

Annual General Meeting of the Hertford Society – 27 June 2026

2025-2026

Chairman's Report

President, ladies and gentlemen

Given that my report starts from the conclusion of the last AGM in September 2025, let me begin with what happened next.

Following the AGM, we had drinks around the Chapel and then lunch in Hall. The 60 or so College alumni and guests who attended heard Interim Principal Pat Roche speak of the progress being made in the new Library project, and the current healthy state of the College and its aspirations.

Our House of Lords Tea last October, the second in three years, again sponsored by our President, Lord Pannick, attracted no fewer than 120 Society members, other alumni and guests. This was once again a very memorable occasion. The great pleasure of having tea on the terrace of the House was enhanced by David's characteristically amusing and wry account of the work of the House. He also made a ringing call for the alumni present who were not members of the Society to join up. The College was represented by Simon Lerwill, leader of the Development Office, and Bursar Jamie Clark. Simon spoke of the College and its activities before those attending the tea made their way to the House of Lords shop for some unusual Christmas presents.

In November last year, the Society very much welcomed the announcement that Alexandra Freeman, Baroness Freeman of Steventon, was to be the next Principal of Hertford and, as such, an ex officio member of our Committee. We look forward to hearing from her at this evening's dinner.

Our next Committee meeting was held early this year, in February, in the RAF Club. Our Membership Secretary Chris Mockler highlighted a recent rise in the number of Society members. This was due in part to the data sharing agreement (DSA) with the College, enabling the Society to approach its members and encourage ex-members to rejoin. The

reception for recent College leavers organized by Bob Smith, the Late Summer Buffet Lunch in College and tea in the House of Lords were also a great help in showing the Society to be a vigorous organization.

While the core events in our social calendar are those in College, such as this evening's black-tie dinner, we also aim to offer events outside Oxford and that includes visits to prestige institutions. Committee member Nicholas Graves came up with the idea of a visit to the Foreign Office and undertook to explore this idea with our Vice President and former diplomat Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles. This visit has now been organized for Thursday 6 August. We are very grateful to Nicholas for making this event happen.

The Membership Secretary, acting on a suggestion from Paul Emery, has organized with the College of Arms two tours of the institution by members of the Hertford Society. These are due to take place in on Tuesday 15 and Thursday 17 September.

The Committee welcomed Pat Roche's report that the Society's donation of £5,000 towards furniture in the new Library would be matched at the College's forthcoming Giving Day, giving a total of £10,000 for the College.

Finally, at the meeting, our Secretary reported that Elizabeth Swing, who had given great support to her late husband Anthony Swing in the organization of Society events at the College over many years, had with pleasure accepted the Committee's invitation to become an Honorary Member of the Society.

The year has been notable for the discussions we have had with Simon Lerwill about the Society's 'brand' - what is special about it - and how the Society will be promoted by the College as part of its relaunched alumni programme. Discussion was constructive and co-operative, and we have now arrived at something the Society has never had before: a Mission Statement.

I'll read it to you now.

The Hertford Society is the College's long-established alumni group, with a particular focus on formal and traditional events. For over 60 years we have been bringing together Hertfordians motivated to maintain lifelong contact with their College and each other. Membership of the Society is based simply on a shared love of the College, as it is now and as it was, and an appreciation of its history and architecture. The modest annual subscription paid by alumni who choose to join enables us to support the College. Our social events, to which alumni regularly bring family and friends, range from black-tie dinners in Hall to visits to prestigious institutions outside Oxford.

I think that sums up admirably what we are about.

I would like to thank my fellow Society officers: our Secretary Graham Jones, Membership Secretary Chris Mockler and Treasurer Steven Hubbard. They work hard to make the Society function and flourish. I also want to thank the Development Office, particularly Georgia Weir, Flo Bates, Charlotte Malins and Tillie Peacock for their help on our behalf, and of course Pat Roche who made time for us and encouraged us during his year in charge of the College.

This evening we will be attending our black-tie dinner in Hall. There will be some 80 plus Society members, other alumni and guests, a very gratifying number.