

<b>Institution: University of Manchester</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 29 (English Language and Literature)</b>
<b>Title of case study: Raising public awareness of medieval dress and textiles</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>This impact case study focuses on the ways in which original research on Anglo-Saxon textiles has contributed to the heritage industry and increased cultural understanding of early medieval life. Professor Gale Owen-Crocker's research impacts on the public's knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon world by engaging with non-professional historians, re-enactors, textile practitioners and creative writers through public lectures, consultancy work, collaborations with museums and living history organisations.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The impact is based on research that took place at the University of Manchester throughout the period from 1993 to the present day, on medieval textiles and especially on the work of narrative embroidery known as the Bayeux Tapestry. The key researcher involved in this study is Professor Gale Owen-Crocker (Lecturer, 1971-1998; SL, 1998-2005; Reader 2005-2006; Prof. 2006-present).</p> <p>Professor Owen-Crocker's first book on textiles in Anglo-Saxon England [3.1] was published at a time when the understanding of early medieval dress and textile barely existed. Owen-Crocker's research was groundbreaking in first drawing attention to and then, in the review period, building up the entire context for a sphere of Anglo-Saxon culture that was previously thought of as lacking any evidence.</p> <p>One of the key areas of Owen-Crocker's work has been on the narrative embroidery known as the Bayeux Tapestry. While it was for a long time regarded as a purely historical source for the events of the Norman Conquest of 1066, Owen-Crocker's research was the first to discover that the tapestry can also be treated as a source for details of eleventh-century dress and costume, thus as a window on early medieval social life. By showing that we could know much more about Anglo-Saxon life than previously assumed, Owen-Crocker's research founded a whole new field of study, which cross-fertilised textile studies, more traditional Anglo-Saxon literary studies, archaeology and visual studies.</p> <p>In 1997, Professor Owen-Crocker co-founded DISTAFF – 'Discussion, Interpretation and Study of Textile Arts, Fabrics and Fashions'. This group rapidly grew into an international interdisciplinary network of 500 students, scholars, and interested laypeople. It led, in 2005, to her co-founding of the international annual journal, <i>Medieval Clothing and Textiles</i>, of which she remains co-editor; volume 9 is in print, volume 10 in preparation. She is currently co-authoring <i>Medieval Dress and Textiles in Britain: A Multilingual Anthology of Sources</i>, with Louise Sylvester and Mark Chambers (forthcoming in 2014). These combined 'efforts have been instrumental – perhaps essential – in establishing the study of medieval dress and textiles as a legitimate field for scholarly inquiry' [3.4]. In 2006, Professor Owen-Crocker began working with Dr Louise Sylvester from the University of Westminster and Dr Cordelia Warr (Art History) at The University of Manchester on a major AHRC-funded open access research project, ongoing during the review period. 'The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing in Britain c.700-1450: Origins, Identification, Contexts and Change' has created a 5,362-entry database of all the words used for cloth and clothing in all the languages of the British Isles from that period.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research (AOR – Available on request)</b></p> <p>Professor Owen-Crocker's monograph, <i>Dress in Anglo-Saxon England</i> is, in the words of Michael Lewis, Deputy Head of Portable Antiquities &amp; Treasure and Curator, Medieval Collections, British Museum: 'a standard text for scholars and those with a general interest alike. It also provides a benchmark for the work of others' [5.1]. 'The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing in Britain c. 700-1450' was an AHRC-funded project. The <i>Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450-1450</i> is published by a leading publisher in the field and has been favourably reviewed.</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

**Key Publications:**

- [3.1.] G. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England: revised and enlarged edition*. Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2004. pp. 400, 25 plates, 238 figs. (AOR)
- [3.2.] G. Owen-Crocker (with assistant editors Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450-1450*. Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2012. (AOR)
- [3.3.] G. Owen-Crocker with Elizabeth Coatsworth (eds), *Medieval Textiles of the British Isles AD 450-1100: An Annotated Bibliography*, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 445. Oxford, Archaeopress, 2007. (AOR)

**Other Relevant Publications:**

- [3.4.] G. Owen-Crocker, 'Dress and Authority in the Bayeux Tapestry' in *Aspects of Power and Authority in the Middle Ages*, International Medieval research Series 14, eds B. Bolton and C. Meek. Turnhout: Brepols, 2007, pp. 53-72. (AOR)
- [3.5.] G. Owen-Crocker, 'Behind the Bayeux Tapestry', in *The Bayeux Tapestry: new interpretations*, ed. Martin Foys, Karen Overbey, Dan Terkla. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009. pp. 119-29. (AOR)
- [3.6.] G. Owen-Crocker, 'L'altra Conquista Normanna e L' Arazzo di Bayeux' (The Other Norman Conquest and the Bayeux Tapestry) in *1087: costumi della traslazione; ebrei, turchi ed armeni*, ed. Luigi Spezzacatene. Bari: Edizione di pagina, 2010, pp. 53-5. (AOR)

**4. Details of the impact****Context**

Owen-Crocker's research on Anglo-Saxon dress and textile underpins her roles as an expert advisor to museums and galleries, as a disseminator of knowledge via the mass media and publicly oriented conferences, and, in particular, as an advisor to practitioners in the increasingly pervasive culture of heritage and historical re-enactment. Her work is, then, strategically situated at the crossroads between public-sphere scholarship (museums and official exhibits, etc.) and the realm of popular appropriation of more officialised forms of scholarship, often via re-enactment or narrativisation.

**Pathways to Impact**

Professor Owen-Crocker's research has been disseminated through specialist as well as more general media outlets. She appeared in a 1999 edition of the BBC's 'Meet the Ancestors' as an Anglo-Saxon dress expert and she was interviewed on the BBC Radio 4 programme *Woman's Hour* in 2006 (1.185 million listeners based on the average weekly reach of the programme according to the BBC). A programme on 'The Makers of the Bayeux Tapestry', which she wrote and presented, was broadcast in April 2013 on BBC Radio 3 as part of 'The Essay' series (60 thousand listeners, according to the BBC's own estimate).

Her work on the Bayeux Tapestry has led to public engagement through conferences with significant numbers of non-academic attendees. She was a major contributor to 'Le Colloque International de Bayeux' at Bayeux in March 2007 and to 'The Bayeux Tapestry at the British Museum: New Research on the Bayeux Tapestry' in London in July 2008.

**Reach and Significance of the Impact****Impact on the heritage industry**

Professor Owen-Crocker's research has contributed to museum, gallery and council exhibitions that reconstruct the Anglo-Saxon past.

In 2010 she advised on the design of the pall covering the coffin of King Alfred in a Winchester street pageant commemorating the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the translation of his relics. The group Hyde900 re-enacted the procession that transferred the bones of Alfred the Great, his son Edward the Elder and Alswitha (Alfred's wife) from the site of New Minster (in the centre of Winchester) to Hyde Abbey in 1110, where the bones remained under the ground until the 1860s (and possibly beyond). The event involved local schools (especially the school closest to the Hyde Abbey site, St. Bede's Primary School), churches, the University of Winchester, the Mayor of Winchester (who

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

played the part of King Henry I), and was a successful community event based on the idea of re-living local history [5.8].

In 2011 Owen-Crocker advised an embroiderer undertaking a community project in Guernsey on the history of the island that was inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry. During the 'Easter Festival of Living History' (22-25 April 2010), Action Company, a group of costumed performers, retold 'the stories from Guernsey's turbulent past and wonderfully rich heritage' [5.9].

Owen-Crocker also acted as a specialist advisor to the author of the historical novel *Shadow on the Crown* (Viking/Penguin, June 2013), the first volume in a fictional trilogy on Emma of Normandy. The author needed details of clothing and costume for her novel, since 'the details of apparel and furnishings are of vast interest to readers of historical fiction', but she also believes that the role of Owen-Crocker's research goes beyond the realm of historical data, and thinks that 'there is often something even more subtle going on in these exchanges': for instance, Owen-Crocker's 2011 reading of the figure of the priest in the Bayeux Tapestry as 'raising the female figure from the dead' influenced both language and plot of her novel [5.2].

In May 2013, Owen-Crocker was consulted by the Strathmartine Trust, St. Andrews, Scotland (an independent study centre to support the study of Scottish History) about the dress on a figure on part of a medieval seal matrix found by metal detecting in Orkney. In the same month, she was also consulted by 360 Productions in relation to a BBC2 series about the life of William Marshal (1147–1219), Earl of Pembroke.

At the International Congress on Medieval Studies held annually in Kalamazoo, Michigan (May 2013), Owen-Crocker and her partner from DISTAFF organized an event with 'La Belle Compagnie', a living history organization focusing on English life during the period of the Hundred Years War. Of the 185 participants, ca. 90 were not academics. The company dressed four representative English knights (from approximately 1350, 1380, 1415, and 1450) in historically accurate reproduction armour to illustrate trends in armour design and techniques over this period. The presentation included documentary, pictorial, and material evidence, supplemented by the knights' feedback on the practical experience of wearing and working in each type of armour. The four re-enactors, their helpers and the narrator in the 'knights' session work variously in graphic design, IT, project management, engineering and creative sculpture and are all members of 'La Belle Compagnie' [5.9; 5.10]. Owen-Crocker was invited in April 2013 to be a guest of honour to the large Convention 'Figments and Filaments', celebrating costuming and cosplay in Kansas City, MO, in 2014.

**Impact on the public's understanding and knowledge of Anglo-Saxon dress**

The project 'The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing in Britain c. 700-1450: Origins, Identification, Contexts and Change' provides information about current activity, a regular newsletter and a 'word of the month' item. The whole web-based searchable database (5,362 entries) is an open access resource. The site went live in January 2007; between January 2008 and July 2013 it had well over half a million hits and currently receives an average of 492 hits a day. Since its inception it has had 79,265 unique visitors, of which we estimate a minimum of 65,000 to fall in the review period [5.4]. The database has operated as a two-way system of knowledge exchange and public engagement. On the one hand, it has provided members of the public with instant access to all the words used for cloth and clothing in all the languages of the British Isles from that period; on the other, it has used the public's knowledge to direct some of the team's lexical research, as two examples demonstrate: 1) A Wars of the Roses re-enactor, got in touch with the team to gain information on the correct recreation of an early fifteenth-century Cluniac nun for an event at Delapre Abbey, the site of the battle of Northampton in 1460 [5.6]. This enquiry led the team to pursue a new strand of lexical research. 2) Another user was an expert in medieval and post-medieval dyeing and on the committee of the London based MEDATS (Medieval Dress and Textiles Society), who wrote of the website: 'This is especially useful in finding any references in Chaucer's work to textiles and textile dyeing amongst all else' [5.6].

The impact of Owen-Crocker's research on the public's understanding of Anglo-Saxon dress is

## Impact case study (REF3b)

also evident in her role as a public lecturer. She lectured at 'The Bayeux Tapestry at the British Museum: New Research on the Bayeux Tapestry' in London in July 2008. 'With 28 speakers from around the world this was the largest gathering dedicated to a discussion of the Bayeux Tapestry in the UK in recent times. The conference attracted 180 delegates of which more than a half were non-academics with a general interest' [5.1]. The British Museum conference was reported in a five-page article in the *BBC History Magazine*, which also profiled each of the six speakers, including Owen-Crocker [5.5]. The Deputy Head of Portable Antiquities & Treasure and Curator, Medieval Collections, British Museum, makes the link between scholarship and public understanding clear when he writes that 'Professor Owen-Crocker's attention to detail is a signature feature of her work. This has highlighted to both academics and the public alike the significance of variation in the Tapestry imagery, thus changing the way we understand and examine [it]' [5.1].

In February 2013, Owen-Crocker lectured to the Welsh Guild of Graduates in Liverpool on the Bayeux Tapestry. There were 50 non-specialist participants, among whom were members of the Liverpool Decorative and Fine Arts Society. As the Trustee of the Makers Guild in Wales reports, The Reverend leader of the Welsh community in Liverpool said in his vote of thanks that he wished he had heard the lecture before he had visited the Bayeux Tapestry rather than afterwards, as he now had a far better understanding of the subject-matter than he had before. This sentiment was reiterated by many other members of the audience during the informal socialising afterwards' [5.3]. This strand of Owen-Crocker's public engagement activities has continued with her participation in events targeted to non-specialist audiences: in 2010 she participated in and contributed to the catalogue to the exhibition *1087: Costumi della traslazione; ebrei, turchi ed armeni* in Puglia (Italy) (3,000 visitors [5.6]); in 2011 she gave a public talk at the 'Medieval Dress and Textiles Society Spring Meeting' (Mixed audience, 119 people); in February 2013 she spoke on approaches to the making of dress and its production at an Applied Art Workshop at King's College, London, to an international audience of 70, of whom 40 were non-academic [5.7].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

All claims referenced in text.

- 5.1 Letter from the Deputy Head, Portable Antiquities & Treasure and Curator, British Museum.
- 5.2 Letter from the author of *Shadow on the Crown* (Viking/Penguin, 2013).
- 5.3 Email from the Trustee of the Makers Guild in Wales.
- 5.4 Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project database statistics.
- 5.5 D. Musgrove, 'How English is the Bayeux Tapestry', *BBC History Magazine*, 9:7, 2008, 26-31.
- 5.6 Email from the Honorary AHRC Research Fellow, 'The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing'.
- 5.7 <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/chs/eventrecords/2012-13/constructing-clothing.aspx>
- 5.8 Edward Fennell, Member- Hyde900 Executive,  
<http://www.winchester.gov.uk/news/2010/mar/king-alfred-reburial-procession/>
- 5.9 <http://guernseytrademedia.com/blog/post/VisitGuernsey-Events-for-2011.aspx>;  
[www.museum.guernsey.net](http://www.museum.guernsey.net)
- 5.10 Email from La Belle Compagnie, re-enactment group.