

Registered Charity Number 297488

# Regional Furniture Society

Annual Report and Accounts  
for the year ending  
31st December 2022

## **TRUSTEES REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2022**

The Trustees present their Report and Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2022.

If you wish to obtain further information about any aspect of this Report or the Society in general, please write to the Honorary Secretary:

Jeremy Rycroft, Holwood House, Goosnargh, Preston PR3 2WD

### **SOCIETY OBJECTS**

The Regional Furniture Society has recorded its aims and objectives in the ‘Objects’ section of its Constitution. They require the Society to:

- advance the study of the history, design, production, distribution and use of regional furniture in the British Isles and areas under British influence, and of Continental and other overseas influences on British regional furniture; and to further public knowledge and appreciation of it.

To achieve this, the Society seeks to:

- encourage the conservation and preservation of examples of all such furniture and related archives both in museums and in other collections, and their current use as sources for study.
- encourage research in all aspects of regional furniture and promote the development of interest in regional furniture in relation to social and economic life and history and in the relationship between regional furniture design and architecture and other arts and crafts.
- publish material selected by its Editorial Board, organise exhibitions and meetings alone or in conjunction with other bodies, and record and store information in appropriate institutions.
- raise funds and invite and receive contributions from any person or persons whatsoever by way of subscription, donation or otherwise, provided that the Society shall not undertake any permanent trading activities in raising funds for its charitable objects.

### **TRUSTEES**

The trustees who served from 1 January 2022 were:

Chair	Liz Hancock
Secretary	Jeremy Rycroft
Treasurer	Keith Robinson
Membership Secretary	Diana Halliwell
Events Organiser	Jeremy Bate

Journal Editor	Stephen Jackson
Newsletter Editor	Linda Hall
Bursary Secretary	Nick Humphrey
Website Editor	Julian Parker
Book Sales	Gerry Coughlan
American Secretary	Daniel Ackermann

Council Officers	Crissie White (to 26 June)
	Louis Platman
	Catherine Grigg
	Rosalyn Sklar
	Robert Williams (from 26 June)

## OVERVIEW OF MAIN ACTIVITIES

The Society was founded in 1984. Its membership of over 400 includes museum curators, furniture historians, furniture collectors, furniture makers, restorers, antique dealers, auctioneers and students.

The Society has a programme of events which have often been fully subscribed. These events provide the opportunity to visit properties and collections that are not open to the general public; residential events allow members to see a very wide range of furniture in one area, which would otherwise be difficult. Occasionally overseas visits are arranged.

The main event for 2022, the Annual Conference was held in Somerset with numbers similar to those before the covid epidemic. While interest in the annual conference remains high, it is apparent that costs of holding conferences (both in terms of travel and accommodation) is escalating. The financial arrangements for the Society have traditionally used the surplus on events to add to subscription income in funding the Society's well regarded publications. Escalating costs may not allow this to happen in future to the same extent as in the past.

The Society's grants and bursaries are funded from investment income. Unfortunately, recent events have reduced investment returns so funding of awards at their current level may eat into reserves a little. This means that for the next year or more both annual cash income and investment returns will need to be monitored carefully to make sure reserves do not decline too rapidly. An increase in subscriptions would be needed to maintain the value of subscription income, but this has to be balanced with the desire to retain membership levels.

Events (visits primarily to collections of vernacular furniture) have returned to their pre-covid levels in terms of events offered, but there has been a small decline in numbers particularly at autumn events. However, the list of events for 2022 was impressive:

Visit to Wycombe Chair Museum and the Ercol Factory – repeated due to its popularity

Visit to Shibden and Oakwood Halls to study West Yorkshire furniture

Visit to Westwood Manor

Visit to the newly updated Burrell Collection

Visit to David Parr House and Saffron Walden Museum

Although the Society has had some success in attracting younger members, taking time off during the week is perhaps more difficult nowadays for those working and they will of course working to a greater age with little prospect of early retirement. This means that the average age of event attendees is increasing and can be expected to continue doing so.

The Society's publications, website and social media channels are used increasingly and appear to be the main focus of interest and hence benefit of membership for younger members. It is planned to have a review of the Society's media strategy, given its growing importance. Webinars seem to appeal to members of all ages and an important one was held on the development of a range of furniture styles in the American South. It is hoped to introduce modest charging for these events, which could be an important supplement when other income sources appear threatened.

## **MANAGEMENT OF THE SOCIETY BY THE COUNCIL IN 2022**

### **Grants & Bursaries**

After making a request for support in 2019, the Judges Lodgings Museum in Lancaster made a formal grant application in late 2020 for £5,000 towards a new Gillows Gallery within the museum. The Society approved the grant, conditional on full funding being achieved. The Museum has now managed to achieve its full target funding; it appears the Society's early grant helped trigger other awards. Payment of the award was negotiated in December, but is still to be made.

A grant to support the publication of a volume on 'Furniture & Furnishings in Medieval Europe' by Cécile Lagane was agreed in principle in 2021 but complementary funding from the French public sector has been delayed. It still seems likely the publication will go ahead with regional public funding if the Ministry of Culture review is negative.

As mentioned above, the prime source of funds for grants is the investment income, i.e. the invested bequests received by the Society. The Council had already decided that grants may exceed investment returns for outstanding applications thereby reducing investment capital, but previous levels of returns are not now expected, increasing the risk of depleting reserves. If markets remain disappointing, further bequests would provide the way to allow the Society to sustain its grant giving. The Society is therefore encouraging legacy giving and with an ageing membership, it hopes for more bequests. Over £10,000 was received in 2021. However, with the escalating costs of events and recently depressed investment returns creating financial uncertainty, the Council will not add to that financial uncertainty by assuming further legacies will be forthcoming.

### **Investment Management**

The Investment Committee has three members of whom two have business/accounting experience and one has significant investment experience. A simpler target rate of investment was set last year and remains in place. Attention continues to be given to investment returns, the anticipated cost inflation and the likelihood of bequests. No restrictions on grants or publication costs have been necessary in this financial year. 2023 may bring greater difficulties.

## **Archive Management**

A detailed Archive Retention plan was agreed in 2021; some paper records have now been transferred to the Museum of the Home and others are being reviewed for archiving there. It is intended that later documentation typically from 2017 will be transferred electronically. A formal agreement with the Museum of the Home was agreed during 2022.

## **Succession Management**

As in previous years, new Council members have been identified to take the place of those retiring – in 2022 only one was needed. The Council can still find able furniture specialists who are happy to make time to help guide the Society. The average age of Council members has again reduced slightly.

The Society decided it was prudent to identify a new President (not a trustee post) in advance of the current one retiring in mid 2023. A change of the Society's Constitution will allow this to happen before every Presidential handover.

In 2024 the term of office of our current treasurer will be completed; action is being taken now to try to find a successor. Finding someone with a furniture interest who is willing to act as an accountant has proved difficult previously.

## **Annual General Meeting**

The AGM was again held in person at the annual conference and by Zoom. It created a larger 'attendance' and allowed those not able to take part in the conference still to take part in the AGM. It also allowed time for general discussion after clearing formal business. This dual method is now the preferred format for future AGMs.

## **Council Meetings**

The Covid epidemic and its related lockdowns continued to affect the way the Council functioned. The April and October Council Meetings were conducted via Zoom, but 2023 will bring a return to in person meetings.

## **COMMUNICATIONS WITH SOCIETY MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC**

In a specialist society of this type a number of levels of communication are necessary:

Firstly, publication of the results of major or minor pieces of research in the regional furniture field is essential.

Secondly it is important to keep members abreast of Society events and developments and general Society news.

Thirdly it is important to share information about regional furniture and the Society with the wider public.

The Society uses three media to achieve this:

The annual Journal, *Regional Furniture*, publishes major research and is distributed to members. The Journal articles are also made available to the general public on the Society's website with a three-year time lag.

The bi-annual Newsletter publishes visit reports, short reports by members and regional museum curators on items of regional furniture and book reviews. It also provides the membership with Society news. Visit reports have an important role in allowing those unable to attend an event to share in the information and insights gained during visits. A decision was taken this year to make past articles of the Newsletter available on the Society's website with the same three-year delay that applies to the Journal. Certain potentially confidential information will not be included.

The Website provides information to members and the wider public on the Society's activities and importantly provides an introductory guide to regional furniture for the general public. An innovation last year was to make webinars available on YouTube. A new series of chairs of the month has been introduced and many useful links to other websites given. The Society also has Twitter and Instagram accounts which are popular. These media channels now form an excellent starting point for anyone interested in exploring the world of regional furniture and are particularly attractive to younger members.

In terms of involvement of the membership in decision making, the AGM allows the Council's plans, policies and reports to be discussed and voted on by the membership and for Council members to be elected democratically.

## **CONSTITUTION AS GOVERNING DOCUMENT**

The Society is governed by its Constitution which was approved by the Charity Commission at its inception and has been revised periodically – significantly in 2017 and in 2022 with some minor administrative changes. This latest version was approved by the Charity Commission and is available on the Society website. In addition, the Society follows Charity Commission guidance on appointment, clearance and briefing of trustees, reporting of serious events, risk management including governance matters, and also on data protection, all of which are discussed by Trustees, with appropriate policies and procedures adopted at Council meetings.

The Society is an unincorporated association governed by its Council which consists of officers and members who are trustees. The Honorary President and Vice-Presidents may attend Council meetings but are not trustees. Potential new trustees are identified by Council members, who may consult or receive proposals from members. Where there is a vacancy during the year, the Council may co-opt the new Council member/Trustee to fill the vacancy, and this would then have to be confirmed by election at the AGM. Alternatively, the Council (or Society members) can nominate a member for election at the AGM. All trustees are subject to annual election at the AGM with limits on how long they can serve.

## **REVIEW OF CHARITABLE PURPOSE AND PUBLIC BENEFIT**

The prime aim of the Regional Furniture Society, as indicated above, is to promote the preservation and conservation of regional furniture, to promote research on regional furniture

and to publish information relating to these subjects and arrange for important information to be archived. As an educational charity, pursuing those objects is the Society's main way of providing public benefit.

The Society intervenes in co-ordination with other bodies when important examples of regional furniture are at risk of being sold or disposed of or even withdrawn from prominence in Museums. The Society challenged plans by the V & A to reduce dedicated furniture curators. The Society offered support to the Judges Lodgings Museum in Lancaster when it was threatened with closure and will be providing a grant towards the new Gillows Gallery.

## **Research**

The Society encourages research by:

- a) offering bursaries to those carrying out research on specific areas of regional furniture, directed particularly to younger researchers;
- b) providing members who carry out their own research with a forum for encouraging and discussing results among peers, through its events and publications;
- c) holding a Research in Progress day in most years where the latest developments in regional furniture research nationally or internationally are presented and debated.
- d) running a programme of events which allow members to become familiar with collections of furniture and their regional differences, including some which are not open to the general public;
- e) Offering grants of up to £5,000 to facilitate more major projects, including archiving important regional furniture research, carrying out more major investigations than would be possible through bursaries, and supporting publication of significant books covering aspects of regional furniture.

## **Publications**

These are a major activity for the Society. As mentioned above, the Journal is published once a year and allows major pieces of research to be presented. Many articles cover recent developments or discoveries. By publishing the Journal to members and then putting Journal articles on the website with a three-year delay, members retain a significant benefit of membership but the wider public also has access to the Society's research. Articles are by members, non-members and by curators of particular collections. This is particularly useful as it can draw attention to important items of furniture that may not be well-known or well-researched and also to problems or issues with them and their conservation. It helps set an agenda for the Society.

The Newsletter has shorter articles and visit reports, both important for those who are less expert in the field of regional furniture and are trying to increase their expertise. It is hoped that the Newsletter may encourage them to do more to support the Society's objects, particularly research. The less formal style encourages wider debate about topics that are less well understood. It was expanded and reformatted in late 2019. As from 2022 it has been decided to make the Newsletter available in the same way as the Journal and with the same time delay.

The Society's website helps to raise public awareness of the complexity and regionality of vernacular furniture, thus helping the Society to achieve its objects. Website activity has continued to increase. The Society is developing an increasing presence on social media – Instagram and Twitter – which has allowed various examples of different regional furniture types to be shown and described. The Society runs a service, via its website, responding to queries from members of the public about regional furniture, which has the same aims of encouraging wider interest in regional furniture. Hypertext indexing of all Journal and Newsletter articles available on the website is well advanced and will enable members of the Society and the public to explore particular research interests far more easily. With new items like Chair of the Month and a wide range of links to other furniture organisation and museum websites, the website is a natural 'route in' for any-one wishing to study regional furniture.



## **REGIONAL FURNITURE SOCIETY TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022**

A surplus of £3,279 was made by the Society in 2022 (2021: a surplus of £13,479). This figure excludes unrealised investment losses. The 2021 surplus was unusually high as it included an unanticipated donation of £10,000. This donation from Chris Pickvance has been placed in a Restricted Fund.

During the year the Society changed its method of collecting and recording membership subscriptions. The complexity of this task meant that some subscription payments remained outstanding at the year end. It is anticipated that the majority of these will be collected in 2023.

In 2021 the coronavirus situation restricted the Society to holding only one live event, the Annual Conference in Lincoln. In 2022, free of pandemic regulations, the Annual Conference and five other visits were organised and these contributed £4,184 to the Society's income.

Promotion of the availability of bursaries and grants continued in 2022 but no awards were made. Grants and bursaries approved in 2021 or earlier totalled £6,680 of which at least £5,000 is likely to be paid in 2023 on completion of the grant work.

The Society's other charitable activities include publication of the Journal and Newsletter and the maintenance and updating of the website, Twitter feed, Instagram posts and YouTube channels. The cost of these activities together with that of governance and administration has been wholly met from membership subscriptions, event surpluses and investment income. Throughout the year cash on deposit and at the bank remained at a level sufficient to meet normal expenditure for a period of three months.

The reserve funds, including those on deposit, continued to be managed by CCLA Investment Management Limited with their performance being monitored by the Society's Investment Committee and reported annually to the trustees. In 2022 markets had their worst year since 2008 and the value of the reserve funds fell by £14,988 - 12% of their value at the start of the year. This was in contrast to 2021 when the funds grew by £11,429 or a little over 10%. The RFS invests for the long term and is able to continue its charitable activities, albeit at a reduced level, until markets recover. Planned spending of the reserves is based on the assumption that an annualised total return of 4.5% will be achieved long-term.

At 31 December 2022 the net worth of the Society, including reserves and unrealised losses on investments was £133,979 (2021: £145,688)

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF  
THE REGIONAL FURNITURE SOCIETY  
IN RESPECT OF THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022**

This report on the accounts of the Regional Furniture Society (Registered Charity Number 297488) for the year ended 31 December 2022 which comprise the Trustees' Report, Treasurer's Report, the Statement of Financial Activities, and the Balance Sheet, is in respect of an examination carried out in accordance with section 43 of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act).

**Respective responsibilities of the trustees and the examiner.**

The trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts and consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 43(2) of the Act) and that an independent examination is required.

It is my responsibility to examine the accounts (under section 43(2) of the Act), follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 43(7)9b of the Act), and state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent examiner's report**

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the trust and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosure in the accounts and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

**Independent examiner's report**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- 1 Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - (a) to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act
  - (b) to prepare accounts which accord with those accounting records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the Act.

have not been met

- 2 To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

David Kingsmill FCA  
Hidcote Boyce Gloucestershire GL55 6LX

Regional Furniture Society

**Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 December 2022**

		Unrestricted Funds				
	Notes	General	Designated	Restricted	Total	Total
		Fund	Funds	Funds	2022	2021
		£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>						
<i>Incoming resources from charitable activities</i>						
Subscriptions		9,590			9,590	12,612
Publications	1	58			58	155
Visits	2	1,842			1,842	0
Lectures and conferences	2	24,975			24,975	17,239
<i>Incoming resources from generated funds</i>						
Donations, legacies and grants	3	558		0	558	10,405
Investment income and interest	4	2,884	410	0	3,294	3,121
<b>Total incoming resources</b>		<b>39,907</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>40,317</b>	<b>43,532</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>						
<i>Direct charitable expenditure</i>						
Donations and grants	5	0	0	0	0	1,000
Bursaries	6	0	0	0	0	2,850
Publication of the Journal	7	6,080			6,080	6,863
Publication of the Newsletter	7	7,877			7,877	7,155
Visits	2	1,343			1,343	0
Lectures and conferences	2	21,290			21,290	10,385
<b>Governance</b>	8	0			0	844
Other resources expended	9	447			447	954
<b>Net incoming (outgoing) resources before transfers between funds</b>		<b>37,037</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37,037</b>	<b>30,052</b>
<b>Net incoming / (outgoing) resources before other recognised gains and losses</b>		<b>2,869</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,279</b>	<b>13,479</b>
<b>Other recognised gains and losses</b>						
Gains (losses) on investments						
Realised						
Unrealised	4	-13,104	-1,884	0	-14,988	11,429
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		<b>-10,234</b>	<b>-1,475</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-11,709</b>	<b>24,908</b>
Fund balances brought forward at 1 January 2022		118,629	17,060	10,000	145,688	120,780
Fund balances carried forward at 31 December 2022		<b>108,395</b>	<b>15,585</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>133,979</b>	<b>145,688</b>

Regional Furniture Society

**Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 December 2022**

**NOTES**

1 Income from sales of the Journal, Newsletter and other RFS publications 58

2 Income and expenditure table for Visits, Lectures and Conferences

	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	<i>Surplus</i>
<i>Ercol factory event (March)</i>	220	70	150
<i>Leeds and West Yorkshire event (May)</i>	1,320	1,007	313
<i>Somerset Conference</i>	24,975	21,290	3,685
<i>Westwood Manor (September)</i>	72	90	(18)
<i>Burrell Collection (October)</i>	80	0	80
<i>Cambridge event (November)</i>	150	176	(26)
<i>Totals</i>	<u>26,817</u>	<u>22,633</u>	<u>4,184</u>

3 Anonymous donation 500

Member donations from booksales 58 558

4 Investment income 3,258

CCLA deposit account interest 30

Lloyds current account interest 6 3,294

Deposit interest received is split between general and designated funds in proportion to the 1 January 2022 holdings

General Funds 109,710 87.43%

Dewdney Bequest (designated) 14,556 11.60%

Michael Legg Fund (designated) 1,221 0.97%

5 No grants were made during the year 0

6 No bursaries were granted during the year 0

7 Cost of printing and posting two editions of the Newsletter and one Journal during the year 7,877 13,957  
6,080

8 The Society's governance costs are for travel and subsistence for meetings of the Council. All meetings in 2022 were Zoom meetings and no costs were incurred. 0

9 Public Liability Insurance 72

Website hosting, social media, other technology spending 375 447

Regional Furniture Society  
Accounts for the period 1 January to 31 December 2022  
**Balance sheet as at 31 December 2022**

	<i>Notes</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2021</i>
<b>Assets</b>			
Cash and investments: General Fund		£109,645	£119,911
Cash and investments: Dewdney Bequest		£13,195	£14,556
Cash and investments: Michael Legg Fund		£1,107	£1,221
Cash and investments: Christopher Pickvance Restricted Fund		£10,000	£10,000
		<u>£133,947</u>	<u>£145,688</u>
<b>Less creditors</b>			
Sundry creditors		£0	£0
		<u>£133,947</u>	<u>£145,688</u>
<b>Reserves</b>			
General reserves at 31 December 2021		£119,911	£120,780
Designated reserves at 31 December 2021		£15,777	£15,256
Restricted funds at 31 December 2021		£10,000	£10,000
Excess of income over expenditure		-£11,741	£24,908
General reserves at 31 December 2022		£108,363	£119,911
Designated reserves at 31 December 2022		£15,585	£15,777
Restricted funds at 31 December 2022		£10,000	£10,000
		<u>£133,947</u>	<u>£145,688</u>

Regional Furniture Society  
Accounts for the period 1 January to 31 December 2022

**Balance sheet notes**

	£ 2022	£ 2021
<b>Cash and investment balances at 31 December 2022</b>		
Knightsbridge current account	6,878	13,236
Christchurch subscription account	11,780	2,773
PayPal account	1,670	1,070
 CCLA deposit account	 3,152	 3,122
CCLA investment account	79,085	89,362
CCLA fixed interest account	19,084	21,767
CCLA global equity account	12,331	14,358
	<hr/> 133,979	<hr/> 145,688