# The Historical Landscape of Stourbridge's Green Belt

Compiled by

K James BSc (Hons), MSc, PhD, FIAP

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This document summarises the historical landscape context of the Green Belt locations around Stourbridge which have been submitted in the Call for Sites phase of the Black Country Plan (formerly Core Strategy) Review (see Figure 1).
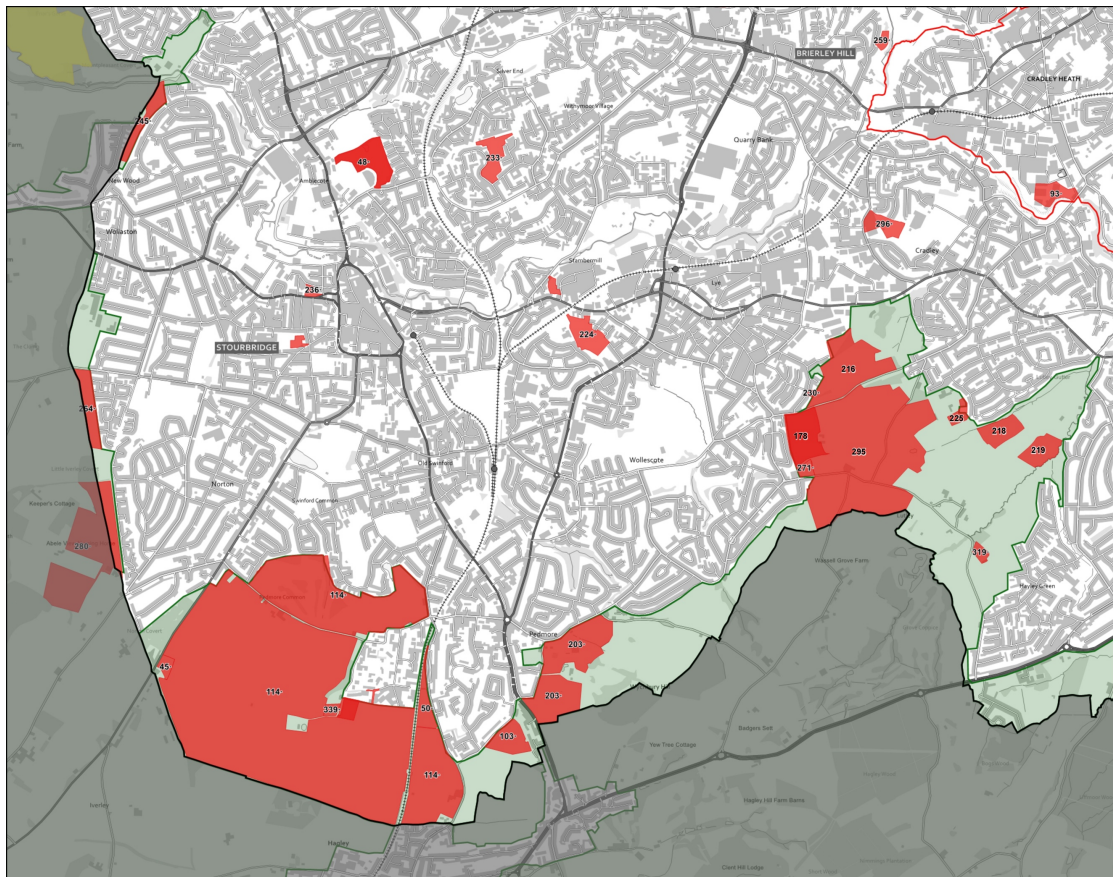


*Figure 1. Extract from 'Call for Sites' map showing the area around Stourbridge and Cradley. Submitted sites are shaded red. (Map issued by the four Black Country Local Authorities: Dudley, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Walsall. See http://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk/bccs/ for additional information.)*

# 1. Introduction

From a historical perspective, the discussion is most conveniently divided into three sections covering:

The western region:    Land opposite Clent View Road (site 280),

The Three Fields, Dunsley Road (site 264),

Wollaston Farm, grazing land (site 245);

The southern region:    Land near Racecourse Lane and Worcester Lane, including Burys Hill and Stourbridge Golf Course (sites 114, 339, 45 and 50),

Land south of Bromwich Lane (site 103),

Land adjacent to Pedmore Hall and Pedmore Lane on Wychbury Hill (site 203);

The eastern region:    Land north of Oldnall Road (sites 216 and 230),

Foxcote Farm and adjacent land (sites 295, 178, 225 and 271),

Lutley, farmland (sites 218, 219 and 319).

Figure 2 summarises the approximate locations of historic and archaeological importance in all three regions. Black circles and ellipses represent the approximate positions of monuments, historical landscape features and large find-spreads that might represent occupation sites or other extended features. Blue polygons serve a similar purpose in the Dudley Historic Environment Record (DHER)[1]; the small blue diamonds represent the DHER's smaller find-spots and excavation sites (each of which still may include a very large number of individual artefacts). The green polygons represent areas where the earthworks of Medieval ridge and furrow ploughing can be seen.

The maps presented in this report indicate the general distribution of archaeological DHER entries but, at the scale required to fit an A4 page, it has not been practicable to label every location with its DHER identifier (reference number). Higher resolution, labelled maps can, however, be viewed online at: http://www.HER.kjdocs.co.uk. A description of each entry is also available online at www.heritagegateway.org.uk, but please be aware that the latter web site currently displays incorrect grid reference numbers for some records.

The DHER identifiers, as well as those from Staffordshire and Worcestershire HERs, and Historic England's Pastscape database, are also quoted in square brackets in this report. The relevant database is distinguished by means of the following prefixes:

| Source database | Prefix in text |
| --- | --- |
| Dudley HER | DHER |
| Staffordshire HER | SHER |
| Worcestershire County HER | WHER |
| Historic England's 'Pastscape' | PS |

Figure 2. Historical landscape features and archaeological find-spots referenced in the text. Circled numbers represent Dudley Historic Environment Record entries. Those preceded by a 'PS' are Historic England's 'Pastscape' Monument numbers. Map base: Ordnance Survey OS OpenData[2].

## 2. The Western Region (sites 280, 264 and 245)

All three affected sites — Wollaston Farm, The Three Fields and Clent View Road —  lie adjacent to the county boundary, which currently separates the West Midlands (and, prior to 1974, Worcestershire) from Staffordshire.

Historically, this has been a crucially important line[3], used over the centuries to delineate:

- the Borough of Stourbridge (1914–74);
- the 19th century civil parishes of Wollaston and Upper Swinford;
- the Norman forest of Kinver (recorded in AD 1300);
- the medieval Halfshire hundred (12th century);
- the ancient parishes of Kinver and Oldswinford (c. 10th–12th century);
- the medieval (c.10th–11th century) manors of Kinver (including its sub-manor of Whittington), Pedmore and Oldswinford;
- the Anglo-Saxon estate or region of Swinford (10th century);
- the Domesday hundred of Clent (originating late 9th or early 10th century);
- Kidderminster Rural Deanery (possibly Early-Medieval), and
- the ecclesiastical dioceses of Worcester and Hereford (perhaps as early as the 7th century).

The Triassic sandstone ridges here and west of Kingswinford form a 'natural' boundary line which may also have marked the edge of earlier territories such as the seventh- to ninth-century Hwiccan kingdom.

Place-name evidence suggests that, for several miles to the north and south of the River Stour, the landscape was heavily wooded during the Anglo-Saxon period[4]; and earlier boundaries were probably ill-defined and variable. Indeed, the area may have been exploited by neighbouring communities in common[5]. Nevertheless, the Wollaston and Kingswinford ridges would have been prominent elements of the landscape, separating the Anglo-Saxon estate of Swinford from the Stour and Smestow valleys, and were probably used as boundary features from an early date.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the present county boundary line consists of 4 distinct sections:

- a straight section south of Greyhound Lane, which followed the course a first-century Roman road;

- after a small deviation, another straight section (the result of parliamentary enclosures and nineteenth-century rationalisation of the boundary) crosses previously unenclosed heath-land until it reaches the northern end of The Three Fields (site 264);

- from here, a sinuous section follows a set of ancient boundary dykes on Wollaston Ridge, and

- a curving section north of Vicarage Road runs alongside the Wollaston Farm site, closely following the line of the old Dividale Brook, to the Stour.

### 2.1. Wollaston Farm (site 245)

This site is bounded by the now-culverted Dividale Brook, which runs into the River Stour some 50m to the north. Though no archaeological evidence is known for the site itself, there may be valuable archaeology here:

- The area is typical of water-side Bronze Age sites; and, indeed, a Bronze Age 'burnt mound' has been found about 500m to the west near New Wood [PS 1147319]. Such sites often occur in clusters and it is possible that further burnt mounds may exist in the vicinity.[6]

- The same evaluation also provided evidence for possible Roman occupation: a drainage or boundary ditch extending from a platform or terrace may be indicative of Romano-British farming in this vicinity. However, the only dating evidence found in the ditch was a single sherd of Romano-British pottery, and it is not inconceivable that the ditch is of a later date and the sherd had simply become re-deposited there as a component of the ditch-fill.
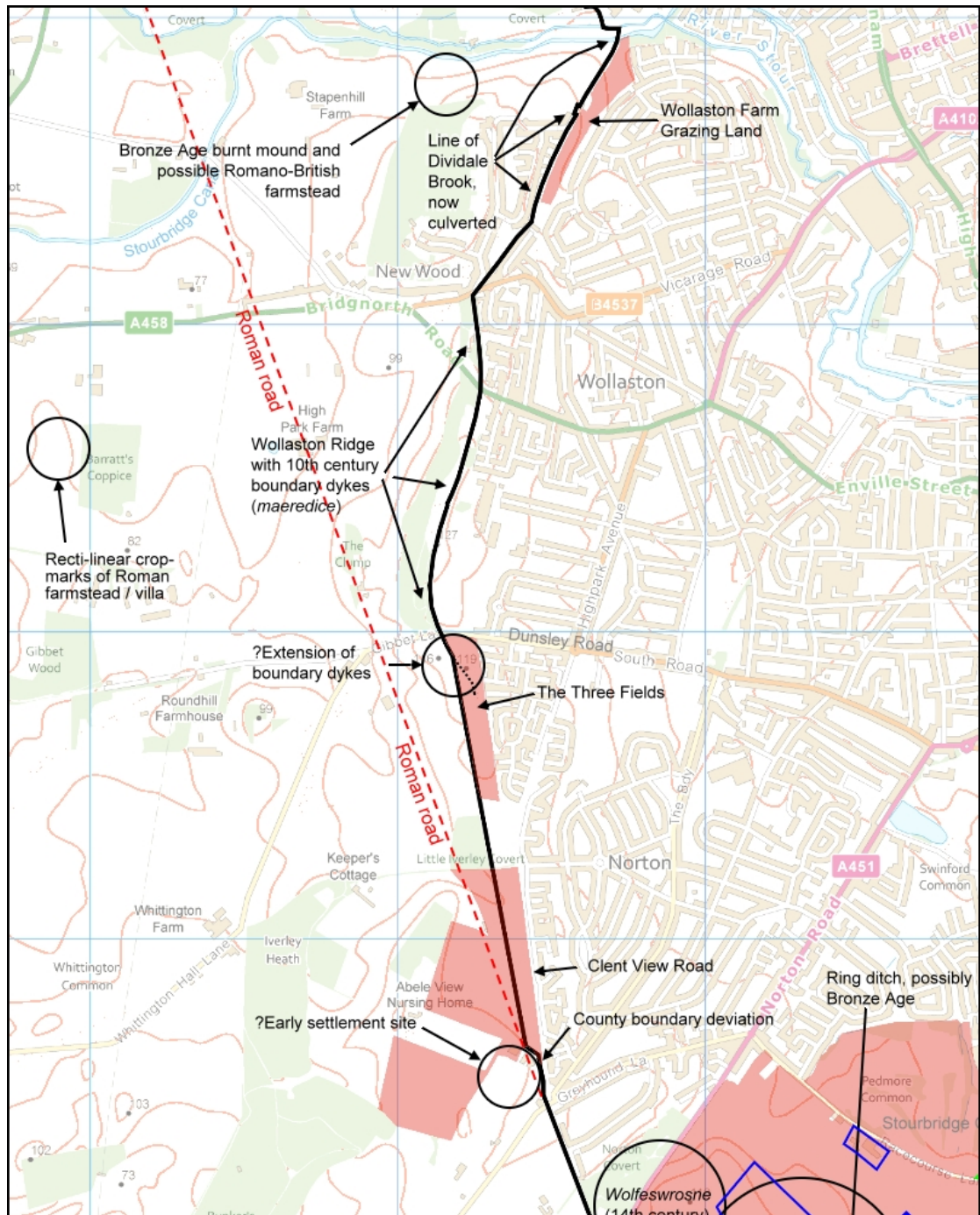


*Figure 3. Extract from Figure 2 showing sites in the Western region.*
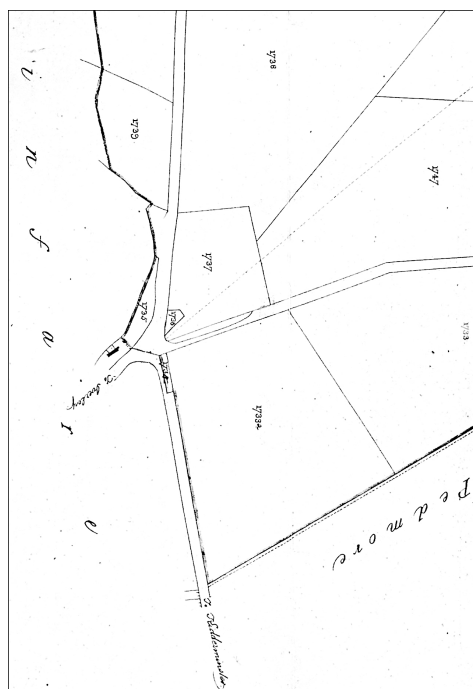
## 2.2. Clent View Road (site 280)

The first-century Roman road (Margary 192) [DHER 4861], which connected Droitwich (*Salinae*) to the various military encampments (and probable civilian *vicus*[7]) at Greensforge, passes through this site.

Though military in origin, the road is likely to have seen a great deal of civilian traffic during the second and third centuries, probably serving — via a route past Burys Hill, Wychbury Hill and Hodge Hill — Romano-British settlements at Siden's Hill, Hodge Hole Dingle, Foxcote, Oldnall and Lutley. The route is partly depicted in green in Figures 2 and 5.

Much of the Roman road remained in use during the post-Roman period and thereafter. Indeed, several nearby stretches survive as roads and tracks today (e.g. County Lane).

There was certainly occupation in the vicinity during the Roman period.

- A Romano-British villa or farmstead was located near this section of the road, a little further north, near Barratt's Coppice[8]. Its remnants can be seen as a quadrilateral crop-mark in aerial photographs [SHER 01724].

- Roman pottery and metalwork, including six brooches [SHER 60120, 60124, 60129, 20130, 60132, 60133], have been found within about 500m of the villa.[9]



A deviation in the county boundary near High Lodge Court (Figure 4) — a site named Iverley Farm in 1882 and Milward's Farm in 1775[10] — may indicate early settlement alongside the Roman road here. It was recorded on the 1782 Enclosures map for Oldswinford although its curved rather than straight-sided morphology suggests a pre-Enclosures date. While any such settlement here may be Medieval or Post-Medieval, one must be alert to the possibility of sub-surface Roman or sub-Roman archaeology remaining within site 280. The fact that this deviation coincides with the point at which the County (and parish) boundary departs from the Roman road may have some relevance, although the significance of this is yet to be determined.

*Figure 4 (left). A deviation in the county boundary as it departs from the Roman road (M 192) at the south end of site 280 (Clent View Road) may be indicative of early settlement here. The road from the south-south-east, Sandy Lane, follows the line of the first century Roman road. (Extract from Brettel and Davis's survey, 1827.[11])*

## 2.3. The Three Fields (site 264)

This site is located on high ground overlooking the Roman road 200m to the west:

- It adjoins a set of boundary dykes on Wollaston Ridge[12] (probably extending, with a break, onto Kingswinford ridge[13]). Topographical and boundary-pattern evidence suggests that the dykes may have originally continued southwards into the Three Fields site, and there may still be sub-surface archaeology here relating to their construction or use.[14]

- The Three Fields area was, most likely, also the location of an important landmark, the *Croked Apeltre*, 'crooked apple-tree', referenced in the AD 1300 perambulation of the Royal Forest of Kinver.[15]

# Western Region: Key Points

➢ The county boundary here has been a crucially important line used to demarcate many different territorial units for over a millennium.

➢ Evidence of two ancient boundary features remains in the landscape: a first-century Roman road (M. 192), and a set of boundary dykes (on Wollaston ridge) that are over 1000 years old.

➢ The Roman road runs through the middle of site 280 (opposite Clent View Road) and, as there is evidence of Romano-British occupation elsewhere near the road, one should be alert to the possibility of sub-surface archaeology here as well.

➢ A deviation in the county boundary may indicate an early (though not necessarily Roman-British) settlement at, or near, the southern end of site 280.

➢ The Wollaston boundary dykes seem to have been part a longer system of boundary dykes extending over Kingswinford ridge; and there is circumstantial evidence that the dykes also projected southwards into The Three Fields (site 264).

➢ Evidence of both Romano-British and Bronze Age occupation has been found immediately to the west of site 245 (Wollaston Farm).

## 3. The Southern Region (sites 114, 339, 45, 50, 103 and 203)

This region encompasses sites in the vicinity of Racecourse Lane, Worcester Lane, Bromwich Lane and Pedmore Lane on the lower slopes of Wychbury Hill.

All six of the sites lie close to the southern part of the county boundary which, until 1974, lay within Worcestershire, the boundary line then representing the division between the ancient parishes of Pedmore and Hagley (see figure 5).


### 3.1. Racecourse Lane / Worcester Lane (sites 114, 339, 45 and 50)

These sites include Stourbridge Golf Course and a vast swathe of land extending south of Racecourse Lane to the county boundary. The latter incorporates the elevated ground near Burys Hill and Buckbury Fields which appears to have been of considerable significance in antiquity.

Perhaps the earliest feature of the area is an ancient trackway[16] (shown as a solid green line in Figure 5 and depicted more fully in Figure 6) that has served a variety of functions:

- In the prehistoric period (and perhaps later) it linked Wychbury Hill, the location of an Iron Age hill fort, and Ismere. The latter was likely the moot (assembly) site of the people of *Husmeræ*[17], an ancient province (persisting into the Anglo-Saxon period) that occupied the Stour valley and which may have extended across the region to Kings Norton and beyond.[18] The track was probably part of a longer route, seemingly paved in parts, linking Wychbury to forts at Oldbury to the north-east and Solcum Farm to the south west.

- Together with an extension east of Wychbury Hill, the trackway would have provided access from Romano-British settlements at Hodge Hole Dingle, Siden's Hill, Foxcote, Lutley and Oldnall (which lie east-north-east of Wychbury) to the Roman road [DHER 4851] on the south-west boundary of site 114.[19]

- Elements of the trackway were named in two charters during the tenth century, and other place-name evidence suggests it was, in the Anglo-Saxon period, a component of the long-distance road network, connecting the important Chester-Bristol road to the Droitwich-Penkridge road (now the A491).[20]

- Droitwich and the Chester region were major centres of salt production, and both roads, as well as the trackway joining them, were probably used as salt-ways from the Iron Age through to the Anglo-Saxon period. An Iron Age (*c.* 500 BC) briquetage (salt container) from Cheshire that was found near Hodge Hill [DHER 12247] may have been carried from the Chester road to its resting place via this trackway.

Near Ounty John Lane, a landscape feature, referenced by name in a tenth-century charter (and often associated with Roman roads and important Anglo-Saxon sites — such as moot sites and even royal centres[21]) has provided toponymists with a *unique* insight into the usage and meaning of the widespread Old English place-name element *ofer.*[22]

There are also a number of other Early- and Late-Medieval monuments and sites of historic interest in the landscape here:

- Medieval ridge and furrow ploughing is known to have occurred in the area now covered by Stourbridge Golf Course, north of Racecourse Lane [DHER 7657].

- To the south of this, place-name evidence suggests the presence of a medieval open field in the vicinity of Burys Hill.[23] Ditch lines seen in crop-marks [DHER 10597, 10599] may represent a possibly related (though as yet undated) field system here.

- D-shaped crop marks observed in the field named Light Acres [DHER 10602] may be the remnants of an Anglo-Saxon settlement known as Compton (*cumb tūn*).[24]

*Figure 5. Extract from Figure 2 showing sites in the southern region.*

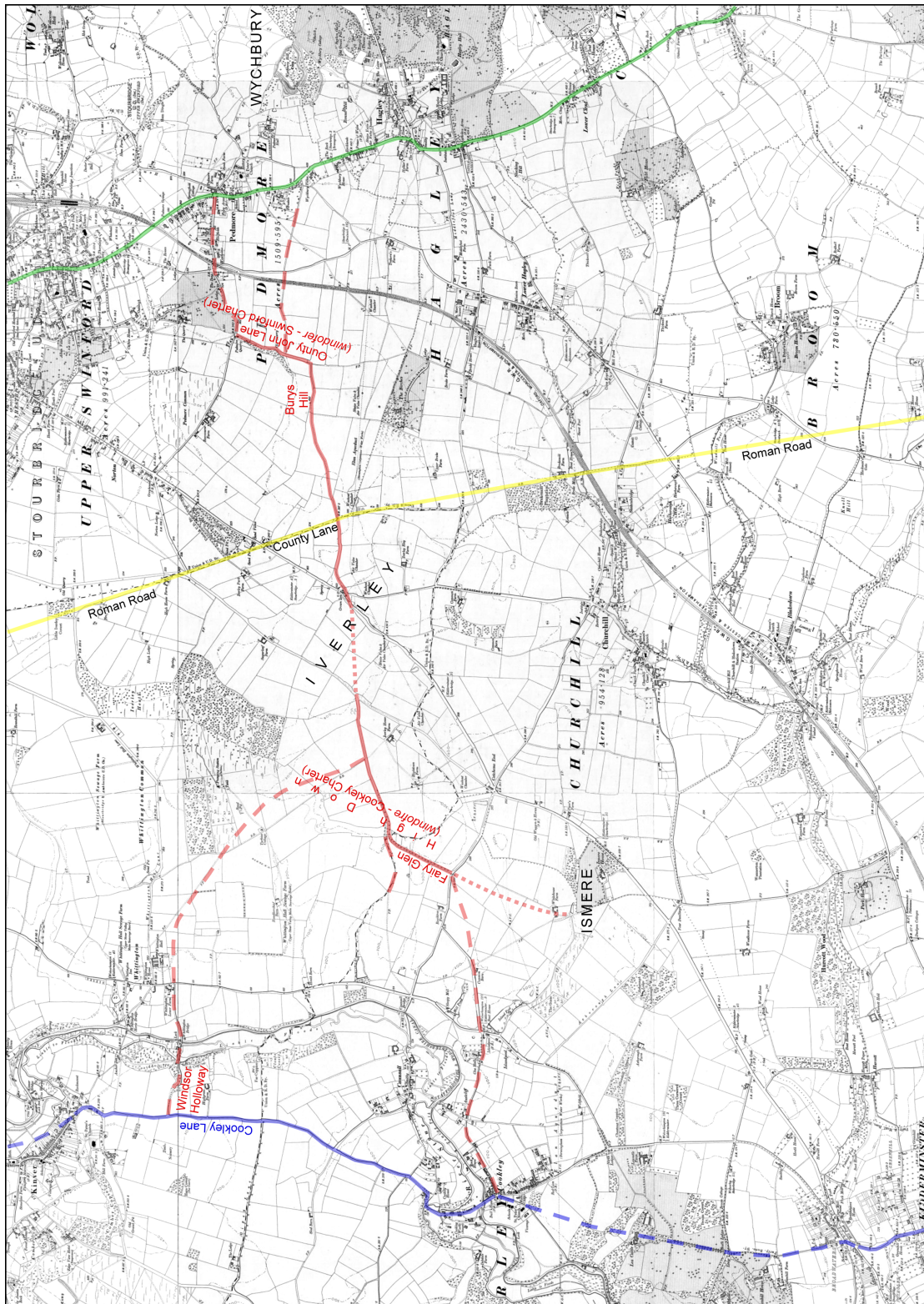*Figure. 6. Ancient trackway (red) on 1880s OS 1:10,560 (6-inch) 'County Series' map sheets (Surveyed / Published): Staffs. LXX.SE (1882/1884); Worcs. IX.SW (1882/1888), IV.SE (1882/1885), VIII.NE (1882/1887), IX NW (1882/1885), IX.NE (1881/1884), VIII.SE (1882/1884), IX.SW (1881/1884) and IX.SE (1881/1884). Other roads: Blue—Chester-to-Bristol; Green—Droitwich-to-Penkridge; Yellow— Droitwich-to-Greensforge (Roman).*

- Other place-name and charter evidence indicates that an Early-Medieval fortification (*sicanbyrig*) existed on the high ground near the county boundary[25]. This, or a separate fortified site nearby, was referenced as *Feckebury* in the boundary perambulation of Kinver Forest in 1300 AD[26].

- The south western corner of site 114 was within the Royal Forest of Kinver in 1300 AD. This area was then termed *Wolfeswrosne*. The final element of this name, *wrosne,* was most likely a corruption of Old English *wrasen*, which meant contorted or 'knotted' ground, and probably referred to the small, hilly drumlins (glacial sand and gravel deposits) here. Norton Covert, which was part of *Wolfeswrosne* and now abuts site 114, is designated a 'Site of Importance for Nature Conservation'.

- Site 50 and the eastern portion of site 114 (i.e. between Ounty John Lane and Worcester Lane) appear to have been occupied by a cultivated oak wood (or wood pasture) in the tenth century[27].

Apart from the aforementioned Roman road (Margary 192) [DHER 4851], very little evidence of a Romano-British presence has so far been discovered within sites 114 and 50, the only finds to date being a brooch [DHER 15142]; and a sherd of Severn Valley ware [DHER 12523].

There is some evidence of Iron Age occupation (a post hole containing an Iron Age pot sherd [DHER 15102]) but, again, this is slight.

There are, however, considerably more signs of earlier prehistoric occupation within site 114, including:

- Several ring-ditch crop marks probably dating to the Bronze Age [DHER 10599; 7659] have been observed in aerial photographs.

- Bronze Age flint arrowheads have been found in Great Buckbury field and Chamber field [DHER 12254, 4859].

- Bronze Age flint scatters [DHER 7047], Mesolithic flint scatters [DHER 4860; 4861] and a Neolithic polished stone axe [PS 116709] have also been recovered from within site 114.

Most of these artefacts have been found within those relatively small areas of site 114 (Chamber Field, formerly 'The Eight Acres', and Great Buckbury Field) that have been examined in any detail. Much more evidence for early land use is likely to come to light if a wider programme of investigation is undertaken.

Indeed, investigations in Flat Field on Treherne's Farm (within site 114) have shown that this area, at least, may have been of considerable importance during the prehistoric periods. This work has yielded a variety of Bronze Age finds including 84 pottery sherds. A number of pits and spreads of heat-shattered stones, interpreted as a Bronze Age 'burnt mounds' (structures where water was heated by hot stones for industrial purposes, food-processing or bathing), were also discovered near to the southern extremity of site 114[28]. These included:

- Bronze Age or Iron Age pits and stake / post holes (probably related to buildings or other structures) [DHER 12931, 12951, 12952, 12953, 12954].

- Prehistoric, possibly Bronze Age, burnt mounds [DHER 12926, 12928, 12939, 15103]. In some cases these are associated with clusters of up to 22 pits, stake-holes and deposits of burnt Bronze Age pottery [DHER 12929, 12943, 12950, 12940; 15103, 12925].

Near the southern boundary of this site, in Upper Flat Field, a Neolithic pit alignment is visible in aerial photographs as a series of crop marks [DHER 8531]. This monument may represent some form of land division (e.g. an agricultural boundary) or may have had a ritual function. It is close to the (very much later) county boundary; perhaps the topography here has made this southern edge of Pedmore parish a natural boundary region for millennia.

## 3.2. Bromwich Lane (site 103)

Little is known of this site's history and it appears that no archaeological investigations have been undertaken here. With regard to its immediate locality, pipeline salvage recording [DHER 7090] to the south-west of site 103 noted only a few items of any appreciable antiquity (two flint flakes) with a small quantity of Post-Medieval fragments of pottery, clay pipe, slag and glass.

One point of note is that a field boundary which, until the late nineteenth century, ran approximately north-south down the middle of site 103 may have followed the line of an earlier (probably Anglo-Saxon) trackway. The track appears to have been part of a route from Worcester to Pedmore and Oldswinford that had arisen to circumnavigate Hagley's medieval open field system[29]. Part of this track would appear to have survived as the short north-south stretch of Bromwich Lane near its junction with the A491 Hagley Road.

## 3.3. Pedmore Lane on Wychbury Hill (site 203)

This site together with land to the east was, in the early 1960s, designated an 'Area of Landscape Value'.[30] Site 203, which is bisected by the drive-way of Pedmore Hall, lies in a key location between Wychbury Hill's Iron Age fort [DHER 2707; WHER WSM00339] — one of the most important monuments in the locality — and an ancient salt-way connecting Droitwich with Penkridge (see Figure 6). The road (now the A491) and the fort may be intimately related; and the land around, and between, the two (including site 203) was probably well used from the Iron Age or earlier.

- A complex of ring-ditch crop marks has been observed in Park Field, which occupies most of the southern portion of site 203 [DHER 12285]. The ring ditches may be Bronze Age in origin, although they have yet to be formally dated.

- Roman coins and pottery sherds were discovered during the 1980s near Pedmore Hall, on the edge of site 203 [DHER 12797].

- A second-century coin and jewellery hoard, was found in the grounds of Pedmore Hall during the eighteenth century. This included ringer rings, toes rings, armlets and necklaces, an assemblage which suggests a high-status owner [DHER 12057]. There is a possibility that the owner lived on or near this site. It is, however, very close to a postulated route linking the Roman road (M. 192) with Romano-British settlements at Foxcote [DHER 7632], Hodge Hole Dingle [DHER 12039; WHER WSM30405], Sidens Hill [DHER 7408] and Oldnall [DHER 7628] - see sections 4.1 to 4.3 below. The latter two sites, at least, appear to have been occupied at the date that the various artefacts in this deposit were manufactured.

Other small Romano-British artefacts, including a pot filled with coins, have been discovered nearby [DHER 15143, 2709]; and it is conceivable that parts of the immediate area were occupied and farmed from the Roman through to the Anglo-Saxon period when the settlement of Pedmore became established (probably *c*.600 AD). The position of Pedmore's parish church in relation to the A491, Pedmore Lane and Pedmore Hall Lane suggests that the road pattern here delineates an Anglo-Saxon infield (intensively used 'core' field close to the settlement)[31].

Earthworks associated with Medieval ridge and furrow agriculture have been noted in fields to the east of site 203 [DHER 8532, 8533, 8534, 8535, 7999, 12001] (and to the south-east [WHER WSM03167]) near the now-deserted Medieval settlement of Foxbrake Farm [DHER 12000]. This lay very close to the postulated route-way linking the aforementioned Romano-British settlements to the north-east.[32]

Wychbury hill fort [DHER 2707] seems to have lain in, or near, a borderland separating the Iron Age Cornovii and Dobunni tribes. It is not an especially large structure, but it has unusually complex and well-constructed defences and may have been related to other Iron

Age forts in the area such as Solcum to the south-west and Oldbury to the north-east. Despite its obvious importance, little is known of Wychbury fort's archaeology: the only significant investigations that have taken place are an examination of its defences in 1992 and an excavation in 1884 which recovered two Iron Age terrets (horse-harness fittings) made of bronze. A few other finds have been made around the fort, including a number of flints and a silver coin of Augustus (i.e. Tiberius Julius Caesar). The site of a possible fogou (Iron Age or Romano-British stone-lined subterranean chamber) has been recorded near the fort although unresolved contradictions in the HER entry mean that its proximity to site 203 cannot be ascertained [WHER WSM46760].[33] Fogou are rare in Britain, most of the known examples occurring in Cornwall. Investigation of the area surrounding the fort, including site 203, may well yield much useful contextual information.

## Southern Region: Key Points

➢ The area between the Roman road in the west (the county boundary) and Wychbury Hill fort seems to have been used extensively in antiquity.

➢ A track linking these two places (and beyond) runs along the high ground near Burys Hill. There is evidence that this track was part of the salt-way network in the Anglo-Saxon period, as it may also have been throughout the previous millennium.

➢ It seems particularly likely that the track was in use during the Romano-British period, a postulated extension linking to settlements east of Wychbury. Indeed, several Roman artefacts have been found near to Pedmore and Wychbury hill, some within, or very close, to site 203.

➢ The topography, crop-mark, and place-name evidence within site 114 indicates that the area was populated and used intensively during the Early- and Late-Medieval periods.

➢ This site is likely to have included a managed Anglo-Saxon woodland or wood pasture dating to the tenth century or before; a Medieval open-field system; an Anglo-Saxon settlement known as Compton and one (or perhaps two) fortified Medieval settlements.

➢ The glacial deposits (drumlins) in the west formed part of the boundary of the Royal Forest of Kinver in 1300.

➢ Site 114 contains a considerable amount of evidence for prehistoric occupation, with, for example, a complex of pits, post holes and assemblages of burnt stones indicating an extensive Bronze Age (or earlier) presence in the southern part of the site.

➢ The southern county boundary follows a ridge line, a natural boundary feature which has been used since at least the tenth century, and probably for very much longer. A Neolithic pit alignment lies close by, and this may also represent a land boundary, perhaps for delineating an early territory or for ritual use.

## 4. The Eastern Region (sites 216, 230, 295, 178, 271, 218, 291 and 319)

This region is extraordinarily rich in archaeology. At 170m above OS datum, the sites at Oldnall and Foxcote are the most altitudinous of the threatened Green Belt locations discussed here. Their underlying geology (the Halesowen Beds of the Carboniferous Coal Measures) is conducive to a high water table which gives rise to an elevated spring line. Both of these factors, together with light, fertile soils, appear to have encouraged occupation and farming in the vicinity from the prehistoric onwards.

Artefacts dating from the Palaeolithic through to the Medieval periods — including stone axes, flints, pot sherds, coins and metalwork — have been recovered by field-walkers. The only period not represented by a large number of finds and monuments is the Anglo-Saxon, but this is not an uncommon situation as much material culture, including buildings, from this period tended to consist of perishable materials (wood, reed, leather etc.); and, as the region was clearly occupied before and after this period, it seems very likely that there was continuity of occupation throughout. This is emphasized by the fact that the local place names are Anglo-Saxon in origin. A rare Anglo-Saxon glass bead has, however, been discovered within site 219 at Lutley.

Aerial photographs also show numerous crop marks indicative of ancient enclosures, buildings and Medieval agriculture.

The field-boundary and road pattern here is intrinsically valuable from the perspective of landscape archaeology. At least one of the field boundaries (on the southern edge of site 295) is over one thousand years old, having been referenced as *ða ðic bufan foxcotun*, 'the dyke above Foxcote', in a mid-tenth century charter.[34] The dyke may have marked an early boundary of this fertile region, and a track leading south-west past Wychbury Hill probably afforded access, from the Romano-British sites here, to the Roman road (Margary 192) [DHER 4851] near Iverley[35]. This track, near the foot of Hodge Hill, is marked on 19th century OS maps and seems to have formed part of the boundary of the tenth-century Burhelm's estate.[36]

The landscape features, crop marks and the vast quantity of small finds in this vicinity (see Figure 7) mark out the whole of this region as historically very important. As most of the archaeological discoveries here have been made simply by field walking or studying aerial photographs, it seems likely that many additional artefacts, and a great deal of archaeological information, would be uncovered by more comprehensive surveys and excavation.

### 4.1. Oldnall (sites 216, 230)

Evidence of very significant prehistoric and Roman settlement has been found within site 216:

- Some of the earliest occupation is represented by a large quantity of Mesolithic flints recovered from site 216 [DHER 7505, 7506]. In addition to those mentioned in the DHER entries, almost 6000 pieces of struck pebble flint have been recovered; and the scatter appears to be focussed upon a spring 200m north of Oldnall Road (Figure 8). The source of the flint is not local; and cores were probably transported from elsewhere to be worked upon the high ground of Oldnall, most likely in a seasonal camp.[37] Mesolithic sites such as this are relatively rare in the West Midlands.

- In addition, a lesser number of Neolithic flints, including arrowheads and Neolithic stone axes have been found within this site [DHER 4852, 4853, 4854].[38]

- The Bronze Age is also represented by a pot sherd and flint assemblage [DHER 12045, 12251] as well as a barbed and tanged arrow head.[39]

- Another pot sherd of probable Iron Age date has been recovered from the same area [DHER 7628].[40]

- There is evidence of a Romano-British farmstead (occupied 1st to 4th century) in the fields north of Oldnall road, with some 350 pottery-sherds having been discovered here, simply by field-walking [DHER 7629][41]; see Figure 9. The pottery scatter consists mostly of Severn Valley coarse ware, with a smaller quantity of Samian ware and mortaria from the Hartshill / Mancetter manufacturing sites (now in Warwickshire). Related finds include a Dolphin brooch and blue-green glass phial[42]. See also [DHER 7039, 7628, 7630, 12078] for finds within this area.

Site 216 appears to encompass former pasture land associated with the 13th century (or earlier) Cradley Deer Park.[43] Though the classic curving park boundary abuts, rather than overlaps, site 216, a discontinuity in the former coincides with a field within site 216 which may have been associated with the park, perhaps even ante-dating it.
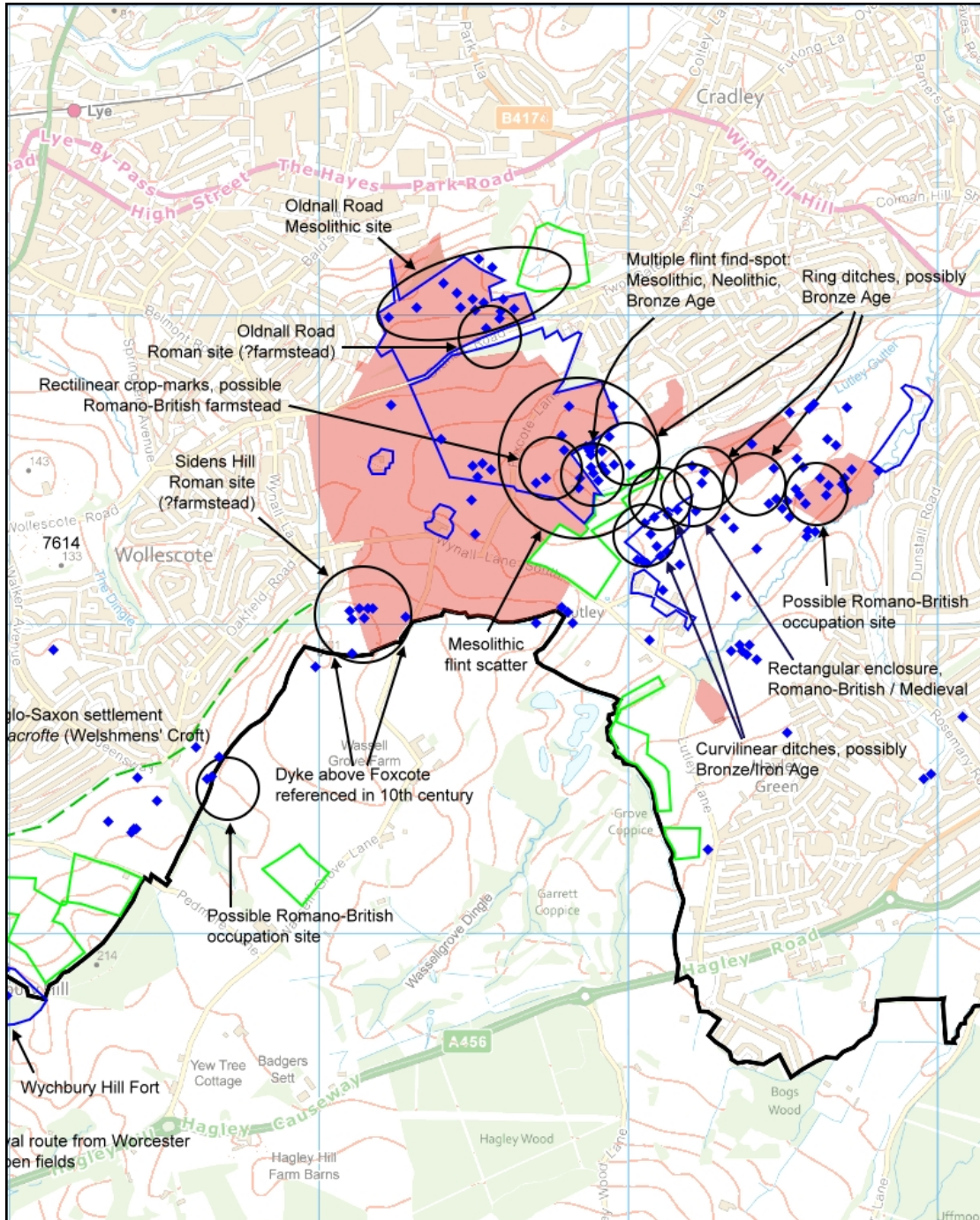


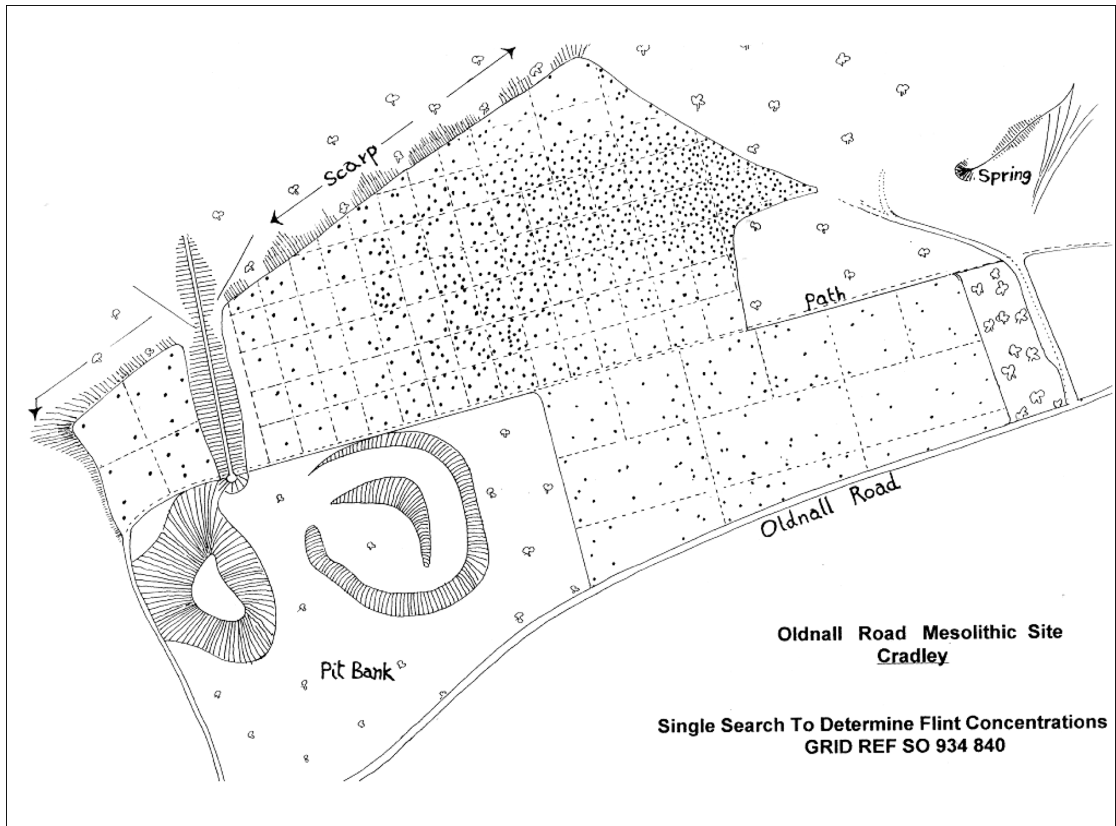*Figure 7. Extract from Figure 2 showing sites in the eastern region.*

*Figure 8. A Mesolithic flint scatter may represent the site of a seasonal encampment at which imported flint cores were processed. After Smith[44].*
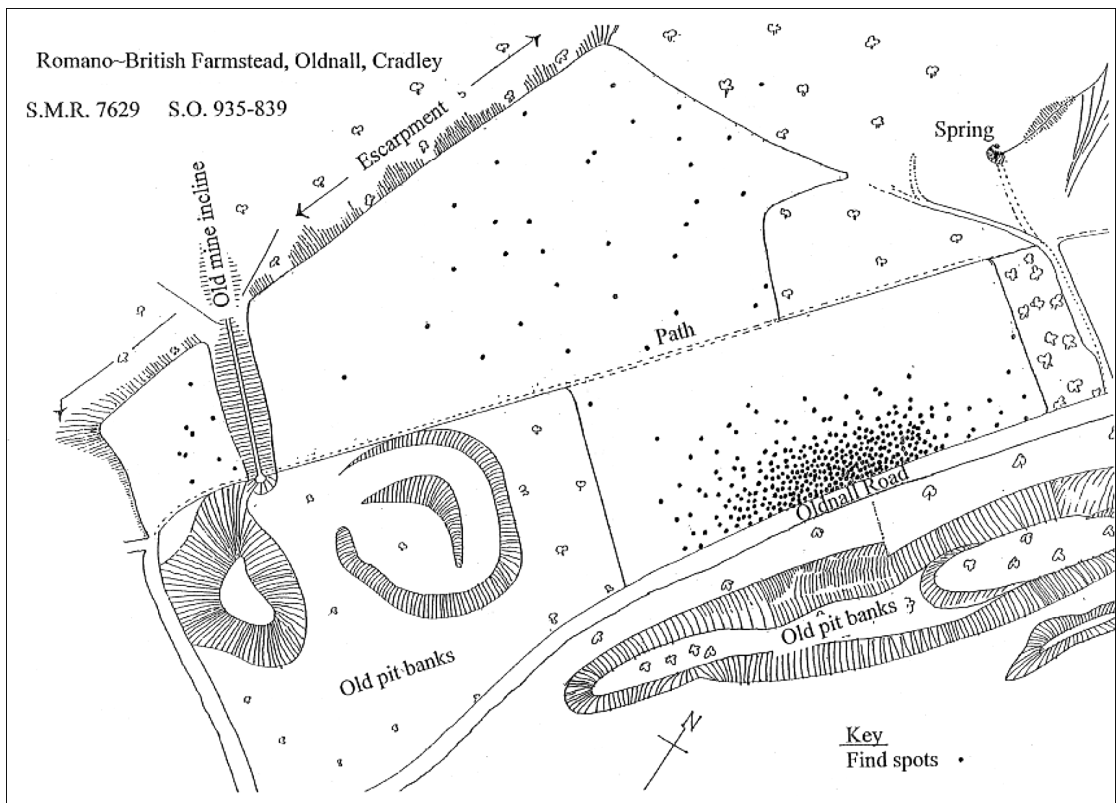


*Figure 9. Distribution of Romano-British pottery sherds indicative of a second to third century farmstead abutting Oldnall road. After Smith[45].*

In addition to the aforementioned ancient artefacts, site 216 contains a considerable amount of Post-Medieval archaeology:

- Part of Oldnall Farm, the buildings of which date from at least the eighteenth century [DHER 7190] may be located upon, or near, the Medieval settlement of Oldnall which is at least 700 years old. It was mentioned in a copy from the Oldswinford Court Roll of 1311–12 CE, in a reference to "the road from *Stanburne* 'Stambermill' to *Oldenhalle* 'Oldnall'".[46]

- The nineteenth- to twentieth-century Oldnall Colliery, including the shaft and ancillary buildings, lay in the eastern part of site 216 [DHER 2058, 2059, 7087].

Unsurprisingly a number of Post-Medieval artefacts have also been discovered within this area, including Charles I and James I silver coins [DHER 15149, 15152, 15153, 15155, 15156].


## 4.2. Foxcote Farm (sites 295, 178, 271) and vicinity

A great quantity of archaeological material has been recovered, both from within these sites and nearby. Modern site boundaries do not always respect historical land use so, to provide some context to this discussion, a number of finds made close to, as well as within, sites 295, 178 and 271 are considered below.


### 4.2.1 *Prehistoric*

The oldest artefact found in the region, a Lower Palaeolithic hand axe [DHER 12047], dates from between 50,000 BCE and about 10,000 BCE. It was found near the pool at the head of Lutley Gutter, just east of Foxcote Farm, but, as it dates from before the end of the last glaciation, it may well have been lost or deposited elsewhere.

Other prehistoric artefacts provide certainty that the area was occupied from the post-glacial prehistoric period onwards:

- Lutley Gutter's source-springs and pool would have provided a convenient supply of water; and it may have had some religious or ritual significance in prehistoric times.[47] Over 9000 Mesolithic flint tools, flakes and cores have been recovered by just one group of field-walkers from within site 295 [DHER 1655]. Numerous other flint artefacts, dating from the Palaeolithic to the late Bronze Age, have been recovered from the same site (and close by), including Bronze Age barbed-and-tanged arrowheads and a flint spearhead [DHER 7023, 7413, 15162, 7533, 12110, 12452, 12511, 1487].

- A very large spread of Mesolithic flint tools has also been found just to the east of site 295 [DHER 12518, 12519]; and a separate Mesolithic flint scatter, including two scrapers and an arrowhead, has been discovered south of Wynall Lane South [DHER 4143].

- Various Neolithic tools and weapons (arrowheads, polished stone axes; a stone ball) have also been found within, and very close to, site 295 [DHER 7018, 7024, 12408, 12516, 12522].

Later prehistoric settlement is indicated by a small, probably Bronze Age, ring-ditch observed in cropmarks north-east of Foxcote [DHER 7639], again near the head of Lutley Gutter. And a variety of Bronze Age and Iron Age artefacts have been recovered from site 295. These include:

- A Bronze Age bell clapper and bronze pin discovered near Foxcote House Farm [DHER 7083, 7084], and

- Iron Age pottery, including a briquetage (container associated with salt from Cheshire) at Siden's Hill [DHER 12037, 12108, 12247, 12498].

### 4.2.2 *Roman*

The Roman occupation is also well represented within, and adjacent to, site 295:

- Rectilinear crop-marks — possibly caused by the sub-surface remains of a Romano-British settlement or farmstead — are visible in aerial photographs north-east of Foxcote [DHER 7632].

- A concentration of Romano-British pot sherds — perhaps representative of settlement — has been discovered within about 200m of the rectilinear crop marks, abutting the eastern edge of site 295 [DHER 4144]. It is an interesting possibility that the curve in Foxcote Lane may have arisen to circumnavigate this settlement.

- Another Romano-British settlement, at Siden's Hill on the southern edge of site 295, is probably represented by a large assemblage of Romano-British pottery (from the first to the fourth centuries, but peaking in the second and third) as well as several glass beads and a small ceramic statue recovered by field walkers [DHER 6186, 7408, 12036, 12109, 15220].

- The settlement, or settlements, within site 295 may have been part of a group of Romano-British farmsteads including the aforementioned example at Oldnall, another near Hodge Hole Dingle, 1.5 km to the south west [DHER 12039, 15145, 7069, 19159, 7803; WHER WSM30405], and a third at Lutley's site 219 (see section 4.3.2).

- A scatter of other Romano-British artefacts including a second- to third-century coin [DHER 7412] provide further evidence of a Romano-British presence around site 295.

### 4.3.2 *Early-, Late- and Post-Medieval*

There is, so far, no archaeological evidence of Early-Medieval (i.e. Anglo-Saxon) occupation within the Foxcote Farm sites but, as previously noted, this is unsurprising and should not be taken as evidence that the region was deserted at that time. The Swinford charter (S 579) indicates that the name Foxcote, at least, was in use during the tenth century.[48]

- The long-standing agricultural importance of the Foxcote / Lutley area is highlighted by the conjunction of five separate township and parish boundaries (Cradley, Oldswinford, Pedmore, Hagley and Lutley) here (Figure 10). It is likely that the landscape was deliberately divided during the Anglo-Saxon or Late-Medieval period to give each community a share of the fertile land in this region.

- Field boundaries, which are probably of a Medieval or earlier date (certainly ante-dating the boundary pattern plotted on the nineteenth-century Cradley Tithe Plan and the 1782 Oldswinford Enclosures map) are visible in aerial photographs of the north-east quadrant of site 295 [DHER 10954].

- A small number of finds, including an iron snake-shaped clasp and a copper alloy buckle [DHER 15147, 15148] are also indicative of a Medieval presence within site 295.

- Evidence of Late-Medieval farming still exists today, with ridge and furrow plough marks observable in fields adjacent to site 295 [e.g. DHER 7615, 7616, 7617]. The first of these fields also possesses a, possibly Medieval, earthwork platform at its north-eastern corner, apparently surrounded by a moat on its north, west and south sides.

Like the Oldnall sites, site 295 also encompasses remnants of extensive Post-Medieval farming and industrial activities:

- Foxcote House Farm buildings [DHER 886] date to 1774, and Foxcote Farm itself [DHER 12817] is older still; it is depicted on Court and Blackden's Oldswinford parish map of 1782, but several of the ancillary buildings are of an even earlier date.

*Figure 10. The apportionment of land around Foxcote and Lutley between five townships and parishes (anticlockwise from the top: Cradley, Oldswinford, Pedmore, Hagley, and Lutley) may be indicative of the value which neighbouring communities placed upon this historically important agricultural region. (Background map: OS 6" County Series c. 1903.[49])*

- The north-east portion of site 295 encompasses the Beech Tree Colliery and associated tramway [DHER 2056, 7088, 7588], both potentially informative examples of nineteenth and early-twentieth-century industrial archaeology.

## 4.3. Lutley (sites 218, 219, 225, 319) and vicinity

Like the Oldnall and Foxcote sites, the Lutley area is very rich in archaeology from almost every period. Fertile soils have clearly made this area an attractive settlement site since the Mesolithic. Springs feeding the two streams here, Lutley Gutter and Twizzlebatch, have provided water for drinking, irrigation and, more latterly, fish ponds. The field-boundary pattern seems to be largely Medieval in origin. It is likely that the area has been more-or-less continually occupied from the Roman period onwards; and there is also a great deal of evidence for prehistoric occupation.[50]

### 4.3.1 *Prehistoric*

The earliest artefact discovered is a Palaeolithic scraper [DHER 7034], which was found near site 301; and significant evidence of subsequent 'stone-age' occupation is distributed across the whole of Lutley township:

- Over 20,000 Mesolithic flint implements and flakes have been recovered from around and within sites 218, 219, 225, 319 — including arrowheads, scrapers and blades — as well as flakes and cores from flint working here [DHER 4142, 4143, 4858, 4862, 4868, 7036, 7037, 7038, 7410, 7801, 7805, 12055, 12517]. (It should be remembered that *each* of these DHER entries, like others listed in this report, may represent several or, in some cases, very many individual artefacts.)

- A comparatively rare Mesolithic mudstone blade has also been discovered within site 219 [DHER 12521].

- The Neolithic is just as well represented, with a variety of lithic implements being found in and/or around sites 218, 219, 225 and 319. These include stone axes [DHER 1832; 4128; PS 868618], arrowheads [DHER 4127, 4863, 12513, 12514, 12515, 12709], scrapers [DHER 10256, 4863] and a denticulated blade [DHER 12049].

- A sickle blade [DHER 4863] found between sites 218 and 219 may provide evidence for Neolithic cultivation here.

The area includes a number of locations where crop-marks of curvilinear ditches — possibly ring ditches indicative of Bronze Age settlement — have been observed in aerial photographs. Each lies within 50 to 500m of one, or more, of the proposed development sites (see Figure 7). That to the east of Foxcote (but near sites 225 and 218) [DHER 7639] has already been mentioned; the others include:

- two overlapping ring ditches near site 218 [DHER 7634];
- a large curvilinear ditch with a smaller ditch superimposed [DHER 7637];
- another large curvilinear ditch near the head of Lutley Gutter [DHER 10596], and
- a small ring ditch on the spur of high ground between sites 218 and 219 [DHER 7633].

Additional occupation sites, which have not yet been observed in aerial photographs may exist nearby. Though it is probable that the monuments referenced above date to the Bronze Age — or, in some cases, to the Iron Age — further archaeological investigation is needed to obtain unambiguous dating evidence. Nevertheless, a number of field-walking finds provide more definitive proof of a Bronze Age presence in the vicinity:

- a Bronze Age wetstone (broken) near site 218 [DHER 7992];
- Bronze Age pottery sherds between sites 218 and 219 [DHER 12044];
- a barbed and tanged arrow-head [DHER 12453], and
- a Bronze Age burnt mound near Grange Cottage a few hundred metres to the south-west [DHER 12793].

A few Iron Age pot sherds have been recovered by field walkers [DHER 12043, 12044] from the immediate vicinity of sites 218 and 219; and it is possible that related archaeological remains exist in this area. The fact that the Iron Age sherds were found amongst Roman pottery scatters may indicate continuity of occupation.

### 4.3.2 *Roman*

Rectilinear crop-marks [DHER 7635] have been observed to the west of site 218. These may represent a Romano-British structure, although a later date cannot be ruled out without further investigation.

It does seem, however, that there was some form of Romano-British occupation in what became Lower Leasow field, within site 219, as a large quantity of first-to-fourth century pottery has been recovered by field-walkers here [DHER 7021, 7025, 12026] and in the fields immediately adjacent [DHER 4870, 7025, 7125, 7534, 7590, 7802, 12395, 12396]. Other, probably related, Romano-British artefacts discovered within site 219 include:

- a plumb bob [DHER 12040];
- a spindle whorl [DHER 12041], and
- a possibly Roman intaglio [DHER 12048] (although its date is uncertain).

A blue glass bead [DHER 7578] and a bronze key [DHER 7579] have also been found in the adjacent fields.

Additionally, scatters of Romano-British pottery sherds (some fairly numerous) have been recovered from around sites 218 [DHER 7993, 7802, 7067] and 301 [DHER 12100, 12105],

as well as a silver denarius (coin) dated to 109-108 BCE from a location near to site 301 [DHER 7409].

Indeed, a very great number of field-walking finds from the Roman period have been made across the whole of the Lutley area. These include:

- a widely-spread distribution of pottery sherds [DHER 4865, 4867, 4869, 7055];
- an elongated blue bead [DHER 12509];
- a fibula brooch [DHER 7803];
- another Romano-British glass bead [DHER 12510], and
- an enamelled brooch [DHER 12450].


### 4.3.3 *Early-, Late- and Post-Medieval*

As is the case with the other sites discussed in this report, the Anglo-Saxon period is not well represented in the archaeological record (see the introduction to section 4 for a brief discussion), although a solitary Anglo-Saxon glass bead [DHER 12294] has been recovered from site 219. The primary legacies of Anglo-Saxon occupation are the pattern of township and parish boundaries here (see section 4.2 and Figure 10) and local settlement names — such as Oldnall (*Ealda*'s *halh* 'nook'), Foxcote (Foxes' earth, or cottage associated with foxes) and Lutley (possibly *Hlūda's lēah* 'wood or open space in a wood').[51]

It is likely that the basic framework of the road and field-boundary pattern here was also laid down in the Early-Medieval period although, like other elements of the landscape, these features will undoubtedly have seen a variety of piecemeal changes throughout the Late-Medieval and Post-Medieval periods.

- Lutley seems to have been an economically viable agricultural land unit for many centuries — being in the possession of the priests of Wolverhampton church at the time of the Domesday survey — yet there is no clear sign of a Medieval manor house within the township.

- The area between Grange Farm House and Whitehouse Farm may, however, have been the site of the Medieval Lutley Chapel [DHER 6184, 15369], although evidence is sparse. The presence of a chapel may indicate a significant population here in the Late-Medieval period.

- The field boundary pattern — both as it exists today and as recorded on nineteenth century maps — is clearly indicative of Medieval open-field farming. Ridge and furrow plough marks have been observed at a number of locations (particularly in the vicinity of the aforementioned farms) in addition to those listed in section 4.3 [DHER 7615, 7616, 7617, 7618, 7618]. Some of these areas of ridge and furrow lie close site 301.

- Near Lutley's northern boundary (defined by Lutley Gutter), dams and water-management earthworks relating to a system of medieval fish ponds can be seen [DHER 7617, 7638]; these would have been fed from the pool at the head of this stream and one, or more, springs to the south.

- Given the clear signs of Early- and Late-Medieval occupation and agriculture throughout this region, it is unsurprising that medieval pottery sherds have been found in many of the fields around Lutley [DHER 4866, 12099]. Most of the scatters occur within and abutting sites 218, 219 and 301 [DHER 7027, 7592, 7534, 7802; 12101].

- Successors to the various Medieval occupation sites survive today as the sixteenth- and seventeen-century buildings belonging to Four Elms Farm [DHER 869]; Whitehouse Farm [DHER 870], Grange Farm House [DHER 8710] and Lutley Mill [12082], the former two complexes lying within about 200m of site 301, and the latter directly abutting site 219.

# Eastern Region: Key Points

➢ Almost the whole of this region is of archaeological importance, with numerous occupation sites and very many artefactual finds.

➢ Most of the earliest finds date from the Mesolithic, a period during which a seasonal flint-working settlement was active near a spring on Oldnall hill (within site 216).

➢ Further evidence of significant Mesolithic activity has been found at Lutley (over 20,000 implements and flakes), and at Foxcote, a very large number from a find-spread near to site 295.

➢ Around 9000 Mesolithic flints have been found around the adjacent pool (at the head of Lutley Gutter) — again, within site 295 — from where many Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts have also been recovered.

➢ Bronze Age, and probably Iron Age, settlement is represented by six complexes of circular crop-marks very close to sites 295, 225 218 and 219, as well as a number of artefactual finds from the same periods.

➢ Some Iron Age material has been found intermixed with Romano-British pot-sherd scatters around Lutley, suggesting continuity of occupation.

➢ Likely Romano-British settlement locations have been identified (approximately) from artefactual concentrations. These occur within site 216 near Oldnall Road and in the southern part of site 295 at Sidens Hill. A further concentration of field-walking finds in, and around, site 219 suggests Romano-British occupation in this vicinity as well.

➢ A group of rectilinear crop-marks east of Foxcote Lane, again within site 295, and another 500m to the east may represent further Romano-British farmsteads.

➢ The conjunction of five ancient-parish and township boundaries near Foxcote and Lutley indicates the long-standing agricultural and economic importance of this region, the land here probably being divided during the Anglo-Saxon or Late-Medieval period to give each community a share of the area's fertile land.

➢ Signs of Medieval agriculture are evident in the pattern of field boundaries, the parallel reversed S shape of many being indicative of open-field cultivation. Evidence of an earlier (though undated) field system is visible within site 295.

➢ Medieval ridge-and-furrow plough marks can seen be in multiple locations south-east of site 295 and close to site 319.

➢ The current buildings of Foxcote Farm and Foxcote House Farm (within site 295 and, in the former case, bordering site 178) are of an eighteenth century or slightly older date, but it is likely that the Late-Medieval and perhaps Anglo-Saxon settlements of Foxcote lay close to, or even beneath, these buildings.

➢ Similarly, the fourteenth century (or earlier) settlement of Oldnall may lie within the curtilage of Oldnall Farm, which partially overlaps site 216.

➢ There is also some comparatively late industrial archaeology here in the form of Oldnall Colliery (site 216), Beech Tree Colliery (adjacent to sites 216 and 295) and related tramway infrastructure.

## Appendix: Archaeological Periods and Dates (Simplified)

| Period | Date Range[1] |
| --- | --- |
| Palaeolithic | *c.*3M – *c.*9700 BCE |
| Mesolithic | *c.*9700 – *c.*4000 BCE |
| Neolithic | *c.*4000 – *c.*2500 BCE |
| Bronze Age | *c.*2500 – *c.*700 BCE |
| Iron Age | *c.*700 BCE – 43 CE |
| Romano-British | 43 CE – 409 CE |
| Sub-Roman / Post-Roman | 410 CE – *c.*450 CE[2] |
| Early-Medieval (Anglo-Saxon in midland England) | *c.*450 CE[2] – 1066 CE |
| Late-Medieval | 1066 CE – 1485 CE |
| Post-Medieval | 1485 CE – |

[1] These date ranges should be considered approximate. Some are conventionally based upon well defined historical events such as the Norman conquest (1066), but in reality widespread societal or technological change did not occur across the whole of Britain precisely at each of these dates. In some cases, divisions *within* a given period represent very profound changes such as the influence of Roman Christianity in the Middle-Anglo-Saxon, or the development of new territorial structures, agricultural arrangements and village nucleation in the Late-Anglo-Saxon.

[2] In the western midlands and Black Country, a later transition date (of perhaps *c.*550 CE) may be more appropriate.

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