

Historic Environment Group Report by Celia Chapple

Tony Metcalfe, Altogether Archaeology, updated our group on the Gueswick terraced hills excavation situated north-west of Cotherstone. After initial field walking, magnetometry and an exploratory trench in 2019, the community archaeology group excavated Gueswick fully in 2021 to discover that there has been an Iron Age settlement there (+/- 700BC to 43AD).

Teaming up with Norwegian archaeologists and other terrace specialists, soil samples were taken and sealed in tubes to avoid light damage and assist luminescence dating which indicates when soil crystals were last exposed to light. These samples indicate that all Gueswick terraces are manmade.

Three trenches were dug. The third trench, encompassing part of a ditch, indicated that a palisade was built - a fence of wooden stakes fixed in the ground, forming an enclosure or defence – and later, when the wood had rotted, stone slabs were incorporated with many animal bones solidly packed in. Carbon dating from a femur indicated more accurately that this is a late Iron Age site (+/- 42BC to 58 AD).



Tony related the various stages of an archaeological excavation as mentioned earlier, and the importance of researching and dating objects, which is an expensive business. The archaeologists and volunteers unearthed important finds, some of which Tony brought with him, and which indicate that people lived at Gueswick. A brooch is the first recorded Saxon item to be found in Teesdale; it is now stored in gel to prevent further erosion. Two spindle whorls for spinning wool were discovered as well as a partly developed Iron Age sandstone bee-hive quern

stone, similar to one found at Cow Green, which indicates the use of grain. Romano-British Crambeck type pottery and late 1st or 2nd century burnished ware were found suggesting possible trade from outside the area such as with Malton, North Yorkshire. Other finds were whet stones, Mesolithic flints and a Roman coin that, once conserved, revealed Marcus Aurelius' head (139 to 161AD). The prettiest object was a blue glass bead with white whirls, and some glass droplet waste indicating glass-making took place here.

We start 'outside' meetings in May with a guided walk on Cockfield Fell lead by Rob Pearson. June will see us at Tees Cottage Pumping Station with Dave Smart. Please contact Tim Meacham for further information. simontimothymeacham@gmail.com