

# PITSKELLY - POLE REMOVAL CARNOUSTIE ANGUS



## - Archaeological Watching Brief -

Carried out 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011  
by  
**Murray Archaeological Services Ltd**



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### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Pole removal and stay replacement for the 11Kv overhead line at Pitskelly, Carnoustie, Angus by SSE Power Distribution required Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic Scotland. The Consent was granted subject to certain conditions. Condition no.2 stipulated that no work should take place until the applicant had secured the initiation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by Historic Scotland.
- 1.2 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by SSE Power Distribution to undertake the work. The Written Scheme of Investigation was approved by Historic Scotland on 15<sup>th</sup> August and the archaeological watching brief on the work was carried out on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011.
- 1.3 The Scheduled Ancient Monument (Index No: 6607) lies to the south of Pitskelly farm (NGR: NO 5440 3500), a short distance S of the A92 and on the NW outskirts of Carnoustie. Parish: Barry.

### **2. The Site**

- 1.1 The site at Pitskelly (SAM HS6607, NMRS NO53SW17, Angus SMR NO53SW0017) is a cropmark site within agricultural ground identified from aerial photographs. The cropmarks have been interpreted as the traces of several rectilinear and curvilinear enclosures with at least three possible ring ditch houses and associated souterrains. Ring ditch houses are one form of later prehistoric roundhouse with excavated examples often suggesting an Iron Age date (Pope 2003). Souterrains are subterranean or semi-subterranean passages generally considered to have been used for storage, although other functions such as refuges have been mooted in the past.  
These traces of later prehistoric settlement should be seen in the context of the wider surrounding landscape which shows a dense concentration of similar cropmark sites between the 20 and 30m contour on predominantly S facing slopes above the Pitarlie ( also called Barry) Burn. These include Shanwell (Angus SMR

NO53NW0029= HS6608 also known as Pitskelly), Greenlawhill (Angus SMR NO53NW0018 =HS 6570), and Ravenby House (Angus SMR NO53NW0028 (=HS6567), 34 (=HS 6568) and 35.

The NMRS record NO53NW38, shown in the same field as SAM HS6607 indicates a possible pit alignment. The category 'pit alignment' simply means a line of pits- these can be of widely differing date or function. As recent excavations in Aberdeenshire have shown some may have origins in the Mesolithic or Neolithic (Murray, Murray and Fraser 2009) and have ritual significance- equally they can include post medieval property boundary lines. In the present context the alignment may be associated with the later prehistoric settlement as some form of land division or property marker- although the possibility should not be discounted that they are of earlier prehistoric date and an instance of a later prehistoric awareness of and respect for an earlier and still visible monument.



**Illus. 1: Site Location , with Scheduled Area in red. Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright (2007)**  
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### **3. Methodology**

3.1 The excavation of all trenches was carried out by a full-slew tracked mechanical digger (CAT 308D) using a narrow toothed bucket.

3.2 Where necessary surfaces were hand cleaned by trowel and spoil examined for finds.

3.3 A crop of oil seed rape had just been harvested prior to the work being carried out.

### **4. The Work**

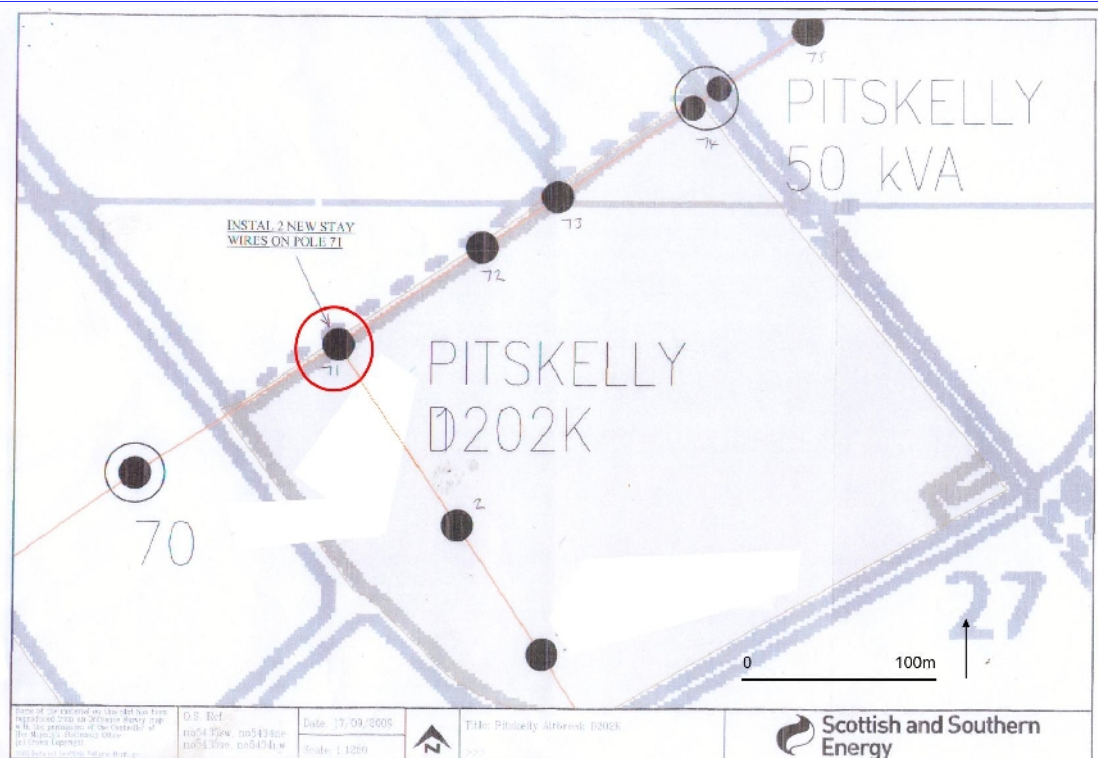
4.1 The work consisted of :

1. the removal of a double pole
2. the removal of four stay wires
3. the installation of two new stay wires to a remaining single pole

The work is described in the sequence in which it was carried out.



**Illus. 2: General view of area prior to removal of double poles, looking N.**



Illus. 3: Site plan with area of work within red circle.

4.2 Installation of new stays (NO 5424 3492):

A trench, 4m long (E-W) x 600mm wide x 1.9m deep, was excavated c.5m to the N of the remaining single pole [Illus.3, above]. An almost 500mm deep layer of rich dark plough soil overlay c.200mm of reddish slightly sandy sub-soil. Below this, fine dark brown natural sand extended down for 1.2m to the bottom of the trench.

No archaeological features or finds were evident.



**Illus. 4: T1 - for installation of new stays, looking W.**

**4.3 Removal of Double Poles (NO 5425 3492)**

The poles being removed were c.6m S of the single remaining pole. The trench measured c.3m long (E-W) x 700mm wide x c.1.5m deep. The fill consisted of a mix of plough soil and natural sand, redeposited when the double poles were initially installed.

No archaeological features or finds were evident.

**4.4 Removal of Old Stays to Double Poles**

As it was not necessary to remove the old stays to the double poles entirely, small machine excavated holes, c.500mm deep, were made so that the stay wires could be cut below ground level. Again, only mixed redeposited plough soil and natural sand was removed.

No archaeological features or finds were evident.



**Illus. 5: Double poles during removal, looking NW.**



**Illus. 6: T2, following removal of double poles, looking NW.**



**Illus. 7: Machine cut for removal old stay wires, looking SE.**

## 5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Work was carried out by SSE within the area of a Scheduled Ancient Monument at Pitskelly, Carnoustie to remove two double poles and stays and to install new stays to a remaining single pole.
- 5.2 No archaeological features or finds were evident during the works.

### **Digital Photographic Catalogue (supplied on CD to archive)**

- 1-2            General views of poles before work, looking N.
- 3-5            T1 – trench for new stays, looking W.
6.             T1 – looking SW.
- 7-9            Details of T1, looking W.
- 10-14        General views of removal of double poles, looking NW.
- 15-19        T2 – following removal of poles, looking NW.
- 20 – 22      T2 – detail, showing earth wires in trench, looking W.
- 23-30        Removal of old stay wires to c.500mm below ground level.

### **References:**

Murray, H K, Murray J C and Fraser, S M 2009 *A tale of the unknown unknowns: A Mesolithic pit alignment and a Neolithic timber hall at Warren Field, Crathes, Aberdeenshire*. Oxbow books: Oxford

Pope, R 2003 *Prehistoric dwelling: Circular structures in North and Central Britain c2500BC – AD 500*. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Durham.