior genealogist to Sir Anthony Wagner, later Garter.²⁶

The Earl Marshal, Bernard, 16th Duke of Norfolk, then only 31, issued a General Warrant to the Kings of Arms permitting them to make grants of Arms, register Royal Licences and so on, during his absence in His Majesty's Forces. The Earl Marshal rose to the rank of major and served in France and Dunkirk.

On Monday 26 June 1939 a savage fire took hold at Schenkers, a shipping agent adjacent to the College on Queen Victoria Street (see **Figure 2**). Despite desperate rescue attempts a typist Lilla Emily Wratten lost her life. This fire seemed to threaten the College and caused some minor damage: but it was later to save the building.²⁷

²⁴ See CA Garter House papers - correspondence of Sir Gerald Wollaston, 1939. I am grateful to Thomas Woodcock, Garter King of Arms, for drawing my attention to these papers.

²⁵ For Penn's death and the instruction to Caffall to go to Gloucestershire, see CA Chapter Book 20 p. 210. For the latter's appointment as archivist 'for the duration of the war', see *Ibid.*, p. 212. Caffall came to the College aged 14 in 1897. See CA Staff Book: Caffall's 'potted autobiography'.

²⁶ P. L. Dickinson, 'Tom Woodard', *The Independent* (London), 2 June 1995, p. 16. CA Staff Book: Tom Woodard.

²⁷ 'Woman's death in City fire', *The Times*, 27 June 1939, p. 14. Inquest reported in 'City fire inquest', *The Times*, 8 July 1939, p. 7.



A general view showing workers being rescued from the fire. More remarkable pictures on Page 6.

Figure 2: Rescue attempts during the fire at Schenkers shipping agent, immediately to the East of the College of Arms on Queen Victoria Street, 26 June 1939. As illustrated in *The Star* of that date.

CA scrapbook.

On 4 August of that year subsidence in Godliman Street ruptured the gas main, and caused a major explosion, which destroyed the nearby remains of Doctors' Commons, then awaiting demolition. The blast broke many windows in the College of Arms, blew doors off their hinges, and may have caused some ceilings to fall; but the structure was otherwise unharmed.²⁸

The air raids did not begin in earnest over London until September 1940, but the threat of them had been perceived since before the war. Interestingly, the war itself is seldom reflected in the designs of arms granted during the war. The war as experienced at home does however appear in the coat of arms granted in October 1939 to Sir Benjamin Hansford, Honorary Colonel 54th (City of London) Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery. Hansford was a stockbroker, a member of the London Stock Exchange since 1900, and with a long history in the protection of London by

²⁸ 'City explosion', *The Times*, 5 Aug. 1939, pp. 12 & 14.

reservists and others. The design (see **Plate 4a**) alludes to the searchlights piercing the sky above London, and also to the weapons they assisted. The crest of a phoenix, and the motto REVIRESCO, express a hope for the future.²⁹

Fighter Command was commanded during the Battle of Britain by Sir Hugh Caswall Tremenheere Dowding, a Scot born in Moffat, Dumfries, in 1882 and educated at Winchester. The arms granted to him in October 1939 (see **Plate 4b**) include references to his middle names. The Caswell family of London and Hampton in Middlesex bore the arms *Argent three bars gemel Sable* in the seventeenth century, whilst the three doric columns were borne by the Tremenheeres of Cornwall.³⁰

From early September 1940 the Luftwaffe shifted away from bombing RAF's supporting structures. They decided to attack civilian areas in the hope of causing a collapse in morale, and the bombing of London began in earnest on 7 September 1940. The blitz would see one million homes destroyed or damaged and 40,000 people killed.³¹

The College was starting to be depleted, with Officers and staff called up or volunteering for military or other war service. Philip Kerr, Rouge Croix Pursuivant since 1928, was called up for service in the RAF in late 1940. He had served as a Captain during the First World War and then joined the Egyptian Civil Service before coming to the College. In the Second World War he became a Pilot-Officer (Intelligence) in December 1940 and was killed on service at Shaluffa in Egypt on 10 February 1941.³²

Eric Geijer, Rouge Dragon, was the naturalized son of a Swedish diplomat, and had also served in the First World War. In the second war he served with the Intelligence Corps, dying in service on 14 January 1941.³³ Meanwhile Somerset Herald, George Bellew, and Chester Herald, John Heaton-Armstrong, were serving with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

George Bellew was from a landed Irish family, whose half-brother had married Barbara, daughter of Sir Henry Farnham Burke, Garter. Appointed Somerset in 1926, he was only 40 at the start of the Second World War. Bellew, whom Wagner describes as a 'temperamental and combative Irishman, who was not easy to live with', became a Squadron Leader, and was mentioned in despatches.³⁴ Bellew's clerk, Walter Verco, had started work at the College aged 17 in 1924. During the war he also joined the RAFVR, serving in England and the Far East, returning in peace time to act as Secretary to two Garters before being himself appointed Rouge Croix in 1954, ending his career as Sir Walter Verco, Norroy and Ulster King of Arms.

²⁹ CA Ms Grants 106/21. For a summary of Hansford's career see his obituary, *The Times*, 2 Dec. 1954, p. 10.

³⁰ CA Ms Grants 106/52. For the arms of Caswell see CA record Mss C24/225b and D17/25. A grant of arms was made in 1831 to William Tremenheere, Vicar of Madron, Cornwall; see CA record Ms Grants 38/219.

³¹ A detailed chronology of the bombed attacks on Great Britain between 1939 and 1945 is provided by Price, *op. cit.*

³² Obituary, *The Times*, 17 Feb. 1941, p. 7.

³³ Obituary, *The Times*, 17 Jan. 1941, p. 7.

³⁴ Obituary, *The Times*, 9 Feb. 1993, p. 19. For Wagner's evaluation see his *A Herald's World*, p. 59.

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Henry Martin, *Richmond Herald*, served in the Intelligence department from 1938 until his death in 1942.³⁵ Anthony Wagner became a civil servant in 1939, serving in the War Office where he was Private Secretary to a Junior Minister, Richard Law. His energy was such that he contrived to continue many of his activities as an heraldic scholar. In 1943 he joined the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, where he was again Principal Private Secretary to the Minister, and amongst other things worked on developing the guidelines for the listing of historic buildings.³⁶ Despite this absence Wagner continued to attend as many Chapters as possible, and was promoted to *Richmond Herald* following the death in 1942 of Henry Martin.

One of the worst nights of the Blitz was the fire attack on the City of 29 December 1940, during which 800 incendiaries are known to have fallen on or around St Paul's Cathedral. About one sixth of the City was destroyed in that raid, with the area to the north of St Paul's Cathedral being particularly devastated. Although buildings near the College were hit, its immediate environment was not badly affected.³⁷

The Blitz reached its height for the College however on the night of Saturday 10 May 1941. The air raid siren sounded at 10.30 p.m. with the all-clear sounding at 5.55 a.m. the following morning. This raid was to be the largest and most destructive to hit the city, eradicating a large swathe of central and eastern London. Much of the damage was caused by firestorms ignited by incendiaries.³⁸

In the course of the raid, fires were ignited in many places around the College, and along the north side of Queen Victoria Street to the east. An East wind blew the flames towards the College. The fires could not be brought under control, partly because the tide was low and with ruptured mains there was a lack of water. By 8 a.m. the flames had spread rapidly and St Nicholas Cole Abbey was burning fiercely. It was clear that the College was in great danger, with the wind blowing the fire down the street towards it.³⁹

Fifty yards from the College was the Faraday telephone exchange, the largest exchange in the world, and a key exchange for all overseas telecommunications as well as the main switching point for the whole of London. The strategic importance of this exchange led to the construction early in the war of a redoubt, encased in a seven-foot-thick re-enforced concrete shell, to accommodate the most critical apparatus; this covered the site previously occupied by the buildings destroyed in the gas explosion of 1939. The bomb-proof redoubt was also attractive as a bunker and so some Ministers, including Churchill, had rooms there. On 10 May 1941, the Lord President of the Council Sir John Anderson, who was a former Home Secretary, and Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, were in the bunker. But for the fire control agency

³⁵ Obituary, *The Times*, 13 Aug. 1942, p. 7.

³⁶ For details of Wagner's career as a civil servant see his *A Herald's World*, especially pp. 99-114.

³⁷ Gardner, *op. cit.*, pp. 246.

³⁸ Gardner, *op. cit.*, pp. 343-58.

³⁹ Details of the raid and its aftermath are told here from the perspective of the College and draw upon the report of the College firewatchers Burbidge and Tinson, presented to a Chapter on 4 June 1941. See CA Ms Chapter Book 20 pp. 228-9.



Figure 3: Queen Victoria Street looking east, soon after the raid and subsequent firestorms of 10-11 May 1941. CA scrapbook.

the exchange was much more important than the politicians: without it Britain would be cut off.

As the flames came closer, the wind carried the flames to the Salvation Army headquarters, nearly opposite the College of Arms, and water remained in very short supply, with the hydrants all dry.

Officers of Arms tended to live in Kensington or still further afield, whilst College staff and servants either lived in the College or were relatively nearby. The College porter Thomas Slatter, under-porter Arthur Frank Tinson, Robert Burbidge, a secretary in Garter House, and their wives, and Harry and Louisa Perring, servants and housekeepers in Garter House, are known to have been present during the raid, and they considered how best to preserve the contents.⁴⁰ All of the current registers were placed in the cellars; as many printed books as possible were put in the Munitment Room, in their place. Other books were placed on the Record Room floor. With the Salvation Army headquarters now alight, and the College nearly surrounded by the fires, the heat and showers of burning wood compelled the College staff to flee

⁴⁰ CA Staff Book: entries for Thomas Owen Slatter; Arthur Frank Tinson; Robert Walter Burbidge; Louisa Perring.



Figure 4: St Nicholas Cole Abbey and the view west down Knightrider Street, soon after the raid of 10-11 May 1941. CA scrapbook.

the building. Flames from the Salvation Army set the roof alight on the East Wing and also the windows of Chester and Lancaster's sets. Surely the College must perish.

At this critical moment, the wind changed from easterly to westerly, reducing the power of the advancing firestorm. The fire-fighters were able to take advantage of the gap in the buildings lining Queen Victoria Street, provided by the destruction of the College's neighbours Schenkers in the fire of 1939, to create a substantial fire-break. They were also able to put out the burning College roof. The College staff returned and put out the blazing windows with the stirrup pump. By 10 a.m. the danger from the burning Salvation Army building was over, as it had been completely destroyed. The severe shortage of water meant that the College was still threatened by ongoing fires elsewhere however; these were not extinguished until 4 p.m. when a new supply of water was obtained. The fire-fighting strategy deployed to save the telephone exchange at Faraday House, not declared out of danger until 6 p.m., had the effect of saving the College from the fire. Much of the area, however, was devastated (see **Figures 3 and 4**).

Gerald Cobb arrived at the College after the all-clear and thus during the firestorms, and helped in moving the College records and books. Cobb was a leading heraldic artist and distinguished architectural historian, who had come to work at the College in 1920 and who would still be at work there some 66 years later at his

death in 1986. Cobb was a member of St Paul's Watch, guarding the Cathedral from destruction by fire, and so had a good view of the night's events.⁴¹ Another fire-watcher at St Paul's that night had been architect Ralph Tubbs, who later wrote that 'everything within a hundred yards of the Cathedral was burnt to the ground.'⁴² At the subsequent Chapter of the College it was reported that in addition to the firewatchers, the porters, underporters and other staff members had been important in helping to save the College.

Despite surviving the Blitz, 1942 was a challenging time for the College. Officers and staff were absent, and there was much disruption to business. Vacancies amongst the Pursuivants were not filled, and by mid-1942 the monthly Chapters of the College were attended only by five or six officers. Garter, Norroy, Richmond, Windsor and York were regularly present, as they were older and therefore not liable to be summoned for war work elsewhere.

The financial position now became the most pressing concern. An analysis of the Treasurer's accounts enables us to understand the position in which the institution found itself. The accounts for the financial year ending in 1938 show an operating surplus of £893. By 1939 the cost of air raid precautions, and the fall in income, meant there was a loss of £506. In 1940 the loss had grown to £1,300. In 1941 the loss was £1,900. The Treasurer's accounts for 1942 show that the loss remained high at £1,500. In 1943 the position was no better with an operating loss of £1,700.⁴³

The losses recurred in part because of rising costs. The rates and taxes paid by the College had risen steadily, as they had for all businesses. Inflation, which had been low or negative during the early 1930s as the economy stagnated, rose as high as 16% in 1940-41, before declining slowly thereafter.⁴⁴ Costs inevitably rose at least with the rate of inflation. Income by contrast was determined for the College by fixed official fees. The fee for a grant of arms and crest still stood at £76 10s. Other fees were similarly unchanging, meaning they lost value rapidly during the inflationary war years.

The relative rise in costs was matched by a sharp decline in income from grants and exemptions of arms, royal licences and other services such as the registrations of changes of name. In 1939 these had yielded £2,000 for the College from the small charges it made on each case. But this figure fell sharply in 1940 to £900 and further in 1941. 1942 actually saw a slight recovery of this income to £1,500 helping to reduce slightly the losses. But in 1943 the grant income fell once more to under £1,000.

⁴¹ Ian Leith, 'Cobb, Gerald (1900-1986)', in *Oxford DNB* (Oxford 2004). Online edn., edited by Lawrence Goldman, Oct. 2007, at www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74784. CA Staff Book: Gerald Cobb. For his account see Gerald Cobb, 'Sixty years at the College of Arms', *CoA* new ser. 4 (1980-1), no. 119, pp. 397-401 at 400. I am grateful to Patric Dickinson, Clarenceux King of Arms, for alerting me to this reference.

⁴² Gardner, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

⁴³ CA Treasurer's Accounts ledger 1936-1973 provides the financial details for this period.

⁴⁴ Inflation figures are derived from Jim O'Donoghue, Louise Goulding and Grahame Allen, 'Consumer price inflation since 1750', *Economic Trends* 604 (March 2004), pp. 38-46.

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The annual figures for grants of arms to corporate bodies, including local authorities, institutions, and commercial companies, enable us to perceive a key reason for the decline in revenue. In 1937, thirty-seven such grants were made. This fell in 1938 to twenty-five, then to fifteen. In 1940 only seven grants to corporate bodies were made, and the following year only three. 1942 saw four such grants, 1943 saw eight, rising to ten the following year. In 1945 the numbers recovered to eighteen, and by 1949 there were fifty-nine such corporate grants in the year. The figures thus show that in the depths of wartime there was a very steep decline in the number of corporate bodies seeking arms.⁴⁵

One example of a body granted arms during the war is the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC), granted arms in January 1941. BOAC had been created as the state airline by Act of Parliament the previous year from the merger of two existing companies. The design includes an astral crown, and a divided compartment alludes to the flights over land and sea that the company undertook, preserving vital connections between Britain and the rest of the free world.⁴⁶ The British Council, granted arms in 1941 after it had received a Royal charter, was also a state body focussed upon communication: in this case the promotion of a cohesive sense of British values and the extension of their influence overseas.

The first and most desperate response to the financial crisis of 1942 was the sale of the investments so carefully built up in the course of the nineteenth century: half of the total was sold in these years to balance the books. Only thus could staff salaries, rates and utilities be paid.⁴⁷

The level of activity at the College was now at a low ebb, with the number of enquiries from the public logged by Officers in Waiting tiny in comparison to normal conditions.⁴⁸ The depletions, by deaths and war service, amongst Officers and staff had left many rooms unoccupied or underused. One proposal contemplated by Chapter was therefore to let these rooms to other individuals or bodies made homeless by the destruction of the Blitz. It was agreed in February 1943 that the entire West Wing of the College should be let; a potential tenant came forward in the shape of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries, who offered £750 *per annum* on a seven-year lease. Reluctant to surrender a third of the College to a tenant for so long, Chapter resolved to decline. Other ways out of the financial mire had to be found. One was to ask the Earl Marshal to raise the fees charged.⁴⁹

The fee payable upon a grant of arms thus rose for the first time in over a century, and by 25%. Significantly the College now received more than £30 for each grant in place of £5 or £10 before. This would seem to mark a change: the grant process had

⁴⁵ Figures for grants of arms to corporate bodies are derived from the unpublished data compiled by Clive Cheesman, *Richmond Herald* in association with Brand Finance PLC.

⁴⁶ CA Ms Grants 106/203. The astral crown, consisting of stars and wings set on an engrailed circlet, is an interesting heraldic invention of this period. It has always had an association with the air; and is now restricted to senior RAF officers.

⁴⁷ For the decisions to sell investments see for example CA Chapter Book 20 p. 241 (March 1942), when the sale of £1000 of securities was authorized; and p. 246 (Oct. 1942), when a further £1000 was authorized to be sold.

⁴⁸ CA Waiting Book 19 (1936-1948).

⁴⁹ CA Chapter Book 20 p. 256.

hitherto been an arrangement between the grantee and the Officer acting as agent, and the Earl Marshal and Kings of Arms, who acted on behalf of the Crown; the College as a corporate entity was little involved. From now on, the College of Arms as an institution would participate in the granting of arms, by receiving a significant share of the fees in order to administer the College on behalf of the Crown.

The heralds' own independent practices nonetheless continued. RAF badges were the responsibility of John Heaton-Armstrong, who had been Chester Herald since 1926 and Inspector of RAF badges since 1936. By the start of the war he and colleagues at the Air Ministry had developed a good system for the design and administration of badges for all RAF units and squadrons. This system also covered imperial air units, as well as units and squadrons of forces such as the Polish Air Force. Although he joined the RAFVR in 1939, rising to become a Squadron Leader, Heaton-Armstrong continued to act in this role throughout the war.⁵⁰ Half Irish and half Austrian, Heaton-Armstrong was a picturesque and gallant figure, a charming if consciously aristocratic personality, who had lost an eye in childhood and always used a monocle. He had fought in Albania on behalf of the six-month rule of Prince William of Wied in 1914, for no reason other than a love of adventure. Taking the Prince's family home to Germany when the regime collapsed, he had then been arrested and imprisoned as a Prisoner of War. On release he served in France, Egypt and Palestine with the Indian Cavalry in the First World War, during which he was shot through the neck and seriously wounded in the leg. This left him permanently lame. Heaton-Armstrong was to register large numbers of RAF badges, particularly towards the end of the war, as units which had used unofficial badges rushed to have them registered, perhaps before they ceased to exist. The heraldic artist Dulcie Corner, part of Heaton-Armstrong's practice, worked on many of these designs.⁵¹

Grants of arms of course continued. Some grantees were military figures, such as Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, who was granted supporters on his creation as Baron Birdwood (see **Plate 5a**). He had formed the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps in 1914, which had carried out the difficult landings at Anzac cove in Gallipoli, on 25 April 1915. Birdwood later commanded the Australia Corps on the Western Front. He remained closely connected with Australia after the First World War, and sought appointment as Governor-General in 1930, but was frustrated by the Australian Prime Minister, who insisted on an Australian candidate. The connection is expressed by the inclusion of a Southern Cross in the arms. The supporters are mounted figures from the 12th Lancers and the 11th Bengal Lancers.⁵²

Another military figure to be granted arms, in September 1943, was Sir Malcolm Lennon Goldsmith, Vice-Admiral in the Royal Navy. Following his command of the

⁵⁰ See CA Inspectorate of RAF Badges – correspondence of John Heaton-Armstrong, 1939. I am grateful to Thomas Woodcock, Inspector of RAF Badges, for alerting me to these papers and providing copies.

⁵¹ Wagner, *A Herald's World*, p. 59. See Duncan Heaton-Armstrong, *The Six Month Kingdom: Albania 1914* (London 2005), in particular the introduction by Gervase Belfield, pp. xxi-xxiii. For Corner's career see CA Staff Book: Dulcie Corner.

⁵² CA record Ms Grants 106/343.

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patrol, minesweeping and fishery protection flotilla he had retired as a Rear-Admiral in 1931. The renewal of hostilities saw him appointed a Commodore in the Royal Naval Reserve for convoy duties. The shield (see **Plate 4c**) appears to be that used by the Goldsmiths of Exton, Hampshire as far back as the sixteenth century, but never registered for them. The crest includes a Commodore's broad pennant.⁵³

John Maynard Keynes was granted arms as Baron Keynes in May 1944 (see **Plate 5b**). The pedigree of his family is on official record at the College as far as the mid-eighteenth century; but the arms are similar to those ascribed to a medieval Keynes family of Devon. As with Wavell, the supporters commemorate his youth at Eton and King's Cambridge, rather than his career.⁵⁴

Lancaster and Windsor Heralds were dominant as agents for grants at this time, perhaps because they were present more often than most. Alfred Trego Butler was nearly 60 at the outbreak of war, having been Windsor Herald since 1931. During the First World War he had been a Prisoner of War in Germany, finding solace in indexing genealogical material sent out to him for this purpose through the Red Cross by Henry Farnham Burke. During the Second World War Anthony Wagner states that Butler carried on almost single-handed many of the College's activities which must otherwise have ceased.⁵⁵ His assistant Sedley Andrus, later Lancaster Herald, had been deemed unfit for military service but was absent nonetheless, working on a farm. Butler would die in 1946, and his extensive practice was inherited by Wagner.

Although the Blitz had largely ended in May 1941, the threat from the air was not over: on the night of Tuesday 13 June 1944 the first flying bombs (V-1) arrived. At their peak more than ten flying bombs a day were launched at Britain. The ground-launched attacks ended in October 1944 as their launch sites were overrun by Allied forces, but air-launched attacks continued into 1945.⁵⁶ In total they caused over 22,000 casualties. On the night of 21-22 June, just after midnight, a V-1 exploded on the north bank of the Thames, missing the College by 100 metres, but sinking a barge. Large pieces of debris were sent over the tops of the surviving warehouses to fall in the derelict area south of Queen Victoria Street. Some 200 panes of glass were smashed at the College - most of these had probably only just been replaced after the Blitz of 1940-41. Several window frames were completely blown out, but the only injury was a broken arm suffered by the porter and warden Thomas Slatter, who caught his right arm in a heavy door.⁵⁷

As the attacks from V-1s eased, by October 1944 it seemed that the physical threat to the College had passed, and plans began to be made for the return of the College's manuscripts from Thornbury.⁵⁸ Officers were not then aware that London was still under attack, from ballistic missiles, the V-2s, by which time they had in fact

⁵³ CA record Ms Grants 107/172. Goldsmith's biography is summarized in an obituary in *The Times*, 6 Oct. 1955, p. 12.

⁵⁴ CA record Ms Grants 107/253.

⁵⁵ Wagner, *A Herald's World*, pp. 59, 77.

⁵⁶ Price, op. cit., p. 200.

⁵⁷ The account of the flying bomb raid is drawn from the report to Chapter of 5 July 1944: see CA Chapter Book 20 pp. 271-2.

⁵⁸ CA Chapter Book 20 p. 276.

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been hitting London for two months. The final V-2 attack came on 27 March 1945. Plans to return the College's records were put on hold until after the war had concluded. As last, following VE Day on 8 May 1945, the College records began to return.

By the end of the war the building had been neglected, damaged by fires and shaken by falling bombs. The Victorian railings that closed the courtyard of the College from Queen Victoria Street had been requisitioned by the Ministry of Works and Buildings in 1942.⁵⁹ The necessary physical restoration was put in hand in 1948-1949, with some £6,000 being spent, sending the College's finances once more into the red. The accounts for 1950 however show an income from grants of arms and royal licences of nearly £7,000, with a respectable operating surplus of £2,000. Reserves were once more being built up, to provide a degree of long-term security.⁶⁰

As an institution the College faced three threats during the Second World War. The first was physical: the annihilation of the building itself, or of the records and collections, the valuable archive of several thousand manuscript volumes, a similar number of unbound manuscripts, and a library of tens of thousands of printed books, all accumulated over centuries and irreplaceable. The most valuable parts of the archive were moved to Gloucestershire, where they were somewhat safer. The building itself was saved only by fate, and by the bravery of both the College staff and servants, and the fire-fighting teams of the City.

The second threat was posed by the loss of personnel to the war effort. Eight of the thirteen Officers were absent for some or all of the time on war service, with only the oldest left behind. Vacancies amongst the Pursuivants were not filled. Staff were called up likewise. The College continued to function partly because some of the Officers and staff still available were able to work extremely hard. Robert Burbidge, who had come to work at the College in 1915, was one of the few clerks available during the emergency; he worked as scrivener, indexer, and Registrar's clerk, as well as secretary to Garter and Clarenceux Kings of Arms.⁶¹

The third threat might have been the most serious: the financial difficulties that the College faced through rising costs and falling income. For an entirely self-funded body this must have been disastrous, had not large reserves been built up and retained for several decades to provide security against just such an emergency. As it was, the College was able to liquidate part of the reserves, and to improve income; and fortunately the war did not last forever. Perhaps as a reaction, post-war Britain would prove enthusiastic consumers of heraldry.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 241. In 1947, compensation of £50 was received. The gates would be replaced by a superior set of gates and railings in 1956.

⁶⁰ CA Treasurers Accounts 1948, 1949.

⁶¹ CA Staff Book: Robert Walter Burbidge.

On page 101, *Figure 5*: A view looking east up Queen Victoria Street, 20 January 1942. On the left, the upper stories of the College of Arms are visible. Ministry of Information Second World War Official Collection. On page 102, *Figure 6*: Aerial view of the City of London 22 April 1945 showing bomb damage. Air Ministry Second World War Official Collection. Both images © Imperial War Museum.



