



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



Background briefing document Royal School of Needlework

History

- Founded 1872 by Lady Victoria Welby – the RSN will be 140 in 2012.
- Established to keep the art of hand embroidery alive and to offer occupation for women who would otherwise be destitute.
- The RSN's first President was Princess Christian of Schleswig Holstein (Queen Victoria's third daughter, Princess Helena).
- Princess Helena persuaded her mother to become Patron and we became the Royal School of Needlework in 1875
- After Princess Helena's death the then Duchess of York became President (later Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother)
- First exhibited in America in 1876 at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition where the RSN introduced art embroidery to America and drew the interest of Candace Wheeler
- The RSN has worked pieces by a range of artists from Edward Burne Jones, Selwyn Image, Walter Crane, Gertrude Jekyll and William Morris to contemporary artists like Basil Alkazzi
- Published its first *Handbook of Embroidery* in 1880 (now recently republished complete with explanatory essay on the RSN's early history).

Today

- Today the RSN is a dynamic and vibrant centre of hand embroidery study and practice
- Current Patron Her Majesty The Queen, President HRH The Duchess of Gloucester
- An unique establishment, still teaching the art and techniques of hand embroidery to the highest standard across a wide range of embroidery techniques: crewelwork, silk shading, whitework, goldwork, canvaswork, blackwork, raised embroidery and more
- The RSN has been based at Hampton Court Palace since 1987. It came to its current base thanks to the assistance of its then Patron, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother

Education

- The only school of embroidery world wide teaching this wide range of techniques and taught at the highest level. Students came from more than 20 countries in 2010 including Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, South Africa, Japan and many European and Scandinavian countries
- We welcome all ages and both men and women. Current degree students are aged 18 to over 50 and Certificate and Diploma students are aged from early 20s to 80s
- The RSN currently runs classes in Hampton Court, Durham, Bristol, San Francisco and Tokyo and from September 2011 in Rugby and Glasgow.
- Runs a full-time two-year Foundation Degree in hand embroidery and from September 2011 a BA third year so a student may graduate with a full BA honours in hand embroidery, the only one in the UK
- The Certificate and Diploma programmes in technical hand embroidery are part time and flexible encouraging people from all over the world to study them.



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- The RSN also offers a range of leisure courses for beginners
- and those new to a technique
- The RSN has an extensive collection and archive and to enable more people to see some of its holdings, it offers themed tours. For 2012, in celebration of Her Majesty The Queen's Diamond Jubilee the RSN's theme will be *Royal RSN* and for the latter half of the year *140 years of the RSN*, to celebrate our own anniversary.
- Currently there is an exhibition of metal thread embroidery at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor Great Park featuring pieces from the RSN Collection and contemporary work by tutors and students
- The RSN Studio undertakes work for Public organisations and private clients, and from conservation to new work.

Clients include:

HM The Queen

Britain's major cathedrals including Canterbury, Salisbury, Wells and Westminster Abbey

Churches in the UK, Europe and North America

English Heritage, Blenheim Palace

Sir Paul McCartney

Volvic mineral water

Gerhard Richter

Daily Telegraph, Radio Times

Various Regiments

New work includes:

Coats of arms altar frontals, vestments, large scale artistic pieces, chair seats, banners and hangings, personal and pet portraits, christening robes

Conservation and restoration:

Christening robes, wedding veils, altar frontals and vestments, Torah covers



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- 1872** Founded as the School of Art Needlework, Princess Helena becomes President
- 1875** Granted Royal patronage and became the Royal School of Art Needlework
- 1876** Exhibited at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition
- 1880** Published the *Handbook of Embroidery* (recently republished)
- 1880s** worked large-scale art embroideries including *Musica* and *Poesis* by Edward Burne-Jones
- 1901** Made Queen Victoria's funeral pall, described as 'a labour of love' by Princess Helena
- 1903** Moved into new building: Princess Helena helped raise the funds and it was opened by HRH The Prince of Wales, the future George V
- 1910** Made coronation regalia for George V
- 1910** Created embroidered banners for the Festival of Europe
- 1914-18** Taught returning soldiers how to stitch as an active therapy
- 1923** Duchess of York succeeds Princess Helena as President
- 1937** Made the Robe of State for Her Majesty the Queen (formerly Duchess of York and later Her Majesty the Queen Mother)
- 1940** Designed badges for all the British regiments and later allied forces for transfers to be worked by men and women.
- 1940-45** Principal, Lady Smith Dorrien collected lace to be sold for the war effort.
- 1946** Lady Smith Dorrien designed a victory sampler featuring all the allied countries
- 1946** Following their destruction in the blitz, the RSN remade the ceremonial crowns for the Worshipful Company of Girdlers
- 1953** Made the Robe of State for Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II for which the RSN was awarded a Coronation medal
- 1966** Hastings embroidery made to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings
- 1969-1974** Created the Overlord Embroidery: 34 panels depicting the events of D Day, now at the D Day Museum in Portsmouth
- 1981** Embroidered slippers for HRH The Prince of Wales and a monogrammed lace pillow for Lady Diana Spencer on the occasion of their wedding
- 1984** Made the current version of the Lord Chancellor's Purse in which is carried the Queen's Speech for the State opening of Parliament.
- 1997** Made new Curtains for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden
- 2002** Created the balcony hanging at Buckingham Palace for Her Majesty The Queen's Golden Jubilee.
- 2002** Sponsored by the Broderer's Livery Company the RSN created a new woolsack to carry the ceremonial mace for The Royal Hospital Chelsea
- 2002** Embroidered the official logo for the FIFA World Cup in Japan and Korea
- 2004** Created an altar frontal for the nave of Canterbury Cathedral
- 2006** Embroidered Sir Paul McCartney's *Ecce Cor Meum* album cover
- 2009** Created hangings in the style of Henry II for Dover Castle (English Heritage) for the Kings Throne Room and the Guest Room
- 2010** conserved an altar frontal made by Princess Alexandra and her daughters in the 1880s for the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace
- 2011** conserved the Te Deum Altar Frontal and Canon Carpenter's Cope for Salisbury Cathedral