PICK OF THE DAY  Michael Wood’s Story of England  9.00pm  BBC4, 11.30pm  BBC HD

DOCUMENTARY OF THE WEEK  New series
The tousled, beaming figure of Michael Wood has been a stamp of quality on history series since the early 1980s. Here, he takes the tale of a single Leicestershire village as his springboard for a more sweeping story. But don’t expect a stodgy, linear narrative: Wood’s programmes have a way of ducking and diving, painting an impressionistic picture with flashes of real insight.

But by the end, we have a good sense of how life in his chosen parish, a huddle of hamlets on the A6 called Kilworth, might have changed from Roman times through to the Norman invasion. A lot of this comes via back-garden archaeology – locals digging pits in their gardens that throw up shreds of Roman pottery and part of an Anglo-Saxon comb (the Sherlockian pottery expert is worth the price of admission alone).

As usual, Wood brings the tale alive with a mix of broadband erudition and sheer energy. And look out for a magical demonstration of how the Saxons spun wool.

David Butcher
Who do these villagers think they are?  page 20

HANDS-ON HISTORY
Kilworth High School pupils made a surprising discovery when they took part in digs for the programme. “In this hole (left) they found a cannon ball that dated from the English Civil War,” says head teacher Angela Edwards. “But they were just as pleased to find things like animal bones. In a wider sense it will help us use the village for the purposes of geography and history lessons so it’s been a very positive experience.”