

# Royal School of Needlework Annual Review 2017-18



Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall  
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester

**RSN**  
ROYAL SCHOOL  
OF NEEDLEWORK  
Founded 1872





## Mission

The purpose of the Royal School of Needlework (RSN) is to keep hand embroidery alive and its mission is to teach, practise and promote the art and techniques of hand embroidery.

## Vision

The vision of the RSN is to be known and recognised as the international centre of excellence for hand embroidery, offering a common approach everywhere we teach, to be open to all levels, from beginners to professional and for students of all ages. We also want to be known as the custodian of the history of hand embroidery techniques and active advocates of new developments in hand embroidery.

## Public Benefit

As a charity the RSN takes very seriously its role to offer public benefit. This year this was achieved through public exhibitions at eight shows across the year, through taster classes, family classes in conjunction with our exhibitions at Hampton Court Palace and loaning out pieces from the RSN Collection for an exhibition with Mr X Stitch at Standen House, a National Trust property. Additional examples will be given later in the report.

Our major public initiative this year was the launch of a programme for schools, supported by the Worshipful

Company of Girdlers entitled *Embroider a Selfie*. So far, we have launched a pilot programme and will be investigating how it has gone, with a view to extending it during the next academic year. The RSN believes pupils need an opportunity to step away from their smartphones and that stitch can be a therapeutic activity allowing students to become calm as well as achieving something personal. *Embroider a Selfie* offers the school pupils an introduction to stitch and it is being used by the schools in different ways – as part of art classes, as an after schools club, for those with less academic focus and also high achievers, so it will be interesting to see the results.



## Fundraising declaration

The RSN is not in receipt of any statutory funding and so raises funds to support its core courses, to enable it to offer bursaries to Future Tutors and Degree students and to undertake new programmes, such as the planned digitisation of the RSN Collection and Archive. Funds are predominantly raised from charitable trusts and livery companies. Occasionally we also raise funds from individuals through direct marketing and legacies.

The RSN complies with the fundraising code and recognises GDPR requests of those who do not wish to receive fundraising requests. This year the only fund-

raising ask to individuals has been through Friends' communication. The RSN has not received any fundraising complaints in 2017/18.

Donors this year have predominantly been foundations and trusts, for core programmes and bursaries these include the Worshipful Companies of Broderers, Dyers, Girdlers, Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers, Haberdashers, Needle-makers and a number of charitable trusts and those who wish to remain anonymous. We have also raised funds for new initiatives such as the RSN Stitch Bank and especially the digitisation of the RSN Collection and Archive where funds have been received from the Garfield Weston Foundation and an anonymous donor.

## Chairman's introduction

This year was a quite exceptional period for the RSN beginning with a double royal visit, and four new initiatives launched. There was also the highest number of Degree students achieving firsts, a set of Millennium Vestments created for Buckfast Abbey and a graduate of the Degree programme won the most prestigious, international, hand embroidery competition. The Degree was also subject to the four-yearly full review by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and there was all the administrative work associated with GDPR.

In November, we were delighted to welcome our new Patron, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, and our President, HRH The Duchess of Gloucester on a special double visit. It was The Duchess of Cornwall's first visit to the RSN and, as a novice to stitch, she invited The Duchess of Gloucester, who has been to the RSN many times, to accompany her. Our visitors met Degree, Future Tutor, Certificate and Diploma students, visited the Studio and also met with some of the RSN Trustees, supporters and staff team. In all, it was a splendid visit and we were thrilled when The Duchess of Cornwall tried her hand at crewelwork with tutor Jacqui McDonald. Before leaving, both Royal visitors were presented with gifts made by members of the RSN Studio team.

That same month, 2017 degree graduate Elena Thornton won the student category of the prestigious Hand and Lock (H&L) prize for hand embroidery, the first time an RSN student has won this internationally recognised award. Not only that, she also won the Gold and Silver Wyre Drawer's prize and the H&L Chairman's prize.

The new initiatives launched by the RSN during the year show the range of our work today, beginning with Distance Learning, which has been asked for repeatedly by those who live some distance from our main teaching centres. This was made possible thanks to a partnership with Sew & So who brought their filming expertise and experience of online course delivery to the process. Initial response to the courses has been very positive and this will be a programme we look to expand over time.

Second was the first US Summer School which brought RSN technique and approach to the largest ever number of students. Ten tutors, the Chief Executive and more than 200 students came together over the two weeks in Lexington, Kentucky. This event was a tremendous success and will be repeated in 2020.

Third was the much-awaited upgrade to the RSN website. This finally went live in August and, while behind the scenes it has led to many challenges for the staff team, the front end looks contemporary and has been appreciated by our customers and visitors.

The RSN is very aware that stitch has been lost from the school curriculum, it is also aware that school pupils can get very attached to social media, but that stitch can be a therapeutic antidote to endless texting. With the help of the Worshipful Company of

Girdlers and some of our suppliers, the RSN is piloting a scheme for schools called *Embroider A Selfie*. This was launched late in the academic year so we are eagerly awaiting responses in 2018-19 to see how pupils will depict themselves in stitch.

These four initiatives are all about enabling the RSN to reach more people, respond to need and reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements on and offline. The Certificate programme also responded to need by extending its summer intensive programme leading to the largest number of participants with over 80 participants of whom 30 people took the first module, Jacobean Crewelwork and 10 stayed for 8 weeks to complete the whole Certificate, an achievement which requires much stamina.

Alongside these new initiatives the staff teams also have to meet the day-to-day requirements of the regulatory authorities, especially in the area of higher education and the Chief Executive and Academic team had to prepare for the second quadrennial review by the QAA. This is a meticulous process that judges the RSN on the same basis as all other higher education institutions. I am pleased to record that the review team concluded that the quality of student learning opportunities were commended. Meanwhile the team also had to submit an application to the forthcoming Office for Students which will add an extra layer of review from next year.

With this busy year other initiatives have taken a back seat but fundraising for our longer-term projects including the RSN Stitch Bank and the digitisation of the RSN Collection and Archive has continued. We are grateful to those who have supported these projects but they can only go ahead once the current IT project is concluded and we have made our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The RSN continues to achieve all this with a very small team. I want to pay tribute to all staff who have this year committed so much to the organisation, especially regarding the IT systems. We also recognise that the teaching cannot operate without our dedicated and talented tutors. The Council and I wish to thank everyone for the contribution they have made to the future development of the RSN.

**Andrew Palmer**  
**Chairman**



## Achievements and Highlights

- ◆ Third year students gave the RSN Degree course a 100% satisfaction rating on the National Student Survey.
- ◆ Seven of the 14 graduating Degree students gained Firsts this year.
- ◆ The RSN Degree stand at New Designers was praised for its individuality, distinct from both the stands around them and within the work of each student.
- ◆ The RSN launched its first four Distance Learning programmes in association with Sew & So.
- ◆ We launched a new programme for Schools, *Embroider a Selfie*, to introduce pupils to stitch as an antidote to social media pressures.
- ◆ Three degree students have achieved places on Masters courses at the RCA, Westminster University and Glasgow University's conservation course.
- ◆ We ran our first US Summer School attracting more than 200 students from all over America. It was so successful that we will repeat it in 2020.
- ◆ Degree students and Future Tutors were invited to participate in a competition for The Arts Society's 50th anniversary by the Greater London Region. Three degree students were shortlisted and the prize was won by Eleanor Latham (front below)
- ◆ We held two exhibitions during the year, *Embellishment in Fashion* ran for the first half of the year followed by *Animals in Embroidery*. Nearly 800 people came to the *Fashion* exhibition and nearly 900 came to *Animals*.
- ◆ We launched the new RSN website with a much fresher look.
- ◆ The RSN offered taster classes and 'have a go' sessions at a number of shows this year including the spring Knitting and Stitching show, working with Mr X Stitch
- ◆ The RSN loaned some dozen pieces of canvas work to Mr X Stitch as part of his exhibition of cross stitch at National Trust property Standen House.
- ◆ The Studio completed the Millennium vestments for Buckfast Abbey on time for Christmas Midnight mass.
- ◆ New donations to the RSN Collection included a 17th century embroidered mirror frame, a range of samplers, the oldest being from 1746 and a number of tablecloths that may well be included in the next exhibition about the Embroidered Home.
- ◆ RSN degree students and graduates are both participating in the Hand and Lock awards. Graduate of the degree Charis Kibble came second in the open category and Elena Thornton won the student textile art prize.
- ◆ Future Tutor Zinaida Kazban won an international award to have her designs featured in an Australian magazine.
- ◆ The RSN passed the QAA review and was commended for the quality of student learning opportunities.
- ◆ The Chief Executive, Degree Course Leader and Head of Studio have all been invited to be judges on a number of textile competitions over the last year.
- ◆ The RSN played host to the Dyes in History and Archaeology 36 international conference in October.
- ◆ Degree and Future Tutor students worked for a number of couture and fashion houses including Alexander McQueen, Ralph and Russo, Zandra Rhodes, and Jasper Conran.







**First year** Rebecca Offredi won the Worshipful Company of Glovers' competition

Three first years had work shortlisted for the Slovak international textile competition

Frances Stone and Lucy Hewitt were shortlisted for the Bradford Textile Competition

## Degree

The RSN Degree in hand embroidery is the only degree focusing solely on hand embroidery in the UK and probably within Europe. The programme teaches core stitch techniques but then challenges students to take the stitch in new, creative directions based on their work in art and design, research and experimentation.

As a higher education institution in receipt of no government funding, the RSN is considered an independent institution, notwithstanding that our degrees are validated by the University for the Creative Arts and RSN students are also UCA students. As such, we are subject to a full review by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education every four years. The last review was 2014 so we had our second full review during the academic year. The three-day process reviewed the course team's approach to quality, how the course reflects changing needs of students and the industry, the pedagogical approach and the strategic approach to course enhancement. This is an enormous amount of additional work for the team, requiring a detailed narrative and more than 300 appended documents of evidence. Overall, the RSN passed the inspection and the course team were commended for the opportunities for student learning but were recommended to make more written records of internal meetings when quality review and strategic developments were discussed.

During the year the RSN also had to register with the Office for Students. Paperwork has been submitted but our unusual relationship with UCA makes this complex.

Meanwhile, the 14 students in the third year worked very hard, each developing their own pathway as illustrated by the final exhibition which showed the diversity and range of the students' work (see page 7). It was an exceptional year and half of the 14 gained first class degrees. Two of them have now progressed on to MAs, one at the Royal College of Art, with a third starting an MA in September 2019.

New Designers is the principal end of year show for all those studying in the creative arts. The RSN has exhibited here before but this time we moved to the centre of the space and this led to much greater awareness of and interest in the RSN by people who may previously have been unaware of us. We also received many commendations including from *Crafts* magazine where the writer wanted to include works from all our students to demonstrate the RSN's students' variety and versatility, but unfortunately only one student per highlighted university could be included.

RSN Degree students are eligible for student loans but their costs of living are high, plus they have additional needs for materials so the RSN is very grateful to all those who support the students through bursaries including the Worshipful Companies of Broderers, Girdlers, Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers, Needlemakers, Coats Foundation Trust, Knights of the Round Table, Golsoncott Trust and others.



## Partnerships and collaborations

The Degree team work hard to bring to the course a wide range of initiatives each year, to give students as many types of stitching experience as possible,. This breadth of experience will help inform students' future career plans, through the contacts they make and in terms of becoming aware of the possibilities for professional stitch.

Work this year included a second project for Patrick Grant and his company E Tautz, above.

Left some of the RSN second and third years worked at Alexander McQueen on the embellishment of Serena Williams's wedding cape.

A group of students were invited to Canada House to take a workshop with native Canadian designers.

The Arts Society Greater London asked RSN students to create a commemorative piece for the 50th anniversary of the society. The three shortlisted students attended a special event in London where the winner was announced.

Bottom left, couture house Ralph and Russo came to the RSN to assess students as potential interns. Several RSN graduates of both the Degree and Future Tutor programme are now working for the company.

Below first years took part in Alice Kettle's Stitch a Tree project. and five students had work selected for the *Animals in Embroidery* exhibition, from their zoomorphic projects.

The RSN was thrilled for the hard working academic team that the third years gave the course a 100% satisfaction rating on the National Student Survey.







Work by third year degree students from left to right row by row Abigail Frusher, Beth Cole, Elliott Reynolds, Nicola Craggs

Millie Byrne, Lizzie Lowe, Jasmine Dawson,

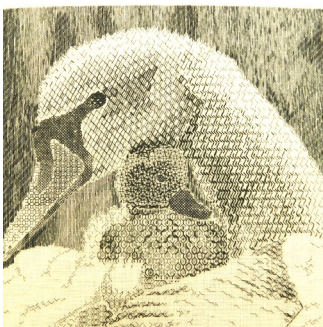
Rie Takahashi, Kirsty Gaffney, Ariane Hall , Nina Brabbins,

Abigail Ellis.

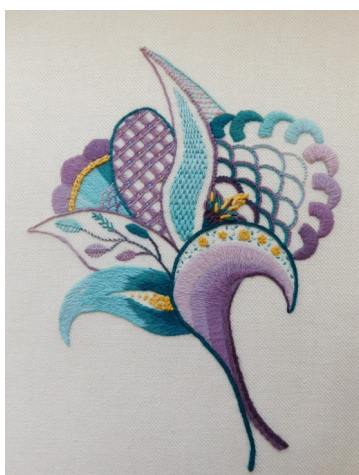
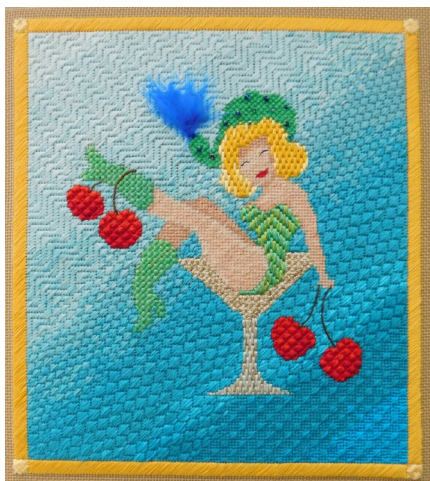




All these pieces by Certificate and Diploma students were featured in the Animals in Embroidery exhibition, either in the introductory presentation or the actual exhibition. We thank all those who loaned us work for this very successful show. Above April Birtwistle, top Diploma student in 2018. Below from left each row: Emma Frith, Gillian Shadwell, Kayo Tanaka, Heike Bubeck, Tamsyn Thorpe and Helen Williams.







## Certificate and Diploma

The Certificate and Diploma in technical hand embroidery are the RSN's part time courses for people who wish to gain practical skills in hand embroidery to a high technical level.

The year began with a new Education Manager and Finance Assistant and a review of the processes and procedures of the course. Unlike most education programmes a hallmark of the C&D is that students can attend flexibly, but in turn this can lead to challenges in terms of staffing and continuity, so work has been done looking at how we can overcome this issue. Initially the year saw attendances decline at Hampton Court and some of the satellites due to students choosing to space out their attendance from an average of once in two weeks to once in three or four weeks. There was also a decline at one satellite, where a number of students reached the end of their course around the same time without an automatic replacement.

As a result, in order to develop an increasing pool of students for the course and continue to allow the flexibility, Open Days were introduced at both Hampton Court and at satellite centres to welcome and inform potential students and encourage new participants. These have already shown a positive impact.

The year ended strongly with the largest number of people attending the Certificate summer intensives at Hampton Court Palace, with a total of 88 places taken over the eight weeks and with 10 students attending all four units. Many of these were international students, some of whom had waited such a long time to be able to attend the RSN that they were determined to make the most of it by staying for eight weeks to complete the Certificate. The numbers meant that the students had to be accommodated across three classrooms at Hampton Court, each with their own tutors and Future Tutor support teams.



Work left by Belinda Mitchell, Catherine Patterson, Susie Finlayson, Claire Fitzgerald and above Camilla Tsang all Certificate students.

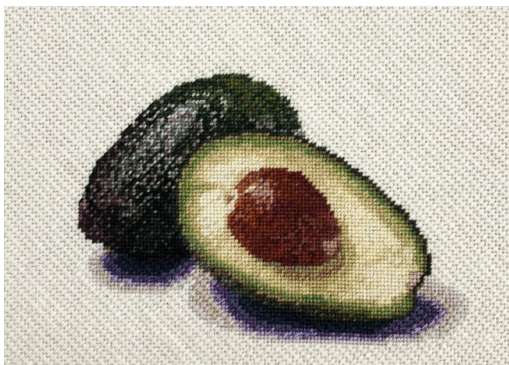




Work by the four Future Tutors who graduated in summer 2018 from top left tapestry silk shading by Zinaida Kazban and Sarah Smith, bottom stumpwork by Chrissie Juno Mann and tapestry silk shading by Alena Chenevix Trench (after Alphonse Mucha)







## Future Tutors

To teach for the RSN, one must be taught by the RSN in order to appreciate and pass on the hallmarks of how we teach and the RSN's technical approach to stitch. Maintaining and developing the number of teachers we have is absolutely vital to our plans for development. We can only meet the need to teach more often in more locations if we have more tutors.

With the former administrator choosing not to return after maternity leave at the beginning of the year, we confirmed in place the interim post holder who then built on the plans and developments she had begun. Like all RSN courses, the Future Tutors programme is reviewed annually to check the extent to which it is meeting RSN and student need. As a result, it was decided to move the students' time in the Studio to be at the heart of their third year. In this way the students have studied each of the techniques before they reach the Studio and can then be more useful and can benefit from having more stitch confidence.

Also introduced this year were a series of introductory sessions on each technique for the Future Tutors, putting the techniques in a wider historical context and backing this up with the students having the opportunity to study pieces from the RSN Collection. The ability to get close to the Collection was greatly appreciated and will be continued.

The course had many more applicants than places this year and to ensure that applicants know what they are signing up for we have also introduced Open Days for potential candidates. Most of these candidates take the course despite knowing that they will have to give up a steady income for the three years. As no government funding is available to these students the RSN continues to raise funds to benefit all by keeping the course costs down. In addition, donors also help provide bursaries for individual students. The RSN is very grateful to the Worshipful Companies of Broderers, Girdlers, Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers and Haberdashers, Barbara Whatmore Trust, Coats Foundation Trust, Headley Foundation and other donors, which have supported the course and students during the year.

*Work on this page from top: Anita Harrison, Jessica Ingram, Nicola Fairhurst, along the bottom: Sarah de Rousset Hall, Martha Blackburn and Jung Byun*







## RSN Studio

The role of the RSN Studio is to undertake commissions of both new embroidery and conservation and restoration of historic textiles for a range of clients.

The Studio year was in two distinct parts, especially when our client Buckfast Abbey decided they would like their new Millennium vestments for the Christmas midnight mass instead of Easter Sunday. This meant that the Studio team focused almost exclusively on the Buckfast project until the end of December so that they were delivered on time. Photographs taken showed that they looked magnificent. In addition, the Abbot requested that the RSN undertake some conservation of their existing sets of vestments, including the transfer of orphery bands on to a new fabric to create a chasuble to match other items in the set. The Abbot told us he was delighted with all the work and particularly pleased with the transfer on to more sympathetic material.

Overall, the Studio has majored on work for interiors and churches this year, interspersed with embellishments to christening gowns and cleaning and preparation of wedding veils. Going forward the Studio will be exhibiting at Decorex to promote the range of work that could be undertaken for domestic and commercial interiors.



*Top conservation cleaning a customer's embroidered table cloth..*

*This cushion cover was completed by the Studio and the cushion made up. Even the customer cannot tell where she stopped and the Studio began .*

*Abbot David and colleagues wearing the Millennium vestments on Easter Sunday 2018. at Buckfast Abbey.*



## IT transformation

At the beginning of the year we appointed a project manager to lead on our IT transformation with the aim of creating a new website and integrating this with our database, enabling our customers to sign up for their GDPR preferences and make bookings themselves. By the year end the new website had just gone live and it was welcomed as portraying a clean and contemporary look. However, the back-end elements of short course, C&D bookings and shop purchases was not a smooth transition. As a result, the RSN is appointing an IT Manager to help ease these issues for customers and staff.

In the meantime, we undertook an exercise to enable people to tell us their GDPR preferences and these were being added to the system.



*The aim of the RSN Stitch Bank is to 'unpack' every stitch to show how it is made and used. The initial pieces to illustrate the stitches will be taken from the RSN Collection.*

## Fundraising

That we have been able to invest in our IT transformation has been due to monies raised and earned over the last few years so that we had the resources before we began the work. This is our general way of operating, that we raise funds first for all new initiatives. Recently we have been raising funds for the digitisation of the RSN Textile Collection and Archive. This is a big project so it is taking some time to achieve but during the coming year (2018-19) we will be bidding for support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and then hope to make a start.

We are also looking to increase the bursary funds for our Degree and Future Tutor Students. We are seeing more evidence of need amongst students and as our courses require a lot of expenditure on materials we want to help as much as we can.

It is also the case that a number of the charitable trusts which have supported the RSN are now reviewing how they allocate their funds and this may mean that we may become ineligible or they will only fund one aspect of our work. To try to overcome this we are taking on a part-time fundraiser to help us identify potential 'new' trusts.



Meanwhile, work has begun on the RSN Stitch Bank which will collate together all known stitches, show how they are worked, give examples of items in which they feature and will, eventually, contain stitches and examples from all over the world.

A small team has been working on the basics of this and we will now start populating it with images and videos showing the stitches being worked so it can be a resource for practitioners and curators/historians alike.

We will aim to launch this softly during 2019 so that people can test it out and then announce it more loudly after that. We believe this will be a really useful resource and appropriate to come from the RSN.





## RSN Collection and Archive

The RSN Collection of textiles and Archive of documents on the history of the RSN are both valuable resources for students, tutors and researchers. We endeavour to make these available to the public through the exhibitions and also welcome individual researchers and students if they can identify what it is they want to examine.

The Textile Collection of the RSN is an extremely valuable resource but it has grown only through donation, not acquisition. The RSN is offered pieces all the time, however, given limited space we have to be selective, beginning with pieces with an RSN connection but there is always a place for high quality, historic and unusual pieces of embroidery, pieces from which students can learn and visitors enjoy. Significant donations to the RSN Collection this year included a 17<sup>th</sup> century Mirror surround dated 1653. Although showing signs of wear on the base satin, the stitching is still in good order and we are very pleased to add this to our Collection. It has been placed in its own conservation box and has been much admired by those who have seen it.

Samplers are always welcome as they are one of the few types of embroidery that are often named and dated, this year we were given three pieces by one lady dated 1746, 1783 and 1899. The earliest, pictured left, is a standard format but is one of just two we have from as early as the 1740s. The 1899 sampler was made by the donor's grandmother.

Meanwhile in preparation for the future digitisation, some preliminary work has been done to review the storage facilities for the materials, especially the Archive where as part of the project the books and ledgers will need to be stored in different boxes that make them easier to handle. Items which are in need of conservation have also been reviewed and will undergo this process as part of the project.

## Friends

The Friends of the RSN are people who want to support the RSN. They make an annual payment or, by choice, can become a Life Friend or a Special Supporter and pay more for their Friends' membership as a donation to the organisation. The Friends have a vital role as ambassadors and advocates for the RSN and many have also been donors.

This year we changed the age at which people could become Life Friends at the reduced price to 65, this resulted in a decline in new Life Friends but we believe

this will pick up again soon. Annual Friends continued at similar numbers to last year and we were pleased to be able to offer international Friends a direct benefit when booking for the US Summer School. In general though, Friends and Special Supporters, see their contributions as donations to the RSN to support our work.

This year Friends also contributed to some of the end-of-year awards including the most promising first year degree student, Jasmine Fone (see the zoomorphic peacock-fish on page 17) and the top Diploma student, April Birtwistle (see metal thread cockerel on page 8).



## Short Courses

The RSN short course programme is about outreach and encouraging people to start, improve and certainly enjoy hand embroidery. This year we worked very hard to offer new designs on many courses, aimed at attracting both new and returning students. For example, some of our recently qualified tutors explored the RSN Textile Collection for ideas that would have a firm link with embroidery history but presented the designs in new contexts. We also endeavoured to display the images of all the different course motifs on the online booking facility, because we are aware of how important the visual element is in encouraging people to book.

As well as offering classes at all our satellite centres, we again visited Dublin for one week of courses. We also continued our links with the Bath Museum of Fashion and the V&A for one-off classes and we held our first class at the Fashion and Textile Museum in London.

With active marketing, especially using social media, numbers of students were up this year, beating previous totals and surpassing targets, with total fee income increasing by four per cent over the previous year.

## USA Summer School

For a number of years, those who visited the US on behalf of the RSN were constantly bombarded with questions about when we were coming again, could there be more events etc. While the twice a year visits to Williamsburg are a regular fixture, they focus mostly on the Certificate and Diploma with only one tutor offer-

ing short courses. So it was decided that we should run a special Summer School. The event would be a one-week workshop which would run twice back to back – the repeat being to make the cost of travel viable for the RSN team.

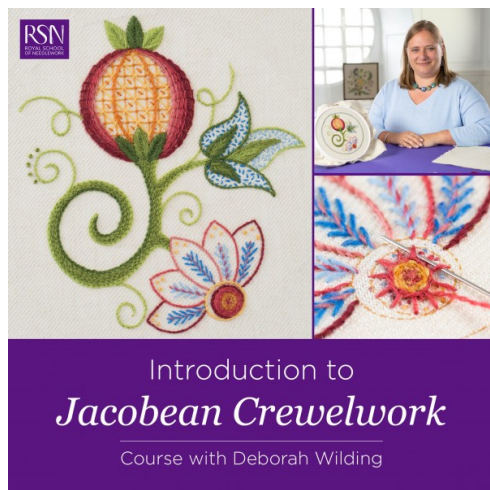
The idea was to take 10 tutors, the Chief Executive and a support team of two, one of whom was a tutor to give extra help in class when required. The teaching team comprised almost half and half long-standing tutors and recent graduates from the Future Tutor programme including one who graduated on Monday and was on the plane to the US by Friday. We worked with a Certificate Graduate in the US to find a suitable location in Lexington, Kentucky. Whilst initially complaining that we had announced the Summer School too late for some people, the idea gained momentum and it was an exciting sight, thanks to modern technology, to see the bookings coming in – the event was more than 50 per cent booked on the first day.

The logistics of the event were soon apparent because every thread, needle, hoop and twizzler (hoop nut tightener) had to be shipped in but it was worth the logistical headache to achieve two fantastic weeks of stitch. By the launch, more than 200 people were booked for the programme of classes, talks, receptions and a dinner. The event worked very well in the school we hired and we had many very happy customers. Students took part in one or two courses but were also able to purchase other kits and RSN memorabilia. As a result of the success, it has been decided to hold another Summer School in 2020.

*Below week one, left and week two summer school students*







## Distance Learning

Distance learning has been requested for many years but while the RSN has the teaching skills the team did not have the filming skills and so we were pleased to partner with Sew & So to bring together this new programme. During the year four techniques were launched; Jacobean crewelwork, Blackwork, Goldwork and Whitework with more to follow. Early response has been very good, with higher than anticipated take up and very positive feedback with people really enjoying working the pieces, finding the online tuition clear and engaging, exactly in the RSN tradition.

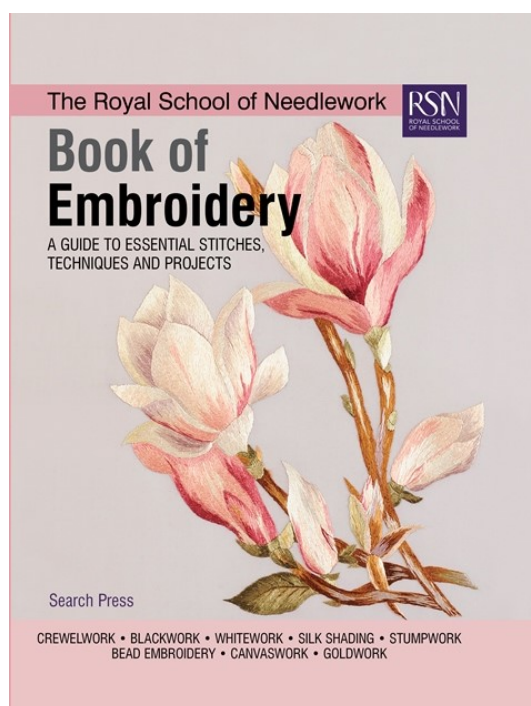
For 2018-19, we will be launching additional techniques and looking at how we can further the stitcher's engagement with the activity and the RSN, as we are aware that some people will never get to the RSN so they want to feel as if they belong through these courses.

## Retail

We offer both a physical shop at Hampton Court Palace and an online shop for a range of specialist and supporting products. We offer everything from slate frames and trestles to small kits and greetings cards featuring the work of our students.

This year we hoped to move to one co-ordinated system for online and physical shop sales which would provide stock control and sales summaries. This has taken longer than anticipated to introduce but is already proving useful in the physical shop and can help with ordering.

During the year we have introduced a range of new products including kits created by our tutors and we took a small shop to the US Summer School, which gave retail a boost of nearly £5,000. With Search Press we have also launched the combined *Book of Embroidery* which comprises all eight of the original Essential Stitch series.





## Marketing

The RSN had a multi-pronged approach to reaching new audiences this year, beginning with focusing on men who stitch. This was well received leading to a multipage article in *Surrey Life* magazine. We also engaged more fully on social media particularly through Facebook and especially Instagram, which is helpful for its visual stance. The timeliness of social media also makes this an appropriate vehicle for last minute reminders and place availability.

During the year, the marketing team also looked at its balance between work focused at new audiences and that focused on repeat customers for maximum impact and will be modifying the emphasis over the coming months.

Our e-news continues to be our most popular communication, which is sent out monthly, and following our requesting of communications preferences for GDPR many of our contacts now see email as their only or preferred method of communication.

## Exhibitions, Lectures and events off site

Invitations to give talks and lectures are part of our public benefit and the Chief Executive was invited to speak to many local groups of Embroiderers' Guild, WI and other societies during the year. In particular, she was invited to Mompesson House, a National Trust property in Salisbury which features a number of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century embroidery pieces. On examination, these are not straightforward works and she was able to study them and present new information on them to the house staff and volunteers for them to share with visitors.

The RSN also loaned the sampler of the Queen's Robe

of State to the prestigious US decorative arts museum Winterthur and the Chief Executive was invited over to give two lectures about the RSN's royal connections and the history of the RSN. These were very well received, resulting in her being invited back to speak at their biennial Embroidery conference in autumn 2018.

There were two exhibitions at the RSN's Hampton Court base this year. The first was *Embellishment in Fashion* co-curated by the Chief Executive and Dr Clare Rose, contextual studies lecturer on the Degree programme. This featured a range of 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century pieces mostly from the Collection that showed how embroidery had been used to embellish and adorn garments over the last three hundred years. This exhibition also included a technical first for the RSN, working with a company called Enova Ltd the company developed an app which would allow visitors to see more of a garment and learn more of its story when a phone or iPad was held over the piece. This worked well on the occasions that visitors wandered round the exhibition on their own, though was less appropriate when visitors are here on tours but it allowed the RSN to see some of the technology that is now available and how it might be used in the future.

The second exhibition was *Animals in Embroidery* featuring work by current and recent students on the Certificate, Diploma, Future Tutor and Degree programmes. The exhibition included almost 100 pieces of work with the theme of wild, domestic and mythical animals, birds and fish and it was launched with a private view for all those whose work was included. Both exhibitions were backed up with talks and tours, and tour and taster classes, these have been very successful as a way for people to have a small sampling of RSN embroidery.



Work by degree students  
Bethany King, Jasmine Fone,  
Emile Doneilait and Rebecca  
Offredi exhibited as part of the  
*Animals in Embroidery* exhibition.





*These boots by Degree third year Elliott Reynolds were featured in this photoshoot at Brixton Market for American style magazine Lucy's. The designer saw the boots at Graduate Fashion Week where we were invited to have a pop-up stand.*



## Financial report for the year

The consolidated statement of financial activities for the year shows a net deficit (before investment gains) of £96,958 (2016/17: surplus of £9,604). However, the net position before one-off exceptional expenditure on the IT transformation project of £186,887, was a surplus of £89,927 on annual turnover.

The overall income for the year 2017/18 amounted to £2,226,212 (2016/17: £1,917,802), a year on year increase of 16%. Income from donations and legacies increased by 13% to £271,043 (2016/17: £239,499). This remains an extremely important source of income, particularly for the Degree and Future Tutor programmes, neither of which receives any government funding, and for all new initiatives.

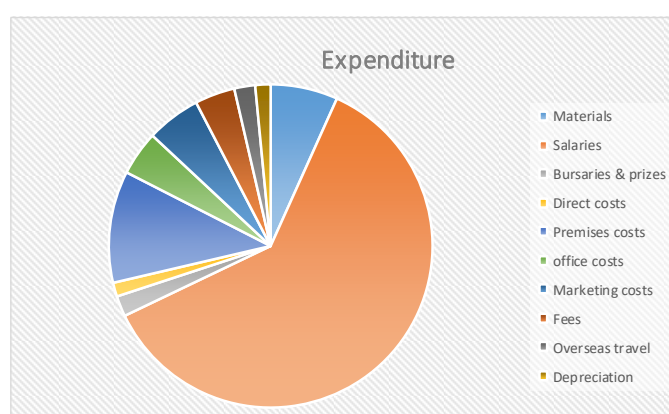
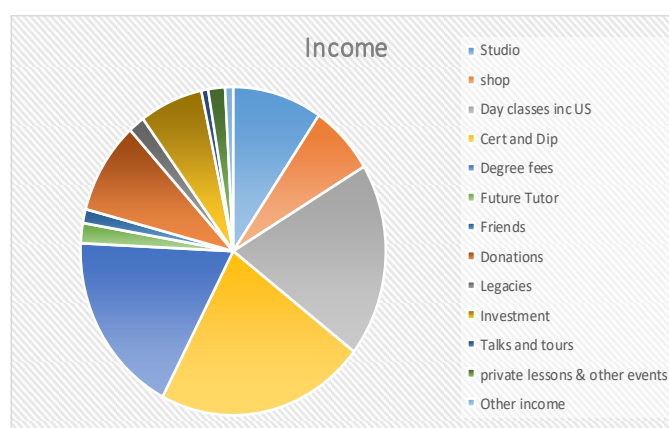
The trading subsidiary income of £358,150 (2016/17: £384,266) decreased by 7% mainly due to the level of activity in the RSN Studio which benefitted from a large commission in 2016/17.

Income from charitable School activities amounted to £1,414,116 (2016/17: £1,126,852) a 25% increase over the previous year due to the success of the 2018 US Summer School and increased student numbers, particularly on the Degree programme and also on short courses. Investment income of £182,903 (2016/17: £167,185) also increased marginally.

The restricted fund income of £201,884 (2016/17: £162,638) consisted of resources earmarked for the Degree and Future Tutor programmes, Embroider a Selfie and the RSN Stitch Bank and Collection and Archive Digitisation Campaigns. The increase compared with last year is mainly due to two generous donations for the Campaign totalling £60k. Restricted expenditure of £207,745 (2016/17: £198,257) was incurred against the Degree and Future Tutor programmes, for the RSN Stitch Bank project, the Embroider A Selfie project which commenced during the year and also the ongoing depreciation on the capital costs of the set-up of the new classrooms at Hampton Court Palace in 2015.

Total expenditure for the year was £2,323,170, 22% more than the previous year (2016/17: £1,908,198). This is mainly due to the IT transformation project that took place in 2017/18, which was funded from funds designated from the Futures Campaign. It also reflects the increased staffing and other resources required to yield the additional income from school activities in the current year.

Net realised and unrealised gains on investments for the year amounted to £163,984 (2016/17: £393,933) reflecting the continued rise in the investment market since the EU referendum. At the balance sheet date, net assets totalled £5,155,625 (2017: £5,088,599) of which £2,171,675 (2017: £2,178,186) are unrestricted.



*In addition to the principal areas of expenditure during the year (left), we also invested £186,887 in IT transformation. Of this, £89,927 was taken from excess of income over expenditure in 2018 and the remainder from allocated funds in the reserves.*



# Consolidated statement of financial activities

Year ended 31 August 2018

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Endowment funds £	2018 Total funds £	2017 Total funds £
<b>Income and expenditure</b>					
<b>Income from:</b>					
Donations and legacies	69,159	201,884	—	<b>271,043</b>	239,499
Investment income	182,903	—	—	<b>182,903</b>	167,185
Income from trading activities	358,150	—	—	<b>358,150</b>	384,266
Charitable activities					
. School activities	1,414,116	—	—	<b>1,414,116</b>	1,126,852
<b>Total income</b>	<b>2,024,328</b>	<b>201,884</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>2,226,212</b>	<b>1,917,802</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>					
Raising funds	460,661	17,583	—	<b>478,244</b>	454,158
Charitable activities					
. Costs of school activities	1,648,816	190,162	5,948	<b>1,844,926</b>	1,454,040
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>2,109,477</b>	<b>207,745</b>	<b>5,948</b>	<b>2,323,170</b>	<b>1,908,198</b>
<b>Net income (expenditure) before investment gains and losses</b>	<b>(85,149)</b>	<b>(5,861)</b>	<b>(5,948)</b>	<b>(96,958)</b>	<b>9,604</b>
Realised gains/(losses) on investments	2,950	249	2,955	<b>6,154</b>	(22,531)
Unrealised gains on investments	75,688	6,373	75,769	<b>157,830</b>	416,464
<b>Net income and net movement in funds</b>	<b>(6,511)</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>72,776</b>	<b>67,026</b>	<b>403,537</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>					
<b>Fund balances brought forward at 1 September 2017</b>	<b>2,178,186</b>	<b>465,067</b>	<b>2,440,556</b>	<b>5,083,809</b>	<b>4,680,272</b>
<b>Fund balances carried forward at 31 August 2018</b>	<b>2,171,675</b>	<b>465,828</b>	<b>2,513,332</b>	<b>5,150,835</b>	<b>5,083,809</b>

## Trustees' Statement

The trustees confirm that these summarised financial statements are a summary of information from the full annual report and financial statements which were approved by the Board of Trustees on 20 February 2019. A copy of the full annual report and financial statements, upon which the auditor has reported without qualification, will be submitted to the relevant statutory bodies, including the registrar of companies. These summarised financial statements may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the Royal School of Needlework. Further information and the full financial statements are available online or by contacting the Chief Executive at: the Royal School of Needlework, Apt 12a, Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU.



## Balance Sheets

as at 31 August 2018

	Group		Charity	
	2018	2017	2018	2017
	£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>				
Tangible assets	47,751	80,356	47,751	80,356
Investments	5,055,159	4,928,585	5,055,259	4,928,685
	<b>5,102,910</b>	<b>5,008,941</b>	<b>5,103,010</b>	<b>5,009,041</b>
<b>Current assets</b>				
Stocks	64,398	58,276	27,593	21,565
Debtors	137,353	98,309	205,110	100,169
Cash at bank and in hand	375,733	365,689	297,279	325,442
	<b>577,484</b>	<b>522,274</b>	<b>529,982</b>	<b>447,176</b>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due</b>				
within one year	(524,769)	(442,616)	(471,227)	(367,618)
<b>Net current assets</b>	<b>52,715</b>	<b>79,658</b>	<b>58,755</b>	<b>79,558</b>
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>5,155,625</b>	<b>5,088,599</b>	<b>5,161,765</b>	<b>5,088,599</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>				
<b>Capital and reserves</b>				
Called up share capital	290	290	290	290
Capital redemption reserve	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500
	<b>4,790</b>	<b>4,790</b>	<b>4,790</b>	<b>4,790</b>
<b>The funds of the charity:</b>				
Endowment funds	2,513,332	2,440,556	2,513,332	2,440,556
Restricted funds	465,828	465,067	465,828	465,067
Unrestricted funds:				
. General fund	1,521,675	1,378,186	1,527,815	1,378,186
. Designated fund	650,000	800,000	650,000	800,000
	<b>5,150,835</b>	<b>5,083,809</b>	<b>5,156,975</b>	<b>5,083,809</b>
	<b>5,155,625</b>	<b>5,088,599</b>	<b>5,161,765</b>	<b>5,088,599</b>

### Independent Auditor's Statement to the Trustees of the Royal School of Needlework

We have examined the summarised financial statements set out on pages 20 and 21.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and auditor

The trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised financial statements in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statements with the full financial statements and the trustees' report. We also read the other information included in the annual report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statements.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 2008/3 'The auditors' statement on the summary financial statement' issued by the Auditing Practices Board for use in the United Kingdom.

Opinion

In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements and the trustees' report of the Royal School of Needlework for the year ended 31 August 2018

Buzzacott LLP, Statutory Auditor, 130 Wood Street, London EC2V 6DL

20 February 2019



## Looking ahead

After the achievements and exertions of 2017-18 we must now focus on the fundamentals of infrastructure, IT and personnel, so 2018-19 will be a year of consolidation. In order to move forward and be ready for our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022, we need to ensure that we have robust infrastructure and adequate staff resource to handle the growing workload. We will be focusing on appointing IT, operations and fundraising personnel this year, which will ultimately benefit all the staff teams.

The transition to the new website was not as seamless as we would have liked behind the scenes, so we will be spending time to ensure the IT meets our needs and is all working effectively for both customers and the staff team before we look to add new elements.

This pause will also allow us to make a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) towards the digitisation project. Support from HLF would enable the project to be worked five days a week in an off-site location, rather than part time at the RSN, which will be more beneficial for the project as a whole. The HLF does however, demand a significant amount of paperwork as part of the bid and insists that the work has not started prior to the bid being considered.

We are also working on the strategic plan for 2019-

2023, something to which Trustees and all staff have been able to contribute. Following discussion with the Trustees the new plan will be finalised during the year. This next five years will be an exciting period for the RSN as it will include our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We will be looking to put a project manager in place from September 2019 to help us to plan and execute the additional activities for the celebration.

Meanwhile, we will be continuing to promote two of our fledgling programmes: Distance Learning and *Embroider A Selfie*. Distance Learning has many more people to reach and we will be looking at how and where we promote this and how we engage with stitchers world-wide. The *Embroider A Selfie* project for schools is an important introduction to stitch for young people as well as a fun activity and can inform them about the possibilities of stitch as a career, so we will also continue to promote and support this initiative.

Overall, our year of consolidation will give us a more internally-facing year for 2018-19 as we catch our breath, but we will use it to prepare for going forward stronger as we start on the strategic developments for the next five years.



Blackwork skyline by Chelsea Burton Degree first year





Blackwork portrait of her Mother by Future Tutor Jessica Ingram.





Dress by Livia Papiernick Berkauer. Front cover, : Alex Standing Photography images front cover and some page 7 by TAS, all others copyright the RSN  
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