**Sarah Inskip, School of Archaeology and Ancient History (15.06.22)**

I am Dr Sarah Inskip, and I am currently a UKRI-FLF, that’s a Future Leaders Fellow, in the School of Archaeology and Ancient History here at Leicester.

At the moment we’re doing the Tobacco Health and History Project, and this is aiming to look at the impact that tobacco had on the health and lives of people from 1600-1900. In narratives about this, there’s a lot about tobacco’s economic impact, about its social impact, but less about what it actually did physically and mentally to people. So we’re aiming to do this through an interdisciplinary study of human skeletal remains, because from the skeleton we can get evidence of whether people were using clay pipes, if they have things like nicotine staining, and we can also see evidence from many of the diseases which we now know are strongly exacerbated by tobacco use.

Where the interdisciplinarity comes in, is that we’re also developing a biomolecular method using metabolomics to try and identify other people who are using tobacco in different ways than using clay pipes, so things like snuffing or chewing or even drinking tobacco, because people did lots of things with tobacco. And also we’re working with a geneticist to look at how it’s affected the oral microbiome, so the microorganisms that live in your mouth, that can keep it healthy, but could also imbalance causing it to be unhealthy at the same time. We’re working with anatomy to try and understand some of the skeletal lesions that we’re looking at and their relationship to tobacco use and a person’s history, and we’re hopefully working with some dentists who are currently working on vaping, to try and come up with an evolutionary long-term perspective of how tobacco has affected our dental health right from its introduction into Europe to today in vaping, so we’re hoping to connect up with them. So lots of connections with different people, and producing some really quite novel research which we’re working on at the moment, everything’s been delayed a lot because of Covid, but we’re getting there.

It's been really great, actually, because Don Jones is allowing us to use his labs in the LPMI [Leicester Precision Medicine Institute], which has been really great because we’ve learned a lot from them, and it’s something that we just couldn’t have done on our own in archaeology, and likewise working with Steve Jacques over in anatomy as well, and being able to get access to individuals who know life histories is really enhancing our working, and what we’re able to do, so lots to be coming out from that in the next two to three years.

I like Victoria Park, but actually the cemetery is really nice, and as somebody who spends their time trying to reconstruct the lives of past people, which is effectively what I do, looking round the cemetery is really nice, because you see all these people who are in there, and they’ve got interesting names, and look at their interesting stories.