

BSGE Annual Scientific Meeting 2025

Dorota Hardy, Co-Chair of BSGE ASM 2025 reports on her experience of running the meeting and shares a few of her conference highlights

It's no exaggeration to say that organising the BSGE ASM 2025 was an incredibly intense, at times overwhelming, but ultimately deeply rewarding experience. As my first time leading the organisation of such a major meeting, I found it both a personal and professional challenge- and one I'm genuinely proud of having undertaken.

In the months leading up to the event, we faced multiple unexpected hurdles, ranging from venue closures to programme changes and even the Royal Armouries itself being placed on the market. The original venue for our consultant and BSGE dinners went bust only a few weeks before the event, and we had to pivot and rebook everything at short notice. Add to that last-minute changes to speakers and logistical issues with live surgery sponsorships, and it felt at times like a series of mini-disasters.

Despite all this, what carried us through was the phenomenal team around me. My fantastic co-Chair James Tibbott, the excellent local organising committee, our event coordinators Naomi and Andrea and, of course, the amazing Atia and Charis who were all instrumental in helping us pull everything together. We also had invaluable support from Professor Balen and the BSGE Council, especially Arvind, who was always on hand to assist with rapid decision-making. Without them, this event simply wouldn't have been possible.



Once the meeting began, something magical happened – everything slotted into place. The atmosphere was vibrant, and the engagement from delegates was unlike anything we'd anticipated.

The final numbers speak for themselves:

888
Attendees – our highest ever

102
Sessions delivered

73
Speakers

38
Sponsors

11
Pre-congress Workshops the most ever hosted

4
Social events

Leeds life

The venue itself, the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, gave the conference a unique character. It wasn't a traditional conference centre, and I think people really responded to that.

We were incredibly lucky with the weather, it was warm, sunny, and bright throughout. Believe me, that's not normal for Leeds! The unexpected result was a festival-like atmosphere. Delegates sat along the canal with ice creams, took boat trips into the city, and mingled outdoors between sessions. Our 800 umbrellas, ordered to protect delegates from the rain, were mostly used as parasols. There are photos everywhere of a sea of yellow umbrellas floating through the city centre and strolling by the water.



Bringing New Skills to Your Armoury

Scientifically, I genuinely believe this was one of the strongest ASMs we've ever delivered.. Developed under the academic leadership of Professor Adam Balen and with valued input from Arvind and the BSGE Council, the programme was built around three transformative streams:

- Enhancing UK's Leadership in Endoscopic Surgery
- Fostering Multidisciplinary Collaborative Work
- Applying State-of-the-Art Technology

We poured weeks, months of effort into curating a diverse, high-calibre programme, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. For me, everything was a highlight, but I'll pick out some sessions to give anyone who missed the meeting a flavour of Leeds 2025:

Pre-congress Courses

With 11 courses and hands-on workshops the pre-congress programme at Leeds was the biggest and most diverse to date. We held sold-out sessions on da Vinci Robotic Surgery, VNotes, Sontata Treatment, Advanced Urogynaecology Workshop, a Pelvic Pain Workshop led by Carolina Afros, the always popular Endometriosis CNS Education Day, and a fantastic Gynaecological Ultrasound for minimal access surgery masterclass. The Hysteroscopy workshop (see the report in this issue of the Scope) and RIGS ST5-7 Laparoscopic Workshop were also very successful.

The first Cadaveric Endometriosis Masterclass was run by Professor Mabrook, this was the first of its kind. Held in Leeds using locally donated cadavers, it received extraordinary feedback and will now form the basis of a long-term collaboration on future training events. We introduced a GRASP (Gynaecological Response to Acute Surgical Presentations) workshop, inspired the hands on training courses they run in obstetrics. The session was delivered in real clinical settings, with real-world scenarios that even moved participants to tears due to their emotional intensity. See Jay Ghosh's report and pictures in this Scope.



Championing Women and Regional Voices

We didn't set out to host such a large meeting. I'm not like Trump- bigger is better! It evolved into that, organically. But our vision was clear: I wanted the ASM 2025 to feel different- to be inclusive, empowering and diverse

It was important to me that this meeting reflected diversity, not just in science, but in speakers. The aim was not just to inform, but to represent, and I believe we achieved that. We had a significantly higher proportion of female presenters, including in sessions on technology and robotics, such as Nadine di Donato and Manchester-based colorectal surgeon Dina Harinji, who were both outstanding. There was an inspirational lecture from trailblazing surgeon Dame Averil Mansfield. In 'A woman in a man's world' Dame Mansfield shared her extraordinary career in vascular surgery and as founder of RCS Women in Surgical Training. She epitomised her message for success: ' Hard work, humility and humour.' Historically male-dominated fields need visibility and balance, and I believe this year's meeting made real progress.

As a northern meeting, it also showcased local talent, with the oncology and extra-pelvic endometriosis sessions delivered entirely by northern clinicians. The fantastic Alec Turnbull Lecture was presented by our own Professor Adam Balen. Adam gave a thought-provoking keynote lecture on the evolution of assisted conception since the first IVF birth and discussed the ethical dilemmas the new technology brings, including the potential for artificial wombs, solo genetic parenting and gene editing.' How far should we go?' Overall, the programme had a strong regional voice and flavour, and many of the talks stood out as highlights of the programme.



Global Health

Ahead of the meeting, I looked forward to our star session on global health. It was a unique, first-of-its-kind session at the BSGE ASM. My colleague John Dalton has been travelling to East Africa since 2005 and contributed to an inaugural laparoscopy camp at Mengo Hospital, Kampala, Uganda in March 2024. He has invited colleagues from Africa as well as those closer to home to share their stories.

The Global Health Session lived up to my expectations. International experts joined local specialists to share their experiences of caring for women in rural facilities and low-resource settings. Joseph Njagi gave an eye-opening talk on endometriosis care in Kenya and the myth that endometriosis is rare in African women. Joseph pointed out the inadequate reporting of endometriosis, lack of awareness of the condition, poor access to diagnostic and therapeutic facilities and the long delays. Is endometriosis rare in Africa? He said a resounding 'NO- African women present only with the most severe symptoms and tend not to seek medical attention for dysmenorrhea.'

There was also a fascinating lecture on gasless laparoscopy and rural surgery from Noel Aruparayil and Peter Culmer. They talked about developing frugal equipment and introducing sustainable, remote surgical training and proctorship to address the needs of patients in these settings.

A holistic approach to Endometriosis

We launched a Pioneering Therapies Research Meeting taking a holistic approach to endometriosis. This included respiratory physicians, plastic surgeons, urologists, gastroenterologists, thoracic specialists, radiologists and dietitians – reflecting our belief that endometriosis is not just a pelvic disease, but one that affects the entire body. It was truly multidisciplinary, and that was a point of pride.



Live surgery

The live surgery, broadcast from St James's, was another well-attended element, even though it started early in the morning after the Gala Dinner! While we originally hoped to feature female robotic surgeons, last-minute sponsor changes forced us to adapt the content. It's something to refine next year, but overall, engagement was strong and the surgery was fascinating with lots of tips and tricks.

We watched teamwork in action from St James Hospital with Lizzie Bean live-scanning and Ertan Saridogan performing abdominal cervical cerclage laparoscopically to prevent mid-term pregnancy loss. We also watched Andrew Kent, James Tibbott and the gynaecology team working with Lizzie Bean scanning and urology colleagues performing a live laparoscopic hysterectomy, excision of #endometriosis and insertion of ureteric stents to treat recurrent endometriosis.

I'd like to thank the surgeons and the St James's theatre team for what was described in the auditorium as 'slick and faultless procedures.' Thanks also to the women who very generously allowed their procedures to be filmed and shown to BSGE members so that they could learn from experts.

Science and socialising

The ASM is about science and sharing knowledge and experiences- but it's also about getting together with friends and colleagues and relaxing.

Socially, this year's meeting was electric. The Gala Ball was nothing short of spectacular – a full 1920s theme with sequins, feathers and vintage glamour. The stunning art deco surroundings of the Queens Hotel made the perfect backdrop for music, dancing and so much fun!

The RIGS Dinner and BSGE Dinner were equally successful, the latter held by the river, made even more memorable by the flawless weather. Feedback from attendees, speakers and industry alike was overwhelmingly positive.



Industry and the ASM

Industry engagement this year exceeded all expectations. All exhibition spaces sold out weeks in advance, and industry partners were unanimously happy. The layout, which encouraged attendees to pass through exhibitor areas for refreshments, created natural traffic and networking.

One new innovation, reflecting our Royal Armouries location, was our Endoscopic Knight Trials. Delegates could collect a stamp card from The ASM reception, then visit the participating stands and collect at least 10 stamps to complete their quest and enter a draw to win a free ticket to BSGE ASM 2026 in London. The feedback I received was that this was the best industry experience they'd had at any BSGE event.

Looking forward to London

Most of all, what I'll take away from this experience is what I learned – not only about events management, logistics, and the science of gynaecology – but about myself, teamwork, and perseverance. I genuinely miss the meeting now it's over. It was an unforgettable experience. I feel I've grown, professionally and personally, and I'm grateful to everyone who made BSGE ASM 2025 such a success.

Here's to BSGE 2026. I wish all the best to Fevzi and the team and we look forward to seeing you in London!

