



**Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)
Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum (OBGA)**

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership training grant

Further Particulars

**The Duchess of Botany: Mary Somerset, Jacob Bobart, and the
Formation of the Oxford Botanic Garden**

The Project

This Collaborative Doctoral Partnership project focuses on the relationship between Mary Somerset, Duchess of Beaufort (1630-1715), a prominent noblewoman and botanical collector, and Jacob Bobart the younger (1641-1719), second superintendent of the Botanic Garden at Oxford (following his father, Jacob Bobart the elder). Substantial exchanges of botanical material, information, and expertise were undertaken between the Garden under Bobart and the Duchess's gardens at Badminton. The project will leverage manuscript and herbaria records to analyse these transactions in unprecedented detail. As such, the studentship will elucidate key aspects of the Oxford Botanic Garden's early history, focusing on the material and intellectual networks that supported the development of its plant collections and institutional structures during the later seventeenth century. Research will therefore directly complement attention to OBGA's heritage in preparation for celebrating the Botanic Garden's 400th anniversary in 2021.

While scholars have attended productively to the Duchess's patronage of botany and horticulture, little research has been conducted into the specific plant specimens (and associated archival documents) that survive *inter alia* at Oxford University Herbaria and the Natural History Museum. This project will rectify that scholarly omission, conscious of Mark Laird's instructive observation that without such work we possess 'only a preliminary and conjectural history of a very significant patron in the realm of flowers' (*A Natural History of English Gardening*, 2015).

Focusing on the relationship between Bobart and the Duchess also enables the project to emphasise the roles of women in the formation of botanical networks and knowledge. Although Mary was unusually privileged in social and economic terms, she functions as a valuable case-study for uncovering

how women during the period engaged as contributors to natural science. How did the Duchess's identity as a woman and status as the wife of a peer impact her relationships with horticultural labourers and botanical scholars? To what extent did she involve other women in her botanical network, and what contribution did they make to its social, intellectual, and economic structures?

Bobart's relationship with the Duchess is central within broader networks of botanical exchange that this project excavates. Both were actively connected to botanical experts and suppliers, including institutional centres (above all, the Chelsea Physic Garden and the Royal Society); individual collectors, like William Sherard (who importantly brought financial security to the Garden via his endowment of the Sherardian Chair of Botany), Hans Sloane, and Leonard Plukenet; and commercial gardeners such as George London and Thomas Fairchild. How did these stakeholders collaborate and compete to acquire and categorise new plants from across Britain and the globe? What botanical knowledge and horticultural skill was generated (and/or disrupted) as a consequence? What was the early Oxford Botanic Garden's role and significance as a centre of botany and horticulture?

In addition to these historical questions, this research contributes importantly to Oxford University's understanding of its institutional heritage. The award-holder will reconnect repositories that speak to the Garden's history, including site-specific materials at OBGA, botanical matter in the University Herbaria, and manuscripts at the Bodleian. By mapping these resources for research purposes – so that early-modern plants, print, and papers are re-engaged in dialogue together – the doctoral candidate will also be enabled to account for the later institutional fortunes of the Botanic Garden (between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries) through understanding the dispersal and re-organisation of its archive elsewhere. Relevant external repositories will also be consulted, including the British Library, Natural History Museum, and Badminton Muniments.

Supervision and Training

The holder of the studentship will be registered as a doctoral candidate in the School of English and Drama (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) at Queen Mary, and will fulfill all the requirements of the PhD degree there under the supervision of Dr Richard Coulton and Professor Markman Ellis. In addition, the student will benefit from joint-supervision at OBGA working under Professor Simon Hiscock and Dr Chris Thorogood.

In the course of their research, the successful candidate will be trained in archival scholarship for working with manuscript resources at the British Library, Bodleian Library, and Royal Society; collections retrieval, handling, and curation skills for working with early-modern herbaria (at Oxford University Herbaria and the Natural History Museum); and event organization and exhibition design relevant to the heritage sector (at OBGA). The student will be supported to participate in scholarly networks and seminars at QMUL

and the Institute of Historical Research in London, and at the University of Oxford. As part of their broader career development it is expected that the award-holder will participate fully in activities relating to the Oxford Botanic Garden's 400th anniversary in 2021.

The Studentship

The studentship begins in October 2020 and lasts for 3 years and 9 months (45 months) full time or part-time equivalent. The studentship has the possibility of being extended for an additional 3 months to provide professional development opportunities, or up to 3 months of funding may be used to pay for the costs the student might incur in taking up professional development opportunities. The doctoral training grant is fully funded (living stipend and tuition fees) at UKRI rates and is subject to standard AHRC eligibility, rules, and guidance for the research students whom they fund and support. OGBA will provide research-related expenses of up to £2,000 p.a. (against receipts, and in addition to the normal research expenses element of an AHRC studentship), including, but not limited to, travel between Queen Mary and the Oxford Botanic Garden, and to libraries and collections containing relevant material. It is anticipated that there will further funded opportunities to benefit from short placements of around one month each with the Natural History Museum, University of Padua Botanic Garden, and Oxford University Herbaria.

Eligibility

We are looking for an excellent, highly promising, and appropriately qualified student who will embrace the opportunity to bring together academic research in the humanities with experience and training at the UK's oldest botanical garden. We want to encourage the widest range of potential students to study for this CDP doctoral training grant and are committed to welcoming applicants from different backgrounds.

Applicants may come from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (e.g. archaeology, anthropology, history, heritage studies, natural history, history and philosophy of science, museum studies, archive and information studies, geography, literary or cultural studies, garden and landscape studies). It is expected that the successful applicant will be able to clearly explain the relationship between their existing training/experience and the topic of the doctoral training grant, and to indicate how their present research interests relate to the proposed project. Some experience of archival manuscript research and/or historical collections handling will also be of benefit to applicants.

NB. All applicants must meet [the AHRC's academic criteria and residency requirements](#).

Candidates should:

1. Normally hold (or expect to receive before October 2020) a master's-level degree with evidence of distinction quality work, and ideally an overall grade of 70% or better (including at least 70% for the dissertation). Alternatively, the AHRC also recognises that research students approach a doctorate from various different routes, and that not all research students complete a research preparation master's-level degree first. Doctoral applicants who have not completed a research preparation master's-level degree are therefore eligible to apply for AHRC funding providing they can demonstrate that they have equivalent experience that has prepared them for doctoral research. Equivalent experience might include, but is not restricted to, a strong track-record of employment in a library, museum, garden, or heritage institution, that includes responsibility for relevant archival research, collections curation, and/or public engagement activity.
2. Be a resident of the UK or European Economic Area (EEA). In general, full doctoral training grants are available to students who are settled in the UK and have been ordinarily resident for a period of at least three years before the start of postgraduate studies. Fees-only awards are generally available to EU nationals resident in the EEA. International applicants are normally not eligible to apply for this doctoral training grant

Application

Applications must be submitted [online via the QMUL PhD application portal](#).

When completing the form, you should select a start date of "Semester 1 (September)" (although the award formally commences in October). You will be required to include in your application:

- your 'research group': select "early modern" or "eighteenth-century"
- a research proposal: write around 750 words outlining from an academic perspective the independent research that you anticipate undertaking under the terms of this doctoral training grant – avoid repeating the formal project description but rather identify and extrapolate those aspects that you find particularly interesting
- a statement of purpose (up to 750 words) explaining how your academic and/or professional experience has prepared you to fulfil the terms of this project
- a current academic CV
- two references, which should be by academics (or other professionals) who are familiar with your recent work in relevant fields
- your degree certificate and university transcripts
- IELTS scores (International English Language Testing System) if applicable

The deadline for application is **Wednesday 11 March 2020 by 5pm**. **Applications received after this date cannot be considered.** It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that their referees write by that date.

Candidates are encouraged to make contact with the lead supervisors, Dr Richard Coulton (r.x.coulton@qmul.ac.uk) and Prof Simon Hiscock (simon.hiscock@obg.ox.ac.uk) in advance of submitting an application. Questions about the online application process should be directed to Hari Marini, Research Student Support Administrator in the School of English and Drama at QMUL (sed-research@qmul.ac.uk).

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview at the Oxford Botanic Garden on Friday 3 April 2020.