

A woman with long, dark braids is standing outdoors, wearing a black turtleneck sweater. She is holding a tan leather boot in her hands. The background is a blurred street scene.

Leathersellers' Review

2023—2024



THE
LEATHERSELLERS



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MASTER'S WELCOME



This year we have started to see the benefits of a root and branch review that was set in hand some seven years ago, when we moved into our seventh Hall. This process culminated in a presentation of the Leathersellers' Strategy at the biennial Common Hall in January 2024, an event at which all members of the Company are invited to learn more about, and engage with, our work.

Simply put, we aim to manage and grow our assets in the widest sense, including those that are cultural, historical and relational, as we build on the benefits of both new and long-term partnerships, and financial assets, with an ambition to maximise our grant funding capacity by targeting areas where we can make a measurable and lasting impact.

As an example, this year's Review includes two stories about Leathersellers' Foundation grantees whose activities focus on the prevention and mitigation of Adverse Childhood Experiences, demonstrating how a broad range of interventions can be used to great effect, positively impacting the lives of individuals and communities across the UK.

Our strategy aims to increase charitable giving across the Leathersellers' Company and Foundation, sustainably, year on year. Next year, using surplus funds generated by the Company, we aim to give away around £4m compared to £3.5m this year.

We have also worked to refresh and reinvigorate our support of Leather, our vision being to support a thriving, sustainable, and connected leather industry by offering opportunity to tanners, designers, makers, and conservators.

We are fortunate to have a talented and committed executive team. However, we recognise that our governance, and future success, rests heavily on the participation and commitment of a diverse, engaged and contributing membership. We have continued to foster and expand our alumni network, aiming to engage with all those we have funded over time. This also provides a pathway to membership bringing diverse talent and experience to the Company.

One of our distinguished alumni and members, Liveryman Alderman Gregory Jones KC, has now become the 18th Leatherseller Sheriff of the City of London having taken office in September 2024. We all look forward to supporting Greg during his year of office.

We continue to encourage all young members of the Livery and Freedom to get involved in any aspect of what we do, whether business, charitable, sporting, or social activities. A highlight of being Master has been to see the great levels of engagement, enthusiasm, and energy amongst the membership.

This has made for a memorable and enjoyable year. Both Jane and I have been proud to represent the Leathersellers in the charitable, civic, and cultural life of the City of London and beyond.

None of this would be possible without the dedication and hard work of Matthew, our Clerk, and the whole Leathersellers' team. Grateful thanks from me and Jane for all that everyone has done to support us.

I congratulate my successor, Nick Tusting, and wish him and Sara a happy and productive year.

Mark Williams

CLERK'S INTRODUCTION



The framework of the strategy launched this year articulates in many areas what the Leathersellers have been committed to for generations, even centuries, while also focusing on future opportunities and endeavours.

The shared philanthropic ambition of both the Company and the Foundation comes through strongly, aligning the membership commitment and sound asset management of the Company with the goals of the Foundation.

With Number 3 St Helen's Place now fully let and a business plan and strategic framework in place, we have more clarity than we have had for a number of years on the mid-to-long term financial profile of the Company, allowing it to make decisions regarding additional charitable giving (either directly or through the Foundation) and other projects, chiefly maintenance of the St Helen's Estate.

Use of the Hall, our network and other assets to further our Added Value focus has continued to flourish, enabling our schools and Foundation partners and individual grantees to raise more funds, learn from one another, train staff and revise for exams. These contacts also enrich our understanding and experience, enabling us to improve our work. Membership engagement has continued to enhance this further from the many formal governance roles of committees and across our partner organisations, through to the mentoring programme and less formal or one-off opportunities such as careers events and welcoming grantees to the Hall.

The strategy speaks of the Leathersellers' aim to build on its rich legacy to be an open, engaged and responsive organisation; this has perhaps been demonstrated most evidently this year through new partnerships with the Merchant Taylors and the Jack Petchey Foundation, allowing us to do more in the areas that we care about. I am sure that our increasing ability to demonstrate and communicate the impact of our work will allow us to explore further opportunities such as these in the future.

The City of London is our home – and indeed St Helen's Place, complete with its new planting, is a jewel in that Square Mile. It is therefore wonderful to have the opportunity to strengthen our ties to its cultural, civic and charitable life further through the shrieval year of Gregory Jones KC.

It is the shared endeavour of our members, staff, partners and wider community that makes the Leathersellers so special and able to achieve so much. My thanks to all those who have helped to advance our work this year.

Matthew Lawrence

CREATIVE HEALING

Meet two Leathersellers' Foundation grantees using music, art and drama to address adverse childhood experiences and break cycles of trauma



“There’s something intrinsically powerful about using creative activities to support people in dealing with the traumatic things they’ve experienced,” says Jenny Young, Founder and Director of Blue Cabin, an arts charity working with care-experienced people in the north-east of England and beyond. One of Blue Cabin’s key beliefs is that the arts and creativity can help build trust and develop and strengthen relationships – something that’s essential for care-experienced young people who need to heal from adverse childhood experiences.

But, having previously worked in a local authority and a large cultural institution, Jenny found that those creative activities weren’t always easy for care-experienced young people to come by.

“There are often challenges in ensuring that care-experienced people have their human right to access great art and culture. They can live in lots of different homes, and they might change schools often. Connecting to creativity and their local cultural offer isn’t necessarily at the forefront of their experiences.”

So, in 2016, Jenny set up Blue Cabin, which offers a wide range of creative projects for care-experienced infants, children, young people and adults. Initially a small community interest company, it’s now a registered charity with three full-time, together with six part-time, staff members as well as associate artists and therapists who provide staff and freelancers with therapeutic supervision. Ensuring the well-being of staff is a priority for Blue Cabin. The supervision provided is essential to help the team manage the impact of being exposed to other people’s trauma when supporting survivors of adverse childhood experiences.

All of Blue Cabin’s activities help individuals to acquire the skills and understanding necessary to build robust relationships. The ability to engage and create trust with others safely can radically change the course of a person’s life.

“We know how important it is for care-experienced people of any age to develop and strengthen the relationships with the people in their lives” explains Jenny. “For some, that will be a foster carer. For others, it will be a kinship carer or an adoptive parent.”

Bonding over music

Blue Cabin’s youngest participant is a five-week old baby, who’s currently with a foster carer. They attend ‘This is the Place’, an early years music-making programme.

“Babies and their carers come and take part in beautiful, trauma-informed music-making experiences facilitated by our associate artists,” says Jenny. As babies play, they’re supported to develop their attachment to their carer, their confidence, their language and communication, and their sense of identity. “Initial attachments are so important for development. The babies are also strengthening their relationships with their carer, which can enable them to heal from very early adverse childhood experiences – either pre-birth or after they’ve been born. Our wonderful associate

Left and above: A Blue Cabin creative session led by associate artists

artists specialise in many different art forms, such as music, and also take part in training in trauma, attachment and recovery.”

As well as attending weekly sessions, carers are given resources so that they can continue to make music with their babies at home. This is about building the carers’ knowledge and confidence to help with routine, soothing and regulation.

Jenny shares an example of a baby who started the sessions not wanting to leave her carer, but quickly moved on to form strong attachments with other people in the group. “She’s started to babble and talk. She helps the musicians play the ukulele and interacts with other babies and adults in the group,” she says. “Her carer says that her development has been really striking and cites attending the sessions as integral to that.”

Understanding the past

Blue Cabin also supports care leavers, a strand of work they will develop further in the future. Currently they offer ‘All About Us’, a six-week online or face to face programme that supports young people to think about their life story. They consider themes like: *Who am I? Why do I live where I live? Who’s in my life? What are my favourite things? What do I want for my future?*

“Our associate artists facilitate these creative sessions alongside a key adult in their life,” says Jenny. They use a range of approaches, including design, theatre, craft and puppetry. “The sessions help the young people to gain a better understanding of their past. This enables them to make sense of their identity and their previous relationships in order to move forward.”

Something helping Blue Cabin to move forward as a charity is a multi-year grant from the Leathersellers’ Foundation. “Long-term core funding is integral to our growth and our long-term survival,” says Jenny. “It helps to make sure we can continue doing this work and grow and deepen the impact that we have.”

Tackling abuse and violence

Another Leathersellers’ Foundation grantee using creative processes to tackle adverse childhood experiences is Tender. The England-wide charity, which celebrated its 20th anniversary last year, uses drama-based activities to educate children, young people and adults about healthy relationships.

In a strategic shift for the charity, Tender is embarking on a 10-year mission to prevent domestic violence and abuse, focusing their activities on wider systemic change, while continuing their direct delivery with children and adults. Domestic abuse includes a range of adverse childhood experiences. These can include sexual, physical and psychological abuse, which affect the child or young person’s environment, relationships, and view of themselves well into the future.



A Tender workshop held with pupils at the John Chilton School in Northolt

Photography: Callum Toy and Joseph Ironmonger

“Domestic violence and abuse can have absolutely devastating knock-on effects on those experiencing them,” says Cordelia Morrison, Tender’s Development Manager. “They can impact educational attendance or attainment. Or, if abuse is happening to an adult, they may struggle with work because of the trauma they’re experiencing. We also know it’s an issue that interacts quite significantly with homelessness, and very much so with poor mental health.”

Learning the signs

Tender works with a wide variety of organisations, from primary schools to global businesses. The charity provides a safe, enjoyable space where people can engage with sensitive topics. They can ‘rehearse’ for real-life scenarios and

“Drama is such a relational art form. We find it a fantastic tool for developing empathy.”

explore their rights, responsibilities and expectations within relationships. “For young people, we have scripts where they observe characters meeting for the first time,” says Cordelia. “Peppered into that interaction are examples of what we call ‘early warning signs’ or ‘red flags’ that the relationship might not be particularly healthy.” This might be coercive or controlling behaviour, for example.

Why does drama work so well when it comes to addressing adverse childhood experiences? Cordelia says that using roleplay and drama helps participants to develop their skills in understanding people. “Drama is such a relational art form. We find it a fantastic tool for developing empathy.”

Using characters and roleplay makes exploring sensitive issues, such as abuse, a bit easier. “It’s a lot less exposing than asking people to give their personal opinion,” says Cordelia. “Those characters act as a buffer. It also makes learning about a very difficult subject feel a bit more positive.”

She adds that their expert facilitators are adept at picking up on when something a child says is coming from personal experience. They are there to offer support to the child and the school. Enabling teachers to identify and intervene when children and young people are at risk not only changes the lives of those experiencing abuse, but means that Tender’s impact goes far beyond what they deliver in their sessions.

The Leathersellers’ Foundation’s ACEs Main Grants Programme provides multi-year grants of £20,000-£25,000 per year for up to four years. Grants are open to charities and charitable incorporated organisations (CIOs) throughout the UK working to prevent and tackle the consequences of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Creating healthier dynamics

Like Blue Cabin, Tender delivers programmes tailored to different life stages. For secondary school, they might look at abuse in the context of a new romantic relationship. For example, when someone asks you out, are there any subtle signs that this person might exercise controlling or coercive behaviour further down the line? “It’s an opportunity for people to see how those types of interactions might play out,” says Cordelia. “But the young people also get to decide how those interactions could go better. How could this be a healthier dynamic?”

For primary schools, the sessions focus on healthy and unhealthy friendships. Cordelia says that giving children tools and vocabulary at an early age helps them to set

boundaries when they start considering intimate relationships in their teenage years. “They have a lot of that foundational understanding of how to have good relationships, for when sexual consent becomes relevant to their lives.”

In 2022–2023 96% of secondary school participants in Tender projects said that they had more knowledge about healthy and unhealthy relationships. Around 85% felt more confident in dealing with issues of violence and abuse. As one participant put it, “In the future, if it [abuse] does happen, what I’ve learnt will get brought up in my brain and I will use it.”

Tender expects to reach an average of 23,750 young people and 3,500 adults each year. Cordelia says that the Leathersellers’ Foundation’s core funding has been invaluable in strengthening their organisation and helping to achieve this reach. “Having a strong infrastructure is particularly important when you’re dealing with really sensitive issues. Things like our safeguarding procedures, our diversity, equity and inclusion procedures and our staff well-being are all vital – and that’s the sort of thing to which core funding makes a massive difference.”

It’s clear that what organisations like Blue Cabin and Tender do now has the potential to change the future. Working with people of all ages, from infants to adults, Leathersellers’ grantees are intervening to support those affected by adverse childhood experiences, and helping to break the cycle of harm for the next generation.

What is an adverse childhood experience?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are a recognised set of traumatic experiences, including abuse, violence, neglect, parental imprisonment and parental substance misuse. When children and young people experience multiple ACEs before the age of 18, it can have a lifelong impact on their future life chances, relationships, and physical and mental health.

EARTH

How UK leather pioneers are setting
global standards in sustainability

MINDED

“Leather is arguably the most sustainable material produced on the planet. What we’re doing is upcycling a waste product, an agricultural by-product that would otherwise go to landfill, [and] making it into a durable product.”

From the seats on planes, trains and cars to our shoes, bags, belts and wallets, leather remains pervasive in our everyday lives; a material tradition, rooted in an understanding of nature and natural processes that humanity has kept up for thousands of years. This legacy is now informing a modern discourse, with different challenges and opportunities arising as part of the climate crisis. As resources like leather are put under the microscope, its story and opportunities as a sustainable material are being championed by UK companies, brands, and individuals for the benefit of a global industry.

As the UK’s largest manufacturer, with the lowest carbon footprint of any leather manufacturer globally, Scottish Leather Group is the logical starting point to explore the impact of this contribution. Dr Warren Bowden, a chartered environmentalist and the Head of Sustainability and Innovation at the company, calls the term ‘sustainable leather’ somewhat redundant.

“Leather is arguably the most sustainable material produced on the planet,” says Bowden. “What we’re doing is upcycling a waste product, an agricultural by-product that would otherwise go to landfill, [and] making it into a durable product. In terms of CO₂ emissions, the impact of hides going to landfill is more than that of the conversion of the raw hide into finished leather.”

While leather offers the benefits of being a renewable material, not all hides are being put to good use. According to the United Nations Food

and Agriculture Organization (FAO), although 99% of leather made across the globe comes from livestock, only around 60 to 70% of cattle hides are made into leather each year. All the while, meat production is skyrocketing; in 2021, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and FAO predicted that global meat supply would reach 374m tons by 2030, meaning a 14% increase over the decade driven predominantly by income and population growth.

Leather makers find it difficult to keep up with this growth rate, especially as regulations, a highly competitive market, and alternative materials push smaller players to the wayside. Bowden estimates that globally some 30% of hides already get sent to landfill because of the existing imbalance between the industries. Not making leather, or pivoting to alternative (often plastic) faux leathers instead, won’t alleviate the problem. Quite the opposite; a 2021 report by the Leather and Hide Council of America estimated that if people stopped buying leather, the resulting disposal of 300m hides would result in 6.6m tons of surplus CO₂ emissions per year.

Although these figures might not inspire immediate optimism, a growing number of Earth-minded industry leaders in the UK are doing what they can to increase responsible leather production, while educating consumers and helping to promote best practice.

“[Leather as a] raw input material is inherently sustainable,” echoes Deborah Taylor, the

“When we add in the socio-economic impacts, it is morally important that we support these local economies so they can continue to rely on the leather industry for their livelihoods.”

Managing Director of the Sustainable Leather Foundation. “But it’s what we do to convert it to finished leather that makes the difference in whether we can say that the end-product is sustainable or not.”

Founded by Taylor in 2020, the Daventry-based Sustainable Leather Foundation’s mission is to support stakeholders across an international leather value chain to improve their sustainability efforts. They do so through a modular audit system, which makes resources and guidance accessible and inclusive of the various challenges that manufacturers, brands, and other parties are facing. As such, she’s well positioned to assess where the global industry is meeting environmental, social, and governance goals and has observed a change in tanneries across the world looking to hold themselves accountable and evaluate their practices. “We’re seeing a shift,” she says. “It’s a small shift because we’re still starting out, but it’s a definite shift.”

“The Foundation was established as a direct response to the changing landscape that the leather industry sits within, where increasing expectations and demands are being placed on leather manufacturers without the necessary skills, training, or tools to meet those demands,” says Taylor. In the four years since the Foundation was founded they have visited, trained and audited in over 20 countries, from the UK, Italy, Taiwan, the USA and Germany to those where the most support is needed, such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Namibia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico and Uzbekistan.

“When we add in the socio-economic impacts, it is morally important that we support these local economies so they can continue to rely

on the leather industry for their livelihoods – something that isn’t always considered by many when talking about sustainability.” It’s this aspect that stands out as an important factor in helping to maintain and increase production and decrease numbers of waste hides.

Part of this work involves acting as an industry representative, working with NGOs and intergovernmental organisations and helping a global supply chain to respond and adapt to new legislation. “I work directly with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the European Commission Directorate-General for Environment’s Deforestation Platform to ensure that we have a voice at the table. This also enables me to disseminate information back into the industry at a practical level,” says Taylor. While relatively new, it’s clear that the approach of Taylor and the Sustainable Leather Foundation is bringing about the adoption of best practice at a faster pace.

Uptake of new practices and processes can make all the difference, and implementing sustainability innovation is a speciality of the Scottish Leather Group. With Bowden at the helm of its sustainability efforts, the company is one of the players leading the way through initiatives like water recycling and the recovery of energy from raw materials that would otherwise be considered waste in normal leather production — a process patented by the business in 2012. “We want to do more and more with less and less, until we can make absolutely everything, [while] wasting nothing,” Bowden says.

There’s also the question of circularity, not only when it comes to waste and energy during manufacturing, but as it pertains to the leather products and making them so that they’re able



Anya Hindmarch, Return to Nature Tote



Dr Warren Bowden, Head of Sustainability and Innovation, Scottish Leather Group

to rejoin the ecosystem once they’ve served their purpose.

The Scottish Leather Group is launching new products that can be composted at end of life, which requires complex chemistry to stabilise the collagens in the material. “The chemistry you use, the finishes and surface patina, all need to be compatible with that end-of-life goal,” says Bowden, noting that leather products also have to meet stringent technical specifications when they’re used for items such as car seats. “We need to stay ahead of legislation and stay ahead of consumer demand, giving them a product that has greater performance but a reduced impact throughout all phases of its life.”

On the brand side, a growing number of businesses are also taking it upon themselves to do more when it comes to championing leather’s versatility as a sustainable material. One example is British accessories brand Anya Hindmarch, which in 2021 introduced its Return to Nature collection. This collection is made with fully traceable leather and is designed to biodegrade at end of life, compost, and deliver 20% stronger plant growth, says the business’s eponymous founder.

According to Hindmarch the skins used in the collection were sourced from Scan-Hide’s farms in Sweden, which boast high levels of animal welfare and traceability. Hides were tanned with Zeology, which replaces chrome with zeolite, and the leather is free of heavy metals, aldehyde, and PU coatings, instead finished with Activated Silk™ Technology. “For us as a brand it is all about ‘progress, not perfection’,” Hindmarch adds. “This collection was a real labour of love but

something I am very proud of.” Return to Nature has become a permanent part of the brand’s collections, and she cites growing appetite from customers for this type of product.

Indeed, what is needed most of all is greater awareness on the consumer side — something that Leather Naturally, which was founded 12 years ago for this exact purpose, is working to drive. The platform’s management board consists of volunteers from businesses including tanneries and chemical suppliers, who come together to address the misunderstandings around leather and educate people about what leather making really looks like today.

Debbie Burton, the chair of Leather Naturally’s management board, is transparent about this being a work in progress. She has, however, seen a positive shift in consumer awareness over the course of her six-year term. “The biggest issue at the start was people didn’t understand that animals aren’t killed for leather, that leather is a by-product. You’d see the same incorrect facts used over and over again, and I’ve seen a real difference in that. It feels less urgent now,” Burton says.

Alongside her role at Leather Naturally she has also held the position as Director of Communications at Leather Working Group, the world’s largest leather industry-specific stakeholder organisation working across topics like traceability and environmental impact. Through education, tools and member support, they are aiming for a 100% deforestation and conversion-free leather supply chain by 2030, reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. Similarly to Taylor and the Sustainable Leather Foundation,

part of the ambition is to create an international community dedicated to responsible leather. And with Leather Working Group and the Sustainable Leather Foundation covering the business side, Leather Naturally balances the equation with work targeted at public education.

To achieve this, among other initiatives Leather Naturally has worked towards driving progress through in-person and SEO research, which has helped the platform to understand better gaps in consumer awareness; creation of content to target these questions and misunderstandings, as well as paid-for search terms; and the campaign Leather Truthfully, which provides journalists with resources to inform their sustainability-related reporting.

“I would say that we have seen a sea-change in sustainability reporting and writing that is a result of people taking the time to understand the nuance around sustainability and why it isn’t as simple as soundbite answers,” Burton adds, noting that on the consumer side, visitors to the website are also engaging with the content and staying to learn more.

Though there are still misunderstandings and misinformation around so-called ‘vegan leather’ and other alternative materials, Burton says “there’s a huge change in the questions we’re being asked, the articles being written.”

Importantly, as awareness improves, Burton is seeing discourse shift from leather’s origins to sustainability concerns in a more holistic sense, from leather’s place in a regenerative agriculture ecosystem to the material’s longevity and best practices around care and repairs. These are all key when it comes to Leather Naturally’s long-term ambition: to highlight leather’s place in conversations around slow fashion and conscious consumption, and to ensure that people know how leather, as an industry and material, can help to shape the way we farm, live and consume in the future. It’s a sentiment that rings true across the UK leather trade, from brands like Hindmarch and its craft partners to producers such as Scottish Leather Group.

Achieving those goals will take time, but when it comes to pioneers in the UK’s leather industry, the agenda has been set. “I see a better understanding of what sustainability means,” Burton adds. “Sustainability isn’t a finite place; we can’t stop measuring the impact at the factory gate.”



The Leathersellers became the first livery company to join Leather Naturally this year and are working closely with Debbie Burton to structure a new educational resource on the Leathersellers’ website. Aimed primarily at lecturers, teachers, and students, this will amplify the reach of the excellent materials created by Leather Naturally and assist partners in the Leathersellers’ network.

Left: Khadija Isack

FREEDOM TO STUDY FREEDOM TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

“Thanks to the Student Grant from the Leathersellers’ Foundation, I was able to love my degree and give it my all.”

Four grantees describe how Leathersellers’ Student Grants have helped them to pursue their passions at university and set their course for the future

“Doing a degree in Midwifery is full-time,” says Khadija Isack, who has just finished her studies at Kingston University London. “You have to work twelve-and-a-half-hour shifts, nights and weekends, and sometimes you’re on call too. It’s almost impossible to take care of your academic work and take on a part-time job as well.

“Thanks to the student grant from the Leathersellers’ Foundation, I was able to love my degree and give it my all without having to worry about additional financial pressures. It was absolutely incredible to have that support throughout my degree. To be honest, I’m not sure what I’d have done without it.”

Khadija is one of 68 people who received an award from the Foundation’s flagship Student Grants Programme in 2023–2024. In total the Foundation distributed £240,000 for that academic year, with awards varying from £2,000 to £5,000 for each student. Many of the students receive support for the duration of their undergraduate degree, up to a maximum of four years.

Around a third of the students awarded funds last year are alumni of Colfe’s School and the Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools in south-east London, where the Leathersellers have been involved with supporting education since the 17th century.

Applicants need to show that they require additional financial support to reach university, which can be because of a number of factors relating to their background, educational journey and chosen career path. The Chair and the Student Grants panel also consider how students have overcome challenges to reach university and the difference that funding would make to their university experience.

“Last year, and looking forward to 2024–2025, when considering new applicants we narrowed our focus to prioritise those who attended our affiliated schools and care-experienced students, recognising the particular challenges that they face in accessing higher education and the difference that qualifications can make,” says Natalia Rymaszewska, Head of Grants at the Leathersellers’ Foundation.

“Care leavers face psychological, financial and practical barriers to going to university. While 47% of young people from state-funded schools progress into higher education by the age of 19, the figure for care-experienced children is just 14%. We hope that our grants will help to level the playing field for people from some of the most disadvantaged groups in society.”

As part of a new partnership the Student Grants Programme now also benefits from the Jack Petchey Foundation, which helps to support the ambitions of young people by contributing £15,000 to each awardee to be spent over three years. Applicants must be under 25 years old, have attended a state school in London or Essex for Sixth Form and either be studying a healthcare related degree or be care-experienced.

For the coming year five students have the status of being joint Leathersellers’ Foundation and Jack Petchey Foundation Scholarship awardees.

Leathersellers’ student grants give recipients an increased sense of freedom in different ways, whether it’s freedom from financial constraints or the freedom to choose what they will study and where.



Above: Favour Ebohon

Favour Ebohon, who in the coming year will be a joint Leathersellers’ and Jack Petchey Scholarship awardee, found that the grant enabled her to focus on her studies. “I’ve just completed the first year of my degree in Medicine at Keele University and finished with a grade I’m really proud of,” she says.

“The grant has meant I haven’t had to struggle financially. So many students have to work on top of studying to pay their bills, but I’ve been able to immerse myself in my studies. The grant has been invaluable and I’m super grateful for it.”

Abundance Chianumba, who’s studying Law and Criminology at the University of the West of England, also appreciates that the award has given her more time to study. “In my first year I had a lot of part-time jobs, working as a care assistant, as a support worker and helping people with disabilities,” she says. “I enjoyed that work, but the Leathersellers’ grant has allowed me to focus more on my lectures in my second year, when my grades count more towards my degree.”

For Priscilla Mitange, whose family home is in London, the grant gave her the freedom to choose where and what to study.

“I really wanted to study Psychology with Clinical Psychology at the University of Kent,” she says. “It’s a niche course that combines the two disciplines, offering training in psychology as well as allowing you to explore the models used in clinical research and practice. Without the Leathersellers’ grant I wouldn’t have been able to afford to live and study in Kent. I’d have had to choose a different course in London and live at home. I’m so lucky that I didn’t have to sacrifice my passion for the sake of financial stability.”

The grant also enables Priscilla to travel home to London when necessary to help look after her mother, who has high blood pressure, and her seven-year-old brother, who has autism. “I’ve been taking care of my brother since he was a little kid,” she says, “and I’ve seen the way he’s been mistreated just because he’s different. So often, children who are neurodivergent are bullied and isolated. It’s so unfair. Neurotypical people tend to look at people with autism and think, ‘They should be more like us.’ But people like my brother have such a pure, innocent, beautiful way of looking at the world.”

Priscilla is now inspired to take her studies in a direction that will help to create a society that is more tolerant and understanding of people like her brother.

“I want to discover where the stigma against people with neurodivergence comes from,” she says. “Why is it so deep-rooted, how does it affect people and how can we educate future generations to think differently?” Her long-term goal is to conduct a study on stigma and its impact on people with learning disabilities or neurodivergence, and to write a book based on her findings. “I want to help normalise neurodivergence and spread awareness,” she adds. “We need to be so much more progressive and accepting in our attitudes.”

Priscilla’s mission ties in with one of the key assessment criteria for the Student Grants: a commitment to contributing to society and making a difference in disadvantaged communities.

“All of the students who receive these awards have overcome considerable challenges to get where they are today,” says Natalia. “They have shown great tenacity and ambition. As a result, they have their own unique insights into the



Above: Priscilla Mitange

factors that enable them to thrive. This is why we’re keen for our Student Grant recipients to draw on their skills and experience to contribute to society.”

Favour and Khadija are both driven by a desire to make a difference to society by supporting women and families during pregnancy and childbirth.

Khadija says, “Caring for women in the most vulnerable and exciting times of their lives has been the best part of my Midwifery degree. The impact that I’ve been able to make will stay with me forever. There’s no better feeling than caring for people from the most disadvantaged groups, like refugees, asylum seekers, black and brown women, and more. Like every midwife, I try to reduce the disparities one woman at a time by giving holistic woman-centred care that makes people feel seen and heard. There’s nothing more rewarding.”

In the future, Khadija wants to carry on her studies. “I’m starting my new job as a qualified midwife this autumn and can’t wait to see what that brings. Afterwards, I’d like to continue working part-time while I advance my studies to learn even more about women’s health.”

Favour, who’s studying Medicine, sees her future career as a doctor as an extension of her family role as the eldest of five siblings. “I always enjoyed looking after my younger siblings as they were growing up,” she says. “Using my knowledge to help other people drew me to medicine. It’s a field where I can support people on a day-to-day basis, making a positive impact on their lives directly. I want to make a difference to the lives of pregnant women and unborn children. When I first started learning about obstetrics and gynaecology, I thought, ‘Wow, this is amazing.’ It’s the opportunity to bring a new life into the world. Pregnancy is a time that can be stressful and full of challenges for people who are having children. It will be extraordinary to be able to use my expertise to support them at such an important time.”

Meanwhile, Abundance has a clear view of how she wants to use her Law and Criminology degree to benefit others. “I want to help people who don’t have a voice. As a looked-after child, I’ve gone through the system and I know what that’s like,” she says.

“I went into Law because I wanted to work within Family Law in Social Services. As someone who’s been in care, I will be able to advocate for kids and help them get into better situations.”

Abundance currently has a placement with a firm of solicitors that offers Legal Aid. “A lot of our clients are vulnerable children and young adults, and many have had care experiences. Often, they’ve committed crimes because their support circle has broken down. It’s been really helpful understanding their situation, knowing exactly what they’re entitled to and helping them get the best possible outcome. In the future, I hope to continue to work with vulnerable people. They always need an extra voice in their corner.”

Natalia comments, “We’re delighted that Leathersellers’ Student Grants are helping to support the studies of these four incredible grantees. I’m amazed by the breadth and depth of their ambition to change the world for the better. They are all humble and inspiring in equal measure. I have absolute faith that they will not just realise their own potential, but will also help many others to be the best that they can be. We look forward to seeing what the next chapter holds for them.”

How physical activity
is helping to build
transformative relationships
with young people who have
experienced trauma

THE POWER OF PLAY

When university friends Jasper Kain and Jack Reynolds started offering football sessions on a south London estate for young people at risk of exclusion from school, they weren't sure what to expect. But a group kept turning up and their behaviour improved.

Participants were offered a celebratory trip away if they completed the school year and achieved better grades – which they did. When the football sessions came to an end, their reactions were both upsetting and revealing.

"They basically said, 'You're snakes'," explains Lee Parker, Head of External Relations at their charity Football Beyond Borders. "'You come in, spend time with us, and then leave. You're just like all the other adults in our lives.'"

The comment prompted Jack and Jasper to form Football Beyond Borders and set the charity a key goal: for all the vulnerable young people with which they work to have a trusted adult relationship to help them thrive. Football Beyond Borders works with young people from areas of socio-economic disadvantage who are passionate about football but disengaged at school.



Without intervention and support, trauma from adverse childhood experiences can affect their education and be a barrier to forming healthy relationships long into adult life. “Ultimately, we’re there to make sure these young people at risk of exclusion from school aren’t excluded,” says Lee, “and they also have a trusted adult relationship with a Football Beyond Borders practitioner within the school, who can help them achieve English and Maths GCSEs and thrive in mainstream education.”

Social and emotional learning

Football Beyond Borders runs over 147 programmes with more than 2,000 young people in schools around England. While the football is still a hook, it’s only a part of what Football Beyond Borders does. “The football is a Trojan horse,” says Lee. “We use it to get young people into a space where they can, unapologetically, authentically become themselves. But the main crux of our work is within the classroom.”

Football Beyond Borders practitioners deliver a curriculum focusing on crucial social and emotional learning. The young people discuss issues like toxic masculinity, race and inequality. “Within those sessions they learn about empathy and how to relate better to other people in school and in their home life,” says Lee, and they have space to talk with our practitioners about their feelings and their emotions. Our practitioners are essentially therapists in tracksuits.”

The multi-year grant from the Leathersellers’ Foundation allows Football Beyond Borders to deliver core activities and invest in their team, several of whom were themselves supported by the charity when they were younger. Training includes upskilling practitioners to achieve degree-equivalent qualifications. “Our training is helping staff to be stronger practitioners and better-trusted adults within the schools that we work in,” says Lee. “It gives them space to reflect and share their challenges and learnings.” As a result, staff stay longer – at least three years – giving young people consistent support.

Out of all the young people on Football Beyond Borders programmes in the 2022–2023 academic year, 92% who were classed as at risk of being excluded ended up staying in school. In the same group, 43% achieved GCSEs in English and Maths, which was nine times more likely to occur than amongst those at risk of exclusion who weren’t on the programme.

“Football is a way of allowing me time to relax and sort everything that’s going on in my head,” says Paige, a Football Beyond Borders participant. “It’s a way for me to come out and say how I feel and express myself. Football Beyond Borders has given me that space to be confident with who I am and to then overcome all the other challenges that I face in life. I don’t think I could be the person I am without Football Beyond Borders.” Paige was predicted to fail her GCSEs before joining Football Beyond Borders, but she passed all her exams and got a 5 and a 6 in English and Maths.



Leaving the comfort zone

Another organisation tapping into the universal power of the beautiful game is Football Journeys. This London-based charity brings together young people from different communities to share new experiences, find common ground and overcome stereotypes. They run a 16-week Youth Leadership Programme in schools, mainly with groups of Year 9s.

“Football Journeys takes young people outside their comfort zones,” says the charity’s Director, Carlos Salvador Joao. “It’s about allowing them to believe that they can be the leader – and the human – that they want to be.”

The programme involves participants visiting schools in different areas of London to build positive links with their peers. As well as taking part in inter-community football activities together, each group creates a film about their local area and shares it with the other. The films explore the identity of the school and the wider community of which they’re a part.

“Teachers have told us that our programme really supports the students to connect more with their identity within school,” says Carlos. “Students have said it’s helped them integrate into the school community, connect with their peers and appreciate their own local community more.”

Students also feel that the programme helps them to have more self-awareness. “They reflect on their own behaviours. This has facilitated better relationships with others. They say they feel more confident to join in with team activities, too.”

Football Journeys also helps to tackle the stereotypes that young people have about people and places that they’ve never been to. “They might have based their views on someone telling them ‘people in east London are like this’, or ‘people in south London are like that’,” says Carlos. “By the end of the programme they can see ‘Oh, they’re really just like us.’”

“When I heard we were going to Bermondsey in south London, I thought it would be a scary place, but it was actually just like where I live,” says one Football Journeys participant. “We have similarities despite being from different places. If I didn’t do Football Journeys, I would’ve been more closed off and reluctant to go to different places and meet different people.”

Carlos has recognised that doing something outside of the norm can have a big impact on young people with adverse childhood experiences. “Challenging themselves with things they haven’t had exposure to or done before gives them a new belief in themselves and what they are able to do.”

During the filmmaking, for example, a young person may begin by feeling shy and uncomfortable. They can challenge themselves to get in front of the camera, or ask a stranger on the street a question about the local area. “If they get a ‘no’, then they’re learning important life skills,” says Carlos. “Through dealing with setbacks, they’re learning resilience.”

“It’s about allowing them to believe they can be the leader – and the human – that they want to be.”



Carlos Salvador Joao, Director, Football Journeys

AYOUB EL-BAKKALI



Shepherd's Bush Group Lead and Well-being Coach, Solidarity Sports

When Ayoub El-Bakkali was six he took part in a Solidarity Sports holiday project. Now 22, he's one of the charity's group leaders and a well-being coach.

"I can remember my first day at Solidarity Sports. Everyone was very welcoming, and I loved every second of it. That was 2007. I carried on coming during all the school holidays. When I was a teenager, I became a helper and then started volunteering as soon as I was old enough.

A couple of years later, they offered me a job as a well-being coach. I was very shy at first. It was a new experience. But, with the whole team's guidance, I worked my way to leading the Shepherd's Bush group and running an after-school club.

Solidarity Sports shaped my career. At school, I wasn't the best student. I was an angry child and didn't listen to adults. I'll never forget one teacher saying to me, 'You'll never make it to university.' It was Sean [Founder and CEO of Solidarity Sports] who gave me the confidence to try. He said to me: 'There are going to be people out there in life who won't believe you'll succeed. You've got to prove them wrong.'

So then I just put my head down, started to ignore my friends and listened to the teachers. I went on to do Educational Studies at university. It's helped me understand the power of play. The activities we do at Solidarity Sports are fun, but they are not just for fun – we do team-building games and games that work the mind. When we have some downtime with the children, for example, if we're waiting for a bus, we might do a quick quiz – something just to make their brains tick.

It's good to watch the children develop and gain confidence. I remember one girl who joined us and would hardly speak. She was very shy and reserved. One of our mentors worked with her for six months, and finally, she started to open up. She went from not talking at all to not wanting to stop! It's lovely because I'm seeing children grow, gain confidence, and express themselves.

Solidarity Sports is like a big family. We all have the same ethos – no matter where you're from or how old you are, everyone is treated equally. We work with children who have been through extreme trauma. And some of them lash out. That's hurt and pain from inside coming out. Most of our children are referred to us from social services. One child lost their family in Grenfell, another child's family are asylum seekers, and others have experienced domestic violence. So many children in this country are being neglected – a lot of it goes under the radar.

What support we give depends on the individual family's situation. We have two children in our group whose parents are both disabled. In that case, we support them by sending a trusted volunteer or staff member to pick up their child every day and bring them to us. Sometimes parents just want someone to talk to, who'll listen to them and understand.

I had a parent call me just this week and say: 'Thank you so much. You don't know what it means that you're taking my daughter out and creating memories with her.'

Our Solidarity Sports t-shirts say 'Every Child Deserves Happiness.' I really believe that. It's very rewarding to be part of it."

The Leathersellers’ Foundation grant has played a massive part in the charity’s short-term future, particularly following the challenges of Covid.



Left: Football Journeys

Football Journeys also offers an ambassador programme for 14–18-year-olds. The young people work together to come up with a structure for the programme, which includes leadership qualifications, skills for work sessions, and opportunities to learn about different industries and careers. “When we run a workshop around leadership in the City, for instance, we’re bringing young people into workplaces where they may not have people in their own family network,” says Carlos. “We’re continuing to challenge them out of their comfort zone. We open up their networks to opportunities they didn’t know existed.”

Carlos says that the Leathersellers’ Foundation grant has played a massive part in the charity’s short-term future, particularly following the challenges of Covid. Carlos also noted the added value that Football Journeys receives from Leathersellers as a grantee. Remarking on the Link and Learn event in March 2024, Carlos states that it was useful for information, networking and sharing ideas.

Breaking the cycle

Providing new experiences is also a key focus for Leathersellers’ grantee Solidarity Sports. This west London charity helps children aged 6–17 to heal from complex trauma through a range of programmes and activities. This includes sports, healthy eating, arts, educational trips, mentoring and holidays.

Below: A Solidarity Sports creative session



Around 95% of Solidarity Sports participants are referred by social services and come from extremely challenging backgrounds. Many have suffered neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse. They may be self-harming and have suicidal thoughts. Having started out as an after-school football club, the charity finds it’s ‘plugging the gaps’ where social services don’t have the resources.

“The adverse childhood experiences are so broad and vast,” says January Jones, Head of Operations at Solidarity Sports. “One of the biggest challenges we have is trying to address all of the young people’s needs.”

One way they do this is by harnessing the power of play. “It’s very liberating and freeing when you can shut your mind off and just focus on playing football, drawing a picture or being silly. It provides a little cocoon and a safe space to let go,” says January. “Every child deserves happiness. We want to provide happy memories, a place for them to have fun and try and forget their problems for a while.”

And they’re succeeding. Of the parents who responded to a survey, 100% said that their child was happier after joining Solidarity Sports. The charity also offers support for parents – with everything from the cost of living to mental health. “We provide the parents with whatever they need so that they can have a less chaotic household for their children.”

Receiving a Leathersellers’ Foundation grant helps Solidarity Sports to address the needs of the young people and parents with which it works. “Multi-year, unrestricted funding has given us some breathing space as an organisation, which is great because there is just so much to do,” says January. “It means we can focus on our aims and increase the number of children that we invite to each activity.”

The range of support that Solidarity Sports offers has the potential to change the future for generations of families. “Hopefully, what we’ll have is more resilient adults,” says January. “We’ll have adults with empathy, who understand what struggle is, and who want to help the next generation. Those adults will have less chaotic households so they won’t need us. As wonderful as Solidarity Sports is, it would be great if it wasn’t needed.”

The Leathersellers’ Foundation’s ACEs Main Grants Programme provides multi-year grants of £20,000-£25,000 per year for up to four years. Grants are open to charities and charitable incorporated organisations (CIOs) throughout the UK working to prevent and tackle the consequences of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

What is an adverse childhood experience? Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are a recognised set of traumatic experiences, including abuse, violence, neglect, parental imprisonment and parental substance misuse. When children and young people experience multiple ACEs before the age of 18, it can have a lifelong impact on their future life chances, relationships, and physical and mental health.



THE WORLD AT THEIR FEET

How support for leather education is offering
opportunity for talented shoemakers of all ages



Left: Arjya Jyotirmay Bhattacharya

With its leather education grants the Leathersellers’ Foundation supports people of all ages and at various stages in their careers in the footwear industry. It could be a shoe veteran such as Rosa Fior, with heaps of experience of pivoting to a different part of the industry, or someone like Joyce Addai-Davis who is passionate about facing up to waste, sharing her knowledge and making the process of shoemaking as progressive and as sustainable as possible. Then, there are those at the very start of their journey such as 22-year-old De Montfort University undergraduate Arjya Jyotirmay Bhattacharya. With all three individuals the UK’s diverse offering of creative talent takes centre stage, underpinned, and empowered by, the use of leather.

Bhattacharya, the DMU student, confesses to having a long-held love of sketching that was subsequently matched by a passion for trainers. He recalls that at the age of eight he was extremely fond of a pair of red patent leather high tops by the Chinese brand Red Sun, bought for him by his father. Fast forward to today and he favours brands that have a global resonance such as Asics and New Balance “because of their intricate patterns and superior comfort.”

“I started drawing as a kid and was always told that I had a natural talent for sketching and 3D perception,” he says. For him, sketching was about self-expression, a way of channelling feelings. Fortunately, the student also has encouraging parents, who rubber-stamped his decision to combine his two favourite things, shoes and art — which is how Kolkata-born Bhattacharya found his way to Leicester, England.

At the age of eight Arjya was extremely fond of a pair of red patent leather high tops by the Chinese brand Red Sun.

When he signed up for the Footwear Design BA in 2022 he was under the erroneous impression that the course revolved around illustrations of shoes. However, as he progressed on the course the level of specialisation required dawned upon him, as did the need for total dedication. “It cannot be done without a genuine love for footwear” he notes. He was told about the grant opportunity by his university tutor, and says that the money given to him by the Leathersellers has helped him to pay his rent and focus on his studies instead of stressing about finances.

DMU aims to stimulate its students by setting them projects and competitions with leading brands. The Dr Martens project was memorable. “It made me push myself in terms of being an actual footwear designer and I got to showcase my skills on a higher level,” Bhattacharya explains.

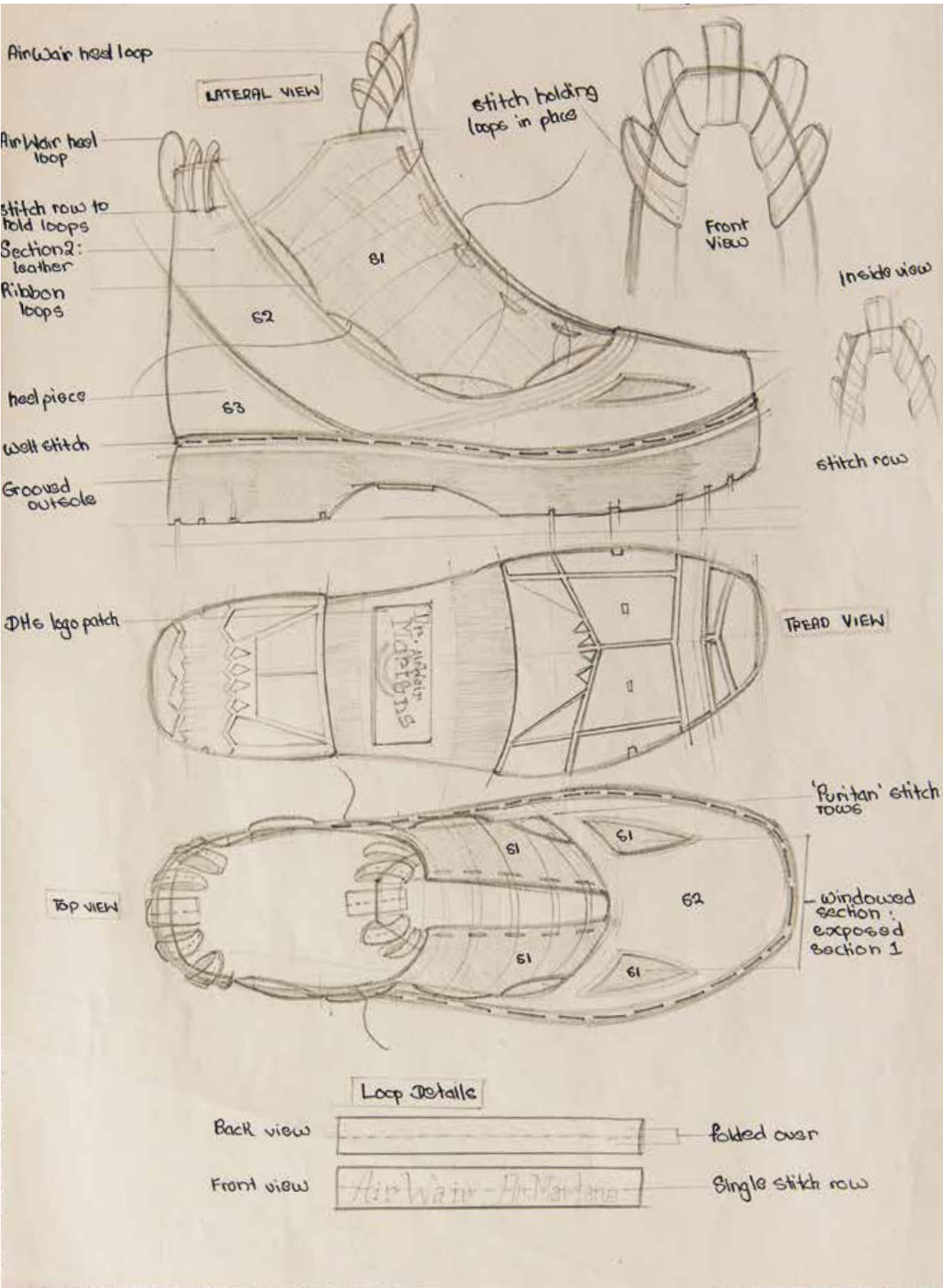


Above and opposite: Dr Martens silhouette project

“It made me push myself in terms of being an actual footwear designer and I got to showcase my skills on a higher level.”

For the project he used elements from his everyday life as inspiration to create a new Dr Martens silhouette. “It was one of the first projects where I truly pushed myself in terms of construction and design and I was extremely happy with it.”

In his second year he was a finalist in the Bespoke Classic Shoe Making module and was also shortlisted as a finalist in a university project with Gravity Sketch and Adidas. As a result he was invited to Germany to present his work to the Vice President of Adidas Originals. Bhattacharya says that when he graduates next summer, long term he hopes to work at a sports brand as a footwear designer/developer and then eventually have his own line of footwear. “I’m eyeing Europe or the US after graduation but let’s see where life takes me.”





Joyce Addai-Davis in her studio

Since graduating from London's prestigious Royal College of Art in August 2023 with a Footwear MA, 38-year-old Joyce Addai-Davis has become a fixture working full time as a fashion research lecturer. It's a role that allows her to implement findings in her dissertation that focused on waste and landfill by incorporating them into the curriculum. Indeed, she has produced a compelling video evidencing landfill waste mountains in Ghana entitled *The Chronicles Of 'Bola' (Waste) Girl*, which is currently gaining traction. But more of her discoveries in Ghana later.

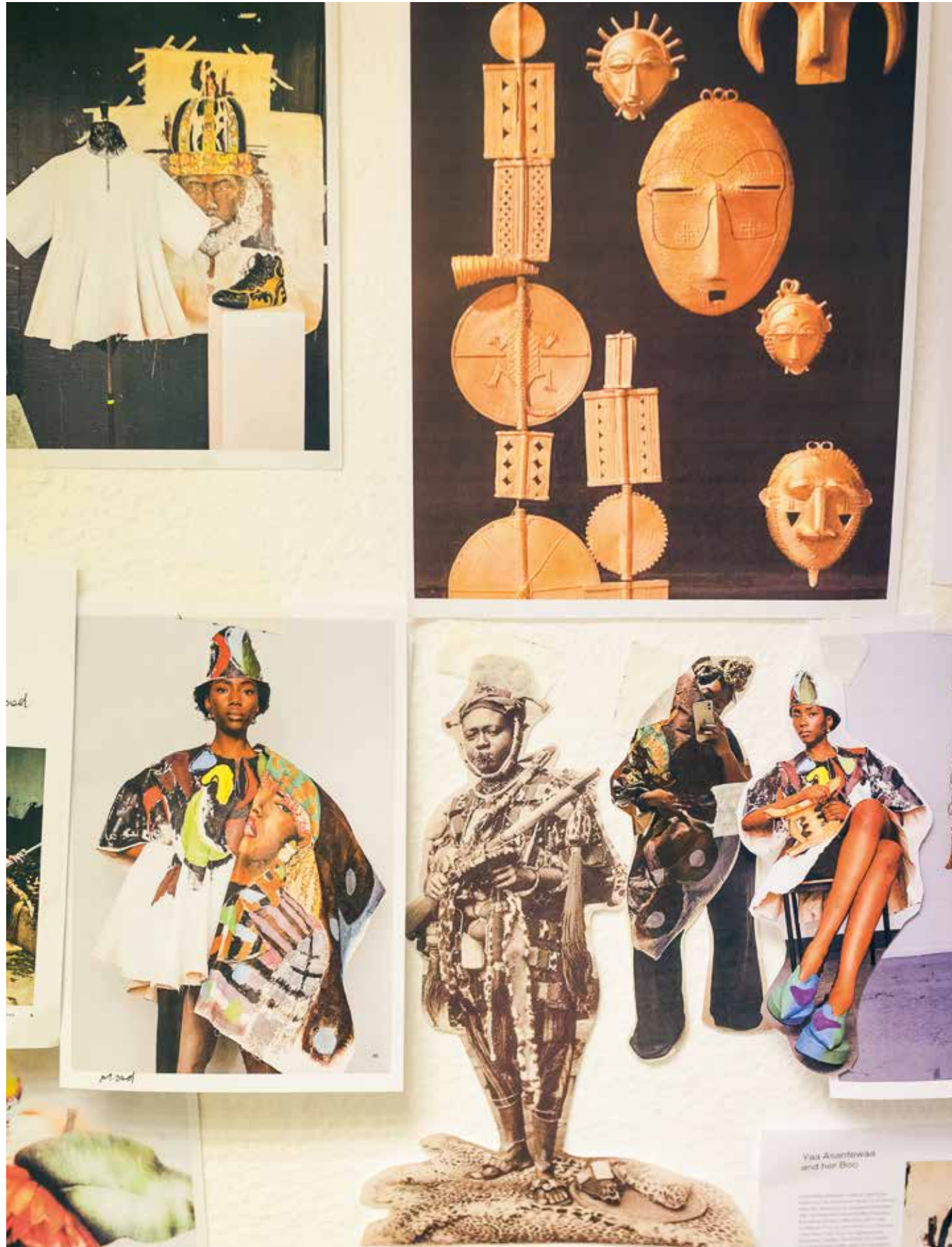
Addai-Davis graduated from Chelsea College of Art in 2008 with a BA in which she specialised in woven textiles. During her time as an undergraduate she spent a term studying at Polimoda in Florence. It was here, she says, that she developed "a taste for leather." Otherwise, her route into footwear has been a circuitous one, including time spent in Chiang Rai in Thailand learning about weaving and ethical practices.

In the past she has also worked in ready-to-wear, learning pattern cutting under a London-based couturier, which led to her becoming a costume designer creating outfits for singer-songwriter Nao's 2019 Grammy-nominated *Saturn* album. When the pandemic came along it prompted a change in direction. In 2021, the Leathersellers supported her with a grant to resume studying, this time for her MA at the Royal College of Art.

However, shortly after she started at the RCA she experienced a eureka moment. "I was on holiday in Ghana at Chorkor Beach near Accra. While there, I started to document all the waste. This included a sparkling New Look shoe that still had the price tag on it" she says, adding that as New Look doesn't operate in Ghana this piece of waste must have been shipped in from elsewhere. She quotes a saying that has been attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, 'You must be the change you want to see in the world', and adds "I can't just complete a Master's and continue adding to the problem; if I want to see true change, it first starts with me." This experience prompted her to switch from Fashion to Footwear at the RCA.

She says that funding from the Leathersellers has helped her on her journey "one hundred percent," not just with making her way and procuring materials, but also allowing her to learn the traditional craft of footwear by shadowing Iliaz Ilali from Ilias Little Shoe Box in London's Wood Green.

As for her creations, she says that her time at the RCA reinforced the thinking that aesthetics come first. "The word 'upcycling' conjures up a 'woe is me' feel. I prefer describing the process as 'beautification of waste' as it doesn't end up tarnishing the product." And when it comes to what she creates, it isn't at all obvious that her pieces are sewn together from waste.



“My goal is to create purposeful fashion items with minimal reliance on new materials or, in some cases, using digital counterparts instead. My artistic inspiration stems from the heroic narrative of Yaa Asantewaa, an 18th-century Ghanaian warrior who resisted British colonialism. I channel her spirit into combating waste colonialism.”



Opposite and overleaf: Rosa Fior in her studio

Rosa Fior's endeavours demonstrate that it's never too late to learn new skills. She describes herself in industry parlance as "a lifelong shoe dog." Thus far, she's had an illustrious shoe design career. It started in London at Cordwainers' College, followed by a stint in Florence, after which she had a long career working for leading labels such as Paul Smith, Karen Millen and lastly Penelope Chilvers, which she left in 2022 in order to set up a slow fashion business Antigone.

"After many years in the industry, I saw that opportunities for women after the age of 50 were severely limited so I felt that I needed to create my own brand to secure my future" she explains. "With Brexit and Covid making it even harder to import goods, I wanted to see if I could buck the trend and bring small-scale shoemaking back to Hackney, where I started my career at Cordwainers."

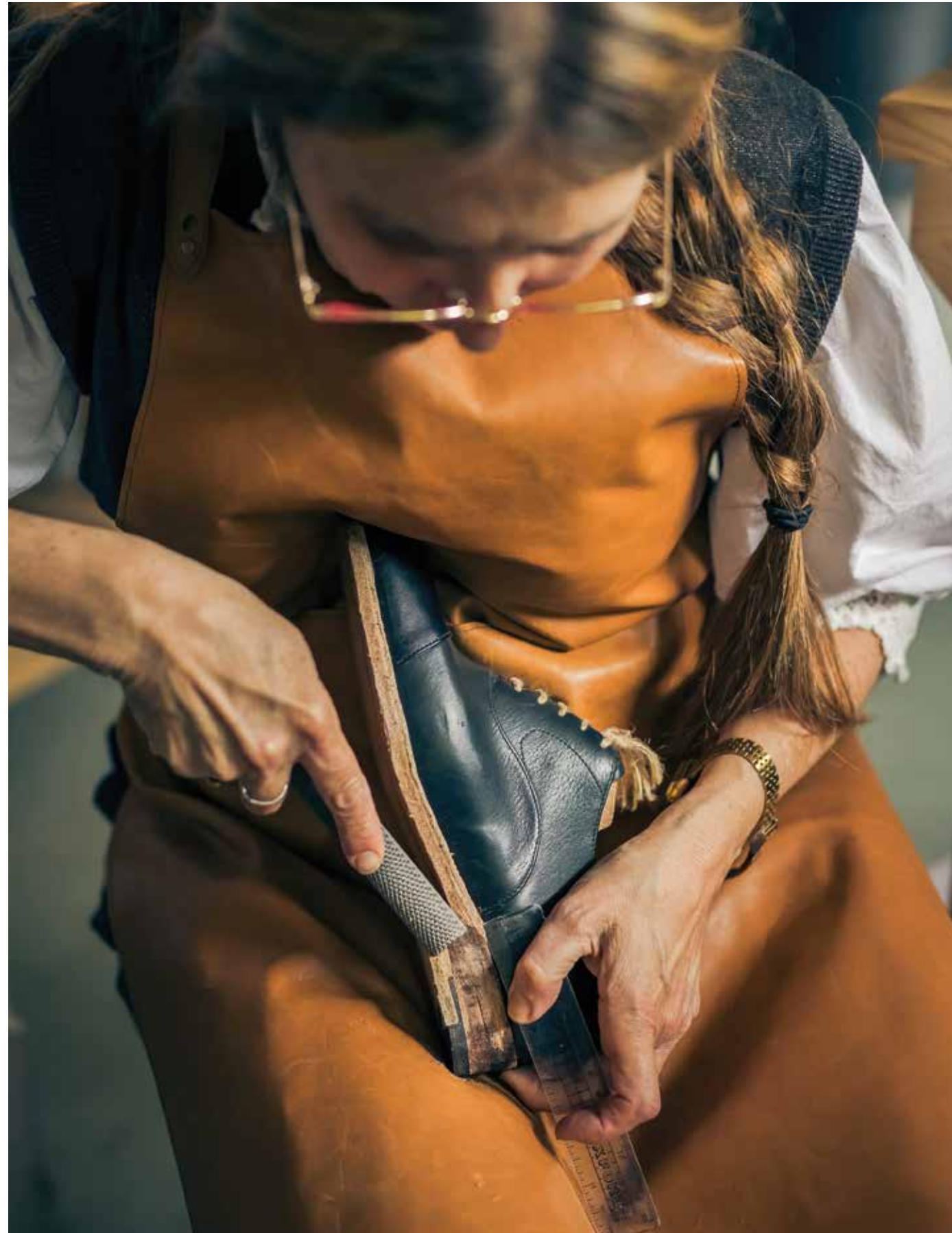
She continues, "Working with Penelope Chilvers, who has a love for quality and artisan craft, chimed well with me as I have always been inspired by footwear that I have come across on my travels." One such example is the authentic espadenyes [espadrilles] that she now imports from a small family workshop in Spain and sells on the Antigone website. "I had been wearing them for years, and when I met the owner I asked him whether I could bring them to the UK for the first time. The uppers are all plant-based and the soles are made from upcycled car tyres. I have always been passionate about sustainability and artisan craft skills, and concerned about overconsumption and waste," she adds.

"...I wanted to see if I could buck the trend and bring small-scale shoemaking back to Hackney, where I started my career at Cordwainers."

With Antigone came the impetus to sharpen her leather skills and deepen her shoemaking knowledge. "I have spent years collaborating with and watching highly-trained craftspeople shoemaking in Italy, Spain and Portugal, but my hands-on skills were rather rusty. The simple sandals I make evolved as an easier launch product. I can make them from my small home workshop without too much in the way of tools or equipment. However, our unreliable weather means that I need to diversify into trans-seasonal and closed-toe lasted styles. I wanted to refresh my skills and explore what else I could add to the collection."

This led Fior to enrol on the year-long Access to HE Diploma in Shoemaking at Capel Manor College. "Being awarded the Leathersellers' education grant was the





deciding factor in helping me to attend the course," she says. "The practical focus of the course has been brilliant, I have rekindled my lifelong love affair with shoemaking and am learning lots of new skills, such as hand-welting with James Ducker. I had never tried it before. I have found it incredibly hard; I seem to always be slicing my fingers or banging my thumbnails with a hammer, but seeing a good-looking shoe emerge is very satisfying. It has also been a wonderful experience to be taught Foot Anatomy by expert orthopaedic shoemaker Bill Bird."

The course is time-intensive and involves attendance three days per week plus academic projects. Added to this, she supports herself by undertaking ad-hoc freelance projects for Penelope Chilvers and others whenever she can fit them in. Then, of course, there are all the various roles she has at Antigone. "As a one-woman band I have to pull on all my experience from working with other brands to do everything from the shoemaking, the website, the marketing, the photography, the social media and even the modelling," she concludes.

From young talent like Bhattacharya to a shoe stalwart like Fior, all three Leathersellers' grant recipients impress with their resilience and fresh ideas. And although the shoe landscape has never been tougher, embarking on specialist further education, research and curating a broader set of skills certainly helps them to navigate it. No doubt when it comes to their respective shoe journeys, they will all go forward by continuing to consider obstacles as opportunities.

The Foundation's support for makers aims to encourage and facilitate a pipeline of individuals skilled in the use of leather for the future. Our partnership with the RCA helps to identify students undertaking Masters-level courses who utilise leather and are in need of financial support. Direct student grants are offered to individuals who can demonstrate a passion for the material alongside financial barriers that would prevent them from fulfilling their potential. Having to work alongside studying, to alleviate financial pressure, can be particularly detrimental to a practical skills-based course, which could mean missing out on studio time and teaching.



Clockwise from left:
Colfe's pupils listening to a presentation in the Riverside Lecture Theatre

Pupils by Hertford Bridge, also known as the Bridge of Sighs

Pupils in the gardens of Exeter College with the Radcliffe Camera in view



ACCESS ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITY

How Colfe's and St Catherine's College, Oxford are helping to increase social mobility and build partnerships with local schools in Lewisham

It was a day of surprises for the excited teenagers from schools in south-east London as they took their first step into Oxford's world-famous university. The long coach journey had been a time to get to know each other as the driver negotiated the heavy traffic. Now came their first glimpse of the dreaming spires.

If they had expected ancient stone buildings and grassy quads, then their host college for the day – St Catherine's – was the first surprise as they entered its modernist building of glass, concrete and brick designed by Danish architect Arne Jacobsen in the 1960s. The second was the unexpected diversity of the Oxford undergraduates they met; and the third was the small class tutorial system. Then there were the friendly well-being alpacas wandering around the campus that they got to stroke.

The annual visit to Oxford is part of the Catalyst Programme, delivered by St Catherine's College (known as St Catz) and supported by The Leathersellers' Foundation, an initiative designed to increase social mobility by widening higher education participation and encouraging students to aim high, especially those who would be the first in their family

to attend university. It gives them the chance to find out about university courses and funding at the ages of 14 and 15, well before they have to make choices about Sixth Form and future careers.

The programme was instigated in 2019 by St Catz in partnership with Colfe's School, which has been closely linked to the Leathersellers since the founder of the school, Abraham Colfe, entrusted it to the Company in the 17th century. Seven local secondary schools, including the Leathersellers' Federation of Schools, have joined to form the Lewisham hub, the first of four groups of schools to partner with St Catz. Other hubs of schools in the programme are in London's Haringey, in Wales and in Teesside.

Initially, staff from St Catz visit the hubs to deliver workshops on higher education, then again for a session focused on A-level choices and student life before the students get to visit Oxford for an academic taster session, a tour, and sessions with current undergraduates and admissions staff. Later on the college re-visits the hubs to offer information and advice on university admissions.



Top and above: Pupils on the tour of St Catherine’s College and the wider university

But it’s not all about Oxford. “We talk about higher education generally and what might be a good fit for them, such as would they want to go to a campus university or a city university and what kind of clubs might they want to join,” explains Joanna Meacham, St Catz’s Outreach Officer. “We are starting early so the students don’t mentally close doors to what they want to do in their futures.”

From the scheme’s inception Richard Russell, Colfe’s headteacher, has been a staunch supporter. “It is very important that Colfe’s students see themselves as grounded in the community,” he says. “Colfe’s is firmly at the non-snooty end of the private school spectrum. There are no straw boaters here and when they meet students from the different schools they find that they are refreshingly similar.

“There is an inbuilt assumption at Colfe’s that if you are bright you will go to a top UK university – that’s part of the culture of the school – and given that most of the schools around here finish at 16 and don’t have Sixth Forms, it is really important they should be able to tap into that culture.

“As far as our students are concerned, it can be beneficial for them to realise that, even if they are the brightest in their year at Colfe’s, there are students outside the seven per cent who can afford private education who are just as bright or brighter. That competition is healthy,” he adds. In addition to its funding for the scheme, The Leathersellers’ Foundation funds scholarships to provide places in the Colfe’s Sixth Form

for economically disadvantaged young people, which helps the growth of a diverse and talented student community.

Colfe’s works closely with state schools in Lewisham and Greenwich so they can share their strengths through a range of joint initiatives such as masterclasses, lectures and debating clubs. Zoe Kendrick, Director of School Partnerships at Colfe’s, who helps to run outreach, says that while independent schools have more resources, state schools have a wide range of expertise to share, such as debating clubs, citizenship projects and GCSE subjects not offered at Colfe’s such as Government and Politics. “It’s reciprocal. Because most of these schools don’t have Sixth Forms, for example, we can provide their students with extra information about Sixth Form subjects and courses, but it is always planned in consultation with their teachers.”

Careers advice and guidance at the right time can make a profound difference to young people’s lives says Celine Nembhard, the Careers and Enrichment Lead at Deptford Green, an 11–16 comprehensive that forms part of the

seminar also helped because it started us thinking about careers and university courses and A-level choices,” she said.

Fellow Colfe’s student Ivan, 15, keeps in touch with students from a neighbouring school he has met through the scheme and, though he comes from a family of university teachers, he was as surprised as other students to find out about Oxford’s small group tutorial system. “It’s something that really stood out to me. The smaller, more personalised classes were very interesting; the opportunity to have conversations with professors who know their stuff,” he said. “The seminar we had last year was good because they worked backwards from the jobs we would like to do, to what university course we would need to do and then what A-levels we should take to get on that course and I’m finding that very useful.”

Another enthusiastic participant is Bonus Pastor Catholic College. The Catalyst programme boosts confidence and aspirations especially for students who would be the first in their families to go to university, says Clint Amfo, a maths

“We are starting early so the students don’t mentally close doors to what they want to do in their futures.”

Lewisham hub. “We ask for feedback after the visit and we find that before they go there our students tend to think that the university is all white, rich and posh and that people won’t look at them, while quite a few mentioned afterwards their surprise that the students were actually diverse in terms of ethnicity. One of the Oxford students told them this year how she had received free school meals and was getting a university bursary on top of her student loan to help with her living costs, and that surprised them,” she says.

Feedback from Deptford Green students showed that most were more likely to apply to university following the visit, she adds. “They said that they had learned about application process, the student loan system and what a university is like, and that is a very good position to be in at their age, still taking their GCSEs,” she says. Written feedback from students described Oxford as “pretty cool” and all agreed the trip was “enjoyable”. Five said that they were “more likely” to apply to university as a result, but two continued to reject the idea on the grounds of cost and student debt.

Colfe’s students also said that they had been surprised by some of the things they saw. Anna, 15, said it helped that last year, before the visit, staff from St Catz had visited Lewisham and led a seminar on higher education. “We went on a bus to Prendergast Ladywell School and it meant that we already knew some people from the other schools and had connections with them, which made the coach journey more fun. The

teacher at the school who accompanied the visit in June. “It was very good to see our students embedded in university life for a day and they loved it,” he says. “They were very excited by the visit and couldn’t believe they were in Oxford. It broke down the misconception that you have to be very rich to go to Oxford or Cambridge,” he added. “On the way back a lot of students said they were interested in applying because of the financial support they could get and they were planning what they could do to get there.”

And there are wider benefits. “Not only does the Catalyst Programme get them thinking about their futures, but it also actually boosts their academic performance in the here and now,” says Manuela Arias, assistant principal at Bonus Pastor. “Students learn first-hand about the variety of courses out there; they don’t all have to be doctors or lawyers or go into business. If you enjoy and study geography it doesn’t have to only lead to a career studying rocks because there are many different jobs out there. The Catalyst Programme engages students to think about their futures, their GCSEs become instantly more relevant to them, and this heightens their commitment to their own learning and ambitions.”

For the students the Oxford visit was a day of surprises, a day to remember, and one that their teachers believe will help to shape the rest of their lives.



Studying for your A-Levels can be challenging, particularly if you’re also dealing with financial or emotional stresses. We hear how Leathersellers’ Sixth Form Awards can make a crucial, sometimes life-changing, difference to students

Above:
Recipients of the 2024 Sixth Form Awards
at Prendergast School

Recognising achievement

The surprising impact of Sixth Form Awards

“At first, I wasn’t too sure what I’d actually won the award for, so I was a bit confused. But as soon as I did understand, I was quite taken aback,” says Ella Parkin, who won a £1,000 Leathersellers’ Sixth Form Award in 2022 while she was studying at Prendergast Sixth Form.

“I was back and forth between Canada and London during my A-levels for personal reasons,” she says. “In Canada, I’d get up at 4am to take classes that were happening in London at 9am. This award was a testament of my hard work during what was a turbulent time for me.”

Will Housden, who received an award of £600 in 2023 when he was studying at Prendergast Sixth Form, was equally stunned when his name was announced. “To be honest, I was very surprised,” he says. “I thought I’d misheard. Several people in our year received Leathersellers’ Awards for various reasons. I knew them all and they’re all such wonderful, caring people. I felt really privileged to be up on the stage with them.”

The award also came as a shock to Leyla Reveillon, who received £850 in 2019. “It was an unreal feeling. I wasn’t someone who’d ever won prizes,” she says. “I was quite a naughty child at the start of secondary school. I got in with the wrong people and liked to play the class clown. I always knew I could achieve academically, but I didn’t take school

seriously. Finally, though, I matured and realised I needed to be less badly behaved. I really concentrated on my A-levels, despite going through a lot of hardships in my personal life. So it felt especially good to win a Leathersellers’ Sixth Form Award, and to be recognised for my hard work.”

The Sixth Form Awards are just one aspect of the Leathersellers’ long-standing commitment to improving young people’s educational chances. The Company and Foundation support the Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools in south-east London, which consists of five schools including Prendergast Sixth Form.

“The Leathersellers has supported education in south-east London since the 17th century. Our history with the Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools dates back to 1890 when Lewisham’s first girls’ secondary school opened on land gifted by the Company,” says Natalia Rymaszewska, Head of Grants at The Leathersellers’ Foundation.

“Today, we’re as committed as ever to offering opportunities to young people in Lewisham. Our Sixth Form Awards shine a light on students who deserve recognition for their success, especially those who have faced and overcome adversity during their A-Level years. We recognise the importance of these final years of formal education as opportunities to improve social mobility. We’re delighted to be able to highlight the tenacity, dedication and achievements of this special group of students at the Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools, and to offer awards that give them an extra boost as they finish school and make plans for their future.”

Every year The Leathersellers’ Foundation gives an overall grant of £5,000, to be awarded according to the recommendations of the interview panel. The panel contains representatives of the Leathersellers’ Company who have the pleasure and privilege of speaking to the students nominated for awards.

“We meet as a Sixth Form team and discuss which students might be eligible,” says Nathan Mealor, Deputy Headteacher at Prendergast School, “and after we’ve made our choice, we recommend a number of pupils to the Leathersellers. They make the final decision on the amount to award to each student.”

The criteria for the award include excellent academic achievement, overcoming challenges in achieving success, and an outstanding commitment towards school life. In the past, some students have won awards because they’ve represented the school in a sports competition or taken part in an exceptional music performance.

“It’s about students who do something above and beyond for themselves and for the school,” adds Nathan.

Many students win Sixth Form Awards because they have overcome adversity to persevere with their education during their time at the school.

Prendergast Sixth Form is based in Lewisham, an inner-city area of south-east London that has high levels of poverty and deprivation. Lewisham is in the top 20% most deprived local authorities in England; one in four people working in Lewisham earns less than the Living Wage, and the borough has one of the highest levels of child poverty in the country.

As a consequence, some students at the school have to deal with day-to-day problems that undermine their ability to focus on their education. “A small number of our students have no family backing and are entirely self-sufficient,” says Nathan. “They’re working in part-time jobs outside school hours to support themselves. Others are struggling with the consequences of family poverty.”

Nicki Mason, Sixth Form Administrator, agrees, adding “Many of our students navigate challenging and complex home situations. They may take on additional responsibilities beyond their years on a daily basis, as well as devoting time to their studies.”



Leyla Reveillon

It is telling that the students who are coping with the most difficult circumstances frequently prefer to keep their problems to themselves. “They tend to be quiet, modest students, who may sometimes feel isolated and not want to speak about their situations,” says Nicki.

“The Leathersellers’ Sixth Form Awards give us the opportunity to acknowledge the achievement of a handful of these students, offering them a small token in recognition of their exceptional efforts during their time with us, before they take their next steps towards higher education, apprenticeships or employment.”

As with schools everywhere, budgets at Prendergast Sixth Form are under increasing pressure, which makes the Leathersellers’ Sixth Form Awards particularly welcome.

“With school funds squeezed tighter and tighter, year on year, we offer our students every support we can in school, but there is a limit,” says Nicki. “The end of Year 13 is a prominent milestone in our students’ lives, and the awards help us to mark this happy occasion for them in a special way, which would otherwise not be possible.”

Nathan remarks that the awards also provide Prendergast Sixth Form with a unique selling point, creating an additional draw for potential students. “The Leathersellers’ Sixth Form Awards are something different that only Prendergast can offer, because we’re part of the Leathersellers’ Federation. They give students another reason to attend our Sixth Form.”

Clearly, the awards are beneficial for the school, but it’s the impact on students that stands out. “The award has helped me get where I am today,” says Ella, who’s currently reading International Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands. “It was a motivating factor for me to continue on a good path and it helped me stay focused on getting through my A-level exams.

“The award supported me emotionally and financially, as it boosted my confidence and helped pay for my housing in the Netherlands. I’ve been learning Arabic and hope to pursue a career in the Middle East and North Africa region. I’ve enjoyed this course so much and am excited to see where it leads me.”

Like Ella, Will found that winning the award gave him more confidence and self-belief. “I came out with way better A-level grades than I could have imagined, because of the award and the unwavering support I received,” he says. “The Sixth Form Award reinforced the fact that, if I put my mind to it, I can achieve what I want. I’m now studying Philosophy and History at the University of Southampton, which has been such a good experience. I’m really enjoying discovering how history is manipulated by people in power. And, in philosophy, it’s fascinating to learn how to question beliefs, reason, and argue my point.”

Meanwhile, Leyla went from being the class clown to studying History and Politics at Cambridge. Her teachers were a vital part of her support squad, encouraging her to go to university and even accompanying her to the local council to help her get a place in a hostel, while at school.

Clearly, the awards are beneficial for the school, but it’s the impact on students that stands out.

“Getting the Sixth Form Award changed my life completely,” she says. “First, it was wonderful that people noticed my hard work. It helped me to cope and to look the future whenever I was tempted to give up. Winning the award was also one of the factors that influenced my decision to go to university, seeing the interest the Leathersellers had in my academic journey and how many people were invested in my potential.”

Following her studies at Cambridge, Leyla gained a position as a research analyst at an executive search firm. Having developed close ties with the Leathersellers, she is also now a Governor at Prendergast School and a Freeman of the Leathersellers’ Company.

“The Leathersellers is an amazing institution and I’m so proud to be involved with it,” she says. “I sit on the Small Grants Committee, so I help to decide which charities should receive grants. I dealt with a lot of hardship growing up, so I draw on my own experience when we’re making decisions. It helps me to give back to the community in a way that I’ve never been able to do before.”

Natalia adds, “It’s inspiring to see that the Leathersellers’ Sixth Form Awards have an impact that goes far beyond the financial. We look forward to the winners joining our thriving alumni network of Foundation-supported individuals, and can’t wait to hear what they do next.”

The Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools develops the vision of Joseph Prendergast, who founded Lewisham’s first girls’ secondary school in 1890 on a site provided by the Leathersellers’ Company. The Leathersellers continues to provide support to the schools through nominating Foundation Governors as well as offering regular financial support to maintain the quality of education, well-being, and access to opportunity. In 2023-2024 financial support for initiatives at the Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools totalled £266,756. Grant funding was awarded for a range of activities aimed at enrichment and meeting essential needs such as breakfast clubs.



“There are two types of people in this world,”

says Sir Ken as we speak over video call, “those who help and those who harm.” This binary logic reflects not only a widely respected and influential career in IT, but also the happiness that can be found in the love of service and of making a difference to others. In March 2024 Sir Kenneth Olisa became an Honorary Freeman and Liveryman of the Leathersellers’ Company in what he calls “a complete alignment of values,” expressed through a commitment to service and compassion.

One enduring area of association between Sir Ken and the Leathersellers is the shared connection to Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. It was here that as an undergraduate in 1971, Sir Ken first came across the Leathersellers by seeing mention of the Leathersellers’ Awards – grants that support students with their studies and recognise achievement. The Leathersellers have a long-term partnership with Fitzwilliam College providing scholarships and access initiatives aimed at improving social mobility. For Sir Ken, the College would provide a foundation for future success, helping to build his “career, confidence, and social capital,” and consequently his “gratitude has never abated.” Indeed, by way of saying thank you, in 2011, he and wife Julia set about enriching the lives of Fitzwilliam students through the endowment of The Olisa Library.

As we talk of Fitzwilliam, Sir Ken recalls the last day of term in 1971. He hitch-hiked to Nottingham to collect a car he part-owned, then drove back to College to collect his belongings before completing the 270 mile roundtrip back to Nottingham to stay with his mother.

She welcomed him by saying, “You can’t leave the car there; someone will break in.” He replied, “This is the trouble with you, you don’t trust our neighbours.” But, as he points out, mothers are usually right and, to his horror, he woke the next day to find the car gone. “Just about everything I owned was in my beloved Austin A35. The only clothes I had were the ones I stood up in and my old school clothes that I hadn’t taken to College!” Sir Ken continues, “I had no money, and to make matters worse I had an upcoming interview for an IBM scholarship for which I needed a suit. I walked into town to a men’s boutique where, to my horror, the assistant showed me the suits, the cheapest of which was £12.” To put that into context, the annual student grant to cover all of his living costs for the year was £440. “As I stood there bereft, the shop assistant came back with the manager. He listened to my tale of woe and did two things: he gave me a hefty discount on the suit and a job over Christmas.”

Sir Ken returned to Fitz at the start of the new year and was welcomed back by his personal tutor Dr Hardy. He told him the story about how he had had everything stolen, to which Dr Hardy, after expressing concern (and knowing Sir Ken’s straitened circumstances), said “How will you manage, specifically, how much do you need for textbooks in the new term?” “I’ll be fine, Sir,” he replied, “happily they didn’t steal my textbooks.” “OK,” said Dr Hardy, “I’m going to ask you another question, and think very carefully before you answer. If you were going to buy new textbooks, how much would you need – rounded



Illuminated vellum scroll recording Sir Ken's admission to the Honorary Freedom and Livery

up to the nearest £10?” A classic Oxbridge question – zero rounded up is, of course, £10. Dr Hardy made a phone call and the next day Sir Ken received a cheque for £10. “The seeds of the Olisa Library were sown at that moment. Four decades later, those 10 pounds turned into two million.”

The story doesn’t end there because, dressed in his new suit, Sir Ken went on to win the IBM Scholarship (at £770 a year a step up on his grant) and worked for IBM in the summer vacations and, poetically, at the boutique in the subsequent Christmas and Easter breaks. In both, though very different environments, he discovered the joy of delighting customers, an important principle that has guided his business life ever since. Even today, his motto at Restoration Partners, a boutique technology merchant bank – a motto borrowed from Sir Sigmund Warburg – is “To make someone your client you must first make them your friend.” And speaking of friendships, we touch on

an important aspect of personal and professional life, that the Leathersellers also value greatly: the power of mentors and their ability to foster opportunity.

After a career at IBM and Wang Laboratories, Sir Ken founded Interregnum, a technology merchant bank that he listed on AIM at the height of dot-com boom in 2000. Cited as one of his most significant professional moments, the listing wouldn’t have been possible without the help of his mentor and good friend, the American philanthropist Norman Knight.

“He was a chap I met on an aeroplane” Sir Ken recounts. “I was on the red eye flight from California back to Boston where I was based for a few years in the 1980s. It’s always nice to pass the time talking with someone, so I tried to initiate conversation, but this guy was completely dead to my opening. He was however forced to talk to me when, in order to ease the pain of recent elbow surgery, he wanted to put a pillow on our shared arm rest. We ended up

locked in a fascinating conversation for the rest of the flight and never really stopped speaking until his death earlier this year. As well as being a wonderful friend and mentor for forty something years, he was my philanthropist role model. The Norman Knight Charitable Foundation is an exemplary operation that has much in common with the Leathersellers’ approach to serving those in need. I miss him tremendously.”

Sir Ken recalls how Norman underwrote Interregnum’s move onto the public market. The difficulty of raising money in a new company is recognising that it might not make it in which case “The biggest challenge was if it fails, where’s the lifeboat? Six months of preparation inevitably means that eyes are taken off the ball which can lead to a cash crunch. Norman knew this and bankrolled us for the listing. A true guardian angel.”

Needing and receiving support changes lives and its exposure of personal vulnerability often inspires the recognition that others are also in need of our support. For Sir Ken it started at Fitzwilliam, and throughout his career there have been decisive moments that shaped his own passion for philanthropy and public service.

He describes a time when visiting London as Head of Europe, Middle East and Africa at Wang Labs; he was coming home from an event in the West End and was shocked to see every shop doorway in Aldwych occupied by a homeless person. “It really upset me,” he says. The change had happened in the few years since he had moved abroad.

“The next morning,” he says, “I mentioned my horror to my assistant and that I wanted to do something about it, and she said she would introduce me to her friend who worked for the homeless charity Thames Reach. She was as good as her word and her friend sent me a donation form. Rather rattily, I challenged my colleague as to why it was that in our country, an offer to do something was instantly translated into a request for cash. I wasn’t interested in just giving money, I actually wanted to do something. By return, I received

an object lesson in British philanthropy from her friend who said ‘tell your boss that in this country when someone says they want to do something, they mean that they want to make a donation. If he actually wants to do something tell him that he had better come to see us.’ And that’s what he did.

He visited Thames Reach and had a meeting with the Director, “the remarkable Beryl Steele.” He was shown to a tool store in the car park as they had run out of office space. They spoke and she said, “We’d like you to join the Board.” “But, I want to do something,” Sir Ken protested. “Serving at a soup kitchen or working in a hostel.” Beryl looked at him and said, “We have plenty of people to do those things; what we need is some serious business expertise on the Board as we navigate the increasingly commercial realities of the sector.” Of course he agreed.

He joined the Board, learned the complex causes and solutions of homelessness and eventually became Chair for many years. “In co-operation with other agencies and the Mayor, we did some fantastic work and made substantial progress in tackling the causes of homelessness,” he says. Sir Ken was awarded his OBE for his time at Thames Reach and continues to serve the charity today as Honorary President.

I reflect on his commitment to, and success while in, a number of non-executive positions including chairing the £300m turnover Shaw Trust and founding the Aleto Foundation, and ask Sir Ken “What makes a good Chairman?”

“As a precursor to the question,” he replies, “I need to answer another question – what’s the point of a Board? The answer consists of three things: make sure the organisation a) has a strategy; b) executes the strategy to the best of its abilities; and c) is compliant with all relevant laws and regulations. The Board is like an orchestra and the Chair is its conductor. The man or woman on the podium hasn’t written the score, and nor do they play the instruments; their job is to make the performance work for the

audience.” This idea of service for the benefit of others is a constant theme in our discussion. For Ken, service delivery is everything and it’s no surprise that he sees this as a central responsibility of his role as His Majesty’s Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London. He represents the Monarch in the capital’s 32 boroughs (excluding the City of London) where his job is to strengthen the bonds between communities to promote civic, commercial, voluntary, and social activities.

A core part of his role is ceremonial, and he is to be seen at many State occasions such as official visits by foreign Heads of State. At His Majesty’s request, Sir Ken also invests worthy recipients of honours. He holds formal investitures twice a year at the Tower of London, principally for recipients of the British Empire Medal, but on occasion also presents higher honours – often in special circumstances. In May 2024 Sir Ken visited the Manvers Acute Respiratory Unit at St Mary’s Hospital in Paddington where, on behalf of His Majesty, he invested the founder of the Maths Anxiety Trust, Dame Shirley Conran, as a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for services to Mathematics Education. Dame Shirley died eight days later.

If life is a gift, and a life well lived is about service, then being able to bestow recognition of this service is perhaps the greatest gift of all for a man who has found both success and satisfaction through the happiness of others. And after mandatory retirement from the Lieutenancy at 75? I suggest that maybe he’d like to keep things quiet for a while. He dismisses the statement with a prolonged laugh. Service never sleeps.

Curtis McGlinchey
Head of Communications

LEATHERSELLERS and the MILITARY

Centuries of Support for the Armed Forces

Armory:

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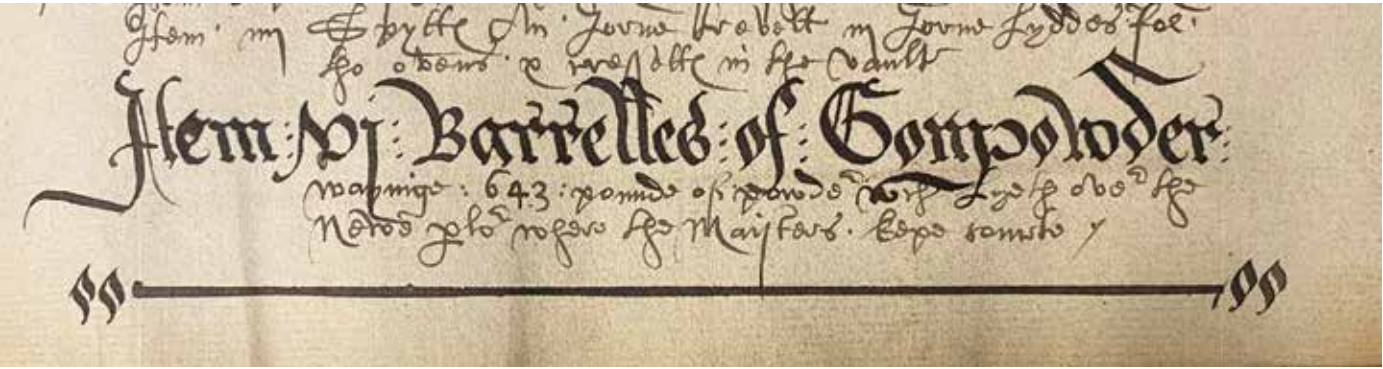
The Leathersellers' support for the armed forces stretches back many centuries and continues today. This support has taken several forms, from supply of men as soldiers and provision of armaments and money to the honouring of senior military figures, and has varied according to demands by the Crown, Parliament and the City and evolving societal needs.

Demands by the Crown, Parliament and City

Historically the Company was occasionally called upon to provide men for military service for the Crown, for instance sending men to musters of troops at Greenwich Park in 1572 and 1585. It sent 100 men to the 1585 muster, provisioned at Company expense with meat, cheese, drink, drums and girdles as well as their wages.

At Leathersellers' Hall preparations for war with Spain included setting up an armoury and purchasing 61lb of gunpowder in 1570, which a couple of decades later increased to 643lb stored in six large barrels – perhaps unwisely kept in the room 'whych lyeth over the newe p[ar]lor where the Maisters keep courte'. Armoury supplies were restocked at this time, as the threat of invasion became more real, and an armourer was employed to keep all the equipment in good repair. During the following century the Leathersellers continued to equip itself with arms. Supplies of gunpowder and bullets were renewed in 1640 in the lead-up to the English Civil War, and in 1643 60 muskets and 40 pikes were purchased to be stored at Leathersellers' Hall. The Company, together with much of the City, was largely Parliamentary during the war.

Opposite: Wardens' accounts, inventory of the Company's armoury including muskets, pikes and swords, 1593



Wardens' accounts, inventory of the Company's gunpowder supplies, 1593



Court minutes, list of plate sold to fund the Parliamentary army, 1643



Hand-coloured engraving showing the Cornhill Military Association exercising outside Leathersellers' Hall in 1792

In the turbulent 16th and 17th centuries the Leathersellers' Company, in common with other livery companies of the time, was seen by the Crown as a convenient source of income when money was required to fund defence of the realm or wars abroad. Indeed, the Company was forced to sell all of its plate in 1544 to raise funds for its contribution to the provision of soldiers 'to serve King Henry the viiith in his waris into Skotlande and also into Fraunce and to serve him upon the sye and lande in other partis and for payment of lone subsidies and benyvolute with other great charges.' This sale of plate raised £123 8s 2d – equivalent to over £50,000 today. Later in the century, during the reign of Elizabeth I, sums were regularly extracted from the Leathersellers for defence against the threatened Spanish invasion; and following the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 the Company was made to contribute £24 towards the cost of six warships and a pinnacle for the continuing maritime war with Spain.

Requests for substantial financial contributions for military purposes continued in the following century; indeed, such demands made of livery companies and the City formed one of the causes of the English Civil War. After several demands by Charles I for 'loans', a request for £1,500 in 1640 was met by a simple statement of the Court of Assistants: 'We have it not to lend.' Not all demands in the 17th century were from the Crown, however, with the Company feeling obliged to support Parliamentary forces financially in the lead-up to, and during, the Civil War. In 1643 it even sold the majority of its plate in order to raise money to help fund the army raised by Parliament. Following the Restoration the Company was still asked for money – by the Crown again – and consequently in 1666 it contributed £280 towards construction of HMS *The Loyal London* for Charles II's navy. Unfortunately the ship was lost the following year when the Dutch sailed up the Medway and destroyed her at Chatham.

Towards the end of the 18th century, when the threat of invasion came from France, there was a renewed concern for civil defence and the Leathersellers contributed to these efforts in a practical manner by permitting a military spectacle to take place in the garden of Leathersellers' Hall in 1797. The Company allowed the City's only militia, the Cornhill Military Association, to undertake military exercise and training there.



'The Chichester Training-ship for Poor Boys, Stationed in the Thames.' Illustration in *The Illustrated London News*, 16th February 1867

Charitable grants

Over time demands from the Crown and Parliament ceased and instead grants began to be made for patriotic and charitable purposes, primarily focusing on the relief of need of troops and their dependents.

As far back as the mid-19th century the Company has had a concern for those training to join the armed forces. An example from the 1860s and 1870s is the funds it gave to the *Chichester*, a naval training ship for homeless boys in London that was supported entirely by voluntary donations. *Chichester* boys went on to join the Royal Navy, Merchant Navy, the Army and other services having received effective training in seamanship as well as swimming, cookery, tailoring and carpentry. Continuing this theme, for many years later in the century the Company gave grants to The Marine Society's training ship *Warspite*.

In the late 19th century a grant-making focus appears to have been on supporting the volunteer forces. This support included a £500 grant to the Patriotic Volunteer Fund paid in yearly instalments from June 1889, a grant to the London Rifle Brigade towards provision of a new drill hall and headquarters in 1893, and a grant of £525 to the City of London Imperial Volunteer Fund in January 1900, made in response to a call from the Lord Mayor to equip a volunteer battalion and transport it to South Africa to participate in the Second Boer War.

During the First World War the Leathersellers supported troops and their families by funding a number of different



Motorised Red Cross field kitchen funded by a Leathersellers' campaign, shown in St Helen's Place with the Master, Frederick Glover, in front, 1915

initiatives, from military hospitals and charities such as the Disabled Officers (Naval and Military Fund) and the Blinded Soldiers' Children's Fund to – on a lighter note – *Blighty*, a weekly newspaper for soldiers at the Front, and a YMCA fund for providing light literature for deployed troops. The Company also led a fundraising campaign to raise money from the leather trade to fund a Red Cross motor ambulance and motor field kitchen, which were displayed in St Helen's Place prior to leaving for the Western Front in January 1915, and supported the Leathersellers' Technical College (newly opened only a few years before) in running classes for soldiers and sailors discharged as medically unfit.

Funding for the relief of need continued throughout the 20th century, with recipients of grants including King George's Fund for Sailors, the British Legion, the Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association, the Lord Mayor's National Appeal for Royal and Merchant Navies in 1945, the Not Forgotten Association, King Edward VII's Hospital for Officers and the Royal Star and Garter Home.

Such financial support continues to this day. The Company has awarded grants and prizes to the Army Benevolent Fund and the Lord Mayor's Big Curry Lunch for over a decade, and in the year 2024–2025 will be making a donation of £6,500 to sponsor a veteran through the Pain Management Programme. It will also be making a donation to Wandsworth Sea Cadets and will contribute to the annual Garden of Remembrance Service at St Paul's Cathedral.



Shield of the London and Kent Regiment, Royal Artillery (Territorials), presented to the Court of Assistants in 1969

it had become a battalion in The London Regiment (The Queen's). Grants were also given to the 1st Dorset Volunteer Rifle Corps for a few years in the 1870s–1880s, though the reasons for this connection are unknown.

In November 1930 the Company adopted a different battalion in the regiment, the 20th The London Regiment (The Queen's Own), now part of the Territorial Army, as an object of interest and support, giving it an initial grant of £50. In return power was given to the Court of Assistants to nominate suitable candidates for commission in the regiment, although there is no evidence that this power was ever exercised. The reasons for this particular battalion's adoption were twofold and were tied to the Leathersellers' educational connections in Lewisham: a company of the battalion consisted of alumni of local schools including Colfe's School, and Colfe's boys had been permitted to use the battalion's miniature rifle range for rifle practice for some years.

Subsequent support for the battalion included a gift of books for the Officers' Mess in 1932 and a grant of £10 towards the cost of equipment for the Officers' Mess. The battalion was transferred into the Royal Engineers as the 34th (The Queen's Own Royal West Kent) Anti-Aircraft Battalion in 1935, and support from the Leathersellers continued with an annual grant of £100 being given in 1939 and 1940. After name changes and amalgamations it became part of the London and Kent Regiment, Royal Artillery (Territorials) in 1967, only to be reduced to cadre strength a couple of years later. The Court minutes for June 1969 report the presentation of a shield by an officer of the regiment in order to reflect the occasion, and the shield remains in our collections today.

Support had been given to it in 1967 and 1968, and this continued following its reformation as the C (London and Kent Royal Artillery) Battery, 6th (Voluntary) Battalion, The Queen's Regiment, in response to an appeal for a contribution towards the cost of equipment for its drill hall in 1971. This affiliation with The Queen's Regiment and some of its predecessors – a connection of 120 years' duration – appears to have ended around 1990.

Formal affiliation with the Royal Navy is more recent, starting in 1988 through the influence of the Leathersellers' first ex-naval Clerk, Captain Neil MacEacharn. A link was forged with the frigate HMS *Cornwall* that lasted until the ship was decommissioned in 2011. An affiliation with the submarine HMS *Tireless* endured from 2002 until 2014, when she, too, was decommissioned.

Military affiliations

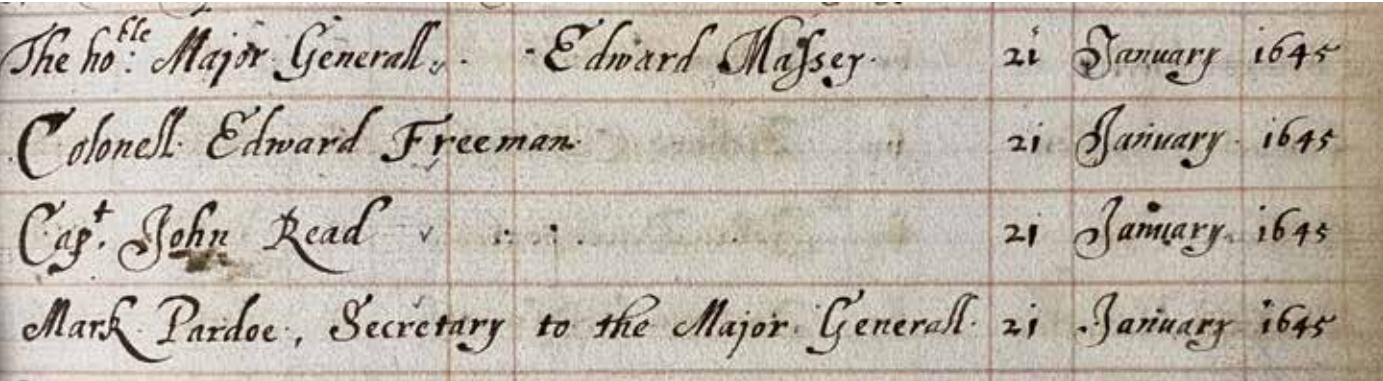
Today the Leathersellers are proud to have three formal military affiliations, which provide the Company with opportunities to give grants and to raise awareness of the armed forces' work:

1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, since 2006. This regiment was formed in 1959 by the amalgamation of the 1st King's Dragoon Guards and the Queen's Bays (2nd Dragoon Guards), both with long and illustrious histories dating back to 1685.

HMS *Audacious*, since 2015. HMS *Audacious* is the fourth of the Royal Navy's new generation of Astute Class nuclear-powered attack submarines.

230 Squadron RAF, since 2013. This squadron was first formed in 1918 towards the end of the First World War and has served in a number of regions including Germany, Northern Ireland, the Gulf and Iraq. It is the first RAF unit to be adopted by the Leathersellers.

While the Company has been affiliated with the 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards for 18 years, in the 19th century and for much of the 20th century it had a different military attachment, proof of a much longer history of such an affiliation than is often realised to exist today. This consisted of support for reserve forces based in the area now forming south London, beginning with volunteer rifle corps that were part of the new Volunteer Force created in 1859 to replace reserve forces largely lapsed since the Napoleonic Wars. In 1871 the Company adopted the 10th Surrey Rifle Corps, a unit based in Bermondsey, and supported it until it became the 3rd Volunteer Battalion, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment in 1883, and thereafter until 1913, by which time



Register of Freemen, entries for Honorary Freedoms, 1645/6

Honorary Freedom/Livery for distinguished military figures

Another way in which the Leathersellers have shown support for the armed forces has been by admitting senior military figures to honorary membership of the Company. The first instance of this took place in January 1646, during the English Civil War, when the Parliamentary military hero General Massey was entertained at Leathersellers' Hall and made an Honorary Freeman of the Company along with his secretary John Pardoe and two other army officers, Colonel Edward Freeman and Captain John Read.

Three centuries later, in the aftermath of the First World War, three senior officers were made Honorary Freemen and Liverymen in recognition of their eminent service to the country during the War: Earl Beatty, Admiral of the Fleet, who led operations in the North Sea such as the Battle of Heligoland Bight and the Battle of Jutland; Earl Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Forces in France and Flanders from December 1915 to November 1918; and Viscount Allenby, Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force 1917–1919 and High Commissioner for Egypt and Sudan.

Only two officers have been given this honour since then. Lord Harding, Chief of the Imperial General Staff 1952–1955 and Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Cyprus in 1955–1957, was admitted to the Honorary Livery in 1958, and most recently General Nick Houghton, Lord Houghton of Richmond, who served as Chief of the Defence Staff in 2013–2016, was made an Honorary Liveryman in 2017.



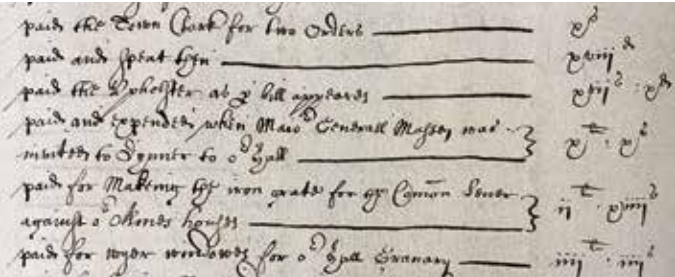
Menu for a luncheon in honour of Earl Haig's admission to the Honorary Freedom and Livery, with a sketch of Earl Haig drawn on the menu by Horace Spencer Dove, 1920



Silver centrepiece war memorial, 1917

Services Dinner

Today members of the military are invited to attend the Livery Dinner held each February, but this tradition of hospitality has much deeper roots in the history of the Leathersellers’ support for the armed forces. A few months after the dinner honouring General Massey in relation to his admission to the Honorary Freedom in January 1646, City military officials and MPs and Peers serving in the army are recorded as attending a dinner held at Leathersellers’ Hall on 11th September, as detailed in the publication *Perfect Occurrences of Both Houses of Parliament and Martiall Affairs*: ‘This day the Souldiary part of both houses [of Parliament] dined with the Military part of the City (viz. Collonels, Lieut Coll Majors and Captains) at Leathersellers Hall in London, Maj. Gen. Browne and Alderman Bunce were Stuarts [Stewards]...’ Military figures continued to attend dinners at the Hall, with the custom being formalised as the Services Livery Dinner in 1978.



Wardens’ accounts, sum expended on the dinner to honour General Massey, 1646

Commemoration

Over the centuries many individual members of the Leathersellers’ Company have served their country in the armed forces, including in times of war, and tragically some have lost their lives in doing so. In order to honour the Liverymen who were killed in action or died of wounds in the First World War, together with those who responded to the national call to arms but survived, the then Master, W. W. Palmer, presented the Company with a silver table centrepiece in 1917 to use as a portable war memorial. The names of Liverymen who died in the Second World War were added later, and the centrepiece is used and valued to this day.

As another commemorative form of support for the military during the First World War the Leathersellers printed a Roll of Honour that named those killed and those serving in the forces, not only Liverymen but also sons of Liverymen and members of Company staff. After the War it also commissioned a Roll of Honour for Colfe’s School.

During the centenary of the War the Company again wished to honour the memory of those who served. It did this by publishing a book, *This Ghastly War: Great War Letters from the Leathersellers’ Archives*, researched and written by the then Archivist Jerome Farrell and based upon letters sent to the Clerk by three junior office clerks fighting in the theatres of war on the Western Front and in India. A poignant extract from one of these letters, ‘trenches ablaze with poppies’, is also given pride of place in a section of the magnificent tapestry commissioned to fill the walls of the dining hall when the Seventh Hall officially opened in 2017. This tapestry section is a permanent reminder of the sacrifices made by those who served their country in the War, and of the Company’s enduring support of the armed forces.



Section of tapestry commissioned for the new Hall, 2017

Armed Forces Covenant

Earlier this year the Leathersellers’ Company and Foundation signed a commitment to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant and support the armed forces community, recognising the contribution that Service personnel, both regular and reservist, veterans and military families make to the Leathersellers, the community and to the country.

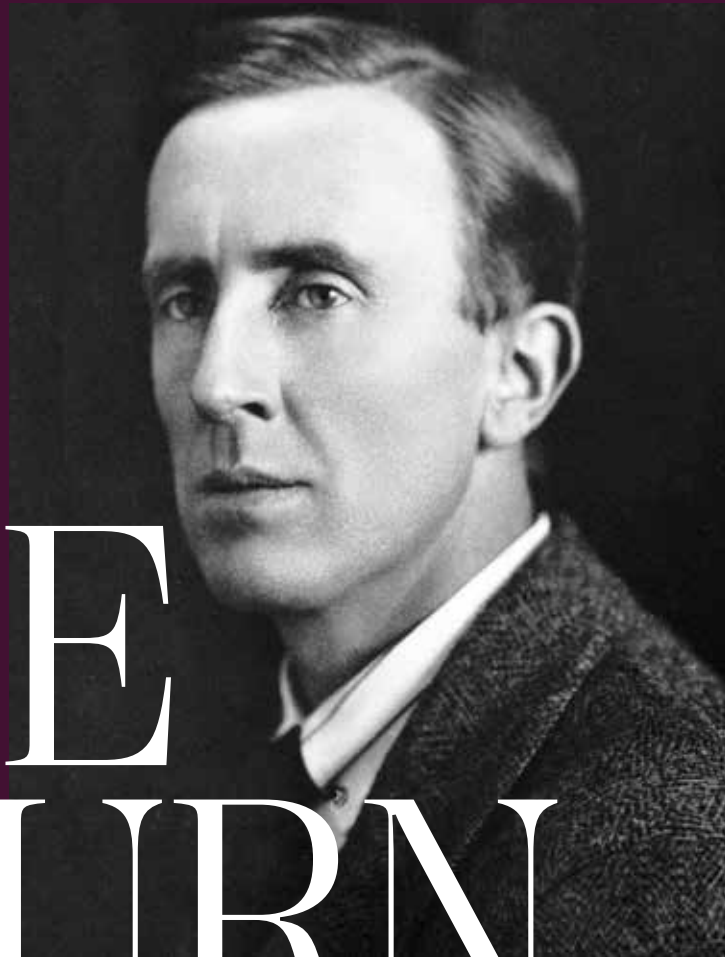
- The Covenant has two key principles:
1. Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.
 2. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

The Leathersellers will uphold these principles in many ways such as furthering our longstanding association with, and support for, the armed forces through our military affiliations, including the awarding of prizes to young leaders; supporting services charities and youth organisations and charities working with current or previous members of the armed forces and their families; and engaging with, and fostering opportunities for, the cadet forces of our associated schools.

Kate Higgins
Archivist



Brigadier Alan Richmond OBE and Mark Williams (Master 2023–2024) with the signed Armed Forces Covenant



THE RETURN of the KIN

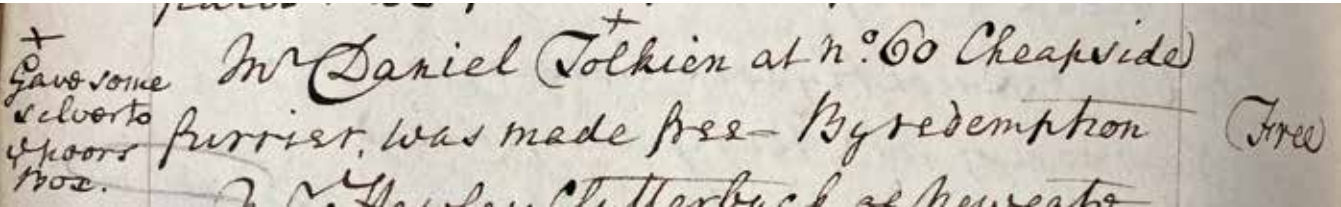
The Tolkiens and the Leathersellers

September 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the death of the famous writer and academic J.R.R. Tolkien (1892–1973). His stories have been adapted for screen production four times in the last four decades and continue to inspire new adaptations today. Despite his own interest in genealogy (as reflected by his creation of complex genealogies in the beloved *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the first two volumes of which were published 70 years ago this year), the professor and author knew very little of his own ancestry. Orphaned at the age of 12 and consequently becoming estranged from his family, he was raised by his Catholic guardian, Father Francis Xavier Morgan, and had no way to enquire about his paternal ancestry. What Tolkien likely never knew was that direct and indirect members of his paternal family were apprentices, Freemen, Liverymen, Wardens and even Masters of the Leathersellers' Company.

The Tolkien family's history in England began with brothers Daniel Gottlieb Tolkien (1746–1813) and Johann, later John, Benjamin Tolkien (1752–1819), the great-great-grandfather of J.R.R., who came from Danzig (now Gdańsk, Poland) to London in the late 18th century following the Prussian Wars. Daniel settled near Covent Garden before later applying for, and being granted, naturalisation as a British subject in February 1794. A naturalisation application reference signed by members of his local Parish of St Paul's, Covent Garden, including the minister, churchwardens, overseers of the poor and seven of his parish neighbours, described Tolkien as 'an Honest Respectable man, a good and Loyal subject of this Realm and every way deserving of the Act of Naturalization which he purposes applying for.' On 16th October the same year he entered into the Freedom of the Leathersellers' Company by Redemption, described as a 'London furrier' in the Register of Freemen, and into the Freedom of the City of London the same month. At this point he resided with his family in Bedford Street before he later relocated to Cheapside and joined the Livery in 1802.

Daniel Gottlieb married Ann Austen in Holborn in 1782. During their marriage she appears to have kept herself busy with her own interests. The Morning Advertiser advertised on 22nd March 1806 for a 'Person experienced in Instruction,

Opposite: J.R.R. Tolkien, 1920s



Opposite
Top: Daniel George Tolkien's apprenticeship indenture, 1799
Middle: Rough Court minutes, Daniel [Gottlieb] Tolkien's freedom, 1794
Bottom: Register of apprentices, entries for Daniel George Tolkien and George Tolkien, 1799

resident in a healthy situation' who wishes to receive in her care 'Female Children, not exceeding six, from the age of four to ten, and initiates them into the principles of English, French, Needle-work, &c. uniting with the assiduity of the Teacher the tenderness of a Parent, and the strictest attention to morals and behaviour.' On the list of women to contact for particulars the last name given is a Mrs Tolkien residing at 60 Cheapside. Whilst little is known about her, this is a small reflection of Mrs Tolkien's activities, friendships and perhaps her status as a respectable woman.

Like his wife, surviving records of Daniel Gottlieb also portray him as a respectable and charitable man. In contrast to the Lutheran faith in which he grew up he later joined the early Methodist community located by John Wesley's house, and attended the church now known as Wesley's Chapel in Islington. His last will and testament, dated 6th September 1813, mentions that his brother owed him the sum of £700 and directs his executors to 'receive as he [John Benjamin] shall find it convenient to pay' and states that 'no Action at Law or providing be taken out against him.' He didn't, however, cancel the claim, having his wife and children's best interests for the future at heart.

John Benjamin was a clock and watch-maker who owned a shop together with one William Gravell on 49 St John's Street in the late 18th century, before becoming a dealer in china and glass around 1810. His life and vocation appear to have been less steady than those of his elder brother, who remained a furrier until his death. The £700 that John Benjamin owed Daniel Gottlieb is likely related to his having gone bankrupt in 1813. Unlike Daniel's descendants, most of whom became apprenticed to Leathersellers and became furriers, J.R.R. Tolkien's direct ancestors had varying interests and vocations, ranging from watch-makers and china-sellers to ironmongers and piano-makers.

Daniel Gottlieb took both his son, Daniel George, and his nephew, George Tolkien (John Benjamin's son and J.R.R. Tolkien's great-grandfather), as apprentices in 1799. Daniel George completed a seven-year apprenticeship, being made Free of the Company in 1806 before later becoming a Liveryman in 1813. His cousin George, however, did not enter

into the Freedom until 1819, taking the unusually long period of 20 years to complete his apprenticeship. This was possibly linked to his marriage to Eliza Lydia Murrell on 5th September 1805 and the birth of their son the following month, the year before the original end of his apprenticeship, together with the subsequent birth of his other 11 children and the establishment of his career as an ironmonger and tool maker in West Smithfield. George's marriage and the swift birth of his firstborn child a month after suggests that he had broken two of the terms on his apprenticeship indenture, which state that the apprentice 'shall not commit Fornication, nor contract Matrimony within the said Term'! His decision to join the Company in 1819 might also have been linked to his father's death earlier that year. His elder brother, John Benjamin Tolkien the younger, never joined the Leathersellers' Company, becoming a Loriner instead.

It is through Daniel Gottlieb's descendants that the Tolkien and the Wotherspoon families were united. His eldest daughter and child, Maria Tolkien, married David Wotherspoon in 1816. He too was a London furrier and joined the Leathersellers' Company by Redemption in December 1816. Together they had three sons: Daniel Tolkien Wotherspoon (1817–1854), David Wotherspoon (1819–1895), and John Wotherspoon (1821–1910), all of whom also went on to become members.

After her husband's death in October 1821 Maria married Edwin Cuthbert, an Irishman, in 1823. Like David, Edwin was a London furrier and joined the Company by Redemption the same year. He followed a similar fate to Maria's uncle, John Benjamin Tolkien, by becoming bankrupt, and in fact was imprisoned in the Marshalsea Prison for debt; but his bankruptcy didn't prevent him from later being elected a Common Councilman for Cheap Ward in 1827. At the end of his service he was commended for 'the faithful and efficient discharge of his duties...for the period of eleven years, and which office he has now resigned, to the deep regret of all the Inhabitants of this Ward.' He went on to serve as Third Warden, sat on the Court from 1849 and would have become Master if he hadn't died just a few months after being elected Second Warden in 1859.

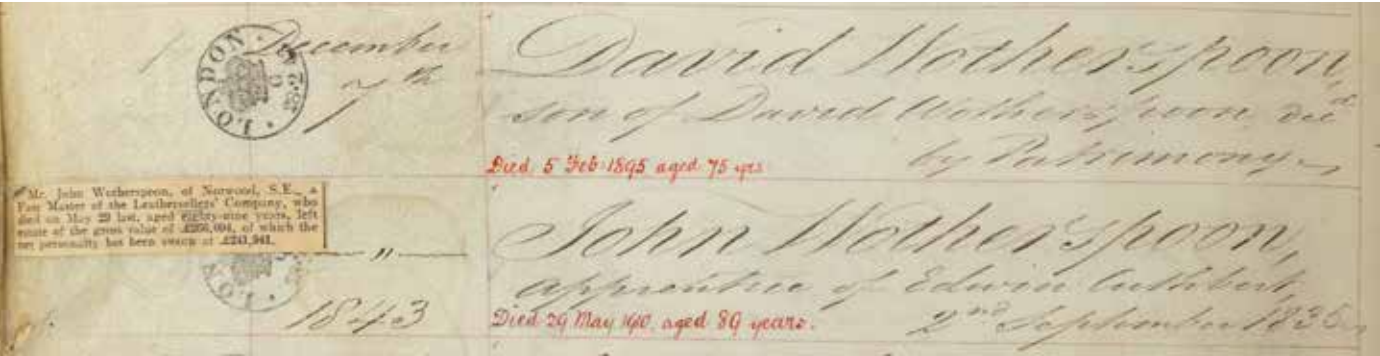


Above: David Wotherspoon, Master 1876-1877
Below: Register of freemen, entries for David Wotherspoon and John Wotherspoon, 1843

Cuthbert took two of his three stepsons as apprentices, beginning with the eldest, Daniel Tolkien Wotherspoon, who joined the Freedom and Livery in July 1838 and became Free of the City the same year. Not long after this, in 1841, Daniel boarded the *Quebec* to New York and settled into life in North America, marrying one Helena Clapham at the Anglican cathedral of Quebec in July 1844. The Livery List of 1853 lists him as residing in Buffalo, New York the year before his death.

David and John had a long history in the fur trade, owning a fur manufacturing firm firstly with their step-father and then without. They also spent many years participating in Leatherseller life and business. Out of the three brothers David was the only one admitted through Patrimony, and he became Master for the year 1876–1877 after serving as Third Warden in 1864–1865 alongside his brother John, who was Fourth Warden the same year. In honour of his stepfather, David named his eldest son Cuthbert Wotherspoon.

Like his eldest brother, John Wotherspoon was apprenticed to Edwin Cuthbert and served an apprenticeship of eight years before being made Free in 1843. Similarly to his brother David he then worked his way up the ranks of the Company; he served on the Court of Assistants, became Fourth Warden and then finally Master in 1878–1879, the same year that the Fifth Hall opened. Indeed, John presided over the first Livery dinner in the new Hall, held in November 1878 to celebrate the installation of Leatherseller Sir Charles Whetham as Lord Mayor. Whilst his brother David retired from the Company in the early 1890s before dying in 1895, John continued to be a valued member of the Court of Assistants, perhaps driven partly by an interest in promoting leather education; he was appointed a founding member of the Leather Technical Education Committee in 1894 to 'consider the advisability of promoting Technical Education in Bermondsey or any other suitable place.' The work of this committee led to the foundation of the Leather Tanning School at Herold's Institute in 1895, and as John was present in the majority of



Right, above: John Wotherspoon, Master 1878-1879
Right, below: Menu for the Lord Mayor's Day Livery Dinner, held during John Wotherspoon's year as Master, 1878

the committee's meetings between 1894 and 1896 he must have been involved. The Court's affection for John can be seen when, following his death in May 1910, the minutes record that he was an 'esteemed friend and valued colleague' who had 'rendered such valuable assistance to this Company in the office of Master, as a member of the Estates Committee for 28 years, and generally as a member of the Court'.

David Wotherspoon went on to have a son also called David – the third David Wotherspoon in three generations – who was also admitted to the Leathersellers' Company by Patrimony in 1870. This David served as Master for the year 1909–1910. Following in his uncle John's interests, he was also present at the Leather Technical Education Committee meetings from 1895. The Leathersellers' Company's Technical College in Bermondsey – the successor to the Leather Tanning School – opened in 1909, during his year as Master, and preparations for the inauguration of the College occurred also during his time as Second Warden. At the opening ceremony, as Master Leatherseller, David presented the Lord Mayor with a 'handsome silver cup' as a souvenir of the occasion, a completely different item to the gold medal the Committee had planned. Evidently, David had another treasure in mind for the memento. In turn he received an oak bookcase from Mr E. Chilman on behalf of the students, for which the Committee prepared a special inscription.

David Wotherspoon the third and J.R.R. Tolkien were contemporaries for 28 years. Their great-great-grandparents were brothers who had come to England more or less together, and they shared a great-great-great-grandfather, a fact which neither of them probably knew. David's ancestors had resided in Cheapside from before the death of Daniel Gottlieb until David relocated to Streatham in the 1890s. Tolkien's direct ancestors, on the other hand, migrated to a number of locations including Birmingham, Staffordshire and Bloemfontein, South Africa. The two Tolkien families of brothers Daniel Gottlieb and John Benjamin had not only become separated by name, but by the late 19th century were also geographically distanced, and the latter's side had long ago drifted from their leather-allied trade as furriers.

While David Wotherspoon and J.R.R. Tolkien never knew each other, their ancestral connection is brought to life through the archives of the Leathersellers' Company, and on the anniversary of Tolkien's death we are reminded that even the most unexpected journeys are meant to be rediscovered.

Clarice Ana Mihele
Archives and Collections Intern



Reports

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The Leathersellers’ Foundation

Natalia Rymaszewska
Head of Grants

Overall Leathersellers’ Giving in 2023–2024

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Direct Grants | £3,502,233 |
| Foundation and Minor Trusts | £3,408,263 |
| Company | £93,970 |

2023–2024 was a year of growth and development for the Leathersellers’ Foundation, with a renewed momentum in existing as well as newer areas of work. Adding an additional member to the team in summer 2023 enabled the Foundation to undertake a number of new initiatives and delve deeper into existing programmes. With an overall strategy providing a framework, and clear aims defined for each of the three grant-making areas of Charity, Education and Leather, the Leathersellers’ ambition to make a difference through philanthropy and connection is clear. Highlighted here is a range of activities undertaken, and we hope that the snapshot provided by this report gives insight into the complex and interesting fields in which we worked this year.

Looking at the bigger picture, across all areas of our work, some overarching themes were:

Building on key strengths

All programmes and approaches are based on learning from prior experience, and this year saw this develop further, with opportunities for evaluation and reflection at every stage of the process: planning, application, assessment, delivery and reporting. Whilst this has increased the amount of measurement in some areas, the increase has been carefully considered to minimise the impact on our grantee partners, remain proportional, and be of use both to the Foundation and to grantees.

Best practice

Since 2021 our ambition to achieve best practice in process and procedure for grantees is monitored through the lens of the Institute for Voluntary Action Research’s Eight Flexible Funder Commitments. The principles and practice are now embedded across all areas of the Foundation’s work and we participate in regular external reviews.

Transparency and openness

The new Leathersellers’ website has further improved communication of our giving, as well as providing more features for accessing and navigating grant information. The Foundation’s grant-making data is accessible and transparent via 360Giving and is updated every six months, so that the information is available to the public, charities, researchers and other funders. Transparency was noted as an area of strength in the external and independent review undertaken by the Foundation Practice Rating.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

The Foundation’s work continues to support the Leathersellers’ Company in its efforts to develop an engaged and diverse membership. Our new website has vastly improved accessibility for grantees and applicants, and we respond to feedback and provide adaptations when necessary. In order to ensure continued learning and identification of any ‘blind spots’ that exclude particular groups from applying we have improved data collection, and data-based reflection is embedded in the practice of each grant giving committee.

Collaboration with other funders

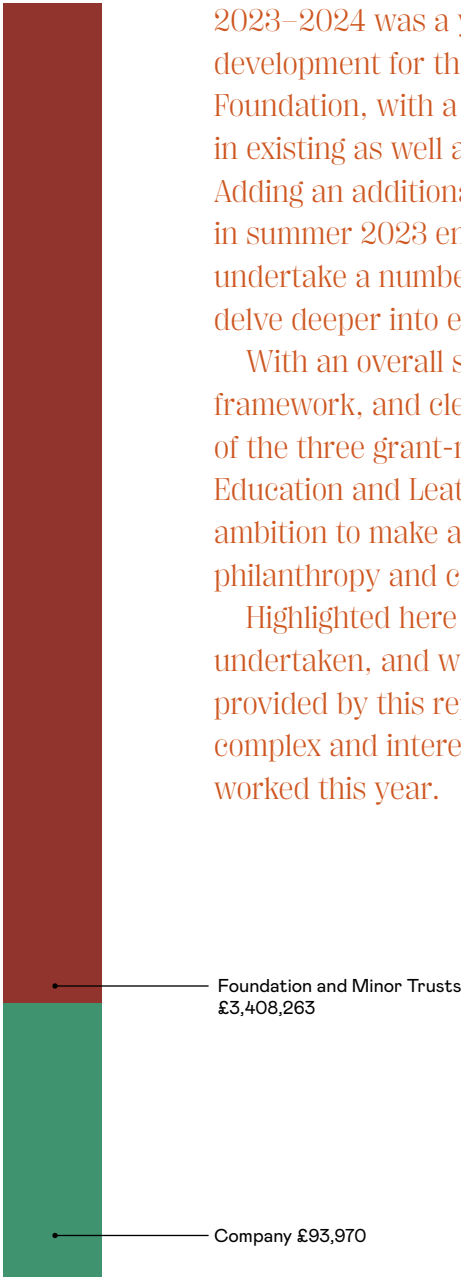
We continue to engage actively as part of a number of collaborative groups including London Funders, special interest initiatives and pan-livery groups (the Livery Education Network; the Livery Charity professionals group; the Livery Charity Chairs Group; and the Leather Livery Group). This has begun to bear fruit, as highlighted in all areas of our giving reports below.

Sustainability

With an existing organisational approach to addressing sustainability, the Foundation has further supported the drive to encourage environmental sustainability through the responsive grants programme and a broader learning session with experts at Link and Learn 2024.

We hope that you enjoy reading more about each of our three core funding areas. For those reading after many years of involvement with the Leathersellers, our intention is that you will see a continuing evolution and progress in our work; and for those looking at this afresh, an exciting range of activity. Guided by our principles of compassion, endeavour and independence, and supported by a wealth of experience and knowledge from our members and partners, we hope that the past year has seen us add value for individuals and communities across the United Kingdom.

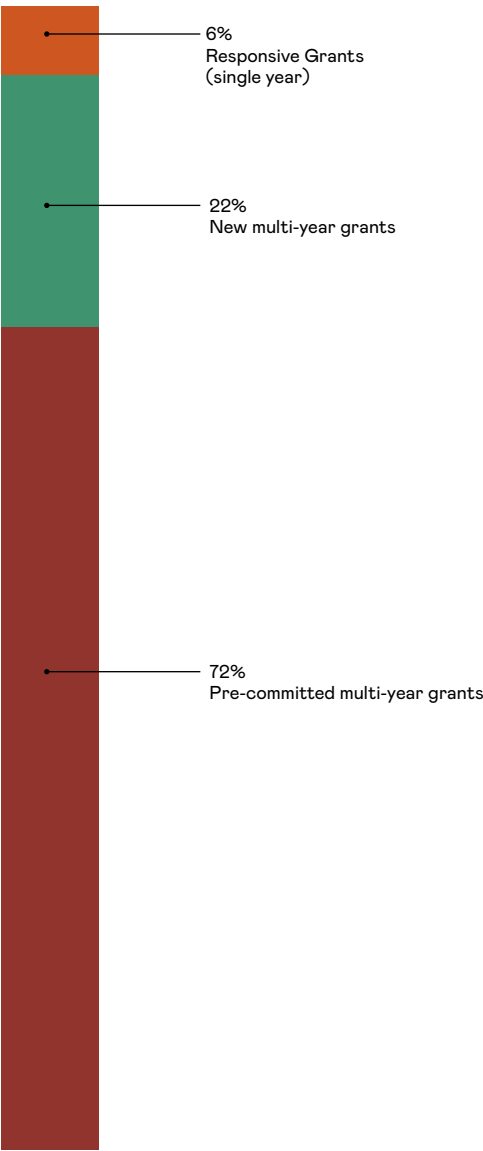
| Overall Leathersellers’ Giving in 2023–2024 (Direct Grants) | |
|---|------------|
| Funding Category | Amount (£) |
| Charity | |
| ACE Main Grants | 1,005,000 |
| Charity Main Grants | 785,500 |
| Responsive Grants | 105,903 |
| Small Grants | 220,000 |
| Sub-total | 2,116,403 |
| Education | |
| Associated Schools – Colfe’s School | 239,000 |
| Associated Schools – Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools | 258,857 |
| Associated Schools – Match Funding | 12,899 |
| City of London Partners | 55,000 |
| Early Years (joint with Merchant Taylors) | 100,000 |
| Education Main Grants | 21,500 |
| Education University Partnerships | 63,000 |
| Undergraduate Scholarships – Student Grants | 248,850 |
| Sub-total | 999,106 |
| Leather | |
| Leather Conservation & Heritage | 40,000 |
| Leather Education Partnerships | 153,906 |
| Leather Makers Support | 27,350 |
| Leather Student Grants | 20,000 |
| Leather Tannery Apprenticeships | 9,408 |
| Leatherworking Apprenticeships | 27,500 |
| Sub-total | 278,164 |
| Company Related | |
| Personal Giving Appeal | 48,800 |
| Discretionary Fund (MW) | 59,760 |
| Sub-total | 108,560 |
| Grand Total | 3,502,233 |



Charity

Stacey Lamb
Head of Charity Grants

Charity Giving 2023–2024



Main Charity Grants 2023–2024

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Total given: | £1,896,403 |
|--------------|------------|

2023–2024 saw many charitable organisations under pressure owing to the compounding strains of increasing requests for help from the public, a significant rise in overhead costs, and uncertainty concerning local authority commissioning and budgets. For the Leathersellers’ Main Charity Grants Programme this led to a higher demand for our unrestricted, multi-year funding and the need to offer our current grantees greater non-financial support.

Despite the difficult funding environment, the charities and CIOs (Charitable Incorporated Organisations) we supported across the United Kingdom navigated challenges with care and commitment, putting the people that they support at the centre of every decision. Many difficult decisions were taken by our grantees’ leadership teams and trustees, resulting in organisational restructures, some reduced services, and selling of assets. In addition to voluntary and compulsory redundancies, we have unfortunately seen dedicated staff move on from their roles because of burnout out and/or the necessity to earn a higher salary.

This reality required a reconsideration of risk by our Charity Committee and Trustees. No longer could it be taken for granted that three-to-six months’ running costs could reasonably be kept in reserves by all charities, nor was it feasible to expect that the services and expertise of staff would continue unchanged. Managing this uncertainty required increased engagement with our grantees, development of a robust and objective evaluation framework, and a greater focus on factors such as succession planning and diversified income when considering funding applications.

In 2023–2024 all of our main charity grant holders continued to provide effective core services of high quality, delivered by experts in their field. We are extremely grateful to our grantees for their unwavering commitment to their communities, and the trust and transparency they showed as we offered opportunity and flexibility in our financial and non-financial support throughout the year.

New ACE partners

In the second year of our focused Charity Giving Strategy, 2023–2024 saw us offer support to a further 24 charities working to prevent and tackle the consequences of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

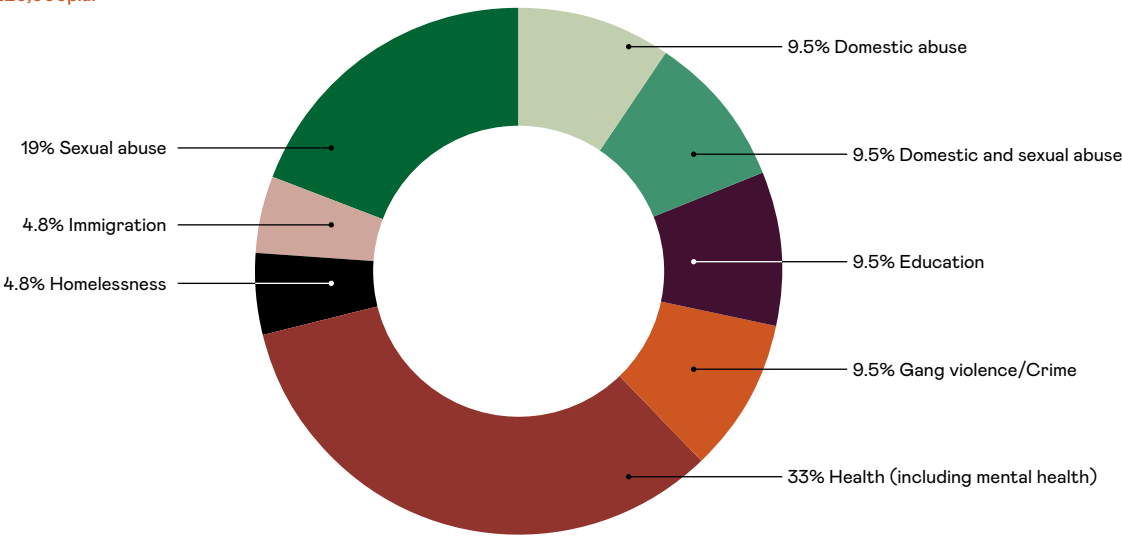
ACEs Giving 2023–2024

21 charities at £20,000p.a.

| Organisation | Area of operation |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Blue Cabin CIO | North East |
| Cambridge Acorn Project | East of England |
| Dandelion Time | South East |
| Knights Youth Centre | London |
| Moving On Durham | North East |
| MumsAid CIO | London |
| MYTIME | South West |
| Power2 Ltd | 2+ regions in England |
| RASASH | Scotland |
| RoSA | West Midlands |
| SAFE Foundation | South West |
| Safety Net (UK) | North West |
| Solidarity Sports | London |
| South London Refugee Association | London |
| St Mary’s Centre Community Trust | London |
| Swansea Women’s Aid | Wales |
| The Green House Bristol | South West |
| The KidsAid Foundation | East Midlands |
| We Stand | National |
| Wilderness Foundation UK | National |
| Young Women’s Outreach Project | North East |

Areas supported by charity type

21 charities at £20,000p.a.



ACEs Giving 2022–2023 and 2023–2024

In the first two years of our ACE programme we have supported 45 charitable organisations that tackle ACEs through a varied range of approaches throughout the UK.

ACEs focused grantees by area

45 charities

Figures rounded up or down to nearest whole percentage



Process and evaluation

In the first year of the ACE programme we received a large number of applications from organisations that did not meet the required criteria. Aware of the limited resources of charitable organisations, we addressed this in 2023–2024 by adding an expression of interest stage to our process, ensuring that only those who met the criteria spent time completing a full application. Within a two-week period we received 377 expressions of interest, and therefore invited 46 organisations to make full applications. Whilst this approach required additional resources from the Grants Team, it achieved our aim of lessening the burden on charitable organisations.

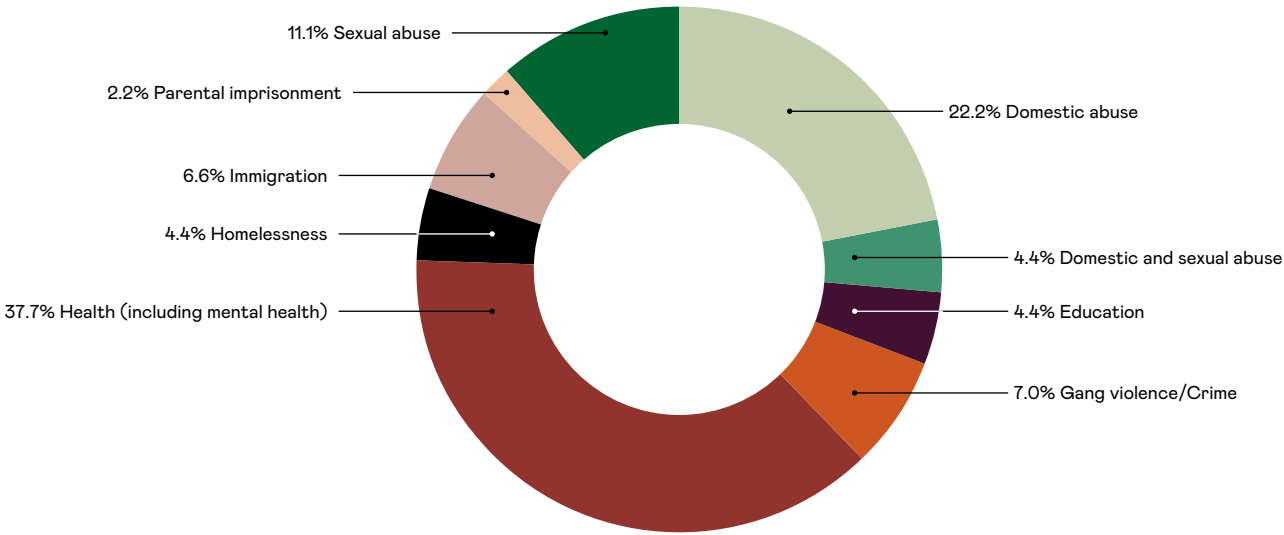
This was the first year of reporting for the 24 organisations successfully funded through the first year of the ACEs Strategy in 2022–2023, so we have been able to begin to understand the impact of these targeted funds. With the support of members of the Charity Committee the ACEs Strategy was codified, setting out clear outcomes and measures for our grantees and the Foundation.

This led to further development of an ACE Programme Evaluation Framework, and subsequent reworking of the process behind our well-received conversational reporting mechanism. Whilst the conversations continued to be led by grantees, the data was recorded against specific indicators and outcomes to determine the overall impact of the portfolio. This led the annual report to increase from 30 minutes to an hour, but the responsibility of ensuring that all required information was obtained and recorded remained with us as the funder, and both grantees and the Foundation acknowledge the continued value in this approach over written reports

Ever conscious of the importance of sharing our learning and being open to changing our approach based on evidence from others, we continue to be an active part of a number of networks and forums of charitable funders. Presenting updates on our work around the conversational reporting and framework allows us to advocate for the provision of unrestricted, multi-year grants, now more important than ever.

Areas supported by charity type

45 charities



Responsive Grants Programme

Stacey Lamb
Head of Charity Grants

The Leathersellers’ Foundation advocates for multi-year, unrestricted funding, having seen the security, planning ability and leverage that this provides to charities. However, recent years have demonstrated that challenges and priorities can change in an instant. For this reason, a proportion of our giving is set aside for one-year grants in response to emerging need.

How do we know what would help?
Only the charities themselves know what challenges are most pressing. This is heavily influenced by evolving socio-economic policy and increasing levels of demand.

Through the supportive partnerships we have established with our grantees, we listen to their concerns during our ongoing interactions, events and conversational reports, and capture their priorities in our annual grantee survey. We then engage a number of our charity partners in follow-up consultations and gain insight from fellow funders and specialists working to tackle similar challenges.

In 2023–2024 our findings showed that meeting overhead costs was the most worrying concern among our charity partners.

Our response
Our grantees told us that owing to lack of resources it was nearly impossible to prioritise investment that would cut costs in the longer term or to contemplate progressing their environmental impact goals. It became clear that despite our commitment to unrestricted grants, a funder-led initiative was the only way that charities could take a long-term view to their energy sustainability.

Steered by our grantees and gaining insight from City Bridge Foundation, Lloyds Bank Foundation and The Clothworkers’ Foundation, we developed a three-pronged response.

- Responsive Grants Programme 2023–2024**
1. Upskilling teams on their energy efficiency and environmental impact knowledge.
 2. Helping to identify potential savings and environmental improvements.
 3. Providing capital improvement grants to make changes to properties and assets.

Upskilling teams
In April 2024 we enabled 20 charities to upskill a member of their team through carbon literacy training and certification. The training, developed by the Carbon Literacy Project, was delivered by Nick Perks over two days.

“The training provided practical advice, acknowledging equity in climate action and not disadvantaging our service users, and interactive exercises that make you think about your own circumstances.”

An initial remote session imparted essential knowledge on climate change and carbon emissions, before an all-day session at Leathersellers’ Hall helped charities to explore and develop cost-effective approaches to encourage their own internal engagement and realistic improvements.

“Small group work discussing real applications and actions gave me specific ideas to bring back, discuss and implement.”

“The training increased my confidence in this area and has led me to consider many next steps for our charity. Carbon reduction is going to become a key objective for us.”

Identifying potential savings
With service delivery as the priority, managing energy providers, bills, and exploring potential savings opportunities is not something that charity teams have the time or expertise to investigate.

We engaged energy auditor Inspired Efficiency to conduct energy bill reviews, site visits and return-on-investment analysis for 15 main charity grant holders. The individual audit reports provided to each charity set out clear recommendations and projected cost savings for specific improvements to insulation, lighting and heating use. The value of the reports is significant, acting as an evidence base for capital funding bids, and accepted by the Government VCSE Energy Efficiency Scheme as an approved audit required to qualify for the fund, thereby saving our partners’ time and resources.

Implementing change
Based on evidenced need such as an energy audit, our main charity grant holders were able to apply for up to £10,000 to support a durable upgrade, adaptation or enhancement of a property or asset that would increase its value and lead to cost savings.

Requests included relatively low-cost changes such as LED bulbs and draft excluders to larger proposals to support window replacements, roof and wall insulation and heating pumps.

11 awards totalling over £90,000 in capital improvement grants were provided in May 2024.

“Fabulous initiative,” said one grantee, with another commenting “This couldn’t have come at a better time.”

Moving forward
Given the nature of the initiative it will be some months (or more) before we can see the practical return on investment in the teams’ skills, audit reports and some of the capital improvement grants, ironically making it our turn to look to the longer term – both our privilege and our responsibility as a multi-year funder.

Link and Learn

Stacey Lamb
Head of Charity Grants



Photography: Clarissa Debenham

On 7th March 2024 we welcomed 90 charity partners, specialists and funders to our third annual Link and Learn event. The day focused on sustainability and considered the challenges identified and echoed by our main charity grant holders.

The value of peer-to-peer support
The most important objective of this year’s Link and Learn event was to demonstrate that the concerns and fears of our grantees are shared by others. They are not alone.

“The charities that we support deliver life-changing services, but the funding environment means that it often comes at a personal and professional cost for charity staff and volunteers.” **Stacey Lamb, Head of Charity Grants, The Leathersellers’ Foundation**

The pressure and isolation of charities’ senior management teams is palpable, with the weight of unavoidable redundancies and organisational restructures taking a heavy toll. By sharing contact details of fellow attendees before the event, and allocating time for networking, table talks and one-to-one conversations, Link and Learn provided a much-needed opportunity for grantees to offload, share, and lean on one another’s experience.

“The inclusive and welcoming atmosphere encouraged me to branch out and speak to people attending from all backgrounds and roles.”

Perspectives and approaches
The patterns of concern that we hear from charities are rarely unique, with under-funding and wider systemic problems at their root. This year supporting staff, rising overhead costs and an increasingly competitive funding environment emerged as the most pressing topics for discussion. By focusing on these three areas at Link and Learn we gained insight from industry specialists, funders and grantees through dedicated panels and cross room discussions, where attendees asked questions and challenged panellists’ perspectives to explore solutions.

“It was fantastic to meet other inspiring charities and to remember we are not alone in our challenges and passion.”

With specialists including charity recruiter Prospectus, well-being consultants Altruist Enterprises, and energy experts Energy Volunteers, conversations started from a place of knowledge sharing. From here, we incorporated the funder perspective and learning from the experience of our grantee panellists including The Harrow Club, The Listening Place and Trelva.

“It is not often that the bridge between funders and grantees and specialists is so smooth and refreshingly new.”

With limited funds available from statutory and independent funders, opportunities for trusts and foundations to clarify their funding strategies are vital. This year we were delighted to be joined by Buttle UK, City Bridge Foundation, The Clothworkers’ Foundation, The Henry Smith Charity, John Lyon’s Charity and Lloyds Bank Foundation. Charities attending Link and Learn noted the significant benefit of being able to put questions to trusts and foundations directly, and were extremely grateful for the openness of funders throughout the discussions and Q&As.

Recognising success and value
By necessity, charities move from one emergency to the next to pursue the best outcomes for the people they support and to ensure their survival as an organisation. This leaves little time to celebrate their achievements. The emphasis on sharing practical solutions at this year’s Link and Learn provided opportunity for charities to share their expertise and accomplishments to help others.

“The chance to hear from other similar charities about their successes and struggles and how they’ve adapted was very useful.”

In addition to supporting fellow grantees by reflecting on their experiences, the approaches of some of our charities were highlighted in the ACEs Video Series shown throughout the day, providing insight into the work and impact of Valley Kids, Sister System, and Body & Soul.

“I had some amazing conversations with other grantees and gained a lot of ‘top tips’ and ‘what works’.”

As a multi-year funder, The Leathersellers’ Foundation is committed to amplifying and supporting the impact of our charity partners. Link and Learn is only possible because of the open and trusting relationships we share with our grantees, which is something that the Foundation will continue to nurture and prioritise.

Small Grants

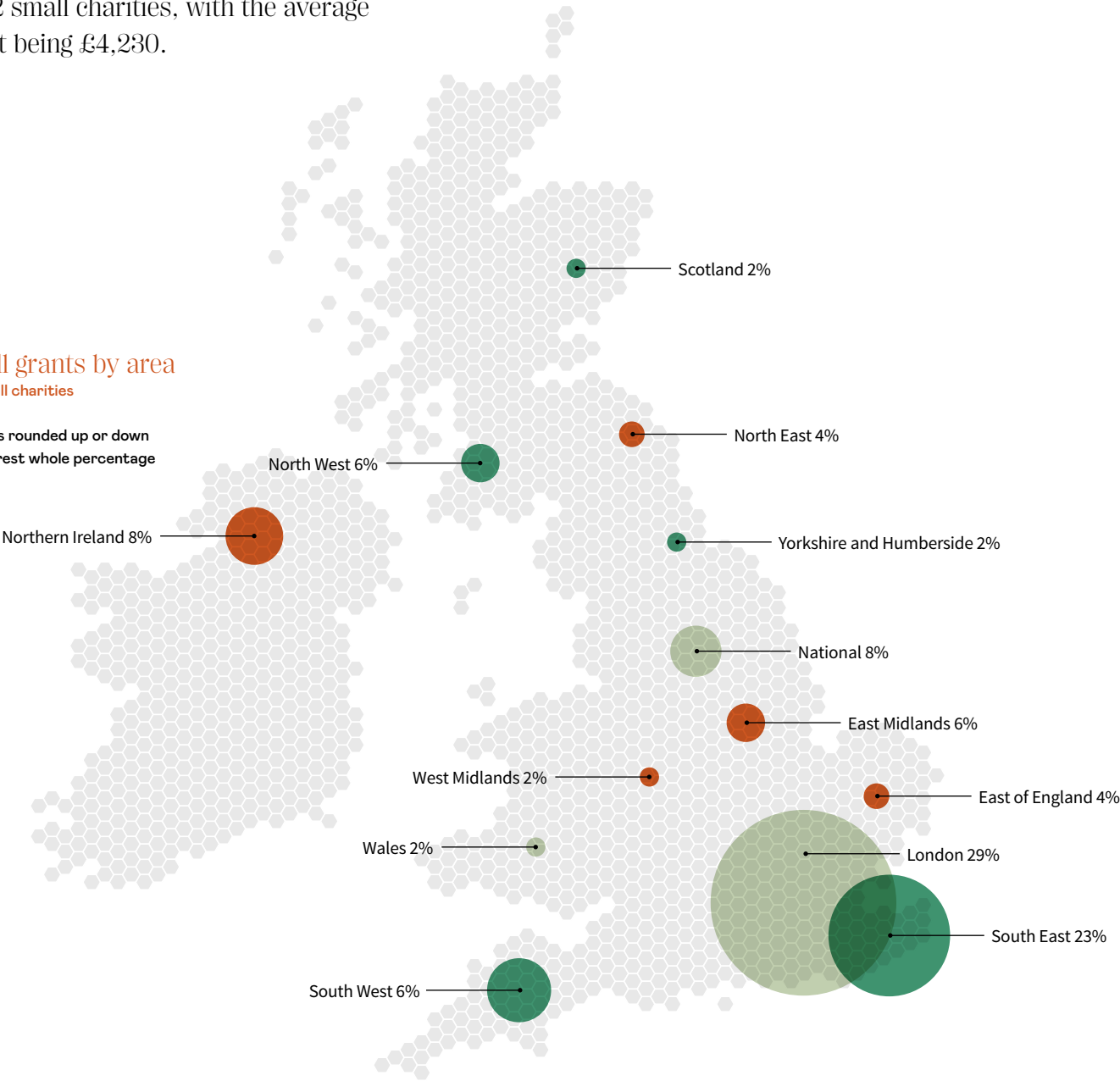
Stacey Lamb
Head of Charity Grants

£220,000 of funding was awarded to 52 small charities, with the average grant being £4,230.

Small grants by area

52 small charities

Figures rounded up or down to nearest whole percentage



The Small Grants Committee’s priority is to support small organisations making a meaningful difference to their local communities.

We accepted 40 applications in each of the 10 application windows throughout the year, with awards guided by 18 members of the Small Grants Committee. The organisations supported had a turnover of no more than £200,000, were operating in an area of high deprivation, and were meeting an identified need supporting vulnerable members of their community.

The Small Grants Committee’s priority is to support small organisations making a meaningful difference to their local communities. Through our giving in 2023–2024 we aimed to improve the geographical reach of our small grants and continue to increase the average grant amount to ensure that our funding can make a meaningful difference to the charities’ work. The average grant amount increased from last year’s average of £3,141 and we were delighted to support four charities operating in Northern Ireland, a marked increase from the one award made in the previous year.

Looking Ahead

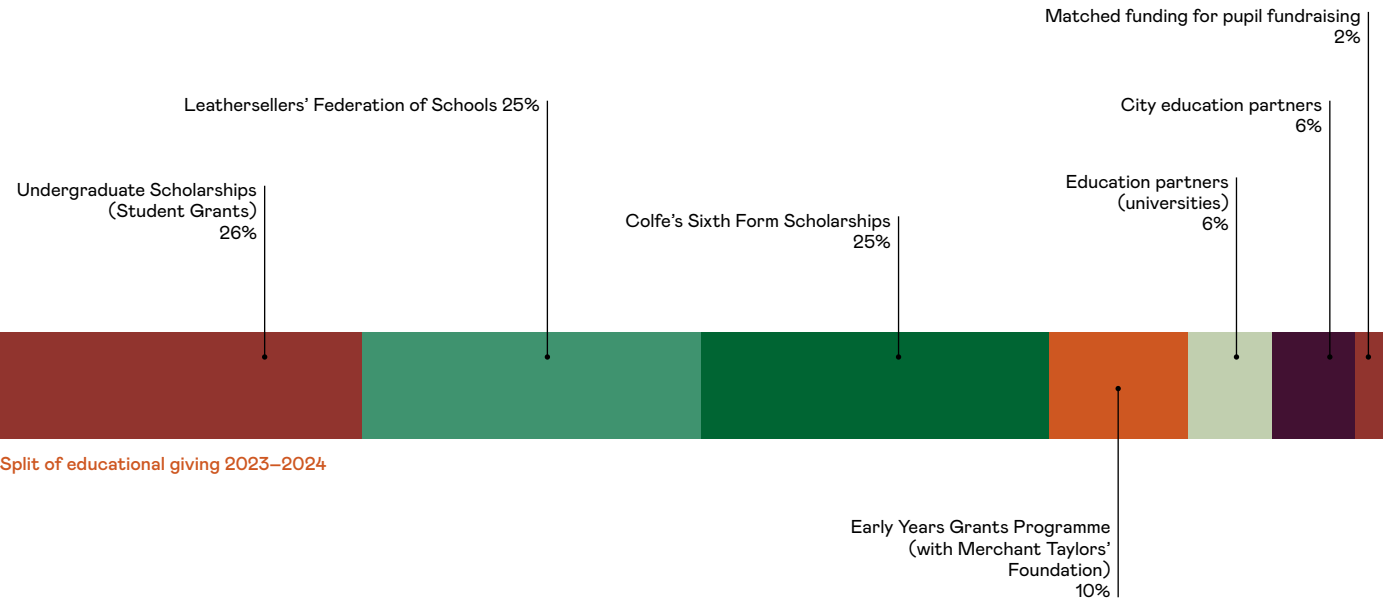
In the year ahead, we look forward to sharing the impact of our ACEs focused grants to date and exploring how the Foundation can better support collaboration and learning in this area. As a national funder we will actively encourage applications from Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland to improve our geographical reach, and will continue to listen to and champion the voice of our grantees and their beneficiaries.

Education

Natalia Rymaszewska
Head of Grants

Building on work undertaken in recent years to define the Leathersellers’ approach to our core goal of furthering Social Mobility, 2023–2024 saw the start of several collaborations with both new and long-standing partners.

Combining the Foundation’s giving with additional contributions of £65,000 from partners as described below meant that Education-focused grant commitments made over the past year reached almost £1m. These commitments encompassed continued support for established strategic programmes alongside fresh initiatives.



Early Years Education Grants Programme 2024–2026

In 2023–2024 the Education Committee used knowledge gathered by the social mobility landscape review and resulting portfolio analysis as a basis to consider how best to support Early Years Education. The need to reduce developmental gaps in the early years of a child’s life (under five but with a particular gap under three) was highlighted as a crucial area of focus. With strong evidence of the lasting impact and importance of supporting parents/carers and infants during this rapid period of brain development, both we and colleagues at the **Merchant Taylors’ Foundation** recognised the need for a targeted funding programme.

Staff and members of the respective Education Committees worked closely together to design and implement a well-received open application process that considered almost 30 proposals for projects to provide educational opportunities to young children from low-income families in Lewisham. Both Companies have a legacy of supporting the Lewisham community with a growing network there in the spheres of education and charity, enabling local context to be considered alongside evidence-based plans for activities to reduce developmental gaps.

Following thorough assessment and joint visits, five exceptional charity partners were identified and provided with a minimum of two years’ funding to support a range of activities and approaches, from more direct play-based provision and inclusive SEN-focused support to indirect enabling of access to opportunities by means such as provision of essential items including prams, books and toys to the most disadvantaged children.

We look forward to working with these partners over the next two years, learning of the challenges and successes that they have and sharing that learning in order to improve what charities provide, which will inform our thinking and development of future funding programmes.

The first two years of life is when 80% of a child’s brain is developed (90% by age five), profoundly affecting their future life outcomes.

Two out of five children are not reaching the expected levels of development at age five.

15 months the gap between disadvantaged children’s communication and language skills and their advantaged peers by the time they begin school.

£14,000 average price of a full-time nursery place per year in Great Britain. It is 30%+ more for parents in London.

Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools

The Federation schools continue to thrive with each year bringing fresh challenges and opportunities, and our strong collaborative relationship allowing for a range of formal and informal initiatives. Only at early consultation stage at the time of last year’s *Review*, the process of considering becoming a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) came to fruition in January 2024 with the new governance structure involving Leathersellers’ members across a range of positions and including the Company as joint corporate member.

As with much of the important ongoing management of the schools, the opportunities presented by the new governance structure, which allows for greater degrees of independence, development and improvements in systems, will mostly remain unseen and will have very little or no impact on ongoing day-to-day activities. Considerable efforts were made to ensure the recruitment of a diverse group of high-quality members for each level of the new structure, and almost all governance positions have now been filled.

Regarding funded activities, 2023–2024 saw the schools continue the vital support work provided through the unrestricted grants highlighted last year: intensive academic and confidence-building scholarships; access to a range of extra-curricular activities; and continued provision of the breakfast club, ensuring physical and mental readiness to begin learning at the start of each school day.

Complementary to, but distinct from the Early Years programme described above, Prendergast Ladywell Primary also proposed and received two-year funding towards a new, evidence-based initiative to improve school readiness, supporting families with incoming Reception pupils from the term before they start and throughout that first year. Gathering evidence and learning from that project will be crucial to understanding which elements make a difference and should be prioritised in the future.

Colfe’s School

The last twelve months have continued to see Colfe’s grow both in size and achievements, with pupil numbers exceeding 1,300 in 2023–2024. These numbers include 15 Leathersellers’ Scholars, including one of the School Captains, Ejiro Ndi-Efam, who is the third Captain (and first male Captain) in the cohort since the scheme’s inception in 2009. The number of Foundation-funded scholarship places will gradually decrease over the next four years under the terms of the current grant, with the intention that the school’s fundraising efforts will result in a steady number of ‘Leathersellers’ Scholars’ – as all recipients of the full means-tested Sixth Form scholarship are now known – in the future.

Renewed efforts by the Alumni and Development team have had notable success, with a celebration event held at Leathersellers’ Hall for over 90 attendees, including 45 current or potential donors who were thrilled to meet the many former Scholars who extolled the benefits of the programme. Donations to Colfe’s Charitable Trust since 2018 have now reached almost £900,000, with others expressing the intention of leaving gifts in their wills to the total of an additional £1.25m. These donations have supported additional scholarships, access to extra-curricular activities and trips for Scholars, as well as hardship grants for families who have faced unexpected financial emergencies.

A video featuring some of the previous Leathersellers’ Scholars discussing the impact that attending Colfe’s had on their careers can be viewed by scanning the QR code below:



With all Leathersellers’ Scholars being invited to join the Leathersellers’ Alumni Network and a number further supported via the Student Grants programme whilst at university, the impact of this relationship continues to grow. So too does that of our wider relationship, as expressed through Leathersellers’ members volunteering as governors, as well as attending the annual Cricket Match, Colfe’s Sermon or Visitation.

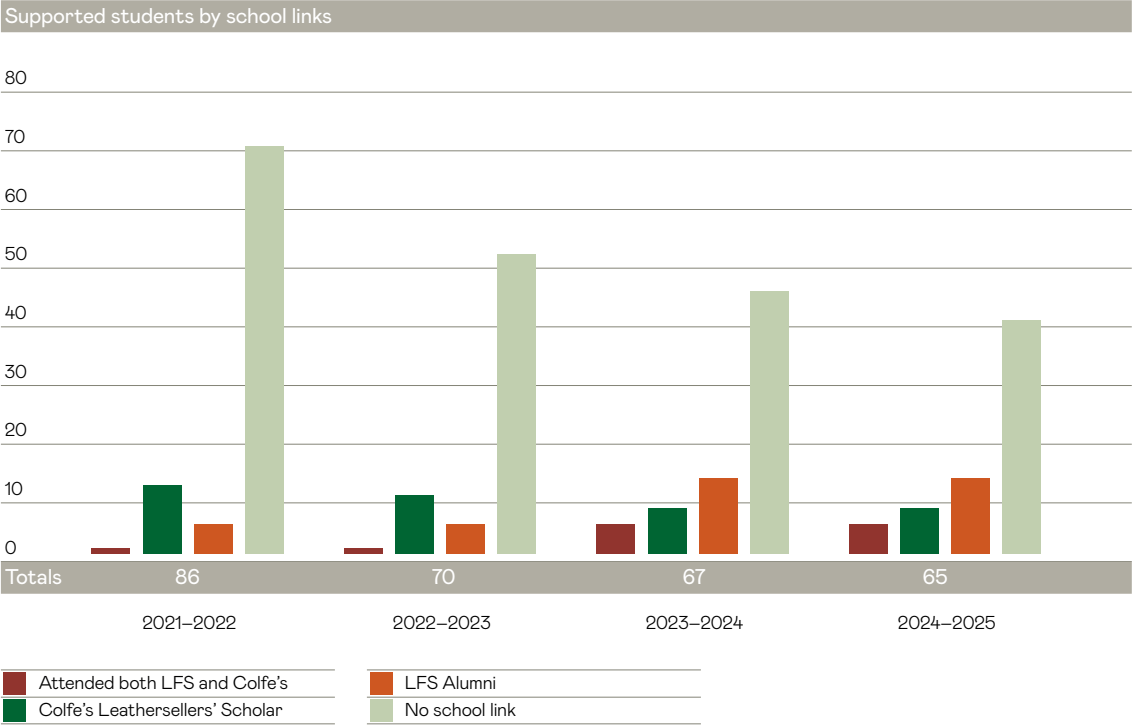
Continuing development – Impact and Evaluation Framework

We continued to develop new reporting mechanisms for our main education grants partners, including the need to understand the drivers of the City partners’ discrete programme and an evaluation of the university student grants and Sixth Form scholarships programme.

Building on the previous landscape and portfolio reviews, this year the Leathersellers continued to work with specialists Better Purpose to increase our understanding of the difference made by our funding. Through well-attended online workshops we gained insight both from members of the Livery and from grantee representatives. This insight underpinned the co-development of a problem tree and theory of change on which we can base our continued progress. Whilst this sounds theoretical it has an eminently practical purpose, informing the creation of a clear framework of outcomes that will signify success for future funding. This work continues into 2024–2025 as we seek to build necessary tools, systems and processes to ensure that we gather this data in a way that is least burdensome for our partners while allowing us to report on the impact of our funds to a much greater extent in future. The information gathered will be used continually to inform and improve what we do, and how we do it, so that we can support our partners as effectively as possible.

Our Undergraduate Scholarships

With the ever-increasing cost of living having a considerable impact on students, the Foundation’s support in 2023–2024 was needed more than ever. In the last year we supported 67 students at various stages of undergraduate study across a variety of courses at 46 different British universities. As in previous years the cohort represents a wide range of life experience, motivation and demographics, with some insight to this given by the infographics/charts below and overleaf:



Considering both the level and complexity of need, as well as the evidence of impact, the Trustees committed to continuing the focus on prioritising care-leavers when assessing new applicants (alongside school alumni) for the next three years of undergraduate scholarships. Building on the foundations created in the initial focus year in 2023 enabled the support element of the programme for care-experienced young people to expand to include offering a bespoke pre-application webinar and some wraparound support through Become, a new charity partner.

Whilst a myriad of challenges face those who have spent a period of their childhood in the care of the local authority, the focus of study for many is on ways to give back and support others facing hardship, be that through social work, public policy or health/social care.

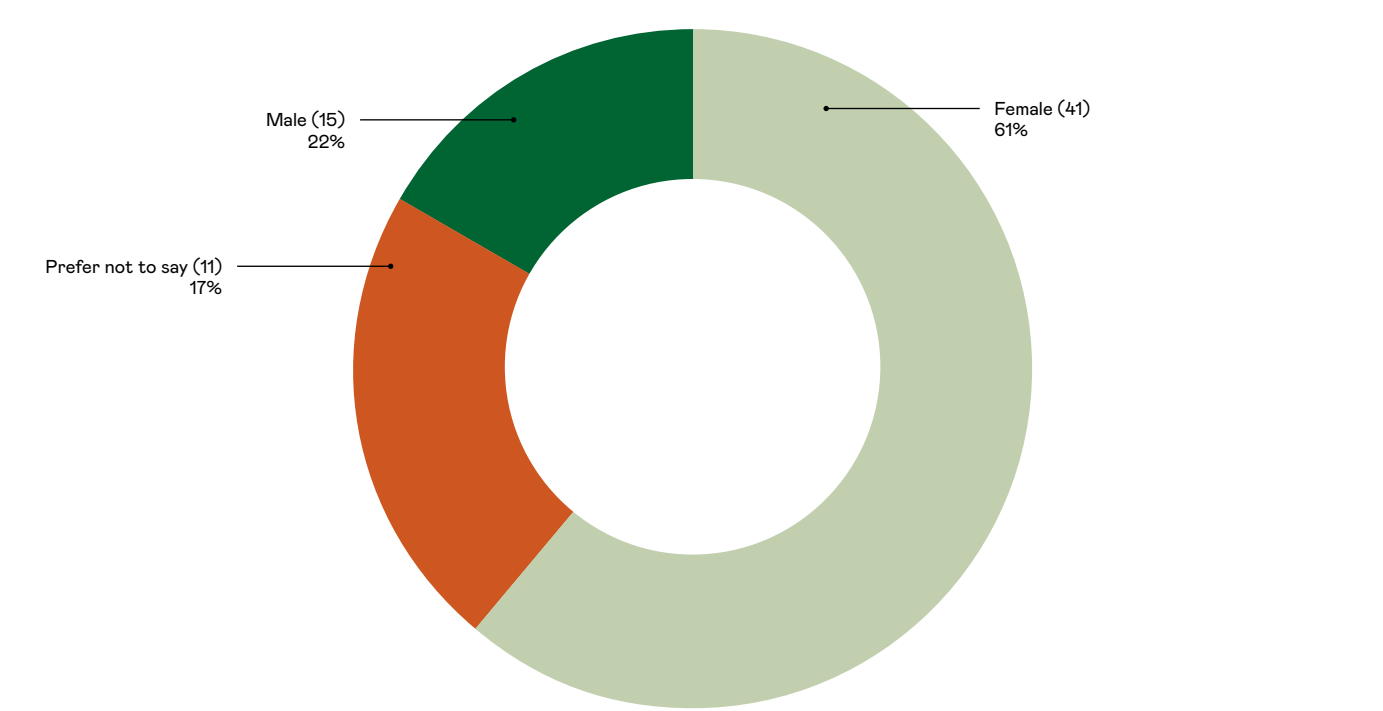
Evidence shows the disproportionate economic disadvantage of care leavers not attending university:

Over the past year a new partnership was also built with the **Jack Petchey Foundation** (JPF). Having been inspired by stories of the Leathersellers’ Undergraduate Scholars and their challenges and achievements, JPF trustees chose to contribute a further £5,000 towards the Leathersellers’ Foundation’s overall budget of £240,000 per year for the next three years. This meant a contribution of £1,000 each to five students, chosen as part of the Leathersellers’ selection process, giving those students the additional recognition of becoming a joint Jack Petchey and Leathersellers’ Scholar.

Focused on their area of charitable work, which is aimed at state school pupils in London and Essex, the initial grants have been awarded for 2024–2025 and we look forward to developing this partnership further. The Jack Petchey Foundation is a charity that was set up to inspire and celebrate young people and their achievements, and it has invested over £170m in young people since 1999. Sadly the founder, Jack Petchey CBE, died in July 2024, but the work of the Foundation continues.

“Going to university shrinks the pay gap between care-experienced people and others. Eighteen months after graduation, the Civitas think tank found that graduates who grew up in care earn only 2.5% a year less than graduates who didn’t – that’s compared to a difference of a third for those who haven’t been to university.”

Student grant recipient gender 2023–2024



Student grant recipient ethnicity 2023–2024

| Ethnicity | Total | % |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|
| Black | 23 | 34 |
| White | 14 | 21 |
| Asian | 8 | 12 |
| Any other ethnic group | 6 | 9 |
| Mixed / Mutiple ethnic groups | 5 | 8 |
| Prefer not to say | 11 | 16 |
| Grand Total | 67 | 100.00 |

Career/Skills Mentoring Programme
Following a successful career- and skills-focused mentoring pilot in 2022–2023 members of the Company and Alumni Network were offered the opportunity to become mentors to currently supported students. The ever-growing Alumni Network and success of the programme presented a range of challenges with over 100 individuals seeking to be involved. The majority of these were trained and matched with suitable pairings, but the popularity of the programme has reached a level where additional support is likely to be needed. Options are being considered and we are hopeful that 2024–2025’s mentoring cohort will gain from the experience and networks of others with a new and improved approach.

Further education partners
In a re-alignment of priorities to dovetail with the Leathersellers’ clarified approach to social mobility, new grant funding was agreed to support both postgraduate scholarships and widening access programmes with long-standing partners St Catherine’s College, Oxford and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. Strengthening our links and understanding further, representatives from both colleges have played an active role in the continued development of our impact and evaluation framework, bringing opportunities to support each other’s objectives.

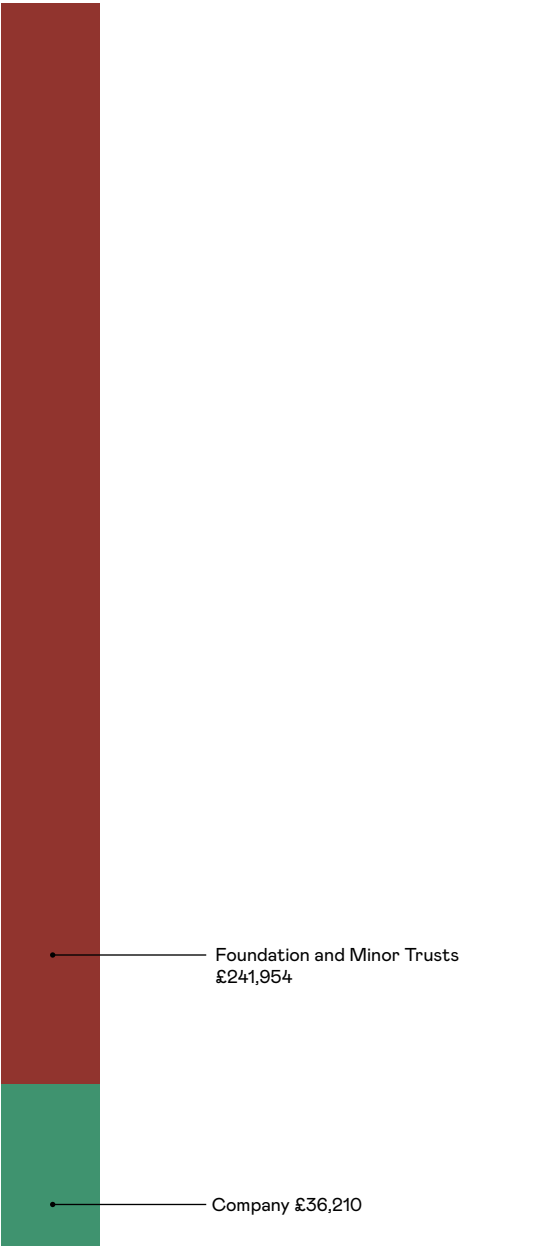
City education partners
In recognition of the Leathersellers’ long-term involvement with, and commitment to, the City of London by working with partners to support a shared charitable, civic and cultural landscape, there has been a considered shift in how we award grants for City-based initiatives. Coming into effect from 2024–2025 these will be funded by the Leathersellers’ Company, rather than under the Education portfolio of the Foundation, allowing for wider contextual considerations beyond those of the social mobility strategy. Current grant agreements stand, with the past year having seen Foundation support be used to enable City University to provide emergency accommodation for students; to grant five Guildhall School of Music scholarships; to allow a Chorister to study at St Paul’s Cathedral; and to enable opportunities to be provided for finance and business leaders of the future via the Mansion House Scholarship programme. Each of these City-wide initiatives involve several other livery companies and as these agreements develop we will look for ways to maximise the value we can add to these relationships.

The City of London has always been our home. Today we work with partners to support a shared charitable, civic, and cultural landscape.

Leather

Natalia Rymaszewska
Head of Grants

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Total Leather Giving | £278,164 |
| Foundation and Minor Trusts | £241,954 |
| Company | £36,210 |



2023–2024 was a pivotal year of reflection for the Leather Trade Committee, with some monumental changes in the wider landscape coinciding with a strategic review of our work in leather. Whilst the Leathersellers’ links to the leather trade have been important to it for centuries, what this work looks like in the modern world, and the question of how best we can channel our support, requires timely and responsive reassessment.

Although leather giving is an area in which grants are awarded by the Leathersellers’ Foundation and related Minor Trusts as well as by the Leathersellers’ Company, this article views the approach and impact of grants overall. A review of the last five years of funding programmes has now been conducted, including the consideration of where and how impact has and could be measured, and discussion of where our focus and priorities should lie for the future. The result of the review is the development of a five-year Leather Strategy. This report focuses on sharing our findings and commitment to the industry, as well as providing a snapshot of the continuing work we are doing with new and existing partners.

Our vision:
 “The Leathersellers will support
 a thriving, sustainable and
 connected leather industry
 offering opportunity to tanners,
 designers, makers and
 conservators.”

Leather – a material for the past, present and future

Underpinning the strategy is the fact that leather is a sustainable and versatile material, created from a by-product of the meat industry, with a multitude of uses in the fashion, automotive, furniture, aerospace, footwear, orthopaedic, equine and other industries. The tanning industry provides a vital function in creating a luxurious and durable material from a waste product that would otherwise be sent to landfill. The UK-based tanning industry ranges hugely, from the cutting-edge technology and carbon net zero production of Scottish Leather Group to the development of artisanal tanneries employing traditional forms of tanning using natural materials, some of which are being hosted by, or linked closely to, regenerative farms across the United Kingdom.

New partnership: Leather Naturally

The Leathersellers has joined Leather Naturally as a member, and using the strength of our networks and connections in the leather trade, will be supporting them in their work focused on promoting the global leather industry and educating consumers. We will also be collaborating to improve the information and resources available on our website.

In this way we also support partners such as the Furniture Makers' Company, helping them to access knowledgeable speakers, as exemplified by the video of Bill Amberg talking to students about how to source ethical leather, available via the QR code below:



We continue to ensure that the most informative resources are being identified and shared without duplication of effort.

Our long-term goals

The Leathersellers' Company and Foundation will offer support to the leather industry through financial and in-kind support to achieve two main goals:

- > To ensure that leather is a material of opportunity in the UK, produced locally and globally, that can be used for a range of purposes by makers and designers.
- > To ensure that a thriving and connected industry utilising leather exists, including technical workers, producers, makers and designers.

How will we get there?

Providing grants and funding to:

- > Support technical leather education, training and skill development in the UK today.
- > Encourage and facilitate a pipeline of individuals skilled in the production and use of leather for the future.
- > Preserve the history of the tanning industry and support conservation skills.

Managing and leveraging our network to:

- > Intentionally connect individuals, organisations and businesses.
- > Engage with leather and education partners, livery companies, funders and businesses.
- > Provide opportunities to our alumni network, for example via commissioning.

Leather

Highlights from 2023–2024

Awards and masterclasses

The successful formula of combining awards and masterclasses continues to support fashion and design students who are working with leather, improving understanding of the material and recognising talent. Along with long-term partners at De Montfort University and the London College of Fashion there are plans to replicate this model elsewhere in the coming year.

Tanning and leatherworking apprenticeships

The second year of the apprenticeships programme has been successful, with apprentice masters reporting considerable progress and learning not only for their new recruits but also for themselves and the wider industry. We aim to bring a new cohort on board in 2024–2025 and continue to develop our support for this vital area of leather education.

The Leathercraft Trust (formerly the Museum of Leathercraft)

2023–2024 saw this long-term grantee and partner of the Leathersellers take the bold step to restructure and transfer the Leather Collection to Northampton Museum and Art Gallery. This opportunity arose following a significant investment in Northampton Museum that enabled the Leather Collection to be added to a vibrant and diverse range of objects that tell the story of the people and craft history of Northampton and the surrounding county. This includes a shoe collection of international significance as designated by Arts Council England.

The Leather Collection adds valuable context for the shoe and leather industry with strong roots in Northampton, including over 10,000 objects and 30,000 documents, photographs and books telling the world story of leather from prehistory to the present day. Whilst the pragmatic decision has been made to transfer the collection to ensure its continued use and access, the Trustees remain committed to education in the area of leathercraft culture and heritage and so have altered their object displays, formed a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation), and rebranded as The Leathercraft Trust to support the continued promotion of, and access to, the collection in a variety of formats.

Leather conservation

The planned relocation of the Leather Conservation Centre continues to build momentum, with plans now focused on a move to Leicester. Alongside opportunities currently being developed for the workspace, a range of business opportunities have been identified for the Centre and supportive partnership discussions held with education and local authority representatives. A generous grant towards the relocation costs has been committed from the Company to aid this strategic step-change, which will come into play in the following financial year.

Collaboration

Through members and staff we have participated in a range of cross-sector initiatives including a working group run by the Saddlers’ Company looking at additional entry level qualifications to introduce the variety of leatherworking careers to a wider base of individuals; the Leathery Livery group, sharing knowledge and information; and the SOLES (Supporters of Leather Education and Science) group that seeks to shape the future of technical leather education following the sad announcement of the closure of the ICLT (Institute for Creative Leather Technologies) at the University of Northampton, due to take place in June 2025. We continue to form new connections, add value to discussions, and link individuals and organisations together as needed across our leather portfolio and community.

Designer Bookbinders

An exciting new initiative was brought to our attention that has spent the last five years re-introducing leatherworking bookbinding skills to students and tutors of art and design courses in three key universities including Glasgow School of Art. With continuing support from the Clothworkers’ Company, The Leathersellers’ Foundation will now fund an expansion of the scheme to include four new education partners, all keen to ensure that their students have access to these skills and understanding.

Surplus leather project

Following the successful pilot with wholesaler partner Abbey England in 2022–2023, various circumstances resulted in a delay to the project in 2023–2024. However, we are pleased to report that towards the end of the year this partnership was rejuvenated, and additional funds have been committed not only to provide surplus leather for use by students at the existing six university partners, but also to expand to additional education providers. We look forward to sharing the extent of this success next year.

Support for makers

We continue to support makers through a range of programmes, from the QEST (Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust) Emerging Maker Award to providing staggered support to makers utilising leather at Cockpit in the refurbished Deptford building and Leather Hub, and giving individual student grants to enable those changing careers to develop their leather and business skills.

Alongside these grant and formal funding initiatives we also link a number of engaged members of the Leathersellers’ Alumni Network to up-and-coming makers through our Mentoring Programme, and seek to use independent makers for various commissions associated with the Company. The opportunities that our knowledge and connections provide across the leather community are far reaching, and we add value wherever possible.

We continue to form new connections, add value to discussions, and link individuals and organisations together as needed across our leather portfolio and community.

Personal Giving

Members of the Livery, Freedom and staff of the Leathersellers’ Company again gave generously in 2023–2024, unlocking additional charitable giving from the Company through the match funding initiative. An overall total of £48,800 was raised and matched, with contributions from 75 members or staff, an increased number from the previous year. This enabled a grant of £12,200 to be given to each one of the following four frontline charities working across the United Kingdom:

- Sunflowers Liverpool**, whose work provides wide-ranging support for patients with cancer or other life-limiting illnesses and their loved ones.
- ADHD Embrace**, who help parents and professionals to support children with ADHD and ensure that they thrive.
- Colchester Korban Project**, who strive to break the cycle of homelessness for young people.
- Autism Voice**, working to enhance the health and well-being of children and adults with autism and/or learning disabilities and their families.

Leathersellers’ cycling team

In addition to direct appeals for support, this year a sponsored challenge event opportunity was added to the appeal. A team consisting of Tom Polito, Edward Lennon and Sam Strong took part in the LHTBI (Leather and Hide Trades Benevolent Institution) organised cycle, joining 20 other ambitious riders to cycle a 177-mile section of La Vélocypédie from La Rochelle to Bordeaux over three days in May 2024 in order to raise funds for a range of causes. Our team raised an initial £600 for the LHTBI and then a further £1,448 which is included in the appeal total given above. Our thanks go to the LHTBI board for permitting the inclusion of a Leathersellers’ fundraising team within the event, and to the cyclists for all their efforts.

Every donation makes a considerable difference, so whether you can support with a regular monthly, quarterly or annual amount or want to donate as a one-off, we are here to help. We are also considering setting up a Leathersellers’ running team to take part in a sponsored event in 2024–2025; please contact our Grants Team on charityapp@leathersellers.co.uk to find out more.

Colfe’s School

Matthew Pellereau
Chair of Governors

I am happy to report that it has been another successful year at Colfe’s.

It was a year marked by reflection, and looking to the future, as Richard Russell announced his retirement as Headmaster. Over the course of 20 years at Colfe’s Richard has given exceptional service to the school. He has led its transformation and development with remarkable energy, skill and judgement, not least through the period of the pandemic. During Richard’s tenure the school has grown greatly in size and stature, securing its place in the top 100 of independent schools nationally and becoming a beacon of co-educational excellence in south-east London. We extend our thanks to Richard for all he has done and wish him a very happy retirement.

We are delighted that the Governing Board has appointed Daniel Gabriele, Deputy Principal of Caterham School, as the new Headmaster of Colfe’s. Dan

will take up the position from September 2025.

Our year was also one of recognising and celebrating the achievements of pupils and staff. In summer examinations, Colfe’s students achieved high proportions of top grades at both GCSE and A-level: 58% of A-levels were graded at A*-A, rising to 88% at A*-B, and 36% of GCSE grades were graded 9, rising to 59% graded 9 or 8.

95% of leavers went on to attend their chosen universities including Oxbridge, Russell Group, and other leading competitive universities and courses. Course choices remain as diverse as ever, including Medicine, Law, Engineering, Architecture, Product Design and Media Studies. It was a record year for students going on to study highly respected degree apprenticeships at companies such as JP Morgan, the National Audit Office and the Metropolitan Police.

Co-curricular achievement this year was equally successful: senior school productions included Jim Cartwright’s *Two* and a joyful musical production of *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13½*. Music saw a continued rich variety of repertoire in termly concerts, including at the beautiful St Alfege Church and at St James’s Church, Piccadilly.

Team sports saw success in hockey, water polo, cricket, rugby and football, with success for rugby’s first XV. Excellent individual achievements continue to be plentiful in many sports. Year 7’s James has been a standout pupil who has quickly risen through the ranks into cricket’s first XI, Thea (Year 9) is representing Great Britain in U17 fencing, while Year 10’s Gabby continues to achieve outstanding athletics results and was awarded the prestigious inaugural Bridget Yule Award for Combined Events.

In the arts, the GCSE and A-level Art, Photography and Media exhibitions highlighted the abundance of creativity and artistic talent, with one student going on to study Animation in September and several to study Art and Media.

Colfe’s continues to go from strength to strength following another brilliant year. High pupil intake for September and continued examinations success bodes well for years to come. My fellow Governors join me in congratulating the pupils and staff for their hard work and dedication in achieving so much this academic year.



Left: Senior School production of *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13½*
Opposite: Colfe’s Concert at St Alfege Church, Greenwich



Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools

Andrew Rothery
Chair of Governors

It has been a year of two halves at the Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools. I am delighted to report that we have now successfully implemented our academisation conversion and that our schools have ended the academic year in a really strong position.

The school year started in September following the resolution of the industrial action taken as a result of the decision to convert to a Multi-Academy Trust earlier in the summer, which was a welcome relief from the significant disruption experienced at the end of the previous term. The immediate focuses were rebuilding relationships with our staff and preparing for the conversion in January 2024.



I must pay tribute to the Federation’s HR and finance teams who have had a huge amount of work to do to put the necessary systems and processes in place in preparation for conversion. In the area of finance we are now required to publish full audited accounts and produce a balance sheet with asset valuations, which wasn’t required while we were a local authority federation. Our first accounts will be prepared for the eight months to 31st August 2024.

The staff, students and parents were also delighted to be back in our schools and learning again. Everyone was keen to put the past disruption behind them and get back to our core education and pastoral provisions.

Another key part of the preparation for the conversion was to establish and populate the new local governing boards (LGBs) for each school. We successfully recruited over 20 new governors, largely drawn from the local community, and I have been really impressed with their commitment and breadth of skills. My thanks go to them as well as to the previous governors who have stayed on following conversion. Ensuring that governance was sustainable by spreading the workload across a much larger group of people had been a key objective of the academisation process.

My thanks go to those Leathersellers who have put themselves forward for a governance role. Julian Barrow has joined the Prendergast Ladywell LGB, Leyla Reveillon has joined the Prendergast School Governing Board, Ralph-Lewis Ackah joined the Prendergast Vale LGB, and Richard Preston has joined the Trust board. I

Opposite, below: Pupils selected for the Leathersellers’ Scholarship Programme attend a first year graduation event at Leathersellers’ Hall

would like to thank Sophie Miremadi who retired from the Trust board at the end of her term; she was an outstanding Vice-Chair and I greatly appreciated her wisdom and support throughout her term. Kate Ward has taken her place as Vice-Chair, and with Stuart Fuller chairing the People and Finance Committee, the Company has members in key senior roles on the Federation Trust board.

I’m also pleased to report that the Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools has celebrated some strong exam results across its schools.

Prendergast Ladywell School reported improving outcomes at Key Stage 4, with 52% of grades at 4 or above, and 35% at grade 5 or above, with some exceptional individual student results and more students progressing to Prendergast Sixth Form.

Prendergast School achieved excellent GCSE results, with 78% of students earning grade 4 or higher in English and Maths, and 46% achieving grade 5 or above. Additionally, 26% of entries earned grades 8 or 9 (A*), and 42% of entries achieved grade 7 or above.

At Prendergast Vale School there was a significant improvement in GCSE results, with a 12% increase in the number of students achieving grade 4 (68%) or above in English and Maths compared to the previous year. At grade 5, 43% achieved in English and Maths which is also an improvement on the previous year. Furthermore, nearly 20% of grades were between 7 and 9.

Prendergast Sixth Form also had an outstanding year at A-level, with 35% of results graded A*-A and 67% at A*-B.

Many students earned top grades and secured places at leading universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, and Bristol, with the most popular subjects being Computer Science and History. A significant proportion of our subjects including Photography, Languages, Sociology and Psychology were in the top 10% of schools for progress. Of our vocational courses, 61% achieved a distinction* or distinction with students going on to study a variety of courses such as Law and Business Management.

The Federation is proud of the achievements across its schools and is committed to continuing its support for all pupils as they progress in their academic and professional journeys.

Our priorities for next year are to finalise and approve our medium-term plan. This plan will have four pillars: Learner Experience, People Strategy, FedTech Strategy and Growth and Development of the Trust. Under the Fedtech Strategy our schools will become Google Schools, which will allow us to upgrade our technology hardware and software, improve collaboration between staff across schools, develop the use of AI, reduce staff workload and prepare our students for their future in an increasingly digital world. You will hear more about this as the plans progress throughout next year.

We continue to be grateful for the incredible support we receive from the Leathersellers. We have had more staff, students and parents attend events at the Hall over the last year or so than ever before and my thanks go the Company and Foundation for their generosity, not just with financial

support but with access to the Hall, and to members for giving their time to attend and support our events and community.

The Company’s support continues to transform young lives, for example with the Year 8 and 9 Scholarship Programme that gives additional support and resources to 24 students who would otherwise be at risk of becoming disengaged following their primary transfer. This is now in its second year. The recent awards ceremony for the students and their parents and carers at the Hall was again a great success, allowing us to see and hear at first hand the positive impact that this programme is having.

Among the many initiatives funded by the Leathersellers, the free breakfast programme for all students in our Federation is having a significant impact on attendance, and improves students’ ability to learn by giving them a decent meal and the time to decompress with friends before starting their lessons.

Our schools remain popular locally and are oversubscribed in nearly all phases. The year has ended very positively after the disruption of the conversion process last year, and everyone involved in our schools is looking forward to the next phase of our development and the adoption of our new medium-term strategy next year.

Leathersellers’ Close

Lynne Smith
Grants Manager

September 2023 saw the return of our annual residents’ outing, with a visit to a place of interest around the London area. The selected location was Denbies Wine Estate based in the Surrey hills, and was led by the Master, Mark Williams. After an indoor tour that gave us all an insight into the winemaking process, residents enjoyed wine tasting in the cellar, which included tasting four of their award-winning wines. It seemed only fitting that after this the residents all climbed aboard the train, which ferried them up to the vines themselves, with magnificent views of the North Downs.

The annual Macmillan Coffee Morning was once again organised by resident Alan Malin, and the amount raised was match funded by The Leathersellers’ Foundation. Our thanks go to the residents for their consistent and generous support.

The Christmas carol service, long impacted by Covid restrictions, once again took place in the picturesque 1920s Chapel in December 2023. Children from Christchurch Primary school sang congregational renditions of traditional seasonal carols.

In February 2024 a Leathersellers’ Foundation grantee and Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools alumnus, Leon Human, presented a performance of Bach’s *First Violin Sonata and Partita* at Leathersellers’ Close. Leon is an accomplished violinist who was seeking performance opportunities towards his final year of Music Studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. We were pleased to be able to make this connection, and we hope that similar opportunities will arise again in future.

Sadly, two of our residents died over the course of the year. Mr Alan Martin unexpectedly died in February. His wife Jenny remains with us at the Close. Mr Raymond Austin died following illness at the end of July, having lived happily at the Close since 2020. Both are much missed. One of our longest-serving residents, Betty Wess, left to go into a care home, and Elsie Gilkes moved to Leicester to be with her daughter. We welcomed Karen James and Sue Nicholls to the community.

Our thanks go to Harrison Housing for the continued assistance of residents, particularly through Samantha Wood, who provides wide ranging support alongside organising a number of social activities for the community.

We also appreciate the assistance of Harrison Housing in managing the ongoing maintenance and repairs to the estate to ensure the continued tranquillity provided by the beautiful gardens, which have been the setting for the almshouses since 1838.

Leadership Awards

The Leathersellers’ Award for Outstanding Leadership

The Leathersellers have three key military affiliations across the Armed Forces: 1st The Queen’s Dragoon Guards, British Army; HMS *Audacious*, Royal Navy; and 230 Squadron, RAF. Each year the Company seeks to support these through the Leathersellers’ Award for Outstanding Leadership, which recognises excellent examples of young leadership.



HMS *Audacious* Citation report by Commander J Howard

Leading Engineering Technician Bryn Bridges

Leading Engineering Technician (LET) Bridges is a professionally confident, well-liked individual, who has excelled during his time on board HMS *Audacious*. LET Bridges has stood in as a local acting watch supervisor. As a Communication Information Systems Rating the role’s primary purpose at sea is managing communication traffic in and out of the submarine during covert operations.

This role is critical in keeping the submarine undetected from potential adversaries whilst on operations, and involves mastering cryptography equipment akin to a modern version of the enigma machine. He completed a very lengthy and operationally challenging deployment at sea gaining significant praise from Command for his performance and professionalism.

During this current maintenance period he has used his spare capacity to arrange site visits to Navy HQ in Portsmouth to develop his section and increase all round knowledge. An excellent submariner, LET Bridges rounded off this successful time on board HMS *Audacious* with his selection and promotion to Leading Engineering Technician.



1st The Queen’s Dragoon Guards Citation report by Captain Edward Cooper

Corporal Thomas Hopkins

Corporal Hopkins displays excellence as a matter of routine. In camp he embodies the role of a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO). Bearing, professionalism, dynamism regardless of the task – he has it all and acts as a role model to all around him.

Where he stands head and shoulders above the rest is in the field. His capacity for green soldiering is second to none. As A Squadron’s Arctic Warfare specialist, Cpl Hopkins operated in the most austere of environments. During Operation Cabrit Cpl Hopkins tackled the gruelling Finnish Winter Warfare Course, conducted by Finnish Cold Weather Warfare experts and elite forces from various nations. His success in this elite course, failed by an infantry Colour Sergeant, is testament to his extraordinary skill and determination. It also earned him further training invitations with the Finnish military and a commendation from the Commander of Operation Cabrit.

Upon completion Cpl Hopkins identified the critical need for cold weather training to improve the lethality and survivability of our soldiers. He spearheaded efforts to train soldiers in winter warfare, playing a pivotal role in delivering the Cold Weather Operators Course. His relentless dedication was a cornerstone in the squadron’s advancement, and his efforts have been transformative in equipping soldiers for operations in extreme cold weather conditions.

Subsequently, Cpl Hopkins produced an exhaustive document detailing the essential progression for cold weather operations, which was swiftly integrated into squadron tactics, techniques, and procedures. Furthermore, he has ensured the seamless transfer of this critical knowledge to the next winter Cabrit rotation, guaranteeing their preparedness for Arctic missions.

Cpl Hopkins is an exceptional soldier at the pinnacle of his cohort. Robust, credible, and a natural leader, he epitomises the type of NCO that the Queen’s Dragoon Guards needs. His contributions across all the Squadron’s activities have been profound and measurable. He is unquestionably deserving of the Leathersellers’ Award.

“It is an honour to have been nominated for the Leathersellers’ Award, it is an achievement I never thought I would receive in my Army career as I never put recognition to the forefront of the courses and Operational Tours I have completed. However it is with great pleasure I accept this nomination.”



230 Squadron RAF Citation report by Squadron Leader Luke Foreman

Corporal Tom Rose

Corporal Rose places team success as his highest priority. His determination to gain the best from each person sees him take great pride in the professional development of his peers and subordinates. This dedication has helped to build self-confidence, loyalty, and vastly increased motivation throughout the Avionics team. This was most recently demonstrated when owing to Senior Non-Commissioned Officer absence, he guided the team through complex fault diagnosis task with minimal supervision, ensuring that 230 could deliver its MEDEVAC (medical evacuation) commitment.

His mentoring of non-SQEP (Suitably Qualified Experienced People) rotational personnel through their NVQ packages is commendable, delivering benefit across wider Puma Force as many of those he trains are returned to employment in the UK and Cyprus with increased qualifications, enhanced hand skills and greater self-assurance in on-wing fault diagnosis. As a key member of the Squadron social events team he sacrifices significant personal time to enhance the lived experience of others. Assisting in the organisation of multiple social functions, both for Service personnel and for their families, his impact on the morale of the section cannot be underestimated.

Clockwise from right:
Bryn Bridges
Thomas Hopkins
Tom Rose



Property

Nick Dart
Head of Property



3 St Helen's Place

Practical completion of Number 3 was delivered under budget in 2023, and since then the main contractor, Collins, has completed the snagging process. With construction risk extinguished, the next challenge was the letting of the building.

The decision was made early in the process to produce a high-quality product and ensure that the building would be environmentally friendly. This was achieved throughout the development process by choosing appropriate materials and finishes with our architect and including the latest market-led facilities as guided by our letting agents. Consequently, Number 3 went on to have more viewings than any other competing development, with our letting agents frequently mentioning that Number 3 was 'best in class'.

During construction it became apparent that the occupier market was changing, with a significant number of companies only being interested in ready-to-occupy fitted-out space. This change could not be ignored, because to do so would have meant excluding around two thirds of the occupier market. Accordingly, it was decided to respond to this new demand by fitting out one floor, the fourth, to act as a show-suite. A number of companies viewed the floor and some opted for this solution, known as 'CAT B'. About half of the building has been let on this basis.

The building is now fully let and includes a broad range of good quality companies in the three main City sectors of finance, legal, and insurance, but also in recruitment, energy, and shipping.



100 Bishopsgate

The tower is now 100% let, including all retail units.

33 Great St Helen's

At the Company's now 10-year-old accommodation block the windows facing Great St Helen's have been repaired and redecorated and the windows to the rear (previously single pane) have been replaced with new double-glazed units.

Above: Example of tenant office space design and installation
Opposite: Example of CAT B office space in Number 3 St Helen's Place

From the Archivist

Kate Higgins
Archivist

It has been another busy year with the Leathersellers’ archives and collections, with work stretching across many areas of activity.



Portrait of Henry VIII, conserved and reframed

Over the past year work has been completed on conserving our portrait of Henry VIII, which had developed two vertical splits on one side and some bubbling of paint on the other. This painting has been conserved and has been reframed in a more historically appropriate frame with a sealed microclimate that will protect the portrait from fluctuations in temperature and humidity.

In addition three important archive documents and two books from the Colfe Library were conserved this year. The ratification of the Company’s ordinances from 1635, a confirmation of arms of the Glovers’ and Leathersellers’ Companies from 1634 and a key deed of acquisition of the Barnet estate dated 1603 have been removed from heavy, bulky frames, repaired and rehoused in conservation-grade mounts and frames, and the two Colfe Library books were conserved: volume IV of a Venetian Bible dated 1481 – the oldest book in the Colfe Library – and a history of the Bible from 1712.

In last year’s *Review* our involvement in two digital library cataloguing projects, the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC) and the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), was announced. Work on these projects has furthered our knowledge of the Colfe Library and the Leathersellers’ institutional library while making these printed collections easier to discover and access. Over the past year Colfe Library books dated 1651–1700 have

been added to the USTC and work has continued on adding institutional library books to the ESTC.

The bulk of material acquired by the archives and collections this year has been internal transfers of records from colleagues, but has also included the external deposits described on pages 104 – 105.

The heritage collections have benefitted from the work of two Archives and Collections Interns, who have participated fully in activities ranging from processing acquisitions, stocktaking, cataloguing uncatalogued material and creating index records to answering research enquiries, supervising researchers, assisting with the creation of archive displays and even filming videos for the Leathersellers’ *Stories From the Archive* video series. Georgia Sales joined us July–September 2023 while Clarice Ana Mihele began her internship in August 2024.

As ever the archives and collections were much used for outreach and promotional purposes this year. A number of events saw displays of archive and Colfe Library material set out for viewing by attendees, such as the annual Wardens’ briefing, Common Hall, evening receptions for Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools parents and Colfe’s School Year 8 parents, and a visit from the current and past archivists of Colfe’s. It is always gratifying to observe the high level of interest in which attendees take this opportunity to see original, often historic items face-to-face. This interest is replicated by that of visitors attending tours of Leathersellers’ Hall, such as those on tours run as part of the Open House

Festival in September 2023, visits from Year 7 students from our associated schools and Federation senior staff, and tours for attendees of the Link and Learn event for our charity partners.

Researchers who accessed the archives in person during 2023–2024 included Dr Ian Stone, who consulted records of Herold’s Institute Leather Tanning School and the Leathersellers’ Company’s Technical College while researching leather trade education for a book the Company has commissioned him to write on the history of the British leather trade 1800–2000, and individuals researching the Swift and Dimbleby families in the 17–18th centuries, the history of The Drive in Barnet and female membership of livery companies 1400–1600.

Topics of research of remote enquirers were many and varied and included Morris Charles Lamb, Director of the Light Leather Department at the Technical College before the Second World War; the Leathersellers’ garlands, used annually at the installation of the Master and Wardens; Dr Constant Ponder; Colfe Library books containing Hebrew script; James Bunce senior and junior; boundary stones and the Warden’s bungalow at Leathersellers’ Close, the Company’s almshouses in Barnet; Harry Collison (Master 1937–1938); the Leathersellers’ hearse cloths of the 16th and 17th centuries; historic lead cisterns in the fifth Leathersellers’ Hall; Sir John Staples (Lord Mayor and Master 1885–1886); and elaboratively decorated initials in the historic Wardens’ accounts.

A more unusual use of the archives, collections and Hall was as artistic



Leathersellers’ Christmas card 2023, designed during a Creative Dimension Trust workshop and inspired by the Company’s archives

inspiration in workshop courses on watercolour miniatures and architectural drawing skills, run by our charity partner the Creative Dimension Trust at Leathersellers’ Hall. Talented young people were able to gain skills and confidence in these creative areas, inspired by visual items from the archives such as historic menus, our Book of Ordinances, membership registers and Wardens’ accounts with decorative lettering, a heraldic certificate of arms and architectural plans and designs, as well as by objects displayed around the Hall and the architecture of St Helen’s Place and the Hall itself.

With the introduction of a new Company and Foundation website this year much work has been done to update the information available about the Leathersellers’ history, the content of the archives, library and object collections and how these can be accessed by members and the public.



Leathersellers’ former lead cistern, 1671, subject of a research enquiry

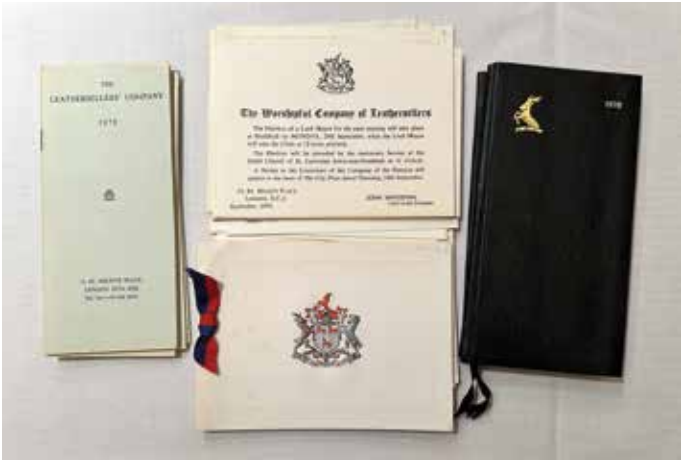
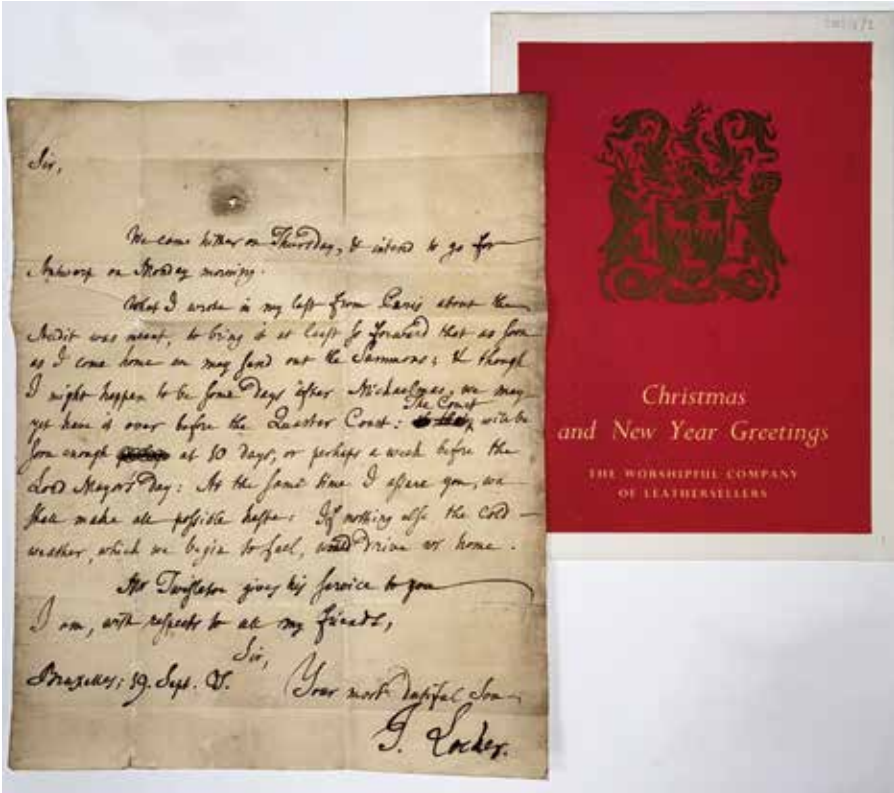
Gifts and Acquisitions

Kate Higgins
Archivist



Master's gift
Mark Williams, Master 2023–2024, has thoughtfully presented the Company with a Montblanc special edition 'Baby' fountain pen, together with a sterling silver ink stand and inkwell – both made in London in 1909 – to commemorate his year as Master. This practical gift springs from Mark's discovery during his year that there was no dedicated pen for Masters to use when signing documents. It will be used on all appropriate occasions in the future.

Historic Christmas card and Assistant Clerk's letter
Two items have been purchased for the archive collections this year. The first is a picturesque Company Christmas card from the 1950s. The second, a remarkable find on eBay, is a letter from John Locker, then Assistant Clerk, to his father, Clerk Stephen Locker, in September 1715. Writing from Brussels, John discusses timing the annual audit (a task always done by the Wardens) around that of the quarterly Court meeting. This is the earliest Clerk's correspondence now found in the archives.



Company diaries and ephemera
Past Master Nigel Pullman answered a January 2024 call for archival deposits of Leatherseller diaries, menus and other ephemera by generously depositing a gift of Company diaries/calendars, menus, summons cards for the elections of the Lord Mayor, Sheriffs and other City officers, Election Day service sheets and other items dating from the 1970s and 1980s. These fill gaps in our collections and have already begun to serve as a useful resource.

Historic Leathersellers box and ladies' gloves
In spring 2024 we received a generous gift from Wendy Halford, niece of Past Masters Lewis A. Powell (Master 1971–1972) and Radclyffe E. C. "Copper" Powell (Master 1975–1976) and granddaughter of Liveryman Radclyffe L. Powell (Third Warden 1931–1932). She presented the Company with a leather-bound, velvet-lined presentation box imprinted with the Leathersellers' heraldic symbols, together with the five beautifully-preserved pairs of leather women's formal gloves stored within. The box and gloves previously belonged to her grandmother Olive Mary Powell, née Turner, and would have come into Olive's possession no later than the end of the 1930s. It was formerly customary that ladies attending Company ladies' dinners would each be presented with a pair of gloves at the end of the evening, but unfortunately gaps in our collection of historic menus means that we have no way to identify the specific dinners at which these gloves were presented. This wonderful deposit fills a gap in our object collections, providing new artefactual evidence of Company hospitality in the first half of the 20th century.



Environmental, Social and Governance Report

An outcome of our recently launched strategy is to develop our Environmental, Social and Governance approaches and practices. A common theme for ESG this year has been data collection for accurate measurement and future analysis of our activities. We hope to use data gathered to inform and improve the ongoing impact of our work across the whole organisation.



Environmental

We are actively engaged in thinking about the environment across a range of touch points, from our investments and our approach to grant funding, to sourcing leather and creating a greener location for our members, staff, and tenants at St Helen’s Place.

Carbon emissions

A review of our environmental impact identified actions already taken and what further steps were required to reduce our carbon emissions. Most significantly, the Leathersellers’ Foundation’s investment portfolio was moved to new fund managers with a specific ESG mandate. The result of this, as shown in a subsequent carbon audit covering three years of activity, was that emissions from investments decreased by 84%. The audit found an overall decrease in the Leathersellers’ scopes 1, 2, and 3 emissions of 58% between 2021 and 2023 – largely driven by the change in the Foundation’s investment portfolio.

Additional measures and recommendations are being considered to help reduce our scope 1 (direct emissions) and scope 2 emissions (electricity consumption, renewable and non-renewable energy), which increased over the three-year period, the primary reason being the normalisation of post-pandemic building occupation on the St Helen’s estate, particularly 100 Bishopsgate.

Nature

Following the successful completion of 3 St Helen’s Place, which sources energy from 100% renewable suppliers and has an EPC A rating, and with the arrival of new tenants moving into the building, the decision was made to enhance the natural environment of the street with a reimagined approach to planting.

Previously, plants were replaced at periods throughout the year, whereas the choice of plants and new maintenance schedule look to create a year-round green space with no disposal of plants, reducing waste and essentially replicating the organic cycle of a garden. Plants were also selected to consider the importance of pollinators in support of the Pan Livery ‘Pollinating London Together’ initiative.

The Leathersellers’ Company commissions a selection of leather goods throughout the year, offering commissions to makers previously supported by the Leathersellers’ Foundation. Leather for a number of items this year was sourced from British Pasture Leather, the first supplier of leather made exclusively from the hides of animals raised on regenerative farms in the UK. The Company also sponsored an event featuring their work at this year’s Groundswell event – a regenerative agriculture festival – hosted by Pasture for Life.

Grant funding

The Leathersellers’ Foundation held its annual Link and Learn event at Leathersellers’ Hall, which brings together charity partners and fellow funders to connect, collaborate and share learning. This year’s event focused on the topic of sustainability, featuring guest speakers and panel discussions on supporting and retaining staff, and energy sustainability.

The Foundation’s 2024 Responsive Grants Programme also focused on energy sustainability, offering holders of Main Charity Grants the opportunity to apply for grants to invest in their energy sustainability and reduce energy costs. The Foundation delivered carbon literacy training for 20 of its grantees; energy audits for 15 grantees; and made over £90,000 of capital improvement grants in June 2024.

Social

Building connections and fostering opportunity are at the heart of our continued support for our alumni community. Our alumni are part of the Leathersellers’ Alumni Network – a thriving, and growing network of individuals who have benefitted from the Company or Foundation’s assistance during their time in Sixth Form, at university, or in other types of training. This year’s alumni event at Leathersellers’ Hall offered a space to bring our alumni together and help foster more opportunities through meaningful connections.

Our Added Value Programme looks beyond grant funding to further support the work of our partners in charity, education, leather, and the City of London. This year partners and grantees held a range of events at Leathersellers’ Hall, from away days and breakfast events to evening receptions, including the Children’s Society’s launch of their annual Good Childhood Report.

Our membership continues to contribute to the long-term success of our partners and now participate at every level of the governance structure at the Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools, helping them to provide opportunity and outstanding education to more young people in Lewisham.

Governance

The publication of the Leathersellers’ Strategy articulated two years of work synthesising new thinking and approaches with the commitments that have always defined us. We have clear objectives describing what we want to achieve in both the Company and Foundation, with associated outcomes, and an evolving measurement framework.

Through our strategy we are committed to becoming an open, engaged, and responsive organisation, with an engaged and diverse membership. To help us achieve this ambition we conducted a membership survey, which looked at communications, perceptions, and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. The information provided by members will help us to identify gaps in our provision of support, provide an essential baseline of data for measuring progress, and ensure that we have practices in place to develop an inclusive organisation.

We also advanced our understanding of organisational risk, and now have in place a dynamic risk matrix, which is actively updated and reported on, with the Senior Management Team implementing agreed mitigations.

Membership

Master and Wardens



Nicholas Tusting

Master 2024–2025

Nicholas is a third generation Leatherseller. He became a Liveryman in 1984, served as Third Warden in 2008 and was admitted to the Court in 2011. After attending Shrewsbury School and reading Natural Sciences at Cambridge University, he was commissioned into the Royal Navy and explored the Atlantic Ocean from North Cape to South Georgia.

Following his career in the Navy, Nick completed a MBA at Cranfield University and joined the family leather business, initially trading skins and hides from India, North America and Nigeria and latterly making shoes in Asia.

Nick has been married to Sara for 38 years and they have four children, three of whom are Liverymen, together with six grandchildren. Nick and Sara run a small farm that includes a herd of British White cattle.

He is a Trustee of The Leathercraft Trust (formerly the Museum of Leathercraft) in Northampton. Nick is an enthusiastic sailor, which takes him to the West Coast of Scotland each year. He has also built boats using traditional methods, is an active member of the Arts Society, and has a keen interest in naval history, walking, and regenerative farming.



Martin Dove

Second Warden

Martin is the third child of John Dove, and his family’s connections with the Leathersellers date back to 1839. Admitted to the Livery in 1984 and to the Court in 2009, he served as Fourth Warden in 2005. He chairs the Finance Committee, is a Member of the Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools and has served on the Charity Committee.

State school educated at Helsby in Cheshire, Martin read Geography and completed a Theology Diploma at King’s College London. He qualified with PriceWaterhouseCoopers and then worked in or for the public sector, including the Commonwealth Development Corporation and the NHS. Career highlights range from creating the Ngapani Coffee Estate in Malawi and setting up a venture capital company in Thailand to leading assurance reviews of the Elizabeth Tower in Westminster Palace. The latter connects to his family’s building roots, with Dove Brothers engaged in Leathersellers’ and City building for over two hundred years. Martin now leads independent assurance review teams for major government projects, facilitates learning and development for Senior Responsible Owners, and advises on strategic, complex delivery issues of Government Major Projects.

Martin has been married to Sharon, a social worker and teaching assistant, for 37 years. They have three children, Rachael, Elly and Will, who are all Leathersellers, and one granddaughter, Juno. Home is Wotton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire with a surfing base in Pembrokeshire. They share interests in the Church, growing fruit and vegetables, travel, hiking, watching tennis and local wildlife habitat mapping. Martin is a keen runner and a lifelong supporter of Liverpool FC.



Richard Preston

Third Warden

Richard became a Liveryman in 1995, served as Steward in 2016 and currently sits on the Finance Committee. He is the third generation of Prestons in the Leathersellers’ Company, his grandfather having been Master in 1976, and he is brother to fellow Liverymen Nick (Fourth Warden in 2023) and Sarah Barr.

Richard was educated at the King’s School, Canterbury and Peterhouse, Cambridge, where he studied engineering and management studies. After a brief stint at Westland Helicopters in Yeovil, he qualified as a Chartered Accountant with Ernst & Young. Subsequently he worked at Cable & Wireless and lastly as CFO at Ceres Power, a plc developing clean energy technology, for 10 years. He is currently taking a career break and in 2024 became a Trustee of the Leathersellers’ Federation of Schools in Lewisham.

He has been married to Chivonne for 23 years and they have three girls, Tabitha, Sophie and Gemma, all of whom are currently at university.

Richard enjoys active pursuits including indoor hockey, hill walking and running with Tonbridge Athletic Club. He also enjoys travelling, has taken up pottery, and supports various local organisations in Tunbridge Wells.



Serena Cheng KC

Fourth Warden

Serena attended Colfe’s School on a Leathersellers’ scholarship in the 1990s and returned to serve on its Governing Board for around 15 years in the 2000s.

She joined the Charity Committee as Steward in 2020–2021 and served a further year as Junior Liveryman in 2021–2022. She will now sit on the Education and Property Committees during her year as Fourth Warden.

Serena is a barrister specialising in engineering and energy disputes. She was nominated for the Construction and Energy Silk of the Year award at The Legal 500 UK Bar Awards in 2022 and for the Silk of the Year award at the Legal Business Awards in 2023, and was named as one of Business Today’s “Top 10 Most Influential Arbitration Lawyers Dominating Asia-Pacific’s Legal Landscape” in the same year.

She lives in London with her husband and 10-year-old son.

Stewards

Our Stewards for the coming year are **Oliver Russell**, Director of Oliver Russell Electrical Ltd and son of Michael Bradly Russell (Master 2018–2019); **Andrew Bailey**, Director of Charles F. Stead & Co Ltd tannery; **Katherine Saxon**, Managing Director at Portland PR Ltd and daughter of Ian Russell (Master 2016–2017); and **Helen Marasha**, Service Leader at Christ Church London Stockwell and Co-Founder of BIGKID Foundation.



Stewards from left to right: Oliver Russell; Katherine Saxon; Andrew Bailey; Helen Marasha

Election Day Service, June 2024

Our annual Election Day Service took place on 12th June 2024 at St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate. It was led by the Honorary Chaplain the Revd Dr Ben Sargent, with the sermon being given by this year’s Select Preacher the Bishop of London, the Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally.

The Bishop’s sermon was based upon Psalm 85: 8–13 and the theme of love and faithfulness, righteousness and peace being the places in which we should put our feet, as encapsulated by the golden rule of ‘Love our neighbour as ourselves’. References were also made to St David’s view – expressed shortly before his death – that walking in joy and faith and doing the little things are essential to Christian life.

The congregation was serenaded by a joint choir formed of pupils from Colfe’s School and Prendergast School, who sang the pieces *Ex Ore Innocentium* by John Ireland and John Rutter’s *A Gaelic Blessing*.

Admissions and Retirements

This year saw the retirement of Past Master **Miles Emley** from the Court. He had been an Assistant since 2008, served as Master in 2011–2012 and Third Warden in 2006–2007, and has been a Liveryman for 45 years after being admitted to the Livery in 1979. Past Master **Ian Russell** resigned from the Court after 18 years of service. Ian, who served as Master in 2016–2017 and Fourth Warden in 2003–2004, remains a Liveryman. We are grateful to Miles and Ian for their many years of dedicated service to the Company.

We were delighted to welcome as new Assistants **Jeremy Curtis** and **Jasper Holmes** in March 2024. Jeremy, head of the London office of Cripps Pemberton Greenish solicitors, is the son of Past Master Emeritus David Richard Curtis and served as Third Warden in 2021–2022, having joined the Livery in 1991. Jasper has been on the Livery since 1988 and served as Third Warden in 2016–2017. He is the son of Richard Holmes (Third Warden 1982–1983), grandson of Sir Stephen Holmes (Master 1967–1968) and great-great-great-grandson of Jasper Thomas Holmes (Master 1818–1819 and 1826–1827). He works as a freelance copywriter with a sideline as a second-hand book dealer.

One Liveryman has retired this year: **Simon Polito**, who joined the Livery in 1976 and served as an Assistant in 2003–2019. We are pleased to welcome **Hugo Cooke**, **Katherine Ward** and **Emily Patrick** as new members of the Livery.

In March 2024 **Sir Kenneth Olisa** OBE CStJ FRSA FBCS was made an Honorary Freeman and Liveryman in recognition of his distinguished services to the country as Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London and shared endeavour with the Company in education and philanthropy.

This year has seen the admittance of eight new members of the Freedom. **Edward Polito**, **William Barrow**, and **Matthew Thornton** were admitted by Patrimony and **Elizabeth Lethbridge**, **Yusuf Osman**, **Harry Johnson** and **Alice Chambers** were admitted by Redemption. In addition we admitted an Honorary Freeman, **Gillian Proctor**, who is Principal Lecturer at the School of Design, De Montfort University.

Joshua Bradly Russell was bound apprentice to his grandfather Past Master Michael Bradly Russell in July 2024 for a term of four years.

Deaths

John Robert Tusting OBE (1932–2024)
John Tusting died, aged 91, in May 2024. He served as Master in 1990–1991, Fourth Warden in 1977–1978 and as a Court Assistant 1980–2006. Admitted to the Livery in 1954, he was a Liveryman for 70 years. He was the son of John Charles Tusting, father of Nicholas Tusting (Master 2024–2025) and Liverymen William Tusting and Alistair Tusting, and grandfather of Liverymen Lucy McLaren, John Edward Tusting, James Tusting and Edward Tusting. He is survived by his wife, Jane Tusting.

Major George Edward Preston (1942–2024)
George Preston died, aged 82, in March 2024. He was admitted to the Livery in 1977 and served as Fourth Warden in 1999–2000. He was the son of Philip Preston (Master 1976–1977) and father of Liverymen Nicholas Preston, Richard Preston and Sarah Barr.

Hugh Royston Jenkins CBE (1933–2024)
Hugh Jenkins died, aged 90, in March 2024. He was admitted to the Livery in 1988.

William Hopley (1941–2024)
William Hopley died, aged 82, in March 2024. He joined the staff of the Leathersellers’ Company as Assistant Butler in 1973 having previously worked at ICI head office and for John Paul Getty II. He served as the Leathersellers’ Head Butler from 1976 until his retirement in 2000.



John Tusting

Master 1990–1991

To many Leathersellers John Tusting epitomised all that was best about the Company. A warm, generous, humane figure, he was interested in all aspects of the Company’s work. For many years he headed one of the most prestigious leather manufacturing companies in Britain and therefore knew inside out all the challenges and rewards of running a successful leather company and what support the leather industry needed from the Leathersellers. He was also deeply involved in the Company’s educational and charitable work, having himself been the inspiration of a local youth charity (the Chellington Centre), near to his home, that after many tribulations proved to be the success he envisaged.

John was a member of the Court for a long period of time – 26 years – and served as Master in 1990–1991, a busy time for the Company. The new building at the end of St Helen’s Place was ‘topped out’ in June 1991, with John being presented with a silver trowel, suitably engraved, after he had helped to smooth the final layer of cement. One issue with the building was long discussion over its name. An early favourite was “Corium Court,” reflecting the Master’s close involvement in the Corium Club, an organisation that grouped together all the students and former students of the old Leathersellers’ College in Bermondsey as well as its successors the National Leathersellers’ Centre and the British School of Leather Technology. As Chairman of the Leather Industries Advisory Committee, John presided over the club’s first reunion in Paris.

The name ‘Exchequer Court’ was eventually chosen for marketing reasons. The building was opened in May the following year, with the rent received from the leaseholder forming a significant boost to the Charity Committee’s budget. In John’s year as Master the Leathersellers’ Company Charitable Fund, now The Leathersellers’ Foundation, made grants totalling more than £1m to charities – setting a clear direction that the Company was later to follow. These included grantees such as Centre Point, which helps homeless young people in London, and the Guildhall School of Music. Both are still thriving.

During John’s year another milestone was marked: Malcolm Mace was promoted to be Assistant Butler. Little was anyone to know then that Malcolm was to go on to look after John at dinners and other events for longer than anyone else in the Company. And it was during John’s year as Master that Diana, then Princess of Wales, agreed to have her portrait painted for HMS *Cornwall*, the ship adopted by the Leathersellers. The painting is one of only a handful of portraits of Diana to be painted from life, and is poignant owing to her early death just a few years later.

John was in many ways the patriarch of the Leathersellers. He presided for a long time over the family business, now spanning five generations, and established the prestigious brand of leather bags, cases and accessories for which Tusting has become renowned.

His commitment to Chellington, a fine old church near his family home that had become redundant and was deconsecrated in the 1960s, was dogged and spirited. Used briefly as a youth camping centre, it was about to be closed and boarded up because of health and safety regulations. But in 1998 John came to the rescue, engaged an architect, found most of the large sum of money needed for its conversion into a residential youth centre and, finally, saw the success of his project. Along the way he pestered the Leathersellers for funds – given at first reluctantly, but later with enthusiasm when the Charity Committee saw the final thriving centre after conversion. John was an accomplished watercolour artist, and the church was often a favourite subject for his hand-painted Christmas cards.

In retirement he was a regular attendee at Leathersellers’ functions, a welcome guest often at lunches because of his warm sociable manner and keen enthusiasm for the Company. He was ably supported by his wife Jane and was proud to see his sons join the Company. He died at the age of 91, but sadly did not live to see out the year of his son Nicholas becoming Master Leatherseller.

Michael Binyon

The Court

- Master**
Nicholas Tusting
- Second Warden**
Martin Dove
- Third Warden**
Richard Preston
- Fourth Warden**
Serena Cheng KC
- Immediate Past Master**
Mark Williams
- Senior Member**
Charles Barrow
- Court Assistants**
Matthew Pellereau
Martin Pebody
Antony Barrow
Michael Bradly Russell
Christopher Barrow
Jonathan Muirhead OBE DL
Gavin Bacon
Clare Lennon
David Barrow
James Lang
Richard Chard
Timothy Fooks
Hamish Williams
Sean Williams
Caspar Williams
William Cock
Alistair Tusting
Mark Berman
Jasper Holmes
Jeremy Curtis

Committees

- Policy**
Nicholas Tusting
Martin Dove
Mark Williams
Charles Barrow
Matthew Pellereau
Gavin Bacon
David Barrow
Hamish Williams
Alistair Tusting
Angela Brueggemann
- Property**
Charles Barrow
Martin Dove
Serena Cheng KC
Andrew Rothery
William Cock
Jeremy Curtis
Gregory Jones KC
Nicholas Preston
James Purdon
Alexander Emley
- Charity**
Richard Chard
Martin Dove
Richard Preston
Antony Barrow
Clare Lennon
Caspar Williams
Mark Berman
Jasper Holmes
Parminder Nahl
Sarah Barr
Helen Marasha
Alexander Preston
- Education**
Christopher Barrow
Martin Dove
Serena Cheng KC
Matthew Pellereau
Andrew Rothery
Timothy Fooks
Elizabeth Womersley
James Russell
David Sheppard
Oliver Buckley
Katherine Saxon
- Finance**
Martin Dove
Richard Preston
Charles Barrow
Christopher Barrow
Mark Williams
David Barrow
James Lang
Sean Williams
Sophie Collett
Andrew Bailey
- Membership**
Nicholas Tusting
Martin Dove
Mark Williams
Martin Pebody
Michael Bradly Russell
Gavin Bacon
Clare Lennon
Sean Williams
William Cock
- Leather Trade**
Alistair Tusting
Martin Dove
Richard Preston
Jonathan Muirhead OBE DL
Jonathan Loxston
Robert Pound
William Amberg
Nicholas Muirhead
Alice Robinson
Oliver Russell
- Young Livery**
Serena Cooke
Talulla Rendall
Francesca Barrow
Alexander Preston
Emily Patrick
Eleanor Bellfield
Edward Lennon
Ralph-Lewis Ackah

Gregory Jones KC
Sheriff of the City of London,
2024–2025



The coat of arms, crest and motto of Gregory Percy Jones

Liveryman Gregory Jones KC became Aldermanic Sheriff of the City of London on 28th September 2024.

Gregory is the 18th Leatherseller Sheriff, the last being Past Master Nigel Pullman, who was the non-Aldermanic Sheriff in 2012–2013. The last Leatherseller Aldermanic Sheriff was Douglas Rowland Holdsworth Hill, who served in 1966.

A distinguished alumnus of Colfe’s School and New College, Oxford, where he received a Leathersellers’ Exhibition (student grant), Gregory is a barrister who practises at the Bar in chambers at Francis Taylor Building, Inner Temple.

He has served as Alderman for the Ward of Farringdon Without in the City of London since 2017; joined the Leathersellers’ Company Livery in 2003; and served as a Junior Warden on the Court of Assistants in 2020.

The office of Sheriff dates back to at least the 7th century, making it the oldest office in the City of London. Two Sheriffs are elected each year, with one always being an Alderman. The primary role of the Sheriffs is to attend and support the Lord Mayor in carrying out official duties; to attend the Courts of Aldermen and Common Council; to officiate at the Central Criminal Court; and to support the City of London’s programme of activities.

Gregory’s arms depict three frogs on a blue background. The crest is a red fox looking backwards and holding a compass that points to the south-east. The motto ‘Perfer et obdura’ is taken from a line by the Roman poet Ovid: ‘Be patient and tough; someday this pain will be useful to you.’

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The Leathersellers

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