



**Connected Histories: making meaning, interpretation meeting,
May 14 2012**

The final research network meeting, *Connected Histories: Making, Meaning, Interpretation*, took place on 14 May 2012. There were around 20 participants: academics, curators and conservators from Scotland and England specialising in the study of textiles and dress. A visiting scholar, Mohammad al-Kasim Mohammad from the Iraqi National Museum, also joined us.

Two of the participants started the discussions by making short presentations. Patricia Allerston described a new project to be launched at the National Galleries of Scotland later this year which will link contemporary fashion design practice with the historic collections through collaboration with Edinburgh College of Art. Barbara Burman described this as the 'golden age of dress history', explaining how objects have an explanatory power of their own, and can help us to find a way in to the lives of people who have left no other record. She spoke of how the wide-ranging interests of dress historians foster multi-disciplinary collaboration, while the opening up of digital resources also allows us to address bigger and deeper questions. Dinah Eastop also gave a brief presentation on her work at the National Archives in London, determining how best to make accessible the Board of Trade Design Register, 1839-1991. The registers form a huge collection, with over 11,000 bound volumes and folders containing over one million unique designs, many of them for textiles, an extremely valuable resource for research into textile and dress history.

Discussions on potential research projects focused on three interlinked areas:

- Scottish identity
 - Perceptions of the Scottish textile industry and the legacy for the contemporary textile and fashion industries; challenging perceived wisdom and myths
 - Association with quality
 - Trade; manufacturing; Scottish engineering and entrepreneurial skills; is textile production now part of heritage?
 - Techniques, skills

- Oral history
 - Lost Scottish textile industries: Singer, Ayrshire lace, Kilmarnock bonnets
 - How to capture skills? Film, YouTube?
 - Engage special interest groups, eg weavers, dyers
 - Public engagement: 'history van'
 - Telling stories around objects
 - Terminology, eg of tapestry weaving, dress; a snapshot in time of eg personal wardrobes

- The Stoddard Templeton Carpet Collection
 - Makers – oral history
 - Design sources, influences
 - Consumption: domestic, commercial, exhibitions

We are very grateful to all those who took part in the discussions.

Frances Lennard

June 2012