



8th September 2025

CC: The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor, The Chair of the Livery Committee, The Chairman of the Fellowship of Clerks, the Chairman of the Association of Past Masters, Chairman of the Lady Masters' Association.

Dear Masters, Prime Wardens, Upper Bailiff, members of your respective Courts, and the Livery.

The Equality of Arms Campaign is writing to update you on our efforts to achieve sensible reform of the Law of Arms for the purpose of equality of the sexes.

Briefly: The Law of Arms discriminates against women in three ways:

- 1) Entitlement
- 2) Display
- 3) Inheritance

For the past seven years the Equality of Arms Campaign has strived to encourage sensible reforms led by the College of Arms, through polite and professional dialogue. These efforts have not been met with unalloyed enthusiasm by the College, and it has now retreated into silence.

At no point has the College denied that it continues to uphold and apply sexist and discriminatory conventions and yet it makes no principled or substantive defence of the status quo nor offers any proposal for reform.

1) Authority of the Kings of Arms / the Earl Marshal to reform the Law of Arms.

Several Livery Companies, Guilds, and Ward Clubs have enjoyed visits to the College of Arms and politely raised the equality issue with the hosting Officer of Arms. We are very grateful to those supporting our efforts in this way.

In response to these queries, some Officers have suggested that the Kings of Arms may lack the authority to reform the Law of Arms. Although the College has never responded directly to the Campaign's requests for clarification on this point, the College of Arms website has recently been amended to suggest exactly this. This is a position inconsistent with multiple previous rulings by the Kings of Arms on relevant areas of The Law of Arms.

This inconsistency is acknowledged on the website by inclusion of the following caveat: “*They may, within them, and after due deliberation, make certain permissible adjustments to the way arms are granted or displayed, and have done so from time to time, including quite recently in respect to the display of arms by women.*” It is not clear what qualifies an adjustment as “permissible”.

Further Officers of Arms have also suggested that the Earl Marshal may likewise lack authority to make relevant changes to the Law of Arms. We are therefore grateful to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk (Earl Marshal), who kindly responded to our query on this point. While rejecting suggestions of reform, His Grace’s letter accepted in principle that he was authorised to make changes to the Law of Arms. This aligns with the Campaign’s research in this area.

2) Engagement with the Livery Committee and Cabinet Office

Following our previous update to the Livery, several companies have raised the topic of heraldic equality with the Livery Committee. While recognising and respecting the Committee’s role does not empower it to instruct any Livery Company, the Livery Committee has been kind enough to facilitate productive and wide-ranging discussions between the Campaign, the City Remembrancer, and the City Council. This in turn has led to the Campaign being introduced to the Cabinet Office, specifically the Crown and Constitutional Policy Unit.

The Campaign has provided the Cabinet Office with all the core documents (manifesto, proposal for reform, summary of research, FAQs, etc) and posed a series of questions for His Majesty’s government to consider. We are assured of a full response in due course.

Conclusion

We recognise this makes for difficult reading, as did our previous correspondence and list of Frequently Asked Questions. All the campaign team are friends of heraldry, and of the College of Arms. We want both institutions to continue and to thrive, and we believe the best way to secure that is through sensible reform led from within the College, not by retreating into the shadows and hiding from a difficult conversation. When sensible reform comes, we will be the first to call three cheers for the College and promote its work far and wide!

We choose to take a stand and invite your membership to join us by emailing us at:
equalityofarmscampaign@gmail.com

Follow us on LinkedIn where you will find all our documents and public statements:
www.linkedin.com/company/equality-of-arms

Respectfully yours,

Equality of Arms Campaign Team

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