

## **'The lexis of cloth and clothing in Britain c. 700-1450: origins, identification, contexts and change'**

### ***Introduction and background information***

Cloth and clothing have been integral to life for every person since civilization began.

In the Middle Ages dress was an identifier of occupation, status, gender and ethnicity: textiles ranged through opulent, symbolic, utilitarian and recycled. Cloth production and international trade constituted a major sector of the economy of medieval Britain.

However, evidence for medieval textiles and clothing must currently be sought in diverse academic disciplines: archaeology, archaeological textiles, art history, economic history, literature, languages.

The vocabulary of the various languages spoken and written in the British Isles is documented in different specialist dictionaries, yet geographical proximity and interaction through labour and trade would argue that this evidence should be categorised and analysed together.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council has made an award of £765,576 within the Research Grants (Standard) Scheme to fund a 5-year Project to undertake a trans-disciplinary study with the purpose of producing an analytical corpus of medieval dress and textiles terminology of the British Isles in the form of a searchable database, innovatively illustrated.

At its centre is the assembly and examination of textiles/clothing lexis in the early languages of Britain (Old and Middle English; Welsh, Old Irish and minor Celtic languages; Anglo-Norman/French, Medieval Latin, Anglo-Norse), investigating the genesis and subsequent development of the vocabulary.

The terms and their citations from both documentary and literary texts will be analysed in awareness of surviving textiles/dress accessories and graphic images in medieval art.

The Project will investigate the complex relationships between vocabulary, artefact and image. Also included in the database will be definitions in modern English of medieval technical processes and artefacts; and 'thumbnail sketches' of significant surviving artefacts.

## ***About the Project***

The Project began on 6 November 2006.

It is hosted by The University of Manchester, under the direction of Professor Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Professor of Anglo-Saxon Culture in the English and American Studies Subject Area within the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, in conjunction with Dr Cordelia Warr, Lecturer in the History of Art in the Art History and Visual Studies Subject Area of the same School, and Dr Louise Sylvester, Senior Lecturer in English Language in the School of English, University of Central England, Birmingham.

Dr Warr will be replaced during the period of her sabbatical leave (January -December 2007) by Ms Frances Pritchard, Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester.

## ***Project Team***

### **The rest of the Project Team consists of,,,**

Three year, full time post-doctoral Research Assistant based at University of Central England, Birmingham: Dr. Mark Chambers.

Dr Chambers will be specialising in Middle English and Medieval Latin.

Five year, full time post-doctoral Research Assistant based at The University of Manchester: to be appointed.

This person will be responsible for the Old English and Old Norse content and will receive and co-ordinate the Celtic, Middle English and Latin material from other specialists.

Part time programmers based at Manchester: Dave Risley and Dan Abbott

A part-time Administrative Assistant based at Manchester

- Brian Schneider has been appointed to this post, but was unable to take up his duties in November owing to illness.
- Pamela Walker is covering for him from November 2006 to February 2007.

### **Language Consultants:**

Dr MicheAl O'Mainnin, Queen's University, Belfast  
Mrs Patricia Williams, University of Bangor

### **Artists:**

Rosalyn and Peter Lorimer

### **Advisory Board:**

Ms Frances Pritchard, Whitworth Art Gallery  
Professor Emeritus Donald Scragg, The University of Manchester  
Professor David Trotter, University of Aberystwyth

Lexis Project Outline : The lexis of cloth and clothing in Britain c. 700-1450

**Project PhD student, beginning January 2007: Pamela Walker**

- Title of thesis. 'Art sources from Britain for clothing and textiles 1100-1450; genre, tradition, contemporaneity'
- The PhD student will be supervised by Dr Cordelia Warr (Ms Frances Pritchard, 2007) and Professor Gale Owen-Crocker and will be based in Art History and Visual Studies; The University of Manchester

**Update May 1<sup>st</sup> 2008.**

Dr. Stuart Rutten was appointed the five-year full time Research Assistant for the Project, assuming his position on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2007.

Dr. Cordelia Warr returned from Sabbatical leave in January 2008 and took over the supervision of the PhD student from Ms Frances Pritchard.

The Irish Language Consultant is now Dr. Michael Hayes, University of Cork, who joined the Project in May 2007.

Dan Abbott left the IT Department at the end of December 2007. Aubrey Scully has assumed some of his duties.