



# The Blazon

Patron of the BC/Yukon Branch: The Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia

SPRING 2017

ROYAL HERALDRY SOCIETY OF CANADA

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Summer is almost here! Last month the weather was fantastic at the Annual General Meeting of the Royal Heraldry Society in North Vancouver. While I could only attend some of the Society meetings I understand the 2017 Conference events went quite well. From the AGM a few interesting announcements were made and resolutions passed. The salient item was the announcement of our Branch Past President and current Publisher John W. Neill was made an Honorary Fellow of the Society. (Refer to a separate item, below, in *The Blazon*.) The Society had recently revised the education bursary that was created several years ago. The Christopher Wallis Bursary had been revised last year and increased from \$1,000 to \$2,500 a year. At the 2017 AGM the members agreed that this bursary would be established at the Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto. The Bursary is \$1,250 to the Faculty of Arts and \$1,250 to the Faculty of Design. The bursary set up is underway to commence this autumn and to run for five years.



BRANCH DIRECTORS AT RHSC AGM

Steve Cowan (Comox), David Hjalmarson (Duncan) and John Neill (Campbell River) at the Annual General Meeting in North Vancouver 6 May 2017.

Should the Society have additional funds for this purpose we will look at other education art and design institutions to expand our assistance to art and design students. Fitting in with the bursary, the Society members also passed a revision to amend our Society bylaws to remove the age restriction for student membership. This will allow more approved students the opportunity to join the RHSC at reduced rate to help achieve our aim of making more Canadians aware of Canadian heraldry.

Our annual black-tie dinner is being planned for Saturday 21 October. Once details are confirmed a flyer will be sent to all Branch members. Details will also be included in the Summer edition of *The Blazon*. Have a safe summer with friends and family as we enjoy the long days exploring heraldry at home and abroad; articles on your heraldic travels are always welcome.

*Steve Cowan, L.R.H.S.C., Branch President*

## BRANCH BEGINNINGS

It all started at the home of Robb Watt in North Vancouver. It was February 20<sup>th</sup> 1982, a Spring-like post-snow Saturday, and members of the Heraldry Society of Canada from all over BC's lower mainland and Vancouver Island assembled to talk about heraldry. (This was two decades before the 'Royal' was added to our name.) There was a little excitement in the air. Even though the Society had been in operation since 1966, it was rare for local members to come together to share their common interest. At that time, there were no branches and heraldic activity was centered about the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal area. But this was soon about to change.

There were thirteen members at that historic meeting, and they were on a mission – to form a structure to facilitate regular meetings and to exert more influence within the Society. After a nice buffet-style lunch provided by the Watts, members got down to business. The thirteen members were:

Irene Alexander\*  
 Bill Amos  
 Graham Anderson\*  
 George Brown  
 Ron Crawley  
 Tony de Cosson  
 Marven Manuel  
 Michael Halloran  
 Murray Mitchell  
 Dr. Earl McPhee  
 Lawrence Patten\*  
 Robert Thompson  
 Robert Watt\*



Irene Alexander



Lawrence Patten



Graham Anderson



Robert Watt

\* denotes arms are displayed to the sinister.

Also in attendance was Dr. McPhee's wife, Jennie, and Robb Watt's wife, Alison, who was the meeting's secretary and recorded the proceedings. Under the chairmanship of Robb, the meeting focused mostly on how best to work towards the creation of a Canadian heraldic authority, which was the top priority for the Society at that time. Dr. McPhee made a motion regarding how to further this goal. It consisted of three points:

- The Society's board should be encouraged to further pressure the Applebaum-Hébert Committee (charged with making a report to the federal government on how best to promote Canadian culture) to include a recommendation on the creation of an independent Canadian heraldic authority.
- The Society should publish the brief that it had already submitted to the Committee.
- The BC/Yukon members should canvass municipalities to gauge their interest in a Canadian heraldic authority.

The motion was passed.

Later in the meeting, Laurie Patten noted that there has never been an HSC conference west of Ontario and moved that the Society board be invited to hold the 1983 Conference at Vancouver. This, too, was passed. Shortly after the meeting, a request was sent from the group to the Society's board for information on how to form a branch - things were starting to roll.



Union Club of  
Victoria

The Society had a Board meeting a few months later in June and decided to finish up an existing 1971 draft of a bylaw allowing the formation of branches and chapters, to be presented for a vote by the general membership at the 1982 Conference in the Fall. Also to be presented was BC's invitation to have the 1983 Conference in Vancouver. Thus, good news surrounded the second meeting of the BC group, which was held October 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Union Club in Victoria (arms shown at dexter), hosted by John Goult. Not much **more could be done regarding making the branch official until the** Conference was held, which was to happen that very same month. So, they acted like a branch anyway and struck two committees; one to make a municipal arms guide, and the other to create a heraldry course.

As expected, the 1982 Conference approved that the 1983 Conference was to be held in Vancouver. However, the bylaw regarding the creation of branches and chapters was not ready and therefore did not go to a vote. This had to wait until the following year. When the 1983 Conference rolled around, in Vancouver, the bylaw was ready and was approved. Our pioneering group was on its way to become a fully recognized chapter.

Let us pause here to define some terms and get into some details. The bylaw passed by the Conference involved branches and chapters. Branches were to be groups organized on a municipal level, while chapters were to be regional or provincial in scale. For a chapter to be formed, it had to include at least five branches. Also, to form a branch, a petition had to be sent to the board with five or more signatures. With these definitions, it had always been the goal of the BC group to end up with a BC/Yukon chapter. So, the group went to work to form five branches within BC. The five branches were worked out during their fourth meeting (November 27<sup>th</sup> 1983 at Robb Watt's house) and were to be:

Victoria  
Central Vancouver Island (Nanaimo and area)  
Vancouver  
North Shore (later named North and West Vancouver)  
Fraser Valley West



City of Victoria



City of Vancouver



District of West Vancouver



City of North Vancouver



City of Nanaimo



Robert Gordon  
Rogers

They quickly drew up five petitions and obtained the required signatures. The Victoria petition even had the signature of the Lieutenant Governor (Robert Gordon Rogers) on it! (Shield at dexter.) The fifth meeting (May 6<sup>th</sup> 1984) was particularly special for a number of reasons: It was the first meeting set in Nanaimo and it was attended by His Honour, the aforementioned Lieutenant Governor. He did not just sit in, but was a full participant at the meeting, suggesting that Expo 86 would require some heraldry designs as well as indicating that the coats of arms in Government



House required some updating. John Goult reported that the branch petitions were all ready to be submitted. Just six days later, the Society board convened in Toronto and approved all five petitions, creating the very first branches for the Society. Now, work could start to incorporate these branches into a chapter.

The BC group's next meeting occurred a few months later, in October, 1984. It was organized by the new Fraser Valley West branch and hosted by Fritz Ziegler, the then Vancouver consul general of Monaco, and held at his home (actually, a castle called Schloss Klipphaus) in Fort Langley. At the meeting, Graham Anderson moved that the five branches petition the Society's board to create the BC/Yukon chapter. This was passed.

The records now get murky. However, a few months later, the board accepted the petition and stamped it 'approved'. Now, finally, about three years after that very first meeting at Robb Watt's house in 1982, the BC/Yukon chapter was officially born!



Township of Langley

As time went on, the branch/chapter bylaw was changed so that there were only branches. The original five BC branches were dissolved and the BC/Yukon chapter became, as we all now know it, the BC/Yukon branch. But whether a chapter or a branch, for over three decades, we have been a strong and vibrant arm of the Society, promoting heraldry with a western flavour.

## EPILOGUE

With support from the burgeoning BC/Yukon branch, the Society's national board continued to push for the creation of a Canadian heraldic authority and was able to get the following section inserted into the final report of the Applebaum-Hébert Committee:

*The heritage significance of heraldry, the study of armorial insignia, was put before us in a brief from the Heraldry Society of Canada. All levels of government, institutions of all kinds and individuals in Canada have petitioned for and received grants of arms from authorities overseas which include emblematic references to the historical traditions, geographical position and community aspirations of the bearer and which, therefore, have become distinctively Canadian in motif. We were told that "Canadian heraldry is now a living reality, in daily use across the land," yet Canada is not yet autonomous in heraldry.*

*The Committee agrees that it is consistent with this Canadian heraldic tradition that the authority which grants permission to use these emblems, officially registers them and later regulates their use, should be located in Canada, independent of, but cooperating with, heraldic authorities in other countries.*

*Canadian artists should be employed to prepare the unique and appropriate designs for the arms, flags, badges and insignia to be authorized by a Canadian Heraldic Authority. Such an authority would in all likelihood be self-sustaining; it might be suitably associated for administrative purposes with the Chancellery of Canadian Orders and Decorations of the office of the Governor General.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Robb Watt – for being the driving force behind the creation of the BC/Yukon branch.

Alison Watt – for making records of the proceedings of the initial meetings, without which this article would not have been possible.

Laurie Patten – for providing context in regards to the branch's overall history.

*Lee Van Horne*

## HERALDRY PRESENTATIONS AND COURSES

Listed below are some of the immediate past or upcoming heraldry events:

### PRESENTATIONS

3 June 2017 – Heraldry presentation to 23 members of the Comox Valley Presbyterian Church, Courtenay.

16 June 2017 - Heraldry presentation in the theatre of the Berwick Seniors residence in Comox.

10 October 2017 - Heraldry presentation with the Comox Valley Genealogy Group, Courtenay.

### COURSES

3-10-17-24 October 2017 - Heraldry Course, 1:00pm to 2:30pm at the Elder College, Campbell River

5-12-19-26 October 2017 - Heraldry Course, 1:00pm to 2:30pm at the Elder College, Courtenay

If any member is doing a heraldry presentation or course please send the details to our Publisher, John Neill (mountneill@outlook.com). If you would like to conduct a presentation or course, please contact Steve Cowan (stevecowanartist@yahoo.ca) for details. These public heraldic activities are designed as part of the aim of the Society to promote Canadian heraldry to Canadians.



## BC-YUKON BRANCH MEMBER HONOURED

At the Annual General Meeting of the Royal Heraldry Society held in North Vancouver on Saturday 6 May, the announcement was made that Mr. John W. Neill, of our Branch, has been appointed as an Honorary Fellow of the Society. This is a well-earned recognition for John who has been our Branch President for six years as well as being the Publisher of our Branch publication, *The Blazon* and the Society's national publication, *Gonfanon*. John has also greatly assisted with heraldry presentations and display events promoting Canadian heraldry.

Honorary Fellows are individuals, including members of The Society, who have significantly engendered, encouraged or



John Neill, to dexter, is being congratulated on becoming an Honorary Fellow of the RHSC by Prof. D'Arcy Boulton, FRHSC, Vice-Dean and Registrar of the College of Fellows. (Photo: Steve Cowan)

fostered a proper respect for, and the correct understanding of, the significance and place of heraldry in Canada or may be persons whose patronage from time to time has enhanced the prestige or honour of The Society.



Arms of John Neill, FRHSC (Hon), MSA

John joins an esteemed group of RHSC members who have contributed to the aims of our Society. Since 1975, the award of Honorary Fellow of the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada has been bestowed 53 times. John joins fellow Branch member Shirley Greenwood, FRGS, FRHSC (Hon.) in the College of Fellows.

**Steve Cowan L.R.H.S.C.**  
**/heraldic artisan**



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**THE BLAZON**

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**Editor** – John W. Neill F.R.H.S.C. (Hon.) M.S.A.

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Articles are welcome for  
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**[bc\\_yukon@heraldry.ca](mailto:bc_yukon@heraldry.ca)**

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