History Beneath Your Feet Transcript

1.If you want to look for the history of a place it is customary to look upwards to view its houses, public buildings and stately homes. In our village and parish, the place to look is beneath your feet.

Sited on or just beneath the surface of our landscape is a hidden history; an ancient history telling us of towering ice sheets; a great lake; nomadic hunter-gatherers; bronze age graves; Romano-British industry and the story of how our Saxon village came to be.

The presentation will take you back to the very early human history of the parish and show how the climatic conditions of the past 500,000 years shaped the landscape and made it such an attractive place for people across the millennia to want to come and live. Leading, eventually, to the creation of the village and parish of Newbold Verdon.

2.But before we do, it is worth pausing for a moment to ask the question: How do we know? What are the archaeological sources of evidence that inform this presentation?

Over the past 75 years or so the exploitation of the land for the erection of (1)solar farms and (2)houses, the (3) quarrying of sand and stone and mining of (4) coal has meant a number of archaeological historical and geological surveys having to take place.

Professional historians, archaeologist and geologists have had to produce reports assessing the impact of new building going up, quarrying taking place and mines being sunk; each time providing detailed descriptions of the land's history. In some cases, teams of archaeologist have undertaken digs for several weeks

Add to this the (5) aerial photographs and (6) field walking surveys of local amateur archaeologists, and you have a great resource for historical research.

It was, for example, the archaeological surveys undertaken on behalf of Tarmac Quarries that we discovered the possibility of the first human-like visitors to our area over 500,000 years ago.

3.This presentation will look primarily at the human history of Newbold from just after the end of the last ice age to the beginning of the Norman period in 1066.

Archaeologists and Historians describe six distinct periods of human occupation beginning with the (1)Mesolithic (middle stone age), followed by the (2)Neolithic (new stone age), (3) Bronze and (5)Iron Ages, (6) Roman and finally Saxon/Viking Britain, sometimes referred to as the early medieval.
We shall look in some detail at each of these periods, but before we doing so it is worthwhile travelling much further back in time to when there is evidence of a much earlier species of human to visiting this part of the country.

4The Palaeolithic period was once commonly referred to as the old stone age. Palaeontologist have assessed it as lasting from 2.5million years ago to approximately 9500BC. It describes as the period of human development when stone tools were first being used.
Approximately 500,000 years ago, one such group of stone using humans, are known to have visited Britain and there is a possibility that they visited our part of the world.

5. Meet Homo Heidelbergensis – so named after the German town of Heidelberg, where their remains were first discovered.

These were the first early human-like people to venture into the cold latitudes of Europe from Africa about 500,000 years ago, where there is evidence that they were the first species to build shelters and hunt big game animals with their spears.

Standing on average at 5' 9'' (men) and 5' 2'' the women, detailed evidence of Heidelbergensis in Britain is quite rare but there is one significant find at Boxgrove, Sussex. Here there was evidence of tool making, cut marked animal bones, and possible settlement.

How, then, did Home Heidelbergensis come to Britain and what evidence is there of them visiting our area?

6. Lets begin by showing you this map of the midlands around 500,000 years ago. You will see there is a land bridge to the rest of Europe, and two large rivers running from the Midlands and the south. The southern river being what we today call the Thames whilst the river flowing from the midlands was known as the Bytham, so named because it flowed through today's Castle Bytham in Lincolnshire (marked CB on the map).

You will see the river began its journey south of Coventry (marked C on the map), flowing first northeast past Hinckley, on to Huncote and toward Leicester following what we today known as the Soar River.

However, it did not continue north like the Soar of today but turned east through Rearsby toward MM , then CB and onward across the land bridge to the North Sea.

The River Bytham is so important to archaeologists because early human like people were believed to have used the river routes to colonise (or at least occasionally visit) Britain from time to time, depending on the climatic conditions.

Archaeologists have found evidence along this ancient river course of human habitation, some of which is close to us.

7. Have we got categorical proof Homo Heidelbergensis came to our area?
Here is an approximate course of the river Bytham running from close to Coventry at Waverley Woods out toward Melton Mowbray, via Brooksby.
At Waverley (1) hand axes dating to this period and known to have been used by Heidelbergensis have been found and at Brooksby (2) organic materials associated with human occupation have been extracted. Both sites are sand and stone quarries, and both sets of findings are of a similar date.
The geology shows that the finds were left at a time of relative warmth and when the Bytham was a slow moving, meandering river, ideal for navigating.
There is no proof that HBergensis roamed the area of Newbold, but Ron Waites, an amateur archaeologist from Warwickshire. Field walked the Warwickshire/Leicestershire border for many years and accumulated an impressive body of artefacts - hand axes, choppers and flakes dating to this period. The closest finds to us being Hinckley.

8. Here are examples of the types of hand axes found at Waverley

9. Carefully shaped to fit easily into the hand.

10. Around 478,000 years ago there began one of the deepest and longest periods of sub-zero temperatures, it known climatologists as the Anglian Glaciation. It made most if not all of the country uninhabitable for 50,000 years and saw the departure of Homo Heidelbergensis.

11. This graph shows the temperature variations over the past 800,000 years.

They have been calculated by the sampling of ice cores in Greenland. As the earth's climate hots up or cools down, it releases more or less oxygen into the atmosphere. This variation can be accurately measured by scientist and the temperature of each time period calculated from these readings.
The Anglian ice period occurred about here.

12. We return to the map of the midland prior to the onset of the period of glaciation. Note where rivers Bytham and Thames flow: both west to east and then north into today's North Sea.

13. As temperatures fell, decade by decade, century by century, the ice fields of the north moved inextricably south their immense weight and force gouging and reshaping the landscape as they went.

14. During a span of 50,000 years the ice mass would advance and retreat on many occasions, each time reshaping the land beneath. At its furthest point south, the ice covered most of Britain, blocking the river channels of the Bytham and Thames.

15. The ice blocked the way for the River Blytham and helped create a lake in the midlands 150 times larger than today's largest natural water in England, Lake Windermere, It is known as Lake Harrison and at its largest was approximately 900sq miles in area –dwarfing Lake Windermere which is under 6sq miles in area.

16. It began to develop as the climate slowly warmed and the meltwaters of two gigantic ice sheets, one west from the direction of Wales and the other from the north, flowed into a shallow depression of land stretching from Newbold Verdon down to Moreton in the Marsh; west toward the outskirts of today's Birmingham and as far east as Rugby creating the Lake.

Geological studies undertaken by Tarmac Quarries provide evidence of this area being in or on its shoreline.

17. The lake lasted for about 10,000 years. The lake, marked in blue, is superimposed on the chart to show you roughly when this would have been.

18. If, at some point around 425,000 years ago we had visited Newbold, looking north toward Newbold Heath and beyond to Bagworth, we would have seen a similar scene depicted in this picture as we stood on the shoreline of Lake Harrison, or perhaps on a small island just offshore.

In the near distance towering above us some 1,000 meters high would be the southernmost edge of an ice sheet stretching from the north pole some 2500 miles away. The melt water at the base would be flooding into the Lake and excreting the rocks and finer materials as it scoured all before it, leaving behind the glacial sands and gravels

19. Today these deposits lie below our feet, and a short walk up Brascote lane to where Tarmac quarries have excavated you will see the very sands and gravels deposited all those millennia ago. Geologists call them the Wigston and Cadeby Gravels.

20. Eventually, as the climate warmed the ice retreated, leaving behind a massive body of melt water that swelled and swelled until Lake Harrison finally burst out of its surrounds and forced rivers to the north, south and east.

21 And left us more or less with the river system we have today. You can now see our two little streams running out of Newbold and eventually into the Soar, northwards to the Trent and onward to the North Sea and the Humber Estuary. The river breaking east was the Welland, and the river breaking south-west was the Avon. Notice too how the river Thames takes up is present day course south and then east.

These momentous geological and meteorological changes all those years ago, laid the foundations for the emergence of settled people living in our parish and why we are here today.

22. After the Anglian Glacial period there were five more periods of cold, the two deepest being the Wolstonian and the Devensian. Our focus will turn to the period after the last ice-age, the Devensian, for it is here where homo-sapiens, modern day man and woman, first appear in Britain and begin to settle first seasonally and then permanently.

23. As the ice from the Devensian period eventually receded north, the geological landscape of our parish looked similar to today's.

The glacial sands and gravel, marked in pink on the diagram, that had been laid down during the glacial periods created well drained land, and also the two streams, north and south of today's village.

The green shading denotes the heavier glacial clays that were not so conducive to early arable farming.

It is the sands and gravels that explain why we are here because they provide well drained land on which to grow crops and build temporary and eventually permanent settlements. For the same reasons they also help explain how the settlements of Desford and Barlestone came to be: they too lie on sand and gravel with water courses near by.

However, it would be some time after the ice age ended before permanent settlements were established though it didn't mean our countryside was devoid of human visitors.

24. After the last ice age people began to return to Britain from southern Europe. This is the period of human habitation known as the Mesolithic Age (the middle stone age).

For some time after the ice had receded north, central Britain's climate was sub-arctic and quite inhospitable to settlers, but from around 9,500BC, nomadic hunting parties from modern day France and Belgium would cross the land bridge into Britain and spend the warmer part of their year hunting, before returning to east and south as the winter drew near.

25. Here is 21st century Newbold

26. And here is what the land on which the village now sits may have looked like 11,000 years ago.

Gradually, as the climate began to warm up, much of Britain became covered in forests of elm, hazel, lime, oak and pine. Within the forests the (1)deer grazed, (2) wild boar foraged, and an ancient breed of (3) wild cattle cropped the undergrowth alongside the (4) elk.

The people that returned to these newly habitable lands like ours were not settled farmers, but nomadic hunter-gatherers. constantly on the move, foraging for wild foods such as nuts and berries, and tracking wild animals for meat and skins.

Their nomadic, transient existence has meant that they have left only faint marks on the landscape and all that can usually be expected of a site where Mesolithic people lived is a scatter of finely worked and very distinctive stone tools.

27. One such site lies in a field opposite the Hut Spinney on the A447 where there has been a large find of 60 pieces of worked flint, some of which are dated to the Mesolithic period.

The second illustration shows a Mesolithic man working the flint to create cutting tools. They were very skilful at this process of knapping and it would not have taken them long to replenish their existing stock of tools with new ones from the found flints.

The flints used in this area are not naturally occurring rocks, they were washed down from north-east Lincolnshire during the Anglian period. Geologists call rocks that have been carried in the ice from the area where they naturally occur as erratic.

It would not be such a big leap of the imagination to think that small bands of nomads might settle near to our parish to take advantage of the flint eratics lying close by.

28. The Mesolithic period is estimated to have lasted about 4,500 years after which archaeologist began to identify such significant changes in the way people were living that they felt there needed to be a new description, known as the (1)Neolithic or new stone age. You will notice that there is a wavy line between the M and N, this tries to capture the period of transition where the old and new ways of living existed side by side. Neolithic people continued to use stone tools, though different and somewhat refined from those of their Mesolithic ancestors, but it wasn't the difference in stone tools that marked the division between the two periods, rather the way they lived their lives: moving from nomadic hunter-gatherers toward settled farmers.

29. Returning again to our parish but now during the Neolithic period, in the foreground is the stream south of the village which travels beneath today's Brascote Lane. The view is one set in the late Mesolithic-early Neolithic landscape as the inhabitants live both as hunters and farmers.

(2) Stone tools were still being made, though using different techniques and with a an emphasis on farming implements as much a hunting weapons. The landscape is changing; there are fewer trees and more breaks in the forest. (3)These clearings were created by the (4) hunters, initially to encourage the gathering of deer, boar, elk and wild cattle. But over time, as farming ideas came in, some of the patches of land were used to cultivate (5) wheat and barley crops and to rear domesticated animals such as (6) cattle and sheep. Close by would be the simple (7)huts lived in all year round.

30. This thumb nail scraper was found during an archaeological field walk in the 1970's. Small, but keenly edged, it was used for cleaning animal hides. It was found with another group of flints, believed to be Late Neolithic/ Early Bronze age in origin. The distinction relates to how flints were knapped, and the type of faces that were created. It was found just north of the Desford road in the field that lies opposite to Mill Lane.

31. Another flint scraper somewhat larger than our first but used for the same purpose, was found at Cadeby quarry.

32. Just south-east of today's Brascote, where Brascote House stood prior to the quarry demolishing it, the very same field walking group of amateur archaeologists from the village discovered a Neolithic flint arrowhead

33. Perhaps the most impressive of finds, and one dating from the later Neolithic/early bronze age, was this stone axe. It came from the same scatter of flints opposite Hutt Spinney on the A447 that had the Mesolithic knapped blades and flakes; demonstrating that some sites were used over many hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

34. Around 2300BC the ages of stone were giving way to the age of metal: bronze. Once again, it was not something that happened over night and in fact archaeologists talk of the early Bronze Age in the same breath as the late Neolithic, because it is hard to tell them apart; the late Neolithic not disappearing fully until around 1500 BC.

Understandably, there is an assumption that the Bronze age is defined by the use of the alloy metal in place of stone, but this is not so. Both stone and bronze tools were used during at least the early part of this period. What was different was the way in which people lived their lives, the way they farmed, their social and cultural attitudes and their understanding and interpretation of the spiritual world. We are fortunate in our parish to find evidence of the people of the Bronze age settling here.

35. This map shows where finds of artefacts and monuments dating to the Bronze Age have been discovered in and around the parish.

The two (1) flint scatters provide evidence of stone tools crafted at this time, whilst the (2) bronze spear heads are evidence of the increasing use of the metal. The (3) ring ditches mark both the site of round houses and where the remains of the dead were buried in circular barrows. There are also signs of (4) pit alignments possibly marking field or territorial boundaries.

What tells us much about Bronze age settlers in our parish is here (5) at the top of Brascote Lane.

36. This slide shows the lake at the top Brascote Lane and adjacent to the allotments. In 2010 this area was excavated by Tarmac for sand and stone, but prior to this happening an extensive archaeological survey was conducted by Leicester University and it revealed a Bronze Age ring ditch and possible settlement. The position of the ring ditch is close to the edge of the lake, adjacent to the sharp bend in Brascote Lane. The possible dwelling about a 130m away to the east on the other side of the lake.

37. This picture taken be the archaeologist shows the faint remains of a Bronze Age ring ditch . You can see the slightly darker deposits arcing round.

Ring ditches are usually the only surviving evidence of former round barrows (burial mounds) which have, over time, been eroded by ploughing.

38. On completion of the excavation, the archaeologists drew a precise diagram of what was found within the ring ditch.
It contained two sites where ashes of deceased humans were deposited. A third site contained large river pebbles placed over charcoal, but no human remains.
The five pits located within the ring ditch enclosure all appear to have contained burnt material and fragments of burnt bone which suggest that they may well have originally contained cremations or ritual burning residues.

39. This is a photograph of a Bronze Age barrow at Denny Lodge, in the New Forest ,Hampshire. It is almost the same size as our barrow
They are called bowl barrows and are the most numerous form of round barrow found in Britain. The remains of bodies would be buried, as described in the Brascote Barrow, and then an earthen or rubble mound placed over the graves.

40. Returning to the Brascote Barrow, this pit is particularly interesting, for although there is no evidence of human remains, there are large river stones placed over remnants of charcoal. The fact that no human remains were found may be to do with the chemistry of the soil which, if acidic, has the capacity to reduce such remains to nothing.

These stones are erratic's originally carried down from the north during the Anglian Glaciation 425,000 years earlier and then used by Bronze Age people to secure the remains of their dead ancestor and left for 3,500 years before the trowel of an archaeologist discovered them.

41. Here is an artist's impression of what might have been happening as the stones from our barrow were laid over the remains of the dead. You will notice that it is set within a landscape containing other barrows – known as a funerary.

Leicester University archaeologists found only the one barrow on this site, so concluded there was no funerary. However, a later archaeological dig opposite the Windmill Inn in 2016/7 revealed two ring ditches, one believed to be a barrow, and just down the road at Fields Farm, archaeologists identified a funerary in the field adjacent to Kirkby Lane.

It is possible that this area south of today's village was the site of a several more barrows but that the ploughing of the land over so many hundreds of years gradually erased the rest from the landscape.

42. Now let us turn to what might be a small settlement only 130m away to the east. It is queried as a dwelling because though the evidence gathered is quite insubstantial it does have post holes and pits, often associated with round house.
The fill of some of the holes consisted of dark greyish brown slightly sandy silty clay, with 50% charcoal content. This charcoal was carbon-14 dated to c.1500BC which puts the date of the fill to the Middle Bronze Age. A fact further enforced by seven conjoining Bronze Age pottery sherd fragments of a large pot identified as a Deverel-Rimbury urn and dated from the same mid-Bronze Age period.

43. Our round house and the Deverel Bucket Urn may have looked something like this.

44. This next slide is speculative and should be viewed in this manner, but it does illustrate what might have been going on at this site, especially toward the end of the bronze age and at the beginning of the Iron age.

It shows it as a funerary with at least one hut sitting within the barrows. By the end of the Bronze Age it was increasingly common to find dwellings and barrows in close proximity. It is the view of some archaeologists that by living amongst the dead people were better able to lay claim to ownership of the land. It may also have signified Bronze age people's attitude toward death that their ancestors, though dead, were still present and a link to the next world. On Uist in Scotland, for example, similar round houses to the one in the picture have been excavated and human remains have been found buried within the houses.

Perhaps in the early Bronze Age period the land would have served as a funerary on the periphery of any settlements but as time went by the ancient barrows were flattened out and incorporated into the farmed landscape and homesteads of people whose farming practices focused predominantly on the grazing of animals.

45. Archaeologist do not all agree on when the Iron Age began. Some believe it was as early as 800BC others believe it was as late as 600BC. The reason for this is the same as the uncertainty surrounding the end of the Neolithic and start of the Bronze age; and that is because there is evidence that for many years Bronze and Iron Age practices occurred side by side. AD43 is a more certain date – the invasion of Rome, but even this date does not mean dramatic changes in most people's live, at least not in the short term.

The Iron Age is commonly defined by the increasing use made by people of iron as the primary metal for tools and weaponry. It is not the sole criteria separating the Bronze and Iron ages. For example, funerial customs had changed. The dead were no longer cremated but buried, but most importantly it is the period when farming became firmly established as the way in which people would live their lives.

46. Newbold and the surrounding area has a great deal of archaeology evidence from this time demonstrating permanent human occupation
This is not surprising given that it was an area already populated during at least the Bronze age and quite likely earlier.

By the end of the Iron age when the climate had improved substantially from the wet and cold of the early years. (1)Trackways had been established. (2)People were well and truly fixed in the landscape, claiming their rights to parcels of land by the digging of ditch boundaries and then hedging or fencing them. (3) The circular houses were surrounded by ring ditches designed to drain away rainwater.

As well as the ditches dug for enclosure of land there were some ditches that don't seem to fulfil any obvious purpose. (4) Archaeologists refer to them as Pit Alignments.

47. As you travel from Newbold to Kirkby Mallory, on your left about halfway is a large open field that is adjacent to a small coppice.

Aerial photography undertaken in the 1950's by Jim Pickering revealed in this field a series of ditches (referred to by archaeologists as pits) running parallel to each other from close to the road and toward the wood. They were identified as Iron Age Pit Alignments.

Archaeologists are unable to say exactly what role these and others like them played in the life of iron age people. In some situations, pit alignments looked to have some form of religious significance, whilst in others it has been speculated that they were used as demarcations of land ownership.

48. Here are another set of similar looking alignments. They are on the western side of Kirby Lane just after passing Wibberley's Farm. The lines may well have stretched much further in the past. This is certainly an area of extensive Iron Age occupation, with pit alignments and field boundaries all across this area.

In other parts of the country pit alignments of this kind have been found to run perpendicular to a water course such as a stream or river. On reaching the watercourse, what are thought to be some form of religious 'offering' such as metal objects have been found. These lines run toward the (2) spring that is the source f the stream that runs south of the village, under Brascote Lane and then south toward the west of Brascote.

49. Returning once again to Newbold Road but on the opposite side of the road to the pit alignments, aerial photography has identified a double pit alignments.

It looks like a track and that is certainly one possibility. The ditches may well have been hedged and they provided opportunity for animals to be moved around from field to field without straying. In other parts of the country they have been associated with henges and are pathways leading to sites of spiritual significance, sometimes where offerings have been made.

50. If you walk from Newbold Church to Cadeby, just before entering Botany Bay Spinney you cross a large open field. Looking to your right as you enter the field the hedge makes a sharp change in direction. At this point aerial photography has identified pits that outline an Iron Age enclosure.

Enclosures were used to corral animals and also as perimeters to farmsteads. There is no evidence to support either possibility.

51. This field and its markings are much more promising. Travelling out of the village down Brascote Lane just after passing the allotments, the field on the left contains these enclosure markings. They define a rectilinear Iron Age enclosure with an entrance closest to the road. Fieldwalking in this field found Roman pottery and a possible Iron Age rim sherd.

Other findings nearby, show that human occupancy of these fields stretches back certainly at least to the Bronze age 4,000 years ago.

52. Returning this time to the fields north of Wibberley's farm that lie adjacent to the Desford Road, aerial photographs have identified what are believed to be Bronze Age linear features.

53. Lying close to Iron Age markings, they may well have been part of the wider field systems of that time.

54. By the late Iron Age, farming was well established throughout much of the country and it provided a relatively stable source of food. As a result, population numbers increased significantly compared to those of the Bronze Age. More and more land was cleared for crops and animals and those on the land staked their ownership by the use of boundary lines and ancestral monuments.

Here is an artist's impression of what an Iron Age settlement may have looked like. A few dwellings set amongst a landscape of small, hedged fields, woodland, and pasture - not too dissimilar to Newbold's countryside of the early 20th century.

The line running across the picture is likely to be a stream or river. Settlements were often close to watercourses for practical reasons but not too close as to be subject to flooding. Our village is in exactly that position, not too close to water and on well drained land. It would not be too speculative, therefore, to conjecture that the origins of the village were not Saxon, as is often stated, but may well have been as early as the Iron age. Certainly, not long after the Romans invaded in 43BC there was even more evidence of significant human occupation in the parish, including those engaged in light industry.

55. In AD 43, following two earlier attempts to invade Britain, the Roman army of 40,000 men under the Emperor Claudius finally succeeded and there then began nearly 364 years of occupation. Within less than 10 years the Romans had exerted their control across most of southern and eastern Britain and established forts along a line from Exeter to Lincoln, one of them being Leicester. These forts were linked by a newly constructed road, the Fosse Way. Archaeological finds in our area show that those people living here at the time, if not Roman themselves, were certainly being influenced by the occupation.

56. In this relatively small area there have over the years been a number of finds associated with Roman occupation.

(1) Sherds of Roman pottery are the most common. These finds, as in this case (2) just off Brascote Lane, are often within existing Iron Age enclosures. Finding Roman style pottery does not necessarily mean the occupiers were Roman. Estimates of the percentage of indigenous people compared to occupiers stands at 95% to only 5%. Suggesting Roman occupiers were spread very thinly across Britain even in the earliest days of occupation.

In 1975, a group of local amateur archaeologists led by Mike Harding of Newbold Verdon found in the field north of the Bull-in-the-Oak, the remains of a Roman villa. This, and similar ones close by in Desford, Kirkby Mallory, Peckleton, and Market Bosworth, would probably have been built in the later years of the Roman occupation.

Perhaps the most interesting of all finds for our area are five roman pottery kilns, two of which lie within our parish boundary. They are here because there was easy access to the raw materials needed to make pots – clay and wood and they are part of a semi-industrial landscape covering Leicester Forest East that can be dated to as early as AD60, only 17 years after the invasion.

57. When archaeologists were called upon to undertake a site assessment at the proposed Tarmac site for the excavation of sand and gravel on the western side of Brascote Lane opposite the Windmill Inn, one of these kilns, along with other Roman features was discovered.

(1) Two ring ditches, the likely remains of late Iron Age/Romano-British dwellings, were found, together with a number of enclosure ditches and gullies associated with evidence of occupation. (2,)Several pieces of domestic pottery dated to early Roman Britain were also excavated. But most telling of all was the discovery of a (3) Roman pottery kiln complete with 91 sherds (5kg) of pottery and 12kg of kiln furniture.

Just to the south-west of the ring ditches and kiln was a (4) small quarry for the extraction of the clay required for the pots.

58. This diagram is from the archaeological report completed by Leicester University on behalf of Tarmac Quarries. Here you can see the excavation trenches positioned around the site and the main discoveries: (1) Imported pottery; (2)a ring ditch, (3) pottery kiln and (4) small quarry.

As well as a geophysical survey involving probing the ground using electrical resistance techniques, there were eighteen trenches dug as well and three soil analysis samples undertaken.

59. The excavated kiln presents as a discoloured circle of sub-soil but when in full operation it would have looked like this.

60. This cross-sectioned diagram shows the construction of the kiln. With its turf clods and lined inner wall, none of which survived the last 2000 years, except the faint circular shadow.

What did survive were the discarded pots and the elongated kiln bars you can see radiating out from the centre of the kiln supporting the flat circular plates on which the pots were placed upon for firing. The kiln produced a range of small and medium-sized jars in a fine sandy greyware and large storage jars.

The findings have been dated to the latter decades of the 1st century AD and the kiln was one of many operating in the Leicester Forest area. The settlement of Leicester (Ratae) and smaller nearby Roman towns would have provided a ready market for the domestic pots as well as roof tiles for the civic buildings, military establishments and, later, countryside villas.

61. The Greyware large storage jar in this slide matches the sherds found in the kiln remains. It would have been used for food storage such as wheat or barley.

The two other remnants of pottery found very close-by but not made in the kiln were possibly the property of the kiln owners. The Gaulish Samian beaker similar to this one was dated as being made between AD70 and 100. This is an unusual enough occurrence in Leicester itself, let alone in the surrounding countryside. These beakers were of a better quality and were perceived as 'best ware' in households.

The mortarium was used for pounding or mixing foods and is regarded as an important indicator of the spread of Romanized food preparation methods. The people living here used Roman methods of cooking even if they were not themselves Roman.

The mortarium had a maker's stamp comprising the letters RNVS, which identified it having been made in Brockley Hill (Surrey) or St Albums (Hertfordshire) somewhere between 60AD to 100AD by the potter Marinus. It is one of the rarest finds in Leicestershire, a named mortarium of such an early period of the Roman occupation.

62. Let us return to the aerial photograph of 21st century Newbold and see what it may have looked like at some time in the Roman occupation period.

63. Throughout the whole period of Roman occupation the midlands continued to be predominantly an agricultural area. (1) Woodlands had diminished in size, but they remained a vital source of building materials and fuel. (2)Hedges and ditches defined property boundaries and kept animals corralled safely, the main livestock being (3)cattle, sheep and pigs.

(4)Round houses remained but more cuboid shaped huts emerged in the later period and there is a possibility that some were gathered closer together, though most would still remain as isolated farmsteads.

(6) Growing crops such a wheat, spelt and barley. (7)Tracks were established between the farmsteads and also to link up with the nearby Roman Roads.

(8) Pots would still be required as would the need to extract the (9) clay from the land.

64. After the Romans abandoned the British Isles in AD410 there followed over 600 years of first Anglo-Saxon and then Viking invasion and settlement before the Norman Conquest beginning in 1066.

It is a period of history that was once described as the Dark Ages, primarily because archaeologists and historians had little evidence both on the ground and in written text to fully understand the period. This has changed somewhat

over the years but most of what we have to go on for our parish is found in some surprising places starting with the village's original Saxon name and the names of the surrounding villages and hamlets.

65. Over this 600-year period the village and surrounding area was first settled by Anglo-Saxon tribes from northern European mainland. They brought with them their own language and named their settlements accordingly. (Read the green settlements). From the late 8th century there was a further incursion of foreigners, this time the Vikings. They too settled and named where they lived in their native tongue. (Read Red settlements).

66. This is not a spelling mistake. It is the spelling given to the village when it was recorded in the Domesday book. The second part of the word 'Bold' provides a clue to the village's history though we do not know exactly when it began as a settlement.

We know it has a Saxon name because 'bold' refers to a house (probably a house of the Lord of the manor) and 'new' would suggest that it isn't the first: hence Newbold – new house. It may not be quite as simple as that. Saxon and Viking societies were hierarchical in nature. Land was divided up and ownership ascribed to important individuals.

To have a 'bold' in Saxon times meant something more than just a dwelling. It also referred to one's rights and responsibilities as the Lord of the manor. He would provide land for his villagers to farm but in return they had to undertake work on his land for a certain number of days in the year.

67. The orange line denotes today's parish boundary, which now marks a local government administrative area that confers certain rights and responsibilities to elected members of the public – the parish council. Prior to this, it was the area defined by the Church as the responsibility of the parish priest (vicar)to serve the pastoral and religious needs of parishioners.

But the origin of these administrative and ecclesiastical districts originates from the Saxon/Viking manorial system, whereby the people of a local districts looked to the lord of the manor for protection and land, and in return they would pay in kind with goods or services to the Lord.

Today's parish boundary was once the Manorial boundary and whilst there have been changes over the years, it is possible that what you see is much of a defined area dating back over 1100 years.

68. The present-day boundary has changed somewhat over the years. This boundary from over 200 years ago shows how Kirkby Mallory parish comes right up to the eastern edge of the village.

Despite these changes over time, it can be said with some confidence that the parish boundary would not have deviated too much since the time of the Saxons when they were first laid down, based on the manorial claims of the ruling elite living in the area.

69. There is a possibility that today's parish was once split into two manors: Newbold and Brascote. There is some support on the ground for this because Brascote has its own Manor Farm whilst Newbold has its own 'Bold' the house or seat of the Lord of the Manor, today's Hall Farm. Also, in the Domesday book Brascote has its own entry, which could signify that it was a manor in its own right. We are going to assume that at least at one point that Brascote and Newbold were part of the same Manor.

70. Not all manors had villages. In vast swathes of the British isles the nucleated village was nowhere near as prevalent as the midlands. Nucleated settlements emerged as a way of better farming the land.

Sometime in the early 9th century the idea of villages began to emerge, initially from Europe before coming to Britain. It was regarded as a way of more efficiently farming the land, whereby all the peasant farmers in a locality would leave their isolated farmsteads and settle their families together in dwellings close by each other.

The hedges in the small fields were removed and the land around the village organised into two or three exceptionally large fields. Each peasant would be allocated strips of land allocated in each of the fields so that each received poor and good land in equal measure. As a group they would decide on what crops to grow in which field each year and when to leave a field fallow so that it could recover. Much of the farming would be done communally, for example when ploughing or harvesting.

71. This is a re-creation of the Saxon village of West Stow in Suffolk and it gives us a reasonable idea of the homes lived in by Newbold's Saxon villagers.

72. Let us look at what our Saxon village may have looked like just prior to the Norman invasion.

73. The network of rough roads and tracks are likely to have reflected some of those we have today. The published maps show the road to MB (1) running between the hall and church. The lane to (2)Brascote and onward to Kirkby would have been established as would (3) the ancient trackway to Cadeby,

The (4) Saxon Manor house stood 25m to the south of today's Hall Farm but the earliest record of a (5) church was not until the 13th century. If there was one it would probably have resembled a large thatched barn.

The (6) peasant farmers' houses would have been close to the Manor House and numbering in single figures. We know this because the DDB of 1086 recorded only 6 peasant farmers and 2 borders (small holders) living in the manor with their families. The village population would have been somewhere between 30-60 people.

74. Our own hamlet of Brascote can probably give us the best insight into what Newbold was like, and Brascote itself. The aerial photograph was taken in the latter half of the 20th century by Robert Hartley who, following a field walk in the 1990's then sketched the map.

75. Here you can see Manor Farm and the probable sites, of four houses set in old enclosures together with a fishpond for winter sustenance. Winding through is a likely ancient track leading to Naneby.

Surrounding the hamlet are a number of hedged fields These hedges are superimposed over much older and larger open fields, with their characteristic ridge and furrows, marked here as dashed lines. In this field it is still possible for you to see them.

The hamlet was almost totally abandoned when it was enclosed in 1499 and most of the residents were driven off the land so that the land could be turned over to sheep farming by the lord of the manor. It has meant that the more ancient Anglo-Saxon, early Norman landscape was partially preserved beneath.

76. In this the penultimate slide of the presentation the diagram illustrates what the landscape of the (1) parish may have looked like just prior to the Norman invasion. Both Newbold and Brascote sit amongst large open fields tendered by the peasant farmers.

The roads and tracks linking up the fields as well as the local communities.

(2) Waste land or common land would be the least productive farmland or woods. All villagers would have the right to graze their animals on these commons and to set their pigs into the woods to forage. The woodland would also be an important source of fuel and building material.

(3) The rest of the land would be farmed according to the three field system: (4) one large field being left fallow to allow it to recover from two years of growing crops, whilst the other two field would be planted with such food sources as barley or wheat.

Decisions about what should be grown and when were taken communally at Manorial Courts, where any disputes between peasants over their strips of land could be settled.

This late Saxon/early Norman landscape is, to a lesser degree still with us today. We drive on roads from this time and walk some of the paths and trackways. The big open fields have gone but their faint footprint can be seen in the field boundaries of today.

77. So, there you have it. A snapshot of what is currently known of our parish and the people who visited or settled in and around it over many thousands of years. No doubt in years to come and as the land reveals its past, further insights into our history will be forthcoming.

If you wish to know more about the sources used in compiling this presentation please view the following slides.

I hope you have enjoyed this gallop through the early history of the parish and that you can now appreciate a little more the history beneath your feet.