

Dress and the individual in medieval Scotland, 1200–1600

Fully-funded PhD Studentship

Funded by the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership's Scottish Cultural Heritage Consortium

24th May 2019

Applications are invited for an AHRC-funded studentship at the University of Durham and National Museums Scotland. This studentship is one of 6 awards made annually by the Scottish Cultural Heritage Consortium (SCHC) under the AHRC's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme. The project may be undertaken full or part-time; full-time funding covers University fees and a stipend for 3 years that may be supplemented with a further 6-month stipend to support a placement with National Museums Scotland. Additional funding for research expenses is also available.

The award will commence in October 2019. It will be supervised collaboratively by Dr Alice Blackwell (National Museums Scotland) and Professor Sarah Semple (University of Durham), supported by second supervisors at both institutions (Lyndsay McGill, National Museums Scotland and Dr Pam Graves, University of Durham).

Project Summary

The medieval period saw the first moves towards mass production and consumption of dress objects in Scotland. Though museum collections are a rich resource for this newly popular and highly symbolic use of material culture, Scottish research has focussed almost exclusively on high-value jewellery. This doctoral project addresses this significant gap by exploiting neglected stray-finds evidence to deliver the first national exploration of medieval Scottish dress. By exploring chronological and regional trends in personal adornment, and the role of dress in identities and the life-course, the project will inform future research priorities, enhance academic and public understanding of a key part of Scotland's medieval past and contribute to museum collections strategies.

Project description

The medieval period saw the first mass production and consumption of inexpensive dress items in Scotland, giving people new opportunities to embellish and adapt their appearance. Work on dress accessories in England (Egan & Pritchard 2002) has shed invaluable light on broad chronological trends and the range of choices available in popular medieval fashion. There has been no comparable work in Scotland. Though the recovery of fittings and jewellery through excavation and metal detecting points to a rich material culture of popular personal adornment, previous Scottish research on dress has focussed on high-status jewellery (Glenn 2003), non-material evidence (Scott 1987), or discrete case studies (Standley 2013). As a result, broader regional or chronological trends are unclear, and connections to popular fashions in England and other parts of Europe remain unknown.

As well as being widely available, popular dress accessories were laden with symbolism: dress was a canvass used by people of all backgrounds to create and

project personal and group identities. Gilchrist (2012) has demonstrated the value of dress objects in considering the medieval life-course in England, revealing their power in marking moments such as birth, aging and death, and their insights on the aspirations and beliefs of wearers. This kind of perspective, focussing on the meanings of objects to individuals, has yet to be applied systematically to the archaeology of medieval Scotland. Standley (2013) gleaned valuable insights through a case study that embraced part of the Scottish Borders, but the variety of meanings attached to dress objects across culturally and linguistically distinct parts of the country have not been explored.

This doctoral project will address these two significant gaps in research by combining archaeological and stray finds in order to:

- a) deliver the first national exploration of the material culture of medieval Scottish dress;
- b) and draw out a richer understanding of the meanings of objects to people across medieval Scotland.

The project will involve two scales of analysis. In year one, historic stray finds information collated by the Treasure Trove Unit will be compared with excavation assemblages to establish broad chronological and regional patterns. In year two, a proportion of material from the National Collection and three local museum collections will be examined first hand to explore the symbolic, commemorative and protective properties of medieval dress objects in Scotland.

Using this dual-level approach of broad data analysis and case study interrogation of museum collections, the project will address the following key research questions:

- 1) What regional trends and local differences are visible in Scottish medieval dress habits?
- 2) How do the use, circulation and disposal of dress objects differ compared with England?
- 3) To what extent were popular dress fashions in Scotland affected by trends across Europe?
- 4) What meanings were attached to dress objects across Scotland and how do they compare with practices elsewhere?

This doctoral project offers the opportunity to set a new direction for Scottish medieval research by advocating the importance of systemically neglected stray finds evidence and championing interpretative models that prioritise the individual. There is scope to refine the case studies' research direction to suit the student's existing finds' experience or interest. The student will deliver tangible benefits to the heritage sector in directly informing the development and reinterpretation of the national and local museum collections.

Egan, G and Pritchard, F 2002 *Dress accessories 1150–1450*.

Gilchrist, R 2012 *Medieval life: archaeology and the life course*.

Glenn, V 2003 *Romanesque and gothic decorative metalwork and ivory carvings*.

Scott, M C 1987 'Dress in Scotland 1406–1460', unpublished PhD thesis.

Standley, E 2013 *Trinkets and charms: the use, meaning and significance of dress accessories 1300–1700*.

University of Durham

Durham Archaeology Department, ranked 2nd overall in the UK in REF2014, hosts one of the strongest and most distinctive groupings of medieval researchers in the UK, with outstanding expertise in the archaeology of NW Europe (Gerrard/Graves/Semple/Petts). Artefacts analysis is a major research theme, with additional strengths in medieval art (Semple/Graves) and portable material (Semple/Graves/Gerrard). The proposed project aligns well to Durham's Material and Visual Culture research group, a collaborative forum for those involved in artefactual research, while [Durham Archaeomaterials Research Centre](#) provides bespoke opportunities for training and applications in materials analysis relevant to the study of metal artefacts and dress fittings. In addition, comparative and relevant datasets on dress items and metal objects are hosted via major grant-funded projects eg [People and Place](#), Leverhulme 2015–18. We have a medieval research cluster of 13 PhD students working on topics including material culture and identity, dress adornment and jewellery (Werthmann, AHRC; Lake, Leverhulme; Haworth, AHRC), and a vibrant, dedicated postgraduate group, Durham Medieval Archaeologists. We also have a successful track-record in hosting collaborative PhD projects with heritage organisations including Historic England (Gurling; Huntress), the British Museum (Binder; Kelleher) and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS; Kelleher).

In these ways Durham Archaeology offers an ideal academic setting, providing access to key specialist facilities and academic expertise and an active peer-group. Our weekly seminars put students in touch with international scholarship, while additional training pertinent to artefacts and collections can be accessed by auditing MA classes (eg Artefact Studies and Care of Collections) and through hands-on experience with heritage partners – notably Tyne and Wear Museums Service and Bowes – who host relevant medieval collections, and in the case of T&W museums, manage the North East PAS. More broadly the Durham [Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies](#) offers access to Durham's medieval research network and additional key specialists, while the [Centre for the Visual Arts and Cultures](#) provides a vibrant art historical context. Training for small group teaching in the Department and the Durham University Learning and Teaching Award (DULTA) also offers PhD students experience in complementary skills for an academic career.

National Museums Scotland

Originating with the collections of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland in 1851 and in many incarnations since, today National Museums Scotland is one of the UK's leading museums services and has one of the largest multidisciplinary collections in the UK. The group consists of four Museums on four sites: National Museum of Scotland, National Museum of Rural Life, National War Museum, and National Museum of Flight. We also have a state of the art National Museums Collections Centre, which is home to our artefact conservators, photographers and scientist. In 2017, NMS welcomed over 2.1 million visitors to the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh.

We are responsible for the procurement, preservation and promotion of a substantial part of Scotland's cultural, historic, and national heritage. National Museums Scotland has in its care over twelve million objects and our collection has been built up over more than two centuries. They encompass a broad range of subject areas such as archaeology, world cultures, natural sciences, science and technology, decorative art and design, and Scottish history and culture.

A comprehensive and detailed history of National Museums Scotland can be found online at <https://www.nms.ac.uk/about-us/history-of-national-museums-scotland/>.

The successful candidate will be one of 10 on-going AHRC CDP funded students at the National Museums Scotland, 4 of which are based in the Department of Scottish History and Archaeology.

Prior qualifications

Applicants should have a very good undergraduate qualification and a relevant post-graduate degree in archaeology, anthropology, art-history, museum/heritage studies or a related field. They will have some experience of relevant research methods (but note that research training is a key part of the studentship). Applicants without a post-graduate qualification should include with their application a 1-page statement outlining the specifically relevant skills, experience and knowledge they have gained beyond undergraduate degree level, that could be considered equivalent to Masters study.

Funding details

This award is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) through the Scottish Cultural Heritage Consortium. Subject to AHRC eligibility criteria, the studentship will cover Home/EU tuition fees. For those settled in the UK, it also covers a stipend towards living expenses for three years. The value for the stipend in 2018/19 is **£15,009** per annum plus a **£550** additional stipend payment. Additional stipend is available through the Student Development Fund which may be used to support a 6-month placement with National Museums Scotland. An additional £1000 contribution towards research and other expenses is provided by the Museum directly to the Student.

Eligibility

The application

The award is bound by the UK Research and Innovation grant terms and conditions. Please check the eligibility criteria <https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/news/training-grants-january-2018-pdf/> and see the general Grant Guide <https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/publications/rcuk-training-grant-guide-pdf/>. Applicants must be a resident of the UK or the European Economic Area (EEA).

There are residence requirements for research council funding for postgraduate research. These are based on the Education (Fees and Awards) (England) Regulations 2007 and subsequent amendments. Normally to be eligible for a full award a student must have no restrictions on how long they can stay in the UK and have been ordinarily resident in the UK for at least 3 years prior to the start of the studentship (with some further constraint regarding residence for education). Applications cannot be accepted from students liable to pay fees at the Overseas rate.

Students from EU countries other than the UK are generally eligible for a fees-only award. To be eligible for a fees-only award, a student must be ordinarily resident in a member state of the EU; in the same way as UK students must be ordinarily resident in the UK.

The UK Government confirmed on 21 April 2017 that Research Council studentships (including AHRC studentships awarded through the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities) remain open to EU students starting courses in academic year 2018 to 2019, and that the funding support will cover the duration of their course, even if the UK leaves the EU.

The application

Applicants should submit:

- a summary curriculum vitae (max. 2 pages)
- an example of recent academic writing (e.g., Masters chapter or undergraduate dissertation where the applicant does not have a MA qualification)
- a short statement (1 page) outlining your qualification for the studentship, and initial thoughts on how you would approach the project
- the names and contact details of two academic referees

Please submit your application via email to s.j.semple@durham.ac.uk and a.blackwell@nms.ac.uk. Applications will close **24th May 2019 at noon**. Please ensure your referees can provide (on request, via email) an academic reference by **31st May 2019, 5pm**.

Interviews will be held on 7th June 2019 at National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh.