*The Worcestershire windofer*s:

Landmarks on a track between Wychbury Hill and Ismere, two of north Worcestershire's most important ancient sites

by

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Abstract

A seemingly ancient track-way traverses an extended area of high ground at Iverley in south Staffordshire. Running in a roughly east-west direction, the track may have afforded access between Wychbury hill, the location of an Iron Age hill fort, and Ismere. The latter was probably the moot (meeting) site of the people of the *Husmeræ* province, an ancient tribal group which almost certainly pre-dates the Anglo-Saxon settlement of the region. Evidence that the track also served as a link between two major north-south roads (probably Iron Age salt-ways) is discussed.

The track begins and ends upon gently-sloping promontories in Wolverley and Pedmore parishes, both of which were in Worcestershire until 1974. The promontories were each named *windofer* in separate tenth-century charters; and it is noteworthy that this otherwise unique place-name occurs twice, just over two miles apart on the same ancient track-way.

The name's *wind-* qualifier may be related the verb 'to wind' rather than to blustery weather. The Old English place-name element *-ofer* is considered to mean a promontory or ridge having a characteristic shape, but it is argued here that *windofer* refers to the entire elevated landmass, including the two promontories, over which the Iverley track passes.

1. Introduction

The northern fringe of the historic county of Worcestershire is home to a number of ancient sites. Two of the most important are Ismere and Wychbury hill fort, which lie about 3 miles (5 km) apart. The former resides in the ancient parish of Wolverley in north Worcestershire; and the latter is located in Pedmore parish, which was also in Worcestershire until the *Local Government Act*'s 1974 boundary reorganisations but has since been part of Dudley Metropolitan Borough. Figure 1 illustrates the study area, in which these sites lie, in relation to both modern counties and the local ancient parishes.

Wychbury hill fort was constructed in the (probably late[1]) Iron Age; and Ismere may have been the central place or moot site of the *Husmeræ* people, an ancient tribal group which almost certainly pre-dates the Anglo-Saxon settlement of the region in the late sixth or early seventh century. It is not clear whether Wychbury's and Ismere's periods of use (or perhaps re-use) overlapped, so it is interesting to note that an apparently ancient trackway connects the two sites via an extended region of high ground known today as Iverley which lies in the south-eastern projection of Kinver parish, Staffordshire. For this reason, and for the purposes of identification only, I will refer to this trackway as the 'Iverley track' in the following sections.
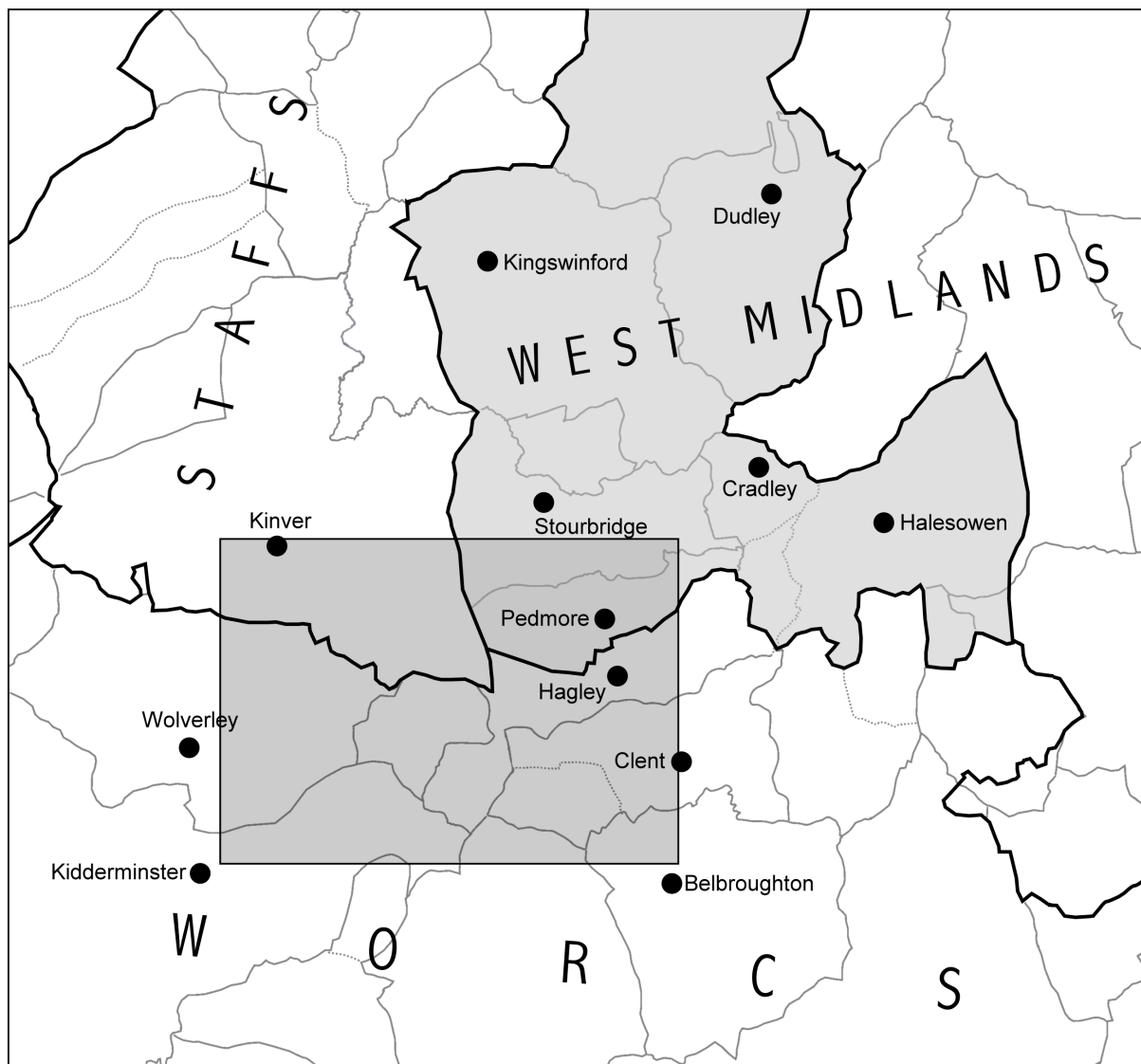

Fig. 1. *The location of the study area depicted in figures 2a and 2b. Modern (post-1974) county boundaries are shown in black; Dudley Metropolitan Borough is tinted grey. Ancient parish boundaries are lined in grey.*

This article discusses evidence for the antiquity and purpose of the Iverley track; and considers its relationship to several of the place-names along its course. This includes two hill-spurs, or promontories, which, in the tenth century, were both called *windofer*, a name which, with one possible exception, is unknown elsewhere in England.

2. The Iverley Track on Historical Maps

All one-inch, and larger, scale Ordnance Survey (OS) maps from 1831[2] onwards show the Iverley track running from Ounty John Lane (SO 901820) in the parish of Pedmore, near Stourbridge, east-south-east to The Crown Inn on the A451 at Iverley (SO 882813), and then on from Sugar Loaf Lane (SO 876813) to a hill named High Down (SO 869811) before turning south through a small valley known as Fairy Glen (SO 865807) towards Ismere in Wolverley parish.

As illustrated in figure 2, the track passes close to several features of historical and archaeological significance: Iverley, an extended area of former woodland in the south-east corner of Kinver parish in Staffordshire; Burys Hill (SO 896816), named as *lusdune* in a tenth-century charter for Swinford, and County Lane (SO 889814), a first-century Roman road that connected Droitwich (*Salinae*) to the Roman encampments at Greensforge near Ashwood.

It is interesting that there is a distinct bend in the Roman road very close to its intersection with the Iverley track. The ridge here was clearly a course-correction point during the road's construction, presumably being used as a reference position for a ranging pole or other line-of-sight marker which Roman surveyors used when laying out the road. It may be that Roman engineers reached this location by means of the Iverley track.

Indeed, it is quite possible that the track pre-dates the arrival of the Romans. Although an eastward extension leads to the (probably) seventh-century[3] settlement of Pedmore, it also connects to an Iron Age salt road serving Droitwich[4]. And, at least two extensions to the west appear to link up with a long-distance road north to Chester (called *Chestrewey* in the AD 1300 perambulation of Kinver Forest)[5], another likely Iron Age salt-trading road.

In addition to the historical cartography already described, modern OS maps[6] depict (most of) the Iverley track as a public footpath, and one may still walk the majority of its length. There have been some minor deviations to the eastward extension mentioned above (i.e. in the vicinity of the modern housing developments around Quarry Park Road in Pedmore), but for the most part the route is unchanged since it was first mapped in 1831.

All available modern and historic maps show a break in the, presumably earlier, direct line of the track between the A451 and Sugar Loaf Lane. The path probably became diverted to the north around the edge of new rectangular fields when the latter were laid out in the seventeenth century[7]. Unlike the section between Ounty John Lane and County Lane (see below), the track here has not reverted to its original 'diagonal' route, which may indicate that the fields in this vicinity were more intensively or continuously used in the intervening years.

Only two vestiges of the track's original course between the A451 and Sugar Loaf Lane remain today: a small stub on the western side of the A451 (SO 882813), and two short diagonal field boundaries which cut across the corners of otherwise rectangular paddocks near Sugar Loaf Lane (SO 878812). The 'stub' is now the entrance to a private driveway, but late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century OS maps (see figure 3) demonstrate that this small area of land belonged to the Kidderminster-Stourbridge Road (the A451). This is precisely what one would expect if it had originally been a branch of the highway there. The short diagonal paddock boundaries nearer Sugar Loaf Lane are not shown on printed OS maps, although aerial views from the Apple Maps App, Google Maps / Street View, and Google Earth (see figure 4) and the Ordnance Survey's online service (accessible at https://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) show these short segments of boundary lining up very well indeed with the expected course of the Iverley track near Sugar Loaf Lane. They are assumed to be remnants of the field boundaries which abutted the track at the date of enclosure.
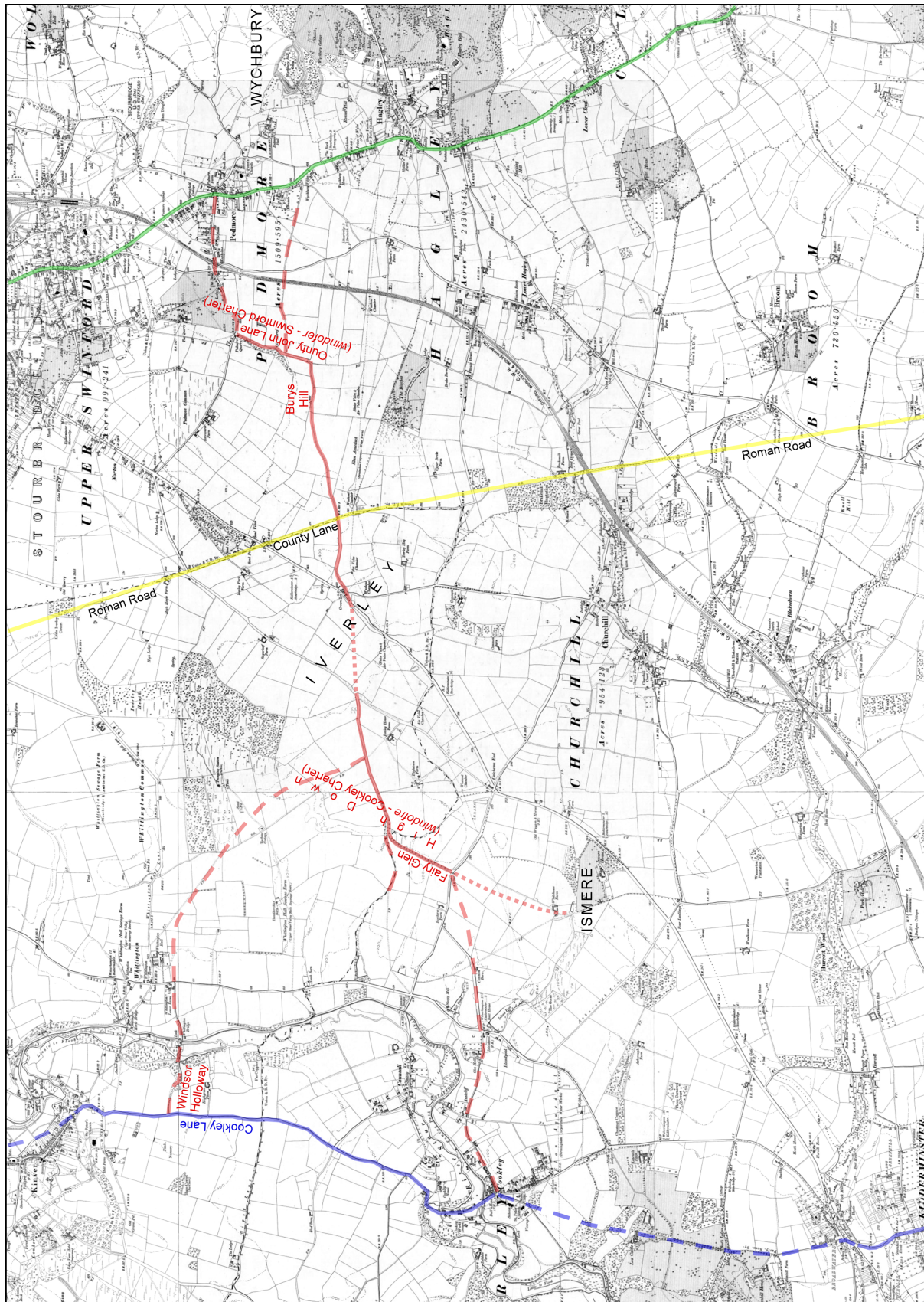
Fig. 2a. *The Iverley track (red) on 1880s OS 1:10,560 (6-inch) 'County Series' map sheets (Surveyed/Published): Staffs. LXX.SE (1882/1884); Worcs. IX.SW (1882/1888), IV.SE (1882/1885), VIII.NE (1882/1887), IX NW (1882/1885), IX.NE (1881/1884), VIII.SE (1882/1884), IX.SW (1881/1884) and IX.SE (1881/1884). Other roads: Blue—Chester-to-Bristol; Green—Droitwich-to-Penkridge; Yellow—Droitwich-to-Greensforge (Roman).*
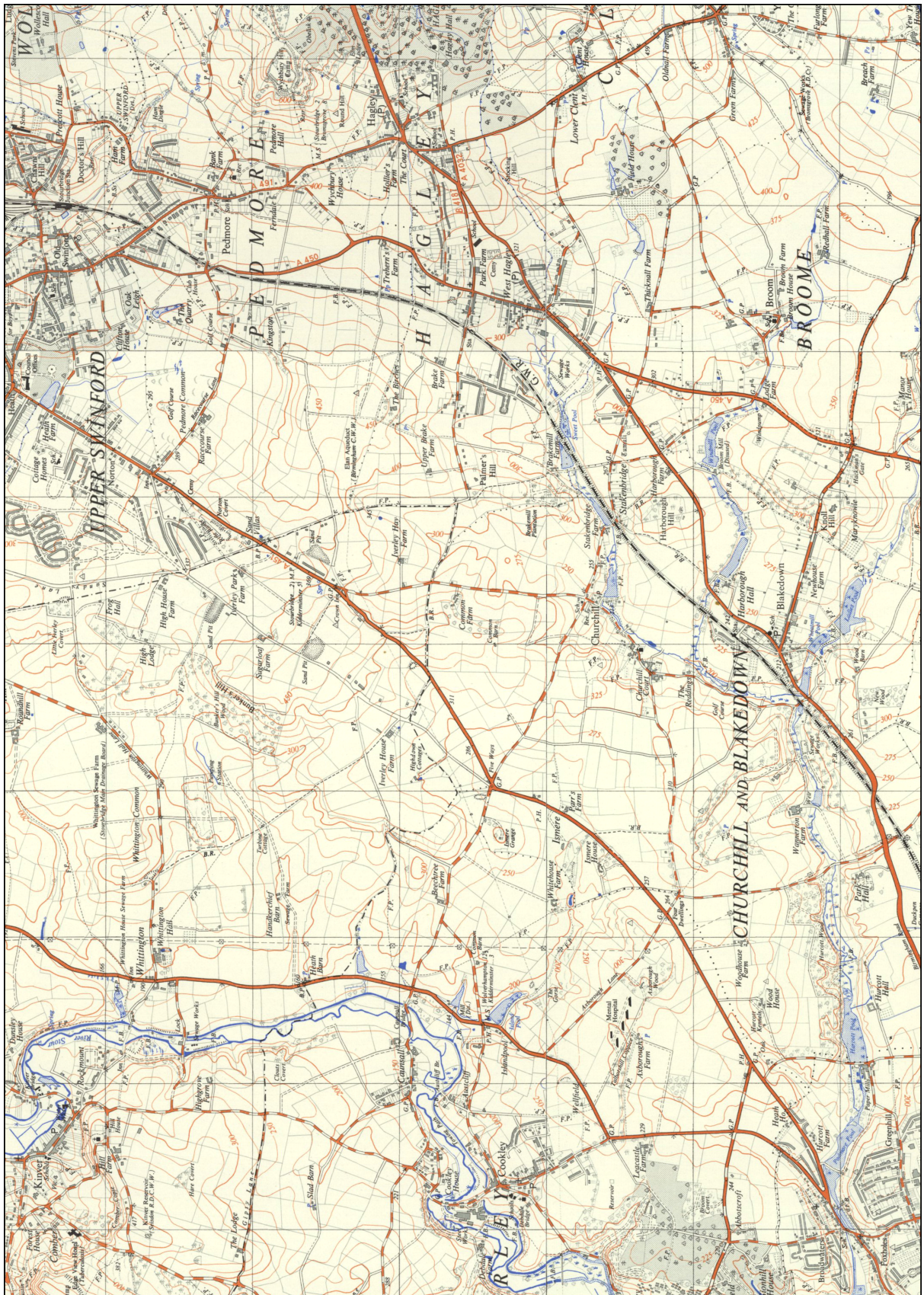
Fig. 2b. *OS 1:25000 1950s 'Provisional Edition' maps, demonstrating the Iverley track's relationship to local contours. Composite from sheets SO88 (1951); SO98 (1953); SO87 (1951) and SO97 (1951).*
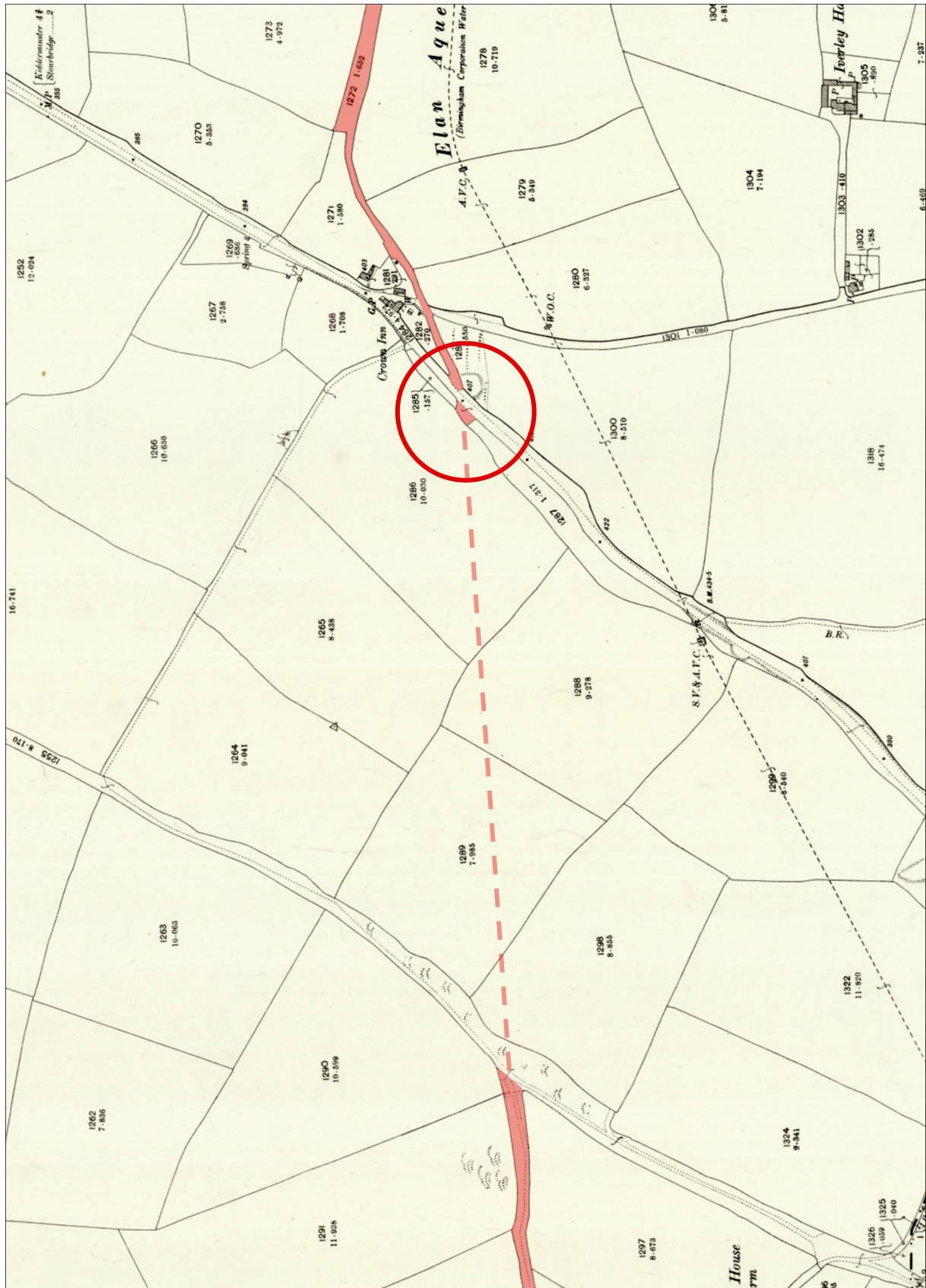

Fig. 3. *Detail from Worcs.1:2,500 (25-inch) sheet IX.1 depicting, as part of the highway, the Iverley track's stub (circled). The track is highlighted in pink. The A451 Stourbridge-Kidderminster road runs from the top-right corner to middle-bottom of the map, and Sugar Loaf Lane runs roughly parallel on the left side of the map.*

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Fig. 4. *Aerial views showing the alignment of two short diagonal paddock boundaries near Sugar Loaf Lane:*

   a) Vertical view from the Apple Maps App, accessed 18/8/18, with boundary alignments highlighted;

   b) More detailed oblique aerial view from Google Maps / Street View web site (https://www.mapstreetview.com/#v7zik_-1acj7_7i_0_5k73), accessed 18/08/2018, with the fence lines along the diagonal paddock boundaries highlighted.

The portion of the track east of Iverley is also shown on the 1846 tithe plan of Pedmore parish[8] (figure 5), although the extension to the east of Ounty John Lane (SO 899817) is represented only as a field boundary (following the same line as the OS-mapped extension).

To the west of Ounty John Lane, the Pedmore tithe plan depicts the track crossing diagonally over relatively modern field boundaries, shown between points A and B on figure 5. Presumably the fields here were enclosed comparatively recently, perhaps in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. One might take this superposition as evidence that the track post-dates these field boundaries, but it is quite possible that it merely represents the re-establishment, by continued use, of the line of an earlier route-way—i.e. one which pre-dated the field boundaries. The diagonal route is not only more direct, but also follows higher and better-drained ground than a diversion around the edges of the fields.

This leads us to another point which may be relevant. The route-way runs along high ground almost all of the way from Wychbury, Pedmore and the A491 in the east to High Down and Ismere in the west. In fact it keeps to the highest ground that it reasonably could whilst still following a fairly direct course between its end points. This may lend weight to the supposition of great age; but it is only circumstantial evidence and, of course, many ancient routes didn't follow high ground at all.

Given the observations above, it seems plausible that this mapped track may represent the course of an ancient route-way, but firmer evidence is needed. Such evidence as is available will be discussed in §4 to §7, but first we must consider the locations which the track was meant to serve.

3. The Iverley Track's Termini

As we have seen in §2, the track clearly served several different end points. Three likely termini can be identified at its eastern end (Wychbury, Pedmore and the Droitwich-Penkridge road) and two near its western end (the Chester-Bristol road and Ismere), each being accessed via short extensions or branches from the main portion of the track (see figure 2). It is probable that the track's primary function and therefore, its principal termini varied over time.

3.1 A link road in the salt-way network

The Iverley track may have served as a link road between two major north-south roads: the Droitwich-to-Penkridge road (now the A491), and the Chester-Bristol road which ran across Enville Common, through Kinver and Cookley, south past Lea Castle Farm and then skirting Kidderminster along the A449. This road was recorded in the AD 1300 perambulation of Kinver Forest (§2). Both roads were probably Iron Age (or earlier) salt-ways.

While Droitwich salt seems to have been traded primarily to the south-west of the west midlands region during the Iron Age[9], it undoubtedly also penetrated well into Mercia in the Anglo-Saxon period. In the Iron Age, the Cheshire salt wics (Middlewich, Nantwich and Northwich), in Cornovii territory, are known to have supplied salt as far south as north Gloucestershire (then Dobunnic territory)[10]. Much of this trade may have been conveyed along the Chester-Bristol road. Indeed, some of it certainly came to north Worcestershire: the Dudley Historic Environment Record (ref. 12247) details an Iron Age briquetage associated with Cheshire salt, found at Hodge Hill in Pedmore.

As mentioned in §1, the Iverley track crosses two locations separately named *windofer* in tenth-century charters; and it has been observed that the distribution of *ofer* place-names in the west midlands correlates closely with the Droitwich salt-way network[11].

Field work confirms that the southern end of the western *windofer* (an eminence now named High Down) could have been seen from the vantage point of Cookley (*culnan clif* in the tenth century), as well as a little way to the north and south. Though its profile is not clear from every angle, it may have acted to alert travellers on the Chester-Bristol road to an easterly turning towards Ismere, Wychbury and the Droitwich-Penkridge road. (Some potential place-name evidence for this is described in §5.3.)

Fig. 5. *Extract from the 1846 tithe plan of Pedmore showing the eastern portion of the Iverley track, which lies within Pedmore parish.*

The eastern *windofer* (a hill-spur at Ounty John Lane, Pedmore) might have served a complementary function for travellers on the Droitwich-Penkridge road, although this promontory would have been considerably less noticeable from that vantage point (see §6).

Dr Ann Cole describes a similar arrangement of roads marked by place-names containing *ofer* in Northumbria[12]. She also notes that place-names in *ofer* (or the Saxon equivalent, *ōra*) sometimes herald junctions on major roads at which one must turn off in order to reach Anglo-Saxon royal centres (e.g. Yeavering, Milfield, Tamworth, Orford and Stonner Point). Whilst there are no (known) royal centres of equivalent importance locally, two places with royal connections would have been reachable via the track's junction with the Droitwich-Penkridge road. These are the royal Domesday manor and probable minster estate of Clent[13] (the *caput* of the Clent Hundred), and Kingswinford, which seems to have been an important royal administrative centre for some time before the Norman Conquest[14]. And, of course, one may wonder whether Ismere or Wychbury themselves would have remained important enough during the Anglo-Saxon period to warrant the coining of *ofer* place-names along their approaches.

3.2 Pedmore and Wychbury in the east

At the eastern end of the Iverley track, there are two primary termini: the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Pedmore and the Iron Age fortification on Wychbury hill.

3.2.1 Pedmore

Pedmore lies near the foot of Wychbury hill, a few hundred metres north-west of the fort. It is likely that there was settlement in the vicinity as far back as the Bronze Age[15], but the Anglo-Saxon hamlet of Pedmore was probably established early in the seventh century[16]. Its name derives from the Anglian personal name *Pybba* and *mōr*, the latter element meaning a barren upland, moor or marsh[17]. *Pybba* (also written *Pypba* or *Pyppa* in some sources) was the name of a late-sixth-century Anglian king (c593-c600) who belonged to the dynasty that ruled Mercia during its westwards expansion into the region. In the wider south-west midlands there is an exceptionally high concentration of places incorporating royal names from this dynasty, i.e. *Creoda*, *Penda*, and *Pybba*. It is likely that these personal names grew popular shortly after each king came to prominence, and that various locations acquired their names from more lowly settlers who had been given these royal appellations. Pedmore's *Pybba* may well have been the person—perhaps the head of an Anglian family or clan— who, in the first half of the seventh century, drained and settled a tract of land near the present-day village.

Pedmore seems to have been one of the earlier and more important settlements in the vicinity; and prior to the local manor (and then parish) boundaries becoming established (which happened sometime after the mid-tenth century), its lands probably extended northwards to Pepper Hill, a place-name that might also derive from *Pybba*. Thus the land subsequently occupied by the settlement of Oldswinford seems originally to have been part of Pedmore township[18].

It is quite likely that the Iverley track provided access to Pedmore (and, perhaps later, Oldswinford) from places in the west like Caunsall, Austcliffe, and Cookley as well as from Ismere and the Chester Road (now Cookley Lane). Near Pedmore, travellers would have taken a course northwards (i.e. down) Ounty John Lane before turning east or north-east to their destination.

3.2.2 Wychbury hill

The Iron Age encampment on Wychbury hill is a moderately sized multi-vallate fort with a large annexe to the south. The fort lies adjacent to the ancient Droitwich-Penkridge road (now the A491) and has complex earthwork defences which appear originally to have been supported by a revetment of stone or timber. The defences on the north-east side of the fort (i.e. furthest from the road) are the weakest, which is surprising because the natural topography here would make this aspect of the fort the easiest to attack. The impressive defences facing the road might, therefore, have been intended

more for show than a practical defensive measure, which probably indicates that the fort did not have an entirely military purpose.

Many Iron Age hill forts seem to have served as the 'central place' of the surrounding community: elite centres used for community and ceremonial functions, defensive retreats in times of stress and storage centres for crops and cattle. They probably also acted in some way as customs or toll stations, perhaps controlling the flow of traffic and goods through their territory. Indeed, the extensive annexe on the southern side of Wychbury hill fort may have been used to hold cattle and other animals, and this has lead to the suggestion that Wychbury could have functioned as a form of customs station or staging post for travellers on the adjacent salt road[19].

Wychbury hill lies near the border-lands of the Iron Age Dobunni and Cornovii tribes; it is not clear which of these tribes constructed the fortification on top. It is also not known what the hill was called during the Iron Age, but its current name is Anglo-Saxon in origin, almost certainly deriving from Hwicce + *burh*[20]. The latter element is an Old English (OE) term for a fortification, and the former the name of a minor late-sixth to late-eighth century Anglo-Saxon kingdom (and subsequently, a Mercian province) which occupied much of the later Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and west Warwickshire. This region coincides, to a large extent, with the geographical distribution of late-Iron-Age Dobunnic coin finds, so some degree of continuity between the Dobunnic and Hwiccan territories is usually assumed. That being the case, we might expect that Wychbury hill fort served people of Dobunnic origin, although this has not yet been proved.

Its OE name seems to imply that Wychbury was still recognised as a site of some importance during the Anglo-Saxon period, a period during which the province of *Husmeræ* (probably centred on Ismere) was also recognised, the first surviving record having been made in AD 736. Like hill forts near the southern Hwiccan boundary[21], Wychbury may even have seen a degree of reuse at this time. It must be emphasized though, that there is no clear evidence of re-occupation, but archaeological investigations have so far been limited and the possibility of, at least, some limited reuse cannot be discounted. While Wychbury does not seem to have held the status of a central place during the Anglo-Saxon period, the hill fort must have retained some significance right up to the second half of the tenth century or later, when it was deliberately divided (perhaps for some political reason) between the newly laid out manors of Pedmore and Hagley[22].

During the Iron Age, hill forts probably controlled individual clan territories within each of the principal tribal areas. There is no clear evidence that Wychbury's territory encompassed Ismere at the opposite end of the Iverley track, but given the distribution of hill forts in the region, it remains a distinct possibility. Indeed, it is likely that the area associated with each fort extended for several miles. Iron Age deposits have been excavated at a site in Madley Heath, which, it has been suggested, probably belonged to Wychbury hill fort some 3 miles to the north-west[23]. Ismere is even less distant, and as we will see in §4, there seems to have been a considerable amount of settlement in that vicinity during the Iron Age.

3.3 Ismere in the west

A projection of the Iverley track running south from Fairy Glen would have provided a direct link to Ismere (figures 2(a) and 2(b)). Analysis of the AD 964 charter for Cookley (S 726) indicates that such a projection probably existed in the tenth century (see the appendix). Obliterated by subsequent farming, it has been replaced by a track, a little way to the east, which now serves Whitehouse Farm.

The first surviving mention of Ismere and the province of *Husmeræ* occurs in an Anglo-Saxon charter, the so-called Ismere Diploma, of AD 736. This document records a gift of land for the construction of a minster (probably the minster referenced in the name Kidderminster) *in prouincia cui ab antiquis nomen est husmerae. iuxtafluuium uocabulo stur*, 'in the province to which the name *Husmeræ* has been assigned from ancient times, beside the river called Stour'[24]. Exactly what qualified as 'ancient times' in AD 736 is not clear, but it probably meant a time before the Anglo-Saxon settlement of the area (c AD 600) and may have referred to the post-Roman or Romano-British periods or even to the Iron Age.

Use of the name *Husmeræ* has declined, and it survives in the locale today only in two house names: Ismere Grange (which recalls the area's time as Halesowen Abbey's monastic farm) and Ismere

House. (The place-name is also commemorated in two twentieth-century road names, Ismere Way and Usmere Road near Broadwaters in Kidderminster, perhaps because, a century ago, Broadwaters was wrongly considered to be the Ismere Diploma's *Husmere*[25].)

Husmeræ is clearly an Anglo-Saxon compound name. The *mere* component is the OE term for a pool; and this may have served as the moot (meeting) site for the *Husmeræ* people. It is almost certainly the small pool lying upon the eastern boundary of Wolverley parish near Whitehouse Farm (SO 862798), rather than that at Broadwaters as supposed by Duignan in 1905. The pool drains westwards (away from the parish boundary) into the River Stour (SO 852807) via a small stream which probably had a Celtic name deriving from the British **usso,* primitive Welsh **ûs* or **ws,* (meaning water)[26], hence the name's first element, *Hus-*.

Given that this British element (i.e. **usso*) was preserved in the OE place-name (as well as the Ismere Diploma's reference to 'ancient times'), it seems very likely that Ismere pool was in use by the *Husmeræ* people for some time prior to the Anglo-Saxon settlement; and it is not inconceivable that it dates from the Romano-British or Iron Age periods.

4. Archaeological and Landscape Context

The age and purpose of the Iverley track are unknown, and there is only patchy circumstantial evidence to help throw light upon these questions. Unequivocal archaeological evidence would be ideal, but as far as I am aware, no digs or related investigations have been carried out. Indeed, if such investigations were to be undertaken, it may prove very difficult, if not impossible, to date the whole length of the track. A geophysical investigation, or even aerial photographs showing crop marks, along the supposed course between The Crown Inn at Iverley and Sugar Loaf Lane might verify that there was once a 'diagonal' track running along this portion of the route (and I suspect that it may also reveal the remains of another settlement near the summit of the hill), but it seems unlikely that any other useful information could be gleaned.

However, the surrounding landscape does contain evidence of occupation and other use which goes a little way to putting the history of the track into context.

There seems to have been extensive settlement near Ismere prior to the Anglo-Saxon period. Rectilinear, D-shaped and other enclosures observed in cropmarks east of Caunsall as well as a few hundred metres north of the Island Pool in Wolverley provide evidence of (probably Iron Age) settlement and farming in the Stour valley[27]. The latter site consists of two sets of enclosures thought to be late Iron Age or Romano-British in origin. Both of them lie close to Ismere and it is not inconceivable that they were related to the tribe or clan of the *Husmeræ*.

Nearer the eastern end of the Iverley track, the area around Racecourse Lane, in the parish of Pedmore has undoubtedly been farmed for many centuries. Dudley Metropolitan Borough's Historic Environment Record (HER) details late medieval ridge and furrow north of Racecourse Lane as well as on the northern and north-eastern slopes of Wychbury hill. It also lists a number of discoveries indicative of much earlier land use[28]. Mesolithic and Bronze Age flint scatters; an undated barbed arrow head and Romano-British pottery sherds have been found in Chamber Field (formerly known as The Eight Acres) close to Burys Hill. Cropmarks visible in aerial photographs show a complex of ring ditches in the fields near Racecourse Lane, as well as a nearby pit alignment. These remain undated but are probably Neolithic or Bronze Age in origin. Other ring-ditch cropmarks are visible on the western slopes of Wychbury hill; and a curvilinear ditch has been reported on aerial photographs north of Pedmore. A Roman coin and jewellery hoard reportedly found during the nineteenth century near Pedmore Hall, on the slopes of Wychbury hill may indicate Roman settlement in the vicinity[29].

Part of the Iverley track itself (near the southern end of Ounty John Lane) was labelled 'Occupation Road' on the 1846 Pedmore tithe plan; and the HER records a D-shaped enclosure and other crop marks nearby. These are visible in aerial photographs of the field labelled Light Acres on the Pedmore tithe plan[30]. Adjacent fields (at SO 902817), called Upper and Lower Compton in 1846, may have taken their names from this settlement. I will return to the Compton place-name in §5.

The name Burys Hill itself almost certainly indicates one or more fortified sites near the hill; and a cluster of fields just a few hundred metres further south share the name Buckbury. The *bury* components of these names probably originate from the OE word *burh* meaning 'fortification'[31]. Indeed, it seems that at least one fortified site is recorded in the historical literature. A mid-tenth-century charter (s579) refers to a *sicanbyrig* located upon the high ground here[32]. The first part of this name either refers to a dry stream bed or is an unattested personal name, and the second part, *byrig*, is simply the dative form of OE *burh* from which we get the modern form 'bury'. About 350 years after the charter was compiled, the same site, or another fortification in the same area, was recorded under the name *Feckebury* in the AD 1300 boundary perambulation of the Royal Forest of Kinver[33]. Archaeological remains of one of these fortified structures may have survived until the early twentieth century: a tree-covered mound is recorded near the western end of Long Buckbury field on the 6-inch OS County Series map of 1885, precisely in the location one would expect for the charter's *sicanbyrig*[34]. This can just be seen in figure 5, in the field north of 'The Birches'. Unfortunately, the mound has since been ploughed out, though one hopes that some sub-surface features might remain.

The boundary clause of the same charter also lists an *acleg*, an oak wood, nearby. This was almost certainly managed woodland or wood pasture in the Anglo-Saxon period and may have been cultivated from a more extensive woodland region, large parts of which subsequently became known as Iverley Wood (or variants thereof). One of the eastern branches of the Iverley track (between the A491 and Ounty John Lane) seems likely to have formed the northern boundary of the charter's *acleg*[35]; and this would imply that the track pre-dates the charter (i.e. is earlier than the mid-tenth century). Sadly, the woodland no longer exists, and has been replaced by fields and an extensive housing development around Worcester Lane and Bromwich Lane.

Whilst this evidence indicates long term, and perhaps continuous, use of the high ground between Wychbury hill and the Stourbridge-to-Kidderminster road (A451) at Iverley, it cannot tell us the age of the track which runs along it. In the absence of any concrete archaeological data, the only other source of evidence we can turn to is the handful of place-names which have been recorded along the Iverley track at various dates. I'll discuss these next, including the 'Worcestershire *windofer*s' referred to in the article's title.

5. Place-Name Evidence

Many place-names encode within them useful information about the landscape, land use or land ownership. I have already mentioned some of the (fairly straightforward) clues which names like Burys Hill, Buckbury, *sicanbyrig* and *Feckebury* can provide.

However, there are sometimes additional meanings attached to certain types of place-name; and one important branch of place-name studies elucidates some of these by studying their geographical correlation with ancient roads and tracks—a subject area which, in recent decades has been explored by Drs. Ann Cole and Margaret Gelling[36]. Amongst this class of names is Compton (which we have already encountered surviving as a field name near the southern end of Ounty John Lane) and names containing the OE element *ofer*. The distribution of these name types seems to be correlated with ancient roads and tracks, particularly long-distance ones[37].

A relatively large number of Anglo-Saxon charters survive for Worcestershire compared to many other counties, and we are fortunate in this case to find two tenth-century charters which reference key locations along the track's route. These locations are only two miles apart, yet they possess the same name, *windofer*. This place-name is otherwise unique amongst the Anglo-Saxon charters of England (with one possible exception in Stratford-on-Avon), and does not appear to survive in any modern form except, perhaps, in one or two instances of Windsor.

The following sub-sections consider Compton's and *windofer*'s relationships to the local landscape, and discuss what the latter's appearance in two separate locations might mean for our understanding of the name's component parts.

5.1 Compton

A cluster of fields named Upper, Middle, and Lower Compton[38] have been recorded near the southern end of Ounty John Lane in Pedmore (figure 5). They abut the Iverley track itself as well as a field named Light Acres in which (as we have already seen) crop marks of a D-shaped enclosure and another sub-circular enclosure have been discovered.

The name Compton probably derives from the OE elements *cumb* and *tūn*, the latter element denoting a settlement. Although it appears to have been used primarily after about AD 730, *tūn* remained an active name-forming element for an unusually long time, and its usage (and therefore meaning) tended to evolve throughout the Anglo-Saxon and subsequent periods. In *roughly* chronological order it has meant an enclosure, an enclosure containing a dwelling or cluster of buildings (e.g. a farmstead), a hamlet, a village or, more latterly, a whole town. The field name Compton might reference a settlement that existed in the vicinity before the fields were laid out, perhaps the very settlement that resulted in the crop-marks visible in the adjacent Light Acres field. The first element, *cumb*, meant a wide, rounded or armchair-shaped valley or depression that is open on one side, and this is a fitting description of the topography immediately north west of the Light Acres Field (the supposed location of this Compton settlement).

The name seems to have embodied a more specific meaning than just 'a settlement near a valley', however. As pointed out by Dr Ann Cole, a statistically significant proportion of Comptons are to be found near to ancient routes[39]. She reasons that while many *tūn*s were identified by more specific names (e.g. *Wulflāf's Tūn*, 'Wollaston'[40]—my example), travellers who were not local to the area and who were unfamiliar with such proper names, would instead refer to the *tūn*s they encountered by reference to a distinctive element in the nearby landscape such as a *cumb*[41]. Thus place-names like *cumb tūn*, 'the settlement in or near the *cumb*' would become established as travellers' landmarks, and this name would tend to mutate over time into Compton.

Given the strong statistical association of Compton place-names with ancient route-ways, the presence of one near to Burys Hill would seem to provide good evidence for the Iverley track dating back to at least the Anglo-Saxon period. It might also indicate that the track was used primarily by long-distance travellers.

5.2 The windofers and Iverley

Place-names containing the Saxon term *ōra* or its Anglian equivalent *ofer* (sometimes expressed as the variant *ufer*) also seem to be geographically correlated with ancient long-distance routes[42]. The Iverley area lies near the northern boundary of the Hwiccan kingdom which was later subsumed into the Anglian kingdom of Mercia[43] so one would expect *ofer* (or *ufer*) to be used more frequently than *ōra* in this locality—and indeed that is the case.

There has been some debate over the precise meaning of these terms, but it is generally accepted that they refer to a promontory-like hill or hill-spur with a fairly flat, or gently sloping, top and a rounded (convex) tip or shoulder. Many hills have profiles consistent with this description of an *ofer* or *ōra*, yet do not bear this type of name. Those that were designated an *ofer* or *ōra* must, therefore, have possessed an additional attribute; and Dr Cole postulates that eminences so named were used as landmarks. She suggests that *ofer*s '*are likely to signify something connected with road travel, and probably act as a warning that a place of importance / significance to the traveller is close by*'[44].

5.2.1 Twin *windofer*s

With the latter possibility in mind it is interesting to note that there are two *ofer* place-names along the Iverley track, separated by a distance of about two miles (3.5 km). Their presence may be indicative the track's antiquity and/or function.

Near the eastern end of the track, the place-name element *-ofer* was applied to a promontory which extends along Ounty John Lane and 200m north over an area of flat, wet moorland (known as The

Moor in 1733), a region that is now partly occupied by Stourbridge Golf Course. This hill was named *windofer* in the Swinford charter (S 579) of AD 951-959[45].

The second *ofer* place-name was also recorded in the tenth-century, close to the western end of the track—i.e. about 1km north of Ismere. Surprisingly, this was also called *windofer*[46]. Again it was recorded in a charter, this time for Cookley (S 726, dated AD 964). The form used in that document was actually *windofre* (i.e. the r and e were juxtaposed), but it clearly stems from the same word. In the remainder of this document, I will use the spelling *windofer* when referring collectively to these places.

The occurrence of two *windofer*s in such close proximity is striking. It is even more remarkable when one realises that this place-name is very rare indeed: I am aware of only these two *windofer*s in the whole corpus of Anglo-Saxon charters, and it appears that no derived forms of *windofer* have survived as modern place-names (unless 'Windsor' can be regarded as such). Indeed, occurrences of any place-name incorporating *ofer* in the Anglo-Saxon charters are few (just 7 in all of the pre-conquest charters[47]); and, amongst the Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire charters, the *ofer* element appears in only four other locations[48].

The rarity of *ofer*s and *windofer*s in the charters; the close proximity of the two Worcestershire *windofer*s, and their association with what appears to be a single ancient route-way (the Iverley track) would seem to make them a noteworthy case.

5.2.2 Proximity of each *windofer* to a 'little hill'

In each of the two charters which record the name *windofer*, a 'little hill' is noted as being close by. As we have seen, the most easterly of our two *windofer*s is referenced in the boundary clause of the Swinford charter, which records a *lusdune* just 700 metres away from the *windofer*. The OE word *dune* means 'a hill', and *lus-* means 'louse', but here it used figuratively to mean 'something small or insignificant'. Thus we have a reference to a 'little hill'. This has been identified as Burys Hill, a small prominence sitting atop a much wider elevated plateau[49]. There is even a field named Little Hill in the 1846 tithe plan of Pedmore, coinciding exactly with the summit of Burys Hill.

The western *windofer* is referenced in a tenth-century charter for Cookley; and, again, the charter lists a 'little hill', in this case OE *litlan dune*. This has been identified as the prominence which is now occupied by Ismere Grange (SO 867803)[50], although it may actually have been the small hill lying 700m to the north west, at the side of Fairy Glen (see the appendix).

The apparent relationship of each *windofer* to a little hill may be no more than coincidence. After all, if the charters' authors had just described a large eminence such as an *ofer*, any other hill they needed to reference would probably be 'little' by comparison. Nevertheless, we cannot entirely discount the possibility that the choice of the name *windofer* (or even just *-ofer*) was somehow related to their proximity to 'little hills' or, indeed, to other so-far unidentified landscape features.

5.2.3 Iverley: A third *ofer* place-name along the track?

As we have already noted, the central portion of the track passes through an extended area known as Iverley, which now occupies the south-east corner of Kinver parish in Staffordshire. This place-name has been spelled consistently in its modern form since the late eighteenth century. In the preceding century it was spelled 'Ivelley', and prior to that, woodland here was referred to as *Ouerley Wood* in 1577, and *Oueley Wood* in both 1610 and 1665[51]. This woodland was also recorded as *ovemaste* (in the place-name *ovemaste mere*) in the AD 1300 perambulation of Kinver forest. It is likely that the *ove-* prefix came from OE *ofer*. The *-maste* component (OE *mæst(en)*, 'swine-pasture') referred to acorns, beech nuts etc. on which pigs would forage. The *mere* in this place-name has been identified as Brake Mill Farm's 'Sweet Pool', which is located over the county boundary in Hagley parish, Worcestershire at SO 893799[52]. This pool is 1.7km south of the Iverley track, yet it was presumably within Iverley's woodland, or lay upon its edge. Thus, the woodland and, perhaps Iverley itself, must have been fairly extensive; and it is quite conceivable that they encompassed both of the *windofer* promontories and were named after the pair of *ofer*s, collectively.

If we can take these earlier representations of Iverley as being closer to its original form, it is conceivable that the name derives from *ofer* + *lēah*. The latter OE element was associated with woodland, so *ofer-lēah* would probably have meant '*ofer* wood' or 'the clearing / settlement in the *ofer* wood'. There are also two earlier occurrences of this name, dating from 1293 and 1603, in which the modern 'Iverley' spelling is recorded. This might indicate that the name actually comes from the unattested OE element *yfre*[53] which seems merely to have been a late-Saxon variant spelling of *ofer*. This would be noteworthy as place-names in *yfre* are otherwise confined to southern counties[54]; and the use of *yfre* in Staffordshire might indicate some Saxon influence in this predominantly Anglian region. A degree of historical interchange between *yfre* and *ofer* has been noted within a single place-name[55]; and it is possible that something similar happened in the case of Iverley.

Names containing *ofer* (or *yfre*) as the first element are comparatively rare. Although a few *ofer-tūns* probably exist, I know of only two names where *ofer* might be combined with *lēah*. The first is Oversley Green in Warwickshire (SO 093568), which has been confirmed to contain *ofer*[56]. As far as I can ascertain, the second place-name, Overley in Staffordshire (SK 159 156), about one mile south west of Wychnor has not been studied, but Wychnor itself contains the element *ofer* and it seems possible that Overley refers to woodland associated with the *ofer* that gave Wychnor its name. However, the alternative that the name comes from *ufera*, meaning higher[57], is possible as Overley lies on a small eminence (much smaller than Wychnor's *ofer*) in an otherwise fairly flat region.

In the hypothetical construct, *ofer* (or *yfre*) + *lēah*, the *ofer* (or *yfre*) component is the specific rather than the generic element of the name, and for this reason one would not necessarily expect to see an *ofer*-shaped promontory at Iverley (i.e. Iverley would have been the location of the wood or clearing rather than the promontory/ies after which the wood was named).

5.3 Windsor Holloway

This is the name of a minor road, just south of Kinver, that may have been part of a short-cut between the ancient Chester-Bristol road (which, in this location, is now known as Cookley Lane) and the *windofer* near High Down. The hollow-way is indeed hollow, sitting within a deeply worn recess in the slope leading down to the west bank of the River Stour; it is clearly of some considerable age.

After diverging from the Chester-Bristol road at SO 848826, Windsor Holloway crosses the River Stour before climbing its east bank to join the A449 at SO 857826 near Whittington. Between that junction and the High Down *windofer* there lies an expanse of land formerly known as Iverley Common (and to the north-west of that, Whittington Common). Today, the former Iverley Common is mostly covered by post-medieval fields—presumably enclosed in the seventeenth or eighteenth century—the straight boundaries of which now guide a public footpath south east to the *northern* end of High Down. After surmounting the promontory (*windofer*) here, the path intersects the Iverley track at SO 873812. It is possible that the path's modern, straight-segmented, course represents a post-enclosures formalisation of a much older path which took a similar route between Whittington and the *windofer*.

Windsor's *-or* ending is typical of the modern forms of many place-names that had originally ended in *-ofer*. The fact that it occurs in such a propitious location just 1.6 km (1 mile) from the western *windofer* and, indeed, leads in the general direction of the latter suggests a connection between the two names.

A *Windsor Lane Piece*, *Windsor Lane Coppice* and *Windsor Field*, all of which lay adjacent to Windsor Holloway, are recorded in William Bright's survey of the parish of Kinver[58]. The Kinver Enclosure Award[59] notes that the enclosures here were, at that date, considered to be old, so it is quite conceivable that these three names, and thus the road-name Windsor Lane (subsequently Holloway), are three centuries old, or more. This doesn't, of course, rule out the possibility that the name had previously been transferred from elsewhere but, given its provenance, it seems improbable that Windsor would have been allocated merely to a road (and later a group of fields) rather than to a settlement; and no such settlement is known to have existed anywhere in the vicinity.

Unfortunately, I have no earlier forms of this name to confirm its apparent link with *windofer*. Additionally, Windsor's 's' may be problematic in so far as there is no 's' in *windofer*. Nevertheless, the

possibility cannot be discounted that Windsor is a derived form of *windofer*. Indeed, it seems quite likely that Windsor Lane (later Holloway) was so named because it led from the main Bristol-Chester road (at SO 848826) towards *windofer* and the Iverley track.

If this link is anything other than coincidental, it raises two questions. Why, if the *windofer* served as nothing more than a landmark, did a branch road from the main Chester-Bristol road lead towards it? And why was the branch road named after the landmark? The answer may be that the *windofer* landmark also served some additional function—perhaps being, itself, part of a route-way. I will return to this suggestion in §7.3.

6. Fieldwork

For any feature of the landscape to be useful as landmark it must be easily recognizable to travellers. We have seen that the essence of an *ofer*-type promontory is its distinctive profile. However, such landforms are three-dimensional objects and their profiles tend to take on subtly different shapes when one changes viewpoint. Both the compass direction and elevation of the traveller's viewpoint have a bearing upon the profile seen.

To understand how each *ofer* might be related to the ancient road system, it is necessary to consider the roads and tracks in their vicinity, and to verify whether the *ofer*'s profile as seen from the road (if tree cover and modern structures were to be removed) is consistent with the typical *ofer* shape (a flat-topped ridge with rounded shoulder).

The roadways under consideration are:

1. The Iverley track itself,
2. The first-century Roman road linking Droitwich to Greensforge,
3. The Chester-Bristol (salt?) road
4. The Droitwich-to-Penkridge (salt?) road

and, of course, the two *ofer* promontories to be considered are:

a) The eastern *windofer*, in Pedmore parish and
b) The western *windofer*, in Wolverley parish.

After verifying, by careful review of mapped contours, the range of locations from which each *windofer* promontory *might* be visible, I confirmed this in the field and recorded (where possible) the promontory's profile as seen from those locations. The results of these field investigations are summarised in table 1 and the most informative images obtained are reproduced in figures 6a-d. I have adopted Dr Ann Cole's practice of presenting these profiles as line drawings rather than photographs, because this allows the relevant features to be picked out more clearly.

It seems unlikely that either of the *windofer*s were associated with the Droitwich-Greensforge Roman road because visibility from that road is limited. From the Iverley track itself, the Pedmore *windofer* and the southern end of the High Down promontory present typical *ofer*-type profiles (flat or gently sloping top with convex shoulder), although the former's tip appears as a gently sloping point rather then a rounded shoulder, and the profile of the latter's northern end is not at all clear. A degree of visibility is, perhaps, to be expected in this case since the Iverley track actually runs up and over both promontories.

The most probable association between the *windofer*s and nearby roads is that involving the Chester-Bristol road in the west and the Droitwich-Penkridge road in the east. The southern end of the western *windofer* (High Down) presents a typical *ofer* profile from Cookley and the southern half of Cookley Lane (figure 6c), although this profile is much less apparent if one moves further north or south on the Chester-Bristol road. From the Whittington area, just to the east of Windsor Holloway, the northern side of the High Down landform is clearly visible as a single flat, raised landmass, but no rounded shoulder can be seen (figure 6d). This is, perhaps, surprising if Windsor Holloway was once a route from the Chester-Bristol road to the western *windofer*, as the latter wouldn't have made for a particularly distinctive landmark from this angle. Moreover, the eastern *windofer*'s profile is not at all

distinct when viewed from the area around Worcester Lane (the B4187) near Stourbridge Golf Course, which calls into question *this* promontory's use as a landmark for travellers upon the Droitwich-Penkridge road. A much more obvious landmark for a turning here would be Wychbury hill, which lies directly opposite the highest part of the promontory. One wonders, therefore, whether both of the *windofer* place-names signified something other than the promontory's use as a landmark.

From the:	Eastern *windofer* (Pedmore)	Western *windofer* (Wolverley & Kinver)
Iverley track	**From Burys Hill (SO 896817):** Clearly visible; but promontory / ridge slopes for its full length, and the tip is not rounded, appearing as a shallow point.	**From Sugar Loaf Lane / Iverley track junction (SO 876813):** Southern end is clearly visible; typical *ofer* shape. **From Fairy Glen near the Whittington path (SO 872812):** Profile of northern end cannot be seen.
Roman road	**Nr. Iverley Park Farm / rear of Norton Covert (SO 886822):** Currently visible in winter only; summer foliage of Norton Covert (woodland) obstructs view. Profile: sloping ridge with shallow pointed tip (when visible). The *windofer* is visible only from a very short stretch of the Roman road here; it not visible north or south of this point.	Not visible between Sion House Farm (SO 898767) and Dunsley Road (SO 880840). Not a practicable landmark.
Chester-Bristol road	Not visible.	**From Windsor Holloway (SO 848826):** Trees obscure the view, but the north end of *windofer* is probably visible otherwise. It is clearly visible from the western end of Whittington Hall Lane at SO 864826, but a rounded shoulder is not apparent. **From Cookley Lane (SO 848818):** Visible, but not highly prominent; typical *ofer* profile. **From Kinver Road, Cookley (SO 845811):** Visible with minor obstruction; typical *ofer* profile, but not highly prominent. **From Cookley village centre (SO 843803):** Partly visible; trees and buildings currently obstruct view. **From Axborough Lane/A449 junction (SO 852800):** Visible, partly obscured by trees; not a typical *ofer* profile.
Droitwich-Penkridge road (A491)	**North of Pedmore (SO 910825):** View completely obstructed by building development, so this promontory was viewed along the same sightlines closer to the *windofer*—i.e. from Worcester Lane (B4187). Between (SO 904820 and SO 907829), *windofer* is just discernable, but doesn't have a typical *ofer* profile; full height is not at all obvious. Profile is quite indistinct, especially south of SO 904822.	Not visible.

Table 1. *Summary of windofer profiles as seen from potentially associated route-ways.*

(a)

Racecourse Lane

Wychbury Hill

(b)

Ismere

Fairy Glen
(Tree-lined path)

(c)

Wychbury Hill
(southern slope)

Fairy Glen
(north end)

Fairy Glen
(south end)

Ismere

(d)

Junction of Whittington Path
with Iverley Track

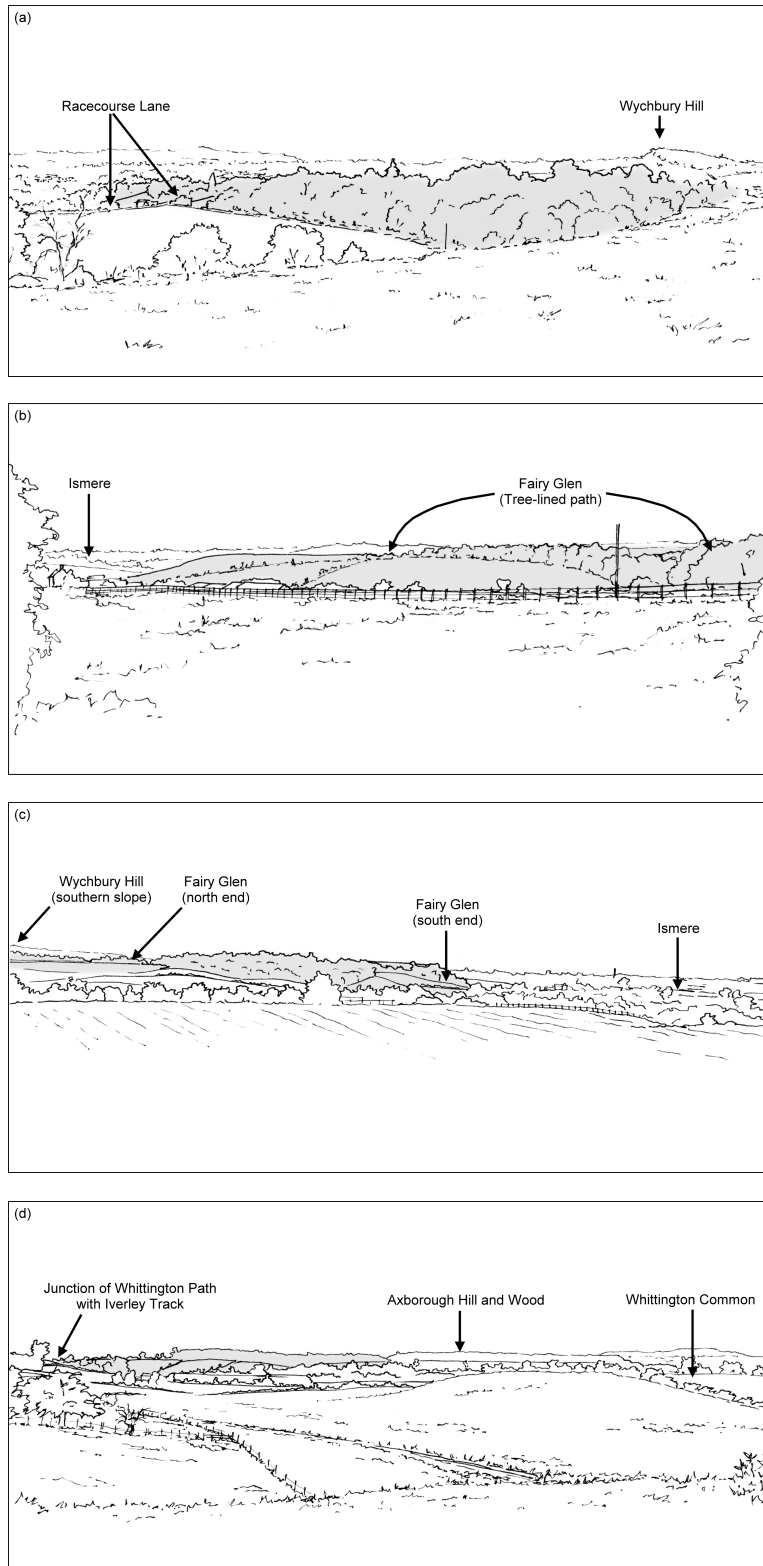Axborough Hill and Wood

Whittington Common

Fig. 6. *Selected windofer profiles (shaded):*

   a) *Eastern windofer from Burys Hill (SO 896817) on the Iverley track.*

   b) *Western windofer (southern end) from Fairy Glen / Sugar Loaf Lane junction (SO 877813).*

   c) *Western windofer from Cookley Lane (SO 848818).*

   d) *Western windofer seen from the Whittington area (SO 864826), 500m east of Windsor Holloway.*

7. Summary and Discussion

So far we have seen that:

- Maps since 1831 depict an almost continuous trackway running over the high ground of Iverley between Ounty John Lane in the parish of Pedmore and High Down in Wolverley parish.

- The only break in the mapped track represents a diversion around fields which were enclosed in the seventeenth century. Landscape evidence suggests that this break had once been bridged by a more direct route over high ground.

- There is archaeological and place-name evidence for occupation along, or near to, parts of the track near Burys Hill and the Buckbury fields beginning from the Mesolithic, and continuing with one or more fortifications or strongholds through the Anglo-Saxon and late medieval periods.

- In the medieval period, one of the occupied sites may have been known as Compton, a name which bears a strong geographical correlation with ancient route-ways. This seems to provide evidence that the Iverley track was in use (perhaps as part of a longer-distance route) at least as far back as the Anglo-Saxon period.

- The OE *windofer* place-names, which occur near to each end of the track (i.e. roughly two miles apart) provide additional evidence of the route's antiquity and, perhaps, of it being associated with long-distance travel.

- The name *windofer* is (with one possible exception in Stratford-on-Avon) otherwise unique, not occurring in its OE form or any modern derivative elsewhere in England (unless Windsor Holloway can be interpreted as such—see §5.3). The close pairing of *windofer* place-names is thus noteworthy.

- The place-name Iverley may itself have developed from *ofer* (or *yfre*) + *lēah*, meaning 'the wood or woodland settlement associated with the *ofer*(s)'. This woodland appears to have been fairly large; and a reference to *ovemaste mere* in the AD 1300 perambulation of Kinver forest indicates that it then extended some distance into Worcestershire. Its size and position suggests that the name Iverley may have been a reference to the pair of *windofer*s, collectively.

- Windsor Holloway near Kinver could have been part of a route joining the western *windofer* to the Chester-Bristol road, the name Windsor conceivably being derived from *windofer*.

- Only the eastern *windofer* (in Pedmore) is visible from the Droitwich-Greensforge Roman road, and then only from a very short stretch of the road near SO 886822, so it seems unlikely that the *windofer*s were used as landmarks on this road.

- It is also doubtful that the *windofer* promontories were used as landmarks by travellers on the ancient Droitwich-Penkridge or Chester-Bristol roads. Though visible, the eastern *windofer* is not at all prominent from the former road (near SO 910825); Wychbury hill would have served as a much more obvious landmark here. And, while the southern end of the western *windofer* (in Wolverley) presents a typical *ofer* profile from the Chester-Bristol road, within about 1 mile north or south of Cookley, its form is not particularly distinctive from the area around Windsor Holloway, a likely shortcut from the Chester-Bristol road.

- As one might expect, the Pedmore *windofer* and the southern end of the Wolverley *windofer* (High Down) are clearly visible from parts of the Iverley track near Burys Hill (SO 896817) and at the north-eastern extremity of Fairy Glen (SO 876813). In both cases they present to the viewer a more-or-less typical *ofer* profile. The northern end of the Wolverley *windofer* does not present its profile to a viewer standing upon the Iverley track.

Dr Cole considers that the landmark-type place-names she discusses, such as *ofer* and *cumb tūn* (Compton), served primarily long-distance routes[60]. Presumably they would not be needed on short local routes that were used by people familiar with the area, so the final point in the foregoing list probably carries little significance unless the Iverley track was used (at least by some travellers) as a link road in a long-distance journey. It may well be that the track became established to connect places of local importance—e.g. Wychbury and Ismere—but, with short westerly extensions, it came to serve as a link between the major north-south routes running between Chester and Bristol on the one hand and Droitwich and Penkridge on the other. It is probably this use during the Anglo-Saxon period which led to the coining of the two *windofer* place-names.

7.1 A pair of windofers or one extended feature?

Before considering the meaning of this place-name, it is useful to ask why two *windofer*s should appear in such close proximity. It seems there can be four explanations:

1. It is purely coincidental that two *windofer*s occur within two miles of each other.

2. One of the promontories (either that in Pedmore or in Wolverley parish) 'accidentally' acquired the same name as the other—e.g. as a result of one *ofer* being confused with the other.

3. One of the promontories was *deliberately* named after the other or after some element or characteristic which they had in common.

4. The two recorded examples of the name *windofer* refer to a single extended feature: the two promontories plus the elevated land in between and the track that ran across them. Thus, *windofer* would be more than what has hitherto been regarded as an *ofer* (i.e. more than a single ridge or promontory with a convex shoulder or shoulders).

The first explanation seems highly unlikely, particularly as the name *windofer*, or any modern derivative, is unknown elsewhere in England (if one can exclude the Windsors, -windsor and Winsors described in the following section, as well as Windsor Holloway mentioned previously).

The second explanation is equally improbable: oral perpetuation of place-names by the local community is seen usually to have preserved them with remarkable precision over many centuries[61].

A deliberate duplication of the name also seems unlikely as it is difficult to imagine any particular feature (denoted by the *wind-* prefix) which the two *windofer*s might have in common, yet which is not shared by *ofer*s elsewhere in the country. Any such duplication would also, of course, have the potential to cause confusion, which would probably have been quickly resolved by the addition of some qualifying term or by a complete change of name.

That leaves only the notion that the name *windofer* represented a single landscape feature consisting of both promontories plus the high ground and track connecting them. Iverley's woodland (i.e. the *lēah* or '-ley' of the name, and probably the *-maste* of the place-name *ovemaste* in AD 1300) is known to have been extensive and may have stretched between, or completely enveloped, the two *windofer* locations named in the tenth-century charters. This lends an additional sense of unity to the entire elevated landmass: it may be that the supposed *ofer-* element in Iverley (*Ouerley* in 1577, *Oueley* in 1610 and 1665) is a reference to this single extended landscape feature.

7.2 The meaning of windofer

The precise significance of the name is uncertain. While the following discussion can be no more than speculation, it is possible that the *wind-* prefix had a particular meaning which might help to explain the unusual pairing of the name and/or the *windofer*s' juxtaposition with the Iverley track.

Where a meaning has previously been assumed or commented upon in the literature[62], including in my own articles[63], the *wind-* prefix has been interpreted as representing wind, 'a movement of air', rather than being related to the verb 'to wind'. This might be wrong. It is clear that the weather-related

meaning would almost certainly make the name's *wind-* element redundant: most *ofer*s, being moderately-sized eminences, would experience blustery weather at their tops. Thus a prefix meaning 'windy' wouldn't necessarily help to identify one *ofer* from the next. On the other hand, an element related in some way to OE *windan,* 'to wind', lends an altogether more plausible meaning to the prefix.

One such element is the unattested OE noun *windles*, meaning a windlass or similar winding gear, which might have been used to assist carts in their ascent of a steep slope. OE **windles + ōra* is thought to be the most likely origin of at least five of the Winsor / Windsor names in England[64]. It is conceivable that *windofer* results from a contraction of a similar term containing *ofer* rather than *ōra*, although it seems unlikely that the middle *-les-* would have been lost at such an early date. Its relationship, if any, to Windsor Holloway (§5.3), which appears to still express the *-s-* a millennium later only complicates matters and I cannot yet offer an explanation.

A more likely origin of the *wind-* element is a reference to a road or path winding its way over the high ground between Ounty John Lane, Pedmore and High Down, Wolverley.

We have already seen that, with short additions to the east and west, the Iverley track may have linked the major long-distance north-south roads serving the salt-producing centres of Droitwich and Cheshire; and it is conceivable that this 'H'-shaped configuration of roads might have given rise to the sense of a winding route reflected in the name *windofer*. Much depends upon the subtleties of the Anglo-Saxon usage of the place-name elements *wind-* or *ge-wind*.

In this context, it is probably relevant to note Dr Margaret Gelling's interpretation of the place-name Chetwynd in Shropshire (SJ 735 214)[65]. This name is considered to include, as the second element, OE *ge-wind*, one meaning of which is recorded as a translation from the Latin *circuitus ascensus*, denoting 'a winding ascent'[66].

If the *wind-* element of *windofer* did originate from an adjective related to the verb *windan* 'to wind', it clearly could not have referred to the individual promontories (i.e. the geological formations) in isolation. The thing that was winding could only have been the route-way (the Iverley track) running over and between them. Moreover, if we assume that the course of this route-way in the tenth century was similar to that mapped in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it could have been considered winding only if perceived in its entirety: the central (longest) section is quite straight. This holistic view is consistent with the notion that *windofer* meant more than just one promontory with a specific profile; it must have referred to the entire region of high ground, including the promontories, over which the track ran.

8. Conclusion

There can be no doubt that the Worcestershire *windofer*s were key parts of the Iverley track which joined, amongst other places, Wychbury hill fort and Pedmore to Ismere, the likely moot site of the ancient *Husmeræ* province.

The two *windofer* place-names provide evidence that the track was in use as long ago as the tenth century, and quite probably several centuries before that. Indeed, given the age of its termini (and, perhaps, its coincidence with a course-correction point in the nearby Roman road) it is probable that the Iverley track pre-dates the Anglo-Saxon period by several centuries, at least. Most likely, it linked two long-distance roads that were components of the Droitwich and Cheshire salt-way networks as far back as the Iron Age. The apparent similarity between the names Windsor (Holloway) and *windofer*, if found to be anything more than coincidental, might throw light upon the origin of both place-names, perhaps with ramifications for some of the other locations in England that bear the name Windsor.

The unusual occurrence of two places possessing the otherwise unique name of *windofer*— particularly as they are situated just two miles apart along the same ancient trackway—is remarkable and provides insights into both the meaning of the name and our interpretation of the OE place-name element *ofer*.

Appendix A: Bounds of the Cookley charter (s726) near Ismere

It is instructive to examine the boundary clause of the tenth-century charter for Cookley (OE *culnan clif*) which now resides in the ancient parish of Wolverley in Worcestershire. This two *mansiuculæ* estate occupied the north-eastern two-thirds (approx.) of the later Wolverley parish; and its boundaries seem roughly coincident with the northern and eastern boundaries of the parish. However, there are some differences, particularly near Ismere. Dr Della Hooke examined this charter in 1990[67]. Unfortunately, her boundary solution, which appears to follow the parish boundary very closely, doesn't seem to accord well with the charter's waypoints north of Ismere. I say that with the greatest of respect for Dr Hooke, and I must emphasize that this doesn't necessarily mean her solution is incorrect; it just indicates that it may be wise to consider an alternative interpretation. Indeed, a close examination of the waypoints here yields a couple of details which are particularly relevant to the present discussion.

Waypoints

Dr Hooke breaks down the charter's boundary clause into twenty separate waypoints. The final ten of these, which are close to Ismere, are reviewed below using the same numbering scheme; and this analysis is illustrated in blue on figure A1. Waypoints 14 to 19 differ from Dr Hooke's interpretation, which is quoted below in indented italicised text. The corresponding waypoints are shown in red on figure A1.

Waypoint 11

> ***'from the path to (the) boundary spring'****; there is a spring near the boundary at SO 833818 and a second valley-head at SO 836820*

The spring lies about 400m south of the current parish boundary, so it is evident that a degree of, at least, minor boundary realignment has taken place since the tenth century.

Waypoint 12

> ***'from the spring to the dyke'***

It is not clear where the dyke ran, but it may have run along Gypsy Lane and the eastwards extrapolation thereof along which the current parish boundary runs. This waypoint is probably at, or near to SO 837821.

Waypoint 13

> ***'along (the) dyke to (the) Stour'****; a dyke had obviously been made along the northern boundary, crossing several spurs of high land, to the river which it reached at SO 853819*

As suggested by Dr Hooke, the boundary probably reached the river Stour at the point where the latter crosses the current parish boundary.

Waypoint 14

> ***'from (the) Stour to (the) boundary valley'***

Dr Hooke's description of waypoint 15 implies that one must leave the river Stour some 700m (½ mile) south of where it is first joined (in waypoint 13). However, the charter's boundary clause does not actually say that it is necessary to travel along the river for any appreciable distance, so we must assume that a more-or-less direct river crossing is indicated. That being the case, the 'boundary valley' cannot be the 'Valley of Murder' (see Waypoint 15). Rather, it must be the somewhat longer valley running ENE from SO 858817.
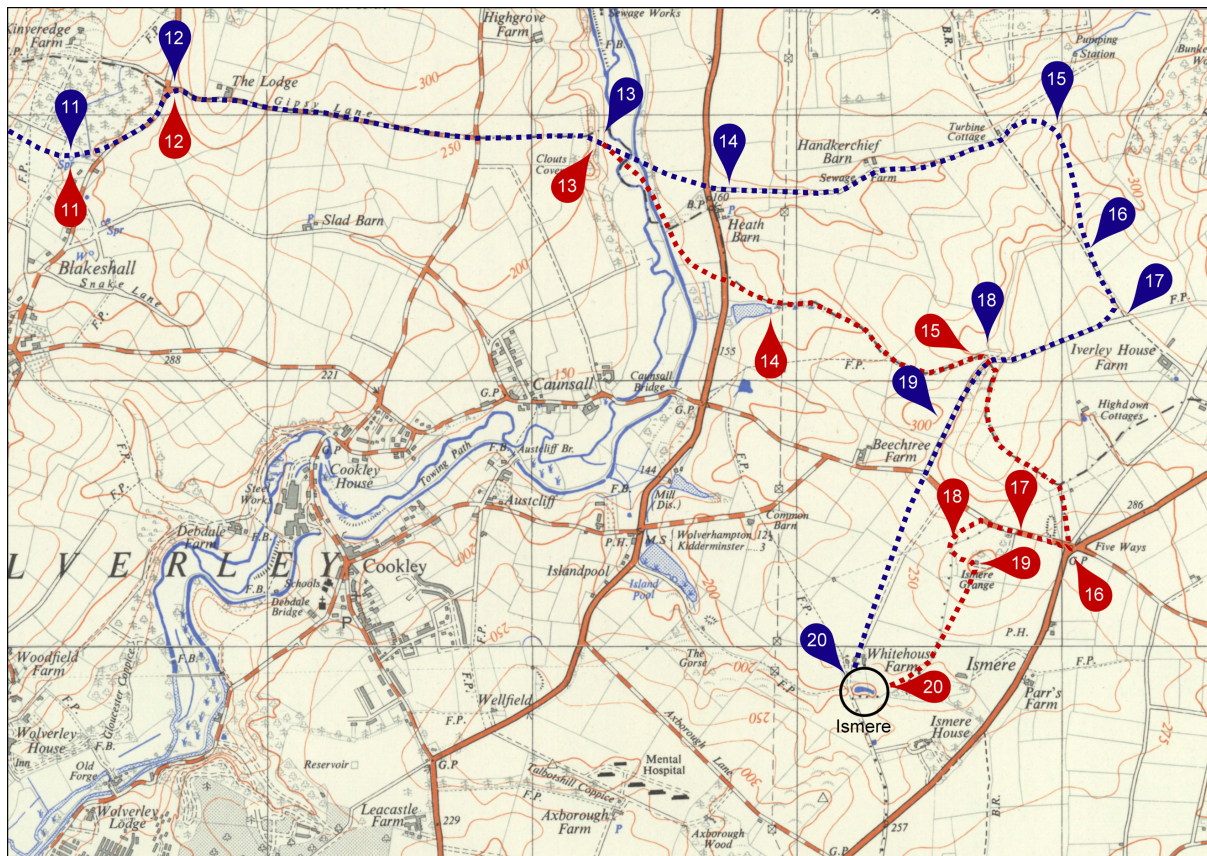
Fig. A1. *Proposed boundary solution for the Cookley charter. Waypoints are shown in blue. For comparison, Dr Hooke's identifications are shown in red. The current boundary of Wolverley parish is depicted on the background OS map as a dotted line. This coincides with the County boundary on the northern edge of the parish, and here the OS map shows the boundary as a sequence of alternate dots and dashes. The Ismere pool itself is circled.*

Waypoint 15

> *'along (the) valley to wind ridge [OE windofre]'; the boundary follows a well-marked valley ESE (known as 'Valley of Murder' in 1768) to reach a ridge of high land called High Down at SO 867811, where it veers sharply southwards*

The *windofre* landmark is the gently-sloping elongated promontory on the northern end of the High Down ridge at SO 870820. The modern footpath and bridleway from Whittington runs adjacent to this promontory. Before the fields on Iverley Common were enclosed in the seventeenth century, the path may have taken the lowest-gradient course up along the crest of the promontory. (Note that, today, the name High Down signifies only the southern end of the eminence here.)

Waypoint 16

> *'from wind ridge to the post'; the post stood at the junction of many routeways at a spot later known as Five Ways. It was probably a signpost, and a field near by* [sic] *is known as 'Finger Post Field*

The post must have been on the high ground somewhere south or south-east of the promontory referred to in waypoint 15.

Waypoint 17

> *'from the post to the way'*

By Dr Hooke's account, the post was situated at the end of the 'way' (OE *weg*—a general term for a road) which she ascribes to Beechtree Lane. If this identification is correct, one has to ask: as we are already at the end of this lane, why would way-point 17 be required at all? Additionally, five 'ways' meet at this point today. If the post was indeed a 'finger post' as Dr Hooke suggests, there must have been at least two 'ways' here in the tenth century; yet the charter doesn't specify which of them we should take. A more likely explanation is that 'the way' was probably the Iverley track—i.e. the north-east section of Fairy Glen (see figure 2); the direction of travel is then specified in waypoint 18.

Waypoint 18

> *'along (the) way into the slade [OE slæd]';* *the boundary runs for a short distance WNW along a lane known today as Beechtree Lane but then veers south-westwards into a small valley to the north-west of Ismere Grange*

A slade (OE *slæd*) is considered to mean, broadly speaking, a valley or dell[68]; it may embody some sense of marshy ground in a valley, or a sloping valley[69], or a small, steep-sided valley or valley head[70]. Moving along Dr Hooke's 'way' (Beechtree Lane) to the point at which the current parish boundary veers south-westwards, the valley here is not particularly distinct. In fact, it is quite wide and open, and hardly the place one would note as being a valley or *slæd*. It seems more probable that the *slæd* was the small, enclosed, relatively-steep-sided, and muddy, valley on the western side of the High Down ridge where the Iverley track (now called Fairy Glen at this point) descends the slope.

Waypoint 19

> *'from the slade to the little hill';* *the western flank of the hillock upon which Ismere Grange is sutuated* [sic] *at SO 867804*

Ismere Grange is, indeed, situated on a low, but fairly broad hill. However, if one is already in the valley immediately to the north-west of Ismere Grange, as Dr Hooke suggests, one only need take a few steps to the left to be standing on the side of the hill. This seems to be a very small (perhaps insignificant) diversion from our course given the apparent imprecision of this waypoint. It is much more likely that the 'little hill' referenced in the charter is the small, but fairly steep-sided eminence to the west of Fairy Glen at SO 865809. This is quite a distinctive landmark; it may have been necessary to include it in the boundary clause in order to direct the reader southwards from the *slæd*, rather than westwards via another path which today leads towards Cookley and Caunsall.

Waypoint 20

> *'along (the) way so that again to Ismere';* *the boundary returns to its starting point at the pool*

The 'way' was probably a southward continuation of the same *weg* mentioned in waypoint 18, which apparently extended south to the pool at Ismere.

Remarks

Two conclusions may be drawn from the foregoing interpretation. Firstly, the *windofre* waypoint was probably the hill-spur on the north side of the High Down ridge rather than the southern promontory that is, today, known as High Down. The second observation is that the section of the Iverley track which runs through Fairy Glen must have, in the tenth century, extended further south directly to the Ismere pool. This has obvious implications for our understanding of the Iverley track.

Appendix B: A possible continuation of the Iverley Track

The Iverley Track crosses a first-century Roman road (Margary 192), the remnants of which now survive as County Lane and form the boundary between the West Midlands (until 1974, Worcestershire) and Staffordshire. A Romano-British farmstead or villa is thought to have existed close to the road[71] near Barratts Coppice a little further north, and there is evidence for five further Romano-British farmsteads[72], which seem to have been occupied from the first through to the fourth century AD, near Foxcote, some 3 miles (5 km) to the east-north-east of County Lane.

Interestingly, another ancient track, which seems to have bounded part of a tenth-century estate[73], connects Pedmore (the supposed terminus of the Iverley Track) to this cluster. This is picked out in red in Figure B1 and runs in the same east-north-east direction as the Iverley Track. Like the latter, it follows moderately high ground, yet its height remains constant to within just ±20 metres. A roughly parallel route may have descended via an ancient path (relegated to a 'green lane' by the late nineteenth century) towards Hob Green in order to cross Ludgbridge Brook. (Judging by the convergence of local roads and tracks here, this crossing point is also likely to be of some antiquity.) The route would then most likely have ascended to the Roman site on Oldnall Hill.

A continuation of one, or both, routes further east-north-east would probably have descended by the most favourable gradient to the River Stour at Overend. That is an intriguing name in the context of this article's subject matter (*windofer*s and the OE term *ofer*), but it is a common enough name and a counterpart to Overend — i.e. Netherend — does exist about 1km to the north-west. Unfortunately, no early forms of the name Overend are available to help clarify its origin[74].

Extrapolating the Iverley track in the opposite direction, would lead in the general direction of Solcum Farm, the site of another Iron Age fort, although no clear route west-south-west has been identified.
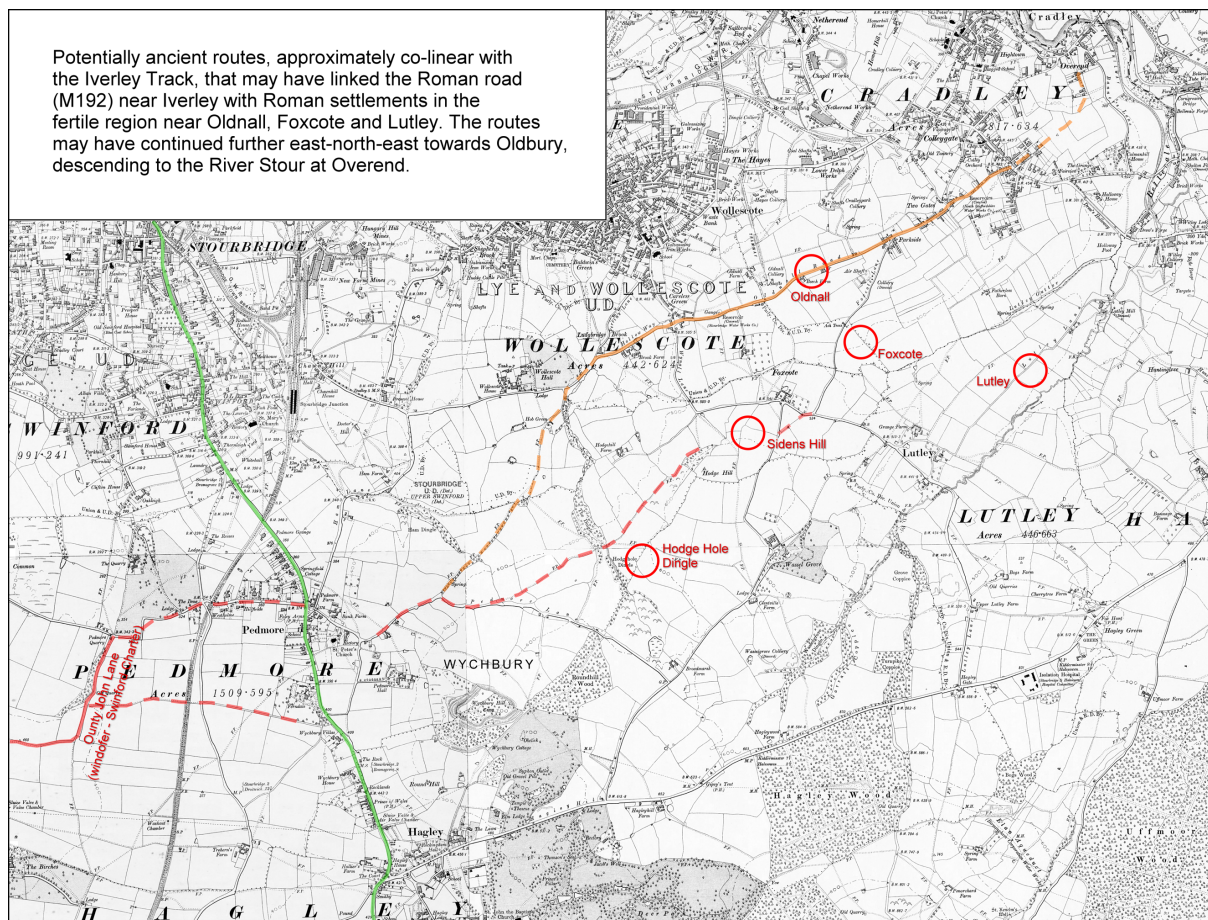

Figure B1. *Potentially ancient routes that may have linked the Roman road M192 near Iverley with first-to-fourth-century Romano-British settlements near Oldnall and Foxcote.*

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25. W. H. Duignan, *Worcestershire place names* (1904). Oxford University Press.

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27. Historic Environment Record. Online resource at: http://www.heritagegateway.co.uk (accessed 2014).

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48. Three of these names are referenced in Hooke (1990), *op. cit.* in note 24. They are: *geahes ofre* (meaning unknown) in Beoley, Worcesteshire (219-22); *readan ofre* ('red ridge') in St Peters Without, Worcestershire (282-4), and *genenofre* (a lost estate name of unknown meaning) in Worcestershire (297-301). The fourth name is referenced in D. Hooke, *Warwickshire Anglo-Saxon Charter Bounds* (1999), The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 36-41. This is simply *ofer* (a simplex form meaning a ridge or promontory of the shape described previously) in Tredington, Warwickshire.

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