

Royal School of Needlework Annual Review 2024/2025

Preserving the heritage and leading the
development of hand embroidery



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

RSN
ROYAL SCHOOL
OF NEEDLEWORK

Founded 1872



Welcome from the Chair

This year has been one of reflection and renewal for the Royal School of Needlework and we've taken important steps to make our work more accessible, engaging, and relevant.



Pip Wood
Chair of Trustees

We welcomed our new Chief Executive, Rhian Harris, whose leadership has brought fresh focus and energy as we shape a more dynamic and sustainable RSN. Through change has come renewed confidence, stronger teamwork, and clear direction for the future.

This summary Annual Review is a snapshot of activity and complements our more detailed Annual Report & Accounts available on our website.

I am deeply grateful to our staff, tutors, students, trustees, and all our supporters for their passion and commitment. Together, we are ensuring that the RSN continues to inspire, teach, and celebrate the beauty and creativity of hand embroidery for generations to come.

Our mission is 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.

Front cover images, top to bottom:

- RSN Hampton Court Palace Diploma student Christine Hopkins
- RSN Degree student Madelaine-Rose Walker
- RSN Tutor Sue Kim
- RSN Online Diploma student Sara Wilson

- RSN Rugby Diploma student Jodi Cheng
- RSN Future Tutor Programme student Lucy May
- RSN Degree student Severina Seidl
- RSN Online Certificate student Linda Turovlin

Our impact at a glance*

Over the year we have shared our embroidery skills and knowledge with participants from around 40 countries.



1.2 million visits across our websites generating around **4.5 million** page visits

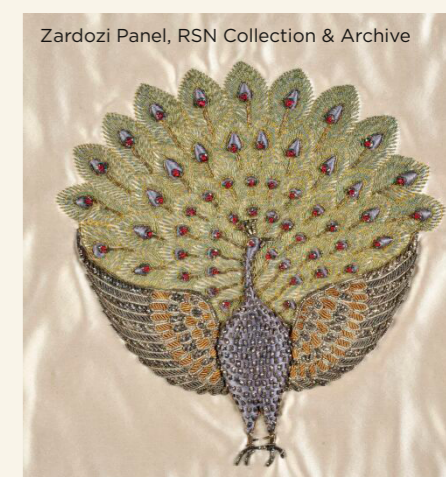


We had over **2,500 viewers** for our calendar of inspiring talks

Inspiring

Our exhibitions, digital resources and public talks provide low- or no-cost opportunities to engage with embroidery and share embroidery skills and historical knowledge.

During the year we delivered 44 tours of our exhibitions and bespoke classes and had over 2,500 viewers for our calendar of inspiring talks. We took the number of digitised items from our Collection & Archive available online from 100 to 350, and had in excess of 1.2 million visits across our websites generating around 4.5 million page visits.



Zardozi Panel, RSN Collection & Archive



RSN Stitch Bank reached **500 stitches**



Free resources from the RSN Stitch Bank were accessed nearly **500,000 times**

Innovating

We are always looking to expand the ways in which we can practice, promote and teach embroidery.

The RSN Stitch Bank reached 500 stitches in April 2025. Linked to our digitised Collection & Archive, it connects embroidery practise with historical objects and context. These free resources were accessed nearly half a million times by embroiderers, students and researchers worldwide, supporting inspiration, learning and research.

Our first conference, *Stitched Together*, brought together over 200 makers and researchers from across the UK and internationally and our first Study Day, visiting museums across London and seeing treasures from our Collection & Archive up close at Hampton Court Palace, also attracted an international audience.

We launched the first project in our **Fragile Threads** programme in October 2025 using embroidery to support wellbeing through new community partnerships.

Teaching

Our practical courses from beginner upwards, include Europe's only BA (Hons) in Hand Embroidery. We work to reduce barriers to access through varied price points, online learning and a variety of locations for in-person teaching.

During the year we filled around 3,000 places across our courses. We taught 15 different techniques across 4 time zones and at 16 locations across the UK. Students and tutors were shortlisted or won 10 'industry' awards.

Work by RSN Degree Graduate Imogen Campbell



Work by RSN Degree Graduate Fleur Webb



RSN students and tutors won or were shortlisted for **10 industry awards**



We taught **15 different techniques** across **4 time zones**



We taught at **16 locations** across the UK



We filled around **3,000 places** across our courses

**all numbers are RSN estimates for the period September 2024 to December 2025.*

Case study 1

Connecting Past, Present and Future in Stitch

It was a landmark year for the Collection & Archive team, building knowledge and broadening access to our internationally significant 10,000-piece Collection & Archive. It is of immense historical importance and a major USP for the RSN enabling us to inform, inspire and link embroidery's rich history with modern practice and application.

In August, we hosted *Stitched Together: Needlework Research and Making*, the RSN's first conference, generously supported by the Pasold Research Fund. Bringing makers and researchers together, it created a rare space where practical skill met academic insight. More than 200 people attended in person and online, joining us from across the UK and as far as the US, Canada, China, Spain and Australia and feedback was outstanding.

Our exhibition *Tales of Textiles: The RSN Collection in Focus* showcased 50 objects spanning 350 years and four continents and reflected the richness of the newly digitised material now available through our website. Our first Study Days took students behind the scenes of London's textile history and offered unique access to the RSN's and other collections that deepen understanding of embroidery design and heritage. We also welcomed our first PhD student, co-supervised with De Montfort University, on *Embroidering Empire*, a project exploring embroidery's relationship to the British Empire.

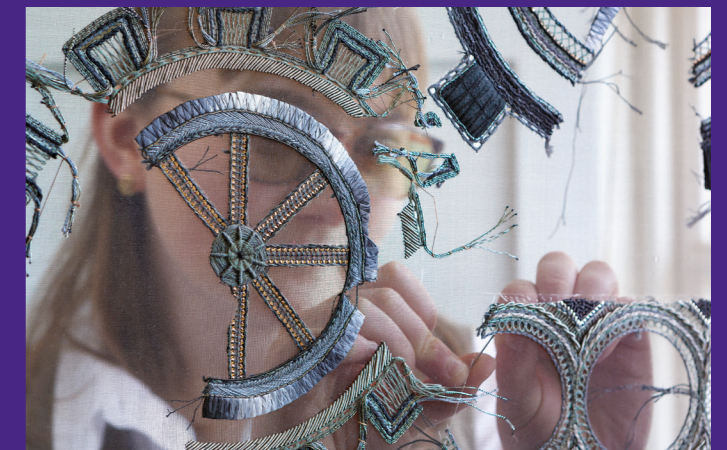
It is our privilege to care for and share these pieces which enrich the practice and knowledge of hand embroidery techniques. We continued cataloguing and improving storage, regularly uncovering remarkable items that deepen our understanding of embroidery's global story, but we have much to do to secure its future and use it to its full potential.



"It is our privilege to care for and share these pieces which enrich the practice and knowledge of hand embroidery techniques."



"The RSN is recognised for the highest standards of hand embroidery teaching, delivered by expert RSN-trained tutors."



Left: RSN Degree student Izzy Ager
Top: RSN Degree student Charlotte Farrant
Bottom: RSN Degree student Clara Donald

Case Study 2

Nurturing Talent in Hand Embroidery at all levels

The RSN is recognised for the highest standards of hand embroidery teaching, delivered by expert RSN-trained tutors. Our courses support stitchers at every level and play a vital role in preserving heritage while advancing contemporary practice. This year we have reviewed many of our courses and educational delivery with improvements being rolled out during 2025 and 2026.

Our flagship Degree programme – the only full-time BA (Hons) in Hand Embroidery in Europe, validated by Kingston University – is central to our mission, nurturing emerging talent and connecting students with industry through high-profile live projects. This year's graduates achieved notable success in competitions and secured diverse career opportunities. Our Certificate and Diploma programmes remained popular, with new assessments, starter days and

refreshed early modules well received. We also successfully piloted *Hand Embroidery: Skills and Studies*, and it is now available online and expanding to Bristol and Hampton Court Palace in 2026.

Five students joined our Professional Embroidery Tutor Programme in September 2024 and are progressing well. Entry was paused in 2025 to review how the programme can better support long-term objectives, including wider tutor distribution, a stronger focus on art and design, and updated content.

Our short course offer has a refreshed team now in place, including a new Head of Contemporary Programmes appointed in late 2025, and we are focused on delivering an innovative and revitalised programme during 2026.

Case Study 3

Stitched Together: Reviving Opus Anglicanum for a New Generation

For nearly two years the Studio has worked with The Worshipful Company of Upholders which is sponsoring a major national project 'Circle of Life' bringing together volunteer embroidery teams from twelve cathedrals and rehabilitation charity and social enterprise Fine Cell Work. It is creating a



Durham Cathedral

textile masterpiece using traditional Opus Anglicanum techniques; the RSN is one of very few organisations worldwide still teaching and preserving this medieval embroidery technique.

It has worked closely with the Upholders and Designer Aidan Hart, developing designs, technical plans, stitch and colour guides, and delivering technical training. Each cathedral received a complete kit to work its section and ongoing support. More than 80 volunteers are now involved, including former RSN students and skilled embroiderers from existing cathedral groups.

The final panel will be assembled at the Studio, with plans to include cathedral volunteers giving them the opportunity to work in the Studio under the supervision of RSN stitchers. Once finished, it is planned to be unveiled at London's Guildhall as part of the Upholders' 400th anniversary celebrations and then exhibited nationwide, raising awareness of this historic craft and the cathedral groups who help preserve it.

Each cathedral received a complete kit to work its section and ongoing support. More than 80 volunteers are now involved, including former RSN students and skilled embroiderers from existing cathedral groups.

Looking to the Future

Our vision to 2030 outlines our commitment to expanding our reach, inclusivity and impact, becoming the leading destination for learning about and practising hand embroidery. Our plans will reverse recent financial under-performance, significantly reduce the in-year deficit and set us on a stronger path toward break-even and future financial surpluses. Extensive groundwork in 2024/25 has positioned us well for growth and we are excited by our renewed strategy. An organisation restructure has strengthened our commercial and operational expertise and the refreshed team is now in place and committed to transforming the RSN into a more creative, contemporary and innovative organisation. We are looking forward to delivering an exciting new programme during 2026.

Our first Fragile Threads programme started in October 2025 and we will deliver several more during 2026 working in collaboration with partner organisations. The programme perfectly captures the spirit of renewal bringing together art, nature,

and community through creative collaboration and storytelling in stitch. Fragile Threads is taking hand embroidery to new and diverse groups at a scale and pace we could not achieve on our own. It will also help us understand how we can re-focus and work in collaboration to help future development and sustainability. We are incredibly grateful to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for its generous grant of £247,000 which has made this programme possible. You can read more about Fragile Threads and our other activities on our website.



RSN Online Diploma student Sara Wilson



RSN Tutor Sue Kim

Financial Review

The consolidated statement of financial activities for the year shows a net deficit (before investment gains and losses) of £654,912 (2023/24: deficit of £477,417).

The overall income for the year 2024/25 of £3,043,977 was 2.5% higher than that of the previous financial year (2023/24: £2,969,245) due to higher income from trading activities.

Income from donations, legacies and grants was less than the prior year, at £214,363 (2023/24: £315,131) due to lower donation and legacy income. Grant income of £31,438 (2023/24: £nil) has been recognised, with £29,438 of this representing the grant from the National Lottery Heritage Foundation in respect of the Fragile Threads project.

Donations and legacies remain an extremely important source of income, particularly for the Degree and Professional Embroidery Tutor programmes, neither of which receives any government funding, and for all new initiatives.

The trading subsidiary's turnover of £816,284 (2023/24: £612,513) increased by 33% driven by both an increase in retail sales through the shop, and the bringing in-house of the self-paced online video courses previously performed by a third party company, where the net commission previously receivable by the company was shown as income; following the acquisition, the gross income and expenditure are now reported in the consolidated statement of financial activities.

Income from charitable School activities amounted to £1,869,272 (2023/24: £1,887,974) a 1% reduction year on year, with income from the degree programme reducing due to a lower number of students on the course compared to the previous financial year, with the reduction partially offset by income from an

increase in non-Higher Education courses. Investment income fell by 8.5% to £133,070 (2023/24: £145,384).

The restricted fund income of £159,969 (2023/24: £111,832) consisted of resources earmarked for the Degree and Future Tutor programmes, the RSN Stitch Bank and the RSN's Collection & Archive. It also includes £31,438 of grant income, £29,438 of which was from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in respect of the Fragile Threads project, and £2,000 of which was from the Pasold Research Fund to fund the hosting of the RSN's first conference. Restricted expenditure of £255,471 (2023/24: £173,521) was incurred against this income.

Total expenditure for the year was £3,698,889 (2023/24: £3,446,662), an increase of 7.3%. Costs have increased in 2022/23 due to the investment in the restructure, new staff posts and the increased activity in the retail operation, in addition to the development of the new History of Embroidery course, and the costs of the self-paced online video courses now being brought in-house.

Net realised and unrealised losses on investments for the year amounted to £186,147 (2023/24: net realised and unrealised gains of £358,583). During the year, the transfer of the investment portfolio from JM Finn to CCLA took place. At the balance sheet date, net assets totalled £4,011,116 (2024: £4,852,165) of which £1,216,165 (2024: £1,853,026) are unrestricted income funds.

The Royal School of Needlework has an investment of £100 (2023/24: £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 £4,982 (2023/24: loss of £3,063).

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

Year ended 31 August 2025

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Endowment funds £	2025 Total funds £	2024 Total funds £
Income and expenditure					
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	54,494	159,969	—	214,463	315,131
Investments	133,070	—	—	133,070	145,384
Other trading activities	827,172	—	—	827,172	620,756
Charitable activities School activities	1,869,272	—	—	1,869,272	1,887,974
Total income	2,884,008	159,969	—	3,043,977	2,969,245
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	945,546	—	—	945,546	748,349
Charitable activities Costs of school activities	2,497,772	255,471	100	2,753,343	2,698,313
Total expenditure	3,443,318	255,471	100	3,698,889	3,446,662
Net expenditure before investment gains and losses	(559,310)	(95,502)	(100)	(654,912)	(477,417)
Realised losses on investments	(4,367)	—	(6,115)	(10,482)	(7,342)
Unrealised (losses)/gains on investments	(73,184)	—	(102,481)	(175,665)	365,925
Net movement in funds	(636,861)	(95,502)	(108,696)	(841,059)	(118,834)
Reconciliation of funds:					
Fund balances brought forward at 1 September 2024	1,853,026	157,993	2,836,226	4,847,245	4,966,079
Fund balances carried forward at 31 August 2025	1,216,165	62,491	2,727,530	4,006,186	4,847,245

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 28 January 2026. A copy of the full annual report and financial statements, upon which the auditor has reported without qualification, has been 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 2025

	Group		Charity	
	2025 £	2024 £	2025 £	2024 £
Fixed assets				
Intangible assets	20,434	18,360	13,770	18,360
Tangible assets	33,190	46,782	33,190	46,782
Investments	4,502,011	5,258,977	4,502,111	5,259,077
	4,555,635	5,324,119	4,549,071	5,324,219
Current assets				
Stocks	158,322	108,857	53,647	43,869
Debtors	134,432	128,206	199,533	195,167
Cash at bank and in hand	280,671	249,776	230,208	199,331
	573,425	486,839	483,388	438,367
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(1,108,760)	(946,091)	(992,771)	(883,314)
Net current liabilities	(535,335)	(459,252)	(509,383)	(444,947)
Creditors: amounts falling due in more than one year	(9,184)	(12,702)	(9,184)	(12,702)
Total net assets	4,011,116	4,852,165	4,030,504	4,866,570
Represented by:				
Capital and reserves				
Called up share capital	220	220	220	220
Capital redemption reserve	4,710	4,700	4,710	4,700
	4,930	4,920	4,930	4,920
The funds of the charity:				
Unrestricted funds:				
• General fund	1,216,165	1,694,499	1,235,553	1,708,904
• Designated funds	—	158,527	—	158,527
	1,216,165	1,853,026	1,235,553	1,867,431
Endowment funds	2,727,530	2,836,226	2,727,530	2,836,226
Restricted funds	62,491	157,993	62,491	157,993
Total charitable funds	4,006,186	4,847,245	4,025,574	4,861,650
Total funds	4,011,116	4,852,165	4,030,504	4,866,570

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

We have examined the summarised financial statements set out on pages 8 and 9.

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 review 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 2025.

Buzzacott Audit LLP
Statutory Auditor
30 Wood Street
London EC2V 6DL
27 March 2026

Thank you and Key Funders

Fundraising is a vitally important function and we strengthened our fundraising capacity recruiting a Philanthropy Manager and Fundraising Assistant to work alongside our Senior Fundraising Manager to grow and develop this important work.

We were grateful for a legacy received from the late Anne Biss, the first part of which was received during the year.

We would like to thank all donors to the RSN including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, The City Livery Companies including the Worshipful Companies of Broderers, Dyers, Girdlers, Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers, Haberdashers, Needle makers, Merchant Taylors' Foundation and charitable trusts including the S E Franklin Charitable Trust, The Trades House of Glasgow, The Radcliffe Trust, The Ebert Foundation, the PF Foundation, Knights of the Round Table, Lynn Suzanne Trapp Fuller Foundation, the Henry Lumley Charitable Trust, the Lord Faringdon Charitable Trust, NADFAS and the Pasold Research Fund.



RSN Degree student Gwyneth Melling

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.



Patron: Her Majesty The Queen
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester

The Board of Trustees: Council Members (Trustees of The Royal School of Needlework for the purposes of charity law) are as below and unless stated have served throughout the year.

Pip Wood**†‡ Chair of Trustees
Louisa Christofidou‡
Professor Patsy Cullen†
Dr Paula Leftwich†
Dr Eleri Lynn†
Peter Mila (*Appointed 9 October 2024*)
Sarah Mumford*
Keith Pickard**†‡ Hon Treasurer
Julie Richards

*member of Finance and Investment Committee
†member of the Education Committee
‡member of the Fellowship Committee

Board of Trustees' interests: All Council Members at 31 August 2025 held one £10 share (2024: one £10 share) in the capital of the charitable company. A register of financial and personal interest of Council members is available on request.

Chief Executive: Rhian Harris

Royal School of Needlework, Apt 12A Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU Tel: 0203 166 6932
Registered Charity number. 312774 | www.royal-needlework.org.uk



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Shop

We have a small shop onsite at Hampton Court Palace and items are also available online including high quality embroidery kits, equipment and supplies, stationery, books, plus a range of exclusive RSN branded gifts and digital **Gift Cards**. It caters for all levels, from beginners to advanced stitchers and everyone in between, and delivers internationally. Every purchase helps support the Royal School of Needlework.



Studio

The RSN Embroidery studio based at Hampton Court Palace offers a range of bespoke embroidery services for fashion, art, royalty, places of worship and livery companies, interior design houses, and private individuals from all over the world. It creates beautiful bespoke commissions for the future as well as bringing historical textiles back to life through conservation or restoration.

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Registered charity no. 312774