LIVING IN THE PAST
COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY
PROJECT

ABOUT LIP

Project case study ‘No. 8’: late 19th Century 2/3 bedroom terraced house

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LIVING IN THE PAST COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

SUMMARY

This booklet provides information on the Living in the Past community archaeology project (hereafter LIP). This project is currently running as a voluntarily endeavour; assuming the continued availability of team members, it will run until September 2013 (if there is substantial uptake, fieldwork may end Easter 2013, to allow time for data to be processed and presented). In the first instance, the geographical area (see below) is confined to locations that are easily to the Project Director, in order to support or undertake archaeological surveys. However, as more resources are created to guide households in their own building and garden investigations, it may be possible to expand the project across a wider area. Conversely, should public participation be substantial, it may be necessary to reduce this area.

The project aims to support members of the public, and communities, to record and examine archaeological material (primarily collated through building investigations and garden surveys), alongside a wide range of historical sources. In addition, other material culture may be analysed (domestic objects with known histories, such as ‘heirlooms’).

LIP will examine a range of written sources, which may include census returns; indentures and wills; rent books; trade directories; local authority reports and records; and journalistic and other social investigative accounts. Visual sources will be incorporated, such as maps, photos, and works of art; and personal accounts - oral history and family history, memoirs and diaries - will form an important component of the range of evidence to be considered.

If you would like to more about the way the project is organised, please see the webpage, or contact the project, for a copy of the project design.

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1 Participants and contributors do so on the understanding that they have read and agree to the Terms and Conditions (available on the LIP Project webpage, or by contacting the project. See the Project webpage, or contact the project, for information on privacy and data protection policies.
WEBSITE INFORMATION

The project website provides information on the proposed aims, objectives, and approaches of LIP (mostly via the static pages); potential participants and contributors may also obtain such information by contacting the project. The website also provides resources of use or interest, for those considering carrying out their own historical investigations.

Short articles and information on subjects surrounding the interests of the project are also posted on the website, including general discussions on history and archaeology.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Should there be sufficient levels of community and public participation and collaboration, it is hoped that the project will facilitate the development of easily accessible online resources, bringing together data and information relating to the significance of material culture within working-class communities, which may be used to understand and engage with the recent past in more meaningful ways. LIP uses a number of additional social media to share information; a list of Online Resources and Social Media sites can be found at the end of this booklet.

The section below on participation will outline the ways in which collaboration might be achieved - through the contribution of articles, opinion pieces, and studies; and shared recollections and photos to the project website and associated media; and guided archaeological building and garden surveys.

LIVING IN THE PAST (LIP)

WHAT IS LIP?

LIP began in spring 2012 as Dec20, focusing upon the investigation of (primarily Victorian terraced) houses in Derby. However, as voluntary and independent a pilot project, there is room for organic development; consequently, registered interest in the project from outside the area covered by Dec20 has encouraged extension of the primary subject region, to incorporate the Midlands, into South Yorkshire within the project. One of the benefits of Dec20 was its cohesive community focus; if sufficient numbers participate within the same neighbourhood, town, or city (within the LIP region), the development of other more locally focused projects in other areas will be considered. And if participants from outside the current catchment area wish to submit information and data derived from their own archaeological surveys, this will also be considered.
STUDY THEMES

The project provides a forum to explore the history of working-class domestic life in the later 19th century, and first half of the 20th century. By bringing together a wide range of sources and approaches, and incorporating the views of a range of participants, it may be possible to reconsider assumptions surrounding urban working-class – particularly low-income households and neighbourhoods. LIP will attempt to go beyond preconceptions that portray urban working-class in the past as an homogeneous group; it is hoped that wider inclusion will not only reveal the diversity of what are commonly seen as socially and culturally cohesive neighbourhoods, but will also encourage reassessment of how both 'community' and 'heritage' might be envisioned.

In exploring the ‘biographies’ of a range of households, it may be possible to achieve a more nuanced and accurate picture of the past, that holds the potential to aid understanding of behaviour and attitudes today. Furthermore, by examining cultural and social similarity and differences within comparable domestic conditions, it may also be possible to determine the effects and influence of change at the national and regional level, alongside developing more nuanced understandings of local histories. Themes that the project could consider might include the impact of political transformations (such as the universal suffrage and development of the labour movement) and conflict (the Boer Wars, WWI and WWII) upon the materiality of daily life. It would be useful to consider the extent to which economic transformations (such as the Depression, and changing welfare provisions), trade and consumerism, and technological innovations (such as the development of communications and spread of alternative sources of power in the home to solid fuel and oil, e.g. electricity), were manifest within the home during this time. In addition, the more abstract concepts of social and cultural transformations (such the changing role of women inside and outside the home) might be investigated through the domestic material culture.

HOW WILL LIP WORK?

LIP focuses upon examining relationships between material culture, family, community, and place. Although centring on urban working-class neighbourhoods, investigation will extend beyond this focus, comparing domestic life within a range of contexts. For example, one possibility might be to look at the lives of those in domestic service, alongside those of their employers, to consider how material culture and domestic space was used to create and maintain a sense of difference – and to see how experiences were similar.

This will be achieved by undertaking archaeological building surveys of Victorian and pre-WWII houses (primarily within urban working-class neighbourhoods), and investigating artefacts (e.g. fragments of pottery) found in the gardens of such properties (or within gardens of more modern properties that overlie earlier housing). Alongside domestic contexts, the project may also investigate associated sites, such as domestic rubbish dumps. The project will examine a range of other historical sources in conjunction with this material, in order to build up as complete a picture of life in the past as is possible within the scope of the project.

WHY HAS LIP BEEN DEVELOPED?

One aim is to test the viability of the proposed methodological and theoretical approaches and frameworks, which adopt a new way of both collecting data, and enabling community and public collaboration. Previous (and ongoing) archaeological studies of domestic contexts (e.g. see the excavations of Hungate, York: http://www.dighungate.com/) have stimulated substantial public interest in urban working-class life in the
recent past (see another earlier post). This interest is also reflected in the popularity of 'heritage attractions' such as the National Trust's Birmingham Back-to-Backs (see http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/birmingham-back-to-backs/). This upsurge of interest in 19th and early 20th social history is perhaps in no small part due to a realisation that the numbers of those who experienced life during this time are sadly but inevitably dwindling - accompanied by recognition that we may learn much from the experiences of these generations. Studies of the recent past situate what we know of our own family histories within a broader historic context, and in doing so, provide us with greater understanding of the backgrounds that have influenced the ways we perceive the world and the people within it. Such reflections hold the capacity to inform our decisions as to how we will move forward into the future. The focus of the project has been selected with these issues in mind.

A further important aim of the project is to facilitate the development of greater stake-holding roles at the community level, in relation to heritage assets and resources; this exercise has practical applications, bearing in mind recent legislative changes. The Localism Act, and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), provides scope for greater public involvement in neighbourhood development. Previous urban ‘renewal’ schemes have often paid little attention to local and community needs, with developments destroying locales that have been integral in defining a sense of place and community. LIP will provide opportunities for and support local communities in recording relevance and significance regarding the historic environment.

**WHO HAS DEVELOPED THIS PROJECT – AND WHO MIGHT GET INVOLVED?**

The Project Director and Principal Investigator is an historical archaeologist based in the Midlands region who, although having many years experience in Roman and Early Medieval Archaeology has for several years considered ways in which the knowledge and skills developed during these studies might be transferred to archaeological studies of the recent past. Previous research has focused upon social and cultural identity, and household archaeology.

LIP aims to support members of the public, and local and special interest communities, within the study region to take part in, and contribute data and information to, the project. Participants will be encouraged to pursue their own particular research interests, the findings of which may be publicly displayed and exhibited through the project.

The intention to share knowledge and information on methodologies through the project is a two-way process: it is anticipated that such collaboration holds the potential to broaden understanding of domestic life in the past, by accommodating both a wider range of data and viewpoints, as well as enabling the transfer of knowledge and skills. For example, discoveries might evolve by incorporating information collected through Family History research - a large field that has provided many outside the Heritage Sector with research skills, substantial knowledge, and familiarity with archives. Another example is the knowledge that circulates through collecting communities: special interest in particular aspects of domestic material culture (such as bottle collecting) holds the potential to aid the identification of artefacts discovered through garden surveys.

If interested in becoming part of the core project team, please contact the Project Director (via the contact information available through this booklet). As well as those with knowledge and experience in historical research (whether professional or 'amateur'), the project team might also include those with technical knowledge and experience (e.g. basic IT skills); art and design or technical drawing skills; experience in funding, advertising, and promotion; or administrative and organisational skills – any that may be able to bring innovative ideas to the project.
PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The project is based around community and public participation and contribution: information on the different ways to participate (e.g. undertaking archaeological building or garden surveys) may be found across the project website (some information pages contain links to PDF files that contain the same information, for printing or downloading, if required), or by contacting the project. Information booklets and sheets on participation are available to view and download, as well as flyers (that contain basic information), which are accessible via the LIP publication page, or by contacting the project.

PARTICIPATION

The project has been organised in such a way to allow flexibility, so that social needs might be more effectively be met from the outset, as well as to incorporate alternative views with regard to interpretation of the evidence that relates to life in the past. Although structure is necessary to ensure that resources are spent wisely (as an unfunded project, the most vital - and limited - is currently that of time), there is room for the project to evolve somewhat 'organically'. There is scope for the development and incorporation of research that stands outside and beyond the knowledge, skills, and specialist interests of the director is provided in facilitating households and communities to undertake their own studies. In this way, public participation may lead to the incorporation of both new ideas, and new goals.

For information on joining the Project Team, or suggestions as to how the project might develop, or interest in a pursuing a particular subject of enquiry, please contact the Project Director.

CONTRIBUTION

It is recognised that some participants may wish to play a less active role in project development, but nonetheless might like to share interesting historical sources and information, or short articles, through and with the project. Providing they are relevant and closely related to the subjects studied through this project, such submissions - whether from trained and professional, or 'amateur' and independent, archaeologists and historians - will most welcome. In the interests of collecting comparative data, articles based on localities outside the study region may be included.

Articles might consist of formal or informal historic research pieces on general related themes, or specific localities; family history research, recollections, or memoirs (where this includes or discusses relevant information, such as family size, household, conditions, employment, education, etc.); studies on domestic material culture (as might be developed by collectors of particular household objects of this date); relevant architectural or landscape histories (e.g. studies of particular types of building, or relationships between different buildings and industrial sites within urban working-class neighbourhoods); photo studies (whether old photos, or new photos of old buildings and urban landscape features); or studies already undertaken by householders on the history of their homes.

Articles can be up to 1000 words in length (longer articles may be considered); it might also be possible to make longer documents available through the website as downloadable PDFs. Please contact the Project Director.

Participants may also share information online through the affiliated online sites (Twitter, Facebook, Google groups, Flickr, Pinterest, and HistoryPin). The project is also interested in collaborating in the creation of community exhibitions and displays.

Any suggestions or concerns regarding either or both projects, or / and is interested in participating (details can be found below outlining ways of getting involved) should be addressed to the Project Director.

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