Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 28/2 Summer 2026

Welcome to our new season of the Appleby Archaeology Group. It has been an exciting time as we have been extraordinarily successful in achieving grant funding. Many of you will probably have seen our Facebook announcement and/or the press release in the Cumberland and Westmorland Herald, but just in case you didn't, here it is:

Today, Appleby Archaeology Group is announcing a £98,552 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for "Dig Appleby-Unearthing the Past", a three-and-a-half-year community archaeology project that will investigate Iron Age and Romano-British sites around Appleby-in-Westmorland and help local people explore, record and share the Eden Valley's heritage.

Residents across the Eden Valley will be invited to become archaeological detectives as the project seeks to uncover where people lived, farmed and worked nearly 2,000 years ago. Although previous discoveries have revealed evidence of prehistoric burial sites and activity around Appleby, much less is known about settlement during the Iron Age and Roman periods.

Without this support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, important evidence about the Upper Eden Valley's early communities could remain hidden and its stories unheard. The project will help protect and share archaeological knowledge while giving volunteers the skills and confidence to take part in future heritage work.

Beginning in spring 2027, volunteers will work alongside professional archaeologists to investigate potential settlement sites through surveys, excavation and research. Local people, groups and schools will be able to take part through workshops, presentations, training sessions, site visits and practical fieldwork, with no previous archaeological experience required.

The initiative builds on Appleby Archaeology Group's successful Dig Appleby – Digging Deeper 2016 to 2022 project that explored the town's medieval past, and on previous investigations at sites including Castrigg and Brackenber Moor. In the long term, Dig Appleby – Unearthing the Past will strengthen local heritage skills, encourage wider participation and improve understanding of the area's rich archaeological landscape.

Anyone interested in volunteering, attending events or learning more about the project is encouraged to contact Project co-ordinator Richard McGregor at richardmcgregor@me.com.

"We are thrilled to have received the support from The National Lottery Heritage fund. Thanks to National Lottery players local people will be able to help uncover an important chapter of the Eden Valley history, learn new archaeological skills, and contribute directly to discoveries that will be shared with the wider community."

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The project will begin in April. In the meantime, we are still fundraising to complete the Castrigg project. As this was begun before the Lottery application, the remaining work should be completed with separate funding as far as possible. At the time of writing we have received £500 from Olleco and £1,500 from the Hadfield Trust. The plan is to investigate the circular feature shown on a 1949 aerial photograph, which may be a 'signal station" or another round house, as well as the enclosure ditch nearby.

Richard McGregor
Chair, Appleby Archaeology Group

Roman Building Complex, Carlisle Cricket Club, 22nd May

An AppArch group visited the Roman Building Complex on the 22nd May this year following an earlier expedition to the site in June 2024 (Newsletter Volume 26/2) and a talk by Frank Giecco in March (Newsletter Volume 26/1).



The complex was built during the reign of Septimus Severus (193-211AD) and is the largest on the Roman Wall. A community archaeological team excavated part of the complex over several seasons, finding the remains of a bathhouse, an impressive terraced building, a wood-framed temple, drains and a cobbled road leading towards the cricket pitch, together with a wide variety of artefacts. It seems "*its importance lasted only 20 years or so and was followed by constant alteration and steady decline before it was abandoned".* Ground surveys of the cricket pitch have been uninformative, but the cobbled road points to some tantalizing possibilities.


recent construction infill
post-Roman river alluvium
cobbled road
floor surface
wall
wall
BATH HOUSE
AUGUST 2025


MAY 2026



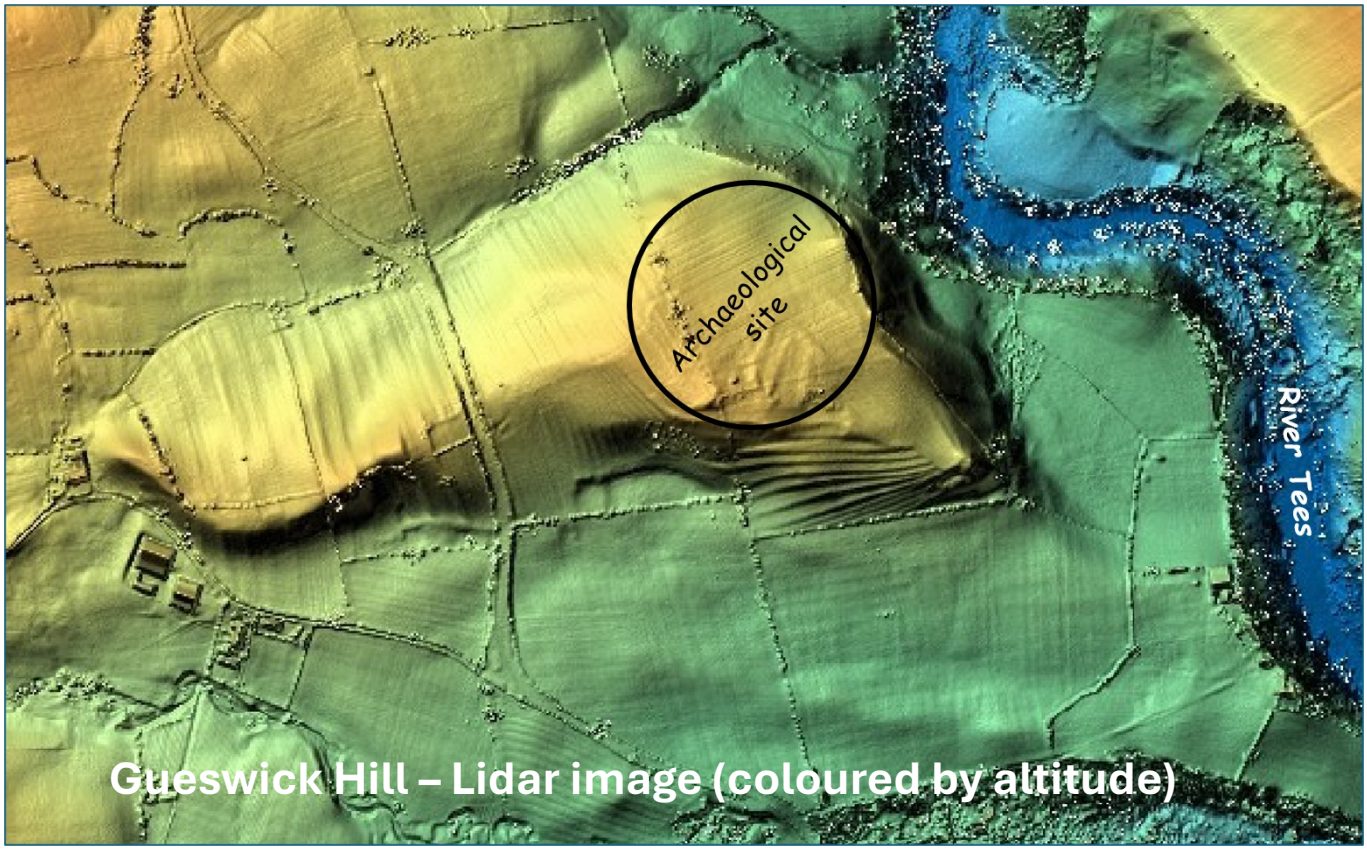




Artefacts discovered in 2026

Revisiting Gueswick Hill Archaeological Site, 5th September

The AppArch Group revisited Gueswick Hill archaeological site near Barnard Castle this month to observe progress made since their last visit in August 2025 (Newsletter Volume 27/3). The site is located on a prominent hill above the Tees River with commanding views across the country side. The investigation is been carried out by Altogether Archaeology with support from Durham University, Queens university Belfast and the North Pennine AONB Partnership.



Gueswick Hill – Lidar image (coloured by altitude)

There is evidence of occupation over a 5000 year period across this region, ranging from a Neolithic- Early Bronze Age hengiform monument and cairnfield nearby together with rock art in the Teesdale Valley ….. to sometimes quite striking ridge and furrow structures recording intense agricultural activity between 1100-1300AD during the Medieval Warm Period. Starting with a walk over, lidar imaging and magnetometry survey in 2019 (later extended in 2023), the group went on to excavate more than ten trenches, guided by the geophysical mapping, defining a late prehistoric palisaded enclosure ditches with both Iron Age and Roman artefacts.

Charcoal dates range from the 3rd Century BC to 1st Century AD with evidence of a later timber building thought to be the remains of a Medieval windmill. The diverse range of finds uncovered, records the multi-phase occupation of the site, from late Neolithic time until the beginning of the Little Ice Age.









Tony Metcalfe chair of Altogether Archaeology describing some of the finds



A mold [use unknown]



Annular Brooch 475-575



Iron Age Shale bracelet



Roman Spear Head 180AD

Tony Metcalfe is scheduled to give a talk to the Group about the Gueswick investigation on the 12th November 2026

Appleby Heritage Weekend 19th-20th September

Appleby Archaeology will be having an Open Day along with other heritage organisations in Appleby on Saturday 19th September in the main hall from 10 until 4.00. Please come along and support us if you can. There will also be a series of talks in the Supper Room and one in St Lawrence's Church to which you are very welcome.



LECTURE PROGRAMME Winter-Spring 2026/2027

Andrew Nicholson: Burnswark -Iron Age settlement and/or Roman training camp?
Thursday 8th October 2026

Tony Metcalfe: excavations at Gueswick near Barnard Castle
Thursday 12th November 2026

Guard [by Zoom]: Ancient Tweedale
Thursday 10th December 2026

Annual General Meeting and Members Night
Thursday 14th January 2027

Adam Parsons : Living and dying in early medieval Cumbria.
Thursday 11th February2027

Helen Evans: Recent archaeological discoveries along the A66 between Penrith and Brough *
Thursday 11th March 2027

Yvonne Luke: The prehistoric monuments of the Ingleborough Massif.
Thursday 8th April 2027

* All meetings will take place in the Supper Room **EXCEPT** the **'Archaeology of the A66'** talk on the 11th March, which will be in the main hall. This meeting will be open to the public and we are working with Appleby Rotary to make it available to all. Please could you note, that as it is likely to be a very well attended event, we intend to use Eventbrite to assign tickets. This will be a free event for all, but we will have a donations box for non members to contribute. We will be asking members to indicate their intention to come in advance so that we can assign the remaining tickets to members of the public on request.