

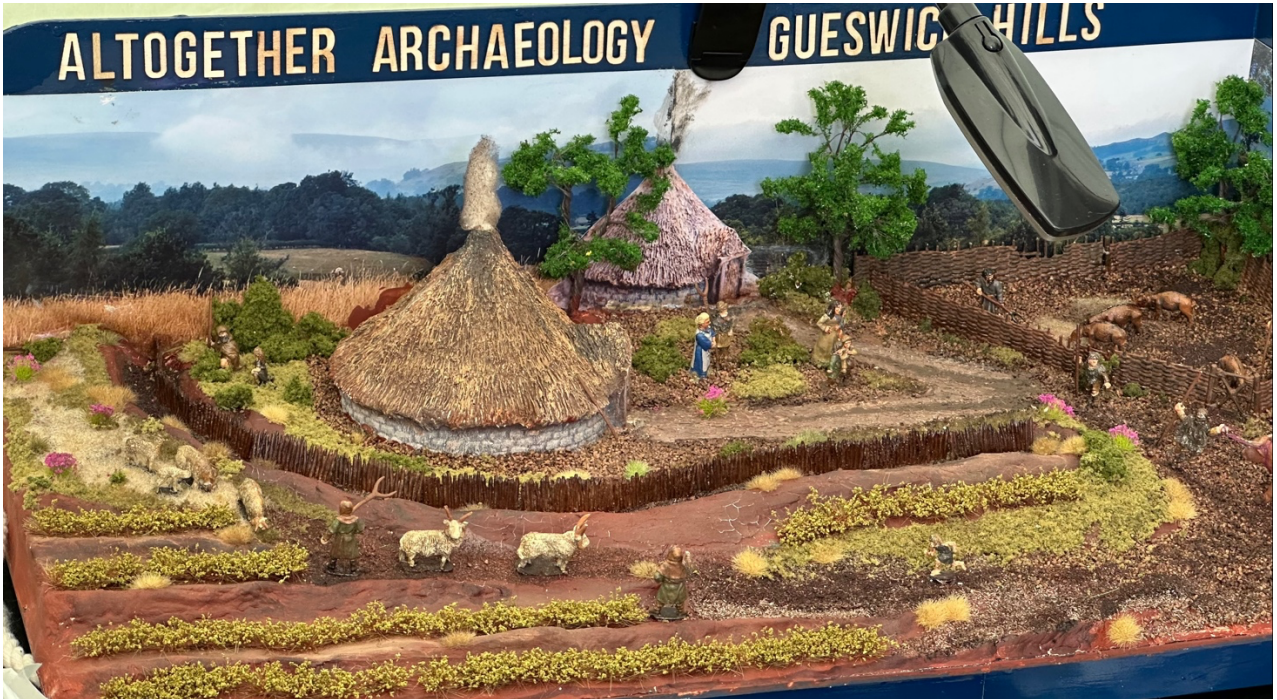
Historic Environment October Report

I reported recently on our visit to the Altogether Archaeology Gueswick dig and we were further fortunate that Rob, who was involved in the dig, brought along a selection of finds to show members at our October meeting. Rob accompanied these with an excellent PowerPoint record of the 2023 excavations.

Rob set the scene with an excellent selection of maps; this was particularly useful for those who had not taken part in our dig visit. He went on to tell us that nobody had ever regarded the dig site with any interest until Altogether Archaeology did their first exploratory dig there in June 2019 featuring three trenches. He paid tribute to the Lamb family of Doe Park who have shown great interest and welcomed the group back each year despite COVID's best efforts in the early years.

In both the initial season and, post-COVID in 2021, Magnetometry scans revealed a puzzling sequence of what appeared to be man-made trenches almost surrounding the hilltop. Attempts to expose cross sections of these suggested that these represented a wooden palisade, but the real breakthrough finds were a multitude of butchered animals' bones. Taken in conjunction with a series of corn querns, a likelihood was emerging that we were looking at a fortified mixed farming 'village'. Animal finds in the depth of one trench were dated to around 1000 BC.

Much of the 2022 season was spent exposing and studying sections of what were clearly paved areas on the hilltop. These suggested a series of roundhouses and 2023 produced some key further finds. Rob showed us iron age pots, while most excitingly a Roman arrowhead suggested contact between our farmers and the Roman invaders. Further investigation of the paved areas allowed the construction of a model of how our emerging 'village' may have looked (my picture below – a similar one recently adorned the front page of the Teesdale Mercury). Progress remains slow given the short seasons of digging, and the complexity of the finds, but Altogether Archaeology will be back there in 2024 and, with the continuing support of the Lamb family, we can look forward to further updates. This is a very exciting discovery and we feel fortunate to be involved. Thank you Rob for a most stimulating talk with great illustrations.



Tim Meacham