



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

Northern Bridge Consortium Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDAs)

Fully-funded PhD opportunities

Title: **Heritage and the Arts at Seaton Delaval Hall, Northumberland**

Partner Organisation: **Seaton Delaval Hall / The National Trust**

Lead supervisor: **Dr. Helen Williams** (Northumbria), helen.williams@northumbria.ac.uk

Partner supervisor: **Emma Thomas** (NT), emma.thomas@nationaltrust.org.uk

The National Trust at Seaton Delaval Hall and the Northern Bridge Consortium are inviting applications from qualified candidates interested in developing doctoral projects that will use and shed light on collections relating to the property. If successful, the candidate will undertake a fully-funded studentship which will include a placement of up to six months at Seaton Delaval Hall. The two potential projects outlined below focus on key collections in the North-East of England and will be supervised jointly by academics and heritage professionals.

Seaton Delaval Hall is a National Trust property designed by Restoration playwright and architect Sir John Vanbrugh. Its main narrative concerns the eighteenth-century generation of the Delaval family, especially John Hussey and his brother Francis Blake, and their respective families. The Delavals were aspiring actors, playwrights, and artists, and their works were well received in the period. The family archive, part housed at the Hall and at Northumberland Archives, provides a rare and remarkable insight into domestic life and hospitality at a major country seat. Seaton Delaval Hall is currently undergoing significant capital works and investment in innovative modes of heritage education and interpretation. This is an exciting opportunity for re-framing the public narratives about the Delaval family and their cultural contexts. Potential applicants are encouraged to consider one of the following projects:

PhD Project (1): Arts, Patronage and Heritage Interpretation at Seaton Delaval Hall

This research project has two strands. The first is archival, and considers the house collection

in conjunction with the family papers at Northumberland Archive, in order to piece together the Delavals' contribution to the arts and culture of the eighteenth century. It will engage with the many surviving paintings, drawings, inventories and letters, and some surviving playscripts which are currently housed in Northumberland Archives and have not been brought to public attention. Such a reading of these collections will enable research to be undertaken exploring some of the following themes:

- class, acting and the stage in the eighteenth century
- hospitality, domesticity and the arts at Seaton Delaval Hall
- home-made theatre spaces
- the Delaval's patronage of notorious literary figures like the pornographer John Cleland
- the relationship between politics and the arts.

The second strand of the project involves reporting on current representations of eighteenth-century arts and patronage in the heritage sector and recommendations for best practice. This will ensure that new narratives developed as a result of the archival research can be developed into heritage interpretation opportunities at Seaton Delaval Hall, ripe for its reopening to the public.

There may also be opportunities to develop community outreach and education activities, and a placement of up to six months' duration may focus on this, and/or a curatorial project.

PhD project (2): **Georgian Amateur Theatricals and Built Heritage**

The eighteenth-century home theatre has made and unmade the reputations of many a literary family. It helped establish Elizabeth Inchbald's successful literary career and led to the scandalous elopement of Lady Charlotte Spencer with amateur actor, Edward Nares. But how has theatrical space shaped these histories? Scholarship on 'private theatricals' fails to discriminate between theatrical spaces at home (like the theatre at Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland, home of the notorious Delaval family) and in the public domain (like the Delavals' invitation-only performance of *Othello* at Drury-Lane). Historic houses today rarely engage with their theatrical heritage and, as ephemeral structures, home theatres are often left uninterpreted. Heritage policy only began to address theatres in 1995, with *A Guide to Theatre Conservation from English Heritage*, which entirely omits home theatres. This project, a collaboration with the National Trust, draws from literary and architectural history whilst engaging with current heritage policy in order to begin the recovery, conservation and interpretation of eighteenth-century home theatres. Research questions considered may include:

- Was the home theatre a physical structure or made from ephemeral sets?
- Did the performance space reflect the works performed?
- Did private performance help secure the family's reputation as a literary one?

- How do we interpret those spaces today?
- What is the relationship between originality and adaptation on the amateur stage?

In exploring how landed families creatively engaged with both their literary and architectural heritage in order to present themselves as having fashionable literary sensibilities, whilst documenting existing tangible heritage and examining heritage policy safeguarding historic houses today, this project would aim to help inform interpretation and conservation of the eighteenth century's unique built heritage.

There may also be opportunities to develop community outreach and education activities, and a placement of up to six months' duration may focus on this, and/or a curatorial project.

Dr Helen Williams (<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/our-staff/w/helen-williams/>): Helen's PhD was one of the earliest Collaborative Doctoral Awards funded by the AHRC. She has since gone on to be Senior Lecturer at Northumbria University and has experience researching and teaching across the two areas of literary and heritage studies. She has worked on a range of arts and heritage projects with partners such as the Laurence Sterne Trust at Shandy Hall, Northern Print, and community theatre companies, for which she has been awarded funding from the Heritage Lottery, the British Academy and the AHRC, and Government Northern Ireland.

HOW TO APPLY

To take advantage of these opportunities you will:

- Be a resident of the UK or EU
- Be seeking to begin a PhD in October 2019
- Have an outstanding academic record, including an undergraduate degree in a relevant subject and (in most cases) EITHER a master's degree either in hand or shortly to be completed OR relevant and equivalent work experience
- Wish to pursue a doctoral project in collaboration with the National Trust at Seaton Delaval and have a professional interest in the museum sector

Potential applicants should contact Dr Helen Williams (helen.williams@northumbria.ac.uk) by **Friday 14th December** for a preliminary discussion of their approach to the project. Candidates whose projects are approved to progress, should then apply via the Northumbria University online application form by **17:00 on Wednesday 9th January 2019**. Applicants should outline their proposed research, representing it as a CDA project, and quote NBC19 in the 'Project/Student Reference Number' field.

For further information, please consult the following websites:

<https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/postgraduate-study/how-to-apply/>
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/seaton-delaval-hall>