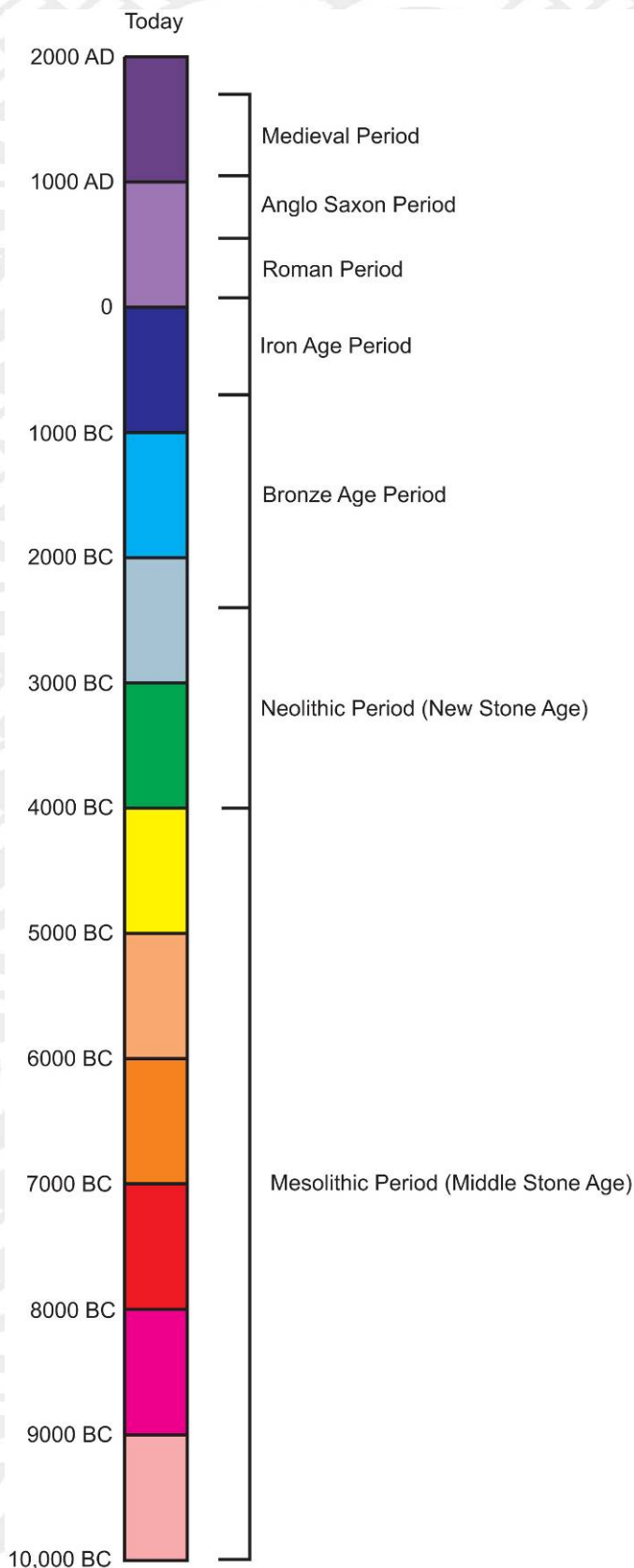




## Factsheet: The Neolithic Period (4,000- 2,400 BC)

***What did people eat? What did people do? Where did people live?***

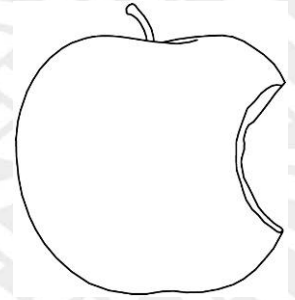


- The word 'Neolithic' means 'New Stone Age' ('neo' means new and 'lithic' means stone).
- The Neolithic period marks the start of farming.
- The Neolithic period lasted from 4000 BC to 2,400 BC in Britain.
- In the Neolithic people began to keep animals.
- In the period before this, known as the Mesolithic, people lived by hunting animals, fishing and gathering plant foods.
- They began to grow crops instead of gathering all their plants.
- In the Neolithic people began to make pottery. They decorated their pottery with lines and shapes.
- They built timber houses but also used tents. They also built large religious sites and burial monuments, such as stone circles and chambered tombs.
- At Lanton Quarry archaeologists have found postholes, fire places and storage pits showing where people lived during the Neolithic.



## What did people eat?

- People in the Neolithic period kept **cows**, **pigs**, **sheep** and **goats**.
- They grew crops like **wheat**, **barley** and **oats**
- They gathered **hazelnuts**, **apples** and **blackberries** as well as other types of **fruit** and **nuts**.
- People cooked their food over **fires** or in oven pits dug into the ground.
- They had a special way of disposing of rubbish. They buried it in pits dug into the ground which were then filled with soil.



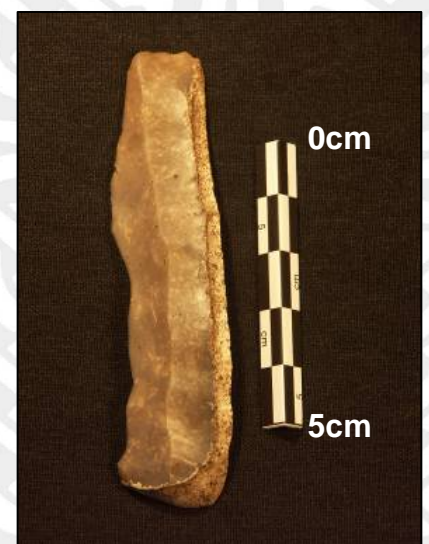
## Evidence from Lanton Quarry

Archaeologists have found evidence at Lanton Quarry of the types of food that people ate in the Neolithic period. Animal bones with cut marks on show us that meat was eaten. Plants do not survive for very long, but at Lanton Quarry we have found the shells from hazelnuts and grains of wheat and barley. These shells and cereal grains were found in the rubbish pits and oven pits. Amazingly, small bits of food can sometimes survive on the pottery! By looking at chemicals in these bits of food we can identify what people cooked in the Neolithic period. At Lanton, the food remains showed the eating of butter, milk and yoghurt as well as meat stews. We also know that they would have used flint tools to slaughter the animals and then removed the skin and fur before eating them.



This dark patch in the sand and gravel shows us that this area had been used as an oven pit. The soil is black because burnt wood had been heated to a very high temperature

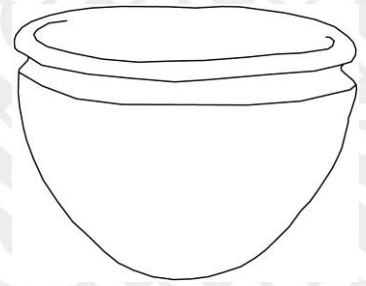
During the Neolithic people made their tools by chipping stone. This is the type of flint tool that people would have used to cut up the meat from animals.





## What did people do?

- In the Neolithic period people made their own **pottery** and decorated it.
- Pottery was made out of **clay** collected from the ground near to rivers.
- Pottery was decorated with **lines** and **patterns** and then heated in a fire to harden it.
- People in the Neolithic used their pots to do their **cooking** in, **store food** and serve **food**.
- People made **jewellery** out of **stone**, **bone**, **animal teeth** and **tusks**.
- Tools were made out of **flint**. Flint is very hard and can be shaped to make **sharp edges** and **pointed ends**. They made **knives**, **arrowheads**, **scraping tools**, and **piercers**.
- **Children** would have learnt all these skills from their parents and would have had to help with all the **chores**. They would have learnt how to gather plants that they could eat and use as **medicines**, and how to look after **crops**.



## Evidence from Lanton Quarry

Pottery and flint tools survive for a very long time so archaeologists can find them when they excavate a site. At Lanton Quarry pottery has survived very well in the ground and we have found lots of flint tools. We know that people decorated their pots and used them for cooking. Some had handles for carrying and pouring, while others had lugs for hanging them over a fire. Archaeologists have also found lots of flint tools at Lanton Quarry, including arrowheads and spear heads used as hunting weapons.



These are just a few of the hundreds of Neolithic flint tools that archaeologists have found at Lanton Quarry. These pictures show some different shaped arrowheads.

These are some of the fragments of pottery that have been found at Lanton Quarry. Can you spot the one that has the handle and the one that has lugs? Can you draw what the whole pots would have looked like?

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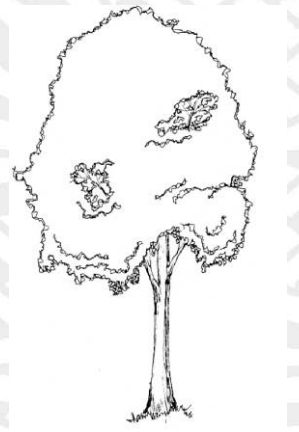


### *Where did people live?*

Houses in the Neolithic period were built in places that were very **near water** and had a **good supply of wood**.

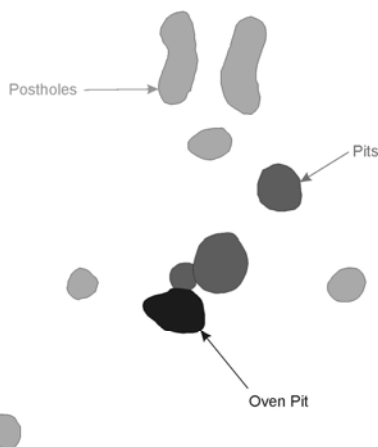
The houses were mostly built of **wood**, but in some places they were built of **stone**, and in other places **tents** were used made from **animal skins**.

They would have had a fire in the middle of the floor for **cooking** and people would have slept in these houses.



### *Evidence from Lanton Quarry*

Archaeologists can tell where there would have been a house by looking for dark marks in the soil. These dark marks show where wooden posts have been, to hold up the roof. At Lanton Quarry archaeologists have found evidence that people were building houses and places to store their food in the Neolithic period. We know that some of the houses at Lanton Quarry would have been triangular in shape, like the one you can see below. In this picture the ranging rods are 2m long so you can tell the size of the building.



These pictures show the postholes of a triangular building that was found at Lanton Quarry. The picture above shows the postholes after the dark soil has been taken out and the picture on the left shows the postholes once they have been drawn on a plan. The strange shaped postholes at the top would have had two wooden posts in them. This was for extra support and could have formed the entrance. The light grey shapes are postholes, the dark grey holes are pits and the black hole is an oven pit. Draw what you think the house would have looked like.