

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological watching briefs undertaken during the refurbishment of an 11kv overhead power line at the south end of the Kintyre peninsula, Argyll. The refurbishment consisted of replacing several wooden poles which were either rotten or had split and inserting a few associated stays. Some of the poles were situated within an area where the surviving evidence of prehistoric occupation and usage was considered high, this area being defined on a map produced by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS). Another archaeologically sensitive area was around High Keil, at the south-west end of the power line.

The refurbishment was carried out by Scottish & Southern Energy, the watching briefs being undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology between 21st and 24th September 2009.

AREA OF INVESTIGATION

The area considered to be archaeologically sensitive was an irregular one, measuring roughly 400m north-east/south-west by 140m wide. It stretched from the coast around Dunaverty and Brunerican Bays northwards as far as the 100 northing and was roughly defined on its west and east sides by the 680 and 720 eastings.

Sites and monuments lying close to the cable route are listed below. They are given the numbers allocated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) (eg NR60NE 9), by WoSAS (eg WoSAS 2899) and, if Scheduled Ancient Monuments, by Historic Scotland (eg SAM 3714).

NR60NE 9 (WoSAS 2899) High Keil: dun

At NR 6789 0802, on the tip of a promontory overlooking Dunaverty Bay and 180m south of High Keil Farm, are the slight, turf-covered remains of what was probably a circular dun. It measures approximately 15m in diameter and is defined by a curved, stony bank although its west and south arcs have been eroded away.

NR60NE 12 (WoSAS 2880) Southend: battle site, burial ground

The site of a battle between Clans Campbell and MacDonald in 1647 is marked by a walled burial enclosure at NR 6868 0816. The enclosure was still more or less intact in 1977.

WoSAS 54044 Brunerican: lithics

Field-walking in 2006 yielded a barbed arrowhead, a leaf arrowhead, a tanged arrowhead, two knives, cores and scrapers as well as worked quartz from an area centred on NR 7031 0779. These artefacts suggest that there were short-term settlement camps in this area from the early Neolithic to the Bronze Age.

NR70NW 15 (WoSAS 3275) Pennyseorach Farm: polished stone axehead

A polished stone axehead was discovered when a drain was dug at a depth of about 1m in the vicinity of NR 712 077.

NR70NW 23 (WoSAS 45089) Pennyseorach: farmstead

Two roofed and one unroofed buildings are shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map of 1869 at NR 7127 0778 while the 1980 OS 1:10,000 map shows two roofed buildings and a courtyard.

NR70NW 2 (WoSAS 3280; SAM 3714) Cnoc Eibhleach: dun

On the summit of Cnoc Eibhleach, 185m east of Pennyseorach Farm at NR 7145 0783, are the slight remains of a dun, measuring some 21.5m by 12m internally. The sparse remains of a perimeter wall are visible although the interior of the dun is featureless.

NR70NW 10 (WoSAS 3270) Machriemore: cinerary urn

A cinerary urn was discovered in the 19th century in the vicinity of NR 701 092.

Southern Kintyre Project: excavation and fieldwalking

Small-scale excavations and surveys were undertaken at Blasthill (at NR 72120 09280, NR 72350 09320, NR 75500 09300 and NR 72010 09130) in 2008 when several prehistoric features were identified. In addition, fieldwalking in the area yielded arrowheads and a fragment of what might be a polished stone axe.

THE WATCHING BRIEFS

At an early stage of the project it was assumed that watching briefs would be needed during the replacement of as many as 36 poles around Southend. In the event, only nine poles were replaced. However, two long trenches were excavated to accommodate earth cables for one of the poles, three new stays were added and a trench was excavated against another pole so that it could be realigned.

Not all of the poles described below were located within the archaeologically sensitive area or were particularly close to any known sites and monuments. For operational reasons, the sequence of pole replacements meant that those requiring watching briefs were interspersed with others that were in less sensitive locations. However, the opportunity was taken to monitor all of the excavations undertaken during this programme of works.

All of the trenches were excavated using a 6-tonne, 360°, tracked mechanical excavator and were backfilled once the new poles and stays were in their correct positions. The original poles were left in situ during this phase of work. The overhead lines will be transferred at a later date and the redundant poles felled thereafter.

The locations of the excavation trenches are shown on two maps which, together with the map produced by WoSAS showing the archaeologically sensitive area, are included with this report.

MAP 1

Site 1 Culdrain spur: Stay for Pole 26

This stay trench was located a short distance south of the pole (which was not replaced) at NR 72419 08663 and measured 2m by 0.5m wide and 1.7m deep. It cut through ground previously disturbed when an earlier stay had been inserted and only redeposited topsoil and glacial till were excavated.

Site 2 Culdrain spur: Pole 27

The trench was located to the immediate west of the existing pole, in a field 300m south-south-west of Culdrain Farm, at NR 72513 08723. It measured 1.8m east/west by 0.6m wide and 1.8m deep and cut through red-brown, clayey topsoil which merged with the underlying subsoil of glacially deposited clay and stones. There was no clear differentiation between the two layers although the glacial till became gradually darker with depth.

Site 3 Culdrain spur: Pole 28

This pole was located at NR 72607 08771, some 100m east of Pole 27, and measured 2.0m east/west by 0.6m wide and 1.7m deep. The trench for the new pole was located to the immediate west of the existing one. The stratigraphic sequence was identical to that in the Pole 27 trench.

Site 4 Kilmashenachan spur: Pole 1

The trench for this pole was located on the west side of the existing pole, some 100m west of Kilmashenachan Farm at NR 71598 07955. It measured 1.9m east/west by 0.6m wide and 1.7m deep and cut through 0.2m of red-brown topsoil and underlying red boulder clay.

Site 5 Kilmashenachan spur: Stay for Pole 2

The trench for a new stay was dug 5m to the west of Pole 2 on the Kilmashenachan spur, at NR 71648 08007. It measured 2m east/west by 1m wide and 1.8m deep and cut through turf, 0.2m of topsoil, boulder clay and, at a depth of 1.5m, shattered bedrock.

Site 6 Pennyseorach spur: Pole 2

Located on the west side of the existing pole and 80m west of the fort of Dun Eibhleach, at NR 71367 07840, this trench measured 2.0m east/west by 0.6m wide and 1.6m deep. The topsoil in this field was only 0.2m deep and overlay glacial till of red boulder clay which gave onto bedrock at the base of the trench.

Site 7 Culdrain spur (Aucharua): Pole 4

A trench was excavated on the east side of this pole, at NR 70549 08602, in the north-west corner of a field and some 100m south-west of Aucharua Farm. The trench, which measured 1.8m east/west by 0.6m wide and 1.7m deep, cut through turf, 0.3m of topsoil and glacial till of red-brown to purple clay which contained some very large boulders.

MAP 2

Site 8 Main power line (Machriemore): Pole 120

This pole was located 400m south of High Machriemore and 150m north-west of South Machriemore, just beyond the north edge of Southend village. The trench for the new pole, at NR 69378 09051, was located on the south-west side of the existing pole and cut through turf, 0.3m of slightly sandy topsoil and glacial till of orange gravel, pebbles and boulders.

Site 9 Machriebeg Caravan Site spur: Pole 2

This pole was located at the south end of a field of pasture, some 100m north of Machriebeg Caravan Site, at NR 68441 08115. The trench, which measured 2m by 0.6m and 1.7m deep, was excavated hard against the north side of the existing pole where the ground had already been disturbed when the original pole was installed and when a ceramic field drain was inserted.

Site 10 Dunaverty Golf Club spur: Pole 5

The trench, which measured 2m north/south by 0.6m wide, was excavated to the immediate south of the existing pole, at NR 68801 08002. It cut through 0.5m of pale brown, sandy topsoil and underlying yellow beach sand to a total depth of 1.8m.

Site 11 Dunaverty Golf Club spur: Pole 6

Pole 6 was not replaced but, because it leaned badly towards the east, a trench was dug on its west side to allow it to be straightened, the disturbed area being backfilled thereafter. The trench, located at NR 68858 07836 and measuring 2m north/south by 0.6m wide and 0.8m deep, cut through 0.3m of topsoil and underlying beach sand.

Site 12 Main Power Line (Keil): Pole 139

Pole 139 is situated some 100m east of High Keil Dun and 300m north-east of the derelict Keil Hotel. The pole sits on a level shelf of land on ground that slopes upwards to High Keil and beyond. The hill is used mainly as rough pasture and includes an extensive spread of gorse and brambles to the immediate north of the pole. The trench, measuring 2m east/west by 0.6m deep, was located to the immediate west of the existing pole, at NR 67985 08024, and cut through 1m of topsoil and hillwash and underlying boulder clay to a total depth of 1.8m.

Main Power Line (Keil): Stay for Pole 139

The trench for this stay was located 5m west of Pole 139 and measured 3.5m north/south by 0.6m wide and 1.8m deep. The stratigraphic sequence within this trench was identical to that within the pole trench.

Main Power Line (Keil): earth cable trenches for Pole 139

Two trenches were excavated to accommodate earth cables for this pole, each trench measuring 0.6m wide and 0.5-0.6m deep. Trench 1 ran in a curve to the west and north-west

of the pole as far as NR 67943 08029, a total distance of some 45m. Trench 2 ran north-east from the pole to NR 68029 08050, a distance of 50m. Only topsoil and hillwash were disturbed.

CONCLUSIONS

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were found in any of the excavated trenches and no artefacts predating the 20th century were retrieved. However, with the exception of the earth cable trenches for Pole 139, the trenches were all relatively small and it is difficult to assess the archaeological potential of this area from these results. Indeed, there is every chance that future excavations around Southend, particularly within the area deemed archaeologically sensitive, will expose remains and artefacts of prehistoric and historic significance.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The photographs listed below form part of the digital archive and are not reproduced within this report.

- 1-2 Trench for Pole 27 on the Cuil drain spur, at NR 72513 08723, viewed from the west
- 3 Trench for Pole 28 on the Cuil drain spur, at NR72607 08771, viewed from the west
- 4 Trench for Pole 1 on the Kilmashenachan spur, at NR 71598 07955, viewed from the east
- 5-6 Dun Eibhleach, viewed from the east
- 7 Trench for Pole 2 on the Pennyseorach spur, at NR 71367 07840, viewed from the west
- 8 Trench for Pole 2 on the Pennyseorach spur, at NR 71367 07840, and Dun Eibhleach viewed from the west
- 9 Possible cultivation rigs to the north of Dun Eibhleach, viewed from the west
- 10-11 Dun Eibhleach, viewed from the east
- 12-13 Stay trench for Pole 2 on the Kilmashenachan spur, at NR 71648 08007, viewed from the north
- 14-15 Trench for Pole 4 at Aucharua on the Cuil drain spur, at NR 70549 08602, viewed from the west
- 16-17 Trench for Pole 120 on the principal power line near South Machrimore, at NR 69378 09051, viewed from the south-west
- 18-19 Trench for Pole 2 on the Machribeg Caravan Site spur, at NR 68441 08115, viewed from the north (both shots out of focus)
- 20-21 Trench for Pole 139 east of Keil Hotel on the principal power line, at NR 67985 08024, viewed from the west
- 22-23 The derelict Keil Hotel, viewed from the south
- 24-25 Trench for Pole 5 at the Dunaverty Golf Club, at NR 68801 08002, viewed from the south
- 26 Trench to allow Pole 6, at NR 68858 07836 at the Dunaverty Golf Club, to be straightened, viewed from the south
- 27-28 The area around Keil, viewed from the east
- 29-30 St Columba's Church, viewed from the east
- 31 Stay trench for Pole 139 at Keil, at NR 67985 08024, viewed from the south
- 32 First (easternmost) stretch of the west earth cable trench at Pole 139 at Keil, viewed from the east
- 33 West earth cable trench for Pole 139, looking east from NR 67967 08022
- 34 West earth cable trench for Pole 139, looking north-west from NR 67967 08022
- 35 West earth cable trench for Pole 139, looking south-east from NR 67943 08029
- 36 East earth cable trench for Pole 139, looking west from NR 68029 08050
- 37 Stay trench for Pole 140, at NR 67917 08056, viewed from the west
- 38 Dunaverty Bay and Sanda Island, viewed from the north-west.