**Project title:** The Holland Collection: exploring a costume collection within its cultural context

**Supervisors:** Dr Anne Boultwood, Professor Christian Frost

Cultural partner: Pauline Rushton, National Museums Liverpool

**Project description:**

This is a collaborative project with the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, exploring a costume collection and its cultural context. The Holland collection is an archive of 30 Edwardian garments belonging to the women of a wealthy merchant family during the city’s most successful period, when it was one of the major ports in the country. Walter Holland was a senior partner in the shipping firm of Lampart & Holt, and the family was actively involved in the city’s social life. The collection, along with other documentation, represents a comprehensive archive of one family.

The Holland women, mother and three daughters, were highly fashionable, and ordered many of their clothes from expensive Parisian couturiers, but also patronised the exclusive ladies’ outfitters in Liverpool’s Bold Street. At the time, this was a significant fashion centre, where clothes were made to measure on the premises. In contrast to the glamorous lives of their customers, the seamstresses *lived-in*, working in harsh conditions with very little pay.

The collection has the potential to provide a unique insight into the social and cultural life of Liverpool at a significant period in its history, within the context of its trade and commercial heritage. In particular, the significance of Bold Street is an under-researched area.

**The project will focus on the following research questions:**

1. How does the Holland collection contribute to our understanding of the lives of the women of a particular family?
2. What can the collection tell us of the cultural milieu of Liverpool at the time?
3. To what extent is the collection a social barometer of the period?

This is an exciting opportunity to work with a leading art gallery on a singular collection. It will add materially to the knowledge base of the National Museums of Liverpool, and will contribute to the public understanding of Liverpool’s social, cultural and commercial, as well as its fashionable, heritage. It has the potential to provide an evidence base for the future dissemination of this valuable cultural resource.