

AHRC Collections & Communities in the East of England Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP)

PhD studentship: Reimagining Caribbean Collections: Unveiling Histories of Identity and Wellbeing through Material Culture

- Start date: 1st October 2025
- Pre-application online information session for interested applications: 16 April, 3 pm BST (UTC+1)
[Register your interest](#)
- Application Deadline: 30 April
- Interviews will take place online: on 19 May

The University of Cambridge and its Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) are pleased to announce a fully-funded Collaborative Doctoral studentship, from October 2025, under the AHRC's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership Scheme.

This project will be jointly supervised by:

- [Dr Jimena Lobo Guerrero Arenas](#) (Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology)
- [Dacia Viejo-Rose](#) (University of Cambridge)
- [Professor Karen Brown](#) (University of St Andrews)
- [Sarah-Jane Harknett](#) (Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology)

The student will undertake research at both the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) and the University of Cambridge, as well as becoming part of the wider cohort of CDP-funded students across the UK.

We encourage the widest range of potential students to study for this CDP studentship and are committed to welcoming students from different backgrounds to apply. We particularly welcome applications from Black, Asian, and other Ethnically Diverse backgrounds, as they are currently underrepresented at this level in this area. Because this project focuses on the Caribbean region, we additionally encourage applications from individuals with lived experience or heritage connections to the Caribbean.

The University of Cambridge values diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity.

Informal enquiries about the project should be directed to:

- Dr Jimena Lobo Guerrero Arenas (jl2283@cam.ac.uk)
- Dr Dacia Viejo-Rose (dv230@cam.ac.uk)

If you have any questions about the application process, please contact the Archaeology Postgraduate Admissions Administrator: arch-pg-admissions@arch.cam.ac.uk

Please contact cc-ee@fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk if you would like this document in an alternative format.

Project Overview

This collaborative PhD project aims to research the Caribbean archaeological collection at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) and the natural history collection from the same region housed at the University of Cambridge Herbarium. More than 3,000 pre-Columbian objects, including shells, ceramics, and stone tools, as well as botanical specimens (both illustrations and specimen plates), will be studied to understand the roles they have played and their connections to the lifestyles, identities, community health, and colonial and post-colonial history of the human groups that have long inhabited the Caribbean islands. Through community collaboration the study will integrate traditional knowledge such as the ceremonial and medicinal uses of the queen conch (*Strombus gigas*; 40% of MAA's Caribbean collections), and bush medicine passed down through generations, to emphasise the inseparable nature of physical and spiritual health in past and present Caribbean communities and their relevance to contemporary cultural and ecological resilience. The research will employ an interdisciplinary and participatory methodology to co-create narratives with Caribbean communities, ensuring the collections are re-interpreted and re-presented in ways that reflect their relevance to contemporary identities. Outcomes will include digital exhibits, enriched museum records, and guidelines for inclusive curatorial practices, fostering stronger connections between museums and Caribbean communities while contributing to global efforts to decolonise heritage collections.

Working collaboratively with the supervisory team, the successful candidate will shape and refine the project, potentially pursuing lines of inquiry such as:

- How have Caribbean material culture and botanical collections historically been classified, displayed, and interpreted, and what biases or omissions are present in the existing records?
- In what ways can participatory research and traditional Caribbean knowledge, including bush medicine, ceremonial practices, and intangible cultural heritage, enrich understandings of these collections?
- How do these objects and botanical specimens illuminate questions of colonial history, postcolonial identity, and wellbeing in Caribbean communities, both in the region and in the diaspora?
- What practical guidelines and curatorial strategies can be developed to ensure collections are interpreted more inclusively and collaboratively for museum audiences?

Benefits and Opportunities

This collaborative PhD studentship offers the opportunity to develop a broad skill set relevant to careers in the creative and cultural sectors, including:

- Hands-on experience with archaeological and botanical collections in a world-class museum and herbarium.
- Participatory research methods, including community-led engagement, oral history, and co-curation.
- Exhibition and display development and/or other forms of public engagement.
- Interdisciplinary academic training drawing on archaeology, heritage studies, museum studies.
- A strong professional network, including membership of the AHRC CDP cohort, the Cambridge Heritage Research Centre, and the potential to collaborate with the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, the Trinidad National Trust, and other Caribbean partners.
- An individual Training Needs Analysis (TNA) ensuring bespoke professional development, including possible internships, placements, and other activities over the course of the studentship.

The successful candidate will be registered with the Department of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge, one of the best universities in the world for postgraduate study.

The University of Cambridge offers a diverse range of facilities and support services to its students. With over 100 libraries, nine specialist museums, and extensive welfare services, you will have every resource you need to make the most of your time here. The University of Cambridge is a world-leading institution with extensive resources and services available for doctoral students, including the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning and a vibrant postgraduate community.

The Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) holds around one million objects of archaeological, anthropological, and social significance from around the world, including the significant Caribbean archaeological assemblage central to this project. MAA has a strong strategic focus on reinterpreting underexplored collections with local communities and diaspora groups, in line with its mission to foster global collaborations and inclusive heritage practices.

The University Herbarium holds thousands of historical plant specimens from the Caribbean region, many collected through colonial networks and often lacking proper acknowledgement of Indigenous and enslaved contributors. Its ongoing mission includes uncovering hidden histories and integrating legacy materials with contemporary priorities such as biodiversity and decolonial approaches.

The successful candidate will be encouraged to participate in professional development events and activities organised for all Collaborative Doctoral Partnership students who are registered with different universities and studying with cultural and heritage organisations across the UK. These activities are organised by a coordination team based at the V&A and are designed to provide CDP researchers with the knowledge, networks and skills to thrive in their future careers.

Details of Award

Funding for each studentship will be for four years' duration (or up to eight years part-time), with the expectation that this will include development activities and placements, and that the thesis will be submitted within this funded period.

This award pays tuition fees up to the full-time home UKRI rate for PhD degrees. The Research Council UK Indicative Fee Level for 2025/2026 is £5,006. The fee gap between the home and overseas fee rates will be covered by the University of Cambridge through internal co-funding for international candidates.

A full maintenance stipend is provided for both home and international students. The UKRI National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2025/2026 is £20,780.

The successful candidate will also have access to a Research Training and Support Grant (RTSG) of £750 per year (pro-rate for part-time students). This can be used to support study visits, conference attendance, training and development opportunities which are necessary for the student's primary research. In addition, the award provides a CDP maintenance payment of £600 per year supporting any additional costs students incur whilst undertaking a collaborative award. Further details can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

The successful candidate is eligible to receive an additional travel and related expenses grant, courtesy of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA), worth up to £2,000 per year for four years (or pro rata for part-time students). The project can be undertaken on a full-time or part-time basis.

If you are an international student, please be aware that there may be additional fees (e.g. UK student visa, Immigration Health Surcharge; more details here: [Cost of studying in the UK | Study UK](#)); for all enquiries, contact the PG administrator (details at the end of document).

If you have a disability, you may be entitled to a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) on top of your studentship. DSA helps to cover the cost of any additional support that a person studying for a doctorate might need as a result of a disability, mental health problem or specific learning difficulty. You can read more about DSA: <https://www.ukri.org/publications/disabled-students-allowance-dsa-framework/>

Eligibility

We welcome applications from both International and UK (home) students.

To be classed as a home student, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Be a UK National (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have settled status, or
- Have pre-settled status (meeting residency requirements), or
- Have indefinite leave to remain or enter

Further guidance can be found here based on revisions to Training Grant Terms and Conditions for projects starting in October 2025 - [Policy statement: review of the training grant conditions – UKRI](#)

We want to encourage the widest range of potential students to study for a CDP studentship and are committed to welcoming students from different backgrounds. We particularly welcome applications from Black, Asian, and other Ethnically Diverse backgrounds as they are currently underrepresented at this level in this area. We also encourage candidates with lived experience in the Caribbean or diaspora heritage.

Applicants should ideally have or expect to receive a relevant Masters-level qualification or be able to demonstrate equivalent experience in a professional setting. Suitable disciplines include (but are not limited to) Archaeology, Heritage Studies, Museum Studies, Anthropology, etc.

If you can demonstrate competence in a language relevant to the area of proposed study, this will be an advantage.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate an interest in the museums, galleries, archives, and heritage sector and show potential and enthusiasm for developing skills more widely in related areas.

As a collaborative award, students will be expected to spend time at both the University of Cambridge and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

NB: All applicants must meet UKRI terms and conditions for funding. See:

<https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/>

We ask all applicants to complete a voluntary EDI monitoring form [here](#). All responses are anonymous.

Application Process

All applications will need to be made through the University Graduate Application Portal by April 30. A guide on how to use the application portal can be found at the end of this document.

An online information session will be held on 16 April at 3 pm BST (UTC+1). This is an opportunity to hear more about the project and the application process. Following a presentation, there will be the chance to ask questions using the Q&A function in Teams. Please register in advance to attend or receive the recording. [Register your interest](#)

Please let us know if you require any adjustments for the application process or interview. Support or adjustments may include (but are not limited to:

- Opportunity to speak with project supervisors at HEI and CDP Award Holder about the project and the process.
- Opportunity to speak with contacts within the HEI and/or CDP Award Holder regarding institutional support systems (e.g. neurodiversity, racial diversity and LGBTQIA+ networks, mental health support, support for carers).
- Access to interview questions and an insight into the interview process (e.g. selection criteria used).
- Opportunity to visit the relevant building and room prior to interview, as well as on-site guidance (demonstrating accessible routes and/or familiarity with building layouts for example)
- Opportunity to speak with active CDP students to ask questions regarding student experience as part of the CDP scheme.

Your application will not be adversely affected by disclosing a disability, and it will be processed in exactly the same way as any other application.

For guidance, information and support for prospective students, applicants and current students with any impairment/disability or health condition, please visit <https://www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an online interview with the supervisory team and representative from the CC-EE CDP consortium on Monday 19 May.

Once an offer has been accepted, the successful student may be required to undergo a basic disclosure (criminal records check) and a security check if needed for specific museum or collection access protocols.

Informal Enquiries and Contacts

Applicants are encouraged to contact the supervisory team with informal enquiries about the studentship:

- Dr Jimena Lobo Guerrero Arenas (Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) Email: jl2283@cam.ac.uk
- Dr Dacia Viejo-Rose (University of Cambridge) Email: dv230@cam.ac.uk

Please contact the Postgraduate Admissions Administrator if you have any questions or concerns about the application or interview process: arch-pg-admissions@arch.cam.ac.uk

If you would like to speak with active CDP students to ask questions regarding student experience as part of the CDP scheme, please contact Sarah Willis at cc-ee@fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

Guide to using the Application Portal

1. Register for an account or log in to the [Applicant Portal](#).
2. Search for **PhD in Archaeology** and apply now
3. Choose a course start date of 01-Oct-2025
4. First section: **About you**
 - a. Personal Details
 - b. Contact Details
 - c. Nationality & Visa: If you are resident of outside of the UK, please put all your relevant information about your Visa status, [further information on help filling in this section can be found here](#) and more information for [International students can be found here](#)
 - d. Additional information: the information put here is not used in the academic decision to admit you to the course.
 - e. College Membership: all students assigned a college once they are accepted on a course; it's a good idea to select a preference in your application rather than leaving this blank. When choosing a College, you can have a look at what disciplines are covered by the Fellows of the College and where your proposed Supervisors is based, for example. You can find out more about choosing a college here.
<https://www.postgraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges>
 - f. This is where you add your academic history details and supporting transcripts. If you do not have a Master's degree, please add all relevant work experience in the employment history and CV section.
5. Second Section: **Course Application**
 - a. Reference Request, add details of 2 references.
 - b. Employment history: add all employment history relevant to this studentship.
 - c. English Language: if you are not a national of an English-speaking country you will be asked to provide scores of a recently taken language test or indicate that you are planning to book an approved language test. If you have not taken a test yet, you will only need to provide the scores if you are offered a place.
 - d. Research (Important please add to fields as described below)
 - i. Please say 'Yes' to 'Do you have any research information to add?'
 - ii. 'Proposed Title' please add: **CDP Studentship: Reimagining Caribbean Collections: Unveiling Histories of Identity and Wellbeing through Material Culture**



- iii. 'Summary of proposed research project' please add: **CDP Studentship:
Department of Archaeology & Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology**
- iv. 'Name of proposed supervisor' please add: **Dr Dacia Viejo-Rose**
- v. 'Research experience' please add: **All your relevant research experience.**
- e. Other Information, add your CV and career goals into this section.
 - i. Additional information to support application: we are committed to ensuring that all candidates are considered fairly and equally for funding. You may use this section of the portal to outline (in no more than 200 words) any individual or personal circumstances that have significantly affected prior educational opportunity and/or attainment, and which have materially affected the preparation of this application. There is no need to include details of circumstances that you have effectively overcome in the past, but you may describe (for example) details of disability, chronic or acute illness, caring responsibilities, educational or socio-economic background, where the impact is recent and/or ongoing. The Selection Panel will then make allowance for this when evaluating your application.
- f. Course Specific Questions
 - i. Core - reasons for applying **(2500 characters)**
Please explain your motivation for applying for this studentship. If you are able, among other relevant skills you have, you should include how you would evidence the following:
 - Experience of working with archaeology collections.
 - An interest in Caribbean archaeology.
 - Experience with archival work and some training in historical methods.
 - A commitment to working in museum contexts or with collections.
 - A commitment to working equitably with communities and to participatory research practice.
 - Competence in a language relevant to the area of proposed study.
 - Ability and commitment to working in a team and taking the initiative with a research project which is interdisciplinary.
 - IT literacy.
 - Excellent communication skills, with the demonstrable ability to communicate confidently with colleagues and external stakeholders.
 - ii. Sample of Work: Applicants should provide a sample of written work in English. There is no set minimum or maximum word count for the writing sample(s), we simply recommend that students select a piece of work that best represents their writing style. It is sensible (but not obligatory) to choose a piece of work which is at least roughly in the subject area in which you plan to do research. These could include research articles, or sector- or public-facing outputs, including blogs.



- iii. Research Proposal: Using the project overview above as your starting point, please write a 700-word proposal outlining how you would develop a project to investigate the history, significance, and contemporary relevance of the Caribbean archaeological collection at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) and the natural history collection from the same region housed at the University of Cambridge Herbarium. You may wish to specify which country, countries, or region(s) your research would focus on. This proposal may include a preliminary set of primary research questions and highlight any objects, materials, or archival sources that are especially relevant to your investigation. You may also discuss potential approaches to community collaboration and interdisciplinary methodologies that would facilitate the co-creation of knowledge with Caribbean communities. The proposal will be used as a basis for the interview.
6. Third Section: **Funding your study** (Important. Please add to fields as described below)
- a. Please ignore 'The central funding competition is closed'.
 - b. Have you applied for or secured funding for this course – please answer **yes**.
 - i. Funding: select **Other**
 - ii. Funding status: select **I have applied for this funding**
 - iii. Please give details about this funding: please add **AHRC CDP Studentship**
 - iv. Please ignore the other fields.
7. Fourth Section: **Equal Opportunities**
- a. Widening Access and Participation: Information collected in this section will be used for anonymous statistical reporting.
 - b. Adjustments: If you would like to tell us about any adjustments you may need to help enable us to treat you fairly, please let us know here (e.g. if you are a wheelchair user). [The Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre](#) (ADRC) offers guidance, information and support to prospective students, applicants and current students with any impairment/disability or health condition.
8. Fifth Section: **Summary**
- a. Supporting Documents
 - i. Academic Transcripts
 - ii. CV
 - iii. Sample of Work
 - iv. Research Proposal as described above.
 - b. Funding Applications: please ignore this (this PhD is fully funded)
 - c. Pay and submit: there is no fee for this application.