‘The lexis of cloth and clothing in Britain c. 700-1450: origins, identification, contexts and change’

The Project will investigate the complex relationships between vocabulary, artefact and image. The database will include definitions in modern English of medieval technical processes and artefacts.

A five-year project at The University of Manchester aims to provide the most detailed record ever of what British people used to wear during medieval times.

A team led by Professor Gale Owen-Crocker from the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, will compile a comprehensive database of items worn between 500 and 1,300 years ago.

The £765,000 Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project aims to understand the origins of the names of thousands of garments and textiles to shed some light on a period of British culture which is still relatively unknown.

The interactive database will contain names, illustrations, descriptions and maps of journeys made by cloth merchants.

The team will also include Dr Cordelia Warr from The University of Manchester, Dr Louise Sylvester from the University of Central England and a PhD student.

Professor Owen-Crocker said: “This project gives ordinary people a direct link to their past: they’ll be able to look at clothing worn today and understand how it connects with times gone by.

“Many people wouldn’t know that, for example, garments are often named from the part of the body they cover. Glove, the ancestor of our word ‘glove’, probably derives from a word meaning hand.”

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