

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**33KV OVERHEAD LINE
TO CIA AIG HYDRO-ELECTRIC STATION
ACHNACARRY**

**Desk study
and
walk-over survey
June 2011**

**5 Bank Street
ABERFELDY
Perthshire
PH15 2BB
Tel & Fax No: 01887-820880
email: scotarc@o2.co.uk**

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a desk study of archaeological sites and monuments and a walk-over survey along the route of a proposed 33kv power line from Banavie to a new hydro-electric power station at Achnacarry, Highland. To ensure that no archaeological sites or monuments are damaged during that operation, Scottish & Southern Energy plc (SSE) commissioned the desk study and the walk-over survey.

The line will run from a new power station at approximately NN 17500 88850, some 350m east of Loch Arkaig, to the south and south-west to link with an existing overhead line at NN 11255 77702, a short distance north of the village of Banavie and some 4km north of Fort William.

Both the desk study and ground survey were undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology at the request of Max Bigham, wayleave officer for SSE, Oban office. The enclosed maps show the proposed route of the power line and the locations of sites where there may be archaeological issues. The thick pink line shows where an existing route will be upgraded, the thin red line where a new section is to be installed and two short sections marked in green depict where the new cable will run underground.

THE DESK STUDY

The results of the desk study are integrated into the account of the walk-over survey. Sources consulted for this work included the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) and Archaeology Scotland's annual journal *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

The corridor taken as the basis for the assessment was a wide one to allow for a broad swathe of ground for machinery to work on during the line refurbishment and for vehicular access from the B8004 road which runs along Glen Mor, roughly parallel with the River Lochy, the Caledonian Canal and the new power line.

THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

For operational reasons the walk-over survey was not conducted in a straightforward, linear manner although the sites and monuments encountered along it are listed from north to south.

The new cable route will run along the lower slopes of Monadh Beag, Sron Liath and Meall Bhanabhie which are covered mainly with coarse vegetation such as heather, grass tussocks and bracken. In addition, the line crosses two areas of commercial forestry, a few patches of birch woodland and, midway along its length, a short stretch of flat ground between the road and the Caledonian Canal. Much of the ground was waterlogged when the survey was undertaken.

The three sites listed below lie close to the proposed route of the new power line. One of them (Site 2) was identified in the desk study.

Site 1: Earthworks (Photos 29-31)

Located at NN 15078 81999, immediately adjacent to Pole 96 on an existing overhead line which runs along level ground between the B8004 and the canal, is an earthwork of unknown origin. It comprises banks of grass-covered soil forming a roughly square arrangement, some 6-8m across, 2.5m high and open on its north side. Other banks run to the north and south from this feature.

These banks may well constitute a natural feature, perhaps resulting from glacial or riverine activity. However, until this feature can be investigated more thoroughly, the area should be avoided during works associated with the new power line.

Site 2: Cairns (Photos 33-37)

On Highland Council's Sites and Monuments Record is an entry (MHG30508) for a cairn discovered by local residents at NN 1480 8160 in 2002. No further information is available in that record.

The walk-over survey identified two cairns around that point. Cairn 1 (Photos 33, 36) is located at NN 14811 81645 and measures approximately 4-5m in diameter and 1m high. Cairn 2 (Photos 34, 35) stands some 25m from Cairn 1 at NN 14795 81664 and has similar dimensions to it.

It is not clear whether these features are burial mounds or the results of field clearance during ploughing. However, the grass covering the top of Cairn 1 might indicate that it is not a modern feature and, while the large boulders on the top of Cairn 2 are clear of vegetation, some of these beneath are not, suggesting that this is an early feature reused as a dumping ground. The cairns sit on a platform of relatively well drained ground surrounded by very boggy land which does not appear to have been ploughed for some time, if ever. Therefore, if these features are field clearance cairns, they are unlikely to be recent in origin. Alternatively, their regular ground plans and size may indicate that they are prehistoric burial mounds.

On the evidence of the above information, these cairns should be completely avoided during the installation of the new power line.

Site 3: cairns (Photos 39-42)

Two cairns were noted in a field lying between the B8004 and the Caledonian Canal. Cairn 3 lies at NN 14323 80940, in boggy ground sandwiched between a low, natural knoll and an area of improved pasture. It measures 5.5m by 2.5m and 0.6m high with little vegetation covering its stones. Cairn 4, located at NN 14373 80897, is a more obvious feature and consists of a conical mound of rubble, approximately 4m in diameter and 1.8m high, with no vegetation over it.

Both features are probably field clearance cairns of fairly recent origin. Although the adjacent ground is now under pasture and displays no evidence of rig cultivation, it may well have been ploughed in the relatively recent past. Nevertheless, caution should be applied when operating in this area and the cairns should be avoided.

OTHER SITES AND MONUMENTS IN THE VICINITY

Other sites and monuments identified from the desk study are listed below. None is likely to be threatened by the construction of the new power line although their locations should be noted.

Site 4

NN18NE 2/MHG4316 Achnacarry Castle (Photos 1-4)

Achnacarry Castle is thought to date from the late 17th century when the occupants moved from Tor Castle (NN17NW 2). The later fortification was burned by Hanovarian soldiers following the battle of Culloden in 1746 and now only slight remains survive and these appear to have been restored. These remains, located at NN 17500 87970, measure 4.0m by 1.3m by 8m high.

Site 5 NN18SW 15/MHG49217 Errochty House: cairn

A cairn commemorating the bicentenary of the rising of the 79th Cameron Highlanders in 1793 is located at NN 14988 82060.

Site 6 NN18SW 8/MHG35451 Arkaig Cottage: farmstead

The first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (Argyllshire 1875, sheet vii) shows two partially roofed and three unroofed buildings, together with another unroofed structure and one enclosure at NN 1394 8065. The OS 1:10,000 map of 1975 shows three roofed buildings and two enclosures at this location.

Site 7 NN18SW 11/MHG35114 Muirshearlich: building

The first edition OS 6-inch map (Argyllshire 1875, sheet vii) shows one unroofed building at NN 1348 8012. Recent maps show nothing at this location.

Site 8 NN17NW 40/MHG35448 Tom Cos Na Broclaich: building

The first edition OS 6-inch map (Argyllshire 1875, sheet vii) shows one unroofed building at NN 1328 7971. Recent maps show nothing at this location.

Site 9 NN17NW 40/MHG35447 Tom Cos Na Broclaich: farmstead

The first edition OS 6-inch map (Argyllshire 1875, sheet vii) shows one roofed and one unroofed buildings at NN 1315 7962. Recent maps show nothing at this location.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The only sites of possible archaeological or historical significance located close to the route of the new power line are the earthworks at Site 1 and the cairns at Sites 2 and 3. Every effort should be made to avoid damaging these features by inserting poles at those points or driving vehicles or other machinery over or near them.

Sites 4 to 9 are sufficiently far from the assumed new line although, nevertheless, their locations should be noted in case the line's route is changed at any point.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

- 1-2 The remains of Achnacarry Castle, located at NN 17505 87962, viewed from the W
- 3-4 The remains of Achnacarry Castle, viewed from the E
- 5 View to the E from NN 17239 88709, at existing Pole 59, along the northernmost stretch of the new line
- 6 View to the S from NN 17239 88709, at existing Pole 59
- 7 View to the N from NN 17326 88017, at existing Pole 49
- 8 View to the SSE from NN 17326 88017, at existing Pole 49
- 9 View to the NW from NN 17705 87402, at existing Pole 41
- 10 View to the SE from NN 17705 87402, at existing Pole 41
- 11 View to the NW from NN 17832 87173, at existing Pole 38
- 12 View to the SE from NN 17832 87173, at existing Pole 38
- 13 View to the NW from NN 18405 86952, at existing Pole 32
- 14 Mound of natural (presumably glacial) material near existing Pole 32, viewed from the NW
- 15 View to the NW from NN 18566 86838, at existing Pole 30
- 16 View to the S from NN 18566 86838, at existing Pole 30
- 17 View to the N from NN 18387 86013, at existing Pole 21
- 18 View to the S from NN 18387 86013, at existing Pole 21
- 19 View to NE from NN 18094 84953, at existing Pole 8
- 20 View to SW from NN 18094 84953, at existing Pole 8
- 21 View to NE from NN 17686 84456, at existing Pole 1
- 22 View to SW from NN 17686 84456, at existing Pole 1
- 23 View to NE from NN 16825 83703
- 24 View to SW from NN 16825 83703
- 25 View to NE from NN 16309 83296
- 26 View to SW from NN 15781 82820
- 27 View to NE from NN 15428 82188
- 28 View to SW from NN 15428 82188
- 29 Earthworks adjacent to Pole 96, at NN 15075 81998, viewed from the S
- 30-31 Earthworks adjacent to Pole 96, at NN 15075 81998, viewed from the N
- 32 View to the SW from Pole 96, at NN 15075 81998
- 33 Cairn 1, at NN 14811 81645, with Cairn 2 beyond, viewed from the S
- 34 Cairn 2, at NN 14795 81664, viewed from the S
- 35 Cairn 2, at NN 14795 81664, viewed from the E
- 36 Cairn 1 with Strone Farm beyond, viewed from the N
- 37 Slightly raised platform containing Cairns 1 and 2 and other spreads of stones, viewed from the W
- 38 View to the N from the cairns near Strone Farm
- 39 Cairn at NN 14323 80940, viewed from the S
- 40 Cairn at NN 14323 80940, viewed from the SW
- 41 Cairn at NN 14323 80940, viewed from the NE
- 42 Cairn at NN 14373 80897, viewed from the S
- 43 View to the NE from NN 13859 80814
- 44 View to the SW from NN 13859 80814
- 45 View to the NE from NN 13599 80509

- 46 View to the SW from NN 13599 80509
- 47 View to the NE from NN 12925 79587
- 48 View to the SW from NN 12925 79587
- 49 View to the NE from NN 12283 78845
- 50 View to the SW from NN 12283 78845
- 51 View to the NE from NN 11559 78461
- 52-53 View to the SSW, at the line terminus, from NN 11441 78422
- 54 View to the NNE from H-Pole 51, at NN 11255 77702