

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH AND SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**11KV LINE REFURBISHMENT
CAMPBELTOWN
TO
MACHRIHANISH**

**Archaeological watching briefs
July 2010**

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a series of archaeological watching briefs undertaken during the refurbishment of an 11kv overhead power line between Campbeltown and Machrihanish, Kintyre, Argyll. In this part of the project nine wooden poles were replaced, one new pole was added and three stays were inserted.

The refurbishment was carried out by Scottish & Southern Energy, the watching briefs being undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology on 7th and 8th July 2010.

AREA OF INVESTIGATION

The poles were all located to the west of Campbeltown and mostly in the vicinity of the village of Machrihanish.

The West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS), archaeological advisors to Argyll & Bute Council, recommended watching briefs should be undertaken during the excavation of most of the poles described below. However, for operational reasons, other trenches were also excavated at this time and hence the opportunity was taken to observe and record the results of these excavations.

There are many known archaeological sites and monuments between Campbeltown and Machrihanish, some of them lying close to the poles that were replaced. These are listed below with the numbers allocated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) (eg NR62SW 2), by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) (eg WoSAS 3018) and, if Scheduled Ancient Monuments, by Historic Scotland (eg SAM 193).

NR61NE 13/WoSAS 2910 Killeonan: bronze hoard

In 1884 and 1908 two deposits of late Bronze Age objects were found at the farm of Killeonan, around NR 684 188. They may originally have formed a single hoard.

These objects were found some 500m east of Sites 1, 2 and 3 and 500m west of Site 4.

NR61NE 46 Marchfield: barrow, enclosure(s), pit(s)

These features, located around NR 69083 19383, were noted on aerial photographs.

They occur some 500m north of Site 4.

NR61NE 47 Marchfield: pit circle

This feature, located around NR 69116 19310, was noted on aerial photographs.

It is located 450m north of Site 4.

NR61NE 48 Marchfield: henge

This feature, located around NR 69061 19308, was noted on aerial photographs.

It is located approximately 450m north of Site 4.

NR61NE 49 Marchfield: pit(s)

These features, located around NR 69066 19081, were noted on aerial photographs.

It is located 200m north of Site 4.

NR61NE 25/WoSAS 2923 Torchoillean: findspot

A large brown flint blade was retrieved in the vicinity of NR 660 191.

This object was found 650m south-east of Site 6.

NR61NE 27/WoSAS 2925 Low Tirfergus: architectural fragments

Three 17th-century carved stones have been built into an outbuilding behind the farmhouse of Low Tirfergus, at NR 664 184. They probably originate from the old house of Tirfergus which stood in this vicinity. One stone bears the date 1677; the remaining two are of carved human heads and were perhaps gable skewputs.

The stones are located 150m south-east of Site 5.

NR61NE 9/WoSAS 2933 Bealloch: possible cairn and human remains

Finds retrieved in 1836 suggest that there was a prehistoric burial at NR 6701 1840.

This monument lies 750m east of Site 5.

NR61NE 19/WoSAS 2916 Bealloch: finds spot

A small, globular, grass-tempered pot, probably dating from between the 10th and 12th centuries, was found in 1930 at approximately NR 6697 1830.

This finds spot is located 750m east of Site 5.

NR61NE 7/WoSAS 2931/SAM 206 Kilkivan: cairn and standing stone

On fairly level ground, at NR 6534 1940, stand the remains of a cairn now measuring 8.5m by 7.3m and 0.6m high. Nearby is a standing stone measuring 1.5m high.

The cairn and standing stone are located 450m south-west of Site 6.

NR61NE 11/WoSAS 2908/SAM 3652 Cnocan a' Chluig: barrow and cairn

A barrow and a cairn, both presumably of Bronze Age date, are located atop a small hill at NR 6522 1987.

These monuments are located 470m west of Site 6.

NR62SE 9/WoSAS 3015/SAM 3683 Kilkivan: church/chapel

At NR 6516 2011 stand the remains of Kilkivan parish church or chapel which is believed to be a medieval church dedicated to Saint Kevin.

The church stands some 600m north-west of Site 6 and 400m south-east of Site 7.

NR62SW 2/WoSAS 3018/SAM 193 Cnocan Sithean: cairn

At the east end of the village of Machrihanish, at NR 6446 2065, is a grass-covered cairn measuring 24m in diameter and 3.5m high. The burial within it was disturbed in 1831.

This cairn is located 400m north-west of Site 7 and 160m north-west of Site 8.

NR62SW 5/WoSAS 3021/SAM 3677 Cnocan Sabhail: dun

On the isolated ridge of Cnocan Sabhail, at NR 6362 2047, stand the slight remains of a dun.

The dun is located 50-100m south of Sites 9, 10 and 11.

NR62SW 6/WoSAS 3022 Machrihanish: fort

At NR 6348 2066, near the main street of Machrihanish, stand the sparse remains of a fort which has probably been reduced by quarrying.

The fort is located 100-150m north-west of Sites, 9, 10 and 11.

NR62SW 1/WoSAS 3016/SAM 769 Lossit House: enclosures

On a north-facing slope near Lossit House are two earthworks, 55m apart and located at NR 6285 2004 and NR 6298 2002. Each comprises a circular area 82m in diameter and defined by a ditch. They are surrounded by traces of pre-Improvement agriculture but are thought to predate those features and were perhaps plantation banks associated with the now defunct Lossit Park.

These earthworks are located 200m south of Site 12.

THE WATCHING BRIEFS

For operational reasons, the sequence by which the poles were replaced meant that those excavations requiring watching briefs were interspersed with others in less sensitive locations. As a consequence, the opportunity was taken to monitor all of the excavations undertaken during this part of the programme of works.

The trenches were excavated using a 6-tonne, 360°, tracked mechanical excavator and were backfilled once the new poles and stays were in position. 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.

Each trench cut through the backfill from the insertion of the original pole as well as some previously undisturbed materials. Their locations are shown on three maps which accompany this report.

Site 1: Pole 46 main Campbeltown to Machrihanish circuit

The pole stood at NR 68005 18792, at the edge of a level field in which cattle were grazing and was a replacement for an earlier one. The trench, to the immediate north-west of the pole, cut through 0.3m of red-brown topsoil, below which was red clay of glacial origin. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered.

Site 2: Pole 45 main Campbeltown to Machrihanish circuit

A stay trench was dug some 5m north-east of Pole 45 which stands at NR 68113 18755, in a poorly drained part of a field given over to cattle-grazing. Below the lush grass was 0.3m of topsoil which gave onto 0.7m of peat over pink-grey boulder clay. No features of archaeological interest were uncovered in this trench.

Site 3: Pole 47 main Campbeltown to Machrihanish circuit

Pole 47 stood at NR 67899 18834, in a level field used for grazing cattle. The stratigraphic sequence in the trench, to the south-east of the pole, consisted of 0.3-0.4m of pale, red-brown topsoil over yellow and pink-grey boulder clay with nothing of archaeological interest being uncovered.

Site 4: Pole 4 Marchfield spur

The pole stood at NR 69016 18868, against a fence on the west side of a level field used for cattle-grazing, the trench being to the north of the pole. At this edge of the field there was barely 0.1m of topsoil which overlay yellow/brown silt, below which was glacial boulder clay at a depth of 1m. No archaeological features were uncovered.

An identical stratigraphic sequence was encountered within a stay trench, located over the fence in an adjacent field 2m west of the pole.

Site 5: Pole 4 Low Tirfergus spur

Pole 15 stood on the east side of a pasture field on ground that slopes gently upwards to the west. The trench, located to the west of the pole at NR 66281 18466, cut through 0.3m of red-brown topsoil which merged gradually with the underlying red boulder clay. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in this trench.

Site 6: Pole 71 main Campbeltown to Machrihanish circuit

The pole was located at NR 65723 19740, on the south side of a grazed field which rises gently to the south. Within the trench, to the immediate east of the pole, was 0.3m of red-brown topsoil over glacial boulder clay with nothing of archaeological significance apparent.

Site 7: Pole 82 main Campbeltown to Machrihanish circuit

The trench, on the east side of the pole at NR 64858 20461 within a level field of good quality pasture, cut through 0.2m of topsoil comprising pale brown, sandy loam which overlay grey and orange, glacially-deposited sand. Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered in this trench.

Site 8: Pole 85 main Campbeltown to Machrihanish circuit

Pole 85, located at NR 64606 20572 in a level field given over to cattle-grazing, had been installed in the 1950s, the original trench probably being hand-dug. The new trench was opened to the west of the pole. Topsoil, only 0.1-0.2m deep, overlay mixed soils and gravel in contrast to the orange sand exposed in the nearby trench for Pole 82. These materials are believed to be derived from disturbance associated with a mineral railway that run across this part of the field (see Photos 24 and 25). No features predating the presumed 19th-century railway were uncovered.

Site 9: Pole 4 Machrihanish village spur

This pole stood at NR 63574 20545, in rough pasture on ground that sloped upwards to Cnoc Sabhail. The trench, located to the east of the pole, cut through 0.5m of pale brown, sandy topsoil with some scree from the nearby rock outcrop, below which were reddish brown sand and gravel.

A stay trench was dug 5m north of the pole where the stratigraphic sequence was identical to that in the pole trench.

Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in either trench.

Site 10: Pole 1 Machrihanish west spur

The pole, located at NR 63570 20593, was not replaced although a stay was inserted 4m to its north. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered, only 0.5m of topsoil overlying sand and boulder clay.

Site 11: new pole on Machrihanish village spur

A trench for a new pole was dug midway between Poles 3 and 4 of this spur in order to raise the overhead line. The new pole trench, at NR 63620 20539, cut through 0.3m of topsoil which overlay a few boulders sitting directly on bedrock. Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered in this trench which was back-filled to be re-opened at a later date.

Site 12: Pole 15 Ballygroggan spur

Pole 15 was located at NR 62997 20224, in a pasture field from where the ground rises sharply towards a small hill to the south. The trench, to the immediate north of the pole, cut through 0.2m of mid-brown humic loam and hillwash of topsoil, sand and rock fragments below which was fractured bedrock. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in any of the trenches and no artefacts predating the 20th century retrieved from them although some of the pole trenches were located relatively close to known sites and monuments. These trenches include:

Site 4, located within a short distance of a complex of prehistoric monuments, including a barrow, a henge, a pit circle and miscellaneous pits (NR61NE 46, NR61NE 47, NR61NE 48 and NR61NE 49) as well as a findspot (NR61NE 13) where a hoard of bronze was recovered;

Site 8, 160m from the cairn (NR62SW 2) on Cnocan Sithean;

Sites 9, 10 and 11 all of which were a short distance from the dun (NR62SW 5) on Cnoc Sabhail; and

Site 12 which was located 200m from the earthworks of NR62SW 1 and which may well have been within the former confines of Lossit Park.

Regardless of the above findings, it is recommended that future excavations undertaken near the sites and monuments listed in this report should also be covered by watching briefs. During such work, note should be taken of the route of the railway which once ran along the southern edge of Machrihanish village, close to the line of the Machrihanish village spur.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

- 1-2 Site 1: trench for Pole 46, viewed from the north-west
- 3-4 Site 2: stay trench for Pole 45, viewed from the north-west
- 5-6 Site 3: trench for Pole 47, viewed from the south-east
- 7-8 Site 4: trench for Pole 4, viewed from the north
- 9 Site 4: stay trench for Pole 4, viewed from the west
- 10-11 Site 5: trench for Pole 15, viewed from the west
- 12 Site 5: Pole 15 and trench, viewed from the south
- 13-14 Site 6: trench for Pole 71, viewed from the east
- 15-16 Site 7: trench for Pole 82, viewed from the east
- 17 Site 7: replacement Pole 82 being positioned
- 18-20 Site 8: trench for Pole 85, viewed from the west
- 21 Site 8: north section of trench for Pole 85
- 22-25 Course of former railway looking westwards from Site 8
- 26 Sites 9 and 10, viewed from the west; Cnoc Sabhail is on the right
- 27 Cnoc Sabhail, viewed from the north-west
- 28 Site 9 (Pole 4) with Machrihanish beyond, viewed from the south-west
- 29-30 Site 9: trench for Pole 4, viewed from the east
- 31 Cnoc Sabhail, viewed from the east
- 32-33 Site 9: stay trench for Pole 4, viewed from the east
- 34-35 Site 10: stay trench for Pole 1, viewed from the south
- 36 Site 10: Pole 1 and stay trench during backfilling, viewed from the south-east
- 37 Site 11: trench for new pole, viewed from the west
- 38 Site 11: trench for new pole with Pole 3 beyond, viewed from the west
- 39-40 Site 12: trench for Pole 15, viewed from the north