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NEWS

Uncovering the story behind your home

HOUSE historian and genealogy enthusiast Angela Lownie holds the key to unlocking the history of your home.

Angela, who lives in Westminster, founded research service London House histories in September 2013.

Working independently, she provides a full chronological history of a property, gathering information from numerous sources including local authority archives, directories, estate records, electoral registers and census returns.

Once accumulated, she builds the texts, maps and pictures into a narrative, before presenting it to the client in a hardback book of 40 to 55 pages.

She said: "I started the business because I have a deep interest in

>> Jake Polden went to see a woman who has made property and history her business

London history and genealogy, and this ties the two together.

"People want to know who lived in their houses before them, and I've been able to provide stories of real human interest."

Angela, who has worked on more than 10 properties since September, has unearthed some interesting findings.

She discovered a Georgian property in Westminster was built for an MP, before it was inhabited by a German count, a painter and a duke.

It was temporarily converted to a boarding school for a few years in the 18th century, and the street in which it stands fluctuated in social standing and even featured a prostitution

reform house in the 1850s.

At the turn of the 20th century the street underwent huge development and the house stood as a beacon of the past among the modern offices and government buildings built around it.

She said: "Finding information requires a lot of digging and a degree of luck. I have to physically go to places like the National Archives and the London Metropolitan Archives – it's very time consuming.

"Sometimes I'll find that there are gaps in records, and this can make my job very difficult."

Like the amount of information Angela is able to find on a particular house, the

popularity of the service fluctuates.

"I had more interest from clients when I first started the business back in September, as it was just before Christmas, and obviously what I provide works as a great, unique present," she said.

While the service is primarily of novelty value for people intrigued by the history of their property, it may unearth interesting stories with potential to raise the value of a house, if it was previously owned by a famous historical character.

■ Angela, who can be contacted via www.londonhousehistories.co.uk, takes about a week to complete a full house history service and charges £600.



■ **HOME HELP:** Angela Lownie, of Great Smith Street, Westminster, researches the history of houses

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