

# Heraldry, mottos, and corporate heritage discovery at the University of Strathclyde: a case of 'Useful Learning'

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## ABSTRACT

This case history of the University of Strathclyde provides an exemplar of the strategic utility of heraldry – including heraldic mottos – as a valuable and durable visual design mode for corporate brands, and particularly for heritage institutions. With its focus on heraldic visual design, this case retrospective elucidates how the acquisition of a full achievement of arms, and a heraldic motto, led to the rediscovery and revivification of the University of Strathclyde's corporate heritage during its bicentenary celebrations of 1996. In particular, the heraldic motto 'Useful Learning' captured a core philosophy of the institution's founder. Since 1996, it has become evident that the heraldic motto has informed what the university does apropos its central purpose, strategy, corporate communications, and, significantly, its corporate brand promise, thus demonstrating the efficacy and utility of heraldry and heraldic mottos for certain heritage organisations. The case history also resulted in a broadening of the corporate heritage taxonomy.

## About the author

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# Heraldry, mottos, and corporate heritage discovery at the University of Strathclyde: a case of ‘Useful Learning’

## Introduction

‘Organisations in examining their past can find their future’. (Balmer, 1994, p.1)

This case history, focussing on the University of Strathclyde, elucidates how the university’s acquisition of a full achievement of arms in 1996, including the heraldic motto ‘Useful Learning’, resulted in the rediscovery of the university’s corporate heritage in terms of its core activities, namely ‘what the university does’. Furthermore, the motto has, *de facto*, become the institution’s corporate brand promise. It is a promise which has conferred the university with a peerless corporate brand positioning. In particular, the motto has exerted a positive and enduring effect on the life of the institution, and seemingly represents a resource of singular importance for the senior management of the university. Notably, the formal adoption of a heraldic motto resulted in a revivification of the university’s heritage and enabled the organisation to hone not only its corporate brand but also its central purpose, mission, strategy, and corporate communications.

The University of Strathclyde has a venerable history, but is problematic in corporate heritage brand terms, since the institution has operated under various brand names since its foundation in 1796. For example, its current corporate brand name, ‘The University of Strathclyde’, only dates to 1964. Precursor institutions of the University of Strathclyde (1964 -) have variously been known as: *Anderson’s Institution* (1796-1828); *Anderson’s University* (1828-1877); *Anderson’s College* (1877-1886); *Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College* (1877-1912); *Royal Technical College* (1912-1956); and *Royal College of Science and Technology* (1956-1964).

This case history is set against the background of the university’s bicentenary celebrations of 1996. This was a momentous anniversary year for the university, since it commemorated the establishment of an antecedent institution by John Anderson in 1796. A highlight of the bicentenary year was a special evening Congregation of the university on 13 January 1996 when the legal document (Letters Patent) granting a full achievement of arms (including the heraldic motto) was formally presented to the University of Strathclyde. In a rarely-seen ceremony, rich in symbolism and ceremony, Charles Burnett, the Ross Herald of Arms (one of the Queen’s Officers of Arms), resplendent in his distinctive satin tabard, publicly read the Letters Patent from a hand-written and richly illuminated velum parchment before bestowing the legal document to the University’s Chancellor, Baron Tombs of Brailes.

Until 1996, the University of Strathclyde lacked an official motto. At that time, the university’s corporate heritage can best be described as latent rather than overt. In terms of visual design, the motto is distinct in that it constitutes an important dimension of the University’s full coat of arms. This is because the university’s motto – ‘Useful Learning’ – is prominently displayed at the top of the full achievement of arms. Significantly, the granting of a full achievement of arms occasioned the rediscovery, and renaissance, of the university’s heritage. Furthermore, ‘Useful Learning’ reflects a key corporate purpose stipulated by the institution’s founder, Professor John Anderson. Moreover, it is an organisational precept that has endured. Thus, the motto was a powerful and peerless means of memorialising, as well as communicating in visual form, and in perpetuity, a key dimension of the institution’s corporate heritage.

Whilst corporate heritage rediscovery at the University of Strathclyde represents a significant exemplar of the phenomenon, it is by no means unique. The case history of the *Cooperative Bank* (Wilkinson and Balmer, 1996) unearthed the bank's heritage in terms of its core purpose: 'what the bank does'. Furthermore, the case history of *British Broadcasting Corporation* (Balmer, 1994) revealed the importance of its less-frequently used heraldic motto 'Quaecunq[ue]<sup>1</sup> which encapsulated the vision of the BBC's founder, Lord Reith, in terms of 'how the Corporation should behave'.

The article continues by discussing the author's involvement with two of the university's corporate heritage design initiatives; provides contexts for the case history; considers the circumstances resulting in the University of Strathclyde being granted a full achievement of arms and heraldic motto; explains how the motto has impacted on managerial corporate brand orientation; discusses the designation of the University of Strathclyde in heritage terms and the need for a broader corporate heritage taxonomy; and concludes by highlighting the significance of this case history and providing management recommendations for the University of Strathclyde.

## **A personal perspective**

The author is well placed to reflect on the background and resultant effect of the conferral of a full achievement of arms. This is because on two separate instances in the early 1990s, he had oversight of two corporate visual heraldic design initiatives for the University of Strathclyde. The first initiative resulted in the university emphasizing its shield of arms as its definitive, and unifying, visual marque. The second initiative led to the university being awarded a full achievement of arms, including the adoption of the heraldic motto 'Useful Learning'. At the time, he was a lecturer in marketing at the University of Strathclyde, and his principal research area was that of corporate identity, with visual identity constituting one dimension of the corporate identity territory. Unsurprisingly, he took an active interest in the university's corporate visual identity, including its management and utilisation.

### **First corporate heraldic design initiative**

With the first initiative, which took place in the early 1990s, the author led a university-based team to consider the university's corporate visual identity and corporate communications. It should be noted that the university team had to take part in a competitive selection process which included presentations by external corporate identity consultancies. However, the university's senior management felt that the home-based team was best equipped to understand, as well as resolve, the university's problems vis-à-vis its corporate brand and identity. An audit of the university's corporate visual communications and brand architecture formed part of the analysis stage of the project (cf. Baker and Balmer, 1997). This revealed that the university had a confusing and inconsistent corporate visual identity, and this was prevalent throughout the university. Many departments, for instance, gave prominence to their own names and logos over the university's shield of arms. Clearly, this undermined the university's profile. Moreover, it communicated a confusing and incoherent image. In response, the author recommended that the university's shield of arms should be its sole and dominant marque. However, he advocated that the university should adopt a flexible monolithic corporate visual identity, which allowed for a limited and secondary role for department iconography. Moreover, it was recommended the shield of arms should, where possible, appear in full colour. Mindful of the university's heritage, he also suggested that its city centre estate should be designated the John Anderson Campus in memory of the university's founder. His recommendations were adopted, and this resulted in the university's graphic design team, working with outside graphic design consultants, introducing a

‘modernistic’ visual solution: the university’s heraldic shield expressed in a distinctive pentagon-shaped shield. This remains the principal visual identifier for the University of Strathclyde. Ingeniously, the shape of the shield of arms blends tradition with innovation.

The author’s suggestion that the heraldic shield of arms should be the university’s marque was made against moves in certain parts of the university to replace the heraldic shield with a (non-heraldic) contemporary logo design. The author voiced his opposition to such moves for two principal reasons. The first reason was that in conversations with students, it became evident that they saw the university’s heraldic shield of arms as a symbol of quality and of prestige. The second reason was that Scotland’s leading universities (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and St Andrews) used heraldic shields of arms as their corporate marque. Thus, if the University of Strathclyde adopted a logo design as its trademark – and eschewed day-to-day use of its heraldic shield – it might, unwittingly, be signalling that it was a university of the second rank.

### **Second corporate heraldic design initiative**

A few years later, the author led a second initiative. This resulted in the university petitioning the Crown to be granted a full achievement of arms to mark the bicentenary of its precursor institutions. By means of context, the granting of a full achievement of arms to a Scottish University is a rare and particular honour which is granted under the Royal Prerogative. The author initiated, and oversaw, the entire legal process of the university acquiring a full achievement of arms and heraldic motto and liaised with Scotland’s heraldic authority, *The Court of the Lord Lyon*. This included identifying the forms of words for the institution’s heraldic motto, along with the design elements constituting the full achievement of arms, and making design recommendations apropos the decoration of the Letters Patent. Given the presentation of the Letters Patent at a special evening congregation of the University, he suggested the music for the evening and oversaw the ceremonial proceedings of the event. This entailed spending six weeks rehearsing the opening procession with a willing group of undergraduates. Although rarely seen, the undergraduates wore the undergraduate gowns of the University of Strathclyde. A lack of funding from the University meant that the gowns were commissioned from the author’s own funds, and were subsequently donated for use by the university’s Chamber Choir. Finally, the Business School’s Department of Marketing took up the author’s suggestion of marking the bicentenary celebration by gifting a special frame and mount (suitable for holding a velum document) for the Letters Patent so that it could be put on public display.

Given the university’s attachment to its distinctive corporate visual identity, firmly grounded in the precepts of corporate heraldry, the award of a full achievement of arms represented a logical culmination of the author’s endeavours for the university to have a corporate visual heraldic identity. The granting of a full achievement of arms provided the university with an opportunity to formally acquire a heraldic motto which could mirror its inheritance.

### **Contexts: corporate heritage, corporate heraldry, heraldic mottos, and university and heraldry**

In order to provide some salient contexts for this case history, this section will provide concise background information relating to corporate heritage, corporate heraldry, heraldic mottos, and university and heraldry.

### Corporate heritage

Although having its roots in the early years of the millennium (Balmer, 2011, 2013a; Balmer et al., 2006; Urde et al., 2007), the corporate heritage notion has seen an exponential growth in interest over recent years, as the following indicative literature attests (Balmer, 2017; Balmer and Burghausen, 2015a, 2015b, 2019; Balmer and Chen, 2015; Bargenda, 2015; Brunninge, 2017; Burghausen and Balmer, 2014; Cooper et al., 2015; Lee and Davies, 2021; Pecot et al., 2018; Paek et al., 2020; Rindell and Santos, 2021; Santos et al., 2016; Spielmann et al., 2021).

Corporate heritage organisations are distinctive in that they are invested with organisational traits that have endured over the passage of time (Balmer, 2011a). Moreover, these traits are not only transtemporal in nature (of the past, present, and future) but, significantly, are *omnitemporal* in character, in that they are *simultaneously of the past, present, and future* (Balmer, 2013a). These traits impart value because they can accord an organisation a strategic advantage (Burghausen and Balmer, 2015). In many instances, corporate heritage traits are not easily replicable (Balmer, 2013a). Notably, corporate heritage design – including corporate heraldry and heraldic mottos – can be a significant corporate heritage trait (Balmer, 2013a). Corporate heritage design has been described as follows:

The pursuance and continuance of certain design features vis-à-vis products, graphic design, architecture, livery etc. can accord an entity with heritage distinctiveness if has prevailed over time. Also relates to having a coherent visual system in place (corporate design/house style/visual identity). (Balmer, 2013 p.310).

### Corporate heraldry

Representing an ancient, enduring, and evocative form of corporate visual identity design, as in centuries past, heraldry continues to be used by organisations as a meaningful design form. Thus, a heraldic shield is employed as their principal corporate brand marque (Burnett and Dennis, 1997; Innes, 1956). Today, countries, regions, cities, churches, and the military still use heraldry as a mode of corporate brand identification. Cases in point include the *Bank of Scotland*, *British Airways*, the *British Monarchy*, the *City of London*, *Cambridge University*, *Cornwall County Council*, *Harrods*, Canada's *Hudson Bay Company* and *Ballantine's whiskey*. There are also instances of pastiche and faux heraldic representations, as in the case of the coat of arms on India's *Amrut* whiskey brand.

The importance of heraldry within the United Kingdom can be seen in the existence of distinctive, and age-old, courts of law regulating heraldry. For example, the *Court of the Lord Lyon* has legal jurisdiction in Scotland, whilst the *College of Arms* serves England (Burnett and Dennis, 1997). Analogous heraldic authorities subsist in other countries, including Canada and South Africa. Various, these courts and authorities remain active in granting coats of arms to eligible individuals and organisations. Ostensibly, heraldic law is a precursor of trademark law.

The full achievement of arms was granted to the University of Strathclyde in accordance with the Laws of Heraldry in Scotland. Scots' heraldry is often considered to be the purest, finest, and vigorous of all the world's heraldic traditions (Burnett and Dennis, 1997).

Governed by specific heraldic rules, the primary element of the heraldic visual form is the shield. A shield relates to any clearly defined shape, with a continuous border, in which a heraldic design is contained. According to the rules of heraldry, the actual shape of the shield is not 'fixed' and can be altered at will (Burnett and Dennis, 1997).

Although the heraldic shield is the principal design element of corporate heraldry, it is occasionally embellished in a variety of ways. A full achievement of arms (one that includes numerous additional design elements) is a comparatively rare occurrence. In the UK, the granting of a full achievement of arms to organisations by the Crown is rare, and is only granted in specific, and exceptional, circumstances, to notable organisations.

Heraldry has advantages over ‘fixed’ graphic design representations such as corporate logos (Innes et al., 1996) owing to its adaptability. Typically, corporate logos are rigid and carefully prescribed in visual terms. In contrast, a coat of arms must conform to the *written description* of its design (the blazon). In Scotland, this is also a matter of law. Consequently, someone versed in heraldry, on reading the blazon, can picture what a coat of arms should look like and will be able to reproduce it (Burnett and Dennis 1997). As a former head of Scotland’s heraldic authority noted:

To blazon a coat of arms is to describe it scientifically, in words which cannot be misunderstood, just as a doctor writes a prescription, or an architect a specification. (Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, 1978. p.33).

In contrast, a heraldic artist, in conforming to the written explanation of the arms, has considerable scope for interpretation. Thus, it is possible to ‘modernise’ the representation of the shape and elements of an organisation’s coat of arms, as demonstrated by the University of Strathclyde in the early 1990s when it adopted a pentagon shape for its shield.

### **Heraldic mottos**

Frequently, heraldic mottos constitute an important dimension of corporate heraldry. There are innumerable examples of heraldic (and non-heraldic) mottos that powerfully encapsulate an organisation’s corporate characteristics, purpose, and/or values. Sometimes, this motto becomes the *de facto* corporate brand promise. Consider *British Airways*, ‘To Fly. To Serve’; *Everton Football Club*, ‘Nil Satis Nisi Optimum’ (Nothing but the best is good enough); the centuries-old motto of *The Prince of Wales*, ‘Ich Dien’ (I serve); the historic motto of the *London Stock Exchange*, ‘Dictum Meum Pactum’ (My word is my bond); the personal motto of *King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden* (1973–present), ‘För Sverige – i tiden’ (For Sweden – with the Times); and *Audi’s* motto, ‘Vorsprung durch Technik’ (Progress through Technology).

### **Universities and heraldry**

Noticeably, many of the world’s leading universities have coats of arms as their brand marque. Particularly in the UK, most universities have a heraldic shield of arms. Moreover, universities established by Royal Charter often contain a clause in their Charter requiring them to have a coat of arms. Notably, many of the oldest and prestigious universities in the UK (*Aberdeen, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Oxford, St Andrews*, etc.), have a heraldic shield as their defining corporate marque. The same is true for universities in the USA (*Harvard, Pennsylvania, Princeton, William and Mary, Yale*, etc.). More generally, some Commonwealth and European universities, among others, also utilise heraldry as their corporate brand marques, viz: *University of Borås (Sweden), Cape Town University (South Africa), University of Dublin (Ireland), University of Groningen (The Netherlands), National University of Singapore (Singapore), University of Sydney (Australia), and University of Toronto (Canada)*. Clearly, corporate heritage is viewed as a highly meaningful corporate brand symbol, as is the case at Christ’s College, Cambridge University, whose great gate makes prominent use of the college’s full achievement of arms. Thus, the gateway, with its striking heraldic embellishment, stands as ‘a metaphor for the College history’ (Reynolds, 2004, pp. ix-x).

## Corporate heraldry and the rediscovery of the University of Strathclyde's heritage

The catalyst for the rediscovery of the University of Strathclyde's corporate heritage was the University's celebrations in 1996. The year-long bicentenary festivities marked the establishment of the Anderson Institute by Professor John Anderson in 1796, which, in time, after many changes of corporate brand name, metamorphosed into the University of Strathclyde. It was the explicit wish of Professor Anderson that Glasgow should have a second university, and one that was distinct from the University of Glasgow, where he was a professor.

Several years before the bicentenary, at a reception for the Department of Marketing faculty, Professor (Sir) John Arbuthnott (the university's Principal and Vice Chancellor) encouraged the faculty to suggest innovative ways in which the university could commemorate its provenance spanning two centuries. It was during this reception that the author suggested that the university could mark this milestone by petitioning Scotland's *Court of the Lord Lyon* (a court of law which regulates heraldry in Scotland) for the very rare honour of being granted a full achievement of arms (including an armorial motto). Moreover, he opined that if the court consented to the petition, a special evening congregation could open the bicentenary festivities, where the Letters Patent conferring a full coat of arms by the crown could be proclaimed by one of the Queen's heralds. Professor Arbuthnott agreed to the suggestion and the author was given oversight of the whole initiative, including the preparation of the petition and the ceremonial arrangements for the evening, including input on the music to be played.

### A full achievement of arms

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The granting of a full achievement of arms, in effect, would mean that all contiguous areas of the university's existing shield of arms (granted in 1964) would be embellished in one form or another. Importantly, the granting of a full achievement of arms meant that the university was free to use the full achievement of arms, or the shield alone, or the shield and motto, or the shield, crest, and motto.

A full achievement of arms constitutes a variety of elements, and these can be explained as follows (cf. Burnett and Dennis, 1997).

*Shield.* Sometimes known as an escutcheon, this is the central element of an achievement of arms. Escutcheons come in different shapes.

*Supporters.* On either side of the shield, animals (and sometimes humans) literally support the shield.

*Compartment.* Found under the shield and supporters, this heraldic design element can be shown as a hill, a mound of rocks, etc. The shield and supporters stand on the compartment.

*Helm.* Found on top of the shield is a helmet which varies in colour and shape depending on the status of the person.

*Mantling.* This is the material which is attached to the helmet, and which is often shown as being ripped so that it forms a flourish above and to the side of the shield.

*Torse.* This is a wreath which sits on top of the helm but beneath the crest.

*Crest.* A design feature which is found above the torse.

*Motto.* A scroll presenting a word or very short phrase which captures a key sentiment or defining characteristic of a person or the ethos of the organisation. In Scotland (unlike in England), the motto is part of the legal description of the achievement of arms (the blazon), and therefore cannot be freely changed. In Scotland, the motto is traditionally placed above the crest. Mottos can be expressed in a variety of languages but are usually expressed in Latin or in a local language.

### Particularising the University of Strathclyde's full achievement of arms

The first task of the author was to take soundings from the head of Scotland's heraldic court (*The Court of the Lord Lyon*), Sir Malcolm Innes of Edingight, as to the feasibility of granting a full achievement of arms to the University of Strathclyde. Fortuitously, his response was both positive and supportive.

The second undertaking was to deliberate on the elements which would constitute a full achievement of arms. Given the impending bicentenary celebrations, the author took account of the institution's origins and legacy, including its association with the ancient Kingdom of Strathclyde, after which the university was named. In addition, he showed mindfulness of the university's strong connections with Glasgow.

The author's suggestions apropos the elements constituting the full achievement of arms were endorsed by the university's senior management and received the formal imprimatur of Sir Malcolm Innes of Edingight (the Lord Lyon King of Arms).

#### *Motto*

Identifying a motto for the university required careful deliberation on the part of the author. However, it proved to be a relatively straightforward affair, since in reading Professor Andersen's will, the author was drawn to a section where he stated that his university should be a seminary of sound religion, useful learning, and liberality of sentiment. Immediately upon coming across these words, the author was in no doubt that the words 'Useful Learning' would be an apposite and effective motto for the university. 'Useful Learning' as a motto was not only meaningful but also matchless.

There were three reasons why 'Useful Learning' recommended itself to the author as a suitable motto.

The first reason was because the words came from the university's founder and powerfully encapsulated Anderson's singular vision for the university. For the author, 'Useful Learning' epitomised a key and enduring sentiment of the university and its antecedent institutions. Thus, it synopsised a key corporate heritage identity trait of the University of Strathclyde.

Professor Anderson mandated in his will that his institution necessarily should break new ground as a new genus of university: a university which was *not* to be informed by *abstract learning*, but rather by *useful learning*. For the author, there was no better way of commemorating the bicentenary of the university than by embracing the sentiment of useful learning.

The second reason was that these words synopsised a core (arguably, *the* core) dimension of the University of Strathclyde's heritage and enduring ethos. From its inception, the principal objectives of the university were to educate men for industry and commerce; to provide a liberal education in science; and to see a university education as having a clear societal purpose (Butt, 1996). The university has other corporate heritage traits of note, including its *inclusivity* (offering courses for women and for broader social groupings); and for its *governance* (local lay involvement in university governance, which, in due course, was a model found in other Scottish Universities), but the motto, for the author, encapsulated the most powerful of the university's heritage traits.

The third reason in its favour was because the motto was memorable, meaningful, and importantly, short.



### *Supporters*

Given that the University of Strathclyde's name was inspired by the ancient Kingdom of Strathclyde, the author suggested that two peregrine falcons (a bird that is common to the region covered by this Kingdom) should support the shield of arms. Moreover, he proposed that the falcons should be gorged at the neck by two antique crowns. This is because the crowns are redolent of the ancient Kingdom of Strathclyde and would mirror the crown in the university's shield of arms. Importantly, two antecedent institutions of the university, namely the *Royal Technical College* (1912-1956) and the *Royal College of Science and Technology* (1956-1964), were granted the exceptionally rare privilege of using the Royal Crown in their shields of arms. The Royal Crown is based on the St. Edward's Crown, which is the crown used for the Coronation. Thus, the prominent use of crowns in the full achievement of arms of the University of Strathclyde ensured a degree of continuity in terms of the heraldic traditions of the institution, even though the university no longer uses the Royal Crown in its shield of arms, having forfeited its royal status when it merged with the Scottish College of Commerce to become the University of Strathclyde in 1964. However, the inclusion of three antique crowns in the university's full achievement of arms (in the shield of arms and supporters) memorialised the two antecedent institutions holding the Royal designation. Moreover, the *Royal Technical College* and the *Royal College of Science and Technology* were distinguished in being among the few royal colleges of higher education in the United Kingdom and the only ones in Scotland.

It should be also noted that the author considered another option for supporters. Under this alternative scheme, the supporters were to include Professor John Anderson (the university's founder) and Saint Mungo (a saint closely associated with Glasgow). Officials at the *Court of the Lord Lyon* agreed with the author that the use of falcons would be the preferable option.

### *Crest*

The crest is constituted of a globe (with lines latitudinal and longitudinal) surmounted by a sailing ship of trade. For this, the author was inspired by a prominent feature of George Square, Glasgow (situated next to the university), namely the globe and ship of trade symbol which surmounts the Trades House (one of Glasgow's most prominent and historic institutions). By this means, the university could affirm its status as a leading institution within the city of Glasgow. Just as the globe represents Glasgow's historic international links, it also characterizes the university's global reach. Equally, Glasgow's position as a prominent centre of commerce is represented by the ship of trade.

Although not formally detailed in the Letters Patent, the author asked that the sailing ship of trade, which surmounts the globe, should be a representation of the Glasgow-built tall sailing ship the *Glenlee*. Why the *Glenlee*? It was one of the last steel-hulled ocean-going sailing vessels to be built in Glasgow and the city has an enviable history as a centre of ship-building. At the time of the bicentenary, the ship was being restored. Significantly, the *Glenlee* was launched in 1896: the year that marked the centenary of the establishment of the institution by John Anderson. Thus, it could be seen to be a representative symbol of the institution's centenary. Now fully restored, the *Glenlee* is maintained by the Clyde Maritime Trust. A ship of trade is efficacious because the university is home to one of the UK's pre-eminent business schools. Additionally, the *Glenlee* is an apt symbol because the university's department of maritime engineering also enjoys renown.

Figure 1 shows the University of Strathclyde's full achievement of arms.

## TAKE IN FIGURE ONE HERE

Figure 1. The Full Achievement of Arms of the University of Strathclyde



### Impact of the full achievement of arms on the university

Today the university fully embraces the motto which, *de facto*, has become its central corporate brand promise. However, whilst the impression can sometimes be given that the words ‘Useful Learning’ were frequently used before 1996, *this was most certainly not the case*. It is true that the university emphasized the practical utility of its research and teaching at this time, but this was not captured in a delineating motto or reflected in an explicit corporate brand promise. Indeed, reference to the official history of the university (Budd, 1996), which was written before the bicentenary celebrations of 1996 and published in the bicentenary year, reveals that the phrase ‘Useful Learning’ is scarcely mentioned in the book. Moreover, and to illustrate the point, no mention of it is made in the index.

The acquisition of a full achievement of arms, and in particular the heraldic motto, impacted on the university in five ways.

1. Unlocking the university’s heritage
2. Constituting the university’s corporate brand covenant/promise
3. Informing the university’s corporate communication and
4. Illuminating the university’s purposes, strategy, and corporate communication
5. Underpinning the university’s managerial corporate brand orientation
6. Enhancing the university’s corporate brand design manifestations

#### *1. Unlocking heritage*

The heraldic motto ‘Useful Learning’ has, since 1996, been enthusiastically embraced by the university. Given that ‘Useful Learning’ encapsulates a key sentiment of its founder, John Anderson, the university has not only unlocked its heritage but also mobilised it. Prior to 1996, the institution’s heritage had been more latent than overt. Post-1996, the situation has been reversed, and the heraldic motto has resulted in a revivification of the university’s heritage. Additionally, it has accentuated the institution’s distinguishing and differentiating corporate positioning.

### *2. Constituting the university’s corporate brand covenant/promise*

The heraldic motto ‘Useful Learning’ *de facto* became the university’s corporate brand covenant/motto. Thus, ‘Useful Learning’ underpins and espouses the university’s *promise* to stakeholders and to society at large. Furthermore, it also appraises what stakeholders and society at large *expect* from, and of, the university. Prior to 1996, the university’s corporate brand covenant/promise was equivocal, even invisible. Post-1996, the corporate brand covenant/promise was unequivocal.

### *3. Informing the university’s corporate communication and corporate brand strapline*

The university’s heritage, as espoused in the heraldic motto ‘Useful Learning’, provides a central narrative that underpins its corporate communication endeavours. Furthermore, the university’s corporate brand strapline, ‘The Place of Useful Learning’ (sometimes expressed as ‘A Place of Useful Learning’) has unquestionably been informed by its heraldic motto.

Figure Two shows an example of how the university uses its corporate brand strapline alongside its heraldic shield of arms, university name and location. Figure Three presents additional indicative quotes showing how the university’s corporate heritage has informed its corporate communication and corporate brand strapline.

#### TAKE IN FIGURE TWO HERE

**Figure Two. The University of Strathclyde’s Corporate Brand Strapline alongside the shield of arms and university name and location.**



#### TAKE IN FIGURE 3 HERE

**Figure 3. Evidence of how the university’s corporate heritage informs corporate communication.**

<p><b>Corporate Communication</b></p> <p><i>Information given to those applying for faculty positions</i></p>	<p><b><i>‘As a place of useful learning, the University’s focus is on generating new ideas, creating fresh opportunities and engaging in partnerships that benefit wider society’.</i></b></p> <p><a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/workwithus/vacancies/">http://www.strath.ac.uk/workwithus/vacancies/</a> (accessed February 22, 2017)</p>
<p><b>Corporate Communication</b></p> <p><i>(From the university website’s Training and Consultancy section)</i></p>	<p><b><i>‘Here at Strathclyde, we believe in useful learning. We know how important it is to keep learning and refresh your skills along with learning new ones as you progress through life’.</i></b></p> <p><a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/workwithus/trainingconsultancy/">http://www.strath.ac.uk/workwithus/trainingconsultancy/</a> (accessed February 22, 2017)</p>
<p><b>Corporate Communication</b></p> <p><i>(From the university’s Built Environment Education &amp; Architectural Pedagogy Research Unit)</i></p>	<p><b><i>‘Guided by the ideals and beliefs of “the place of useful learning”, our staff have a long and well-established tradition of exploring learning practices in architecture, building construction, and urban design’.</i></b></p> <p><a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/research/subjects/architecture/builtenvironmenteducationarchitecturalpedagogy/">http://www.strath.ac.uk/research/subjects/architecture/builtenvironmenteducationarchitecturalpedagogy/</a> (accessed February 22, 2017)</p>
<p><b>Corporate Communication</b></p> <p><i>(From Strathclyde University Business School)</i></p>	<p><b><i>‘Strathclyde Business School is one of four faculties forming the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. The University was established in 1796 as “the place of useful learning” and this remains at the forefront of our vision today for Strathclyde to be a leading international technological university that makes a positive difference to the lives of its students, to society and to the world’.</i></b></p> <p><a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/business/aboutus/">http://www.strath.ac.uk/business/aboutus/</a> (accessed February 22, 2017)</p>

#### 4. Illuminating the university’s purposes, strategy, and corporate communication

The university’s singular heritage – as manifest in the heraldic motto ‘Useful Learning’ – is a powerful cornerstone for the institution. This is because the motto exemplifies the university’s quintessence, and furthermore, accentuates the institution’s provenance vis-à-vis useful learning. Testimony of its importance can be seen in statements relating to the university’s purposes and strategy, and formal corporate communications emitted by the organisation. For example, the motto enjoys prominence in policy documents relating to the organisation’s purposes and strategy. Additionally, statements and speeches made by senior university figures frequently refer to ‘Useful Learning,’ such as the following examples from the university’s strategic plan.

The University’s Mission:

*A leading international technological university, inspired by its founding mission, that makes a positive difference to the lives of its students, to society and to the world.* <http://www.strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/strategicplan/> (Accessed February 22, 2017)

The University’s Vision:

*From our foundation as a “place of useful learning”, we take it as our responsibility to research, teach and be of benefit to society – to reach outside the University to make the world better educated, prosperous, healthy, fair and secure.*

<http://www.strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/strategicplan/> (Accessed February 22, 2017)

See Figure Four for further indicative quotes relating to the above.

#### TAKE IN FIGURE FOUR HERE

<b>Figure 4. Evidence showing how the university’s heritage (and heraldic motto) informs the institution’s mission, strategy, corporate identity as expressed in its strategic plan (2015-2020).</b>	
	<i>‘A leading international technological university, inspired by its founding mission, that makes a positive difference to the lives of its students, to society and to the world’</i> <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/strategicplan/">http://www.strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/strategicplan/</a> (accessed February 22, 2017)
<b>University’s Vision</b>	<i>‘From our foundation as a “place of useful learning”, we take it as our responsibility to research, teach and be of benefit to society – to reach outside the University to make the world better educated, prosperous, healthy, fair and secure’.</i> <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/strategicplan/">http://www.strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/strategicplan/</a> (accessed February 22, 2017)
<b>University’s Strategic Plan 2015-2020</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Introduction to the Strategic Plan by Professor Sir Jim McDonald, The Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Strathclyde</b></p> <p><i>‘Our collective vision for Strathclyde is of a leading international technological university inspired by its founding mission as “the place of useful learning”, that makes a positive difference to the lives of its students, to society and to the world’.</i> (p.1)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategic Plan opens with the following statement</b></p> <p><i>‘Established in 1796 by Professor John Anderson “for the good of mankind” and with the purpose of being “the place of useful learning”, the University of Strathclyde is the only higher education institution to be established in Scotland during the Enlightenment. This historical tradition is reflected and enriched today by our reputation and status as a leading international technological university, focused on delivering excellent teaching and world-class research and known for forging strong collaborative links with industry, government, business and the third sector’.</i> (p.6)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Section on student experience in the strategic plan</b></p> <p><i>‘Our commitment to delivering an outstanding student experience is characterised by our founding mission of being “the place of useful learning”, delivering a distinctive curriculum that is innovative, forward-looking and practical, and fostering academic excellence and achievement.’</i> (p.10)</p> <p><a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/strategicplan/">http://www.strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/strategicplan/</a> (accessed February 22, 2017)</p>

#### 5. Underpinning the university’s managerial corporate brand orientation

Seemingly, ‘Useful Learning’ – as the university’s corporate brand covenant/promise – has, it would appear, a significant normative and regularising value for the university’s management team (cf. Balmer, 2022). Managers, conceivably, are attuned to ‘Useful Learning’ as the university’s corporate brand covenant/promise. Ostensibly, the motto functions as an effective and uniting mechanism for managers and for a shared managerial corporate brand orientation. The corporate brand promise, as expressed in the heraldic motto, serves as a central pivot

which, seemingly, guides management behaviour, leadership, and judgements (cf. Balmer, 2012).

#### 6. *Enhancing the university's corporate brand design manifestations*

The full achievement of arms and motto enhances the corporate brand design manifestations of the university in that it appears on degree certificates; has a place of prominence above the stage on the Great Hall of the University (the Barony Hall) where graduation and other ceremonies are held; is replicated in a stained-glass window in the Great Hall; and features on university banners. Furthermore, the corporate brand strapline 'A Place of Useful Learning' is part of the design of the university's fêted Graham Hills Building. The 'Strathclyde Wonderwall' is the largest mural in Glasgow and, for a while, was the largest mural in the UK.

### **Classifying the University of Strathclyde's heritage and the efficacy of a broader corporate heritage taxonomy**

Extant corporate heritage branding classifications, viz: corporate brand with a heritage, corporate heritage brand, corporate heritage identity, do not strictly apply to the University in terms of its heritage status pre- and post-1996. After considerable deliberation, it was reasoned that two new corporate-level heritage concepts (*'a corporate identity with a heritage'* and *'a corporate brand with a corporate heritage identity'*) captured the university's heritage status pre- and post-1996.

In particular, this case study revealed that the university had a clear corporate heritage identity dating back to 1796. It is also apparent that the University of Strathclyde, pre-1996, did not meaningfully utilise this heritage, and this explains the designation *'a corporate identity with a heritage'*. This designation is applicable to organisations that have a corporate heritage but fail to utilize it in, for example, their strategic positioning and corporate communication.

Post-1996, although the university had a clear corporate brand and strong corporate brand promise, it could not be classified as having a clear corporate heritage brand, even though it now recognised, and marshalled, its corporate heritage identity. Thus, its corporate brand name, 'The University of Strathclyde', was adopted in 1964, and the formal adoption by the university of 'Useful Learning' as its *de facto* corporate brand promise only dates to 1996. Therefore, it can be recognised that the university's corporate brand has a recent origin whilst remaining mindful that the university currently marshals a heritage of more than two centuries. Moreover, this corporate brand does not yet meet the three-generational/50-year criterion required for the university to be considered as a corporate heritage brand (Balmer, 2013a). This explains why the author has accorded the university the current designation of *'a corporate brand with a corporate heritage identity'*. As previously articulated:

Corporate heritage brands refer to a distinct category of institutional brand where there is a degree of continuity in terms of the brand promise as expressed via the institution's identity, behaviour, and symbolism. (Balmer, 2011 p.1385)

*Ceteris paribus*, the University's corporate brand will, in due course, meet the criteria to be designated a corporate heritage brand. Appendix 1 explains the author's corporate heritage identity and corporate heritage brand criteria.

Given the above, the author had cause to revisit and broaden the corporate heritage taxonomy, since existing heritage concepts were limited, and the extant taxonomy was therefore wanting in this regard. Notably, the broadened taxonomy makes a distinction between organisations who strategically marshal their heritage and those who do not. It also embraces the ‘corporate brand with a corporate heritage identity’ notion specified earlier.

Thus, with reference to corporate brands, the former category – where the heritage is strategically marshalled - is termed ‘*a corporate brand heritage*’. In contrast, again with reference to corporate brands, the latter category - where the heritage is not strategically marshalled - is termed ‘*a corporate brand with a heritage*’.

The broadened taxonomy encompasses the following classifications: *corporate heritage identity*, *corporate heritage brands*, *corporate identity with a heritage*, *corporate brand with a heritage*, and *a corporate brand with a corporate heritage identity*.

Appendix 2 details the author’s broadened corporate heritage taxonomy in greater detail.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

### **Contribution**

This case history of the University of Strathclyde illustrates the utility of corporate heraldry in capturing and revivifying an organisation’s heritage. Since heraldry is an art form with roots in antiquity, it can be a powerful visual medium through which to communicate an organisation’s corporate heritage. Moreover, its dignity can recall the historical basis of an organisation; heraldic devices and colours brighten and enliven buildings; and its economy recommends itself to those organisations spending public funds (cf. Innes et al., 1996).

Furthermore, the heraldic motto can become an institution’s cornerstone and inform an entity’s strategy and mission, as well as providing a powerful, singular, and memorable corporate brand promise. Consequently, this can provide a spur for organisational-wide corporate brand orientation and, more particularly, managerial corporate brand orientation (cf. Balmer, 2013b, 2022; Balmer and Podnar, 2021), and could be meaningful for organisational heritage identification and organisational heritage cultural identification (Balmer and Burghausen, 2015b). In addition to encapsulating core purposes, it can unearth and capture an entity’s ethos in terms of its behaviours, as with the case of the BBC (cf. Balmer, 1994). It provides a guide to what should, and must, be done and what needs to be done.

### **Management advice for the University of Strathclyde**

Although it is clear that the acquisition of a full achievement of arms and heraldic motto have led to a revivification of the university’s heritage, the university might consider marshalling its heraldic symbols to greater effect than is currently the case. For example, the full achievement of arms could be prominently displayed outside of certain university buildings and on ‘entry routes’ to the university’s John Anderson campus. The shield of arms – which is commonly seen throughout the campus and on formal communications by the university – could also, where appropriate, also include the heraldic motto, ‘Useful Learning’. Moreover, the university could fly a corporate heraldic flag, which would add colour and dignity to certain university buildings. A heraldic flag entails the elements of the shield of arms covering the entire area of a rectangular corporate flag and should not be confused with placing the shield of arms in the middle of a flag. For examples of this, see the flags of *British Columbia* and *Simon Fraser University*, Vancouver. Additionally, given the luxuriant and arresting nature of the shield of arms, corporate heraldic banners could enliven the university

campus. They would also work well inside the Great Hall of the University during graduation ceremonies. Finally, it is hoped that the university will again make readily available online the video of the presentation of the full achievement of arms to the university in 1996.

### **Management implications**

For corporate heritage organisations, several managerial implications emerge:

1. Consider utilising corporate heraldic design to encapsulate and communicate the organisation's heritage.
2. Corporate heraldry, and heraldic mottoes especially, can engender, encapsulate, and communicate corporate heritage.
3. Ponder whether the acquisition, and in some cases renewal, of a heraldic motto that encapsulate a key dimension of an organisation's heritage is efficacious.
4. Where your organisation already has a coat of arms/heraldic motto, be mindful of their origins and purposes, since this might shed light on the entity's heritage.
5. Corporate anniversaries provide opportunities for uncovering and embracing an organisation's corporate heritage.
6. An organisation's heraldic motto can provide the pivot for its corporate brand promise.
7. A heraldic motto, when used as the organisation's corporate brand promise, can provide the cornerstone for *managerial corporate brand orientation* and, more generally, for corporate brand orientation.
8. A meaningful corporate heraldic motto which encapsulates a key dimension of an entity's heritage can have high visibility, and therefore can inform strategy, corporate identity, strategic positioning, corporate communication, and corporate brand covenant/promise.
9. A corporate coat of arms and motto can be signs of prestige, and therefore, may burnish an organisation's distinctiveness and attractiveness to customer and other stakeholders.
10. Whereas corporate logos are fixed, corporate heraldic design is flexible, since a heraldic corporate marque needs to conform to a written description rather than to a fixed design. Thus, a variety of design interpretations are possible. Given this, it is possible to "modernise" the corporate heraldic marque along these terms.
11. Heraldic mottos can be a powerful way of evoking an organisation's history and heritage.
12. The heraldic colours of a coat of arms/full armorial bearings can be used in a variety of ways to enliven an organisation's corporate communications as well as brightening buildings, interiors, and open spaces.
13. In certain sectors or industries, the most prestigious and prominent institutions use heraldry. Therefore, institutions that decide against utilizing heraldry as their corporate marque may, unwittingly, be signalling they are of the second rank.
14. Whereas a corporate marque may continually require change and modernisation at some considerable cost, a corporate heraldic design is not only cost-effective but also enduring.
15. Be mindful that some legal documents of incorporation (such as Royal Charters) may require your institution to have a coat of arms.

### **Final Reflection**



This case history has shown how, by revisiting its heritage along with the organisational precepts espoused by its founder and expressing this in its heraldic motto ‘Useful Learning,’ the University of Strathclyde, in its bicentenary year, unearthed an enduring, eloquent, and exacting expression of its primary corporate purpose, as expressed in its full achievement of arms, and moreover, in its corporate motto. There are lessons here for other organisations. As a heritage motto, ‘Useful Learning’ is meaningful because it is sempiternal. It not only serves as a permanent guide to what the university has done, but also provides direction as to what it must achieve. Thus, although he is long dead, John Anderson’s corporate philosophy still lives and still has voice – a voice that finds meaning and expression in the University of Strathclyde’s coat of arms, and which is powerfully captured in the heraldic motto ‘Useful Learning’. Hence, it is unquestionably the case that, ‘*Organisations in examining their past can find their future*’ (Balmer, 1994, p.1).

### Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflict of interest.** The corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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### Notes

1. There are differences in spelling: in the BBC, it appears as Quaecunq̄ue, whereas elsewhere it is spelt as Quaecumq̄ue.

## Appendices

<b>Appendix 1. Corporate Heritage Identity and Corporate Heritage Brand Criteria</b>	
<b>Corporate Heritage Identity</b> (Balmer, 2011)	<b>Corporate Heritage Brand</b> (Adapted from Balmer, 2011)
Omni-temporality: corporate heritage identities subsist in temporal strata of the past, present, and prospective future.	Omni-temporality: the corporate brand subsists in temporal strata of the past, present, and prospective future.
Institutional trait consistency: certain corporate heritage traits have remained consistent and constant.	Corporate brand covenant consistency: the corporate brand promise and the delivery of the promise have remained consistent and constant.
Tri-generational heredity: a corporate heritage identity must have been in existence and have been meaningful to customers/stakeholders for a minimum of three generations or approximately 50 years.	Tri-generational heredity: a corporate heritage brand must have been in existence and have been meaningful to customers/stakeholders for a minimum of three generations or approximately 50 years.
Augmented role identities: a corporate heritage identity is infused with multiple role identities, and is therefore meaningful for territories, cultures, societies, and ancestries.	Augmented role identities: a corporate heritage brand should be infused with multiple brand identities, and is therefore meaningful for territorial, cultural, societal, and ancestral brands/identities.

Ceaseless multigenerational stakeholder utility: a corporate heritage brand has been demonstrably salient for consecutive generations of stakeholders.	Ceaseless multigenerational stakeholder utility: a corporate heritage brand has been demonstrably salient for consecutive generations of stakeholders.
Unremitting management tenacity: a corporate heritage brand has been underpinned by assiduous management. (However, where this is not the case, but the other criteria apply, then the classification of 'corporate brand with a heritage' applies).	Unremitting management tenacity: a corporate heritage brand has been underpinned by assiduous management. (However, where this is not the case, but the other criteria apply, then the classification of 'corporate brand with a heritage' applies).

## Appendix 2: Broadened Corporate Heritage Classifications

Concept	Explanation
<i>Corporate heritage identity</i>	Refers to institutions which have institutional traits that have remained invariant (unchanging) and meaningful, and therefore are viewed as being part of the past, present, and prospective future (Balmer, 2011, p.1385). Significantly, senior managers employ their corporate heritage identity as part of their strategy and strategic positioning.
<i>Corporate heritage brand</i>	Refers to a distinct category of corporate brand where the corporate brand covenant/promise has remained invariant (unchanging) and meaningful, and therefore is viewed as being part of the past, present, and prospective future (Balmer, 2011, p. 1385). Importantly, senior managers employ their corporate heritage brand as part of their strategy and strategic positioning.
<i>Corporate identity with a heritage</i>	Refers to an organisation with a <i>bona fide</i> heritage but where senior managers do not employ their heritage as part of their strategy and strategic positioning (either consciously, because they feel that they have a negative, redundant, or disagreeable heritage, or because senior managers are oblivious to their organisation's heritage). This is a new concept.
<i>Corporate brand with a heritage</i>	Refers to an organisation with a <i>bona fide</i> corporate heritage brand covenant/promise but where senior managers do not employ this brand covenant/promise: positioning (either consciously because they feel that they have a negative, redundant, or disagreeable brand promise associated with the heritage of the corporate brand, or because senior managers are oblivious to their corporate brand's heritage). This concept was initially introduced by Urde et al. (2007).
<i>Corporate brand with a corporate heritage identity</i>	Refers to an organisation with a <i>bona fide</i> corporate heritage identity where, importantly, senior

	<p>managers employ their corporate heritage identity as part of their strategy and strategic positioning. However, the organisation's corporate brand, because it does not meet the three-generational/50-year criteria (Balmer, 2013a) in terms of constancy of corporate brand promise, cannot be deemed to be a corporate heritage brand. However, it is likely that the corporate brand covenant will emphasise a promise based in its corporate heritage. <i>Ceteris paribus</i>, the corporate brand will meet the criteria to be designated a corporate heritage brand (see explanation of corporate heritage brand above).</p>
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