

Royal School of Needlework Annual Review 2023-24



Patron: HM The Queen
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester

RSN
ROYAL SCHOOL
OF NEEDLEWORK

Founded 1872





About the RSN

The RSN is a registered charity with a mission to preserve the heritage and lead the development of hand embroidery, enriching lives by inspiring, teaching and innovating to provide the widest access to our knowledge and skills. This is delivered through the values of Tradition, Quality and Innovation.

The RSN was established in London in 1872 to revive and teach the art of hand embroidery. It now has global reach and an international reputation for the expertise and skills of its tutors and staff, and the excellence of work in its professional studio. No other single organisation covers the breadth of work now undertaken to teach, practice and promote the art of hand embroidery.

Based at Hampton Court Palace, in south-west London, the RSN offers an education programme for beginners through to those pursuing hand embroidery as a professional career. This includes the only BA Honours degree course in Europe dedicated to hand embroidery, the three-year RSN Professional Embroidery and Tutor Programme, a Certificate & Diploma for leisure stitchers wanting a higher level of technical tuition, one-day or weekly leisure courses online to people worldwide, and onsite primarily across the UK with selected classes in the US, Australia and Japan, an annual international summer school and pre-recorded online video courses.

The RSN professional studio specialises in bespoke commissions, and the restoration and conservation of historic textiles. The RSN further promotes hand embroidery through exhibitions, talks (live and recorded), introductory taster sessions, schools' projects, an extensive Archive & Collection comprising around 10,000 unique items and textiles and the RSN Stitch Bank, the largest free online database of stitches in the world. An online retail operation and store is based at Hampton Court Palace. Every purchase helps support the RSN. More details can be found at royal-needlework.org.uk.



Front cover – Image shows 18th century embroidered cuff from the RSN Collection, one of the first 100 objects added to the new RSN Collections website.



Degree Student Denisa Manoila



Strategy & ambitions

We focus our activity in three key areas

- Teaching and Learning – providing tuition and resources;
- The Practice of Embroidery; and
- Promoting and providing insight into the heritage and modern use of embroidery

Our ambitions are set out in our 2022-27 five-year strategy (detailed below) which aims to engage and inspire, putting students, customers and wider beneficiaries at the heart of all we do, so that we can deliver a bigger impact for a broader audience.

Delivering a forward-looking, relevant and customer-driven proposition

We use our experience and expertise to develop a range of courses and educational activities to further strengthen our leadership role in the world of hand embroidery.

1. To develop a collaborative programme that connects hand embroidery with a key societal issue highlighting its contemporary relevance to increase the accessibility of our activity
2. To ensure we have a customer driven, relevant offer to broaden engagement and increase participation
3. To leverage our legacy and share our expertise

Developing secure finances

Like most charities, we have to raise funds to support our operations, and we are ever mindful of the need to develop strong and sustainable sources of finance and allocate funds appropriately to get maximum return.

4. To review and develop our fundraising strategy
5. To develop our networking and external relationships to increase viability of our community delivery through groups and partnerships
6. To grow profitable operations and develop new revenue streams

Building strong foundations

We need the appropriate resources and systems in place to support our staff in the delivery of our ambitions.

7. To embed an engaging, empowering and collaborative culture
8. To build awareness of our activity to encourage broader participation and engagement
9. To review and improve operations and delivery

To get involved and support the RSN you can:

- **Make a donation** to any of the projects or departments mentioned in this review, through our website.
- Pledge a legacy to help support our long-term future.
- **Become a Friend, Life Friend or Special Supporter.**
- Register to receive our monthly **digital newsletter** to keep up to date with all our news.



Message from the Chair of Trustees

The 2023-24 academic year was a real step forward for the RSN as we introduced a number of initiatives and developed a more collaborative approach to delivery.

Activities which have been the recent focus of fundraising came to fruition including our long held ambition to digitise items from our Collection providing wider access via our website. We reviewed our tutor programme, launching the three-year Professional Embroidery Tutor course, which better prepares individuals for a career in professional embroidery and/or teaching, and introduced the RSN Fellowship to recognise those who have completed the most intensive and rigorous training of all RSN courses.

We have updated our strategy to guide our work over the next few years and this will help us refocus and strengthen our ability to deliver the incredible breadth of educational courses and resources for which the RSN is known. It will also enable us to widen access to our extensive experience and expertise in hand embroidery built up and passed on over the past 152 years.

Central to this is our desire to reach out and work with a broad range of partners helping us reach new audiences at a scale and pace we could not achieve on our own and directly targeting our skills, knowledge and encouragement for the specific benefit of their members and stakeholders. Reviewing our operating model is also essential for our own organisational sustainability. The RSN has a financial deficit which must be reversed and we are now investing in the structure and plans needed to effect this.

The strategic development of this approach took place during 2023-24, and at the point of writing we are gearing up to deliver the initial projects with a range of partners under the programme brand of Fragile Threads. This initiative also helps focus our efforts to champion sustainability. Within our own operations we are committed to adopting working practices that will assist continued environmental improvement and through Fragile Threads we aim to raise awareness, improve understanding and, through the medium of embroidery, challenge behaviour which is leading to the loss of essential species. You can read more about this in our 'Looking Forward' section on page 12.

Dr Susan Kay-Williams, our Chief Executive for the past 17 years, retired at the end of August 2024. Under her leadership the RSN introduced many new programmes and initiatives. She also helped navigate the path through the challenges of the pandemic when the RSN pivoted operations to an online model as Covid-19 locked us down. This is now a standard feature of our teaching and talks programmes. We thank her for her dedication and commitment to the RSN and wish her all the best for the future.

Our new Chief Executive, Rhian Harris, took up post in September 2024 and will lead our new strategic approach. She has worked with a range of historic and contemporary art, design and social history collections and has a passion for making heritage, culture, art, craft and design accessible to a wide and diverse range of people, putting learning and participation at its heart.

We are very excited about the skills and expertise Rhian brings, and trustees are looking forward to working with her to ensure the RSN continues to develop, grows stronger and becomes sustainable.

We welcomed Clara Poon to our Council of Trustees in September 2023 and Peter Mila joined at the start of the new academic year. Both strengthen our Council further adding important skills needed for the oversight and delivery of our strategy.

As a charitable body we are constantly checking activity in line with available funds. Our operation is reliant on the customer support of our commercial activities and the kind donations of individuals, charitable trusts and organisations who share our passion to preserve the heritage of hand embroidery and ensure its continued relevancy and contribution to modern society. We are very appreciative of all the support and to the hard work and passion of our staff, tutors and volunteers who help deliver our vision, and to our students, customers and other beneficiaries who make it all worthwhile.

Pip Wood
Chair of Trustees



Class design by Tutor Kate Barlow



Future Tutor Student Kristina Clarke

Review of 2023-2024

The following pages provide a summary of activity undertaken during the 2023-24 academic year which represents the breadth of our operations and contributes to our ambitions and organisational objectives.

More details on these and many other activities undertaken by the RSN can be found on our website royal-needlework.org.uk



Future Tutor Student Lucy May

RSN Professional Embroidery Tuition

Customers tell us they actively choose courses taught by RSN trained tutors because of the depth and breadth of their teaching and embroidery expertise.

We paused entry to our 'Future Tutors' programme in September 2023 to undertake a full review and ensure we were providing the best content to prepare graduates for a modern career in hand embroidery.

We launched a new syllabus in September 2024 with our three-year Professional Embroidery Tutor Programme (PET).

Under the guidance of our own expert tutors, participants are trained to the highest level in technical hand embroidery. They also receive classes

in Art & Design and Business Skills, as well as opportunities for teaching practice and teaching opportunities with the RSN following graduation. The programme now offers more flexibility to help participants juggling study with home and family responsibilities. The course was fully subscribed in September 2024 and will now open to new entrants every other year.

We are keen to provide a Scholarship place in an effort to increase the diversity of tutors and role models graduating from the course. With the PET programme now running every other year we hope to offer a more holistic level of scholarship support beyond basic course fees.

The RSN Fellowship

Many people have been trained by the RSN. However, only those successfully graduating from our Apprenticeship, Future Tutor or PET programmes have undertaken and passed the most intensive and rigorous training of all RSN courses and are uniquely qualified to teach and practise the highest standards in the broadest range of embroidery techniques.

As embroidery experts they pursue professional careers and help further the mission of the RSN passing on the knowledge, skills and benefits of hand embroidery to others.

In March 2024, we launched the RSN Fellowship to recognise their significant training and commitment. Fellows can now use the RSN Fellowship badge to differentiate their level of expertise.





RSN Short Courses

Our day, evening and weekly courses are often a customer's first experience of the RSN. They cover a broad range of techniques, often based on stitching a kit, and most are flexible to support a mixed ability of participants who learn in small and friendly groups. During the year we ran more than 100 classes; nearly 50 comprised a single day with others being multiple days or a series of sessions over a number of weeks.

RSN Experience Classes take place at a special venue, usually with an RSN connection, bringing our teaching to new locations and audiences. Many offer an 'added value experience' such as access to an otherwise private venue, exhibition entry or private curator-led talk. These classes are very popular, and we increased the number run last year to 20 up from 16 the year before with ten partners across 13 venues.



Drawing skills with Caroline Homfray

RSN Bespoke Classes

We are uniquely placed to organise bespoke classes tailored to the interests of groups or individuals. Taught online or at Hampton Court Palace, participants travel from around the world to enjoy talks, exhibitions, curator-led viewing of objects from our Collection & Archive and embroidery courses.

Some periods are busier than others. In a single week in July 2024, we hosted two separate groups, one from Australia and the other from the US who between them enjoyed a talk on the 'RSN and Five Coronations' exhibition, a viewing of objects from the RSN Collection with our curator and a goldwork and crewelwork course. Only the RSN has an in-house offer that integrates a range of such experiences.



Design by Tutor Sarah de Rousset-Hall

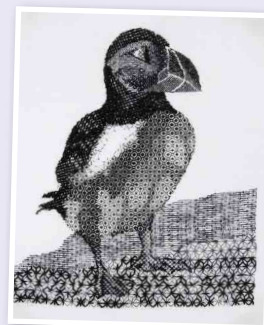
RSN International Summer School

Our Summer School comprises day, or multiple day, classes at Hampton Court Palace and online, with additional benefits such as talks, welcome gifts and, for those at Hampton Court, exhibitions and a tour of our professional Embroidery Studio.

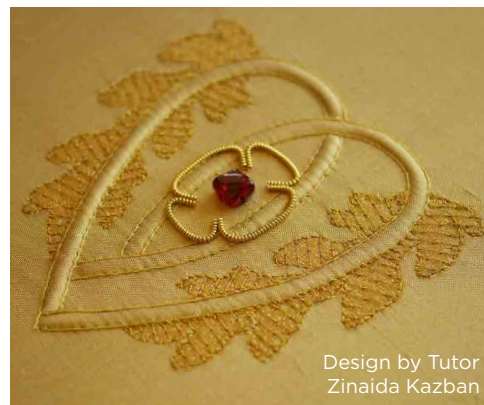
In Summer 2024 we ran over 30 classes including two at our Durham centre and 11 online. A group of tutors also travelled to the US to deliver a further 18 classes.

Online Video Courses

Our online video courses allow stitchers to learn in their own time, at their own pace and in the comfort of their own home. Led by RSN Tutors, a growing range of courses cover a wide range of hand embroidery techniques and different designs. At the end of August 2024, 16 courses were available from Introduction to Embroidery to Next Steps in Goldwork & Silk Shading. The majority are equivalent to a three day class but two new shorter introductory courses, equivalent to a one day course, were added and have been well received.



Design by Tutor Helen McCook



Design by Tutor Zinaida Kazban

RSN Certificate and Diploma

Many customers progress from short courses to our part-time Certificate & Diploma (C&D) course, which attracts several hundred students each year and provides tuition to a very high technical standard.

Teaching takes place at Hampton Court Palace, online and at satellite locations around the UK (Bristol, Rugby, Durham and Glasgow) as well as Japan. Students can pace their learning or take an intensive course which runs a couple of times a year in the UK, US and in July 2024 we started teaching in Brisbane, Australia. Online classes run in three time zones: UK/Europe, North and South America and Australia/New Zealand/SE Asia.

Interest in C&D remains strong, and we increased our capacity to get students started on the first 'set' Jacobean module. Students then choose which technique they study next, although many



C&D Student Rebecca Coventry-Beer



C&D Student Beverly Pearson

value their class community and stay together throughout the course.

This year we held a consultation with around 150 C&D students from Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand and the UK to learn more about their thoughts on course assessment. As a result, we introduced a new assessment process in January 2025. Students were also very complimentary on the standard of tuition and grateful to be able to take the course from all over the world.

RSN BA (Hons) Hand Embroidery

Our degree programme is strategically important to the RSN; it has an excellent reputation within the fashion and interiors industries and enables us to work collaboratively with fashion houses and creative partners.

It is the only full time BA (Hons) Degree programme specialising in hand embroidery in Europe. developed to provide an academic learning experience which connects creative practice, textile and design theory with a technical skills base of hand embroidery. Validated by Kingston University, students use contemporary approaches to traditional hand embroidery techniques, venturing into creative careers in fashion, interiors or textile art.

Skills development is at the heart of the degree, and these are applied to real world projects, giving students the opportunity to experience and network with major potential employers and influencers.

Students study exactly the same course but develop very different interpretations, becoming confident practitioners, designers, creative thinkers and innovators. Our graduates are sought after for their highly skilled work and professional conduct within external settings.

We are extremely grateful to our funders, including Livery Companies, Friends, individual donors, and people who have left us legacies to provide bursaries so that our students are able to afford to attend.



In May 2024 first year Degree student Amelia Legg won the Worshipful Company of Glovers' annual design competition in the category Glasto Glove which asked entrants to design a glove for someone who has headlined at Glastonbury. Amelia's glove was for Lady Gaga; made of metallic leather, beads, with many recycled shards of glass and mirrors, as well as embroidery details.

Degree Student Amelia Merrick

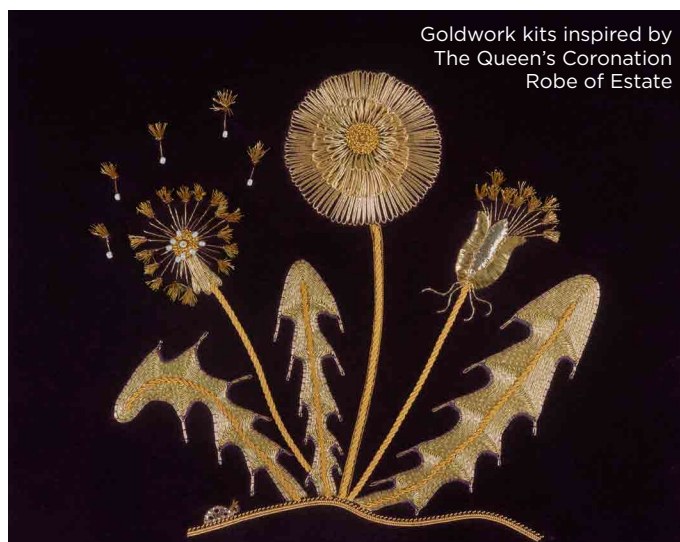


Degree Student Fleur Webb





Restoration work on a Napoleonic chair



RSN Professional Embroidery Studio rsnstudio.co.uk

Our Studio at Hampton Court Palace offers bespoke embroidery services attracting projects from all over the world, including from royalty, places of worship and Livery Companies to leading fashion and interior design houses and private individuals. In September 2023, our Head of Studio & Standards and Studio Manager were awarded Coronation Medals for their and the RSN's work on the Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. They accepted the medals on behalf of everyone at the RSN who worked on the special projects.

This year we have had an increase in work from livery companies due to our work the previous year on The Anointing Screen, which was gifted for the Coronation by the City of London Corporation and many participating livery companies. We also undertook work for new, regular and returning customers. We saw an increase in design enquiries, particularly from interior designers looking for bespoke and special soft furnishing and furniture items, and larger scale pieces.

The RSN's activities are all interlinked and support each other and this is particularly true of the Studio. It supports the teaching of degree and Professional Embroidery Tutor students and also designs kits for the RSN Shop.



Bugle Boy's jacket

The Studio team was excited this year to be commissioned by the Household Cavalry Museum to conserve a Bugle Boy's jacket dating 1808. It belonged to John Edwards, who went on to have a long career in the Army and was a very special piece due to its age and rarity and because so much detail was known about the history of the boy who wore it.

RSN Collection & Archive collections.royal-needlework.org.uk

The RSN Collection & Archive comprises more than 10,000 unique and priceless pieces capturing the passion for embroidery throughout history. It both informs and teaches us about embroidery heritage and inspires the creation of future items. Objects span the globe and the broadest range of techniques, stitches and materials.

Accessibility of the Collection has been largely limited to exhibitions, talks and tours, but in April 2024, thanks to generous donations from RSN Friends, Trusts and private individuals, we realised a long-held ambition to make it more accessible and launched the first 100 digitised pieces online giving a glimpse of the Collection's breadth and depth.

The new website is free of charge to view, and features comprehensive catalogue entries, high-definition images, makers' names, dates, places, stitches, motifs, techniques and extensive descriptions.

Visitors can learn about the techniques and stitches featured via links to RSN Stitch Bank.

We are continuing to add to the online resource but must raise funds for this important work to continue further.



RSN STITCHBANK



RSN Stitch Bank

RSN Stitch Bank goes to the core of the RSN's mission, making knowledge of stitches freely available to preserve the heritage of hand embroidery and ensure it continues to develop. It features videos, written instructions, illustrations, and photographs for each stitch as well as a history of its use and images of examples from the RSN Collection.

RSN Stitch Bank currently contains nearly 500 stitches. It is the largest free database of stitches

rsnstitchbank.org.uk

in the world and aims to digitally preserve every stitch, conserving many that would otherwise be lost. While some of the earlier stitches to be featured were those in more common use, the winter 2023 'release' featured late 16th / early 17th centuries stitches that have fallen out of use, as well as different ways of working familiar stitches.

We are very grateful to our generous funders for enabling us to add more stitches and to keep it as a free resource.



RSN Online Talks

Online Talks help us to develop an online community around the world and stay engaged with RSN supporters who may no longer be able to stitch. Many talks feature items from our Collection & Archive and are entertaining and educational. Speakers include RSN staff members and guest speakers such as authors, historians, and curators from some of our venue partners. Fifteen talks were held this year with participants from over 20 countries including more unusual locations of Lithuania, Croatia, Mexico and Turkey. The most popular featured dress historian and broadcaster, Amber Butchart, which was only surpassed by an event promoting the RSN Stitch Bank attended by nearly 1,000 viewers.

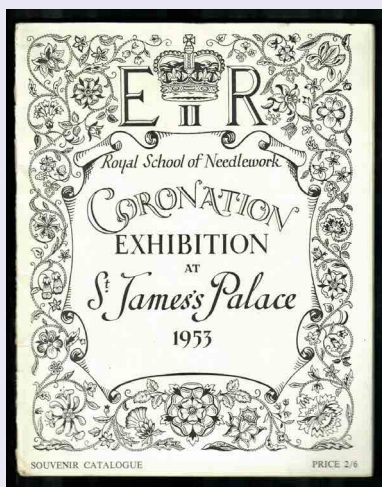
Exhibitions

We regularly exhibit pieces from our Collection and Archive as well as students' work, at events around the UK and in exhibitions at Hampton Court Palace. Exhibitions are complemented by talks, curated tours and private views.

In July 2023 we opened 'The Royal School of Needlework & Five Coronations 1902 - 2023' which was scheduled to run until mid-November 2023, but was extended to May 2024 due to demand. It featured items from behind-the-scenes of the RSN's Coronation work through the years and worked samples from the Coronation of Charles III. We ran nearly 60 tours, all of which sold out.

In August 2024, a free exhibition of items from the Collection opened at the Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum in Scotland. 'Embroidered Excellence: Treasures from the RSN Collection', ran until mid-November 2024 and brought together some of the finest examples of embroidery in our Collection.

'Tales of Textiles: The RSN Collection in Focus' is now running from September 2024 to June 2025, and focuses on English embroidery and many of the first 100 objects to be digitised and catalogued.



RSN Sip & Stitch

In November 2023 we held our first online 'RSN Sip & Stitch' event live from Hampton Court Palace with over 700 people registering for the event worldwide. Two smaller onsite events at our Bristol and Durham satellites sold out. While primarily an event organised to encourage wider participation, the events also stimulated donations to RSN Stitch Bank and increased engagement with significant spikes in website visitor numbers.



Schools Engagement Programme

Inspiring the next generation of stitchers is an important part of the RSN's mission. Since 2018, the RSN has offered the Embroider a Selfie project free to schools, thanks to support from The Worshipful Company of Girdlers. Schools can apply to receive free needlework supplies and access to a host of ideas and stitch demonstration videos. For the second year running thanks to the support of The Worshipful Company of Broderers, we also ran Family Days and School Workshops with partners at seven different venues which took the practice of hand embroidery to hundreds of children and families, up 40% over the previous year. We will continue to build on these programmes and bring innovative ways to introduce embroidery and engage the next generation.



RSN Shop

During the year we introduced new products and ranges resulting in a significantly more dynamic and engaging offer to complement staple embroidery products. The refreshed offer and a programme of themed marketing activity helped deliver an increase in sales.

In particular kits designed by different RSN tutors, presented under a consistent brand have sold well and unique products, such as the six coronation kits created by our Studio (see page 7) have appealed to avid collectors with some customers buying the complete set. Our initial stock of the kits sold out within two months and has now been replenished.

RSN Friends

Friends support the RSN through advocacy, engagement with core programmes and donations, making a vital contribution in supporting our work and ongoing development. This year we introduced new membership options to distinguish between Friends, who want to continue to support the RSN but who no longer stitch, and those who continue to practise hand embroidery.

As well as helping support our ongoing work, Friends receive a number of benefits including exclusive biannual newsletters, advance information and priority booking notifications for classes and events, along with 10% discount on RSN Shop purchases, Exhibition Tours, and Online Talks. RSN Stitching Friends receive the same benefits plus 10% discount on selected Day and Short Courses (including the RSN International Summer School).

Fundraising

Like most charities, we have to raise funds to support our operations, and we are ever mindful of the need to develop strong and sustainable sources of finance and allocate funds appropriately to get maximum return.

The RSN does not receive any statutory funding. In particular, we raise funds for all new projects as well as for student bursaries.

This year we welcomed a new dedicated Fundraising Manager to strengthen our fundraising efforts across the board including from Trusts and Foundations, Legacy Fundraising, Individual Giving and Major Donors and we will be developing a new and robust fundraising strategy to take us forward.

We are hugely indebted to the many individuals and organisations who respond to requests to help with the funding of the RSN and specific projects, including RSN Stitch Bank and the digitalisation of the Collection and Archive. Thank you to Dorothy Jones, Lucy Roberts, and Pam Farmer for their ongoing support.

We are very grateful to those who remembered us with a legacy including John Vick, and Marjorie Piper.

We are also particularly grateful to those Livery Companies and Charitable Trusts who supported us this year including:

- The Worshipful Company of Broderers
- The Worshipful Company of Dyers
- The Worshipful Company of Girdlers
- The Worshipful Company of Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers
- The Worshipful Company of Haberdashers
- The Coats Foundation Trust
- The Honourable Society of Knights of the Round Table
- The Pitt Rivers Trust
- The Arts Society
- The Radcliffe Trust
- The Headley Trust
- Newby Trust
- Lord Barnby's Foundation
- SE Franklin's Charitable Trust Number 3
- Trapp Family Foundation
- The Henry Lumley Charitable Trust

Marketing and Communications

Our work for the Coronation of King Charles III continued to feature in marketing and communications during the year. We celebrated Goldwork at The Knitting & Stitching Shows in London and Harrogate in the autumn, and Fashion & Embroidery at the Birmingham NEC in the spring, and on Boxing Day 2023, the BBC Documentary, Charles III: The Coronation Year, attracted an audience of 4.8 million. It featured footage from Their Majesties visit to the RSN to see our work underway.

In May 2024, the first ever digitised version of the Coronation Roll, the official record of the Monarch's accession and crowning, was unveiled and we were honoured to feature in an interview.

In September 2023 we opened our doors at Hampton Court Palace as part of the Open House Festival, inviting visitors to see behind the scenes of our Embroidery Studio, not usually open to Palace visitors. We also gave free one-hour tours of our Education department to around 400 visitors – most of them new to the RSN.

To keep up to date with the RSN news, register to receive our monthly digital newsletter.

New Courses

Developed by RSN Tutor Tracy Franklin and launched in September 2024 at our Durham satellite, Hand Embroidery: Skills and Studies includes learning traditional methods and techniques, experimenting with new approaches, and investigating domestic and international contemporary and historic embroideries. During the year we also began development of the RSN History of Embroidery Course, an online modular course which is scheduled for launch later in 2025.



Degree Student
Grace Richardson

Sustainability

Sustainability takes different forms at the RSN

Our Operations: We are currently based at Hampton Court Palace which is looked after and managed by the independent charity Historic Royal Palaces. In undertaking daily duties. We accept our staff will have an influence on the environment and we are committed to adopting working practices that will help to have a positive effect, assist towards continued environmental improvement, and reduce unavoidable negative influences while acknowledging that we must conform with the requirements of operating within a Grade 1 listed building.

Within our own operations, we continue to look at further prioritising efficient use of resources and materials. We reuse and recycle, practise responsible procurement where possible and aim for 'minimum waste'.

This year we reviewed our investment manager and the investment of our reserves moving to an ethical investment fund run by an Investment Manager which promotes a healthy society and environment. Assets are carefully selected for long-term value and act collectively to encourage systemic change, helping to accelerate progress in meeting major sustainability challenges.

Our Ethos: Sustainability is also rooted in our purpose to sustain the art of hand embroidery by preserving the heritage and promoting its contemporary relevance. Our Studio undertakes restoration and conservation work and makes a much-valued contribution to social sustainability.

We think positively about sustainability, and this is actively taught and embraced by our students. We are an advocate for positive change in sustainable fashion, often featuring historic items from our Collection that have been repurposed for another use or owner. We teach and engage people in visible mending techniques to reduce waste in textiles and fashion and this class ran regularly this year.

We encourage the donation of unwanted items to our Archive & Collection, for student and customer use, and as project resources for beneficiaries such as schools.

Agitating for Change through the Language of Stitch

Our Ethos: This year we have developed a collaborative programme to work with partners to raise awareness, understanding and challenge behaviour around climate change and species loss (see Looking Forward opposite).

Looking Forward

Over the past year we have developed an approach to widen access to our extensive experience and expertise called Fragile Threads. This will be delivered through enhancements to our existing education programme and by making hand embroidery more accessible through collaborations with like-minded individuals and partner organisations. It will launch later in 2025 and we look forward to telling you more about it in due course.

For centuries nature has inspired extraordinary pieces of embroidery and at the same time unique, rich embroidery traditions have used stitching to record events, impart knowledge and make powerful statements. Fragile Threads places this tradition of self-expression and an exploration of the current fragility of the natural world side by side to help raise awareness, promote understanding and challenge behaviour around Climate Change and the damage to biodiversity through species loss. Estimates suggest 50% of all species will vanish within the next century and globally one million species are thought to be at risk.

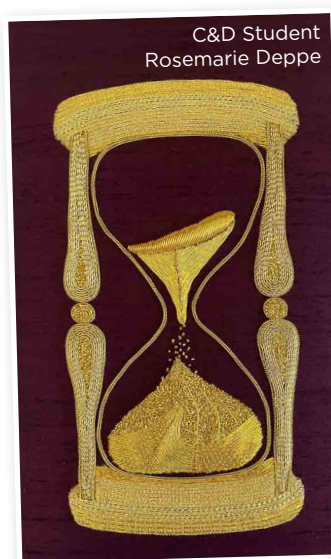
Fragile Threads will develop compelling narratives, explain and educate by empowering individuals, groups and communities to tell their own biodiversity stories through hand embroidery and these will be shared through curated events.

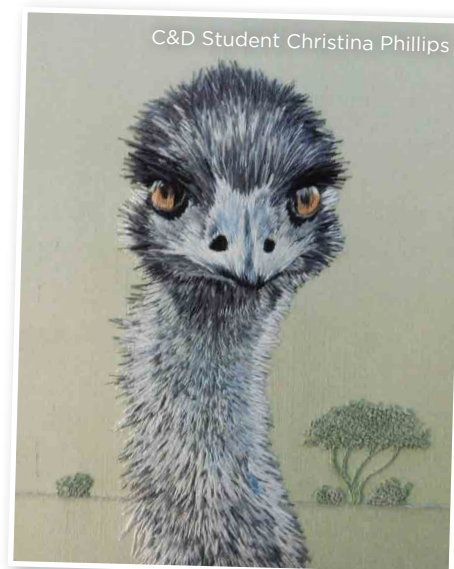
The initiative has been warmly received by many organisations and individuals approached during the programme's development and several collaborations are already confirmed. This will take the art of hand embroidery to new and more diverse groups at a scale and pace we could not achieve on our own.

Fragile Threads aims to reach and impact a broad and diverse audience, and key objectives are to:

- Create and preserve the heritage of hand embroidery techniques and traditions
- Widen access, engagement and participation through the universal language of embroidery
- Promote the positive impact to a person's mental health and wellbeing through mindfulness and creative activity
- Raise awareness, improve understanding and challenge behaviour around the impacts of climate change and loss of biodiversity through the empowering medium of embroidery
- Champion sustainability
- Re-energise and re-focus the RSN's ongoing relevance to assist its future development

We are incredibly grateful to the wide range of individuals and organisations who have helped us develop this programme by sharing their experience, expertise and enthusiasm and look forward to developing and extending the programme further.





Financial Review

The consolidated statement of financial activities for the year shows a net deficit (before investment gains) of £477,417 (2022/23: deficit of £317,373).

The overall income for the year 2023/24 of £2,969,245 was £213,197 higher than that of the previous financial year (2022/23: £2,756,048). Income from donations and legacies was £113,199 higher than the prior year, at £315,131 (2022/23: £201,932), largely due to the fact that the prior year figure contained a charge of £99,473 against legacy income; excluding this, the increase in income over the prior year would have been £13,726. Donation income for the year includes a very generous donation of £89,361 in the form of shares from one of the charity's major supporters. No grant income was received during the year (2022/23: £nil). Donations and legacies remain 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's turnover of £612,513 (2022/23: £587,577) increased by 4% driven by an increase in retail sales through the shop. Studio income was lower than the prior year, as a range of items for the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla were commissioned during that period.

Income from charitable School activities amounted to £1,887,974 (2022/23: £1,807,188) a 4% increase year on year. The year saw the first International Summer School in the US since the Covid 19 lockdowns, with this income being offset by a reduction in student numbers and therefore fees for the undergraduate Degree programme. Investment income fell by 6% to £145,384 (2022/23: £154,888).

The restricted fund income of £111,832 (2022/23: £143,701) consisted of resources earmarked for the Degree and Future Tutor programmes, the RSN Stitch Bank, the Collection and Archive Digitisation Campaigns including a specific campaign regarding the digitisation of the Grove Book, the Schools/Family workshops programme and funding for the tuition of a student. Restricted expenditure of £173,521 (2022/23: £182,891) was incurred against this income and in addition the Embroider a Selfie project.

Total expenditure for the year was £3,446,662 (2022/23: £3,073,421), an increase of 12%. The year was the first full year of new staff posts, and increased sales activity in the retail operation drove higher purchases. In addition, travel and accommodation costs were higher than the prior year due to the International Summer School delivered in the US.

Net realised and unrealised gains on investments for the year amounted to £358,583 (2022/23: £481,906 net realised and unrealised losses). During the year, a tender exercise for the provision of investment management services was undertaken and the decision made to transfer the management of the investment portfolio from JM Finn to CCLA. The transfer of investments took place after 31 August 2024 and has now largely been completed other than one stock for which trading is currently suspended.

At the balance sheet date, net assets totalled £4,852,165 (2023: £4,970,099) of which £1,853,026 (2023: £2,100,301) are unrestricted income funds.

The Royal School of Needlework has an investment of £100 (2022/23: £100) in the share capital of RSN Enterprises Limited, a wholly owned company which is incorporated in England and Wales. The net trading result of the company for the year amounted to a loss of £3,063 (2022/23: profit of £44,336).

Consolidated statement of financial activities (including the Income and Expenditure Account)

Year ended 31 August 2024

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Endowment funds £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Total funds £
Income and expenditure					
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	205,854	109,277	—	315,131	201,932
Investments	145,384	—	—	145,384	154,888
Other trading activities	620,756	—	—	620,756	592,040
Charitable activities School activities	1,885,419	2,555	—	1,887,974	1,807,188
Total income	2,857,413	111,832	—	2,969,245	2,756,048
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	748,349	—	—	748,349	651,151
Charitable activities Costs of school activities	2,524,292	173,521	500	2,698,313	2,422,270
Total expenditure	3,272,641	173,521	500	3,446,662	3,073,421
Net expenditure before investment gains and losses	(415,228)	(61,689)	(500)	(477,417)	(317,373)
Realised losses on investments	(3,439)	—	(3,903)	(7,342)	(51,479)
Unrealised gains/(losses) on investments	171,392	—	194,533	365,925	(430,427)
Net movement in funds	(247,275)	(61,689)	190,130	(118,834)	(799,279)
Reconciliation of funds: Fund balances brought forward at 1 September 2023	2,100,301	219,682	2,646,096	4,966,079	5,765,358
Fund balances carried forward at 31 August 2024	1,853,026	157,993	2,836,226	4,847,245	4,966,079

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 5 February 2025.

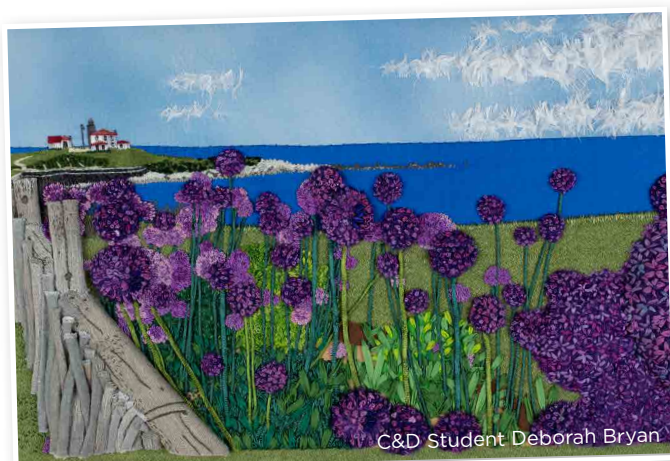
A copy of the full annual report and financial statements, upon which the auditor has reported without qualification, will be submitted to the relevant statutory bodies, including the registrar of companies and the Office for Students. These summarised financial statements may not contain sufficient 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.

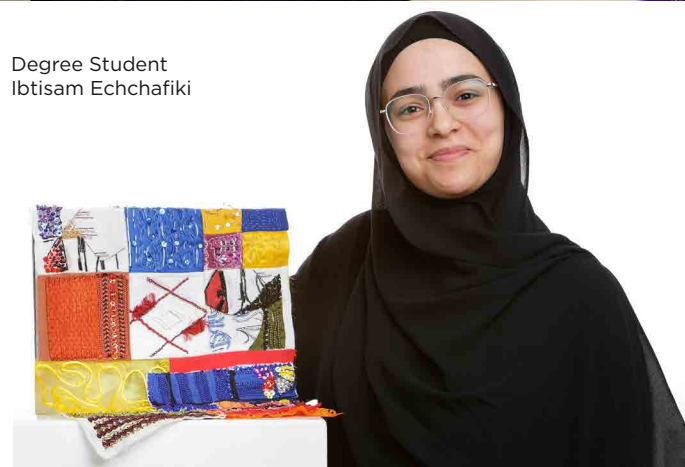
Balance sheets

31 August 2024

	Group		Charity	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets				
Intangible assets	18,360	—	18,360	—
Tangible assets	46,782	32,368	46,782	32,368
Investments	5,258,977	4,959,508	5,259,077	4,959,608
	5,324,119	4,991,876	5,324,219	4,991,976
Current assets				
Stocks	108,857	94,461	43,869	34,627
Debtors	128,206	199,323	195,167	258,058
Cash at bank and in hand	249,776	514,356	199,331	483,395
	486,839	808,140	438,367	776,080
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(946,091)	(829,017)	(883,314)	(785,715)
Net current (liabilities)/assets	(459,252)	(20,877)	(444,947)	(9,635)
Creditors: amounts falling due in more than one year	(12,702)	—	(12,702)	—
Total net assets	4,852,165	4,970,999	4,866,570	4,982,341
Represented by:				
Capital and reserves				
Called up share capital	220	240	220	240
Capital redemption reserve	4,700	4,680	4,700	4,680
	4,920	4,920	4,920	4,920
The funds of the charity:				
Unrestricted funds:				
• General fund	1,694,499	1,399,175	1,708,904	1,410,517
• Designated funds	158,527	701,126	158,527	701,126
	1,853,026	2,100,301	1,867,431	2,111,643
Endowment funds	2,836,226	2,646,096	2,836,226	2,646,096
Restricted funds	157,993	219,682	157,993	219,682
	4,847,245	4,966,079	4,861,650	4,977,421
Total funds	4,852,165	4,970,999	4,866,570	4,982,341



Degree Student
Ibtisam Echchafiki



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

We have examined the summarised financial statements set out on pages 14 and 15.

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 2024.

Buzzacott LLP
Statutory Auditor
30 Wood Street
London EC2V 6DL
24 March 2025

Public Benefit

Our Annual Report demonstrates the depth and breadth of activities undertaken during the year to further our charitable purpose for public benefit and can be accessed on our website. The RSN complies with its duty, under Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011, to show due regard for the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit

Patron, President and Board of Trustees

Patron: Her Majesty Queen Camilla

President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester

Following a major review of more than 1,000 Royal Patronages and charity Presidencies, following Their Majesties' Coronation, Her Majesty The Queen will retain her Patronage of the RSN. Her Majesty became Patron in 2017 and we are very grateful for the continued Patronage.

We are also very honoured that Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Gloucester is our president. Her Royal Highness has supported the RSN since the 1990s.



Her Majesty Queen Camilla, patron of the RSN

The Board of Trustees

Council Members (who are also Trustees of The Royal School of Needlework for the purposes of charity law) are shown below and except for any instance mentioned have served throughout the year.

Ms Pip Wood^{**}

Chair of Trustees

Ms Louisa Christofidou⁺

Prof Patsy Cullen^x

Ms Victoria Farrow

Dr Paula Leftwich^{x+}

Ms Eleri Lynn^x

Mr Peter Mila

Appointed 9 October 2024

Miss Sarah Mumford ^{*}

Mr Keith Pickard^{**}

Hon Treasurer

Ms Clara Poon

Appointed 28 September 2023

Ms Julie Richards

Prof Dominic Tweddle^{*}

Board of Trustees' interests

All Council Members at 31 August 2024 held one £10 share (2023: one £10 share) in the capital of the charitable company.

The Finance Director maintains a register of financial and personal interest of Council members.

This can be obtained by contacting Rebecca Turner at the RSN's registered office (see below).

Chief Executive: Rhian Harris

Appointed 30 September 2024

Royal School of Needlework, Apt 12a Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU

Tel: 0203 166 6932

Registered Charity No: 312774

Website: www.royal-needlework.org.uk

* indicates members of the Finance and Investment Committee, which met four times during the year under the chairmanship of the Honorary Treasurer.

^x indicates members of the Education Committee which met three times during the year under the chairmanship of Prof Patsy Cullen.

⁺ indicates members of the Fellowship Committee which met x times during the year under the chairmanship of the Director of Education.

During the year working parties comprising Trustees and staff have looked at the development of the Fragile Threads programme.

Royal School of Needlework
Apt 12A Hampton Court Palace
East Molesey
Surrey KT8 9AU

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020 3166 6932

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