

**Assessment of the Potential Impact on known Archaeological
Features by Mybster-Dounreay Line Refurbishment Works**

**Cathy Dagg
2, Ruigh'Riabhach
Scoraig Peninsula
Dundonnell
Wester Ross
IV23 2RE
Tel: 01854 633 337**

Assessment of the potential impact on known archaeological features by Mybster-Dounreay Line Refurbishment works.

Introduction

The author was asked by Scottish Hydro-Electric to assess the potential impact of refurbishment works on the Mybster-Dounreay 33Kv overhead line on archaeological sites already recorded for this area. The aim was to propose actions by the contractors to minimise accidental damage to the sites and the surrounding areas where associated archaeological features might lie. A further aim was to decide whether an archaeological watching brief would be advisable or necessary during any refurbishment works. A visit to the area was made on 1.12.99 in the company of Ian Spowart of Scottish Hydro Electric. Attention was given only to those sections of the line where the proposed replacement of poles coincided with the presence of recorded archaeological features.

The following sites were visited:

Pole 31 Westerdale Broch at 129 518. The recorded archaeological features lying close to the line at this point are taken to include the two bridges, the derelict mill on the east bank of the River Thurso, the derelict farm buildings on the west bank and three brochs spaced along the west bank. Only the southernmost broch is close enough to the proposed works on the pole to be of any concern. The interpretation of this mound as a broch is slightly dubious. It stands at least 50m to the north of Pole 31 while access to the pole for any machinery would be from the road to the south.

Action: no specific action considered necessary at this stage

ND 15320019

Pole 105 Enclosure at 083 606. The pole stands 10 m. from a NW-SE running fence, on the other side of which is a large rectangular enclosure formed by a low turf and stone dyke. Further low dykes can be traced in the surrounding area, of which at least two run up to the fence, but all trace of their continuation on the west side of the fence is lost. The field in which the pole stands is featureless grassland, and it is concluded that any archaeological record has been effectively destroyed by ploughing and drainage. Access to the line is from the road to the west

Action: no specific action considered necessary at this stage.

ND 065E0060

Poles 116 and 119 Chambered cairn at 0706 6190 Farmstead at 0709 6194 Approximately 10m. west of the midpoint between poles 116 and 117 is the edge of the farmstead, consisting of the footings of a house and byre and connected stackyard. (a second farmstead is visible 200m. south along the loch shore) The chambered cairn is on a narrow spit of land extending into the loch, and is partly waterlogged and overgrown with gorse. The water level of Loch Calder, which is a reservoir, appears to have risen considerably and affected both the chambered cairn and a possible line of farmsteads or crofts. Work is to be done on pole 116 and access is from the road to the NE. the terrain is rough and the ground already considerably broken by livestock and farm vehicles, but a reasonable line of access to pole 116 should be possible without encroaching as close as 20m. from the farmstead. The farmstead has already been taped by the contractor.

ND 06 SE 0010

ND 06 SE 0072

There is an amorphous rubble spread and possible archaeological feature below the line between poles 117 and 118 This has also been taped by the contractor and should not be affected as the access route should pass well to the east

Pole 119 is in a different field and will be approached by a different access route from the road. There are no visible archaeological features in this field.

Action: the contractor should be encouraged to use an access route to pole 116 as far to the east as possible, and at least 20m. from the edge of the farmstead.

The following poles are not due to be replaced during the present phase of refurbishment, but are included in this assessment in case any other form of maintenance work is carried out in their vicinity, and so that mitigating actions can be decided on when any future replacement work is proposed.

Pole 131 Knockglass Broch at 0549 6365 (Scheduled Monument) The pole, although standing in level, previously ploughed grassland, is less than 5m. from the edge of the mound on which stand the remains of the broch. It will certainly lie within the scheduled area.

Action; Historic Scotland must be contacted again before any excavation work is carried out on this pole, as Scheduled Monument Consent will almost certainly be needed. Consent should require that an archaeological watching brief be carried out. Meanwhile it is recommended that if any other form of maintenance is carried out on the line between poles 130 and 133, materials should be carried onto the site by hand unless conditions underfoot are very dry, to avoid damage by vehicles to the ground in the area surrounding the broch

ND 065E 0018

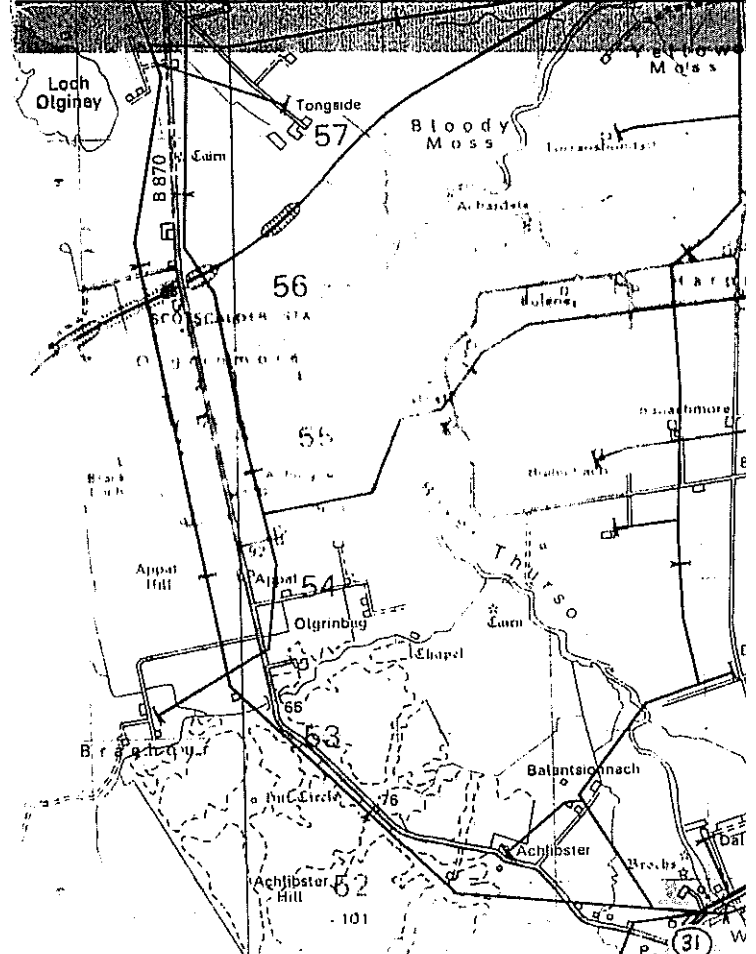
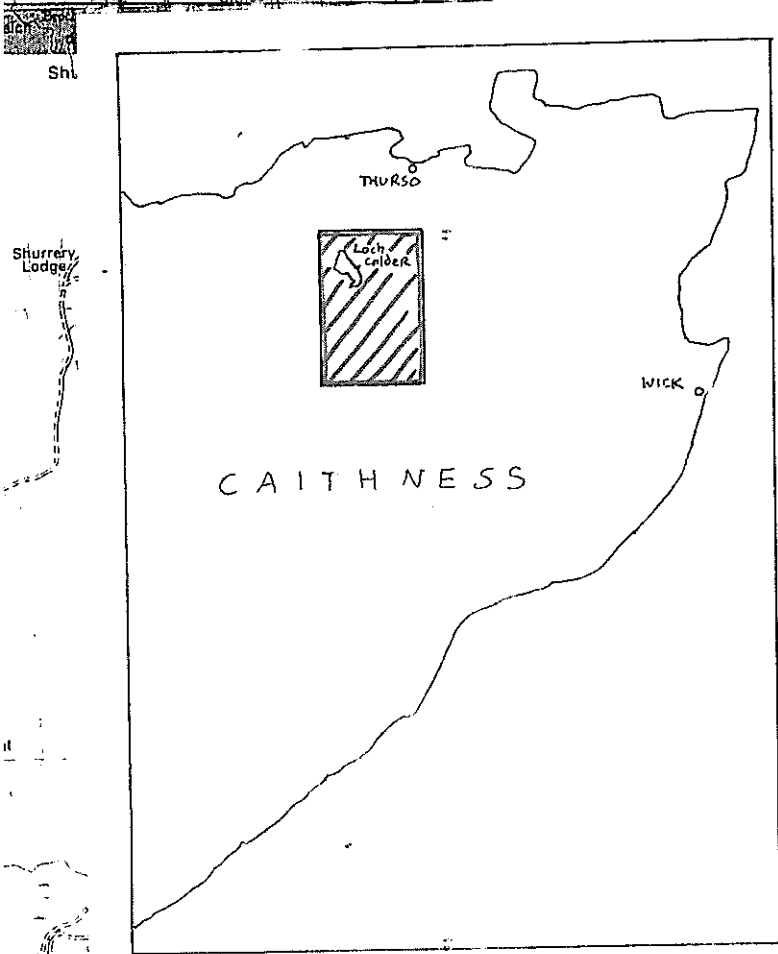
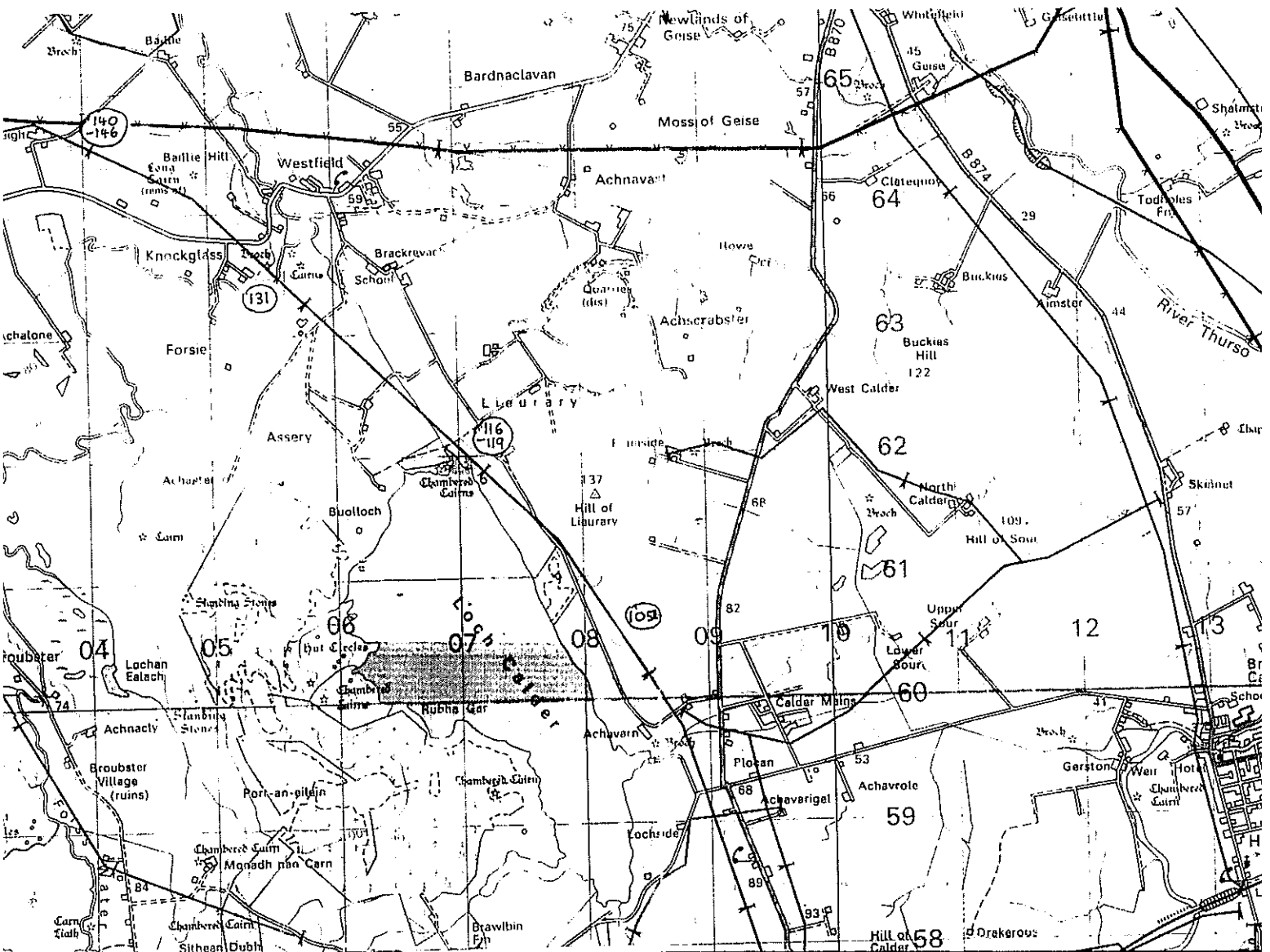
Poles 140 to 146 This section of the line was visited because four archaeological sites are recorded close to the line between poles 140 and 145, including a burnt mound at 0390 6445. The three fields crossed by the line are ploughed and drained grassland, devoid of any visible archaeological feature. The farmer remembers the burnt mound, but admits that it was destroyed by ploughing, and now only shows as an area of discoloration during ploughing. A pile of rubble and earth below pole 140 appears to postdate the erection of the pole.

Action: a desk-based assessment of the four destroyed archaeological features may conclude that an archaeological watching brief is advisable if any future excavation work is carried out. Other maintenance work not requiring excavation should not require any mitigating action.

ND 065W 0013, 81, 82, 83

Further to these specific recommendations, as a general rule, contractors should be made aware that there may be as yet unrecorded archaeological sites in the areas in which they are working. They should look out for artificial-looking humps or piles of stones, any linear-looking features or areas of grass contrasting with surrounding heather cover. If possible they should avoid anything like this by 20m. This includes running machinery over the ground to gain access to the line.

Catherine Dagg 2.12.99

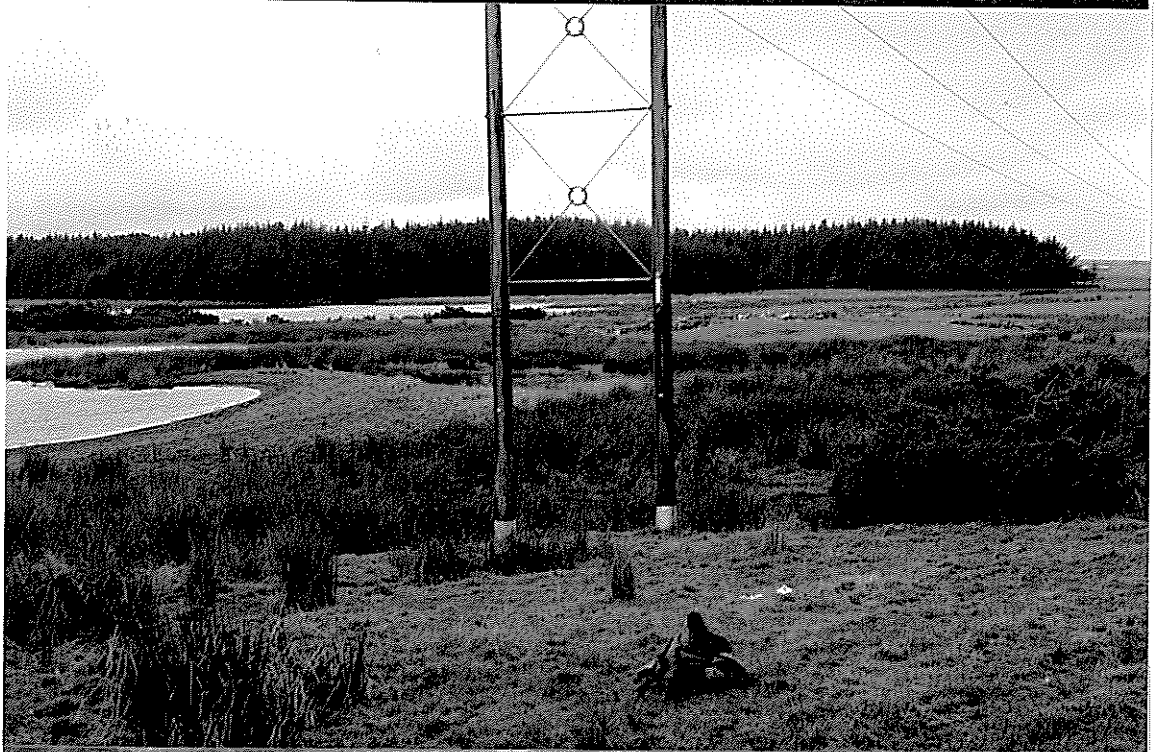


Pole 105
View from East
Enclosure in foreground



Pole 116
View from SE

Farmstead is behind R. pole
Chambered cairn is under
gorse on extreme left.



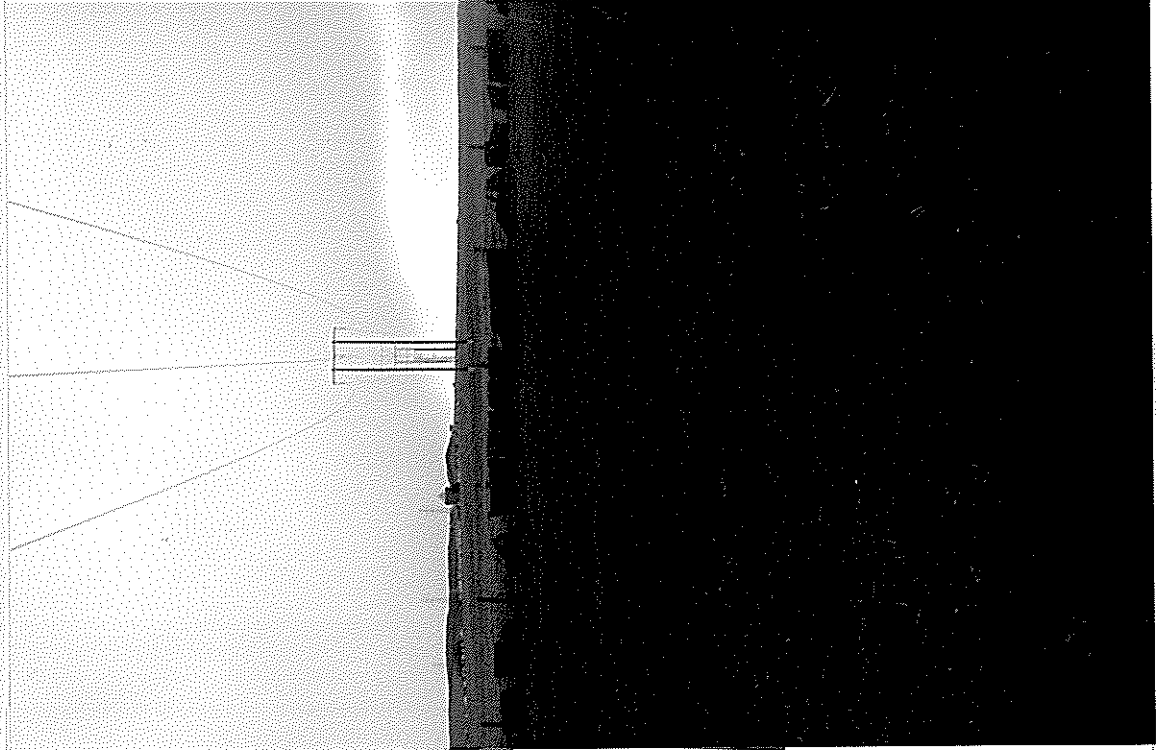
Between poles 117 + 118
Rubble, possible feature



Pole 131
View from SE
Broch on immediate
right.



Poles 141-146
View from SE
showing lack of visible
archaeological features



Pole 140
View from NW.
Recent rubble pile

