

# Austin Friar 2025



**The Furniture Makers' Company**  
the furnishing industry's charity

**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**



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The Furniture Makers' Company is the City of London livery company and charity for the furnishing industry. We are a modern livery company whose membership comprises individuals and businesses that make up the diverse, vibrant and creative UK furniture and furnishing industry.

Welcome to Austin Friar 2025, our annual publication that highlights the milestones and achievements of the past year.

In a year marked by economic challenges affecting many, we are proud to report that our membership has remained strong. It is especially gratifying to see a growing number of businesses within our industry acknowledging the essential work we do, whether it's fostering the next generation through educational programmes, celebrating excellence through our Guild Marks, or providing crucial support to the welfare of current or former industry colleagues.

**03–09**  
**Introduction**

**10–17**  
**Welfare**

**18–43**  
**Excellence**

**44–61**  
**Education**

**62–91**  
**Membership**

**92–93**  
**Fundraising**

# The Furniture Makers' Company is the City of London livery company and charity for the furnishing industry **We are here for you and your industry**



Pocket springs by Wolf Components



The Madison Corner Sofa  
by Ashley Manor



Skomer handles in patinated brass  
and antique by Crofts & Assinder



Bespoke ergonomic seating by ErgoChair



Tekiò by Anthony Dickens



Claydon by Shackletons



# The Master

## Brian Ahern, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company

**WHAT AN UNFORGETTABLE YEAR THIS HAS BEEN.**

My Installation at Mansion House was a remarkable beginning to a year filled with incredible experiences and lasting memories.

Just a week later, we had the privilege of hosting dignitaries from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) as the Lord Mayor unveiled the blue plaque now adorning our hall, commemorating the site of the RNLI's first headquarters in 1824.

Looking back through my diary, there are far too many highlights to list them all. Among the most memorable were two visits to our military affiliate, XXV (Fighter) Squadron, in Anglesey, where we were warmly welcomed and given extraordinary behind-the-scenes access. A day at Sandhurst with our military affiliate 2 Rifles was equally unforgettable, despite the rain, as we witnessed an impressive display of team sharpshooting. The tradition and pageantry of the Lord Mayor's election and the Silent Ceremony were followed by the spectacle of the Lord Mayor's Show and the solemnity of the City's Remembrance Day services. The calendar year was rounded off beautifully with a magical Christmas carol service in the historic Tower of London Chapel.

Our fundraising and social events have been both great fun and record-breaking, thanks to the dedication and generosity of our supporters. The Big Shots clay pigeon shooting event, supported by Furniture Village, set new records, as did the Teesside Golf Day, sponsored by Barker and Stonehouse. Other events have been equally outstanding, too numerous to mention individually, but each has been a joy to participate in.

Growth has been another key theme of the year. Our membership has expanded, reflecting the increasing impact of our work in Welfare, Education, and Excellence, our three key pillars. I warmly welcome all new members and hope they enjoy many happy years with our Company. This year has also seen the launch of three new regional groups – Midlands, South East and Wales – highlighting the importance of our nationwide presence. While the industry itself is not centred in London, the role of government is, and we remain actively engaged in supporting the British Furniture Confederation in promoting our industry to policymakers.

Representing our Company within the industry has been a great honour, and the esteem in which our work is held has been evident at every event we've attended. This is a testament to the tireless efforts of our volunteers, who chair and serve on committees, attend events and functions, and of course, the incredible support of our office team. Their dedication ensures our continued success, and I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed throughout my year in office.

This year has been filled with once-in-a-lifetime experiences, and I have been fortunate to make many lasting friendships along the way. I have also been deeply encouraged and supported by my family, for which I am immensely grateful. I would be remiss not to acknowledge my wardens, Debbie Johnson and Jessica Alexander, who have been an absolute pleasure to work alongside. Debbie will now take the helm as our 63rd Master, and I wish her every success for the year ahead.



# The Master-Elect

## Debbie Johnson, Master-Elect of The Furniture Makers' Company

**THE DAY I JOINED AS A FREEMAN, I TOOK THE FIRST** step toward where I am today. I can still recall feeling somewhat daunted and wondering how I would find my place in all of this. It feels like it was just yesterday, and now, here I am, about to step into the most exciting role of my life.

I was first introduced to the Company by the late Margaret Miller, who was the incumbent Master, and first lady Master. At the time, I was a publisher of the furniture industry trade magazine Cabinet Maker, which was in publication between 1880–2019. Its archive represents a major historical record of this industry in the UK, and I am proud to have played a small part in its rich history up until retirement in 2018.

Bored with retirement, I took diploma qualifications in both soft furnishings and upholstery. I also worked part-time as assistant clerk and acting clerk for the City Livery Club. This gave me first hand insight into how the City of London Civic works, how all the livery companies interact and the opportunity to build a wide network of livery friends.

Being a member offers many benefits, but the true value lies in that age-old adage about giving back, which is one of the main reasons members cite for joining us.

When new members ask me how best they can get involved, I always take the opportunity to encourage them to consider several things. First, I suggest joining a committee. If you can spare just a few days a year to share your skills and experience, it's one of the best ways to contribute and feel connected to our work. Over the years, I have served on many of our committees, and I've seen first-hand the dedication our members bring to help us accomplish all that we do. It is by far the best way to learn about us.

Another way to get involved is by attending our social and fundraising events. We have a cherished tradition of fellowship, which is reflected in our yearly calendar of events, offering something for everyone. These events are the best way to network with fellow members, strengthening bonds of friendship, sharing knowledge, and celebrating the rich heritage of the industry that unites us.

I also encourage freemen to consider becoming liverymen, which grants full membership. Lastly, I recommend making our hall your meeting place in London – an impressive and unique venue. By taking advantage of the discounted hire rates available to our liverymen, you can consider our hall in the City of London as your first choice for conferences or meetings.

As for the year ahead, my focus will be twofold. First, I will support the hard work of our governance and executive committees as they guide us through uncertain times. The year ahead will undoubtedly bring its challenges, but there are also plenty of opportunities to seize. We are fortunate to have the expertise of our members to help us achieve our goals. Our Membership and Events, Corporate Membership, and Fundraising committees are the lifeblood of our livery. Our strategy must continue to focus on growing both our membership and corporate engagement, as this is where we will find our future leaders. We unite a broad spectrum of the UK furniture industry in a unique way, and we are so much stronger together.

Additionally, our other executive committees play a vital role in delivering the activities and output of our three pillars: Education, Excellence and Welfare – and I look forward to supporting them.

Second, I'd like to shift the focus to deepening our understanding of what we represent within the UK furniture industry, both as a London livery company and charity. We mean different things to our members, and while this may seem complex, it's crucial that everyone understands the fundamental principles we stand for. I plan to address any misconceptions and work closely with our Communications Committee to continue their excellent efforts in promoting us across the entire industry.

For over 120 years, our charity has been dedicated to supporting the welfare of past and present employees in the furnishing industry. Collaborating with HR teams and industry professionals, we strive to ensure that anyone entitled to support knows where to turn in times of need.

Through our benevolent fund, we offer quick-response grants to assist with a wide range of essentials, including household items and bills, funeral expenses, property repairs, disability adaptations, medical equipment, respite breaks, and financial hardship. We also provide support for pre-tenancy costs and relocation expenses.

If you know someone whose financial situation has changed and who is struggling to make ends meet, please encourage them to contact us for support.

Additionally, through our partnership with Shout, a free, confidential, 24/7 text service, we're extending mental health support to anyone in the UK furnishing industry. To start a conversation with a trained volunteer, simply text 'COMFORT' to 85258. Help is always just a message away.



# Welfare

**ABOVE** Therese received a financial grant from us

# Why Welfare Matters

## Vicky Whitaker, HR business partner at corporate member and Manufacturing Guild Mark holder HSL Chairs, talks about why welfare matters



**AS A PROUD, YORKSHIRE-BASED FAMILY** business, our fabulous colleagues are what make HSL special and truly unique. Our values – Feel Valued, Feel Inspired, Feel Responsible, and Feel Part of the Family – underpin everything we do. When colleagues feel looked after, they are more engaged, more productive, and more likely to stay with us long term, which is great for our customers. We work extremely hard to look after our colleagues and we believe it is our colleague-first approach that results in people staying with HSL for many years. One of our colleagues has been with HSL for 40 years, which is a testament to our company's culture. We also have full families working at HSL, further enhancing the sense of community and belonging.

As a brand that champions wellbeing for our customers, we work tirelessly to provide a range of support. Our wellbeing support includes counselling services for our colleagues and their loved ones, physical health checks, and cashback for optical and dental procedures. Additionally, we offer financial wellbeing sessions, discount vouchers for high-street brands, and the option to save directly from wages through our partnership with Transave.

Listening to our colleagues and continually striving to improve runs through our DNA. As well as our annual employee engagement survey, we run informal drop-in sessions with board members to have 'coffee & croissants' and our managing director, Venessa Hodgson, hosts annual listening groups for all parts of the business. Every Monday, we have weekly stand-up, face-to-face meetings for all colleagues (remote colleagues can dial in), which we call 'Gather'. This gives us a platform to recognise and celebrate our fantastic people, contributing to a culture where individuals know they matter. We promote The Furniture Makers' Company through our colleague communication channels and signpost colleagues in need to submit grant applications.

As an HR business partner, I see first-hand how investing in our people directly impacts

**EMPLOYEE WELFARE ISN'T JUST ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS AT WORK – IT'S ALSO ABOUT RECOGNISING THAT EVERYONE HAS A LIFE OUTSIDE OF IT, WHETHER IT'S FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES, OR INCLUSIVE SUPPORT FOR COLLEAGUES AT DIFFERENT LIFE STAGES**

**BELOW**  
Vicky at the Routes to a Stronger Workforce event



not only their wellbeing but also the success of our business. The furniture industry is unique in its demands, and ensuring that our colleagues feel supported, valued, and engaged is a responsibility we take very seriously.

Employee welfare isn't just about what happens at work – it's also about recognising that everyone has a life outside of it. Whether it's family-friendly policies, or inclusive support for colleagues at different life stages, such as menopause support and our new parent/grandparent baby boxes, we strive to create a workplace where people can thrive both professionally and personally. We are proud to be recognised as an 'Outstanding

Place to Work' with Best Companies, which is also testament to the work that we do in our local communities, whether it's through our schools' engagement programme, our apprenticeship schemes or supporting local charities.

I first got to know about The Furniture Makers' Company in 2022 when I attended a conference centred around welfare which brought HR and business professionals together from the furniture industry. I became a regional ambassador soon after to support raising awareness and signposting colleagues to make grant applications.

The team at the charity make a real difference to people's lives, often behind closed doors. They are real life superheroes. One of our younger colleagues suffered an unexpected bereavement of a partner. At this most tragic time, the charity stepped in and gave a generous donation towards the cost of a funeral which meant the world to our colleague. In turn, as a company, HSL has also donated furniture to support a grant application for a colleague who had retired from the industry.

Since then, HSL's partnership with the Furniture Makers has gone from strength to strength. In June 2023, HSL was awarded the prestigious Manufacturing Guild Mark which is one of the highest accolades in the industry, reserved exclusively for Britain's finest furniture manufacturers who consistently meet exceptional standards in design, production and sustainability. Three of our team were admitted as corporate liverymen last year and we continue to support the work of the Furniture Makers.

I think it would be great to see the charity represented more on a local level and visiting businesses directly. When our colleagues can put a face behind an initiative, they are always more likely to become engaged, involved and show support ●  
**Should any other businesses wish to network with our people team, share ideas and best practice, please reach out to [hrgeneral@hslchairs.com](mailto:hrgeneral@hslchairs.com).**



# Supporting people through difficult times

## Welfare stories

### Carina’s story

#### Case study

**CARINA, A FORMER SUCCESSFUL** interior designer, and her husband Anthony, a skilled cabinet maker, had built their lives around their careers in the furniture industry. However, tragedy struck some 10 years ago when Anthony became paraplegic. Despite the challenges, Carina remained resilient, supporting Anthony and seeking assistance

from The Furniture Makers' Company, which provided crucial aid for his medical equipment. In 2021, Carina faced her own health crisis, discovering cysts in her spinal cord that necessitated major surgery. The ordeal left her reliant on a wheelchair and battling severe neuropathic pain. Determined not to succumb to despair, Carina enquired into solutions to enhance her mobility and alleviate her pain. Carina sought a customised wheelchair tailored to her needs, which promised to alleviate her chronic pain and enhance her mobility significantly. However, financial constraints posed a significant

hurdle. Undeterred, Carina turned to us, seeking assistance to procure the wheelchair. With a welfare grant of £2,000 from our charity, Carina was able to bridge the financial gap and apply for additional support from the BHS Trust. The purchase of the bespoke wheelchair has proven transformative for Carina. Not only did it provide practical mobility assistance, but it also offered relief from her pain, enabling her to reclaim her independence and quality of life. Carina expressed profound gratitude to The Furniture Makers' Company for our unwavering support.



As the charity for the furnishing industry, we have been supporting the welfare of people working in the trade since 1903. Every day people have to cope with financial hardship due to the impact of bereavement, relationship or family breakdown, illness, reduced work hours, an unexpected loss of income or redundancy, but they don't have to deal with this alone. Here are a few examples of the individuals and families we are proud to have supported

### Mohamed’s story

#### Case study

**MOHAMED WORKS HARD AS A** warehouse operative for a bed manufacturer and had previously been a driver for another furniture firm. Mohamed's HR team made contact with us when he received the surprising and unpleasant news that he was going to be imminently evicted from his privately rented property since it was being leased to the local authority with a significant increase in the rent which would have been unaffordable to Mohamed. With a very short timeframe to find a new property, as well as a deposit and month's rent in advance, it was a very anxious time for Mohamed. We were able to act quickly to obtain all the relevant paperwork and ultimately to support Mohamed with a grant to cover the cost of a month's rent in advance and a deposit. After securing his new property, Mohamed got back to us to tell us what a difference the grant made and to offer to share his story with others who might be in a similar situation. He told us that without our support he may well have ended up homeless so we're delighted to have been able to help at such a crucial time.



### Sean’s story

#### Case study

**SEAN, A HIGHLY SKILLED AND** experienced upholsterer, has dedicated many years to his craft. Working for an independent upholstery manufacturer in Nottinghamshire, Sean's career was thriving until a serious accident changed everything. Sean suffered severe injuries, including a broken back and ankles, which required extensive surgery and a prolonged period of rehabilitation. Unable to work for several months, Sean faced numerous challenges. The physical pain and the need for a wheelchair were compounded by

significant financial stress. With only Statutory Sick Pay as his income, Sean struggled to cover his living expenses, leading to growing concerns about falling into debt and arrears. At this difficult time, Sean learned about The Furniture Makers' Company through his HR department. We provided Sean with a monthly grant for three months, offering much-needed financial relief. This support allowed Sean to focus on his recovery without the overwhelming worry of financial instability. Reflecting on the assistance he received, Sean expressed his gratitude: "I am overwhelmed as this wasn't expected at all. I appreciate your help massively." As he continues his journey to full health, Sean looks forward to the day he can return to the work he loves, knowing he had a community that stood by him in his time of need.



## Tom's story

### Case study

**TOM HAS DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO THE FURNITURE** industry, beginning his journey as an apprentice cabinet maker and steadily progressing to become the owner of his own successful business. His expertise and commitment to quality earned him a place in the esteemed Guild of Master Craftsmen. As Tom built his business, he also cultivated strong connections within the industry, gaining recognition for his craftsmanship and innovative designs.

Last year, Tom faced an unexpected and challenging setback. After contracting Covid-19, he was unable to work for an extended period, leading to significant disruptions in his business operations. During his recovery, Tom fell behind on the rent for his workshop. With a young family to support and mounting bills, the pressure on Tom grew. The risk of further debt loomed, threatening both his livelihood and his family's stability.

At this difficult time, Tom turned to The Furniture Makers' Company for help. Understanding the urgency of the situation, we swiftly arranged for his rent arrears to be paid directly to his landlord. This intervention provided Tom with much-needed relief, allowing him to focus on his recovery and return to what he does best – creating beautiful, innovative furniture.

Tom expressed his gratitude, saying, "Thank you so much. It's such a massive help".

With the support of The Furniture Makers' Company, Tom was able to stabilise his business and continue his work. His situation soon began to improve significantly. Tom was shortlisted for the prestigious Alan Peters Furniture Award in 2024, a testament to his talent and dedication. Additionally, he has been invited to judge the award in the future and was asked to join the committee of an industry association, further cementing his reputation as a respected craftsman in the industry.

Maureen Baker, welfare officer at The Furniture Makers' Company, said: "We are proud to have been there for Tom during his time of need, helping him to overcome a challenging period and enabling him to continue his craft with renewed focus and energy." ●

Our Excellence programme recognises and promotes outstanding achievement in design, craftsmanship, and manufacturing within the British furniture and furnishing industry. It sets the standard for excellence, recognising individuals and organisations that exemplify innovation and quality.

Central to the programme are the Bespoke Guild Mark, Design Guild Mark, and Manufacturing Guild Mark. The Bespoke Guild Mark honours exceptional craftsmanship in unique furniture and fitted furniture, showcasing the creativity and skill of artisans. The Design Guild Mark highlights innovative, functional, and aesthetically superior designs in mass produced furniture, lighting and interior design elements, ensuring the promotion of outstanding design. The Manufacturing Guild Mark celebrates excellence in production, recognising companies that maintain the highest standards in manufacturing processes.

By celebrating excellence, we foster a culture of innovation and quality, ensuring the British furniture industry remains competitive, sustainable, and globally admired.



# Excellence

**ABOVE** Aran by Morgan, 2024 Design Guild Mark holder and winner of the Jonathan Hindle Prize for Outstanding Design in 2024

# Why Excellence Matters

## John Makepeace OBE is a liveryman and sits on the Bespoke Guild Mark committee. He talks about why excellence matters



John Makepeace  
OBE

**‘GOOD ENOUGH’ IS ONE OF THOSE** phrases that makes my flesh creep. Imagine how demotivating it would be to work in an environment where that attitude prevails? The loss of self-respect undermines any sense of achievement or the incentive to improve performance, leaving only a wage and some social exchange as the benefits from working.

Excellence is a constant challenge, with cross-disciplinary learning adding to the complexity of related issues, the challenge of hitting a moving target as new imperatives evolve.

Some of the issues we address as part of excellence now are the design and production of more enduring products, their recyclability and the more environmentally intelligent use of resources – capital, energy and materials. Europe’s new Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulations and the Circular Economy Action Plan require each product to have a Digital Product Passport for its entire life.

These will help to reduce the large amounts of material from the furniture industry going to landfill. Some years ago I proposed that the industry could initiate a programme of long-term strategic research into the future of furniture in our homes and offices. The feedback, perhaps predictably, was that companies preferred research to focus on closer-to-market issues.

Research and innovation are vital in the drive towards energy, material and processing efficiency in ecological terms. With my support, the Victoria and Albert Museum has initiated a 10-year programme, ‘Make Good; Rethinking Material Futures’, to advance the knowledge, use and re-use of natural materials and processes. At the ‘Make Good’ Annual Symposium in March 2025, there was a line-up of thought-provoking speakers, including Summer Islam of Material Cultures

on bio-resins, Guy Standing on the future of land use, Jeremy Ralph on Evolving Forests and Studio Sarmite on transforming industrial waste into products, all leaders in developing more ecological ways forward.

You are invited to visit the Furniture Study Galleries where, alongside great examples of the changing furniture-making techniques through the centuries, is a new display presented by Material Cultures. This demonstrates the potential for the bio-resins in forest waste and the use of bark for roofs and cladding. Will the time come when the furniture industry in the UK is reintegrated with the source of its raw materials?

In parallel with the excellent exhibition by Material Matters at London Design Week, this series is especially relevant for all those involved with natural materials, whether as growers, processors, designers, manufacturers or in construction. ●

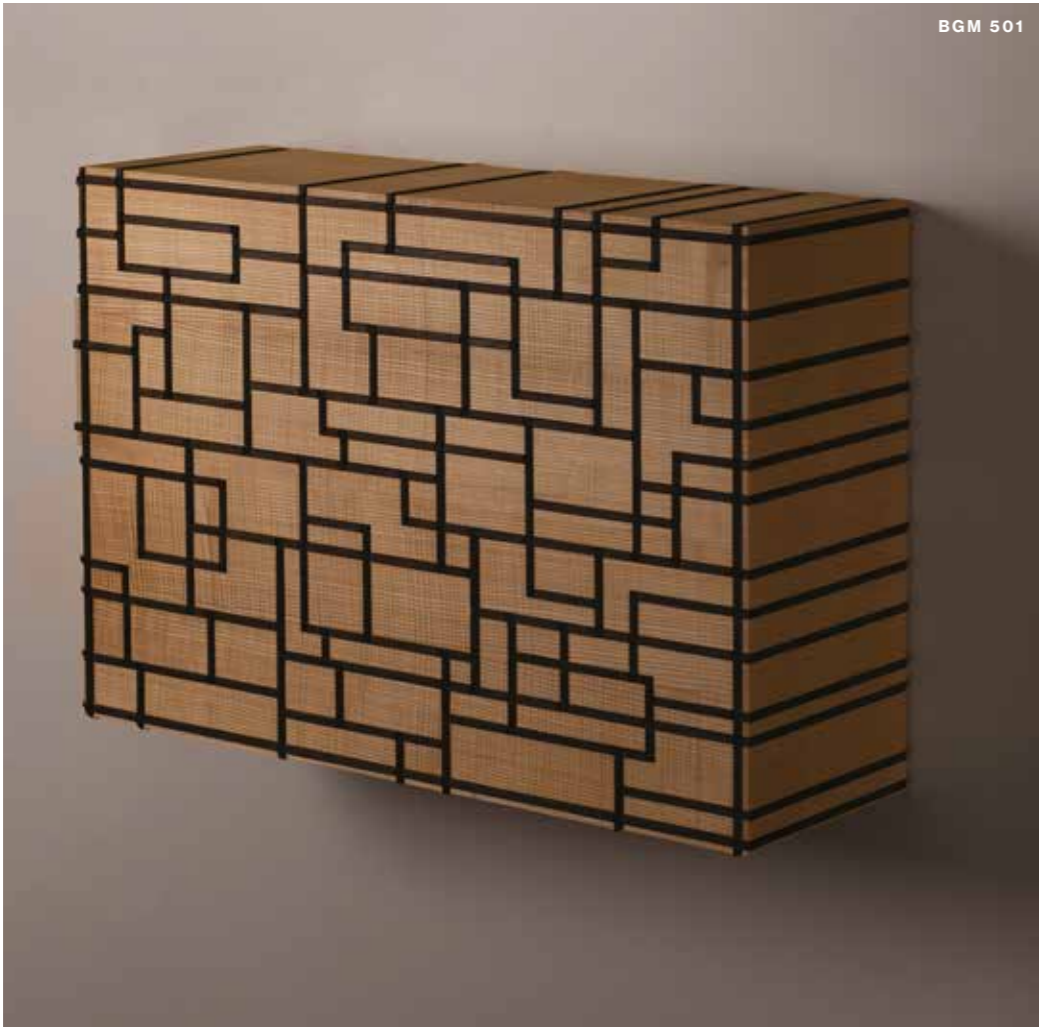


# Bespoke Guild Mark

## Celebrating sublime British craftsmanship

**THE BESPOKE GUILD MARK RECOGNISES** excellence in design, materials, craftsmanship and function for exquisite pieces of furniture made as single items or a limited run and fitted furniture. In 2024–2025, six exceptional pieces met the exacting standards to be awarded the mark. ● [bespokeguildmark.org.uk](https://bespokeguildmark.org.uk) | [@bespokeguildmark](https://www.instagram.com/bespokeguildmark)

- BGM 496** Tweed Console Table by Philip Dobbins
- BGM 497** Oomugi: A Japanese Whisky Shrine by Ed Ryland
- BGM 498** Spitfire Chair by Ian Burnell
- BGM 499** Trewithen Kitchen by Guild Anderson
- BGM 500** Sunburst Table & Chairs by Daniel Lacey
- BGM 501** Lines Puzzle Cabinet by Josey Garbutt





ABOVE Elliott Butterwick

## Profile Marshlands Drinks Cabinet

**ARTISTS OFTEN FIND THEIR GREATEST** inspiration in the landscapes, rhythms, and textures of their hometowns. Whether it's the rolling hills of the countryside, the bustling energy of a cityscape, or the quiet mysteries of a coastal marsh, the natural and cultural environments that surround them inevitably seep into their work.

This is true of the Marshlands Drinks Cabinet, an ode to north Norfolk's tidal swells and salt marshes, which was designed and crafted by East Anglian designer-maker Elliott Butterwick.

With its fluid, wave-like doors and an exterior texture that seems to capture the whispers of salt marsh grasses swaying in the wind, the Marshlands Drinks Cabinet is a masterclass in design that bridges art and nature.

Every detail of its construction, from the use of ancient bog oak to the luxurious sycamore interior, speaks of a designer deeply attuned to the interplay of material, form, and environment. Striking and functional, the cabinet invites interaction, telling a story of craftsmanship where the organic meets the refined. It's no wonder this remarkable creation has earned Elliott the prestigious Christopher Claxton

Stevens Prize, cementing its place as a modern icon of British bespoke furniture.

The Marshlands Drinks Cabinet was awarded the prize during a ceremony at London's Mansion House in May 2024. This prestigious prize, presented by the Rt Hon the Lord Mayor, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli and Brian Ahern, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company, recognises the finest design among pieces awarded the Bespoke Guild Mark in the past year.

The prize, which includes a £1,000 cash award sponsored by Past Master Christopher Claxton Stevens, honours the skill, creativity, and innovation of Britain's top designer-makers.

Elliott's choice of materials for the cabinet tells its own story: its exterior features 5,000-year-old bog oak, a rare and challenging wood to work with, while the sycamore interior and bespoke brass handles add a touch of modern elegance. The textured surface of the curved doors, created using silicone moulds of marshland grass, underscores the piece's connection to its environmental muse.

This juxtaposition of rugged natural elements with refined craftsmanship is what makes the cabinet a standout creation. According to Daniel Hopwood, chairman of the Bespoke Guild Mark, "Elliott was not afraid to use bog oak despite its potential shortcomings. He did so extremely effectively, and the outcome was an exceptional piece of bespoke furniture."

Crafting the Marshlands Drinks Cabinet was a test of Elliott's skill and ingenuity. Unlike traditional cabinetmaking, where the carcass is built first and the doors fitted later, this design demanded a reverse approach.

"The most challenging aspect was probably towards the start," Elliott explained. "The doors were set on the outside of the carcass and given that I didn't know how much spring back there would be from the bent wood lamination, it made sense to make them first. Once they were done, I could then make a jig off the interior radius so the top and bottom of the carcass would match the curve of the doors."



IT IS TRULY AN HONOUR TO RECEIVE THIS YEAR'S PRIZE, ONE OF THE HIGHEST ACCOLADES IN BRITISH FURNITURE – THE JOURNEY TO COMPLETING THE CABINET WAS FULL OF CHALLENGES, AND LOTS OF MISTAKES WERE MADE ALONG THE WAY. THIS AWARD HAS GIVEN ME THE INSPIRATION TO PUSH BOUNDARIES EVEN FURTHER IN FUTURE CABINETMAKING

Elliott's eye for detail extended even to subtle features, such as ensuring that the drawer sides matched the radius of the curved front. "This wasn't fully planned beforehand," he admitted, "but it was an intentional decision when the time came. It not only looked better but also allowed for more glue surface."

Earning a Bespoke Guild Mark is a defining moment for any designer-maker. Since 1958, the award has represented the highest standards of British craftsmanship. Each piece is rigorously assessed on design, materials, craftsmanship, and function by a panel of experts.

The mark not only serves as a badge of honour but also provides winners with opportunities for promotion and exposure. Automatic consideration for the Christopher Claxton Stevens Prize is a further testament to the significance of this accolade.

Beyond the recognition, the Bespoke Guild Mark also plays a role in fostering growth. For unsuccessful applicants, the detailed feedback provided by the judges is an invaluable tool for refining their skills and designs for future success.

For Elliott, receiving the Christopher Claxton Stevens Prize is a career-defining moment. "It is truly an honour to receive this year's prize, one of the highest accolades in British furniture," he said. "The journey to completing the cabinet was full of challenges, and lots of mistakes were made along the way. This award has given me the inspiration to push boundaries even further in future cabinetmaking."

Elliott's commitment to pushing the limits of design and craftsmanship is evident in every inch of the Marshlands Drinks Cabinet. From its bold use of materials to its intricate detailing, the piece exemplifies the spirit of bespoke furniture: a union of artistry and utility that elevates the everyday into the extraordinary. ●

📍 @elliottbutterwickdesign



# Design Guild Mark

## British design at its best



SIXTEEN OUTSTANDING SUBMISSIONS

from three categories were awarded the coveted Design Guild Mark in 2024, with three receiving the additional accolade, the Jonathan Hindle Prize.

The Design Guild Mark was established in 2008 by The Furniture Makers' Company to raise the profile of British industrial design and to recognise excellence in this discipline. Over time the mark has grown from just Furniture to include categories for Interior Design Elements, and Lighting.

The presentation took place at Humanscale during Clerkenwell Design Week on 21 May 2024, with a presentation by Deyan Sudjic OBE, a British writer and broadcaster and former director of the Design Museum, London.

Aran, Re.Wrap and Apex were named the best designs of their category and were awarded the 2024 Jonathan Hindle Prize for outstanding design. ●

[designguildmark.org.uk](https://designguildmark.org.uk)  
@designguildmark

FURNITURE



OE1 Sit-Stand Table by Industrial Facility for Herman Miller



Aran by Morgan Studio for Morgan



Kitt by Mark Gabbertas for Gabbertas Studio



Maluma by Claesson Koivisto Rune, for Modus Furniture



Element Sofa System, by Philippe Malouin for SCP



Laines, by Craig Jones for Jones & Partners



Woodland Seat, by the Gaze Burvill team for Gaze Burvill



Pirouette Coat Stand, by Huw Evans and Campbell Thompson for The Conran Shop



Bellingdon Table and Sideboard, by Lisa Gould Sandall for Ercol

INTERIOR ELEMENTS



Modern Flock Wallpaper Collection,  
by Erica Wakerly for Modern Surface



Re.Wrap, by Ric Frampton and  
Sophie Cappe for The Collective



Bronte British Lambswool Collection,  
by Judith Coates for Bronte By Moon



Revolution, by Jodie Padgett for Camira

LIGHTING



Tekiö, by Anthony Dickens  
for Santa and Cole



Hotaru Mini, by Edward Barber  
and Jay Osgerby for Ozeki & Co



Apex, by John Tree for Hay



ABOVE John Tree

## Profile Apex

**LONDON-BASED DESIGNER JOHN TREE** has long been celebrated for his ability to distil objects to their core essence, crafting designs that marry industrial techniques with timeless functionality. With a portfolio spanning leading brands like Hay, Muuto, Tala, and Motorola, John's work reflects a thoughtful interplay between form, function, and sustainability. One of his latest creations, the Apex family of lights created for Danish furniture brand Hay, epitomises this ethos and earned him a prestigious Design Guild Mark in 2024.

Inspired by the classic banker's light, Apex pays homage to its historical roots while embracing a contemporary aesthetic. Its folded steel shade creates focused, directional lighting, making it versatile across diverse settings – whether modern or traditional. The range includes both free-standing and clamp-on models, enabling effortless adaptability. A standout feature of Apex is its high-gloss coloured finishes, which provide a bold visual statement even when the light is off.

Describing the initial spark for Apex, John said: "Apex came about from trying to create a simple directional light with a simple mechanism. Initially folding a

sheet of card around an E14 candle bulb, I realised that if it could also twist around the bulb, it would provide both shade and direction. The resulting form was quite like a pitched roof hence the name."

True to his design philosophy, John prioritises functionality, allowing aesthetics to flow naturally from problem-solving. Apex exemplifies this approach.

John explained: "For me, durability is a key part of the sustainability jigsaw so working closely with Hay's in-house designers, we used steel for as many parts as possible, both for its longevity and recyclability. The light source is also based on a standard bulb rather than a custom LED module, so the light source can be replaced and should be available for many years to come."

The design journey for Apex was not without hurdles, though. Achieving the seamless floating effect of the shade required innovative welding techniques to prevent distortion during production. Additionally, balancing the aesthetic desire for thin, elegant stems with practical electrical needs demanded creative problem-solving.

John reflects: "I wanted the shade to appear to float over the bulb which required having the mounting point hidden and welded to the underside of the shade. Welding to a steel sheet can cause it to distort which would have created problems for the high gloss and smooth exterior we wanted."

"A very fine and precise laser welding was needed for production to construct this detail and maintain the uninterrupted separation of the shade from the bulb and body. To keep the designs clean, I wanted the electrical cables to pass through the stems. There was a bit of back and forth to try and get the stems as thin and elegant as possible, while still supporting the flow of electricity. The stems are maybe a little thicker than we started with, but I think work better visually."

In addition to winning a Design Guild Mark for Apex, John was also awarded the Jonathan Hindle Prize for outstanding design – presented to the design that the judges believe to be the ‘best in category’ for the year – which includes a cash prize of £1,000.

“Presenting the design to a jury of industry leaders and receiving their approval was an incredible confidence boost,” said John. “It reaffirms the value of thoughtful, intentional design. The recognition of winning the award will hopefully be something that both bring new clients and help reassure existing ones that they are in safe hands.”

Looking ahead, John sees boundless potential in lighting innovation, particularly with advancements in LED technology: “The transition to LEDs has opened doors to low-energy, highly controllable lighting. I believe we’re just beginning to explore what’s possible.” ●

[johnntree.net](https://johnntree.net) | [@johnntree\\_](https://www.instagram.com/johntree_)



Jonathan Hindle presenting the Jonathan Hindle Prize to John Tree

PRESENTING THE DESIGN TO A JURY OF INDUSTRY LEADERS AND RECEIVING THEIR APPROVAL WAS AN INCREDIBLE CONFIDENCE BOOST – THE RECOGNITION OF WINNING THE AWARD WILL HOPEFULLY BE SOMETHING THAT BOTH BRING NEW CLIENTS AND HELP REASSURE EXISTING ONES THAT THEY ARE IN SAFE HANDS



# Manufacturing Guild Mark Celebrating Great British manufacturing

THE PRESTIGIOUS MANUFACTURING GUILD

Mark has been the mark of excellence, distinguishing Britain's top furnishing manufacturers, since 1993.

We award it to British manufacturers that have demonstrated incredible standards across all areas of the business by successfully passing a rigorous, independently reviewed audit against a comprehensive set of criteria, including design, product development, manufacture, HR, financial stability, sustainability, sales and marketing. ●

Find out more about becoming a holder: [furnituremakers.org.uk/excellence/manufacturing-guild-mark/](https://furnituremakers.org.uk/excellence/manufacturing-guild-mark/)

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**ABOVE** Michael Dingwall, director of production and quality at Dreams, and Howard James, testing and technical services manager at FIRA International, who audited Dreams

**LEFT** The Dreams factory

# Profile Dreams

**THE INDUSTRY'S MARK OF EXCELLENCE,** the coveted Manufacturing Guild Mark, not only distinguishes Britain's top furnishing manufacturers, but the rigorous audit itself has been designed to help a company, large or small, achieve the highest standards throughout its operations.

Held by 20 leading British manufacturers, the Manufacturing Guild Mark, which is awarded by The Furniture Makers' Company, is one of the industry's most sought-after accolades. In 2024, leading bed retailer Dreams joined the illustrious band of outstanding businesses which have achieved the mark.

Established nearly 40 years ago, Dreams, which is a corporate member of The Furniture Makers' Company, is known as one of the UK's most-loved bed retailers and now manufactures over 1,000 mattresses, 700 divan bases and 200 headboards every day. With in-depth skills training key to enabling the company to consistently supply high-quality products and adhere to outstanding manufacturing standards, Dreams Bed Factory in the West Midlands is at the heart of the business.

The Oldbury manufacturing facility is home to a 230-strong team of craftspeople,

including five apprentices, who provide a range of skills from quilting, sewing and fabric cutting to upholstery, mattress tufting building, tape edging and frame and drawer assembly. The specialist skill of tape edging, the process of bringing mattress edges together, is a particularly complex procedure, partly because it requires walking backwards while working. At Dreams Bed Factory, all of the 18 tape edgers currently employed have trained for six months before being deemed competent.

Ian King, operational excellence manager, who successfully led the Manufacturing Guild Mark audit at Dreams Bed Factory, explains why the company took on the challenge. "Having never had a manufacturing specific accreditation, we felt it was about time that our fantastic team here got some well-deserved recognition as bed experts. The Manufacturing Guild Mark is widely recognised in the industry as a sign of excellence and as a leading player in the UK beds market, we felt it perfectly aligned with us."

The comprehensive assessment process required Dreams to pass a rigorous, independently reviewed audit carried out by the Furniture Industry Research Association (FIRA). This was set against an extensive set of criteria including design, product development, manufacture, HR, financial stability, sustainability, sales and marketing.

The Manufacturing Guild Mark gives assurance to retailers, specifiers, distributors and customers that the furnishings they purchase are made with care and that the company that manufactured them has exemplary standards throughout its operations.

Ian continues: "The audit process itself took a few weeks of preparation, collecting various records and documents to send off to the auditor for pre-reading. The inspector then spent a full day on site, looking at every aspect of our production. Some of the key criteria we were assessed on included innovation in terms of products and production processes, product

quality standards, testing records and robust inspection criteria, customer service standards and complaints procedures, health and safety standards and colleague training programmes, and also our ESG activities.

"I am proud to say that the auditor did not find any non-conformances on the day which was a superb achievement for the Dreams Bed Factory team. The audit was a valuable opportunity to review all aspects of our manufacturing process and it was reassuring for an independent auditor to confirm that we are the best we can be. It was also useful in reaffirming to the factory team that we are one of the UK's leading bed manufacturers and have robust systems, policies and procedures in place to ensure we are not only conforming to, but surpassing, many of the standards required to meet the audit criteria.

"Another constructive move which resulted from the audit was a suggestion by the auditor that we go on to obtain FISP (Furniture Industry Sustainability Programme) certification as a next step, to formalise our commitment to driving continuous environmental improvements. We have also started the process of becoming FSC certified to further demonstrate the value we place on supporting responsible forestry. Overall, the audit was a very positive process and a great way of congratulating our expert team on their outstanding work."

With a history dating back to 1985, Dreams has 2,300 colleagues across the UK and boasts a store network of 208 sites in addition to its ecommerce platform.

Ian explains: "Gaining the prestigious Manufacturing Guild Mark shows how far we have come as a business – having been in the industry for many years, I see it as the pinnacle of operating excellence. Dreams

THE AWARD IS MORE THAN A BADGE OF EXCELLENCE – THE COMPLEX AUDIT IT REQUIRES ALSO DELIVERS BENEFITS, SOMETIMES HIGHLIGHTING AREAS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT AND PROVIDING CONSTRUCTIVE ADVICE OR, AS IN DREAMS' CASE, REAFFIRMING THE HIGH STANDARDS A COMPANY HAS ACHIEVED

Bed Factory has undergone significant change over the last two years, from re-designing the whole product range to implementing a new factory layout and improving our processes. In fact, the same inspector had visited the factory a few years earlier and he was extremely complimentary about the improvements we have made, describing them as being 'transformational'.

"To have sailed through the comprehensive FIRA audit without the inspector finding a single non-conformance is a real credit to the skills and hard work of our team, and I would like to congratulate every one of them on the part they have played in our success. From design, product development and manufacture, to HR, financial stability, sustainability, sales and marketing, Dreams came through with flying colours."

He concludes: "Our internal and external quality metrics show the levels of improvement we have achieved in recent years and the Manufacturing Guild Mark accreditation underpins this, giving assurance to our customers and the wider industry that we are one of the leading bed manufacturers in the UK."

Daniel Mesecke, chairman of the Manufacturing Guild Mark, commented: "It's fantastic to see Dreams gain the much sought-after Manufacturing Guild Mark. A mark of excellence, it demonstrates Dreams' ongoing commitment to outstanding craftsmanship and innovation in the bed retail sector."

Paul Solly, chief commercial officer at Dreams, said: "The Manufacturing Guild Mark accreditation is a real testament to the expertise of our craftspeople and the high standards we maintain throughout our business. At its core, Dreams is committed to providing premium products that meet our customers' needs. Being awarded the Manufacturing Guild Mark cements this promise and recognises our success in doing so."

In addition to communicating the business's success in achieving the Manufacturing Guild Mark to colleagues, Dreams will also be utilising the mark in its marketing to customers both via its website and in point-of-sale displays instore. The accolade perfectly aligns with the company's mission to encourage customers to choose Dreams first, further building trust for the business as a great quality manufacturer and retailer. ●

[dreams.co.uk](https://dreams.co.uk)



At The Furniture Makers' Company, we're dedicated to securing the future of the UK furniture and furnishing industry by inspiring and supporting the next generation of talent. Education is at the core of what we do, and we're proud to champion the designers, makers, retailers and innovators who will shape the industry for years to come.

Our work begins in schools, where we introduce young people to the creative possibilities of furniture design. For those pursuing further education, we provide scholarships, bursaries, and awards that break down financial barriers and recognise excellence. These initiatives not only encourage dedication and creativity but also ensure talented individuals can achieve their potential.

We also focus on bridging the gap between education and employment. Through partnerships with colleges and employers, we support apprenticeships and organise professional development programmes that equip young professionals with the skills they need to succeed.

This section celebrates the impact of our education initiatives. Together, we're building a vibrant, sustainable future for furniture – one student, apprentice, and professional at a time.



# Education

**ABOVE** Lucy Milham  
and the Alis Armchair  
at the Young Furniture  
Makers exhibition

# Why Education Matters

## Liveryman Alex Gifford is head of art and design at Morley College, London. He tells us why education matters



Alex Gifford  
Morley College, London

**DURING MY RELATIVELY SHORT TIME IN EDUCATION, I HAVE OBSERVED AN INCREASING NUMBER OF CAPABLE STUDENTS WHO ARE UNWILLING TO PURSUE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AT THIS STAGE. MANY ARE EAGER TO ENTER THE WORKFORCE AND ARE GROWING MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE COST-BENEFIT RATIO OF A UNIVERSITY DEGREE**

securing partners willing to offer these opportunities is vital. However, we are fortunate to receive funding and support from the college to establish what I believe will be a leading workshop facility in parts of London where such opportunities are scarce. I am also immensely grateful for the support of The Furniture Makers' Company, whose guidance has been invaluable in designing this space.

In addition to T Levels, we plan to offer short adult courses and, in the longer term, open the facilities to the public, creating a permanent maker space that supports local designers and makers, and for community action projects.

During my relatively short time in education, I have observed an increasing number of capable students who are unwilling to pursue university education at this stage. Many are eager to enter the workforce and are growing more concerned about the cost-benefit ratio of a university degree. As someone who was a perpetual student at a time when education was far less expensive, I completely understand this perspective. The appeal of degree apprenticeships or deferring university is becoming ever stronger, and we need education that caters for this in more and more subjects.

As we near completion of our workshop, I can't help but smile when our facilities team – many of whom have been here for 20 or 30 years – roll their eyes and remind me that just a decade ago, we stripped out all our woodworking facilities in favour of computer labs. While we have also invested in laser cutters, 3D printers, and digital skills training for our students, the human desire to make tangible objects is not diminishing. In fact, as people spend more time on screens, the value of hands-on creation is increasing. We live in a physical world, and the drive to learn how to make things remains as strong as ever. We need an education system that caters for that, and I hope to play a part in that journey.●

[morleycollege.ac.uk](https://morleycollege.ac.uk)



**I AM RELATIVELY NEW TO TEACHING,** having started in 2020 after spending around 20 years working in the furniture industry as a designer, product developer, and marketer. Initially, I saw teaching as an interesting way to navigate the uncertainties of the pandemic, assuming that once the world returned to normal, I would resume my career in the industry. However, working in education ignited a new love of learning.

At Morley College, I oversee several art and design courses, catering to a diverse range of students. These include individuals who left education without GCSEs and are seeking a fresh start, 16–19 year olds at Level 3 or Foundation, higher education students, and retirees who pursue evening classes to explore their creative passions. I have witnessed first-hand how education can touch people at different stages in their lives, demonstrating that it remains relevant to absolutely everyone, throughout their entire lifetime.

One aspect of teaching that particularly interests me is the evolving landscape of education. While some of these changes may seem daunting, they also present exciting opportunities, and as society changes, so must education. My current project is the introduction of T Levels at Morley College. This qualification remains relatively unknown, particularly the craft and design pathway, which is, in many respects, unprecedented. We plan to launch the T Level in furniture making, upholstery, jewellery, fashion, and textiles. What differentiates these courses from previous vocational apprenticeships is their combination of design rigour, while learning hand-making and digital skills alongside a significant academic study of the creative industries. This holistic approach enhances students' employability, as well as preparing them to go to university.

Delivering these courses presents substantial challenges, not least because awareness of T Levels is still limited. A crucial component of the qualification is an 8–12 week industry placement, and



# In 2024 we resumed our Young Professionals Industry Experience

**YOUNG PEOPLE ARE THE HEARTBEAT OF** the future workforce, bringing fresh ideas, energy, and adaptability to an ever-evolving world of work. But their success – and the success of the organisations they join – depends on more than just enthusiasm. It requires opportunities to nurture their skills, guide their growth, and help them find their place in the professional landscape. Recognising this, we reintroduced our Young Professionals Industry Experience in 2024.

It provides nominated young professionals with an unparalleled opportunity to gain a comprehensive overview of the industry. In 2024, eight promising individuals embarked on a transformative three-week journey across the UK. Their itinerary included visits to 20 companies representing every facet of the furniture supply chain, from raw materials and components to manufacturing, marketing, and intellectual property.

Spanning three weeks across June and July, the programme offered participants a rare opportunity to experience the industry in its entirety. Companies visited included household names like Ercol, G Plan, and Silentnight, alongside organisations such as the Sylva Foundation and the Frogmore Conservation Workshop. Each stop featured masterclasses, behind-the-scenes tours, and insights into how different businesses operate and thrive within the industry.

At the end of the experience, the group returned to Furniture Makers' Hall to present their findings to their employers and host companies.

Ellie Amodio, senior marketing executive at Sleeppeeze, highlighted how the experience enhanced her knowledge: "The Young Professionals Industry Experience was a fantastic opportunity to visit a variety of businesses from across the furniture industry which I wouldn't have had the opportunity to see otherwise. I was able to boost my knowledge in commercial areas, as well as learning completely new things about manufacturing and its complexities. Everyone on the programme brought different perspectives and questions, so we were able

to bounce off each other and make the most of the opportunity we had."

Beyond the professional insights, the programme also fostered strong connections among participants and industry leaders. These relationships are a key part of the Young Professionals Industry Experience's value, helping to build a supportive network that will benefit both individuals and the broader industry for years to come.

Lydia Burrows, head of brand experience at HSL Chairs, emphasised the unique opportunity to engage with a diverse group of industry leaders: "This has been a truly unique opportunity, offering rare insight into a wide range of furniture designers and makers across the UK. It has demonstrated that the industry is thriving and has also highlighted the sheer scale of knowledge and skill upon which it is founded. I can't wait to put all the things I have learned into action in the coming years."

### 2024'S PARTICIPANTS

- Ellie Amodio**  
Senior marketing executive, Sleeppeeze
- Claire Anderson**  
Assistant production manager, George Smith Ltd
- Jess Blake**  
Social media manager, Saxon Furniture
- Lydia Burrows**  
Head of brand experience, HSL Chairs
- Gabriella Charlton-Little**  
Account manager, Colebrook Bosson Saunders
- Jordan Hargadon**  
New product development team leader, Silentnight
- Tab van der Lande**  
Furniture designer maker at Sebastian Cox Ltd
- Thomas O'Neill**  
Senior design and projects engineer, Race Furniture



Delegates at the presentation lunch



Vita Group visit



Designer Contracts visit



Claire Anderson, Thomas O'Neill, Gabriella Charlton-Little, Brian Ahern, Master, Ellie Amodio, Lydia Burrows and Tab van der Lande

# Young Professionals Industry Experience

## Why Intellectual Property Matters

An Intellectual Property (IP) 'mini' masterclass was included in the Young Professionals Industry Experience (YPIE) by Past Master Dids Macdonald OBE, chair of Anti Copying in Design (ACID). The 2024 delegates were given the chance to enter a competition to write an essay on 'Why Intellectual Property matters to your brand' and the winner received a free membership to ACID and the chance to share their essay with Austin Friars' readers



### WINNER

#### Claire Anderson

Assistant production manager of George Smith

### BRAND IS EVERYTHING TO A BUSINESS,

the value of which cannot be overstated. At the heart of a brand lies its intellectual property (IP) – creations of the mind such as inventions, literary and artistic works, designs, and names, which are often intangible, but set a business apart from its competitors. In today's fast paced, global and competitive markets, why does IP matter?

### Protects Unique Brand Identity

Every brand, including yours, has its own unique identity, comprising of a logo, product designs and tagline to name a few things. This identity is key to how your customers perceive and differentiate your business from competitors. An individual colour scheme or unique product shape can make you instantly recognisable to a customer but imagine if this was copied by another brand or business. Your reputation, sales and customers could all be profoundly affected.

Intellectual property rights help to safeguard these elements. Trademarks, design rights, copyright, patents and trade secrets all help guard your brand's distinguishing features and provide a legal recourse to address and deter infringements.

### Encourages Innovation & Creativity

The protection offered by intellectual property rights incentivises innovation and creativity by ensuring that creators can reap the benefits of their hard work. Substantial investments of time, money and specialised equipment can be needed to design and bring a new product to life. Knowing that innovations are protected encourages businesses to continue investing in new ideas to drive progress and growth.

### Builds Trust & Loyalty

Well-known brands have instantly recognisable intellectual property – we all love those logo games. From their IP, these brands have often built a brand associated with quality and reliability. Customers buying their products or services do so because they trust the brand to meet the standards they expect. These brands have created and won the loyalty of their customers. Intellectual property rights protect both customer and brand from counterfeits and copies trying to piggyback from another brand's goodwill.

So now you know why intellectual property is a vital asset to your brand and business. It's no wonder that IP was described as the oil of the 21st Century by Mark Getty. Still not sure on IP, intellectual property rights and how to protect your brand? Speak to ACID. ●

### RUNNER UP ACID AWARDEE

Tab van der Lande

**LEFT** Claire Anderson (centre) was the winner, with Laura Newbold Breen (left), CEO of ACID, and Dids Macdonald OBE (right), Past Master and co-founder of ACID

# Young Furniture Makers Exhibition 2024

**THE YOUNG FURNITURE MAKERS** exhibition, our inspiring annual showcase of young design talent principally sponsored by Tizo Limited, returned to the City of London last October.

Nearly 70 designs from emerging designer-makers were showcased at Furniture Makers' Hall and the Dutch Church in Austin Friars, London.

The exhibition, established over 15 years ago, has become a key event for fostering new talent in the furniture industry offering schoolchildren, students, and graduates an invaluable opportunity to display their creations to the design community while networking with potential employers.

Excitement and anticipation built throughout the day, culminating in a drinks reception and the announcement of the 2024 Young Furniture Makers Award winners. Hundreds gathered in the Dutch Church to hear which innovative designs topped their categories, with esteemed furniture maker John Makepeace OBE serving as the guest of honour and awards presenter.

Brian Ahern, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company, said: "The Young Furniture Makers exhibition once again highlighted the outstanding and extraordinary design talent present in the UK. We are deeply thankful to our exhibition and award sponsors, whose continued commitment makes this inspiring event possible every year. I would especially like to express my gratitude to our principal sponsor, Tizo Limited, for their generous support."

John Makepeace OBE, guest of honour, said: "It was exciting to see a variety of innovative ideas but also an impressive level of craftsmanship, both in wood and fibre."

Nick Groves, CEO at Tizo Limited, principal sponsor of the Young Furniture Makers exhibition, said: "It was a fantastic privilege to be a small part of the day, sponsoring the event. We had a real opportunity to gain an insight into the level of talent on show. It's inspiring to see such exceptional talent and creativity from the next generation of designers and makers. Supporting young talent is crucial to the future of the industry, and we are thrilled to be part of an event that celebrates innovation and craftsmanship. Congratulations to all the participants and winners – you are the future of the industry." ●

[furnituremakers.org.uk/young-furniture-makers-exhibition](https://furnituremakers.org.uk/young-furniture-makers-exhibition)

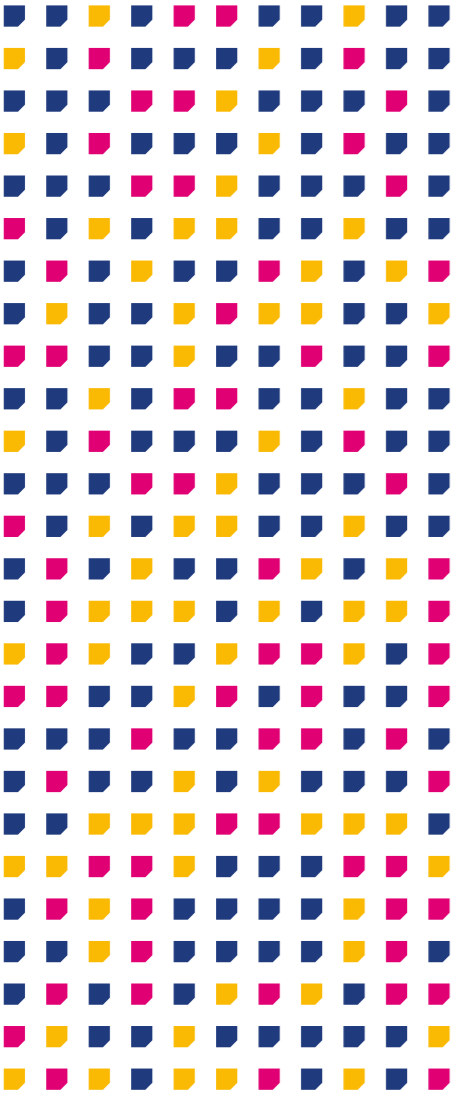
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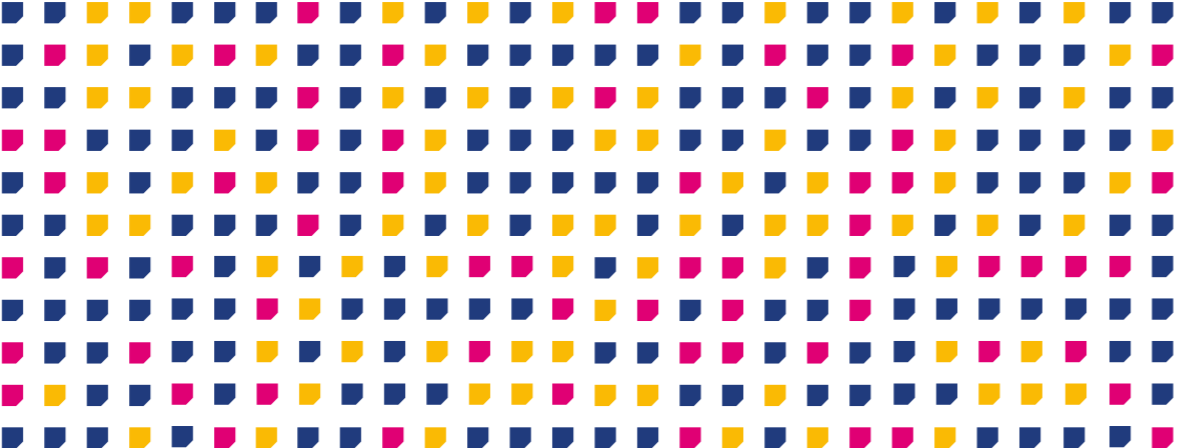
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# Young Furniture Makers Awards 2024



Young Furniture Makers Exhibition 2024

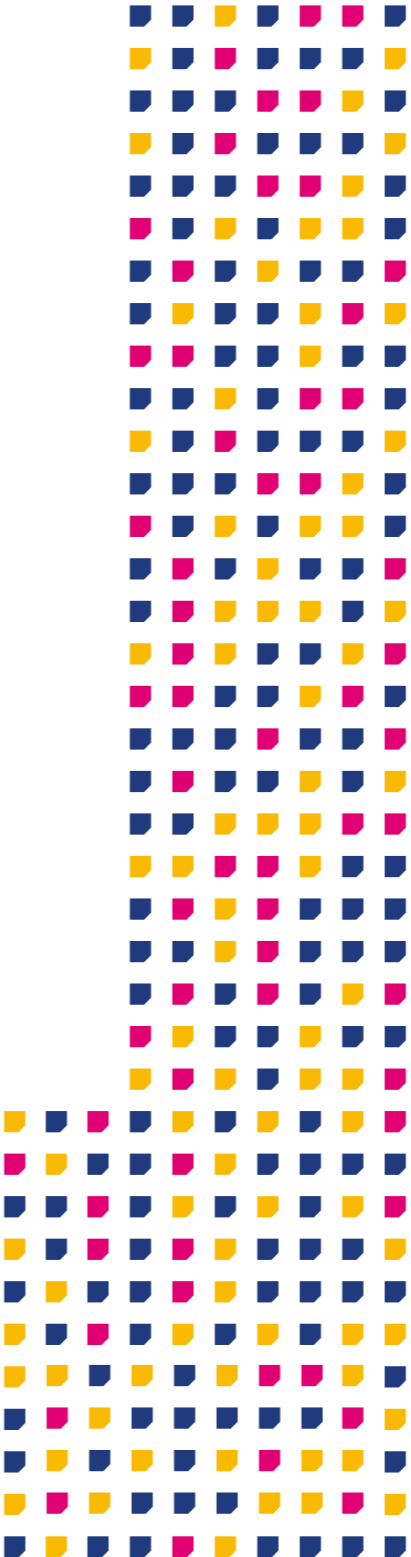


**EVERY YEAR OUR YOUNG FURNITURE MAKERS** exhibition culminates with an award ceremony, recognising the designs judged to be the standout exhibits on show.

All the pieces at the exhibition have been shortlisted for one of the four Young Furniture Makers Awards – the Bespoke Award, Design Award, Textiles Award and, new for 2024, the Apprentice Award. The judging of each design takes place in person at the exhibition, giving our judging panels the opportunity to inspect the pieces carefully before making their decision.

In addition to these awards, we also present several prizes that are sponsored by different companies from industry. In 2024, we were delighted to have John Makepeace OBE, one of the UK’s pre-eminent furniture makers, as our special guest to announce the winners.

We would like to say a big thank you to all the sponsors of the awards and prizes. ●



**APPRENTICE AWARD**  
Sponsored by Achieve & Partners  
**Wrapped Grain Walnut Tambour Record Cabinet by Stanley Mackintosh from Bill Cleyndert + Company**

“I had an amazing experience during the exhibition. The opportunity to be surrounded by so many extraordinary exhibitors and meet such a wide range of people with experience in every aspect of the furniture industry. From other students/apprentices starting out at the same level as me to heads of companies that have been working in furniture for a lifetime. The day simply wasn’t long enough for me to speak to everyone as much as I would have liked to. Being lucky enough to have the opportunity to present my work and meet so many amazing people is something I am massively grateful for, and something I would encourage anyone that is able to make the most of in the future. At the end of such an inspiring day, I was fortunate enough to receive first place in the Apprentice category. Having seen the quality of work on display, I was not expecting this at all, but I was incredibly flattered and glad that others enjoyed my work.”



**BESPOKE AWARD**  
Sponsored by Axminster Tools  
**Oomugi – A Japanese Whisky Shrine by Ed Ryland**

“Being recognised among the many incredible talents showcased at this year’s inspiring Young Furniture Makers exhibition is a true honour. My heartfelt thanks go to everyone at Waters and Acland for patiently transmitting their passion for creativity and craftsmanship through expert tuition and unwavering support.”



'Torsion' Dresser Sideboard



Tom and John Makepeace



Eva and John Makepeace



Nautical Bench



Madaleine and John Makepeace



Diamond + Pearls Chair and Tomer



Master Brian Ahern and Tomer



Verne Easy Chair and Kevin



Simon Burvill, founder of Gaze Burvill; Kevin; and Charles Dedman, head of design at Gaze Burvill



Cove and Eva

DESIGN AWARD

Sponsored by NaughtOne

**'Torsion' Dresser Sideboard by Tom Wilkinson-Dix**

"It's an honour and a privilege to have won this award. I think these exhibitions are vital to the future of furniture design. Social media can be a great tool for visual discovery and research, but nothing compares to the kind of connections and conversations that can only happen when you get like-minded people in a room together. Besides, furniture is made to be touched and interacted with, and you can't do that through a screen."

TEXTILES AWARD

Sponsored by House of Sonnaz

**Cove by Eva Ellis**

"Showcasing my work at the Young Furniture Makers exhibition was an incredible experience. It was a privilege to exhibit my chair, Cove, alongside such talented designers and to connect with industry professionals. I enjoyed discussing the future of sustainable upholstery and the potential of 3D knitting. I'm grateful for the positive reception my design received from the judges, industry, and public. Winning the Textiles Award was a fantastic surprise, and to receive the Fast Track Prize as well truly exceeded my expectations. I'm looking forward to working with industry expert Malcolm Walker over the next 12 months, to gain valuable industry experience."

SCHOOL DESIGN PRIZE

Sponsored by KI

**Nautical Bench by Madaleine Richardson**

"I was overwhelmed and excited when I found out that I had won. It was such an honour to be recognised among some very talented designers. This achievement has given me confidence as a designer, and I plan to use it as a foundation to expand my portfolio. I also want to continue to refine my skills particularly in woodworking and welding as well as sustainable design."

BEST IN SHOW PRIZE

Sponsored by Blum

**Diamond + Pearls Chair by Tomer Arad**

"It was truly exciting to participate in such a wonderful event and witness the appreciation young designers like me are receiving. This exhibition was a significant milestone for me and others, as we typically spend most of our time in the workshop, away from public and client interaction. It provided us with a valuable opportunity to showcase a precious part of ourselves that usually remains hidden. It was a great honour to exhibit my work alongside like-minded people who share the same passion. There was a great atmosphere among the exhibitors – everyone was very friendly, and I enjoyed discussing our work, exchanging ideas, and building new connections."

BEST CHAIR IN SHOW PRIZE

Sponsored by Meon by Gaze Burvill

**Verne Easy Chair by Kevin Tronel**

"I am thrilled and deeply honoured to win this award. It was a moment of pure excitement and disbelief. To have my work recognised among such talented designers was incredibly validating. The feedback was very encouraging. Attendees were drawn to the chair's sharp design and the comfort it offers, while industry professionals appreciated its strong production focus and the meticulous attention to detail in craftsmanship. Exhibitions like this are essential. They bring together emerging and established talents, fostering innovation and collaboration. They also create a platform for designers to connect with the industry and the public, ensuring the craft continues to evolve."

THE FAST TRACK PRIZE

Sponsored by Malcolm Walker

**Cove by Eva Ellis**

"Exhibiting my chair, Cove, has been a valuable step in my career. I'm excited to build on this through my internship with Malcolm Walker, where I'll gain industry knowledge, refine my skills, and make sure to ask plenty of questions. The exhibition has already opened new opportunities, including an invitation to showcase my work at Buckingham Palace in March. I look forward to using these experiences and connections to advance my career in furniture design."



# My Furniture Career Recruitment and training support

## THE BRITISH FURNISHING INDUSTRY IS

built on craftsmanship, innovation, and a skilled workforce. To ensure the sector continues to thrive, The Furniture Makers' Company launched My Furniture Career – a dedicated early careers website designed to connect young talent with exciting opportunities in the industry.

Developed in collaboration with GetMyFirstJob and The Talent People, My Furniture Career provides a specialist recruitment solution, supporting businesses in attracting the next generation of furniture designers, makers, and industry professionals. The platform is aimed at 15- to 24-year-olds, helping those still deciding on their career path, signposting industry-specific training opportunities, and linking job seekers with employers.

## WHAT MY FURNITURE CAREER OFFERS

My Furniture Career provides a comprehensive hub for young people exploring career opportunities in the furniture and furnishing sector, offering:

- **A Free Jobs Board**  
Employers can quickly register and upload early career vacancies. Jobs listed also gain exposure on the GetMyFirstJob website, which attracts 10,000 new users every month.
- **Featured Employer Pages**  
A cost-effective way for businesses to showcase their organisation and highlight vacancies to a targeted audience.
- **An Extensive Training Directory**  
Connecting users to a wide range of educational providers, from short upholstery courses to advanced degrees in product design.
- **Engaging Industry Content**  
Regularly updated with inspiring stories, career advice, and industry insights tailored to young people interested in furniture and furnishing.

## NOW ON TIKTOK

As part of our mission to inspire the next generation, we have launched a My Furniture Career TikTok channel. Working directly with young professionals already thriving in the industry, the channel will share motivational video content, career advice, and behind-the-scenes insights into the world of furniture design, manufacturing, and craftsmanship.

This exciting new platform will help young people see first-hand what a career in furniture can offer – combining creativity, skill, and innovation in a fast-evolving industry.

## A CALL TO ACTION FOR EMPLOYERS

Jonny Westbrooke, CEO of The Furniture Makers' Company, urges businesses to take advantage of this specialist platform.

"We have developed My Furniture Career to offer businesses a specialist, dedicated platform to promote and fill job vacancies, as well as research suitable training from established providers to upskill their employees. We encourage businesses to utilise My Furniture Career as part of their recruitment strategy.

"By embracing this platform – and now TikTok – My Furniture Career is making the furniture industry more accessible, exciting, and engaging for the next generation of talent." ●

[myfurniturecareer.org.uk](https://myfurniturecareer.org.uk)



 **my  
furniture  
career**

# The Frederick Parker Collection and

## By Wendy Shorter-Blake, chairman of the Frederick Parker Collection

**THE TREASURES OF THE FREDERICK** Parker Collection, almost 200 historical chairs and an extensive archive of material from Parker Knoll and Frederick Parker & Sons Ltd, have continued to enchant, inspire, educate and intrigue students, researchers and visitors throughout 2024.

In the first half of the year, a record numbers of visitors came to see the collection. In addition to returning visitors from specialist furniture groups and upholstery colleges across the UK, for the first time, the visitors in 2024 have included groups from universities outside London, furniture retailers and from general interest groups.

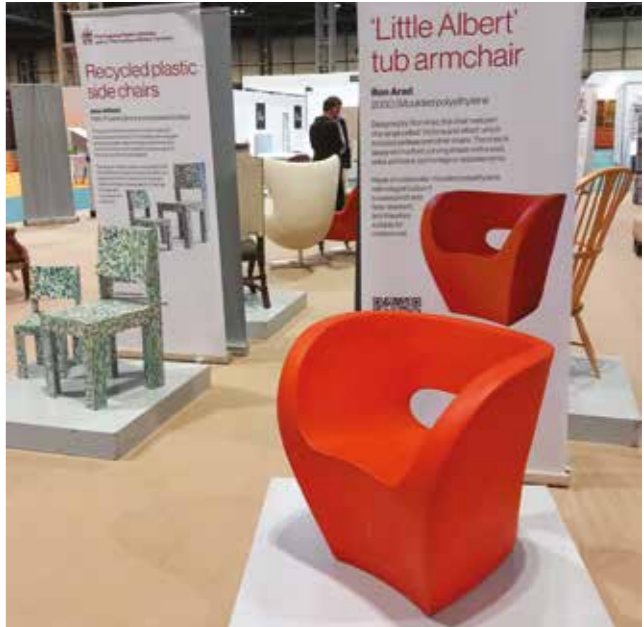
This year also brought the opportunity to introduce the collection and archive to a wider audience, when Jo Sovin, collections manager, and Peter Fisher, London Metropolitan University special collections outreach manager, were invited to discuss the collection at a symposium organised by the Institute of Conservators. Their presentation invited some lively discussions on how the collection has been preserved, maintained and stored.

In spring 2024 the schools and colleges touring exhibition was extended to include West Dean College as well as Rycotewood College. The very positive feedback received after these visits indicates how valuable the schools and colleges tour has become as a way to expand access to the collection. The tour provides an opportunity for those students who are not able to visit the collection in London to see a selection of chairs up close and to benefit from the specialist furniture history and design talks delivered by members of the Frederick Parker Collection Committee.

The online catalogue of the chair collection, which was launched in 2023, has proved a much-used and popular resource. The entry for each chair features a number of high-resolution digital images and newly researched, in-depth descriptions. These allow catalogue users to examine the chairs in close-up detail and to cross-reference chairs within the catalogue and in the accompanying archive.

At the time of writing, the future of the Frederick Parker Collection and Archive is uncertain. Although much of the collection is currently in temporary storage, a selection of some of the most popular and interesting chairs remains accessible and is available for display at external events and exhibitions. Thanks to our storage partner, Celtheath, eight chairs from the collection were shown at the Young Furniture Makers exhibition in October and at the January Furniture Show in Birmingham. Once again a selection of chairs will be sent to furniture colleges as part of the schools and colleges touring exhibition in spring 2025. Discussions are currently underway for a new home for the Frederick Parker Collection and Archive, which will allow continued access for students, researchers and all those who have an interest in this unique collection. ●

**To view the chair catalogue, go to [frederickparkercollection.org.uk](https://frederickparkercollection.org.uk). For general enquiries about the collection and archive, email [specialcollections@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:specialcollections@londonmet.ac.uk)**



The Furniture Makers' Company is a forward-thinking, modern livery company representing individuals and businesses across the diverse, dynamic, and creative UK furnishing industry. As a collective force for good, our members drive our mission, helping us achieve our goals and fulfil our commitments to the sector.

Our members come from all areas of the furniture and furnishing industry, including beds, fabrics, kitchens, carpets, and floor coverings. This broad representation ensures our continued industry relevance and fosters meaningful business connections within our network. Whether you're a designer, manufacturer, distributor, craftsperson, retailer, supplier, lecturer, PR practitioner, or journalist, there's a place for you in our community.

We are pleased to report that our membership grew steadily in 2024. Every new member strengthens our voice and empowers us to advance our core initiatives in Education, Excellence, and Welfare within the industry.



# Membership

ABOVE Liveryman  
Dawn Hamlet



## Freeman Profile

### Emma Leeke is managing director of Leekes

**WHEN I FIRST LEARNED ABOUT THE** Furniture Makers' Company, it was through industry contacts who spoke with such enthusiasm and reverence for the organisation that I couldn't help but delve deeper. What I discovered was an institution that stands as a cornerstone of the industry I love, promoting excellence, nurturing the next generation, and providing essential support to people from the industry. It was impossible not to be inspired. The opportunity to network with others who share this passion sealed the deal, and I'm proud to now call myself a freeman of this historic organisation.

My career in the furniture industry began indirectly, but the journey has been nothing short of transformative. Starting on Marks & Spencer's graduate scheme, I spent years learning the ropes of retail management and buying before returning to Wales to join my family business as commercial director. That role introduced me to the world of furniture buying, and it's been a love affair ever since. For the past 25 years, I've travelled the globe, immersing myself in the intricacies of this dynamic trade. Yet, no matter where I've been, the pull of community and collaboration has remained central to my professional ethos. It's this sense of shared purpose that I've found so strongly embodied in The Furniture Makers' Company.

**AT ITS HEART, THE FURNITURE MAKERS' COMPANY IS ABOUT BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND FOSTERING A SENSE OF FELLOWSHIP AND IT'S THIS SPIRIT THAT I'M MOST EAGER TO EMBRACE – I SEE MY ROLE WITHIN THE COMPANY AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE BACK TO AN INDUSTRY THAT HAS GIVEN ME SO MUCH**

Becoming a freeman is more than a professional accolade, it's a personal honour. The Furniture Makers' Company's dedication to promoting education, welfare, and fellowship aligns seamlessly with my own values. The work they do, from encouraging young talent to supporting those in need, is both vital and inspiring. As someone who oversees the buying for our chain of home department stores as well as our leisure division – which includes a luxury hotel, two championship golf courses, and even a distillery – I'm particularly excited by the opportunities to connect with other industry leaders and share experiences.

Through this connection, I've already begun to think about how I can contribute to the Company's mission. One of my first commitments has been to establish a regional group for Wales. Our aim is to bring together individuals and organisations from across the Welsh furniture industry, fostering collaboration and encouraging new membership. In February 2025, we hosted a gin tasting evening at Hensol Castle Distillery, a venue close to my heart and a cornerstone of our family business. This event marked the start of what we hope will be a regular calendar of gatherings, each one a chance to strengthen ties within the industry.

What excites me most about The Furniture Makers' Company is the diversity of its activities. From events and networking opportunities to its work in education and welfare, the organisation offers myriad ways to engage and contribute. For me, this also extends beyond the Company. As a newly

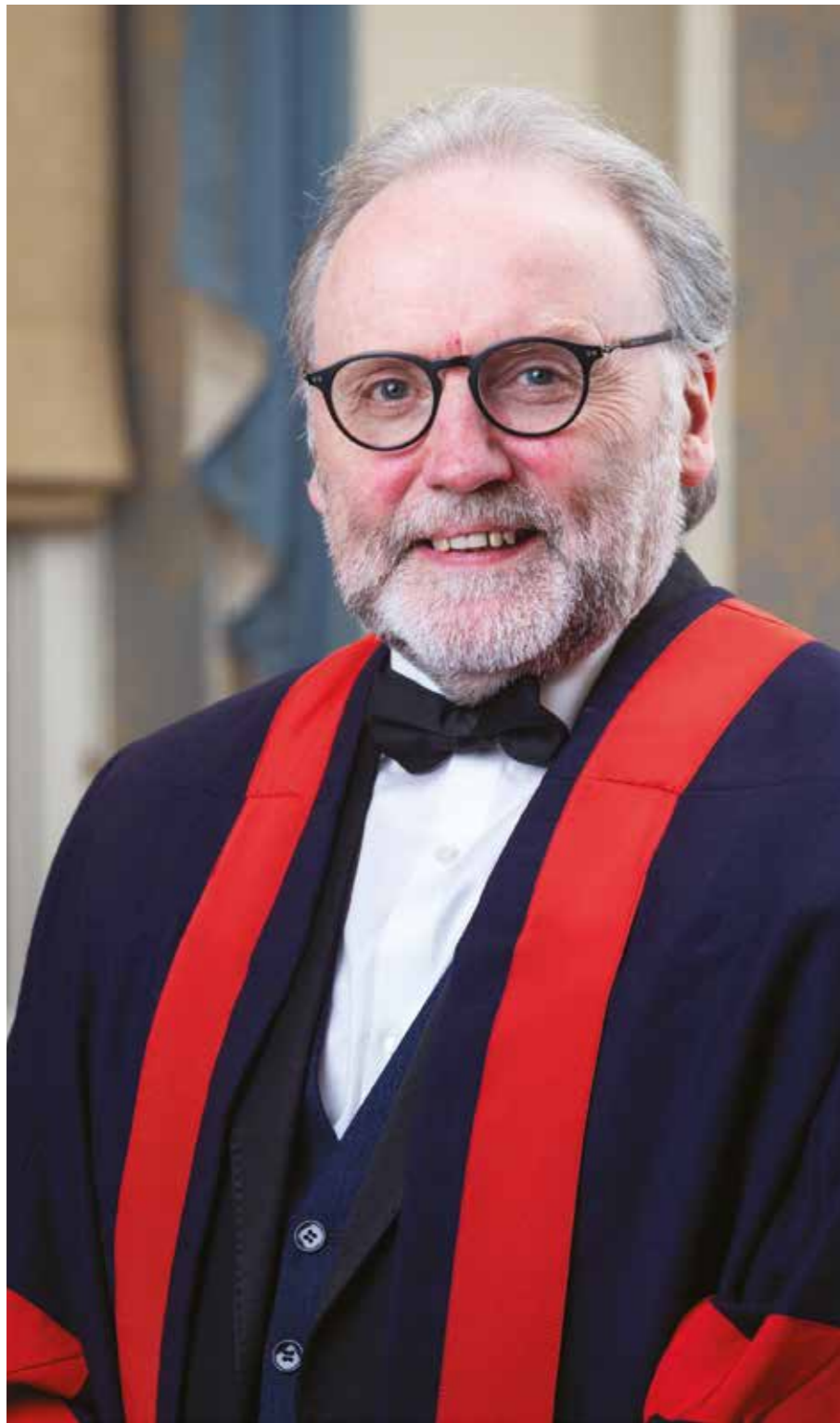
appointed director of the British Furniture Association (BFA), where I represent the voice of British furniture retailers, I see opportunities for synergy. The insights I gain from the Company's work can help inform my contributions to the BFA, and vice versa, creating a stronger, more unified industry.

At its heart, The Furniture Makers' Company is about building relationships and fostering a sense of fellowship. It's this spirit that I'm most eager to embrace. Whether it's through sharing knowledge, mentoring young professionals, or simply exchanging ideas with peers, I see my role within the Company as an opportunity to give back to an industry that has given me so much.

**TOP TO BOTTOM** Leekes Department Store

As I look ahead, I'm filled with anticipation for what's to come. The Furniture Makers' Company not only preserves the heritage of our trade but also shapes its future, and I'm honoured to be a part of that journey. Together, we can continue to champion excellence, support one another, and ensure that the furniture industry remains a vibrant and dynamic force for generations to come. ● [leekes.co.uk](https://leekes.co.uk)





**OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM**  
Maria Gil was the recipient of the inaugural Fast Track Prize, sponsored by Malcolm; Malcolm at the Young Furniture Makers exhibition; 2024 Fast Track Prize winner Eva Ellis and Malcolm

**I FIRST BECAME AWARE OF THE** Furniture Makers' Company during my time at retailers Maples and Waring & Gillow. I was invited to the Installation Dinner of the then Master, and I was immediately captivated by the organisation's rich history and heritage. I knew right away it was something I wanted to be more involved with in the future.

My journey with the Company began when I became a corporate liveryman while serving as the buying director and director of product at Furniture Village. A pivotal moment came when Court assistant Donna Bellingham introduced me to some talented young designers and makers at the Company's Young Furniture Makers exhibition. It was there that I realised I could contribute meaningfully, and this led to my decision to become a liveryman.

The ethos of The Furniture Makers' Company – Education, Excellence, and Welfare – deeply resonates with me. Education is particularly significant because this industry has educated me since I was 15. I've been fortunate to learn from incredible individuals over the years, and I feel a strong desire to give back and support the next generation of talent. Excellence, for me, is a mindset – it's the driving force behind success and a standard I continually strive to uphold.

**SEEING THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF INITIATIVES LIKE THIS IS INCREDIBLY FULFILLING AND I WHOLEHEARTEDLY ENCOURAGE ANYONE TO GET INVOLVED – IT'S AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND FEEL GOOD ABOUT THE LEGACY WE'RE CREATING FOR OUR INDUSTRY**



The concept of Welfare, rooted in family first, is equally important. Personally and professionally, I see our industry as a family, and it's vital that we support the people who make it thrive.

One of our greatest responsibilities is to protect and preserve our industry's traditions. By safeguarding our history, we create a foundation for future generations to build upon. The Furniture Makers' Company, as a charity, embodies this principle. Caring is at the heart of what we do, ensuring the preservation of our past, the vitality of our present, and the promise of our future.

In 2023, I launched the Fast Track Prize, an annual award presented at the Young Furniture Makers exhibition. Its purpose is to address a critical gap: too many talented young people, who spend years studying and acquiring qualifications, end up leaving the industry due to a lack of commercial guidance. While we teach them design and craftsmanship, we often neglect to equip them with the skills to navigate the business side of the industry. The Fast Track Prize aims to fill this gap, providing support and a platform to help young talent find their place and build a career in our field.

As we near the end of the first full year of the prize, it has been inspiring to watch our inaugural recipient, Maria Gil, grow and thrive. I've also learned a great deal along the way. The prize is not a rigid, one-size-fits-all model – it evolves to meet the specific needs of the recipient. Without giving too much away, Maria will be showcasing her work at Salone del Mobile in Milan and has secured a project with a major Italian upholstery company, which I'm confident will be a great success. The first Fast Track Prize concluded at the 2025 January Furniture Show in Birmingham, where we welcomed our next recipient, Eva Ellis, to begin her journey.

Seeing the positive impact of initiatives like this is incredibly fulfilling. I wholeheartedly encourage anyone to get involved – it's an opportunity to make a difference and feel good about the legacy we're creating for our industry. ●

**Liveryman Profile**  
**Malcolm Walker, director of F.I.R.S.T MW, talks about why he became a liveryman in 2024**



#### AT CASTELAN GROUP, SUPPORTING

meaningful causes has always been central to our ethos. For many years, our focus has been on initiatives centred around health and wellbeing. However, as we reflected on our commitments, we recognised a gap. We were not contributing to a charity that directly supports the furniture industry that we are so deeply part of. That's where The Furniture Makers' Company provided a unique opportunity – a chance to give back to the sector that underpins our business.

Our first encounter with the Company came through its events, like Big Shots. After some time away from these activities, we re-engaged as Castelan, attending events more regularly and rediscovering the organisation's incredible mission. It was when CEO Jonny Westbrooke approached us to explain the benefits of corporate membership that we were convinced to take the next step. His insights aligned perfectly with our desire to support an industry-focused charity.

When we joined, our hope was to contribute meaningfully to the Company's charitable initiatives, support colleagues in the industry who needed it most, and connect with like-minded professionals. What we have discovered since has exceeded those expectations. Membership has provided not only a way to raise vital funds but also opportunities to foster relationships – both new and longstanding – through events that are both enjoyable and impactful.



One aspect of the Company's work that resonates deeply with us is its focus on supporting individuals in the industry. While we provide our own colleague support services, being aligned with a charity that understands the unique challenges of the furniture sector is invaluable. Initially, we assumed the Company primarily supported manufacturers and retailers but learning that it extends aid to others in the industry, including our own colleagues, was incredibly reassuring.

Participating in the Company's events has been a particular highlight. From the Big Shots day in Middlesex to a local Somerset shoot and the annual National Golf Day in Northamptonshire, we have enjoyed using these occasions for team building and client networking. Our chief operations officer even won the National Champion title at the golf event in our first year – a moment of celebration that, admittedly, he relished for two years when the event was cancelled the following year because of COVID restrictions. These experiences are more than just fun – they're meaningful ways to strengthen relationships while supporting an essential cause.

What impresses us most about The Furniture Makers' Company is its role in shaping the future of our industry. Encouraging young talent and investing in traditional skills is critical for preserving quality design and manufacturing and this approach aligns well with our own Apprenticeship Scheme. At Castelan, our vision is to innovate insurance and product service solutions that complement the products our clients sell. Being exposed to the creativity of emerging talent helps us align our offerings with future industry trends.

Networking through the Company has also been invaluable. While no single event stands out above the rest, the opportunity to connect with clients and peers in a charitable context is unique. In an era where corporate hospitality can sometimes feel transactional, participating in events that support the Company allows us to engage in a more meaningful and purpose-driven way.

NETWORKING THROUGH THE COMPANY HAS ALSO BEEN INVALUABLE. THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH CLIENTS AND PEERS IN A CHARITABLE CONTEXT IS UNIQUE. IN AN ERA WHERE CORPORATE HOSPITALITY CAN SOMETIMES FEEL TRANSACTIONAL, PARTICIPATING IN EVENTS THAT SUPPORT THE COMPANY ALLOWS US TO ENGAGE IN A MORE MEANINGFUL AND PURPOSE-DRIVEN WAY

One particularly rewarding outcome of our membership has been building a training partnership with another major supporter of the Company. While the connection wasn't forged directly through a Company event, our shared involvement highlighted how much our values aligned, making it clear that collaboration would be mutually beneficial.

For any company considering joining The Furniture Makers' Company, my advice is simple: think about the long-term impact you want to make. While many organisations rightly support causes close to their colleagues' hearts, I'd encourage those in our industry to dedicate part of their charitable efforts to a sector-specific charity. By supporting The Furniture Makers' Company, you're not just helping individuals – you're ensuring the future vitality and creativity of the industry itself.

At Castelan, we are proud to be part of a community that uplifts its own, and our membership with The Furniture Makers' Company is a testament to our commitment to the furniture industry we call home. ●

[castelanguroup.com](https://castelanguroup.com)

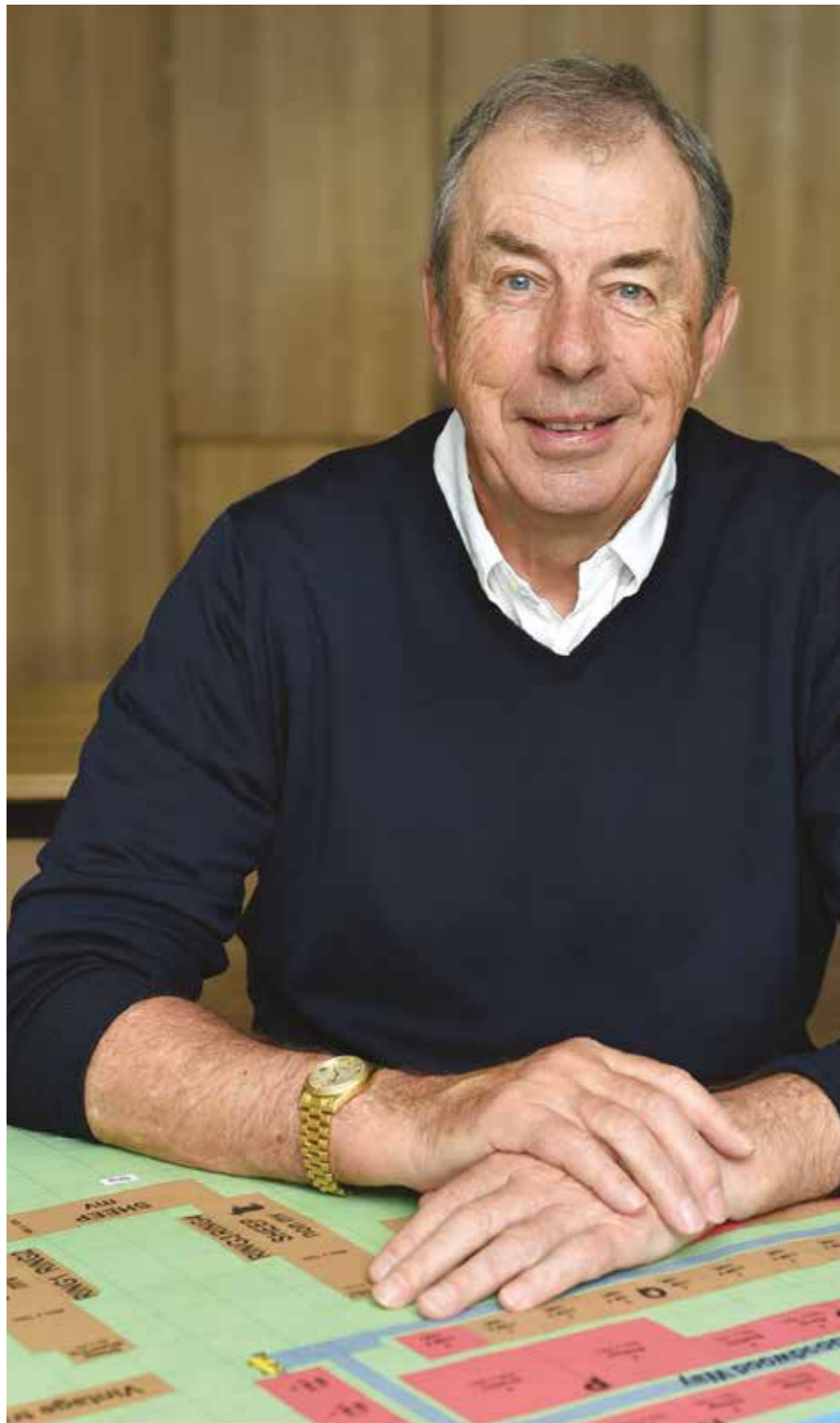
## Corporate Liveryman Profile

### Martin Napper, CEO at Castelan Limited and a corporate liveryman, talks about their involvement with the Company

# Thank you

## Our highly valued corporate members and supporters



**THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD IS** presented annually to a leader who has devoted their life to the furtherment of the furnishing industry and left an indelible mark on the trade.

Colin Mustoe was presented the award by the Rt Hon the Lord Mayor, Honorary Liveryman, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli, and Brian Ahern, the Master of The Furniture Makers' Company, at Mansion House, London on Monday 13 May 2024.

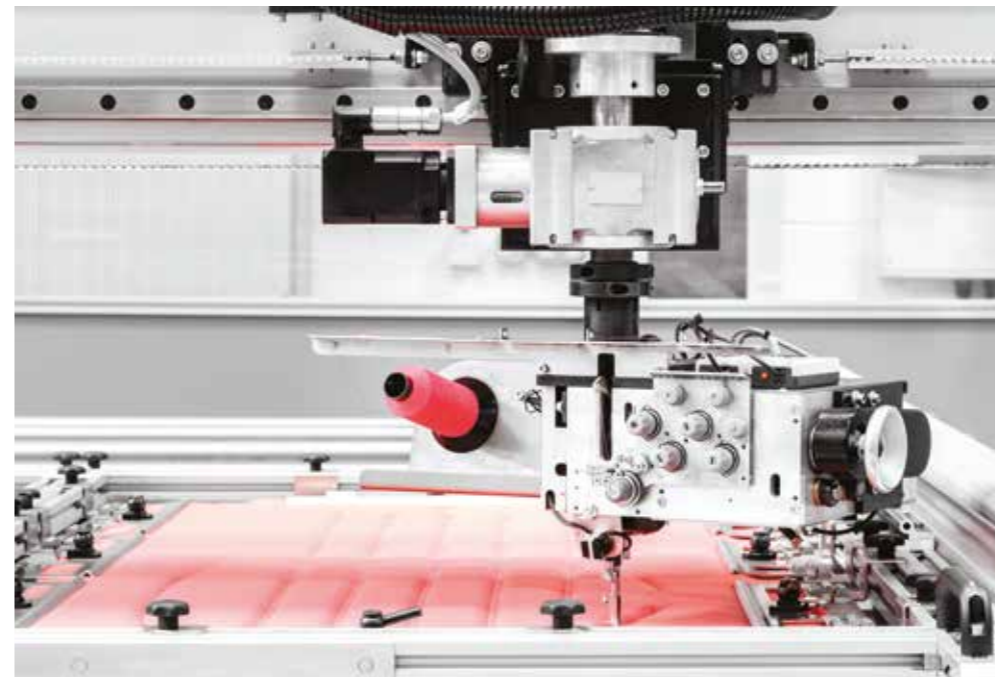
Colin's long career in the office furniture sector started at the age of 17, initially in London and then at Darwen in Lancashire, where he set up his own company, Kingsway Contracts, in 1976. This later became the Senator Group and in the intervening years has grown into the largest UK office furniture manufacturer, with its four brands of Senator, Allermuir, Torasen and Teal widely known internationally and currently employing over 1,500 people globally. It remains an independent, family-owned business, still in Lancashire, and now with Colin's son Robert in charge.

Brian Ahern, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company, said: "Colin has long been an enthusiastic advocate of young people entering the manufacturing industry and is a regular supporter of local colleges, as well as setting up the Blackburn Youth Zone and helping with other local charities. He is also chairman of the Royal Lancashire Agricultural

Show. In 2017 he was awarded an MBE for services to manufacturing and charity in north west England. We are delighted to add further recognition by presenting him with a Lifetime Achievement Award."

Commenting on the award, Colin said: "I am very proud to accept this award from The Furniture Makers' Company. The last 40 years have been very exciting watching the company grow. My son, Robert, is committed to moving the company forward and the key to that growth is continual investment in product design, development and control of the manufacturing process." ● [thesenatorgroup.com](https://thesenatorgroup.com)

**I AM VERY PROUD TO ACCEPT THIS AWARD FROM THE FURNITURE MAKERS' COMPANY – THE LAST 40 YEARS HAVE BEEN VERY EXCITING WATCHING THE COMPANY GROW AND MY SON, ROBERT, IS COMMITTED TO MOVING THE COMPANY FORWARD**



**Lifetime Achievement Award**  
In 2024, we honoured Colin Mustoe MBE in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the office furniture sector of the British furnishing industry



**LEFT** Rt Hon the Lord Mayor, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli, Colin Mustoe MBE and Brian Ahern, the Master of The Furniture Makers' Company

# Graham Kirkham Award

## A new award recognising exceptional contributions to the Company

### IN 2024, WE PROUDLY INTRODUCED THE

Graham Kirkham Award to recognise individuals who have made exceptional contributions to The Furniture Makers' Company. Named after Lord Graham Kirkham KCVO, founder of sofa retailer DFS and president of our charity since 2016, this prestigious accolade celebrates dedication and outstanding service within the furnishing industry.

We are delighted to announce Sandra Fawcett, a longstanding employee at leading furniture retailer Barker & Stonehouse, as the inaugural recipient of the Graham Kirkham Award.

Sandra received the award during our Royal Charter Dinner, held on Thursday 7 November 2024 at Furniture Makers' Hall, London. Lord Kirkham presented Sandra with a crystal trophy and a commendation before an audience of nearly 80 distinguished guests.

Sandra, personal assistant to James Barker, managing director of Barker & Stonehouse, was honoured for her remarkable 24-year commitment to organising the Teesside Golf Day, a key fundraising event for the charity.

The 2024 edition of the golf day celebrated its 50th anniversary since its founding by Richard Barker in 1974, raising £17,000 for The Furniture Makers' Company. Under Sandra's stewardship over the past 24 years, the event has raised a staggering total of £250,000, providing essential support to individuals facing hardship within the UK furnishing industry.

A judging panel led by Brian Ahern, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company, unanimously selected Sandra as this year's recipient. Praising her unwavering dedication, the Master said: "The Teesside Golf Day is the most successful and longest-running supporter-led fundraiser, and Sandra has organised 24 of them. Her exceptional event management, both in advance and on the day, coupled with her deep commitment to the cause, is truly commendable. Sandra seeks no recognition for the countless hours she dedicates to improving the event year after year. I cannot think of a more deserving recipient of the inaugural Graham Kirkham Award."

On receiving the award, Sandra expressed her heartfelt appreciation: "I am delighted and truly honoured to have won the prestigious Graham Kirkham Award. It was a wonderful surprise, and I am very grateful for this recognition. More importantly, I am proud to have played a role in raising vital funds for The Furniture Makers' Company. Throughout my time at Barker & Stonehouse, I have always enjoyed organising the annual Teesside Golf Day to support those in the UK furniture industry who have fallen on hard times."

Sandra's remarkable achievement sets a high standard for future recipients of the Graham Kirkham Award, reflecting the spirit of dedication, service, and charitable impact the award was created to honour. ●



**RIGHT** Lord Kirkham and Sandra Fawcett

# Membership

## Livery events

**AS ONE OF THE 113 LIVERY COMPANIES IN** the City of London, we actively encourage our members to explore and participate in the Square Mile's rich array of unique events and time-honoured traditions.

Our livery dinners and gatherings provide opportunities for members to connect, fostering fellowship while preserving centuries of heritage. From the grand spectacle of the annual Installation of the new Master, celebrated with a banquet at Mansion House, the official residence of the Lord Mayor of London, to the historic United Guilds' Service at St Paul's Cathedral, and even the charming Sheep Drive over London Bridge, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

We were privileged to welcome the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli, alongside senior representatives of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), for a special ceremony at our hall. The event celebrated the unveiling of a blue plaque recognising the site of the RNLI's first-ever headquarters, marking a milestone in the institution's storied past.

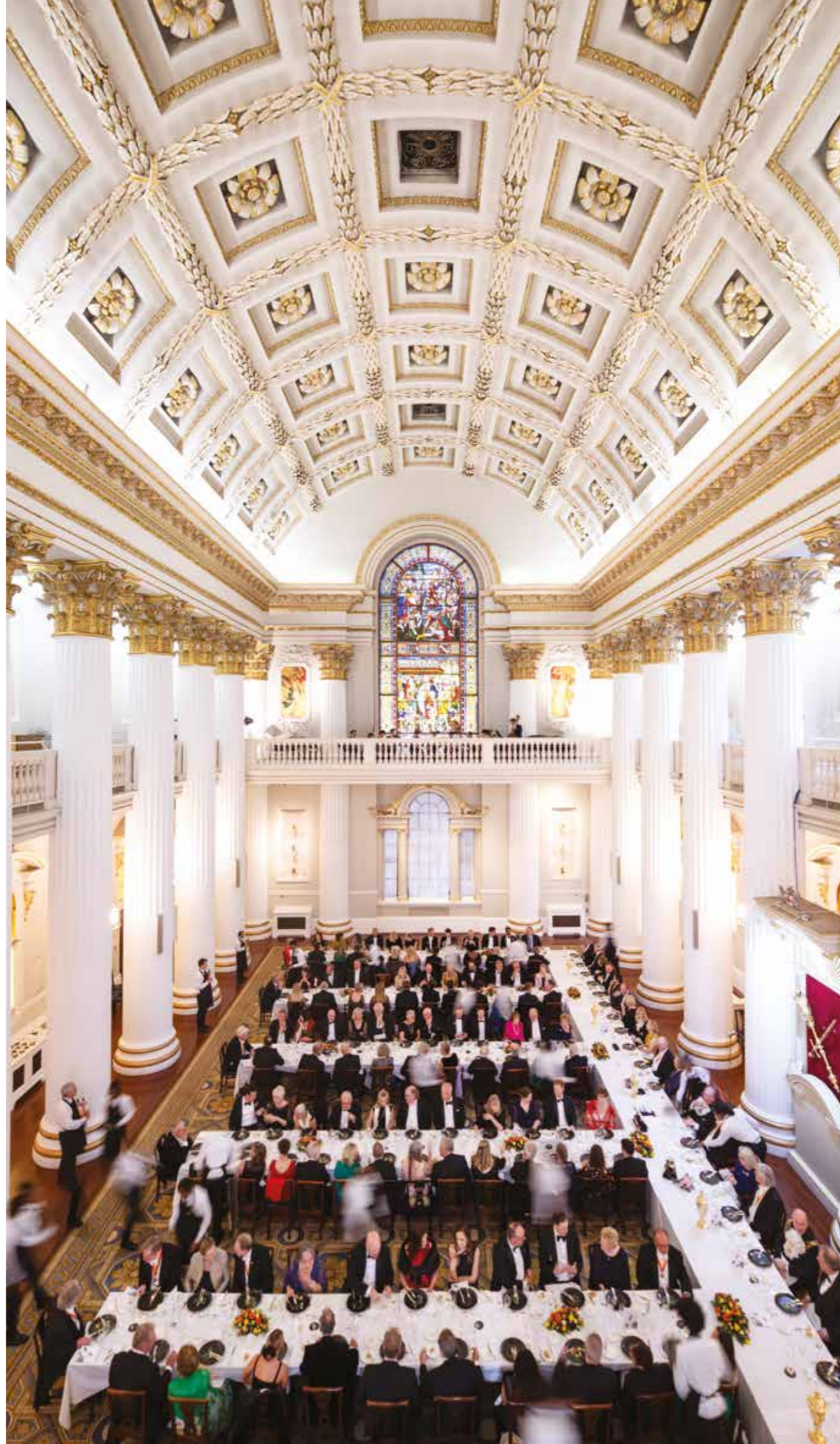
These events not only pay tribute to our shared history but also help weave a vibrant and enduring cultural legacy within the City of London. ●



The Rt Hon the Lord Mayor, Honorary Liveryman, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli, and Brian Ahern, the Master of The Furniture Makers' Company



The Wine Dinner



LEFT The Master's Installation Dinner at Mansion House



A drinks reception at Furniture Makers' Hall



The admission of new corporate liverymen and liverymen



Guests and dignitaries at the Installation of the Master

# Membership

## Networking, Fundraising, and Fellowship

**ONE OF THE PRIMARY REASONS MANY** people become a member is the opportunity to connect and socialise with others working in the UK furniture and furnishing industry by attending our various events.

Through our conferences, workshops, mixers and social gatherings, we create spaces where valuable ideas are exchanged, emerging trends are discussed, and exciting collaborations take root. The camaraderie within our community fosters a sense of belonging and friendship.

Furthermore, we unite individuals across the industry through an exciting calendar of nationwide fundraising events. These gatherings are instrumental in supporting our charitable mission and amplifying our impact. Standout events such as the Big Shots clay pigeon shoot, sponsored by Furniture Village, and the ever-popular National Golf Day serve as key opportunities for fun and relationship building, all while raising critical funds for our initiatives.

In December 2024, we proudly hosted our second Online Christmas Charity Auction, an event that spanned the entire month and featured over 20 exclusive items. The auction raised an impressive £6,000, a testament to the generosity and enthusiasm of our supporters.

We extend our thanks to everyone who contributed to these events, from our valued sponsors to our dedicated participants. Together, we are building a stronger, more connected community. ●



**LEFT** Networking at a social event  
**BELOW** Joanna Knight speaking at the Material Choices sustainability event



**CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT**  
The 2024 edition of Big Shots raised £42,000 – the largest amount in recorded memory; The Clay Bashers, winners of the Top Team prize at Big Shots 2024, with Charlie Harrison of Furniture Village and Master Brian Ahern; The National Golf Day is our longest-running fundraiser; Guests at a Mixer event



# Membership

## Regional events and activities

### OUR REGIONAL COMMITTEES ARE THE BACKBONE

of our nationwide community, connecting members and industry peers across the UK. Each of our nine committees curates a diverse programme of events, including informative seminars, practical workshops, and engaging social gatherings. These initiatives are designed to address the distinct needs and interests of members in their respective areas. By fostering opportunities for networking, collaboration, and knowledge exchange, our regional activities play a vital role in strengthening the furniture and furnishing industry's professional and social bonds.

### OUR REGIONS:

- East of England region covers Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Suffolk and the regional committee is chaired by liveryman Joanna Knight.
- Midlands region covers Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands and Worcestershire and the regional committee is chaired by liveryman Gina Thomson.
- North East region, chaired by liveryman John Conroy, includes Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham.
- North West region, chaired by freeman Phil Hopkins, includes Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire.
- South West region, chaired by Past Master David Dewing OBE, includes Cornwall, Dorset, Devon, Gloucestershire and Somerset.
- South East region, chaired by liveryman Graham Marley, covers West Sussex, Surrey, Middlesex, Greater London, Kent and East Sussex.
- Southern region, chaired by liveryman Lizzie Shaw, includes Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire.
- Yorkshire region, chaired by junior warden Jessica Alexander, includes East Riding of Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.
- Wales region, chaired by freeman Emma Leeke, includes Mid and West Wales, North Wales, South Wales Central, South Wales East, and South Wales West. ●

[furnituremakers.org.uk/regional-association](https://furnituremakers.org.uk/regional-association)



### CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

The South East Region's Shooting Day; Southern Region's Charity Hoedown; Guests at the Yorkshire Curry Night; Jessica Alexander, Jack Humpley, and Peter Hewitt at the Yorkshire Bowling Night; The Teesside Golf Day; New Makers Conference 2024; Gin Tasting at Hensol Castle, the launch event for the new Wales Region; Fun at the Southern Region's Charity Hoedown

# Furniture Makers' Hall

## Discreet, professional and beautifully catered events

**FURNITURE MAKERS' HALL, LOCATED IN** the historic Austin Friars area, offers a prime venue in the heart of London, just a short walk from Liverpool Street, Bank, and Moorgate Underground stations. This elegant setting provides a choice of beautifully furnished rooms, equipped with state-of-the-art AV facilities, professional customer service, and exceptional catering courtesy of our venue partners, Life's Kitchen.

Whether you need an intimate meeting space, a central location for a board meeting, or a stylish venue to host an event for up to 120 guests, Furniture Makers' Hall is the perfect choice. The venue offers flexibility and sophistication, ensuring every event is seamlessly executed.

Corporate members enjoy the exclusive benefit of one complimentary day's use of the hall each year. Freeman and liverymen also receive special discounts on bookings for any of the versatile function rooms. With its blend of historic charm, modern amenities, and unbeatable location, Furniture Makers' Hall is the ideal venue for all occasions, from professional gatherings to private celebrations. ● [fmhvenuehire.co.uk](http://fmhvenuehire.co.uk) | 020 7248 1163 [sales@furnituremakers.org.uk](mailto:sales@furnituremakers.org.uk)



# Membership

## Lord Mayor of London

### THROUGHOUT 2023-2024, WE WERE

proud to support our honorary liveryman, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli, during his distinguished year as the 695th Lord Mayor of the City of London.

With a strong and longstanding connection to Michael, we were especially delighted that his mayoralty spanned two livery years, enabling both Immediate Past Master Amanda Waring and current Master Brian Ahern to join him at key City events.

A standout moment was the 2023 Lord Mayor's Show – a vibrant celebration of the enduring bond between the Crown and the City – where we proudly featured a float, generously sponsored by corporate member Alltruck, promoting our My Furniture Career website.

In 2024, we had the honour of welcoming Michael and representatives of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) to our hall for a special ceremony marking the unveiling of a blue plaque commemorating the site of the RNLI's first-ever headquarters.



### CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

Michael at the 2023 Lord Mayor's Show; Michael and Immediate Past Master Amanda Waring presenting Paul Ferris with the Journeyman Certificate at the 2023 Master Certificate Ceremony; Michael unveiling the blue plaque, commemorating the first headquarters of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution at Furniture Makers' Hall in 2024; The Furniture Makers' Company's float, sponsored by corporate member Alltruck, at the 2023 Lord Mayor's Show; Michael at the Lord Mayor's Show

# British Furniture Confederation

## By Jonathan Hindle, British Furniture Confederation chairman



BFC MEMBERS

- British Furniture Association
- Carpet Recycling UK
- National Bed Federation
- Furniture Industry Research Association
- The Furniture Makers' Company

THE BRITISH FURNITURE

Confederation (BFC) is an executive body made up of representatives from the UK's leading furniture, furnishing and bed trade associations. It meets to discuss developments within the sector and strategies to further its aims and communicate these to government. We had five key objectives for 2024. Here's a quick round-up of the progress we have made towards these.

Prepare for a new government (including reforming the All-Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group-APPFIG)

It's ancient history now but at the time it was quite a surprise when the Conservative Government announced an election for early July 2024, which Labour won with a huge majority of 172 seats.

Many MPs who had been supportive of our industry lost their seats, so we have had to work hard to develop new relationships with new MPs and of course wait to see what the priorities are of the new ministers with whom we hope to engage.

Following the election of Kemi Badenoch as leader of the Conservative Party, we also now also have a new cohort of shadow ministers to get to know.

The APPFIG is an essential part of our engagement with government. MPs are restricted to speaking up only on behalf of their own constituents – the APPGs can speak for special interest groups and sectors. New rules for APPGs mean that we must have four officers and 20 members to form one, so much of the latter part of 2024 was spent identifying and approaching suitable candidates. We were delighted when Adam Thompson, MP for Erewash (covering the Long Eaton area), agreed to chair ours – and we also have Sarah Smith, Labour MP for Hyndburn, Baroness Taylor of Bolton (Labour) and Greg Smith, Conservative MP for Mid Buckinghamshire on board as the other three officers.

Form a Public Affairs Advisory Group of senior executives from industry to give additional substance to our interaction with government

The formation of the Public Affairs Advisory Committee (PAAC) has been an important addition to the way the BFC operates. We now have a pool of senior executives from our sector whom we can approach for input and feedback, in addition to the heads of the trade associations who form the BFC. The PAAC met a couple of times in person and a couple of times online during 2024 – initially being briefed on the way the BFC and the APPFIG work and then helping us decide what were the likely key issues for the industry to engage with government.

We are also encouraging all PAAC members to actively engage with their local MPs (including asking them to engage with the APPFIG).

Conduct a comprehensive survey of members

With a new government comes the need for a reset. It was important to complement the guidance from the PAAC with wider feedback from the industry. A wide-ranging survey of all our trade association membership was undertaken – the results of which are being used with our new Plan for Growth publication.

Publish a new manifesto/plan for growth for our sector

The 2025 Plan for Growth publication is a summary of the key concerns of our industry for the duration of this government: skills and training; environmental issues; international trade; and investment. It also aims to drive home the size and significance of our sector – despite the fact we are an industry of mostly SMEs and micro-businesses scattered across the UK.



Continue our engagement with government departments and ministers, bringing up current issues as they arise

Letters, meetings, questions in the House, events – all these are the ways in which we engage with government and bang our drum, so to speak – in particular with the Department for Business and Trade, the Office for Product Safety & Standards, the Department for Education and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Recent examples of our engagement include:

- Letters of welcome to all ministers we hope to engage with, reminding them of the significance of our sector.
- A response to the government's Industrial Strategy consultation, focusing on the importance of the furniture industry for the UK economy, the increased demand anticipated in the light of the government's housebuilding target and the value that is placed on British-made furniture around the world.
- A letter to Mary Creagh, CBE MP, Minister for Nature, who is responsible for circular economy issues – requesting full involvement and consultation from an

early stage in any deliberations likely to affect our sector. We already know that furniture, furnishings and textile floorcoverings are priority products for attention as they are problematic in the waste stream.

- A letter to all MPs with several furniture businesses in their constituencies, adding our voice to businesses' concerns about the effect of the rise in employer National Insurance contributions and changes to inheritance tax on jobs and growth.

Looking forward

As of 2025, the BFC is looking forward to actively engaging with the government through its newly formed APPFIG, ensuring that the sector's voice is heard and valued. Additionally, the organisation is preparing to host a significant event at Westminster to launch the 2025 Plan for Growth. Beyond this, the BFC will be organising pan-sector events to contribute to the review of flammability regulations for furniture, fostering industry-wide discussions on this critical issue. Furthermore, a series of export-focused events will be held, highlighting key international markets and supporting the sector's global expansion efforts. ● [britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk](https://britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk)



Jonathan Hindle  
British Furniture Confederation chairman

THE APPFIG



Adam Thompson MP



Baroness Taylor



Greg Smith MP



Sarah Smith MP

# Military Affiliation: 2 Rifles

## Daniel Brown, Lieutenant Colonel and Commanding Officer, provides an update on the battalion's past year

**I AM DELIGHTED TO WRITE TO YOU AS THE** battalion is deployed throughout Romania, Bulgaria and Greece on Exercise Steadfast Dart, NATO's biggest exercise of the year. 2024 was defined by rigorous training and operational achievement. This culminated in our successful validation exercise in Kenya, ensuring the battalion remains battle-ready for future operations.

In the early part of the year, we conducted a Regimental Junior Non-Commissioned Officer (JNCO) Cadre. This cadre saw participation from riflemen across all battalions, with 27 riflemen passing the course. Her Majesty The Queen's attendance at the passing-out parade provided an extraordinary boost to morale and underscored the significance of this formative step in our soldiers' leadership development.

Our innovative approach to training was demonstrated by I (Support) Company's leadership in the Brigade Battle-Winning Capability Cadres pilot programme. This initiative brought together over 550 personnel from 4 Light Brigade for six specialist weapon cadres across 10 Defence Training Estates across the UK. Notably, we welcomed five riflemen from 8 Rifles to these cadres, providing them with opportunities otherwise unavailable within their parent Army Reserve unit.

The battalion also contributed to Exercise Ulu Warrior in Brunei, supporting 1 Royal Gurkha Rifles. This deployment enabled our riflemen to trial cutting-edge technology, such as Dismounted Situational Awareness kits, under the jungle canopy, pioneering efforts that are now being further developed by UK Special Forces and the Royal Marines.

Our year concluded with Exercise Haraka Storm in Kenya, a 42-day battlegroup deployment that replicated the realities of war experienced in Ukraine. The exercise piloted the Army's newly designed Land Training System which aims to arrest and reverse the atrophy of our ability to conduct combined arms manoeuvre in the 21st century and transform at the pace of relevance. With a fighting force of over 750 personnel, this exercise tested our riflemen



in arduous conditions and validated the battlegroup's operational readiness.

Community engagement has remained a cornerstone of the battalion's ethos. During Exercise Haraka Storm, we supported various initiatives, including the Young Mothers Orphanage in Nanyuki and Restart Africa in Gilgil. Domestically, the battalion facilitated the relocation of a memorial commemorating Corporal Coughlan and Private Swanick to The Wardrobe in Salisbury, ensuring their families have a meaningful place to honour their sacrifice.

Despite a demanding operational tempo, we have prioritised sport and adventure training. An expedition of 15 riflemen summited Mount Kenya, an impressive feat after spending the previous 42 days operating in the field on exercise. Our Nordic skiing teams achieved remarkable results in both divisional and army championships, with Captain Emily Smith

retaining her army and national title. Rugby also flourished, with individual and team successes at army-level competitions, earning rifleman Qorowale and rifleman Ravuvu semi-professional contracts this season. Our boxers once again impressed at the Army Individual Championship: Lance Corporal Caws and Corporal Taylor were crowned Army champions in their respective weight categories with the latter also going on to be crowned the Ulster 75kg champion.

In conclusion, 2024 has been a year of significant accomplishment. I am immensely proud of our riflemen and grateful for the steadfast support of their families. We are ever grateful for The Furniture Makers' Company's support that continues to have a tangible benefit to our riflemen, providing support to their lived experience when not deployed across the globe. ●

[army.mod.uk](https://army.mod.uk)



# Military Affiliation: XXV (Fighter) Squadron



## AS ONE YEAR DRAWS TO A CLOSE AND A

new one begins, it is a fitting time to reflect on the achievements and changes within XXV(F) Squadron and the broader Royal Air Force. From the rigorous training of the next generation of fast jet pilots to the continued dedication of veteran squadron members and national celebrations, 2024 has been a year to remember.

### Training the next generation of Fast Jet Pilots

As one of the RAF's historic fighter squadrons, XXV(F) Squadron has long been at the forefront of training the fast jet pilots who will go on to be the tip of the spear for the United Kingdom's Combat Air Force. Based at RAF Valley, in North Wales, the squadron plays a critical role in preparing pilots for the rigours of operational duties on either Typhoon or F35 front line squadrons.

The Hawk T2 remains the backbone of Advanced Fast Jet training on XXV(F), where trainees are taught to fly a jet-powered aircraft for the first time, mastering low-level formation flying and basic fighter manoeuvres in preparation for more demanding operational training. Alongside cutting-edge virtual reality and full mission simulators, XXV(F) Qualified Flying Instructors (QFIs) ensure that each pilot is ready for the demands of multi-role combat operations.

QFIs play an essential role, passing down their knowledge to trainees. Their blend of experience, professionalism and dedication to excellence reflect the values that define XXV(F) Squadron. The result is a steady stream of highly trained pilots ready to progress towards the Typhoon or F35 front line.

### The King's Birthday Flypast

One of the standout moments of 2024 was the King's Birthday Flypast in June. XXV(F) Squadron proudly contributed to this magnificent display, which highlighted the precision and professionalism of the RAF.

The flypast, which included a variety of aircraft ranging from Typhoons to the legendary Red Arrows, thrilled spectators across the nation. This year's event was particularly special, as it commemorated the 80th anniversary of D-Day, with Spitfires and Hurricanes joining the formations to honour the RAF's WW2 legacy.

For XXV(F) Squadron, the flypast underscored our role in upholding the RAF's proud traditions while embracing its modern capabilities. It was a privilege to participate in such a historic celebration of service and dedication.

### Our Affiliation

XXV(F) Squadron's close affiliation with the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers is something that we are extremely proud to uphold. 2024 saw the squadron host a visit from the Furniture Makers in May, where we demonstrated our squadron's daily routine. The visitors were put through their paces in the simulator and given a jet tour before graciously hosting the QFIs and trainees in the Oyster Catcher.

Most recently in November 2024, XXV(F) Squadron was honoured to have members of the Furniture Makers attend our annual Dining in Night in the RAF Valley Officers' Mess. The occasion is used to say goodbye to departing squadron members and welcome new ones. This is also an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of squadron personnel and was made all the more special with the presentation of the Hayes trophy, by The Furniture Makers' Company, to pilot of the year: Flt Lt James Spratt. This was gratefully received by Officer Commanding XXV(F), Wing Commander Richard Dennis, in his absence. ●

[raf.mod.uk](https://raf.mod.uk)

# Thank you for your support

## Donna Bellingham, Co-fundraising chairman

### AS MY FIRST YEAR AS CO-FUNDRAISING CHAIRMAN DRAWS TO

a close, I want to extend my thanks to everyone who has supported our events and activities throughout the year. Your generosity and commitment have been instrumental in driving our success.

Co-chairing the Fundraising Committee with fellow Court member, Sir Anthony Ullmann, we have worked hard with the committee to build on the exceptional foundations laid by our predecessors. Despite challenging market conditions, we have achieved encouraging success in our fundraising efforts, thanks to the unwavering support of our members and industry colleagues.

Our national events continue to play a vital role in raising awareness and funds for the charity. Big Shots, our annual clay pigeon shoot sponsored by Furniture Village, remains a standout highlight. In 2024, it reached new heights, raising a record-breaking £42,000. This event brings together some of the biggest names in the industry for a day of camaraderie, entertainment, and philanthropy. In 2025, we'll celebrate the 30th anniversary of Big Shots with plans to make it an unforgettable milestone event.

Beyond national initiatives, supporter-led regional events have showcased the power of grassroots involvement in strengthening our fundraising efforts. The Teesside Golf Day, organised by Barker & Stonehouse, has firmly established itself as another significant date in our calendar. This year marked its 50th anniversary and also set a record raising £17,000, a remarkable achievement. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Barker & Stonehouse and the tireless efforts of Sandra Fawcett, whose dedication ensures that every event exceeds expectations.

Regional activities are instrumental in engaging local businesses and industry professionals, highlighting the critical role of community-driven initiatives in achieving broader goals. A highlight was the South West Region's New Makers Conference, which offers young professionals an invaluable platform to connect, learn from seasoned experts, and exchange innovative ideas.

What excites me most is the growth of our regional presence. Over 2024–2025, we welcomed the addition of South East, Midlands and Wales Region. This expansion not only reflects the growing reach of the Furniture Makers but also opens new doors for collaboration, fundraising, and support within untapped networks.

Thank you once again to all who have contributed to this year's successes. Whether through attending events, sponsoring initiatives, or volunteering, your efforts have made an indelible impact. Together, we are building a brighter, stronger future for the Furniture Makers and the industry as a whole. Here's to even greater achievements in the year ahead.



### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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**Past Master  
Robin Waring**



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