

# RSN Annual Review 2018-2019



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

**RSN**  
ROYAL SCHOOL  
OF NEEDLEWORK

Founded 1872



# Mission

The RSN's mission is to teach, practise and promote the techniques of hand embroidery, in both historical and contemporary contexts, to keep the art of hand embroidery alive.

# Vision

The RSN's vision is to be the best school of hand embroidery in the world: a school which celebrates tradition and inspires the new, through its teachers, students, programmes and projects. An organisation that is recognised for its embroidery knowledge and reference resources as much as its teaching.

# Values

The RSN's core values, which underpin everything we do, are **Quality**, **Tradition** and **Innovation**. Aware of where we have come from, but always looking to the future in new ways and always operating at a high level of performance.

# Public Benefit

The RSN believes that it is important to engage with the public and does this in a number of ways. During 2018-19 these have included:

- \* Working with an increasing number of museum partners including, new for this year, the D-Day Story Museum in Portsmouth which displays the Overlord Embroidery, made by the RSN in the late 1960s-early 1970s, and the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- \* Providing background from our archives for the 'retelling' of the making of the Hastings embroidery from 1965-66 and an 'expert witness' through Liz Elvin who worked on the piece, prior to re-display.
- \* Offering opportunities for people to find out more about the RSN through its archive. We have responded to requests regarding:
  - \* Presents to the Royal Family.
  - \* Erica Wilson's time at the RSN for a major retrospective of her life in the US.
  - \* The commissioning of historic pieces listed in the RSN's work books.
  - \* We exhibited work by RSN students and from the RSN Collection in Exeter, Lisburn Northern Ireland, Harrogate and London, as well as at Hampton Court Palace.
  - \* We undertook four exhibitions of final work from RSN students across the Degree, Future Tutors, Certificate and Diploma which are all open to the public as well as to industry specialists.
  - \* We held two exhibitions open to the public at Hampton

Court: *Animals in Embroidery* and *The Embroidered Home* both of which brought in a wide range of visitors including WIs, Embroiderers' Guilds, U3A, special interest groups, Arts Society groups and individual visitors from all over the world.

\* The CE has lectured nationally and internationally on the RSN's history, the work of its Studio and especially the work of its students including at Winterthur in the USA and with the Degree course Leader at the Costume Colloquium in Florence.

\* We taught Taster Classes at a number of events across the UK.

\* Degree and Future Tutor students constructed and embroidered a den for HRH The Duchess of Cambridge for her garden at Hampton Court Garden Festival (right).

Other aspects of our public benefit will be referenced in the text.



**Patron** HRH The Duchess of Cornwall

**President** HRH The Duchess of Gloucester

**Council of Trustees**

**Chairman** Mr Andrew Palmer

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**Chief Executive** Dr Susan Kay-Williams

# Chairman's Report

After a very busy year in 2017-18, this year was about consolidation which is sometimes necessary as an organisation grows from where it can be managed by a small team of multi-taskers to requiring both more personnel and more specialists to deliver, or help others deliver, the programmes. New staff were brought in to assist with operations and fundraising.

At the beginning of the year the RSN moved over all its systems on to new IT software and hardware. Such matters are always more problematical than one would wish and this experience was no exception. Following the migration it was realised that we would need to employ our own IT manager on site to deal with the many issues that had arisen. Some of this is down to the complexity of the RSN. It is a small organisation and yet operates in many different ways, requiring systems that can be adaptable and flexible. At the start of the year there were a significant number of issues but since the appointment of an IT Manager these are being tackled systematically. I would like to thank the staff team for their forbearance and professionalism when dealing with these challenges.

The RSN is very proud of its higher education offering, the BA in Hand Embroidery for Fashion, Interiors, Textile Art, but having this course means that the RSN has to be subject to government scrutiny and changes in the higher education sector. Back in 2018 the RSN applied to become registered with the Office for Students (OfS) in order to maintain its Tier 4 Visa accreditation for the Degree's international students. Finally, in March 2019 this was granted. The new regulatory framework for higher education puts additional burdens on the RSN, especially as a small provider. The Council always considers the Degree at each meeting and it endeavours to take a proportional approach to the additional OfS requirements.

Meanwhile, the Degree students produced a very broad body of work which was much appreciated by Patrick Grant whom we were pleased to welcome to hand out the prizes and awards at the end of the year. Patrick has been a very positive supporter of the course and the graduates it produces.

This year the Certificate and Diploma had a healthy position with an increase in class uptake in both regular classes and summer intensives where some 85 places were taken over the eight weeks. In the USA 18 places were quickly sold for each event.

Fundraising remains an important part of the RSN to enable it to undertake new initiatives. This year we were extremely grateful to a trust which has long supported the RSN and which was winding up. They chose to make a

significant donation to the RSN which, well invested, will continue to deliver an annual income equivalent to what they used to give. This will be used to support tutor training. We have also been raising funds for the RSN Stitch Bank. This aims to conserve and preserve every stitch in the world, contemporary and historical but to do this we need to raise the funds. This is a work in progress that we hope to launch in 2020.

The RSN has had international links since it exhibited in the USA in 1876. Today, we teach in the US and Japan but we are always keen to extend cultural exchange and welcomed the opportunity for the Degree students to spend a day with Master Kim of Korea. She is a master of Korean Hanbok embroidery and our students all enjoyed learning from her, with the added bonus of one of our Future Tutors being able to translate, with a shared understanding of embroidery. In July, the Chief Executive and an RSN Tutor were invited to China on a cultural exchange where they taught some hand embroidery classes and met with a number of organisations to discuss the possibility for future links. We will look at a couple of opportunities that could be of benefit to students over the next year or so.

As a year of consolidation there were no big initiatives to drive additional income this year. As ever the team aimed for a break-even budget. While this was more than achieved thanks to the large donation, a number of anticipated income sources were less than expected at the year end, including day classes and investments. Fundraising for the RSN Stitch Bank did not reach the hoped for target, though money has continued to come in beyond August and it is anticipated that this will certainly meet its target as the project gains momentum, especially as a way to commemorate keen stitchers and recognise stitch groups through the Adopt-a-Stitch campaign.

On page 15 you will see the RSN's plans for the next five years; they will be challenging but are aimed at enabling the RSN to continue to grow.

The staff team has worked hard over the year to endeavour to start to build the RSN of the future. I want to thank the staff team for all their work this year. Also central to the RSN are the Tutors who bring their skills and enthusiasm to the classrooms at each of the RSN locations. The Council and I wish to thank everyone for the contribution they have made to the development of the RSN.

**Andrew Palmer**

**Chairman**





Dev Patel received the award for top third year in 2019 with his hand embroidered street wear.





# RSN Degree programme

During the year the course and the RSN had to be re-validated by UCA as part of its quinquennial programme to ensure courses are kept fresh and appropriate to meet the professional needs of the industry. This gave the Course Leader and team the opportunity to review a number of aspects of the course and it was also the time to consolidate those areas which make this course unique, such as the investment in technical training and the partnership opportunities that students have on offer.

Also this year, we heard that the RSN hand embroidery course had successfully achieved registration with the Office for Students. This will be an ongoing area for the Trustees to oversee, to ensure the RSN meets the changing requirements of higher education monitoring.

Second year students take part in a live project which changes every year. This year, it was to work with a Korean Master of Embroidery and Kingston University textile students, learning about Hanbok, the traditional Korean wedding garments and then making work in response to the Hanbok with the theme of insects. The final pieces were displayed at the Stanley Picker Gallery, Kingston University, which was open to the public, and some have been selected to go to Seoul. These live projects help students to think more widely about their practice and they also help them to work to a timescale or brief which may be more defined than the usual direction of their own work.



We also undertook new work for Patrick Grant's company E. Tautz for a runway show. Such opportunities give students real experience of working on pieces for industry and of collective working and deadlines.

Like other places of higher education the RSN has noticed an increase in the mental health and wellbeing requirements of the students. As one way of mitigating this and taking the burden off the academic team, the RSN has employed its own mentor to help the students with their wellbeing issues. This will be an ongoing role.

At the end of the year the RSN was invited to exhibit at Graduate Fashion Week with a small display and the top three students whose work was in the area of 'fashion' were selected: Dev Patel, Charlie-Anne Ellis and Abi Noronha. We then held our show of all students' work

followed by the Degree graduates show at Hampton Court, to which we were pleased to welcome visits from many industry contacts as well as family and friends and general visitors to Hampton Court Palace. Finally, the work was shown at New Designers, the annual event for graduates in the creative arts at the Business Design Centre.

Three students who graduated in 2018 went on to be winners of the prestigious Hand & Lock Hand Embroidery Prize: Lizzie Lowe won the Broderers' Prize, Beth Cole was runner up for the Student Fashion award and Alex Standing won both the Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers' Award and the overall top award for Students in Textile Arts. Meanwhile, RSN second year students won three of the top four awards at the Bradford Textile competition in the embroidery category.

The RSN is proud to be able to offer bursaries to our students and this year nearly 70% of students applied for this support. Bursaries can only be made available from specifically donated funds and we are very grateful to those who give this funding directly or through legacy bequests. This year we received funds from the Worshipful Companies of Broderers, Dyers, Girdlers, Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers, Haberdashers, Needle-makers, the Knights of the Round Table and Coats Foundation Trust. We are very grateful to them all. The bursaries make a big difference to students.

We were delighted when two of our third year students Dev Patel and Carys Atkinson were invited to speak at the prestigious Port Eliot Festival in Cornwall interviewed by Tamara Cincik, CEO of Fashion Roundtable on the topic of Streetwear to Sustainability. Dev works in Street wear and Carys' final project used recycled materials to reflect the bleaching of the world's coral. Third year Degree student Abigail Noronha was invited to show her work at the Victoria and Albert Museum during the All Party Parliamentary Group for Fashion and Textiles' event 'Global Britain, Local Stories'. The RSN Degree was also invited to display some students' work from all three years in Lisburn, Northern Ireland at a public exhibition. The exhibition reflected the use of linen, which is a ground fabric for many different types of embroidery from Crewelwork to Blackwork.

Through the year and during holidays students have undertaken work for a number of ateliers, interiors companies and textile artists including E. Tautz, Jasper Conran, Alexander McQueen, Ralph & Russo, Catherine Walker, M-Industry, Simone Rocha, Cathryn Avison for Disney and Susan Aldworth for the Hatton Gallery Newcastle. The companies appreciate the skill level and dedication of the RSN Degree students.





'Lady Sybil'

Tapestry Silk Shading by

Future Tutor, Jessica Ingram



# Future Tutors

There were ten Future Tutors this year, two third years, five second years and three first years. The policy is that we will not appoint to a specific number but rather select only those whom we feel will benefit from the course and offer a long-term return for the RSN. We are also aware of the impact of funding the course and equally of not training too many people for the amount of work that is available.

Some of the students will come with no prior experience of RSN stitch while two of our first years had both nearly finished their RSN Certificates before they started. However, they were asked to start in the first year so that we could ensure they had learned all the aspects of each technique that they will need to know, to be able to teach them.

As with the Degree, we encourage the Future Tutors to enter competitions. This year second year student Martha Blackburn won *Stitcher of the Year* for her Blackwork at the National Needlework awards and Sarah de Rousset Hall was runner up for design for her shaded Blackwork portrait of David Bowie as Ziggy Stardust. In addition, second year student Matthew Cayton was awarded a Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (QEST) scholarship and has already benefited professionally as well as financially. The RSN is very grateful to QEST which has supported a number of RSN Future Tutors, giving them vital funds and interesting opportunities.



Each year we review the programme and look at what needs to be enhanced to better fit the students for their professional life beyond their qualification. This year we modified the third year syllabus so that the students will spend three days a week in the RSN Studio learning the skills of conservation, repair

and bespoke pieces, where there is a timescale, budget and a client who makes the final decision. Third years still have to work on their final professional project which is to produce initial materials for Day Classes and also their signature project where they can utilise any of the techniques they have learned. Third year Jung Byun entered her signature project of a silk shaded peacock mirror, (see front cover and above) in the Hand & Lock

international stitch competition 2019 and was awarded the special Broderers' prize.

While Future Tutors take the Certificate and Diploma course as their starting point, there are additional expectations of them, not least the requirement to achieve a merit or distinction for each module, as well as undertaking aspects of art and design, a teaching qualification and business planning. It is an intensive programme over the three years leaving students little opportunity to seek part time work.

As the Future Tutors are ineligible for Government grants for higher education we are very grateful to those organisations and individuals who support the Future Tutors through either contributions to the course or by offering bursaries to the students. This year these included the Worshipful Companies of Broderers, Dyers, Girdlers, Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers, Haberdashers, Needle makers, the Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust, the Headley Trust, Eva Stokes, the Coats Foundation Trust, legacy gifts of Victoria Adams, Janet Churm, Wendy Hogg, and an RSN Friend who wishes to remain anonymous. We are extremely grateful to them all.

Future Tutors also help the RSN to fulfil its public benefit obligations by offering taster classes at shows and exhibitions including The Knitting and Stitching shows and by leading Family sessions of stitch which we run in the February, May and October half terms.

The two students who graduated in 2019, Nicola Fairhurst and Jung Byun, had their work displayed in the summer exhibition. Meanwhile, work by past and current Future Tutors was featured as part of the new exhibition *Faces & Figures in Embroidery*. More than 20 pieces in Blackwork and Tapestry Silk Shading have been used including representations of Lady Sybil, (left) from the first series of *Downton Abbey*, Sansa Stark from *Game of Thrones* and Frodo from *The Hobbit* as well as representations of family members past and present.



Above: Martha Blackburn's sister in Blackwork.

Left: Frodo in Tapestry Silk Shading by Matthew Cayton.





Among the many pieces the RSN Studio conserved this year was the coronation robe and train worn by the Countess of Carnarvon for the 1902 and 1911 coronations of Edward VII and George V.

The current Countess of Carnarvon is mistress of Highclere Castle, better known as the setting of Downton Abbey, and now that the actors have moved out she is re-presenting some of the rooms with pieces from the family's collection.

The train and dress had to be surface cleaned, the trim was supported with conservation net and new sleeves were created on to which the original lace edging was attached.





# RSN Embroidery Studio

Following the large projects for Buckfast Abbey, this year the Studio worked mostly on a variety of small pieces from many different sources. These included the transfer of embroidered altar frontals on to new backing fabrics, a technique which can give the frontals many more years of use, cleaning and mounting of samplers and making a new christening robe based on one which was now too fragile to be used.

Perhaps one of the more unusual jobs was for Lady Carnarvon who asked the Studio to conserve the coronation robes worn by her predecessor for the coronations of Edward VII and George V, (see left) The Studio team also took the opportunity to update their conservation skills and knowledge of techniques through a series of Continuing Professional Development days. Conservation methods are something which are always being updated so it is important to ensure that the Studio

team understands the latest thinking and approaches.

As the Studio looks ahead they were pleased to be offered the opportunity to exhibit at Decorex, Europe's leading event for interior design professionals. For this event, the name was summarised as RSN Embroidery Studio so that it did not confuse the audience regarding the relationship of the School and the Studio. This is likely to be something we will use more in the future, to help the Studio have its own identity. The event was a good way to start building relationships but it will take time to convert into specific jobs.

Meanwhile, the Studio is reviewing how it will move forward and the range of work in which it wishes to specialise, to make best use of the Studio Embroiderers' skills.

## RSN Stitch Bank

The RSN is very aware that stitch is really part of what is known as intangible cultural heritage and that stitches have been lost to use over time perhaps because people lose the skills or because other stitches are faster and perhaps cheaper to work.

In order to help preserve and conserve stitches for students, stitchers, researchers, curators and others the RSN is setting up the RSN Stitch Bank to literally save every known stitch online. We are starting with stitches known in the western world but we are already talking to people in a number of different countries with strong stitch traditions about the stitches they use. It will be as interesting to know that many cultures use the same stitches, although often in different ways, as it will be to learn how many stitches there are altogether.

The online database is currently being compiled and we hope to launch the first 500 stitches in July 2020. Work on this is being undertaken by a specialist in building online databases and RSN Tutors who are undertaking the creating and videoing of each stitch. As we begin to work on international stitches we will need to work with stitch experts in the different countries so that we can show the accurate ways of making each stitch.

We may also find that in some countries the stitches are the same as elsewhere but it is the patterns that differ and we will also try to reflect this with examples.

In other countries we may find the stitch is the same but being worked in, for example, silk as opposed to cotton. There may be specific technical requirements as to how the stitch needs to be worked so the silk will shine, or will lay flat.

Each record will give different names for the stitch, including in a number of languages. It will feature an image of the completed stitch, a video of how to work the stitch and a step by step set of diagrams as an alternate way to show the making of the stitch. There will be a short introduction to the history of the stitch which can be added to later and we will feature the stitch on an object, initially working with pieces in the RSN Collection.

To help both stitchers and those who might be looking at finished stitches and need to work backwards to its name and method of making, each stitch will have an icon, like the two rows below, which will feature an image of what the stitch or pattern looks like when finished. We hope this will be helpful to people such as curators, who may not be stitch specialists, when they are trying to identify the specific stitch on an object or garment.

As a new project for the RSN it has been necessary to raise funds to support this. We are very grateful to the Eranda Rothschild Foundation, the Charles Hayward Charitable Trust, Livery Companies and to all the individual RSN Supporters and donors who have contributed to this programme so far through adopting a stitch.







Advanced Gold work by Kay Allen

Diploma, RSN Scotland



# Personal development through stitch

## **RSN Certificate and Diploma in Technical Hand Embroidery**

Certificate and Diploma numbers increased this year following the recognition that students were spacing out their lessons more, so we worked to increase the number of students attending and focused on students achieving one to two units a year. This has worked well, leading to fuller classes and we have also held more weekend classes to meet need. In total some 360 people took at least one Certificate and Diploma class in the year.

For the Summer Intensive Programme we again had an excellent show of numbers (85) for the Certificate. For the first time we offered classes on the Diploma too but numbers were surprisingly small. We will look at how we offer this in future, with the possibility of adding additional days' tuition for what is a much more complex topic, so that it will help students to know that they will be able to complete the piece, with support, in the time.

During the year we learned we would have to leave our US home in Williamsburg but we have found a new location not far away and this will be tested in the autumn. Meanwhile, the satellites generally have achieved targets.

## **Short courses, private lessons and bespoke classes**

The RSN endeavours to offer classes in a wide variety of forms so that people can access them in a way that is right for them. Short courses provide excellent introductions to the different techniques as well as fun days out, while private lessons allow people to work on personal projects and bespoke classes enable small groups of people to explore a particular theme or technique on a day that suits them.

This year short courses struggled to achieve the numbers of the previous year and we had a full review of the issues which might be leading to this, though the biggest challenge is always trying to second guess which will be the popular classes. We will be applying our learning in 2019-20 as we aim to rebuild numbers though we are beginning to notice that the general national malaise appears to be hitting this market, as we see other organisations showing signs of a similar downturn. As an antidote to this we will be offering some of the classes in 2020 under the umbrella of mindfulness and the therapeutic benefits of stitch. Private lessons and bespoke classes have been very successful this year impeded only by the lack of available space to hold them. As many people want their special sessions during the week we are limited to the rooms available.

We also held a pop-up series of classes in Lancaster for the first time. Moderately successful, we are planning a second visit in 2020 to test out the value of repeat visits as part of our planning for 2022.



## **Distance Learning**

The distance learning programme continued to be well received but in March 2019 the parent company of our partners F&W Media filed for Chapter 11 in the US. While the UK company was initially unaffected, by mid year it was clear that the UK operation was going to be sold. Fortunately, however the UK team managed to put together a management buy-out and the company will now continue under its new name of David and Charles. As such we only managed to create one new programme, contemporary crewelwork, during this time but we will be looking ahead now and are planning a further six titles in 2020. As a result of this upheaval, income from this source was slightly down against budget but both partners now feel we are on an even keel to move forward.

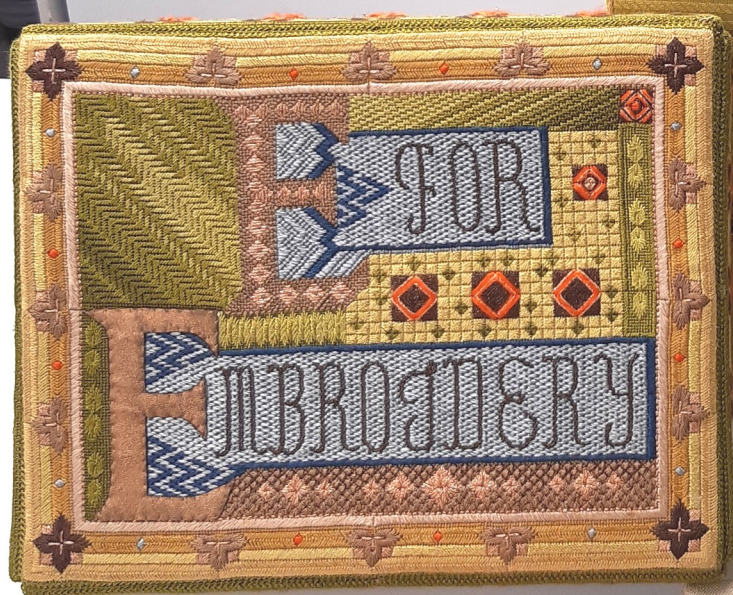
## **Embroider a Selfie: the RSN's project for Schools**

Embroider a Selfie is a key part of our public benefit and work with schools and other youth groups. We continued to promote this project, supported by the Worshipful Company of Girdlers, and now 46 schools have participated. We have been pleased and surprised by the variety of ways in which the schools have used the materials. They have been used as part of art and design classes, for lunchtime or after school clubs, for working with children who struggle academically and for those who are academically gifted and talented. This shows the versatility of the programme. Feedback from teachers also attests to the impact of stitch on the students, that it has a calming effect and has been participated in actively by both boys and girls. Stitch being novel to both there are few received gender stereotypes. As such it is meeting the criteria set for it and we hope to encourage more schools to participate in the coming year, not least by adding the option for students to stitch personal mantras.





*E for Embroidery.* This box of embroidered samples of at least one technique for every letter of the alphabet was worked by Dr Isabel Elliott. As a natural historian many of the subjects are birds and animals. This was donated to the RSN in 2019 following her death..



*When I use a word*  
*Flampty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone*  
*it means just what I choose it to mean*  
*— neither more nor less*





# Exhibitions, Collection and Archive

## Public Exhibitions

All our exhibitions help the RSN to fulfil its public benefit requirements, but more than that they give people the opportunity to see a wide range of embroidery and to appreciate this art form in a new and different way.

At Hampton Court Palace we held two exhibitions this year: *Animals in Embroidery* and *The Embroidered Home*. The former predominantly featured pieces from RSN students and graduates while the latter featured pieces from the Collection. In the lead up to the *Embroidered Home* exhibition we were presented with many additional examples of stitch in the domestic environment and some of them were used in the exhibition while others were sold as a result of it re-awakening people's interest in embroidered interiors.

The *Worship and Glory* exhibition of ecclesiastical embroidery has been to a number of sites and this year spent a month in Exeter Cathedral. The location of the pieces meant that visitors could get very close to them to examine them in detail. This was much appreciated, by visitors and residents, with several local people making repeat visits to see the works.

## Collection and Archive

The RSN is reliant totally on donations for its Textile Collection. However, we cannot accept every piece that we are offered due to space constraints, so our policy is focused on RSN-related pieces or high-quality examples of stitch, or pieces which can be handled by students to learn more about techniques. This year we have been given some pieces that fall within each category. From a former RSN student, Jane Page who studied towards the end of the 1950s, we have received some of her Old Diploma pieces from which we can see the development of the programme at that time. As such, these are useful pieces for the history of the RSN itself as well as the stitch.

In the category of fine stitch donations this year there were two particular pieces. The first is a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Lord Chancellor of Ireland's purse. This originally belonged to Sir Maziere Brady who was Lord Chancellor to Queen Victoria in Ireland three times. This piece had been given to a friend and was handed down through his family until it was given to the RSN in 2018. It contains excellent examples of padded metal thread embroidery and of course links to the current British Lord Chancellor's Purse which was made by the RSN in 1984.

We have also accepted a large stitched box of stitched sample booklets for every letter of the alphabet from A for Appliqué and B for Blackwork to W for Whitework and beyond. They were all made by a teacher of stitch, Dr

Isabel Elliott who was Mistress of Embroidery at Gloucester Cathedral. This is a treasure trove of techniques and fascinating examples. It was donated to the RSN after her death and has been much admired by the Tutors. It will be used for exhibitions and teaching.

Other donations included a fire screen made in 1911 in a limited colour palette on linen, donated by Mrs Ann Low, an RSN Life Friend and an unmade-up slipper front in silk from China which will feature in a future exhibition. These items show the diversity of what we are offered.

In addition, as part of their training, Future Tutors conserved some of the donations to the Collection allowing them to learn important conservation techniques such as cleaning, netting, backing, re-couching and stabilising textiles while ensuring our Collection remains in good condition. The major piece they worked on this year was a black Edwardian cape featuring extensive metalbead work and cutwork.

For the Archive we have been adding information about the RSN's displays at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia and learning more about why we requested to drop the word 'Art' from our title in 1922. All of the information that is given to us for the archive helps us to fill in the story of the RSN's past and will contribute to the publications for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022.

## Digitisation of the Collection and Archive

Meanwhile, we continue fundraising to enable us to digitise the Collection and large parts of the Archive. We now have over half the money needed and are applying to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the rest but because of this, we cannot make a start until after NLHF have made their decision.

## Friends

Following the updating of the IT systems we can see more clearly the number of active Friends and we will be looking to build this number over time.

Life Friends and Special Supporters were invited to two special events this year, tied in with each exhibition but also enabling them to meet current students on all programmes. All Friends were also invited to special Friends days for each exhibition at Hampton Court.

Friends also support the RSN through legacy bequests and gifts in kind. This year the latter were more common than the former. We sell materials and books given to raise funds for the RSN while stitched pieces will be considered for the Collection, whether for the main part or sometimes for the handling collection.



## Retail

As with other departments retail suffered this year with IT issues of systems not talking to each other, this had the effect of reducing the online sales against budget. However, counter sales were very good, exceeding last year due to a range of new products and sales to RSN students, tour visitors and Palace visitors. Adjacent is one of the new scarves which was based on a tree of life embroidery donated in 2018. Although using crewelwork technique the thread is silk and cotton instead of the usual wool. The designers manipulated the ground colour beige to blue but kept the vibrancy of the flower colours, especially the orange, in developing this piece.

Thanks to a small team of volunteers we have sold more donated product this year through the shop, thanks to its presentation and packaging, creating delightfully tempting offerings.

Work is ongoing to enhance the interface between the counter and online systems and then the next area to focus on will be how the online shop appears on computers, tablets and phones and how customers sort and select their purchases.

## Fundraising

The RSN has to earn or raise its income. Earned income comes from the courses which are part of its charitable mission. Raised funds are sought to support core programmes including Future Tutors, bursaries for Future Tutor and Degree students and to enable the RSN to undertake new programmes such as the planned digitisation of the Collection and Archive and the creation of the RSN Stitch Bank. These funds are raised primarily from charitable trusts and livery companies. This year we asked Friends and supporters to help us by 'adopting' a stitch. This was well received with people adopting a stitch directly and also in-memory of stitcher friends and relatives. We also seek ongoing help through the Friends membership and asking our supporters for legacies.

The RSN complies with the fundraising code and recognises GDPR requests of those who do not wish to receive fundraising appeals. The RSN has not received any fundraising complaints in 2018/19.

Donors this year were livery companies including the Worshipful Companies of Broderers, Dyers, Girdlers, Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers, Haberdashers, Needle makers, charitable trusts including the Barbara Whatmore C T, the Headley Foundation, the Eranda Rothschild Foundation, the Coats Foundation Trust, and those who wish to remain anonymous. One trust gave us an endowment which should generate an annual amount equivalent to their previous donations.





# Strategic plan for the next five years

During the year the Trustees, Senior Management Team and staff worked on developing the strategic plan for the RSN over the next five years. This will be an important period for the organisation as the RSN will celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022.

While our mission remains the same, to keep the art of hand embroidery alive, our vision is to be recognised as the best school of hand embroidery in the world, acknowledged for its embroidery knowledge and stitch reference resources as well as its teaching. Our underpinning values are summarised as Tradition, Quality and Innovation, recognising where we have come from while embracing the new and always working at a high standard.

We have six strategic goals

- \* Build resilience to sustain the RSN beyond the 150<sup>th</sup>.
- \* Build reputation, awareness, engagement and income through the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- \* Enhance the quality and range of the RSN offering, including teaching, exhibitions and distance learning to reach more people in more places.
- \* Bring to fruition the RSN Stitch Bank and the digitisation of the Collection and Archive to increase awareness of the RSN and its central role in stitch knowledge and stitch history.
- \* Find a meaningful role for the RSN Studio with a core offering which can underpin the variability of other work.
- \* Grow resources through core activity, fundraising and commercial initiatives.

We certainly want to celebrate our anniversary in style and to do this we will be planning with external partners to maximise the opportunities available to the RSN and all its supporters, but through the plan we will also be looking at the longer term, ensuring that we are set up to continue long beyond the anniversary as the international



Images from the following schools: Cardinal Newman, Debenham, Waldegrave and Archbishop Holgate's.



centre of excellence for stitch education.

Specifically in 2019-20 the RSN will once again be outward looking, building new links, starting with a stitched portrait of our Patron HRH The Duchess of Cornwall as part of the new exhibition *Faces & Figures in Stitch*.

Plans are already afoot for the second US Summer School in July 2020 taking 12 Tutors and 2 Future Tutors. We will also further develop the Embroider a Selfie programme with a twist – to embroider a mantra defined as a word or phrase which gives strength/courage/self belief to the stitcher. As part of the mental health and wellbeing focus of stitch we believe that doing this activity will be an enjoyable break from the academic and if they then carry their mantra with them, it will be to hand when things become difficult.

We are also starting to prepare for the anniversary in 2022. However, we will not be taking our eye off the fundamentals and working hard with day classes and the Studio to improve recent take up levels and ensuring annual income exceeds expenditure.

For example, the Studio will be revisiting Decorex with a much more dynamic stand to show what we can do and follow up with an open day for interior designers. They will also be working with Historic Royal Palaces to create classes based around motifs from the Bacton Altar Frontal/Elizabeth I's lost dress on display at Hampton Court Palace.

Meanwhile, IT developments will continue to support and underpin many parts of the organisation, enabling us to make stronger links with our Friends, Supporters and contacts and making it easier for them to book classes, buy from the shop or get a quote from the Studio.





# Finance

The consolidated statement of financial activities for the year shows a net surplus (before investment gains) of £142,916 (2017/18: deficit of £96,958). To achieve this the RSN has a very varied range of income streams to endeavour to mitigate any shortfalls.

The overall income for the year 2018/19 amounted to £2,357,491 (2017/18: £2,226,212), a year on year increase of 6%. Income from donations and legacies increased by 68% to £454,451 (2017/18: £271,043) mainly due to a donation of £250,000 from the HB Allen Charitable Trust upon their closure. 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 income of £352,549 (2017/18: £358,150) decreased by 2%.

Income from charitable School activities amounted to £1,377,207 (2017/18: £1,414,116) a 3% decrease year on year. In the previous year income from charitable school activities had benefitted from the success of the 2018 US Summer School. Investment income of £173,284 (2017/18: £182,903) also decreased marginally.

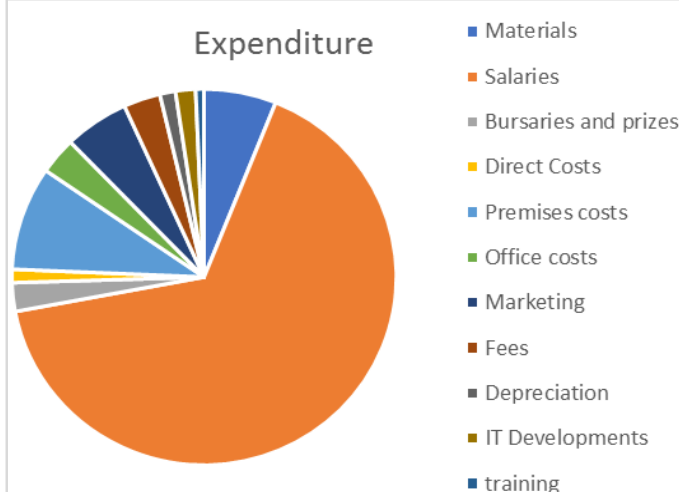
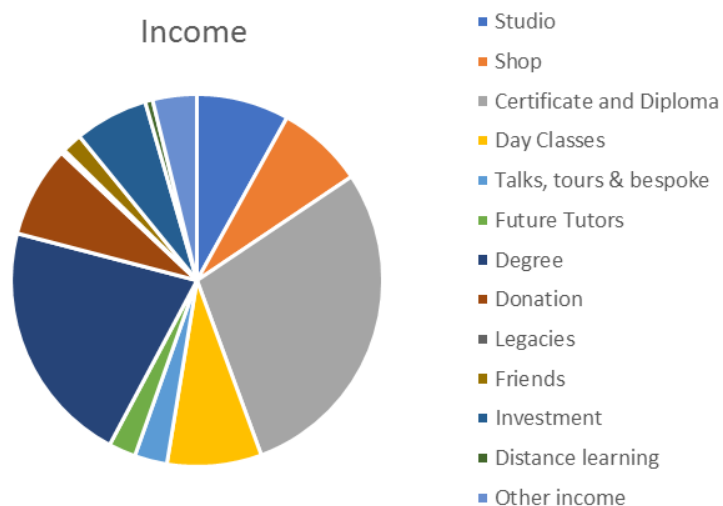
The restricted fund income of £152,584 (2017/18: £201,884) consisted of resources earmarked for the Degree and Future Tutor programmes, the RSN Stitch Bank and Collection and Archive Digitisation Campaigns. The decrease compared with last year is mainly due to two generous donations for the Campaign in 2017/18 totalling £60,000. Restricted

expenditure of £234,689 (2017/18: £207,745) was incurred against the Degree and Future Tutor programmes, for the RSN Stitch Bank project 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 £2,214,575, 5% less than the previous year (2017/18: £2,323,170). This is mainly due to the additional costs of the US Summer School and the IT transformation project that both took place in the previous year.

Net realised and unrealised gains on investments for the year amounted to £146,237 (2017/18: £163,984). At the balance sheet date, net assets totalled £5,444,778 (2018: £5,155,625) of which £2,223,252 (2018: £2,171,675) are unrestricted.

The Royal School of Needlework has an investment of £100 (2017/18: £100) in the share capital of RSN Enterprises Limited, a wholly owned company which is incorporated in England and Wales. The net trading income of the company for the year amounted to a deficit of £11,332 (2017/18: deficit of £6,142). However, the charitable arm of the RSN will support the trading arm, not least because the RSN Studio also undertakes a considerable amount of support for the Future Tutors in their training during the third year which technically would come under the charity's purpose.





## Consolidated statement of financial activities

Year ended 31 August 2019

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Endowment funds £	2019 Total funds £	2018 Total funds £
<b>Income and expenditure</b>					
<b>Income from:</b>					
Donations and legacies	51,867	152,584	250,000	<b>454,451</b>	271,043
Investment income	173,284	—	—	<b>173,284</b>	182,903
Income from trading activities	352,549	—	—	<b>352,549</b>	358,150
Charitable activities					
. School activities	1,377,207	—	—	<b>1,377,207</b>	1,414,116
<b>Total income</b>	<b>1,954,907</b>	<b>152,584</b>	<b>250,000</b>	<b>2,357,491</b>	<b>2,226,212</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>					
Raising funds	465,834	20,375	—	<b>486,209</b>	478,244
Charitable activities					
. Costs of school activities	1,507,877	214,314	6,175	<b>1,728,366</b>	1,844,926
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>1,973,711</b>	<b>234,689</b>	<b>6,175</b>	<b>2,214,575</b>	<b>2,323,170</b>
<b>Net income (expenditure) before investment gains and losses</b>	<b>(18,804)</b>	<b>(82,105)</b>	<b>243,825</b>	<b>142,916</b>	<b>(96,958)</b>
Realised gains/(losses) on investments	(31,068)	(2,024)	(31,460)	<b>(64,552)</b>	6,154
Unrealised gains on investments	101,449	6,609	102,731	<b>210,789</b>	157,830
<b>Net income and net movement in funds</b>	<b>51,578</b>	<b>(77,520)</b>	<b>315,096</b>	<b>289,153</b>	<b>67,026</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds:</b>					
<b>Fund balances brought forward at 1 September 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>
<b>Fund balances carried forward at 31 August 2019</b>	<b>2,223,252</b>	<b>388,308</b>	<b>2,828,428</b>	<b>5,439,988</b>	<b>5,150,835</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 23 January 2020. 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 2019

	Group		Charity	
	2019	2018	2019	2018
	£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>				
Tangible assets	24,635	47,751	24,635	47,751
Investments	5,402,282	5,055,159	5,402,382	5,055,259
	<b>5,426,917</b>	<b>5,102,910</b>	<b>5,427,017</b>	<b>5,103,010</b>
<b>Current assets</b>				
Stocks	76,080	64,398	29,625	27,593
Debtors	116,688	137,353	182,539	205,110
Cash at bank and in hand	378,054	375,733	351,671	297,279
	<b>570,822</b>	<b>577,484</b>	<b>563,835</b>	<b>529,982</b>
<b>Creditors:</b> amounts falling due				
within one year	(552,961)	(524,769)	(528,600)	(471,227)
<b>Net current assets</b>	<b>17,861</b>	<b>52,715</b>	<b>35,235</b>	<b>58,755</b>
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>5,444,778</b>	<b>5,155,625</b>	<b>5,462,252</b>	<b>5,161,765</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>				
<b>Capital and reserves</b>				
Called up share capital	280	290	280	290
Capital redemption reserve	4,510	4,500	4,510	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	2,828,428	2,513,332	2,828,428	2,513,332
Restricted funds	388,308	465,828	388,308	465,828
Unrestricted funds:				
. General fund	1,613,252	1,521,675	1,630,726	1,527,815
. Designated fund	610,000	650,000	610,000	650,000
	<b>5,439,988</b>	<b>5,150,835</b>	<b>5,457,462</b>	<b>5,156,975</b>
	<b>5,444,778</b>	<b>5,155,625</b>	<b>5,462,252</b>	<b>5,161,765</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 17 and 18

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

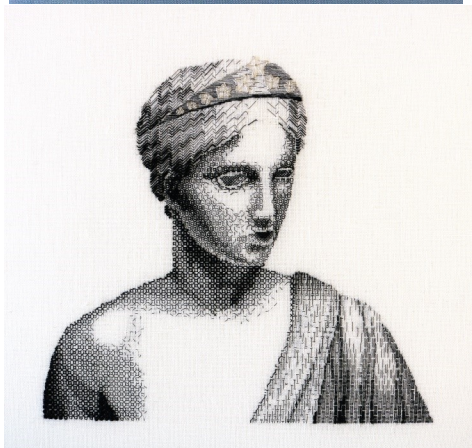
**Buzzacott LLP**, Statutory Auditor, 130 Wood Street, London EC2V 6DL

23 January 2020





Most of these pieces feature the work of students on the Summer Intensive C&D programmes which attract people from all over the world to learn technical hand embroidery at the RSN. From left each row: Claudia Pugh-Thomas, Puilan Ng, Susan Cameron, Aivita Henina, Hakyung Choo, Morag Mawson, Irene Wong, Kuan-Hsun Chen, Takako Yagasaki, Chantal Crevier, Anastasiya Liankevich







Final Major Project – Degree  
Lucy Hewett