

# LIPCAP TEAM – WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO!

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## **(Investigating C19 – C20 everyday life: creating community connections through standing buildings and garden finds)**

A [previous post](#) outlines our community and public 'DIY' house and garden surveys. This post briefly discusses why the project has been developed, and what we hope will be some of the benefits. More information about LIPCAP (Living in the Past Community Archaeology Project) can be found via these links:

Website: [www.livinginthepast.org.uk](http://www.livinginthepast.org.uk)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UrbArc20>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/>

Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/living-in-the-past/sets/>

YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcy3KUXbjyFdaCodnHRy6lQ>

## **KIRST (PROJECT DIRECTOR)**

*I started to develop what has become LIPCAP a few years ago, when confined to the house by illness and consequently prevented from pursuing my usual archaeological research and fieldwork. Unable to contemplate not 'doing' archaeology for any length of time, my immediate surroundings – a house built in the late 1920s – early 30s – inevitably drew my attention. I began to think about how those without archaeological knowledge or experience might be enabled to recognise the numerous traces of past domestic life just waiting to be discovered – and to record and share this information, potentially making a valuable contribution to studies of histories of the home.*



*Although specialising in the Roman to early medieval transition (c. AD 350-600), I'd been interested in early 20<sup>th</sup> century housing and domestic material culture for some time; my research and fieldwork into early historic (for my studies, 1<sup>st</sup> century BC – AD 7<sup>th</sup> century) households often*

*inspired me to investigate late historic contexts to ask comparable questions. More usually associated in the public imagination with the excavation of ancient remains, the role of archaeology is to investigate the material traces human behaviour in the past – whether prehistoric or historic. And similar techniques can be applied to standing buildings or buried sites to examine, record, and interpret relationships in time and place between people and the material world. Historical Archaeologists commonly analyse archaeological evidence in conjunction with other historical sources, such as documents, in order to understanding of past life in more depth. When studying earlier periods, I often consulted texts in an attempt to explore the interaction of material culture and beliefs; in this way, I was able to investigate social and cultural identity – particularly ethnicity, ‘tribal’ identity, and ‘national’ identity. By adapting approaches developed within sociology, anthropology, and psychology, archaeologists may begin to consider how material evidence both creates and reproduces ideologies, such as those fundamental to religious, social, and political organisation.*

*My tentative archaeological investigations into the archaeology of early 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic life (some of which I have shared on a [blog](#) elsewhere) made me aware of several issues. Firstly, that many old standing buildings – not ‘listed’ as being of historic worth, due to their commonplace survival – are likely to retain traces of everyday life in the past; the extent to which such traces do survive – even within substantially altered (‘gutted’) houses – may surprise some. Secondly, that DIY is probably eroding and erasing those traces at an unprecedented pace; conversely, renovation and modernisation provide excellent opportunities to explore these remains. And thirdly, that archaeological analysis may reveal information that will enhance interpretations of the domestic historic environment.*

*The most exciting aspect of these realisations was that such traces are accessible to many, with no need for destructive and expensive explorations: by adopting basic archaeological methods, anyone living in an old house might begin to explore the material histories of their homes – and contribute towards the historical record in the process. Being an industrial centre, hundreds (probably thousands) of small terraced houses, built mostly in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods for workers of local mills and factories, form line upon line of Derby streets (LIPCAP’s base); most are still lived in today. These houses are an untapped historical resource – not least for the children who occupy them, who may ‘get more out of’ history taught at school through practical investigations or their surroundings. But also, outside formal education, such houses provide opportunities for inhabitant to ‘make’ history through their own explorations, and find out about how previous generations of their own families (who perhaps occupied similar houses) may have lived.*

*In themselves, the findings made at individual houses might seem to be so fragmentary and divorced from wider society and culture that they are of little use or meaning. However, when studied with and compared to findings from other, similar, houses, analysis has greater potential to yield valuable information (perhaps revealing significant patterns), particularly if examined*

*alongside other historical sources (such as documents and maps, photos and oral history), and in combination with the findings of individual and group Local History and Family History research.*

*My main objective for the project is to provide easy (and hopefully fun) opportunities for engagement with Derby's rich historic environment; I intend to (and hope others will also) assess the findings from family homes in relationship to wider social and cultural networks. Each household was (and is) an integral component of a neighbourhood, several of which together made the town, which with other towns and villages comprised the region, which in turn combined with other regions to make up the country as a whole. The decisions and movements of the powerful few that controlled and managed the affairs of the nation (as well as those leading more local authorities), through this network of local communities, effected – and often were affected by – the individuals and families inhabiting each household. Therefore, in coming together through the project to pioneer new ways of exploring very specific and localised histories, our investigations may contribute towards understanding the wider and varied pasts of those outside and beyond the individual home, as well as providing a picture of life in the past in our own home.*

A couple of members of the project team will now say a few words for the DoA about the project, and why archaeology appeals to them:

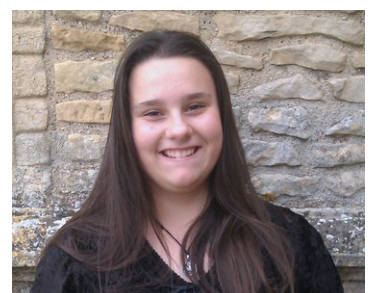
## **DEBRA (SECRETARY AND FAMILY HISTORY CO-ORDINATOR)**



*I have always been interested and fascinated in archaeology and when asked to become part of the project, I was both grateful and excited. As a child, I was always fascinated in 'how we used to live'. What also excites me about the project is the possibility of sharing oral and family histories (adopting an 'archaeological ethnographic' approach), which enables a wider range of historical resources to be expanded to give meaningful interpretations and accounts to local communities.*

**Sarah (Youth Rep.)**

*It is very hard for me to explain why I love archaeology, I just enjoy it extremely. One of the things that interests me about archaeology is finding out how people in the past survived in the conditions they lived in, I also enjoy discovering new and exciting artefacts when excavating. I think that it is fascinating to discover how our ancestors used to live.*



*I am looking forward to this project because I would like to experience what it is like to do fascinating archaeological fieldwork and get some idea of what it is like to be an archaeologist. I really want to be involved with this project because history is my passion and I want to do as much history related things as possible.*