



Austin Friar

2026



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**

The Furniture Makers' Company is the City of London livery company and charity for the UK furnishing industry. As a modern livery company, our membership brings together individuals and businesses from across this creative sector, reflecting the breadth and diversity of furniture and furnishing in the UK today.

Welcome to Austin Friar 2026, our annual publication celebrating the people, progress and achievements of the past 12 months.

Over the past year, the industry has continued to navigate an evolving economic landscape. Despite these pressures, our industry has remained resilient and engaged. We are particularly encouraged by the continued support of our membership and by the increasing recognition from businesses across the sector of the vital role the Company plays – whether supporting the next generation through education and training initiatives, recognising craftsmanship and innovation through our Guild Marks, or delivering meaningful welfare support to those who have dedicated their careers to our industry.

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The Furniture Makers' Company
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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



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Grafton Collection by KI; Roxy Mid Back and High Back chairs, upholstered in Panaz's Harvard Putty fabric, by Barons Furniture; Shay Alkalay and Yael Mer, designers of Light Mass^, a 2025 Design Guild Mark winner

THIS PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM
The Yorkshire Region's Curry Night; Lana Laptop Stand by Colebrook Bosson Saunders; Alderley in William Morris Sunflower Artichoke with a Cotton Effect Pink Trim by Harrison Spinks



The Master Debbie Johnson, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company

IT HAS BEEN AN HONOUR AND A privilege to serve as Master. Looking back over the past year, what stands out most clearly is the remarkable commitment of our members to the Company's charitable and fellowship objectives. I have been continually inspired by the enthusiasm, generosity of spirit, and shared sense of purpose that define our Company. It has been a privilege to witness first-hand the dedication of so many individuals who give their time and energy so willingly to ensure that the Company continues to thrive.

One of the great pleasures of the year has been the opportunity to spend time with members across the livery. Whether at formal occasions in the hall or at more informal gatherings, these moments have reinforced for me the warmth, friendship and sense of community that sit at the heart of the Company. The Master's diary is, of course, full of dinners and events, but what I have enjoyed most about these occasions is the chance to meet people, exchange ideas, and strengthen the relationships that sustain our shared work.

Attending events with other livery companies has also been a particularly

rewarding aspect of the year. These occasions offer far more than ceremonial tradition; they provide a valuable opportunity to learn from the experiences of others and to appreciate the extraordinary diversity of professions represented within the livery movement. Taking part in civic events alongside Masters of other companies has deepened my appreciation of the City of London's historic institutions and the collaborative spirit that continues to bind them together today.

Representing The Furniture Makers' Company within the wider furnishing industry has been another highlight. Visiting manufacturers, meeting designers, attending trade events and engaging with organisations connected to our sector have all provided fascinating insights into the creativity, resilience and innovation that characterise the industry today. I have particularly enjoyed the opportunity to see at first hand the skill and craftsmanship that underpin so much of what our industry produces.

Equally rewarding has been working closely with the people who keep the Company moving forward day by day. Supporting the clerk and his team, working alongside the Court, Past Masters and

committee chairs, and seeing the dedication that underpins the Company's work behind the scenes has been both reassuring and inspiring. The Master may preside, but the real strength of the Company lies in the collective efforts of its members, and it has been a pleasure to work alongside so many committed individuals.

Among the most satisfying moments of the year has been welcoming new freemen and liverymen into the Company. Seeing the Company continue to grow and evolve, particularly with the involvement of younger professionals, has been enormously encouraging. Their enthusiasm and fresh perspectives ensure that the Company remains relevant and connected to the modern industry it represents.

I have also taken great pride in seeing the work of our committees, particularly in fundraising and regional activity, bringing people together in support of the Company's charitable aims. The generosity of our patrons, sponsors and supporters has enabled us to continue making a meaningful difference through our educational and welfare work, and it has been deeply gratifying to see the impact of those efforts.

The opportunity to meet students, emerging designers and young people entering the industry has been another real highlight. Their creativity and ambition are a reminder of the exciting future that lies ahead for our sector. Our partnerships with colleges, design institutions and industry organisations continue to strengthen the bridge between tradition and innovation, something I have found particularly rewarding to observe.

Perhaps the most humbling aspect of the year has been seeing the work of our charity in supporting members of the trade facing hardship. Knowing that the charity can provide timely support and reassurance to those who find themselves in difficult circumstances is something of which we can all be proud.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the entire Company for the encouragement, kindness and good humour that I have received throughout the year. The experience of serving as Master is made truly special by the people with whom one shares it, and I have been fortunate to be supported by such a generous and welcoming livery.

As the year draws to a close, I look back with enormous gratitude for the experiences and friendships it has brought. While the calendar has been full and the pace often brisk, the year has been immensely fulfilling. It has been a great privilege to serve this remarkable Company, and I wish my successor, Jessica Alexander, every success and enjoyment as she begins her own year as Master.



The Master-Elect Jessica Alexander, Master-Elect of The Furniture Makers' Company

an exhilarating tour around picture libraries in places as diverse as the V&A Museum, the Museum of London, the High Wycombe Chair Museum and the Heal's archives, among many others. And I was hooked. What's not to love about working in an industry that makes the stuff that we sit on, sleep on, eat at – in our homes, our workplaces and where we go for relaxation, entertainment, socialising and celebrations?

From Cabinet Maker, my career has meandered, somewhat unplanned, through PR and marketing, running my own company and working for many leading furniture and flooring companies; and ending up at the helm of one of our leading trade associations, the National Bed Federation, for 17 years.

As I mentioned earlier, I joined the Furniture Makers in the early 2000s, and I can't describe how honoured and humbled I feel to have been chosen as chief caretaker of this incredible organisation for 12 months as its 64th Master – and the fifth lady Master.

All the Masters I have known who have gone before me have each brought their own energy and enthusiasm to this role and I will endeavour to do the same.

Each of us has faced different challenges. It is not about putting our mark on the organisation as individuals, but about supporting, encouraging and protecting what we are and what we do together.

We are a closed company, which means all our members are linked in some way or another to our industry; and our charitable efforts are directed at supporting our industry – specifically those in need of a helping hand and young people at the start of their careers – and championing excellence through our much-admired Guild Mark schemes.

All that we achieve is thanks to the dedication and hard work of willing member volunteers, supported by our fabulous office team. In my year, I will do my best to support and encourage both staff and volunteers in what we all know are challenging times for membership organisations and charities. If we are to survive, it is imperative that our unique place at the heart of the industry is recognised and valued. We are more visible than perhaps we have ever been, but we can't let up on our efforts to translate that visibility into tangible support.

I am privileged that my year as Master coincides with becoming mortgage-free owners of our lovely Furniture Makers' Hall and I'd really like to bring what we have to offer to the attention of anyone in our industry, in the City and beyond, who needs meeting or event space in London. Much work is being done in the background to ensure what we offer is fit for purpose and competitive, and I am looking forward to being able to shout about it.

MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO, WHEN PAST

Master, the late Peter Keen practically railroaded me into joining The Furniture Makers' Company, I barely knew what it was all about, let alone had any ambition to become its Master.

What I did understand was that the Company was at the heart of the furniture industry, an industry in which I had spent my working life; and that by volunteering some of my time to sit on a committee or two, I was giving back and, in a way, saying thank you for the opportunity and the pleasure. I have no regrets – I have been rewarded handsomely in return by so many memorable experiences and amazing connections with wonderful people.

I didn't plan to make the furniture industry my working home. But after completing an English Literature degree at London University, I found myself with a job as a trainee journalist on a weekly business magazine called Cabinet Maker. It was 1979, the year before the magazine was to celebrate its 100th anniversary, and I was set the task of picture research. This led me on

Life doesn't always go to plan, and when things get tough, people in the furnishing industry deserve somewhere they can turn to. That's where we come in. For over a century, our charity has been quietly supporting current and former industry workers through difficult times, making sure help is available when it's needed most.

We offer practical financial help through our benevolent fund, responding quickly to ease pressure and stress. This support can cover everything from urgent household costs and essential items to funeral expenses, home repairs, disability adjustments, medical equipment, short breaks for respite, and help during periods of financial strain. We can also step in with pre-tenancy costs or moving expenses when a change of circumstances leaves someone stuck.

If someone you work with, or care about, is struggling after a sudden change in their finances, please let them know they don't have to deal with it on their own. Reaching out can make a real difference.

Support isn't just financial either. We've teamed up with Shout to offer free, confidential mental health support by text, day or night, to anyone in the UK furnishing industry. A trained volunteer is always available – just text COMFORT to 85258 to start a conversation. Whenever things feel heavy, someone is there to listen.



Welfare

ABOVE
Lesley, an upholsterer,
was supported with a
welfare grant



Why welfare matters

Rachel Harte created Money First Aid to equip teams with the skills and confidence to spot the signs, start supportive conversations, and signpost colleagues to the right help. She talks about why welfare matters



Rachel Harte
Money First Aid

BEHIND EVERY ROLE, EVERY SKILL, AND every craftsperson is a human being trying to make life work. Welfare reflects how we choose to care for people as whole individuals: supporting them not only in their work, but also in how they live and manage life's pressures.

Today, financial stress is one of the most significant (and often hidden) pressures undermining overall welfare in the UK. According to the Financial Conduct Authority, 31% of UK adults have less than £1,000 in savings, leaving millions with little or no buffer when life throws up the unexpected. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports that almost 4 million households have borrowed to pay for life's essentials, such as food, rent and energy. And nearly half of UK adults are now living in financially vulnerable circumstances, according to Fair4All Finance.

Behind these statistics are people turning up to work worried about bills, struggling with debt, and making impossible choices about what they can afford for themselves and their families. Financial wellbeing is not just about surviving day to day. It is also about having enough security and breathing space to cope with change, plan ahead, and enjoy life. For too many people, that currently feels out of reach.

ACCORDING TO THE FINANCIAL CONDUCT AUTHORITY, 31% OF UK ADULTS HAVE LESS THAN £1,000 IN SAVINGS, LEAVING MILLIONS WITH LITTLE OR NO BUFFER WHEN LIFE THROWS UP THE UNEXPECTED

Financial wellbeing, mental health, physical safety and long-term security are deeply connected. While there has been welcome progress in how organisations support physical and mental health at work, financial wellbeing has historically received less attention. That is beginning to change, and rightly so. When financial pressure is left unaddressed, it can quietly undermine every other aspect of welfare.

At Money First Aid, we deliver workshops and online training courses that help individuals support themselves and their colleagues to overcome financial difficulties and improve their financial health. One of the greatest barriers we see to effective financial welfare support is the confidence to speak up. Many people still feel unsure about how to talk about money, what is appropriate to say, or how to help without overstepping boundaries.

This is particularly important because some support does exist in the UK, but it is often not reaching those who need it. Policy in Practice estimates that £24.1 billion in

financial support went unclaimed in the UK during the last financial year. And workplaces that do offer financial support often report low engagement. Reasons range from lack of awareness and stigma, to assumptions about eligibility, and uncertainty about how to access help.

When organisations normalise conversations about money, people are far more likely to seek support early, before reaching crisis point. Trained colleagues and peers are not there to give financial advice, but to spot warning signs, listen without judgement, respond with empathy, and guide people towards appropriate, trusted support.

For organisations like The Furniture Makers' Company, welfare support has a wider legacy. Many people in the furniture and furnishings industry have long, proud careers built on specialist skills. Supporting their welfare protects not only individuals, but also the future of the craft itself and a stronger, more resilient community. ● moneyfirstaid.net



Supporting people through difficult times

Welfare stories



Supporting Kevin through a time of loss and financial hardship

Following the death of his aunt, Kevin faced serious and immediate financial difficulties that put his housing and day-to-day stability at risk. He was struggling to keep up with rent and essential utility bills, and mounting arrears were causing increasing pressure at an already distressing time.

Kevin had lived with his aunt after the loss of his mother and had later given up employment to become her full-time carer. As Kevin is unable to read or write, his aunt had previously managed household

correspondence and finances on his behalf. After her passing, the sudden loss of income, combined with the challenge of responding to written communications, left Kevin vulnerable to escalating financial problems. His rent top-up increased, resulting in rent arrears, and he fell behind on gas, electricity and water bills.

Kevin was referred to The Furniture Makers' Company by his Housing Support Officer, who helped him access immediate support. With this assistance, Kevin

successfully applied for a Discretionary Housing Payment, which cleared his rent arrears, and submitted a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application to help improve his longer-term financial position. While awaiting the outcome of his PIP claim, an application for additional support was made to The Furniture Makers' Company.

Kevin's application was successful, and he received financial assistance to help cover essential living costs and to gradually reduce his outstanding utility debts. This support provided vital stability during a period of significant transition and loss, helping Kevin regain control of his finances and move towards greater independence and security.

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.

Helping Carlton to reconnect with his roots

Carlton arrived in the UK in 1992, bringing with him a wealth of carpentry experience from his native Jamaica. Over the next three decades, he dedicated himself to the furniture and woodworking industry, working across various roles – including, most recently, at a social enterprise in Manchester that specialised in wood reclamation and upcycling. In November 2023, after 31 years of hard work, Carlton retired.

Shortly before his retirement, Carlton suffered a leg injury that left him physically incapacitated for several months. Recognising the challenges he faced, his final employer referred him to The Furniture Makers' Company for support.

Tragically, Carlton also experienced a devastating personal loss when his daughter passed away suddenly from sepsis. The shock and grief had a profound impact on his mental health. He became withdrawn, struggled with insomnia, and eventually

fell into a deep depression. It was a period of profound difficulty during what should have been a time to enjoy his well-earned retirement.

In a bid to help rebuild his emotional wellbeing and reconnect with his roots, Carlton hoped to visit his family back in Jamaica – a trip he had only made once since arriving in the UK over 30 years ago. Believing that this break would help him regain a sense of peace and confidence, he applied for a welfare grant from our charity.

On receiving his application, we were delighted to award him a grant of £1,200 to assist with the cost of flights and accommodation.

Thanks to this support, Carlton was able to take the much-needed journey home. The break provided not just a chance for rest and reflection, but also an opportunity to reconnect with family, culture, and himself.

Supporting Karla during a period of ill health

Karla was facing severe financial hardship after becoming unable to work due to ongoing mental health challenges. With no income beyond Universal Credit, she struggled to meet even her most basic living costs, leaving her under constant financial pressure and increasing isolation.

Karla is a self-employed designer and sole trader who had previously sought support from The Furniture Makers' Company. In 2025, she entered into a Debt Relief Order, which provided temporary respite from her debts. However, her circumstances remained extremely challenging due to continued ill health. Following an NHS assessment, Karla was referred to Talking Therapies to support her mental health recovery.

Despite reducing her outgoings as much as possible with guidance from National

Debtline, Karla continued to face a significant monthly shortfall. The ongoing financial strain made it increasingly difficult to manage day-to-day tasks and contributed to feelings of isolation. During this period, Karla required emergency medication following a time of suicidal thoughts. A subsequent mental health assessment concluded that she is experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder linked to past trauma.

In light of her situation, we provided Karla with some short-term financial support to help reduce immediate overheads and provide stability. This support was intended to ease financial pressures, allowing Karla to focus on her recovery, engage with treatment, and work towards improved wellbeing and independence.

The Excellence programme champions the very best of British furniture and furnishings, celebrating exceptional standards in design, making, and production. It exists to elevate the industry by recognising both individuals and businesses whose work demonstrates originality, skill, and uncompromising quality.

At the heart of the programme are three prestigious accolades: the Bespoke Guild Mark, the Design Guild Mark, and the Manufacturing Guild Mark. The Bespoke Guild Mark recognises outstanding craftsmanship in one-off and made-to-measure furniture, highlighting the expertise and imagination of master makers. The Design Guild Mark rewards furniture, lighting, and interior elements that combine innovation, functionality, and visual excellence. The Manufacturing Guild Mark acknowledges UK manufacturers that achieve distinction through rigorous processes, precision, and consistently high production standards.

Beyond recognition, the Guild Marks serve as powerful marketing tools, enabling recipients to clearly communicate their excellence and differentiate themselves in competitive markets. By promoting these marks globally, the programme helps elevate awarded individuals and companies on the world stage, strengthening their visibility, credibility, and commercial opportunities.



Excellence

ABOVE
Ten-Pin Side Table
by Louis Barrett



Why excellence matters

Chris Arend, chief commercial officer of Biesse UK, sponsor of the Manufacturing Guild Mark, writes about the importance of excellence



Chris Arend
Chief commercial officer, Biesse UK

IN MANUFACTURING, EXCELLENCE IS

often spoken about as an aspiration. In reality, it is a discipline, one that determines whether a business merely operates or genuinely leads. At Biesse UK, excellence is not confined to machinery performance alone; it defines how we consult, install, support and partner with the manufacturers who rely on our technology every day.

In sectors such as furniture and bespoke joinery, accuracy is non-negotiable. A fraction of a millimetre can determine whether a component fits flawlessly or requires costly rework. Downtime disrupts schedules, erodes margins and places reputations at risk. For manufacturers operating in competitive, specification-driven markets, mediocrity is expensive. Excellence, by contrast, protects productivity, safeguards quality and underpins long-term growth.

True manufacturing excellence is about more than machinery alone. It's about providing the technology, expertise and support that help customers deliver exceptional results every day.

That commitment extends beyond engineering. True operational excellence means understanding a customer's workflow before a machine is ever installed. It means configuring equipment to meet specific

production goals, integrating CAD/CAM software seamlessly, training operators thoroughly, and providing responsive aftercare that keeps production running.

Biesse aligns closely with the standards represented by the Manufacturing Guild Mark. Awarded to companies that demonstrate exceptional standards of design, craftsmanship and manufacturing integrity, the Guild Mark is far more than a badge. It demonstrates that a business operates according to recognised professional standards. Its combination of peer review, thoughtful assessment, and focus on enduring quality makes it well regarded in the furniture and joinery sector.

For Guild Mark holders, trust is hard earned and carefully maintained. Their customers, whether they be architects, designers or private commissioners, expect faultless execution. Machinery performance and technical support are therefore not background considerations, but critical components of successful project delivery. There is a natural synergy between advanced computer numerical control (CNC)

TRUE MANUFACTURING EXCELLENCE IS ABOUT MORE THAN MACHINERY ALONE. IT'S ABOUT PROVIDING THE TECHNOLOGY, EXPERTISE AND SUPPORT THAT HELP CUSTOMERS DELIVER EXCEPTIONAL RESULTS EVERY DAY

technology and high-end craftsmanship. Advanced engineering enables repeatability without compromising creativity. Digital optimisation reduces waste as well as unwanted down time, while protecting the product quality. Automation supports consistency while skilled makers focus on detail and finish.

Excellence also plays a critical role in sustainability and risk management. Efficient nesting software such as Biesse's b_Nest, ensures accuracy which means less wastage, saving production costs and time. However, it is essential that machines are kept maintained. Proactive servicing reduces unexpected downtime. Factors like this contribute not only to environmental responsibility but also to commercial resilience. In a market defined by tight margins and rising client expectations, manufacturers need partners who reduce variability rather than introduce it.

Ultimately, excellence is about alignment of standards across the supply chain. When a manufacturer invests in achieving Guild Mark recognition, it signals a commitment to quality without compromise. Working with partners who share that ethos strengthens the entire production ecosystem. It builds confidence with specifiers, reassures end-clients and reinforces brand reputation at every touchpoint.

At Biesse UK, excellence is a standard we put into practice, not a concept we admire from afar. It is a practical, measurable commitment to raising the standards of manufacturing across the industry and with the Manufacturing Guild Mark, we are able to work closely with the industry. ●

biesse.com/gb/en/



Bespoke Guild Mark
Honouring the finest
traditions of British
craftsmanship



BGM 503



BGM 503



01



BGM 503



BGM 503



02



03

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 2025–2026 only one exceptional piece was awarded the Mark, demonstrating the exacting standards needed to attain this prestigious accolade.

Although only one piece was awarded a Bespoke Guild Mark, the judging panel wanted to commend three submissions by awarding a Certificate of Merit. ● bespokeguildmark.org.uk | [@bespokeguildmark](https://www.instagram.com/bespokeguildmark)

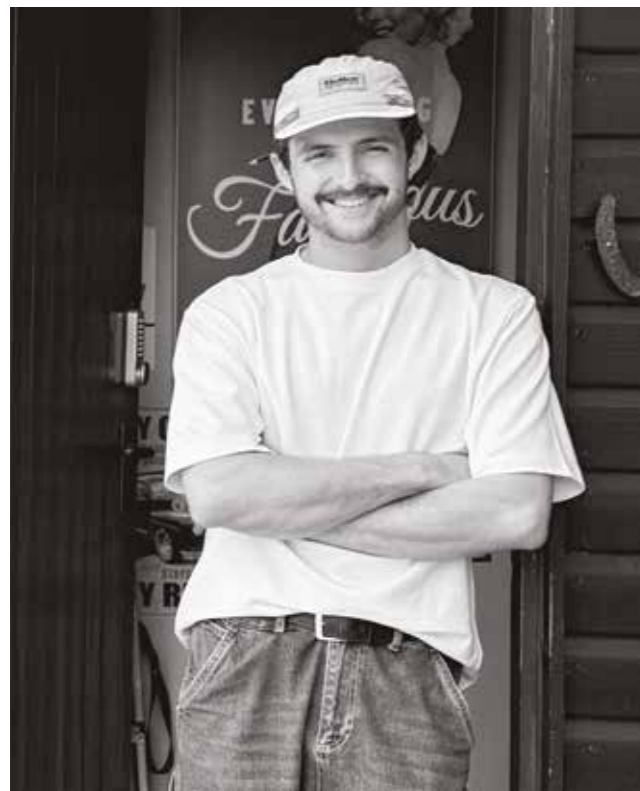
BGM 503 **AWARDED**
The Sky Wardrobe and Dressing Room
by Karen Howes and Jane Landino

CERTIFICATE OF MERIT
01 The Red Loop Windsor Chair by Lucy Steward
02 The Duchy of Cornwall Table by Nick Wright
03 The Mycena Table by Jarrad Belton

Profile

Gratus Bench

Designer-maker Joseph Robinson was presented the Christopher Claxton Stevens Prize in 2025 for his Gratus Bench



ABOVE Joseph Robinson

THE GRATUS BENCH DID NOT BEGIN AS AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE

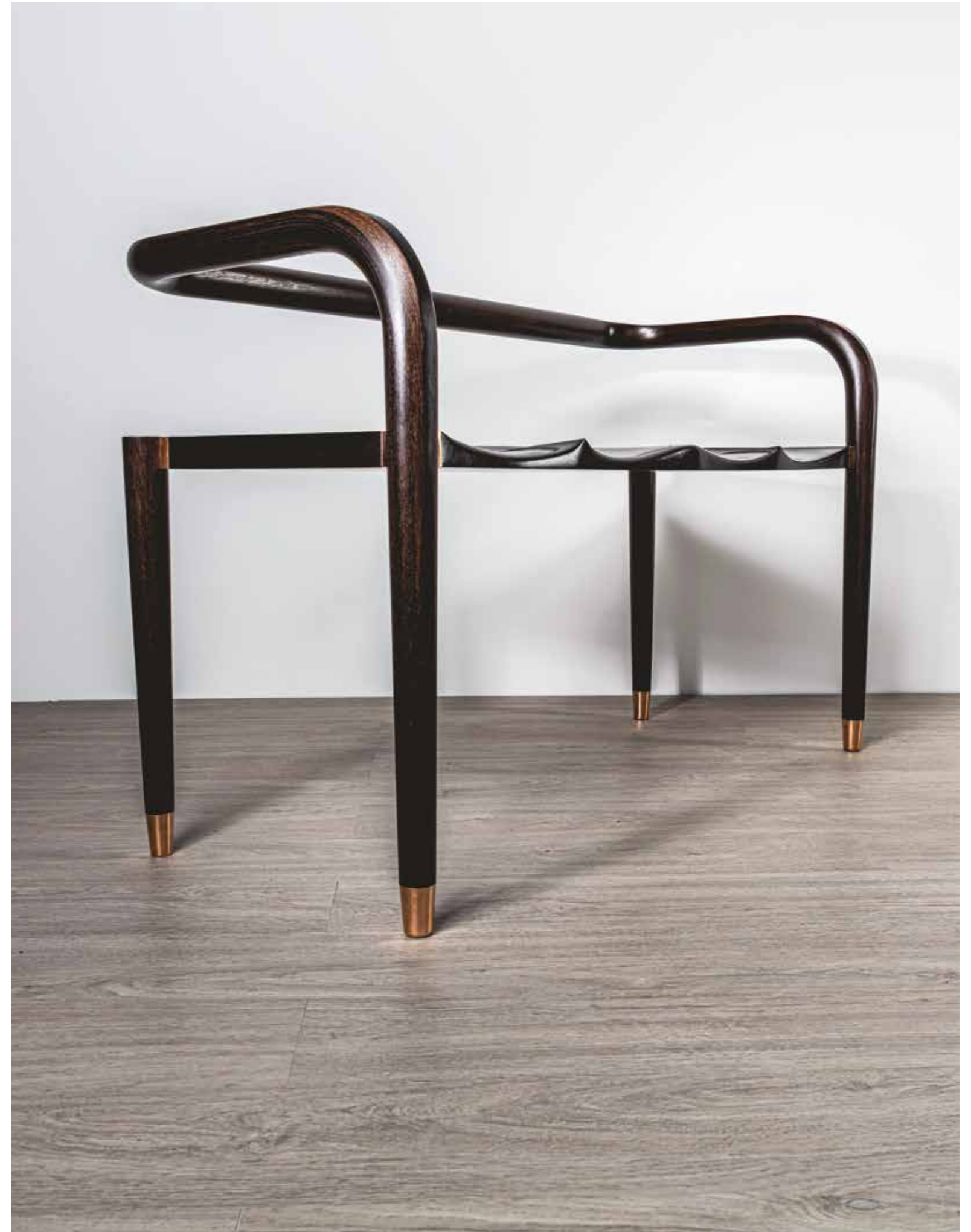
a statement piece. Instead, it grew out of an unusual moment of stillness. Designed and made during the COVID pandemic, the bench was shaped by a time when normal rhythms were interrupted and reflection became unavoidable. For Joseph Robinson, a British furniture designer based in the bustling coastal town of St Leonards-on-Sea, this pause became the foundation of the work.

"The bench reflects a rare pause amid uncertainty. It invites people to slow down, breathe, and notice their surroundings. I wanted to transform a typical hallway bench from a mere waiting spot into a place of stillness, where lingering becomes a gentle act of presence and reflection," Joseph said.

That sense of time and patience is embedded not only in the concept, but in the materials themselves. The bench is made from quarter-sawn Bog Oak, chosen for the way its dense, complex grain reveals itself through carving. Bronze details sit quietly alongside the timber, reinforcing the sense of age and continuity that runs through the piece.

"The seat is crafted from quarter-sawn Bog Oak because its grain becomes beautifully pronounced when carved. The bronze echoes the wood's aged character, linking the materials back to the Bronze Age – when the tree was last standing tall," Joseph explained.

Structurally, the Gratus Bench represented a significant step in Robinson's development as a maker. It was his first completed project and his first experience of bench lamination – a technique that allowed the flowing curves of the legs, arms and backrest to be formed as a continuous structure. One hundred laminated veneers come together to create a form that is both sculptural and restrained.





THE BENCH REFLECTS A RARE PAUSE AMID UNCERTAINTY. IT INVITES PEOPLE TO SLOW DOWN, BREATHE, AND NOTICE THEIR SURROUNDINGS. I WANTED TO TRANSFORM A TYPICAL HALLWAY BENCH FROM A MERE WAITING SPOT INTO A PLACE OF STILLNESS, WHERE LINGERING BECOMES A GENTLE ACT OF PRESENCE AND REFLECTION

The relationship between materials became a defining feature of the bench. Each bronze element was individually hand-shaped and fitted, demanding precision and patience. This careful integration proved to be the most challenging aspect of the design, but also one of the most rewarding.

“Hand matching all the bronze details to the timber was the most challenging part of the process. Every piece had to be shaped and finished by hand, but that precision is what allowed the relationship between the materials to feel seamless and considered,” Joseph said.

As the bench developed, the design was refined through making. The arms were originally designed with a circular section to mirror the backrest, but this was later adjusted when the form felt visually too heavy. Flattening the top of the arms reduced their bulk and brought a greater sense of balance to the overall composition.

From initial sketches to final completion, the Gratus Bench took 16 weeks to make. The result is a piece that feels measured and resolved, belying the fact that it was Robinson’s first completed work.

Awarded the Bespoke Guild Mark, the bench was subsequently recognised with the Christopher Claxton Stevens Prize, marking it as the most outstanding piece awarded the Guild Mark that year. For Robinson, the recognition carries significance well beyond the accolade itself.

“The Bespoke Guild Mark means far more to me than just an award. Recognised by industry leaders as the ultimate accolade, it represents possibilities I once believed were beyond reach. It has shown me that I am capable of more than I ever allowed myself to imagine,” Joseph said.

Quiet, reflective and deeply considered, the Gratus Bench stands as a response to a moment of global pause – and as a confident beginning for Joseph’s practice as a designer-maker. ●

joseph-robinson.co.uk



BELOW Joseph being presented the Christopher Claxton Stevens Prize by the Lord Mayor, the Rt Honourable Alderman Alastair King DL and Debbie Johnson, the Master



Design Guild Mark Celebrating excellence in design

SIXTEEN OUTSTANDING PIECES OF FURNITURE, lighting and interior design elements were awarded the coveted Design Guild Mark in 2025.

We established the Design Guild Mark in 2008 to raise the profile of British industrial design. It is unique in that applicants are required to present their piece in person to the three categories' – Furniture, Interior Design Elements and Lighting – judging panels, to allow for a dialogue and any questions to take place.

The winners were announced by design leader Sebastian Conran to a packed audience at KI's showroom during Clerkenwell Design Week. In addition to the 16 holders, ReSKU 2.0 by Jodie Padgett and Jane Marks-Yewdall was awarded the Jonathan Hindle Prize for outstanding design. This accolade is awarded to entries that stand out as exceptional even among high-quality submissions, and includes a £1,000 cash prize. ●

designguildmark.org.uk | [@designguildmark](https://www.instagram.com/designguildmark)

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DGM 329



DGM 332



DGM 330



DGM 333



DGM 331



DGM 334

FURNITURE

- DGM 329** ROXi Chair by David Colwell for David Colwell Design
DGM 330 Mindflow Chair by Charlie Fowler for TFH
DGM 331 Ringstead Chair and Footstool by Charlie Fowler for Another Country

- DGM 332** Barricane Chair by Magnus Long for Morgan
DGM 333 Highmoor Large Extending Dining Table by Benjamin Stanton for ercol
DGM 334 Cosi Laptop Table by Pearson Lloyd for Teknion



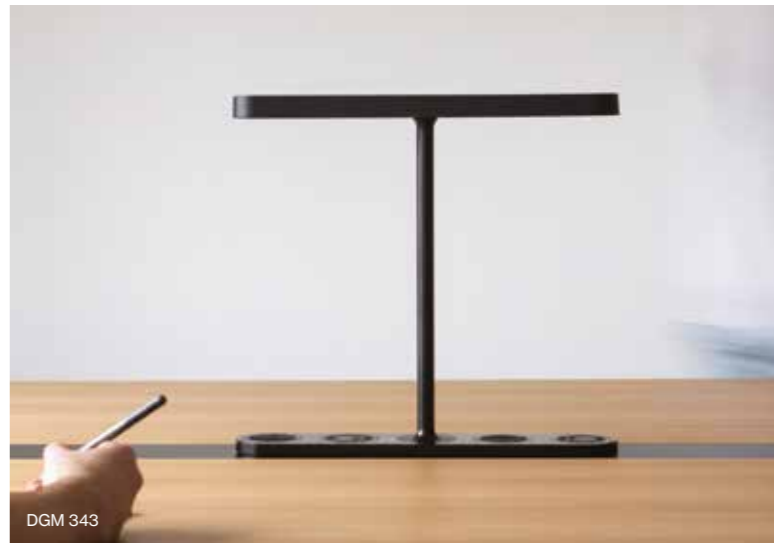
DGM 335



DGM 338



DGM 341



DGM 343



DGM 336



DGM 339



DGM 342



DGM 344



DGM 337



DGM 340

INTERIOR DESIGN ELEMENTS

- DGM 341** Disorder of Stasis by Charlotte Raffo and Joel Weaver for The Monkey Puzzle Tree
- DGM 342** ReSKU 2.0 by Jodie Padgett and Jane Marks-Yewdall for Camira (Jonathan Hindle Prize Winner)

LIGHTING

- DGM 343** Current by Jones + Partners for Bachmann Group
- DGM 344** Light Mass^ by Yael Mer and Shay Alkalay for Raw-Edges Studio



Profile

ReSKU 2.0

Jodie Padgett, innovation manager at Camira, talks to us about ReSKU 2.0, winner of the 2025 Jonathan Hindle Prize for outstanding design



ABOVE Jodie Padgett and Jane Marks-Yewdall

FIFTY YEARS ON FROM ITS FOUNDING, YORKSHIRE-BASED

fabric manufacturer Camira chose to mark the milestone in 2024 not by looking outward, but by looking back. ReSKU 2.0 is a considered reworking of one of the company's most quietly radical textiles, a fabric that first appeared in 1998 and challenged long-held assumptions about waste, value, and design long before circularity became an industry focus.

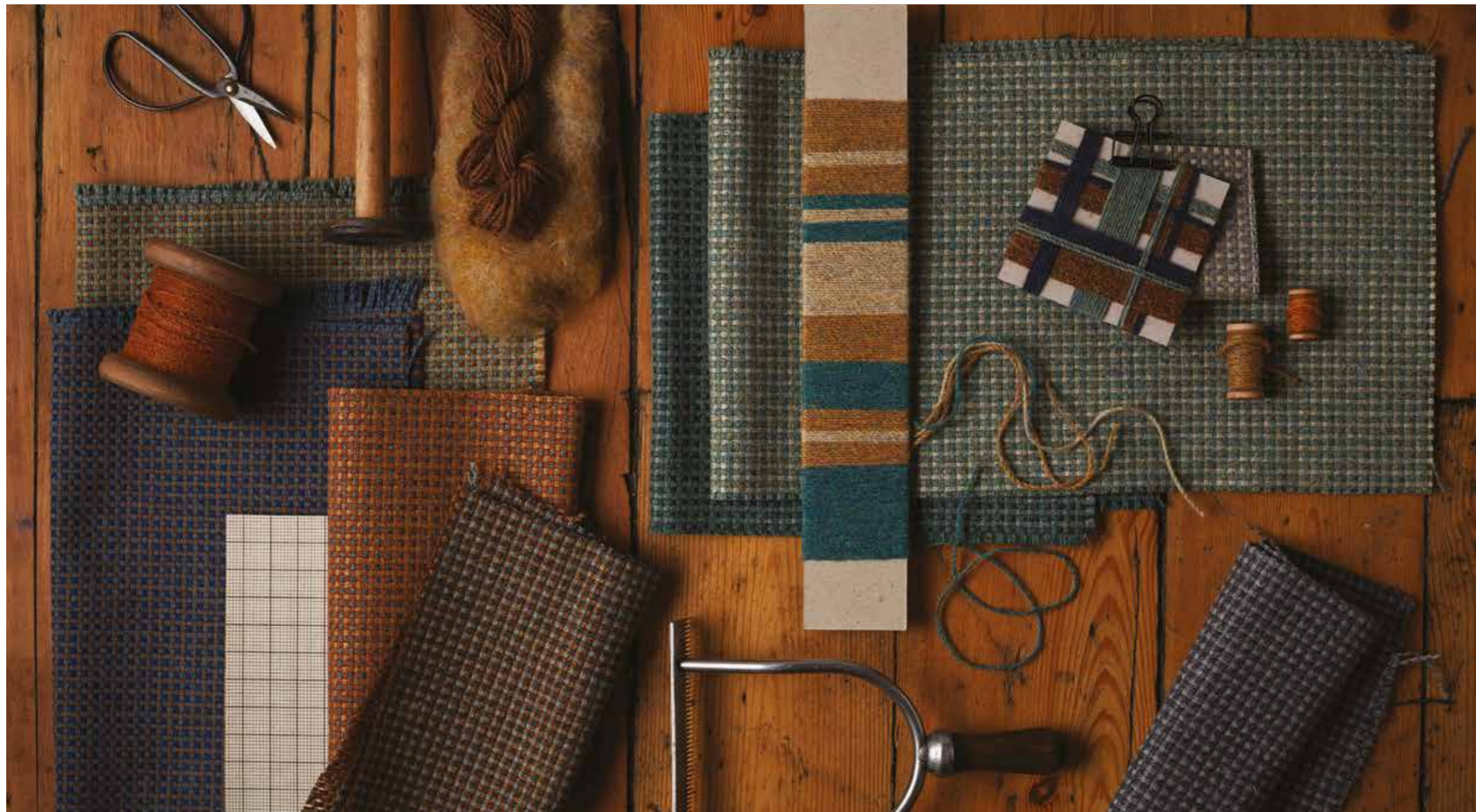
The original ReSKU was made from recycled army jumpers, a bold and unconventional move at the time. For 2024, Camira revisited that idea with fresh eyes, updating the fabric for modern interiors while remaining faithful to its distinctive character.

Jodie Padgett, innovation manager at Camira and one of the designers of ReSKU 2.0 along with Jane Marks-Yewdall, explains: "ReSKU 2.0 was born out of a desire to celebrate our 50th anniversary while revisiting one of our most iconic innovations. The original ReSKU was ahead of its time in demonstrating the potential of textile reprocessing. For 2024, we wanted to honour that heritage, updating the concept with modern techniques and materials to create a fabric that is both nostalgic and forward-looking."

That tension between past and present defines ReSKU 2.0. Visually and tactually, it retains the homespun texture, hopsack weave, and unmistakable recycled wool character that made the original so distinctive. Look closer, however, and the refinements become apparent. The fabric has been engineered to meet contemporary performance standards, expanding its potential across upholstery, curtains, and drapes in commercial, hospitality, and residential settings.

"We retained the soul of ReSKU – the homespun texture, hopsack weave, and recycled wool character – while refining it for today's design and performance standards," says Jodie. "By introducing





RESKU 2.0 USES WASTE FROM OUR OWN PRODUCTION, REDUCING LANDFILL CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESOURCE CONSUMPTION – BY BLENDING RECYCLED WOOL WITH RENEWABLE FLAX AND DESIGNING FOR CIRCULARITY, WE CREATED A FABRIC THAT CAN BE REPURPOSED, REPROCESSED, AND CELEBRATED AGAIN



renewable flax and improving the recycling process, ReSKU 2.0 meets contemporary requirements for durability, flammability, and multi-application use.”

Materiality plays a central role in that evolution. ReSKU 2.0 blends recycled wool from Camira’s own manufacturing waste with renewable flax and recycled polyamide, each element carefully chosen for both performance and sustainability. Wool provides warmth and tactility, flax adds strength and subtle colour variation, while recycled polyamide enhances durability. Together, they create a fabric that feels soft yet resilient, offered in 24 colourways with depth and nuance.

Behind the scenes, the technical challenges were significant. Turning disparate recycled fibres into a consistent, high-quality yarn demanded meticulous sorting and mechanical processing, all while preserving the natural irregularity that gives ReSKU its charm. Achieving modern flammability and performance standards added another layer of complexity, pushing the development process well beyond a simple update.

Sustainability, however, was never treated as an add-on. It shaped every decision from the outset.

“ReSKU 2.0 uses waste from our own production, reducing landfill contributions and resource consumption,” Jodie explains. “By blending recycled wool with renewable flax and designing for circularity, we created a fabric that can be repurposed, reprocessed, and celebrated again.”

The result is a textile that feels honest and purposeful, one that invites designers to engage with its texture and subtle colour shifts. Its naturally layered appearance brings warmth and tactility to interiors, while its versatility allows it to sit comfortably alongside established Camira ranges such as Main Line Flax, Main Line Twist, and Blazer.

In 2025, ReSKU 2.0’s thoughtful balance of heritage, innovation, and environmental responsibility was recognised with both a Design Guild Mark and the Jonathan Hindle Prize for outstanding design.

Looking ahead, Camira sees ReSKU 2.0 as more than a retrospective gesture. It is a reminder that textile waste holds untapped creative potential.

“ReSKU 2.0 demonstrates that textile waste is not a problem, but a resource with immense creative potential,” says Jodie. “By combining heritage techniques with sustainable innovation, we hope to inspire designers and manufacturers to rethink how fabrics are made.” ●

camirafabrics.com

Manufacturing Guild Mark Championing 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

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- Jay-Be
- Magnet
- Paneltech
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- Wren Kitchens

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01



04



02



05



03



06

- 01** Aeron by Herman Miller
- 02** Ascot three-seater power recliner and armchair in Veloro Morocco by HSL
- 03** Ayton Table by Treske

- 04** Baroness by Easy Rest Beds
- 05** Bespoke Joinery Package at Finzels Reach by Paneltech
- 06** Dover Bespoke Kitchen by Collins Bespoke



07



10



13



16



08



11



14



17



09



12



15

- 07** Dream Team Gold mattress by Dreams
- 08** Earthfoam Heritage on Imogen bed by The Burgess Bedding Company
- 09** Ilfracombe in pebble and truffle by Howdens Joinery

- 10** Infinity Plus Milano Elements by Wren
- 11** Laboratories for the Royal Veterinary Clinic in Camden by Simpson & Liddard
- 12** Ludlow in parchment by Magnet

- 13** Mythos Collection by Artistic Upholstery
- 14** Staples & Co Artisan Utopia by Bensons for Beds
- 15** Tall Emily Bespoke in Hainsworth fabric with the Legacy mattress by Hypnos

- 16** The Jay-Be Grand small double folding bed
- 17** Weybridge in William Morris Strawberry Thief Velvet with a velvet ocean trim by Harrison Spinks

Profile

Wren

Kes Serelis, UK manufacturing operations director at Wren, talks about the importance of the company's Manufacturing Guild Mark

FOR WREN KITCHENS AND BEDROOMS, MANUFACTURING HAS never been a background function. It is the engine of the business, the foundation of its brand promise and the reason customers continue to place trust in its kitchens and bedrooms. That philosophy has been independently recognised with Wren becoming a holder of the Manufacturing Guild Mark, one of the UK furniture industry's most respected and demanding accolades.

Awarded by The Furniture Makers' Company, the Manufacturing Guild Mark is not a badge awarded lightly. The process involves a rigorous, independently reviewed audit that examines everything from design and product development through to people, governance, sustainability and long-term financial resilience. For Wren, the award represents confirmation of an approach that has been years in the making.

"Being awarded the Manufacturing Guild Mark was an important validation for the way we design, manufacture and invest here in the UK," says Kes Serelis, UK manufacturing operations director at Wren. "It recognises not just the scale of our operations, but the robustness and sustainability of our processes, the capability of our facilities and the standards we set ourselves every day across our manufacturing sites."

With nearly 50 years of experience in the kitchen industry, Wren has grown into one of the UK's largest kitchen and bedroom manufacturers, yet its focus remains firmly on the fundamentals of making things well. The business is proud of the accreditations it has achieved, particularly those rooted in genuine manufacturing performance rather than marketing claims.

"Innovation at Wren is driven by how we make products better, more efficiently, more sustainably and more consistently," Kes explains. "That runs from materials and automation right through to quality control and logistics."



ABOVE
Parrott Street factory floor

OPPOSITE PAGE
Shaker Forest Kitchen in Alchemy



A key differentiator is Wren's ownership model. As a privately owned business, Wren does not rely on external shareholders or third-party financiers. This independence gives it the freedom to reinvest directly into manufacturing, take a long-term view and prioritise quality and continuous improvement.

"That autonomy allows us to focus on doing the right things for the long term," Kes says. "The Manufacturing Guild Mark is a meaningful endorsement of our approach that puts manufacturing at the heart of everything we do."

Wren's control over its design, manufacturing, retail and logistics operations is central to its ability to deliver consistent quality at high volume. By owning and controlling the majority of its supply chain, the business maintains clear accountability for standards from the earliest design decisions through to manufacture, delivery and installation.

"Owning and controlling design, manufacturing, retail and delivery gives us a significant advantage," says Kes. "It allows us to maintain clear ownership of standards at every stage."

This close alignment enables Wren to identify issues and market trends quickly and respond with speed and precision. Improvements and innovations are developed and implemented in-house, meaning changes can be rolled out efficiently and consistently rather than diluted across multiple third parties.

"Our in-house integration ensures accountability at every stage," Kes adds, "and enables us to continuously refine quality while operating at scale."

The Manufacturing Guild Mark audit process is designed to be searching and objective. For Wren, the independent assessment validated the transparency and consistency of its manufacturing processes and confirmed that governance systems are well embedded across the organisation.

"It reinforced that the standards we set – and continue to challenge – are clearly understood and applied day to day," Kes says.

Where the audit added particular value was in providing an external perspective. Viewing operations through independent eyes prompted Wren to further sharpen how it evidences its culture of excellence and continuous improvement, especially in capturing the contribution of its people and the decisions that underpin performance.

"Overall, it was a constructive process," Kes reflects. "It helped us refine how we illustrate and demonstrate the strengths and controls already built into the manufacturing side of the organisation."

Among the many aspects of Wren's manufacturing operation recognised by the Manufacturing Guild Mark, one stands out as a clear demonstration of excellence in practice. Like all manufacturers of wrapped furniture, Wren operates in a category where delamination is a known industry risk. Rather than accepting this as unavoidable, Wren invested heavily in research, testing and collaboration to eliminate the issue.

"Through extensive research, testing and collaboration across our manufacturing teams and third-party adhesive specialists, we developed a unique adhesive process designed specifically to address this issue at scale," Kes explains.

The result is an innovative system recognised as one of the highest-quality adhesive processes currently in use in the UK. Supported by rigorous ongoing quality controls, including 30-minute manual inspections, the process has transformed performance.

"Since its introduction, delamination is no longer an issue for Wren," Kes says. "It's considered a challenge firmly in the past."

MAIN IMAGE Milano by Wren

SMALL IMAGES The Parrott Street factory



This blend of innovation, disciplined manufacturing control and sustained quality assurance is a clear example of the standards recognised by the Manufacturing Guild Mark.

Producing at scale without compromising quality requires more than end-of-line inspection. At Wren, quality control is embedded throughout the manufacturing process, supported by end-to-end visibility and real-time monitoring.

"By keeping all key elements of the manufacturing process in-house, we maintain continuous control over quality at scale," says Kes. "That allows us to address issues early, rather than relying on final inspection alone."

Wren's approach is underpinned by extensive product testing. Its internal laboratories subject both new and existing products to rigorous, repeatable testing that exceeds typical industry requirements. These assessments are complemented by independent third-party testing, ensuring durability and long-term performance are validated externally as well as internally.

"This combination of control, testing and verification enables us to produce at volume without compromising precision or long-term performance," Kes notes.

Wren's manufacturing sites have been purpose built to modern standards, allowing processes to be designed around quality and efficiency from the outset. A flagship example is the £120 million, 1.2 million sq. ft. manufacturing facility at the company's Barton headquarters, conceived as a fully integrated, state-of-the-art operation.

Investment in technology is matched by investment in people.

BEING AWARDED THE MANUFACTURING GUILD MARK WAS AN IMPORTANT VALIDATION FOR THE WAY WE DESIGN, MANUFACTURE AND INVEST HERE IN THE UK – IT RECOGNISES NOT JUST THE SCALE OF OUR OPERATIONS, BUT THE ROBUSTNESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR PROCESSES, THE CAPABILITY OF OUR FACILITIES AND THE STANDARDS WE SET OURSELVES EVERY DAY ACROSS OUR MANUFACTURING SITES



Wren recruits primarily on attitude rather than aptitude, focusing on individuals who share its values and commitment to continuous improvement. Structured development programmes, apprenticeships and ongoing specialist training ensure skills evolve alongside increasingly advanced manufacturing technology.

Sustainability is equally embedded across the business. Wren is on a clear path to carbon neutrality, sourcing materials responsibly, recycling, reducing waste, aiming to plant one million trees, transitioning to e-trucks and investing in innovations such as water-based paints and a pioneering carbon mapping tool enabling on-pack carbon calculations developed with Hull University.

"This isn't a tick-box exercise," Kes emphasises. "It's a commitment to making a real, measurable difference."

British manufacturing plays a central role in Wren's brand identity and customer proposition. Every kitchen and bedroom is designed, tested and manufactured in the UK, supporting local jobs and ensuring agility, quality and reliability.

Holding the Manufacturing Guild Mark reinforces confidence among customers, partners and the wider industry. "It's not just an award," Kes concludes. "It's a benchmark that underscores our commitment to craftsmanship, innovation and consistently delivering exceptional kitchens and bedrooms."

For Wren, the mark is both recognition and responsibility – a confirmation of what has been achieved, and a challenge to keep raising the bar for British manufacturing excellence. ●

wrenkitchens.com

Education underpins our commitment to the long-term success of the UK furniture and furnishings sector. We are passionate about nurturing emerging talent and supporting the designers, makers, retailers, and innovators who will define the future of the industry.

Our engagement starts at school level, where we introduce young people to the creativity, craft, and opportunity within furniture design and making. As individuals progress into further and higher education, we offer scholarships, bursaries, and awards that both recognise outstanding potential and remove financial obstacles.

A key focus of our work is supporting the transition from education into employment. Through close collaboration with colleges, universities, and industry partners, we promote apprenticeships and deliver professional development opportunities that build practical skills and commercial understanding. Programmes such as the Young Professional Industry Experience (YPIE) provide participants with a valuable perspective on the full breadth of the sector.

Alongside this, our annual New Furniture Makers exhibition celebrates exceptional work by emerging makers from across the UK, offering a high-profile platform for new voices and ideas.

This section highlights the breadth and impact of our educational initiatives. By investing in learning at every stage, we are helping to create a confident, skilled, and sustainable future for furniture making — supporting individuals as they grow from students into industry professionals.



Education

ABOVE
Rocco Huntley on
his Sprung Chair at
the New Furniture
Makers exhibition



Why education matters

Liveryman Geoffrey Fowler, founding CEO of London Design & Engineering UTC, has spent more than 25 years working in education, largely in communities facing significant social and economic challenge. He talks about why education matters



Geoffrey Fowler
London Design & Engineering UTC

EDUCATION WORKS BEST WHEN IT IS rooted in purpose, relationships, and the belief that every young person deserves to be taken seriously. This has always been true, but it is especially so in furniture making and the wider heritage crafts, where skill, judgement, and pride in workmanship are passed on person to person, often over generations. When learning is connected to real opportunity and real craft, its impact extends far beyond the classroom.

Over my 25 years in education, I have learned that progress is rarely driven by one individual or one idea. It comes instead from people who persist, adapt, and keep learners at the centre of their decisions. This mirrors the traditions of craft itself, where mastery is built patiently through guidance, repetition, and shared standards.

For me, education has always been about more than outcomes alone. Qualifications matter, but they are only part of the picture. Education shapes confidence, identity, and aspiration. It influences who feels the future is open to them and who quietly assumes it is not. In craft disciplines, this question of belonging is particularly important. Too many young people never see themselves reflected in skilled trades or heritage industries, not because they lack ability, but because they

TOO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE NEVER SEE THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN SKILLED TRADES OR HERITAGE INDUSTRIES, NOT BECAUSE THEY LACK ABILITY, BUT BECAUSE THEY LACK ACCESS, ENCOURAGEMENT, OR ROLE MODELS



lack access, encouragement, or role models. Inclusion, therefore, is not an addition to the work; it is the work.

At London Design & Engineering UTC, we express this belief through what I describe as the Two Golden Tickets. The first is qualifications. Exams remain essential and continue to act as gateways to further study, apprenticeships, and employment. The second is experience. Real projects, contact with professionals, and exposure to work environments help learners develop confidence, language skills, and a sense of possibility. In furniture making and related crafts, this second ticket is especially powerful. Without experience of real materials, tools, standards, and working practices, learning remains abstract and incomplete.

Over time, with the support of colleagues, employers, and governors, this thinking has developed into the IndEX approach, the Industry Education Exchange. A pedagogy built around four pillars, Inspire, Create, Prepare, and Experience, IndEX is not designed as enrichment or a bolt-on. Instead, employers work alongside teachers as co-educators, helping to bring the key concepts of the curriculum to life through authentic, real-world contexts. Academic rigour remains central, but learning becomes more memorable and meaningful when it is connected to purpose.

In practice, this means learners studying T Levels in Furniture Making and Upholstery working directly with professional makers and upholsterers throughout their education. Learners are guided by people who understand materials, tools, tolerances, and standards because they apply them every day. Employers set live briefs, demonstrate techniques, critique work, and talk honestly about the realities of professional practice. Learners might work alongside an upholsterer to understand traditional and contemporary methods, materials selection, and quality control, or engage with furniture makers to explore joinery, finishing, and workshop discipline. Academic rigour remains central, but learning becomes more meaningful when theory is reinforced through real working contexts, professional expectations, and the shared language of craft.

This approach was explored in depth during our most recent Ofsted inspection. Inspectors spent time listening to learners, observing practice, and understanding how the college works with employers. The outcome was five 'Exceptional' judgements, with Ofsted describing our practice as "of the highest standard nationally" and "from which other schools can learn". We see this feedback as encouraging and as affirmation that an inclusive, employer-rich model can support strong outcomes when applied consistently and thoughtfully.

What has been most heartening is seeing this work begin to resonate beyond our own institution. IndEX is now developing into a national platform, offering a structured way for employers and their professionals, including liverymen and freemen, to support schools and colleges by sharing their time, experience, and professional insight. Often, what young people value most is not grand gestures, but honest conversations, practical challenges, and the chance to see how learning connects to real working lives.

The livery tradition has long stood for service, standards, and the passing on of knowledge. In furniture making, this tradition is tangible, embodied in materials, techniques, and a commitment to quality that outlasts trends. IndEX is simply an attempt to contribute to that tradition in a modern context. Education matters because it is how potential is patiently shaped into capability. If you are able to give a little time or expertise, the impact on a young person's confidence and direction can be far greater than you might expect. ●

ldeutc.co.uk

Young Professionals Industry Experience 2025

Inspiring the leaders of tomorrow

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ARE THE driving force behind the future of the UK furniture and furnishings industry, bringing fresh thinking, technical skill, and a passion for innovation. To support the next generation of industry leaders, we once again delivered our flagship Young Professionals Industry Experience (YPIE) programme.

Now in its second year since relaunch, YPIE is a cornerstone of our educational offering. The three-week programme is designed to give emerging talent a unique, end-to-end view of the industry, spanning design, manufacturing, testing, compliance, sustainability, marketing, and retail. In 2025, eight outstanding young professionals were selected in recognition of their potential and commitment to the sector.

Over the course of three weeks, the group visited 20 organisations across the UK, gaining first-hand insight into the full furniture supply chain. Hosts opened their doors to share expertise in areas such as component sourcing, production processes, innovation, customer experience, intellectual property, and sustainability.

Participating organisations included Anti Copying in Design, Blum UK, Colebrook Bosson Saunders, Designer Contracts, Dreams, ercol, FIRA, G Plan, Herman Miller, Hypnos, MillerKnoll, Panaz, SATRA, Sleepezee, The Furniture Ombudsman, and

BELOW John Makepeace OBE with Aamarah and Daniel

OPPOSITE, TOP TO BOTTOM
The 2025 participants with the Master; a factory tour of Hypnos



THE EXPERIENCE GAVE ME A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE INDUSTRY OPERATES – NOT JUST FROM A DESIGNER'S PERSPECTIVE, BUT ACROSS THE WIDER BUSINESS. I'M LEAVING THE PROGRAMME FEELING MORE INFORMED, INSPIRED, AND BETTER PREPARED TO NAVIGATE THE INDUSTRY

2025 PARTICIPANTS

Sinéad Ambrose

A multidisciplinary designer-maker studying furniture design & make at Rycotewood College.

Jakub Jedlecki

Technical designer at Lanserring with a background in architecture.

Carl-Henrik Andersson

Building surveyor at Fluent Architectural Design Services and founder of Category Furniture, focused on sustainability and circular design.

Daniel Edmunds

Team leader at Dreams with 14 years' industry experience and a strong interest in leadership development.

Charlotte Akroyd

Head of manufacturing at HSL, with more than 20 years at the business and its first female to hold the role.

Aamarah Noor

Self-employed designer and 2024 New Furniture Makers Award winner, specialising in functional and sustainable design.

Miles Clifford

Designer-maker and New Furniture Makers Award winner, trained at Rowden Atelier and influenced by his work with Marc Fish.

Jennifer Seastone

London-based sculptural bespoke furniture maker and 2024 New Furniture Makers Award winner, with a background in fine art, sculpture, and theatre.



William Hands, alongside a masterclass with John Makepeace OBE.

The programme concluded with a presentation lunch at Furniture Makers' Hall on Thursday 17 July, where participants reflected on their experience with employers, industry leaders, and host organisations.

Debbie Johnson, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company, said: "The YPIE programme offers something truly rare – access, mentorship, and a panoramic view of what makes the UK furniture industry thrive. The 2025 cohort brought such energy, curiosity, and passion to the experience. We look forward to seeing how they take this learning forward in their careers."

Participants highlighted the value of seeing the industry beyond their individual roles. Aamarah Noor said: "The experience gave me a broader understanding of how the industry operates – not just from a designer's perspective, but across the wider business. I'm leaving the programme feeling more informed, inspired, and better prepared to navigate the industry."

Reflecting on sustainability, Carl-Henrik Andersson said: "Seeing how leading UK manufacturers are tackling circularity and data-driven innovation was incredibly valuable. The programme deepened my understanding of the complex relationship between environmental responsibility and commercial growth."

Jennifer Seastone added: "It was amazing that so many successful people took time out to really show us the inner workings of their businesses. Meeting others pursuing different paths and learning about their processes was equally inspiring."

For Sinéad Ambrose, the behind-the-scenes access was key: "Each company offered something unique. Even when a visit didn't align directly with my career goals, there was always something valuable to take away."

The 2025 Young Professionals Industry Experience once again demonstrated the depth, diversity, and opportunity within the UK furniture and furnishings sector, while strengthening the connections that will help shape its future. ●

New Furniture Makers Exhibition 2025

OUR ANNUAL SHOWCASE OF EMERGING design talent, the New Furniture Makers exhibition, once again proved to be a highlight in our events calendar.

Principally sponsored by Furniture Village, the exhibition – formerly known as the Young Furniture Makers exhibition – took place on Wednesday 29 October at Furniture Makers' Hall and the Dutch Church in Austin Friars, London.

More than 70 designs by up-and-coming designer-makers from across the UK were exhibited at the inspiring one-day event. Established over 15 years ago, the exhibition was created to give school pupils, students and graduates a platform to showcase their work to the design community and connect with potential employers.

The day concluded with the New Furniture Makers Awards ceremony, with awards and prizes presented by Rupert Senior, one of the UK's leading bespoke furniture designer-makers, and Francesca Rowan-Plowden, interior designer, entrepreneur and TV presenter.

Debbie Johnson, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company, said: "The New Furniture Makers exhibition once again highlighted the outstanding and extraordinary design talent present in the UK. We are deeply thankful to our exhibition and awards sponsors, whose continued commitment makes this inspiring

event possible each year. I would especially like to express my gratitude to our principal sponsor, Furniture Village, for their generous support."

Charlie Harrison, managing director at Furniture Village, added: "Supporting the New Furniture Makers exhibition is part of our ongoing commitment to nurturing emerging talent in the UK furniture industry. The event provides an invaluable platform for young designers to showcase their ideas and connect with professionals who can help them take the next step in their careers." ●

The 2026 edition of the New Furniture Makers exhibition will be taking place on Wednesday 4 November 2026



THE NEW FURNITURE MAKERS EXHIBITION ONCE AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED THE OUTSTANDING AND EXTRAORDINARY DESIGN TALENT PRESENT IN THE UK – WE ARE DEEPLY THANKFUL TO OUR EXHIBITION AND AWARDS SPONSORS, WHOSE CONTINUED COMMITMENT MAKES THIS INSPIRING EVENT POSSIBLE EACH YEAR

PRINCIPAL SPONSOR



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New Furniture Makers Awards 2025

EACH YEAR, THE NEW FURNITURE MAKERS exhibition concludes with a celebratory awards presentation, honouring the most outstanding work on display. The awards recognise creativity, skill, and innovation, highlighting the designs that truly stand out to the judging panels.

Every exhibited piece is considered for one of four New Furniture Makers Awards: the Bespoke Award, the Design Award, the Textiles Award, and the Apprentice Award. Judging takes place in person during the exhibition, allowing panels to closely examine each piece and fully appreciate the craftsmanship and design detail before reaching their decisions.

Alongside the core awards, several additional prizes are generously supported by industry partners, further strengthening the connection between emerging talent and the wider furniture sector.

This year's exhibition also marked the conclusion of a special one-off competition – the Empty Chair Design Award – organised in partnership with the Church of England.

Launched in 2024, the initiative invited young furniture designers and makers from across the UK to create a prototype chair that embodies the poignant symbolism of loss and absence. Submissions were reviewed by a judging panel featuring representatives from both the Church of England and The Furniture Makers' Company.

We extend our sincere thanks to all the sponsors whose support makes these awards and prizes possible. ●



SCHOOL DESIGN PRIZE
Sponsored by KI
Dynamic Bench by Summer Gardner



"The New Furniture Makers exhibition was such a great experience, and I was really amazed to see such a wide variety of incredible products and ideas. I think one of the best parts of the day was the countless interactions I had as it enabled me to get advice from industry professionals as well as young designers slightly further on in their journey than me. Winning the School Design Prize was an incredible honour and has given me the opportunity to make further connections with such a wide audience of experts in the design industry. I look forward to continuing this passion next year as I study engineering at Loughborough University."



APPRENTICE AWARD
Sponsored by Achieve and Partners
Branching Out by Chelsey Church from Bill Cleynert & Company



"I am honoured to have received the Apprentice Award. It means a great deal, having my work recognised among such inspiring makers and individuals. I really enjoyed showcasing 'Branching Out', sharing my passion for cabinet making with so many, on such a memorable day. I am incredibly grateful to have been part of it."



BESPOKE AWARD
Sponsored by Past Master
Roger Richardson RD
Flow by Ellen Baines



"The experience of meeting so many wonderfully talented and creative makers, both new and established, is one that will stay with me. It was a true honour and huge surprise to receive the Bespoke Award at last year's show, and I cannot thank The Furniture Makers' Company enough for their support of new and emerging makers."

The winners were presented their prizes by Rupert Senior, one of the UK's leading bespoke furniture designer-makers, and Francesca Rowan-Plowden, interior designer, entrepreneur and TV presenter.



DESIGN AWARD
Sponsored by NaughtOne
Archetype M by Reuben Porter



"Winning the New Furniture Makers Design Award was such a fantastic experience. It was a truly lovely day exhibiting and meeting so many talented young makers from across the UK, people I hope to stay connected with and collaborate with in the future. The event gave me great exposure and the chance to speak with a wide range of industry professionals. I feel very honoured to receive this award, and I hope it marks an exciting step into the British furnishing industry."



BEST IN SHOW PRIZE
Sponsored by Blum
Re-Thatched Shelves by Robert Radcliffe



"It was a huge honour to win the award at the New Furniture Makers Awards, and a meaningful recognition of my approach to furniture design and making. The feedback and industry connections I gained at the event are already proving invaluable as I take my practice forward."



TEXTILES AWARD
Sponsored by House of Sonnaz
Goleuo by Sam Budd



"Being selected to exhibit at New Furniture Makers was a major achievement for me, and winning the Textiles Award made the experience even more meaningful. This was rewarding as it marked a nice end to my university experience at Nottingham Trent University. I was able to reflect on how I had evolved as a designer through great mentorship from lecturers and build friendships with my peers."



LEATHERSELLERS' PRIZE
Sponsored by the
Leathersellers' Company
Stitch by Grace Mansell



"Winning the award at the New Furniture Makers exhibition was a huge honour and a really encouraging moment for me. The whole day was incredibly inspiring, surrounded by such talented makers. It's an experience I'll always remember."



BEST CHAIR IN SHOW PRIZE
Sponsored by Meon by Gaze Burvill
Her Captain's Chair by Lily Hitchcock



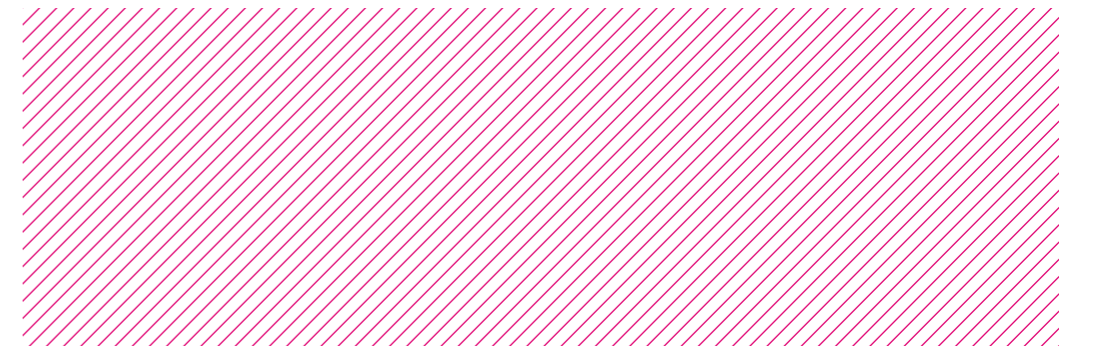
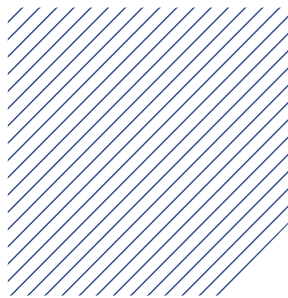
"I am so pleased I applied for the New Furniture Makers Awards. I had such an enriching day speaking to both industry professionals and other young makers – the community was so supportive. I loved sharing my 'Her Captain's Chair' project with others. It is so important to me, and I am so proud to have won the Best Chair in Show award with it."



EMPTY CHAIR DESIGN AWARD
Sponsored by
The Church of England
You Might Want to Sit Down by James Gascoigne



"I was delighted to learn that 'You Might Want to Sit Down' had been shortlisted. This feeling quickly turned to imposter syndrome as I arrived at the exhibition hall. The quality of the work on display was truly exceptional, but speaking with the other exhibitors, it was their stories and their creative energy that I found hugely inspiring. Winning the award was a total shock but also an unforgettable experience made even more special as my fellow Chippendale School graduate, Ellen Baines, came first in the Bespoke category."





LEFT AND ABOVE
The collection is being moved to East London Furniture Institute (ELFI)

The Frederick Parker Collection

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

THE FREDERICK PARKER CHAIR

Collection has been on loan to London Metropolitan University (LMU) since 2003, but sadly due to the reorganisation of their courses they are unable to continue to do so. So, over the past year, the committee and I have been working hard to find a new home for the chairs, and I am delighted to say that we have found one.

Later this year the chair collection will be moved to the East London Furniture Institute (ELFI) at Royal Docks, East London. ELFI is part of the London Design and Engineering University Technical College (LDEUTC). Geoffrey Fowler, CEO of LDEUTC said: "ELFI will use the collection as a core educational resource. Students on T Level Craft and Design programmes, AMUSF diplomas in upholstery and specialist short courses will have direct access to study these historic pieces. They will be able to analyse design evolution, structure, materials and upholstery techniques, building deep understanding that informs contemporary creative work. ELFI's industry-aligned curriculum emphasises hands-on learning with real objects, and the chair collection will inspire design thinking and craft excellence for learners from all backgrounds and will be made available to the public for several

STUDENTS ON T LEVEL CRAFT AND DESIGN PROGRAMMES, AMUSF DIPLOMAS IN UPHOLSTERY AND SPECIALIST SHORT COURSES WILL HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO STUDY THESE HISTORIC PIECES – THEY WILL BE ABLE TO ANALYSE DESIGN EVOLUTION, STRUCTURE, MATERIALS AND UPHOLSTERY TECHNIQUES, BUILDING DEEP UNDERSTANDING THAT INFORMS CONTEMPORARY CREATIVE WORK

days a year. This partnership underlines ELFI's commitment to preparing designers and makers for global creative industries while celebrating the rich legacy of British furniture craft."

We are delighted that we have been able to save the most significant chairs but, sadly, ELFI are only able to house part of the chair collection. Therefore, we have selected the most interesting and important pieces that will form both the permanent display with a smaller group that can be sent on tour to other colleges or exhibitions. The chair collection will be more focused, with every chair contributing special qualities to inspire and inform students and provide a unique educational resource for everyone interested in English furniture from the 17th century to today. The remainder will be sold at auction and the money raised will be put towards the upkeep of the chair collection in the future.

Later in the year we will be relaunching the Friends scheme, continuing to offer visits to the collection, lectures and tours. More details about the new Friends scheme, the relaunch and visits to the collection will be sent out in due course.

The archive material will remain at the LMU, forming part of their Special Collections Archive and Library at Holloway Road, where it can be easily visited for research. The whole archive has been catalogued, which is available online, and the LMU are in the process of digitising the most important items, including the master books, so that they can be studied online in due course. There will continue to be close collaboration between the Furniture Makers, LMU and ELFI. ●

frederickparkercollection.org.uk

The Furniture Makers' Company continues to evolve as a progressive and inclusive livery company, bringing together individuals and businesses from across the UK's wide-ranging furniture and furnishing industry. Our members remain at the heart of the Company, shaping our direction and supporting the delivery of our charitable and strategic objectives.

We are proud of the diversity of our membership, which reflects the full breadth of the sector, from beds, fabrics, kitchens, and cabinetry to carpets and floor coverings. This range of expertise not only underpins our relevance within the industry but also encourages collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of lasting professional relationships.

Over the past year, a focused and proactive effort has been made to encourage and support the progression of freemen to liverymen, helping to strengthen engagement and ensure a healthy pipeline of active members. We are pleased to note that individual membership has increased slightly on the previous year, demonstrating steady confidence in the Company, alongside sustained interest from corporate members. Each new addition reinforces our collective strength and supports our ongoing work in education, excellence, and welfare within the furnishing industry.



Membership

ABOVE
Liveryman
Samuel Chan

Why membership matters

Master-Elect and co-membership chairman Jessica Alexander writes about what you get from being a member of the Company

WHEN I FIRST JOINED THE FURNITURE

Makers' Company over 20 years ago, little did I know that a whole new world would open up before me.

It wouldn't be exaggerating to say that becoming a member has been one of the most meaningful and rewarding things I have done throughout my almost 50 years in the industry.

If you are active in the furniture industry, you may well have been asked to put your hand in your pocket on more than one occasion to support the Company, which has been the industry's only charity since 2013, when it merged with the Furnishing Industry Trust, formerly FTBA. But joining the Company is a whole other level and brings with it so much more than just a sense of temporary satisfaction from an occasional donation or attendance at a fundraising event.

So over and above that warm fuzzy feeling of doing good, what else do you get from becoming a member and why does it matter?

If you get involved, join committees and come to events, you get access to an unparalleled network of peers, leaders and innovators. Whether you work in design, manufacturing, retail, upholstery, craft, education or supply chains, the livery brings together professionals from every corner of the industry – the only organisation to do so. This creates opportunities for collaboration, mentorship and knowledge exchange that rarely exist elsewhere in such a concentrated and supportive form.

The livery acts as a powerful voice for the industry, promoting high standards, celebrating craftsmanship and advocating for skills development. As a member, you become part of this collective effort. Engaging in networking events, lectures, factory visits – both in London or around the country (thanks to the efforts of our regional committees) – keeps you informed about market trends, sustainability initiatives, manufacturing innovations and policy developments that shape the UK furniture and furnishings landscape. Staying connected in this way can help you broaden your expertise, spark new ideas and stay competitive in an evolving marketplace.



IT WOULDN'T BE EXAGGERATING TO SAY THAT BECOMING A MEMBER HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST MEANINGFUL AND REWARDING THINGS I HAVE DONE THROUGHOUT MY ALMOST 50 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY

tradition of fellowship – rooted in centuries of livery movement history – offers something deeper than a typical trade association. Members join a community built on shared values: integrity, education and a commitment to strengthening the industry for future generations. This spirit of camaraderie is reinforced through social events, formal dinners and charitable fundraising that bring together members in meaningful ways. And they are really enjoyable and fun too!

For people working in the UK furniture and furnishings sector, I think the case for joining is compelling. Whether you're new to the industry, mid-career or, like me, an industry 'lifer'; whether you're seeking professional development, better industry insight, new relationships or a way to give back, the community offers an inclusive and unique environment to achieve these goals. It connects individuals not just to each other but to the wider story of the British furniture and furnishings industry – its traditions, innovations and aspirations.

And perhaps most important of all, none of it would happen without members. ● furnituremakers.org.uk/membership

One of the livery's most crucial charitable roles is nurturing future talent and raising the profile of the British furniture trade. There are plenty of initiatives aimed at helping students, apprentices and early career professionals, ranging from awards programmes and educational outreach to the amazing annual New Furniture Makers exhibition for schools and colleges.

Being a member also brings with it a strong sense of heritage, purpose and community. The organisation's long-standing



Freeman profile

Beth Grover

Design Consultant, Carbon Efficiency



ABOVE Beth Grover

OPPOSITE PAGE
Beth at a Company Mixer event (top)
and at the Making Commercial Sense
of Sustainability event (bottom)

BEING VERY EARLY ON IN MY OWN CAREER, HAVING THE

opportunity to join The Furniture Makers' Company as a freeman is one that I hold so much personal and professional value in. I have known about the Company since the beginning of my undergraduate degree, where we were told about the work, prestige, history, and wealth of knowledge behind it.

For me, becoming a freeman gives me the opportunity to learn from those with these experiences to share, while also being given the space to share my own opinions and perspectives. I am able to be part of something bigger than myself, in a community full of people all dedicated to the furniture industry for different reasons, with different stories. It gives me a standard and a sense of belonging that I can hold myself to as I continue to grow and develop in my career over the coming years.

During my time at university, I found myself increasingly drawn to the topic of sustainability in design, and furniture specifically. Right at the heart of the COVID pandemic, I began my own sustainable design consultancy – and met now-liveryman Katie Furmston who became a fantastic friend and mentor for all things sustainability. This all led me to my role today with Design Conformity, and getting more and more involved with the Furniture Makers; ultimately leading to my application and joining as a freeman.

I have been nothing but supported and encouraged by my own team in the two years I have been working with them so far, and it is their belief and encouragement that gives me the confidence to get involved more with events and communities such as the Furniture Makers.

I am very motivated to continue growing as a designer and sustainable consultant so that I can bring even greater value back to my organisation and this industry that I care deeply about. Personally,



I HAVE A GENUINE LOVE FOR DESIGN AND FURNITURE AS A WHOLE – SEEING WHAT OTHERS ARE CREATING, EXCHANGING IDEAS, AND LEARNING FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES IS INCREDIBLY FULFILLING FOR ME

joining the Company is something really quite special for me. It feels like an achievement in itself that I have taken a step and pushed myself to be more involved, to have a voice in something I am very passionate about.

I'm very excited by the opportunity to stay connected to what is happening across the industry and to keep up to date on a much more involved and personal level. While my own professional role is predominantly focused on sustainability, I have a genuine love for design and furniture as a whole. Seeing what others are creating, exchanging ideas, and learning from different perspectives is incredibly fulfilling for me.



With my own role within the industry focusing on sustainability, it is an ever-evolving topic of change, and is continuing to grow while creating some new, exciting and passionate conversations. It is a wonderful opportunity to not only learn from others within the industry and their perspectives but to also contribute to these conversations and be a part of these important changes.

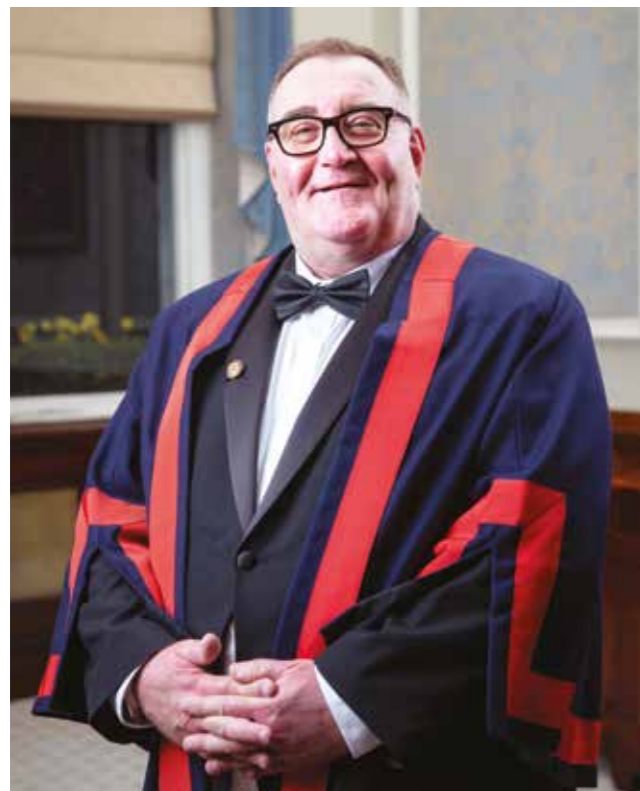
At its heart, to me, the Furniture Makers is a community of dedicated people who care deeply about furniture and giving back to the industry – each for their own reasons. To have the opportunity to be part of that collective passion and develop my own knowledge and experience is one that I am incredibly excited for. ●

carbonefficiency.ai

Liveryman profile

Paul James

Director at One-Call Furniture Ltd and vice chair of the British Furniture Association



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Paul James; Paul at the Confederation Lunch; the Midlands Tug of War Family Fun Day

AFTER 36 YEARS IN THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY, INVOLVEMENT with The Furniture Makers' Company feels like a natural progression rather than a new chapter. Having grown up hearing about the Company throughout my career, its presence has always been part of the furniture trade's backdrop. My early, more hands-on experience came in the early 2000s, when I helped organise a sailing event for the FTBA, now part of The Furniture Makers' Company. It was then that I truly understood how vital the organisation is in raising funds to support people working across our industry.

A significant influence in my decision to become a member was the Immediate Past Master, Brian Ahern. Having known Brian for many years, I'd long been interested in the Company's activities and ethos. Before joining, I took time to reflect on how I could contribute meaningfully, as well as what I could gain from the regular engagement and networking events. That balance of giving back while continuing to learn and connect ultimately confirmed that becoming a liveryman was the right step for me.

Being a liveryman closely reflects my own personal and professional values – integrity, pride in our industry, and the pursuit of high standards. The Furniture Makers' commitment to charity and supporting others aligns strongly with my belief in giving back. Networking has played a major role throughout my career, and I've consistently found that offering solutions to others' challenges is often where the strongest professional relationships – and genuine friendships – are formed.

Of all aspects of the Company's mission, welfare and education resonate most deeply with me. We need to be far louder across the entire industry – from the factory floor and delivery truck cab to the office and the shop floor – about the real value of the Furniture Makers' Welfare Scheme. It's essential that grassroots staff understand

who the Company is, what it does, and how it can support them when they need it most.

Looking ahead, I see The Furniture Makers' Company as a guardian of our craft's heritage while also driving the industry forward. Supporting skills development and apprenticeships, while championing innovation and sustainability, is key to ensuring the furniture industry has a strong and relevant future.

Since joining, I've become actively involved with the Midlands Region, which has been an incredibly rewarding experience. Joining the regional committee, we had just three months to plan and deliver a major event – a Tug of War competition. With the support of many people, particularly regional chairman Gina Thomson and new committee member Lynda Piggott, the event was a real success. We raised over £1,600 for the charity and learned a great deal about collaboration and event management along the way. Unsurprisingly, planning for our 2026 event is already well underway.

The Midlands Region has an exciting calendar ahead. In 2026,

LOOKING AHEAD, I SEE THE FURNITURE MAKERS' COMPANY AS A GUARDIAN OF OUR CRAFT'S HERITAGE WHILE ALSO DRIVING THE INDUSTRY FORWARD



events begin in March with a networking evening at the Bunker in Nottingham, offering everything from virtual golf on world-class courses to darts – though for some of us, avoiding the surrounding walls may prove the real challenge. June sees the return of our now-established Tug of War competition, followed by our annual bowling night in the autumn, where hidden talents always seem to emerge – usually from those lined up against me!

We also have plans forming for a visit to the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the Red Arrows, at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire, alongside strong interest in organising a visit to a local distillery.

Our aspiration for the Midlands Region is to build on the success of our first year in 2025. In 2026, events will be bigger, better and more inclusive, with wider participation and the introduction of a summer golf event. We've worked hard to raise awareness of regional activity and are committed to creating a welcoming, engaged community where everyone feels encouraged to get involved and contribute. ● onecall.furniture

Corporate Liveryman profile

Sir Anthony Ullmann

Shackletons, one of the UK's leading manufacturers of furniture for care environments, has been a corporate member of The Furniture Makers' Company since 2018. Chairman Sir Anthony Ullmann reflects on his journey into the furniture sector and the value of engagement with the Company



ABOVE Sir Anthony Ullmann
OPPOSITE PAGE With a student at the New Furniture Makers exhibition

MY ROUTE INTO THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY HAS BEEN

somewhat unconventional. For most of my working life, my background was firmly rooted in the global manufacture and distribution of automotive textiles, operating across international markets and complex supply chains. I retired in 2017, expecting that chapter of my professional life to be complete. However, shortly afterwards I was introduced to Shackletons, a business with a long and respected heritage in the manufacture of furniture for care homes. I was immediately struck by both the quality of the products and the importance of the sector it serves, and in 2018 I acquired the company. While my experience in furniture manufacturing is relatively short compared to some, my broader industrial and commercial background has proved invaluable in helping guide the business strategically.

My introduction to The Furniture Makers' Company came through Past Master Tony Attard. Initially, my intention was simply to understand more about the livery and its role within the industry. However, having attended several events – both at Furniture Makers' Hall in London and across the regions – it quickly became apparent just how relevant and valuable the Company is. What I discovered was an organisation that combines tradition with modern purpose, offering meaningful support to the industry while fostering strong professional relationships.

That early impression has more than stood the test of time. Through my involvement, I have been able to build a broad and diverse network of industry leaders, something that has been particularly valuable given my relative newness to the sector. Equally important has been the opportunity to give something back. The charitable work of the Company is a defining feature of its mission, and being able to contribute to welfare, education, and excellence within the industry has been immensely rewarding.



WHAT SETS THE FURNITURE MAKERS' COMPANY APART FROM OTHER ASSOCIATIONS IS ITS BREADTH – THIS HOLISTIC VIEW ENSURES THAT THE COMPANY REMAINS RELEVANT TO BUSINESSES OF ALL TYPES AND SIZES, WHILE MAINTAINING A CLEAR FOCUS ON ITS CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

As a newcomer to furniture manufacturing, the connections I have made through membership and networking have been invaluable. The openness with which knowledge, experience, and insight are shared within the Company is striking. Corporate membership, in particular, facilitates collaboration at a senior level – either through conversations at events or direct engagement with fellow members. At Shackletons, our CEO, commercial director, and operations director are also members, which has helped embed this collaborative approach across the leadership team.

What sets The Furniture Makers' Company apart from other associations is its breadth. It is affiliated with, supported by, and actively involved across the entire furniture sector, from retail through to contract manufacturing and distribution. This holistic view ensures that the Company remains relevant to businesses of all types and sizes, while maintaining a clear focus on its charitable objectives.

For me, the most compelling aspect of the Company is that it is truly all-encompassing. It serves its members while remaining firmly committed to its three core pillars of welfare, education, and

excellence. These values resonate strongly with my own beliefs about leadership and responsibility within industry.

I currently serve on the Court and am a member of the Fundraising Committee. I also attend several Company dinners throughout the year, which provide valuable opportunities to engage with peers in a relaxed but purposeful setting. In addition, Shackletons has been proud to host the Young Professionals Industry Experience initiative, supporting the next generation entering our industry and helping to ensure its long-term sustainability.

If I were to encourage another business to become a corporate member of The Furniture Makers' Company, I would highlight three key benefits: learning, philanthropy, and friendship. Membership offers the chance to deepen understanding of the sector, to contribute meaningfully to an industry-focused charity, and to build lasting relationships with like-minded professionals. For me, it has been a decision that has delivered far more than I initially expected. ●

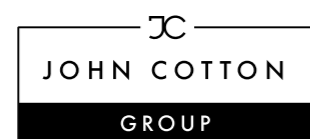
shackletonsltd.co.uk

Thank you

Our highly valued corporate members and supporters



GRESHAM



Lifetime Achievement Award Peter Keen



ABOVE Peter Keen

IN 2025, PETER KEEN, FORMER CHAIRMAN OF HYPNOS, WAS awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to the British bed and furniture industry. Peter passed away in July 2025 at the age of 81 but was honoured earlier that year in celebration of a career that shaped the industry for more than five decades.

The Lifetime Achievement Award is presented annually to an individual who has devoted their life to the advancement of the furnishing industry and whose influence has left an indelible mark on the trade. Peter was presented with the award at a distinguished ceremony at Mansion House, London, on Monday 12 May, by the Lord Mayor, the Rt Honourable Alderman Alastair King DL, alongside Debbie Johnson, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company.

A much-loved and widely respected figure, Peter led British bedmaker Hypnos for over 50 years. Having inherited the family business in his early thirties, his entrepreneurial vision and passion for sleep products helped transform Hypnos into a globally recognised brand with a £60m turnover, renowned for quality, innovation and sustainability.

Peter was instrumental in forging strong relationships with royal households and the hospitality sector, while also giving tirelessly to the wider industry. He served on numerous industry boards, including Contract Interiors UK, the National Bed Federation, where he was president, and the British Furniture Association as chairman. A Past Master of The Furniture Makers' Company, Peter's leadership helped shape key initiatives, from establishing the annual Bed Show to championing mattress recycling and raising industry standards.

Debbie Johnson, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company, said: "Peter's legacy within the furnishing world is profound. His



PETER'S LEGACY WITHIN THE FURNISHING WORLD IS PROFOUND – HIS CHARISMA AND ENDURING COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE HAVE LEFT AN UNMISTAKABLE MARK

charisma and enduring commitment to excellence have left an unmistakable mark. Beyond business success, Peter's investment in people, from suppliers to apprentices, helped define Hypnos's family-oriented culture. We were delighted to honour him with this Lifetime Achievement Award."

Peter's impact extended far beyond the boardroom. A long-standing advocate for charitable causes and conservation in Buckinghamshire, he dedicated time and energy to preserving both the area's furniture-making heritage and its natural environment.

Commenting on the award in May 2025, Peter said: "I'm incredibly honoured to receive this award from The Furniture Makers' Company. I've had the privilege of working with so many wonderful people in an industry I love. I'm proud of the legacy we've built at Hypnos and know the future is in safe hands."

A celebration of Peter's life took place in October 2025, bringing together family, friends and industry colleagues to remember a remarkable leader and champion of the furnishing industry. ●



TOP The Keen family at Mansion House on the night Peter was presented his Lifetime Achievement Award

ABOVE Peter was presented the award by the Lord Mayor, the Rt Honourable Alderman Alastair King DL and Debbie Johnson, the Master

Graham Kirkham Award

George Joyce

An award celebrating individuals who demonstrate exceptional commitment to supporting The Furniture Makers' Company through fundraising, volunteering or other outstanding contributions that further our charity's mission



ABOVE George Joyce and Lord Kirkham
OPPOSITE PAGE George completed
the London Marathon

IN 2025, GEORGE JOYCE, SALES DIRECTOR AT SOUTH

Yorkshire-based Wolf Components, was named the second recipient of our prestigious Graham Kirkham Award. Established in 2024, the award recognises individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the charity and is named after Lord Graham Kirkham KCVO, founder of sofa retailer DFS and charity president of The Furniture Makers' Company since 2016.

George was presented with the award at our annual Royal Charter Dinner, held at Furniture Makers' Hall, London, on Wednesday 22 October. Lord Kirkham personally presented George with a crystal trophy and commendation in front of nearly 80 guests. George was recognised for his inspiring fundraising efforts in 2025, when he completed the TCS London Marathon, raising nearly £5,000 for The Furniture Makers' Company. Running his first-ever marathon, George's determination and spirit captured the admiration of many within the furnishing industry community.

Debbie Johnson, Master of The Furniture Makers' Company, said: "George's commitment and enthusiasm perfectly reflect the values of our charity. His efforts at the London Marathon not only raised vital funds but also shone a light on the importance of community and resilience within our sector. He is a truly deserving recipient of this year's Graham Kirkham Award."

George said: "I'm incredibly honoured to have been recognised by The Furniture Makers' Company. It was a wonderful surprise and a truly surreal moment, and it was fantastic to celebrate with my wife and our team. I'm deeply grateful for the generous support from companies and individuals who donated to my London Marathon efforts. I hope this recognition inspires others to take on their own challenges and help raise funds so The Furniture Makers' Company can continue its amazing charitable work within our industry." ●





Membership Livery events

AS ONE OF THE CITY OF LONDON'S historic livery companies, we actively encourage our members to experience and participate in the vibrant calendar of civic ceremonies, social gatherings and time-honoured traditions that make the Square Mile so unique.

Our programme of dinners and gatherings provides opportunities for members to connect and foster camaraderie among one another. Highlights from the last livery year include participation in the Lady Mayor's Show, the world's oldest civic procession dating back to the early 13th century, where female members marched proudly alongside fellow livery companies in celebration of the Lady Mayor of London, Dame Susan Langley DBE.

Within our own Company, we continued to host memorable events such as the annual Installation of the new Master, once again held at Mansion House, the official residence of the Lord Mayor of London, alongside dinners and quarterly admission ceremonies for new freemen, liverymen and corporates.

These occasions not only pay tribute to our shared history but also help weave a vibrant and enduring cultural legacy within the City of London – uniting members new and longstanding in fellowship and tradition. ●

THIS PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM Female members walking with the Lady Masters Association as part of the Lady Mayor's Show; the Loving Cup at the Installation Dinner; an admission ceremony for new liverymen and corporate liverymen; the Design Guild Mark awards ceremony; the line-up of dignitaries at the Master's Installation



ABOVE Guests at the Wine Dinner

Membership

Networking, fundraising, and fellowship

BOTTOM ROW FROM LEFT
A Best Practice Day – organised exclusively for corporate members – at Blum UK; fun at Big Shots; the 30th anniversary of Big Shots raised a record-breaking £46,000 for our charity

A KEY REASON MANY OF OUR members engage with The Furniture Makers' Company is the opportunity to connect and socialise with peers across the UK furniture and furnishings industry. Through our diverse calendar of networking events – from social mixers and industry gatherings to charity fundraisers – we create welcoming spaces where ideas are exchanged, trends are explored, and lasting professional relationships are formed.

Our fundraising events play a vital role in uniting the industry around meaningful causes. These occasions not only support our charitable mission but also foster camaraderie and fellowship among attendees. A standout highlight this year was the Big Shots clay pigeon shoot, which celebrated its 30th anniversary. Thanks to the generosity of participants and sponsors, including principal sponsor Furniture Village, this milestone event raised a record-breaking £46,000 for our charity.

Similarly, the National Golf Day brought industry professionals together for a day on the greens in Northamptonshire. With teams from leading companies teeing off in support of our charity, the event raised over £5,000, blending friendly competition with fundraising success.

In the festive season, our third Online Christmas Charity Auction further showcased the generosity of the furnishings community. Featuring 25+ donated lots from businesses and individuals across the sector, the auction raised nearly £10,000 – funds that will directly support education, welfare, and skills initiatives for people connected to the industry.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed – from event sponsors and donors to all the participants. ●



RIGHT
The Tim Bloyce Cup
Five-a-Side Football
Tournament

TOP RIGHT
Networking at one of our
quarterly mixer evenings

MIDDLE RIGHT
The National Golf Day
raised over £5,000





BELOW, TOP TO BOTTOM Yorkshire Bowling Night champions Harrison Spinks and Jessica Alexander and Rob Livingstone; the Midlands Region Tug of War and Family Fun Day; the Midlands Bowling Night; the Southern Region's visit to the Battle of Britain Bunker



Membership

Regional events and activities

OUR REGIONAL COMMITTEES SIT AT THE heart of our UK-wide network, bringing members and industry colleagues together at a local level. Across nine regions, each committee develops a varied programme of activity, from insightful talks and hands-on workshops to relaxed social events. These programmes are shaped to reflect the specific priorities and interests of members in each area. By creating spaces to connect, collaborate, and share expertise, our regional initiatives play a key role in building strong professional relationships and a vibrant, connected furniture and furnishing community.

OUR REGIONS

- East of England Region covers Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Suffolk and the regional committee is chaired by liveryman Gary Sprawling.
- 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. The relaunch of the Midlands Region was marked by two successful



mixers, followed by a well-supported Tug of War and Family Fun Day that welcomed members, colleagues and families for games, activities and fundraising.

- North East Region, chaired by liveryman John Conroy, includes Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham. The 51st Teesside Golf Day, organised by Barker & Stonehouse, proved a standout event, raising a record-breaking £21,000 for the charity.
- North West Region, chaired by corporate liveryman Michael Dingwall, includes Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire. The 2025 edition of Northern Big Shots raised £3,500.
- The South East region, chaired by liveryman Graham Marley, covers West Sussex, Surrey, Middlesex, Greater London, Kent and East Sussex. In 2025, a group of members gathered for a memorable clay shooting day.
- South West Region, chaired by Past Master David Dewing OBE, includes Cornwall, Dorset, Devon, Gloucestershire and Somerset. Members from across the UK came together in the South West for Inspiring Makers 2025, an event championing skills, innovation and the future of furniture making, reinforcing the Company's commitment to education and professional development. Other highlights included the annual shooting events and golf day.
- Southern Region, chaired by liveryman Debbie Browne, includes Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire. Members enjoyed a guided visit to the historic Battle of Britain Bunker, combining learning with networking, alongside a well-attended bowling night in High Wycombe that continued the region's strong social programme.
- Yorkshire Region, chaired by Master-Elect Jessica Alexander, includes East Riding of Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. Highlights included a bowling night, which brought members and colleagues together for an informal evening that strengthened connections across the region, as well as the ever-popular Curry Night, which is now in its 10th year.
- Wales Region, chaired by liveryman Emma Leeke, includes Mid and West Wales, North Wales, South Wales Central, South Wales East, and South Wales West. In spring 2026, the region organised a hike up Pen Y Fan, the highest peak in South Wales, for members and industry colleagues. ●

furnituremakers.org.uk/regional-committees

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Networking at the South West's Inspiring Makers Conference; more than 100 people attended the Yorkshire Curry Night; the Top Team winners at the Teesside Golf Day with Immediate Past Master Brian Ahern

Furniture Makers' Hall

Unique and professionally catered events

FURNITURE MAKERS' HALL, NESTLED in the historic Austin Friars district of the City of London, is an exceptional venue just a short stroll from Liverpool Street, Bank and Moorgate stations. This beautifully restored location blends classic architectural charm with modern amenities, offering a selection of elegantly appointed function rooms fitted with cutting-edge AV technology, attentive professional service and bespoke catering delivered by trusted partners.

Whether you're organising a focused board meeting, an executive seminar or a stylish reception for up to 120 guests, Furniture Makers' Hall provides a versatile and sophisticated setting tailored to your needs. Corporate clients enjoy seamless event execution, while members benefit from exclusive advantages – such as preferential rates for freemen and liverymen across all spaces.

In addition to its reputation for outstanding event hosting, Furniture Makers' Hall was recognised with the Dick Balfour Trophy for Best Small Display at the 2025 Flowers in the City awards, celebrating its exceptional horticultural display and contribution to the visual appeal of the urban environment – an accolade presented at Mansion House in October 2025.



Combining historic character, modern flexibility and an unbeatable central location, Furniture Makers' Hall is an ideal choice for professional gatherings, receptions and private celebrations alike. ●
fmhvenuehire.co.uk | 020 7248 1163
sales@furnituremakers.org.uk





The Company Archives Liveryman and Company archivist Gil Carter discusses the steps being taken to preserve our history for future generations

IN AN AGE DEFINED BY RAPID

technological change, political upheaval, environmental catastrophe and economic uncertainty, the value of archives in a modern livery company may not be immediately apparent. However, archives are not just dusty repositories of historic information but may be valuable assets for strategic growth, organisational identity and future success.

City of London livery companies may be traced back many hundreds of years through archival records held at many locations, many having survived through the Great Fire of London in 1666 and the Blitz in 1940 when so many ancient buildings and their contents were destroyed. Nevertheless we are still able to view records, typically of membership and governance, back to the 12th century. Hence we know of the major role they played in regulating their trades, training apprentices to their rigorously upheld standards, and protecting their trades against unfair competition. In addition, they provided a welfare role to their members in old age, poverty, and bereavement.

Here at the relatively young Furniture Makers' Company, gaining livery status in 1963, while we may not have the degree of control enjoyed by those early companies, we aim to leave a record for future historians

ABOVE Liveryman and archivist Gil Carter viewing the Frederick Parker Collection

of the same types of activity enjoyed by medieval liverymen, but updated to reflect the furnishings industry's standing in today's world. These are namely: excellence in craftsmanship, training and education of those in or joining the industry, the welfare of employees, and active oversight of significant issues affecting the industry. Additionally, we will leave evidence of the social activities and the associated fellowship of members of the livery together with our ongoing role of support for the civic activities and traditions of the City of London.

We already have a wealth of material in storage. Shortage of space precludes documentation beyond normal recent business and administrative requirements being stored at Furniture Makers' Hall. However, some historic documents such as registers of Guild Marks from the first awarded in 1959, and various ephemera and our treasures are held on site.

The great majority of documents and images, dating back to the founding of the Furniture Trades Benevolent Association in 1903, later becoming the Furniture Industry Trust, with whom we amalgamated in 2011, are held at the London Archive in a controlled environment. It is uncatalogued but a box list is available and the boxes are all accessible by the public. A complete cataloguing of the material is currently beyond the scope of our available resources but it is hoped it may be possible in the future as living memory of those early days fades away.

The Frederick Parker Collection of chairs dating from 1670 to the present day, together with the associated Archive, all fully catalogued, is owned by the Furniture Makers' Company. A full update on current status and future plans for the Collection is featured on page 54.



ARCHIVES ARE
NOT JUST DUSTY
REPOSITORIES
OF HISTORIC
INFORMATION BUT
MAY BE VALUABLE
ASSETS FOR
STRATEGIC GROWTH,
ORGANISATIONAL
IDENTITY AND
FUTURE SUCCESS

ABOVE The Company's Royal Charter hangs in Furniture Makers' Hall

BELOW Guests viewing historic documents from the Frederick Parker Collection

We are now gathering material which will reflect our civic, welfare, education and social activities, not apparent in the formal minutes and business documentation of our Company. We also have to face the modern challenge of identification and long-term storage of relevant digital information. Did authors thousands of years ago think that clay tablets, stone carvings and papyrus scrolls would still be studied today? Can we guess at the longevity of current storage technology? We hope that our archives will reflect our values and history, and contribute to a future sense of pride in The Furniture Makers' Company. ●

For more information, contact:
hello@furnituremakers.org.uk

British Furniture Confederation

2025–2026 update

THE BRITISH FURNITURE CONFEDERATION

(BFC) is the single voice for the UK's furniture and beds, furnishings, and flooring (FFF) sector. Its mission is to influence policy and drive positive change through constructive dialogue, collaboration, and thought leadership, encouraging a regulatory environment that celebrates enterprise rather than constrains it.

The BFC is supported by the British Furniture Association (BFA), Commercial Interiors UK (CIUK), the Furniture Industry Research Association (FIRA), the National Bed Federation (NBF), the UK Sustainable Flooring Alliance (UKSFA), and The Furniture Makers' Company (FMC).

THE BFC IS ON A MISSION

The past year has brought significant changes at the BFC. After a decade at the helm, Past Master Jonathan Hindle stepped down as chairman, passing the reins to Past Master Anthony 'Tony' Attard OBE DL.

"It has been a great pleasure and incredibly rewarding to chair the BFC," said Jonathan. "The BFC is a unified and determined team with a clear purpose. I have thoroughly enjoyed working alongside the leaders of our industry's trade associations, building a shared understanding and raising the profile of this significant sector. I wish Tony every success as he takes on the challenge."



THIS PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT New BFC chairman Tony Attard with outgoing chairman Jonathan Hindle; Adam Thomson, MP for Erewash and chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Furnishings Industry Group, addresses members of the furniture industry gathered at the Palace of Westminster



Stepping into the chairman role, Tony is exceptionally well-placed to lead. He founded his family-owned furnishing textiles business, Panaz, 40 years ago, and brings decades of hands-on industry experience to guide the BFC into its next chapter.

"I am honoured to take on the role of chairman of the BFC, following in Jonathan's formidable footsteps," said Tony. "Over the past decade, he has done an outstanding job championing our industry in government and parliamentary circles, and we have much to thank him for. Looking ahead, there is still plenty to do. Our sector faces a range of challenges, both at home and abroad. For business to survive and thrive, government must listen and respond. We need to lobby for a genuinely pro-business economy – one that drives growth and prosperity for our entire industry."

In November, The Furniture Makers' Company co-hosted an event with Adam Thompson MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Furniture Industry Group, in partnership with the BFC. The gathering brought together over 150 industry professionals, civil servants, and parliamentarians.

The event highlighted the scale and importance of the sector – not just to the UK economy, but to communities across the country. Valued at over £41 billion annually, the industry supports 260,000 jobs across 33,000 companies. Manufacturing alone accounts for around £10 billion in turnover, with exports contributing approximately £3.5 billion.

The outgoing chairman, Jonathan, reflected: "Thanks to the BFC's dogged determination over the past decade, government is now far better informed about the scale and importance of our industry to jobs and the economy. Crucially,

they are also recognising our sector's investment in advanced manufacturing and design technology, with large companies competing on the global stage alongside smaller specialist craft ventures that form the backbone of our SME landscape."

Incoming chairman Tony offers a frank assessment of the challenges facing the industry and the BFC's priorities under his leadership. "Sadly, we are no longer among Europe's most business-friendly nations, with fair employment laws, stable taxation, and a strong spirit of enterprise," he said. "But the talent, innovation, and determination within British industry remain second to none. If we can restore a government mindset that celebrates, rather than constrains, enterprise – and I will work with my fellow BFC executives, business leaders, the All-Party Parliamentary Group, and civil servants to make that happen – then we can, and will, return this country to growth."

In addition to welcoming a new chairman, the BFC has brought in a new public affairs and communications director. Adam Honeysett-Watts joins the team with 20 years of political, public affairs, and communications experience under his belt, having worked extensively across parliament, trade associations, and industry. His portfolio includes advising the Road Haulage Association, ATF Operators Association, UK Travel Retail Forum, National Federation of Retail Newsagents, and the Advertising Association, providing strategic guidance, stakeholder engagement, and strong representation of members' interests.

"We are looking forward to Adam bringing his experience, expertise, and enthusiasm to bear as the BFC navigates the challenges ahead in 2026 with renewed purpose," said Tony.



KEY POLICY ISSUES FOR 2026

The BFC has highlighted a range of key policy issues it aims to address in the coming years.

- **Defend British business.** We must ensure that enterprise is not treated as low-hanging fruit for ever-increasing taxation.
- **Reframe the productivity debate.** Productivity is not an industrial problem alone; it's a societal one. Too many people in our country are simply not contributing to the economy.
- **Challenge damaging legislation.** We must ensure government understands the real-world consequences of measures such as the non-dom reforms, increased taxes on young professionals, and the failure to extend Business Property Relief.
- **Make business rates and energy tariffs competitive and fair.** They must be equitable and sustainable for all enterprises.
- **Promote sensible regulation.** Especially around issues like flammability standards, which must be both safe and workable.
- **Champion the creative industries.** We cannot allow further erosion of arts education; creativity is one of Britain's greatest assets.
- **Align education with industry.** Our educators must equip young people with the skills our industries need to thrive.
- **Call for industry-led sustainability and circular economy initiatives.** These must be practical and affordable so that UK industry remains competitive.
- **More meaningful support for exports.** Exports are still at a significant deficit to imports in our sector, however the potential is very evident if only more was done to encourage investment in our local manufacturing capabilities. To compete with other countries abroad, more than just advice is needed.
- **Build partnerships.** We will work closely with other trade bodies and All-Party Parliamentary Groups to turn these priorities into progress. ●

britishfurnitureconfederation.org.uk



Military affiliation: 2 Rifles

Col Simon Greenman, commanding officer, 2nd Battalion The Rifles, provides an update on the battalion's past year

I AM DELIGHTED TO WRITE TO YOU WITH an update on the battalion's activities over the past year, my first as commanding officer of 2 Rifles. It has been a great privilege to assume command of a battalion whose riflemen consistently demonstrate the professionalism, resilience, and quiet determination for which the regiment is renowned. 2025 was a demanding and rewarding year, defined by operational commitment, rigorous training, and the continued development of our people.

The battalion entered the year having recently completed a successful validation exercise in Kenya, confirming our readiness for future operations. Following a short period of recovery, the battalion deployed by road to Romania, Greece, and across Eastern Europe on Exercise Steadfast Dart. This major NATO exercise formed part of a wider demonstration of the United Kingdom's ability to project a division in support of our allies and deter potential adversaries. For 2 Rifles, this marked the final occasion in 2025 that the battalion deployed as a formed unit.

Subsequently, elements of the battalion prepared for enduring operational commitments. B and C Companies undertook a demanding and comprehensive training pathway ahead of deployment to Iraq on



Operation Shader. Following a strong report from the validating authority, B Company deployed in September, where they handed over to C Company in early 2026. The professionalism, maturity, and self discipline shown throughout this process have reflected extremely well on the battalion, particularly during extended periods away from family and home and throughout continuing periods of Middle Eastern crisis.

In parallel, I (Support) Company deployed to the Falkland Islands on Operation FIRIC (Falkland Islands Roulement Infantry Company) for a three-month tour. Operating at considerable distance from battalion headquarters and in an austere environment, the company exceeded expectations in all aspects of their role. They were commended for completing the highest number of patrols of any FIRIC deployment and earned praise from the RAF and the local community alike for their professionalism and approachability. At just 750 miles from Antarctica, the conditions are demanding, and the company's performance is a source of significant pride.

The year also marked a period of transition for the battalion, as we bade farewell to Lieutenant Colonel Dan Brown and Major Mark Andrew Poots. The new command team

is firmly focused on building upon the strong foundations already in place, with a renewed emphasis on warfighting excellence and preparing the battalion for potential future deployments in the latter part of 2026.

Despite a high operational tempo, sport and adventurous training have remained central to battalion life. Riflemen have taken part in a wide range of activities, from mountain biking expeditions in Spain to adventurous training across the UK and Europe. Our sporting teams have competed strongly across army competitions, with notable progress in rugby, cricket, and boxing. These opportunities are vital in developing resilience, trust, and cohesion, all of which directly translate to operational effectiveness.

Community engagement remains a cornerstone of the battalion's ethos. The battalion greatly values opportunities to engage with our affiliated organisations, and we were delighted to attend the Furniture Makers' Big Shots event at Holland & Holland. It was an excellent occasion to spend time with members of the Company in an informal setting and while the hospitality was greatly appreciated, I am pleased to report that, most importantly, the riflemen succeeded in outperforming the RAF on the range.

I am also particularly pleased to highlight



that Rifleman Hibbard of B Company was selected as the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers' Rifleman of the Year. An outstanding young soldier, Rifleman Hibbard has consistently demonstrated exceptional professionalism, determination, and selfless commitment to his platoon and company, particularly during Operation Shader. His selection is greatly deserved and reflects great credit on himself, the battalion, and the values that this award seeks to recognise.

The Company's support continues to have a direct and meaningful impact on our people. This year, your generosity helped fund a rifleman's return home to Fiji following a bereavement within his family, support that made a profound difference at a difficult time. In addition, your contribution towards our Salamanca Day celebrations allowed us to mark the regiment's birthday properly, bringing together riflemen and families for an occasion that strengthens our sense of identity and belonging.

None of the battalion's achievements would be possible without the unwavering support of our families and the sustained generosity of our affiliated organisations. The relationship between 2 Rifles and the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers is deeply valued across the battalion, and your support continues to make a tangible difference to the lived experience of our riflemen.

On behalf of all in 2 Rifles, thank you once again for your enduring interest and commitment. We look forward to maintaining and strengthening our affiliation with the Company in the year ahead. ●

army.mod.uk

ABOVE A Coy conduct a training exercise in Scotland
OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Rfn mountain bike in Spain (Exercise Bold Endurance);
B Coy & Regimental Buglers mark Remembrance Day in
Iraq deployed on Operation SHADER; C Coy deployed
alongside NATO allies on Exercise Steadfast Dart

Military affiliation: XXV(Fighter) Squadron Jonathan Nixon, group captain of XXV (Fighter) Squadron, provides an update from the past year



AND IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, THAT IS 2025 over and a time to reflect on the past year for XXV (Fighter) Squadron. You won't need me to tell you that security of the United Kingdom remains central to government policy, with defence and security in a significant period of growth after decades of decline following the 'peace dividend' at the end of the Cold War. The Royal Air Force's new chief of the air staff, air chief marshal Sir Harv Smyth regularly reminds his audiences that the use of air and space power capabilities are often the UK government's first response to a crisis. As XXV(F) Squadron, we continue to play our part in helping the UK Armed Forces maintain their assured capabilities by training the next generation of fighter pilots for the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

Command of XXV(F) Squadron was handed over during the year, with wing commander Rich Dennis being replaced by wing commander Colin Bartwicki. Rich has moved on from North Wales to the slightly warmer climate that is Singapore and we wish him well.

In summer, we sadly lost one of our own, flight lieutenant Geoff Corser, to a civilian flying accident and our thoughts and prayers continue to be with his family. A great officer, pilot and work colleague who we all sorely miss.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT
Squadron walk in memory of flight lieutenant Geoff Corser; visit to RAF Valley; XXV(F) Squadron deployed to Corsica, France; Kyno, Birdy and Bruce win for XXV(F) Squadron at Big Shots



TRAINING FAST JET PILOTS

Over the years, Hollywood has made flying fast jets appear a very glamorous and exhilarating occupation. While looking back over my career, I can think of a few occasions when that may have had some truth, the Holyhead (RAF Valley) reality is somewhat different day-to-day. The whole station's main effort is to support the training of our next generation of pilots – aircrew, engineers, battlespace managers (air traffic controllers) and support staff all pull together to generate the flying sorties and training events for our trainee pilots.

Working relentlessly, our trainee pilots prepare for their next events, whether that be a briefing, a synthetic sortie in our flying training devices or full mission simulators, or a flight in a Hawk T2. Our instructors work equally hard to ensure that the training provided is the best it can be, contributing to the RAF remaining a world-leading air force. Every day is different as staff and trainees alike consider not only the requirements of the training event, but how factors such as weather, daylight, airspace and other users will affect the specific sortie. Of course, most of these factors can be carefully controlled in the synthetic environment to maximise the

training benefit. However, for live flying, we very much have to adapt how the training is delivered – particularly during the months in autumn and winter when the weather plays a major part in how flying training can be delivered.

It was fantastic to be able to give members who were able to visit in October an insight into the day in the life of a trainee on XXV(F) Squadron and to host you in the Officers' Mess for a dinner night. We very much look forward to doing the same later this year – so if you missed out, don't worry, another opportunity is coming. The squadron looks forward to welcoming those of you who can make the journey to Anglesey in 2026.

It would be amiss of me not to mention how much members of XXV(F) Squadron enjoyed attending the Big Shots shooting event. A sincere thank you for the organisation of such a great day, for the hospitality and of course we were very happy with the result. ●

raf.mod.uk

Thank you for your support

Donna Bellingham, Co-fundraising chairman

AS CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE,

I am proud to reflect on another highly successful year of activity and, most importantly, to thank the many individuals and companies who have supported our events throughout the year. Your continued generosity, engagement and commitment are central to the work of our charity, and I am deeply grateful for the role you have played in helping us deliver such strong results.

This year has once again demonstrated the remarkable willingness of our industry to come together in support of a shared cause. Against a backdrop of challenging economic conditions, the enthusiasm shown for our fundraising programme has been both encouraging and inspiring. Thanks to that support, we have been able to deliver a diverse range of national and regional events, each contributing not only vital funds, but also strengthening the sense of community across the furnishing sector.

Our flagship events continue to sit at the heart of our fundraising efforts. Big Shots, principally supported by Furniture Village, reached a particularly significant milestone this year, celebrating its 30th anniversary in truly outstanding fashion. The event raised a record-breaking £46,000 – a remarkable achievement and a testament to the loyalty of its supporters, sponsors and participants. Over three decades, Big Shots has become a cornerstone of our calendar, and this year's success reflects the strength of the relationships that underpin it.

Golf events also played a major role in our fundraising programme. The Teesside Golf Day, organised by Barker & Stonehouse, delivered an exceptional result, raising £21,000 at its 51st edition and once again demonstrating the impact of long-standing supporter-led initiatives. The National Golf Day continued to attract strong participation from across the industry, raising over £5,000 and reinforcing its place as a valued fixture in our calendar.

Alongside these established events, regional initiatives and alternative fundraising activities have continued to thrive. Northern Big Shots provided an excellent example of regional engagement, while our Online Christmas Charity Auction once again harnessed the generosity of the industry, raising close to £10,000 through donated prizes and enthusiastic bidding.

While the sums raised are impressive, it is the collective effort behind them that deserves the greatest recognition. From sponsors and event organisers to volunteers, donors and attendees, every contribution has helped us extend our reach and strengthen our ability to support those who rely on the charity.

On behalf of the Fundraising Committee, thank you for your continued support. Together, you are helping to ensure that our charity remains strong, relevant and able to support our industry – now and in the years to come.






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THE MEMORY OF

Past Master
Peter Keen

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