



The Furniture Makers' Company
the furnishing industry's charity

SOUTH WEST REGION

NEWS LETTER



WELCOME TO OUR FIRST NEWSLETTER

This is the first newsletter produced by the South West Region of The Furniture Makers' Company. We hope it will be the first of many. We aim to bring you news of the activities of The Furniture Makers' Company and more specifically to keep you up to date with developments within our industry here in the South West.

Firstly, what is The Furniture Makers' Company?

It is one of 111 livery companies of the City of London, the oldest of which were formed in the 12th century and the newest, the Worshipful Company of Nurses, in 2023. The Furniture Makers are the 83rd livery and were formed in 1963. Livery companies were traditionally part of the governance of the City of London, with members able to elect the Lord Mayor, and they acted to protect standards of craft and trading within the City of London. Although liverymen still elect the Lord Mayor, many of the companies now have a largely charitable role, supporting the industries they are most closely associated with, not just in London but across the nation. Overall, they raise over £70m each year to fund education, training, research,

innovation and enterprise. So they are not just about colourful robes and badges and fine dinners!

Our role is to sustain a thriving British furnishing industry with a talented workforce delivering high-quality products, which supports those in need from within its ranks and those who have served it in the past. We achieve this through three pillars of activity – Education, Excellence and Welfare.'

Education - we have developed a comprehensive education programme to develop, steward and inspire the next generation of industry colleagues.

Excellence - we recognise excellence in design and production through our coveted awards - the Bespoke Guild Mark, Design Guild Mark and Manufacturing Guild Mark.

Welfare - our charity has been supporting the welfare of employees in the UK furnishing industry for 120 years, through good economic times and bad. We are here to help anyone from the industry, past or present, who has fallen on tough times, by awarding financial grants.

Our Regional Strategy

Over the last few years, The Furniture Makers' Company has set up regional committees across the country to ensure the whole industry has a local team who are on the ground, able to provide advice and support and a direct link to the Company in London.

Our SW region includes Gloucestershire, Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, surely one of the most beautiful parts of the country, with the rolling Cotswolds, Somerset levels, Jurassic Coast, Exmoor and Dartmoor and the magical cliffs and beaches of Cornwall. Across the region there are many of you engaged in the furniture industry, whether as individual bespoke makers, small enterprises, design companies, larger manufacturers, retailers and distributors, teachers and trainers, and all the specialist technical, servicing, marketing and financial expertise that underpins everything you do.

One of our first tasks is to map the industry in the South West, which is being achieved through a directory containing the details of all the organisations we hear about and are in touch with. So far, we have over 100 listed but we know this is just the tip of a much larger cohort, and we are keen to add more as quickly as we can. The directory will help us to understand the scope and breadth of the region's enterprises, to see where there are clusters where closer collaboration might be encouraged, to signpost training centres and job opportunities, and share news and knowledge.



David Dewing
South West chairman

Manufacturers, Dealers, Resellers, Designer / Makers, Retailers, Sales Professionals, Interior Designers, Architects & Specifiers across the full spectrum of the furnishing industry – join us!

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Earlier this year we held our second **South West Clay Shoot at Brook Bank Shooting Ground**, near Cheddar. This is a really friendly and well-run operation, with very good instructors and a lovely site with views over to Glastonbury Hill. Around 40 people came, and the shooting was done in groups of 4 guns using 7 stands. We were a mixed bag of talents, from complete novices to the relatively experienced, and everyone had a great afternoon. We had prizes for the best individual score and the best team, and Mark Woodhead of Halstock had organised a fabulous array of raffle prizes. Overall, we raised £900 for the Furniture Makers' charity and the event will certainly be repeated next June. In October, we had the **Master's Outing to Highgrove Gardens and the Snowdon School of Furniture**, a fascinating and fun event.

And on 24th November, we will visit Hooke Park, in Dorset, which is run by the Architectural Association as a centre for exploring the uses of sustainable timber in architecture and furniture. It was founded by John Makepeace as an off-shoot of his Parnham School of Furniture, and we look forward to a very interesting visit. We will finish the day with a social gathering to round off the year.

Next year, on Tuesday 23 April, we have our annual **Axminster Golf Day** at Lyme Regis Golf Club, our longest running and most successful event, sponsored very generously by Axminster Tools, which this year raised over £3,000 for the charity. It is open to anyone regardless of experience, and we positively encourage novices. It's a great way to have a go, enjoy the company and meet new people, and you would be hard pressed to find a course with more spectacular views. Put the date in your diary and look out for the announcement in the New Year.



EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Our South West Region is represented by a small committee of people in the industry who are keen to help bring together the wide range of furniture businesses across a large chunk of the country; we all believe there are benefits in working together, sharing ideas, seeking solutions and raising awareness. We want a strong, enterprising, innovative and sustainable industry, which encourages and nurtures a talented workforce and produces high quality products to enrich peoples' lives.

These are big ambitions, but we are starting small, laying foundations which we hope will last well into the future. Here is a summary of our main activities:

- We are gradually building our network of contacts, compiling a regional directory to map the industry and establish regular communication.
- We organise a series of events, such as visits to workshops, factories and places of interest, days out for golfing, shooting and walking, and social gatherings.
- We raise funds for the charity with sponsored bike rides and walks, and through events.
- With Artichoke, we have run two very successful conferences for New Makers, attracting large audiences to hear from practitioners about how they started in the industry and what they learned in their first few years, and from some more experienced leaders giving their advice and encouragement. These conferences will now be held annually.
- We keep in close touch with a number of organisations providing training in furniture design and making in the South West, and ensure they are connected to the bigger national picture.
- We help to spread the word about the welfare grants so that every workplace has the right information to access support, prominently displayed for staff.
- We encourage applications for the Guild Marks.
- We are always supportive of people wanting to join by becoming an associate or a freeman, or a company which might be interested in corporate membership.
- Any funds we raise through our activities are channelled direct to the charity, which means we are contributing to the national drive to create a strong and successful industry.

If you or your company would like to become more closely involved, we would very much like to hear from you. Please get in touch with any of us on the committee through Nancy Wellman, our regional administrator: nancy@furnituremakers.org.uk.



South West Region Committee Members

There are 12 members on the South West Committee and we meet four times a year.

David Dewing, chairman, former furniture designer and museum director
Alan Styles, deputy chairman, managing director at Axminster Tools Ltd
Jane Cleal, director at Williams and Cleal Furniture School
Charlie Cross, sales manager at Axminster Tools Ltd
Paul von der Heyde, chairman at Axminster Tools Ltd
Marina Jonas, marketing director, Artichoke Ltd
Rebecca McLeod, HR manager, Axminster Tools Ltd
Simon Pirie, managing director, Simon Thomas Pirie Ltd
Will Reed, director, Lyme Regis Boat Building Academy & Furniture School
Mike Storey, commercial director, G-Plan Ltd
Kelly Wakeley, PR and communications officer, Axminster Tools Ltd
Mark Woodhead, production manager, Halstock Cabinet Makers Ltd