Editor's Note

Immutable objects inform the ethos of nearly everything that appears in *Transactions*. Universities are complicated institutions whose constituencies' competing interests lead to the inertia that turns standard procedures into traditions. These aren't all bad. A visual display of tradition in practice is the university ceremony. Nothing so closely identifies a university ceremony as the object of our scholarship: academic dress.

As early as a thousand years ago, some Islamic scholars received robes of honour to mark their civic status. The dress we know and wear today comes from a different tradition, one only slightly less ancient. The stylish oddity of the shapes and cuts have changed little over time, making them all the more identifiable to twenty-first-century eyes. Worn among today's casual standards, the gowns and hoods and caps and bonnets make the long line of scholars in solemn dress stand out for continuity.

Yet as every reader of our journal knows, change happens all the time. Education adjusts to meet the current needs of students and those who will employ them. Academic dress changes too. Gown hems are shorter, materials are more durable, and colours are brighter, though the basics stay the same. In this volume, you'll find an article describing innovations to the neckbands of hoods in New Zealand, and from the historical view, one showing how heraldic depictions of academic dress preserve the past.

Similarly, *Transactions* seeks to innovate too. In my fifteenth and final year as editor, I look back and see changes to typography and design that may be imperceptible from year to year. By contrast, this year's cover marks a departure from the past, and also new is an index (pp. 138–40). A few more changes on the following pages will be noticed by sharp-eyed readers.

Other changes address our content. With the help of the editorial board, *Transactions* has chosen articles with a reliably scholarly basis. A perennial topic is the review of a university's academic dress history, but we have sought other scholarly perspectives too, encouraging social research that asks why academic dress matters and how students, staff, and the public perceive it.

Until this year, we had published 165 scholarly articles, reminiscences, write-ups of study days, and tributes to departed Fellows. This twenty-fifth anniversary volume adds six more research articles and two commentaries on the challenges of using AI in visual research. Does our accumulated knowledge on an admittedly esoteric topic receive much attention? It does. Our wide-ranging body of research reaches a readership around the world. In 2025, readers downloaded our articles 42,543 times—more than 3,500 downloads each month last year.

Now I have the honour of handing over *Transactions* to Dr Valentina Grub, whose experience in publishing includes two articles in this journal and editing *Burgon Notes* for the last two years. She will no doubt bring a fresh perspective to *Transactions*, so when you open Volume 26 in a year's time, look for the path that will embrace the future while nourishing tradition.

—Stephen Wolgast