

Archaeological Watching Brief  
East Blair Wind Turbine  
Glenfarg  
Perth and Kinross  
GF04



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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
EAST BLAIR WIND TURBINE  
GLENFARG, PERTH AND KINROSS**

**GF04**

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*Cover Photo: Stripping turbine base, looking N*

*Illustration 1: Location*

*Illustration 2: Base and Access Track*

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**Editor** Chris Fyles, MA, FSA Scot

**ABSTRACT**

*Alder Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Absolute Solar and Wind Ltd to carry out a watching brief (GF04) on topsoil stripping of a wind turbine base overlooking East Blair, Glenfarg, on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017. A rapid walkover was also carried out of a possible access track route. The site is located on high, steep and irregular glacial terrain, now rough pasture, not far from a pre-improvement agricultural landscape. No obvious artificial features were found, perhaps due to the small scale of the intervention, and also because the site may be too steep and exposed to have attracted more intensive use.*

# **1 Background**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Absolute Solar and Wind Ltd commissioned Alder Archaeology to undertake an archaeological Watching Brief on the site of a single wind turbine at East Blair, Glenfarg. The proposed development area is rough grazing on a hillside overlooking Glenfarg Reservoir and Water Treatment Works, centred on NGR NO 1114 1022. The work (site code GF04) was undertaken on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017 in freezing weather conditions of dense falling snow alternating with bright winter sunshine. The requirement was to observe and record the initial stripping of a single turbine base area, 12 m x 12 m. It had also been intended to observe other ancillary works, but these were postponed.

The work was designed to partially satisfy the archaeological Condition 9 on development application reference 14/01463/FLL.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

The main aim of this investigation was to establish the presence/absence, date, character and quality of any archaeological remains surviving within the development area, in particular any pre-improvement landscape features associated with the nearby settlements of East and West Blair, for example field boundaries, tracks and rig and furrow. The results of this investigation will be used to inform future mitigation strategies for the proposed development.

## **1.3 Reporting**

The present document has been prepared as the final report on this watching brief. Copies will be sent to the client, The National Record of the Historic Environment at Historic Environment Scotland, and Perth & Kinross Historic Environment Record.

## **1.4 Planning and Curatorial Issues**

This Watching Brief is part of a programme of archaeological work designed to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this development.

## **1.5 Acknowledgements**

We wish to thank Martin Sword of Absolute Solar and Wind Ltd, and Sarah Winlow of Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust for their assistance and guidance throughout this project. Absolute Solar and Wind Ltd funded this Watching Brief.

# **2 Details of Work**

## **2.1 The Site (Illus 1)**

The development area is rough grazing on a hillside overlooking Glenfarg Reservoir and Water Treatment Works, centred on NGR NO 1114 1022, about 2 km W of the village of Glenfarg, on what appears to be a natural glacial platform about 250 m (820 feet) OD. This platform overlooks the present farm house at East Blair at around 210 m OD. The surrounding terrain is generally very steep, irregular and exposed.

## 2.2 Archaeological Potential

The site is located in an area of hill pasture, not cultivated in recent times, with the possibility of pre-improvement landscape features associated with the adjacent settlements of East and West Blair. These have produced traces field boundaries, enclosures, tracks and rig and furrow. The turbine base site itself was located on top of a small irregular platform, apparently a natural glacial feature, roughly flat, sloping gently down to the E, and bounded by steep downward slopes on all sides.

The light covering of fresh snow, combined with the low angle of the winter sun, made the undulations of the ground surface more visible, but there were no signs of enclosures or other artificial features on the platform.

## 2.3 Archaeological Method

The area of the proposed turbine base had been marked out on the ground as a square 12 m x 12 m. This was deturfed using a small tracked mini-excavator, working from S to N. An irregular sondage was then dug by machine in the NE corner, down to what seemed to be the top of glacial deposits.

Having identified the top of natural gravel, it was decided to backfill the sondage and leave the turbine site as deturfed for the time being. It is not intended to continue construction of the turbine base until some time in 2018, and as the site is in use as rough grazing, digging the whole area down to the top of gravel and leaving it open might have created a hazard for livestock.

The opportunity was taken in remaining daylight to walk over the line of the proposed access track from the turbine base down to the junction with an existing track along the S bank of the River Farg, between the Reservoir and the Treatment Works. The line of the proposed track is similar to that previously shown in the planning application (to which an amendment may be sought), but less angular, and re-routed in places to avoid impracticable gradients.

## 2.4 Results of Investigations

### *Turbine Base*

The top layer observed on the turbine base was turf and soft brown peaty topsoil 01, about 0.1 m deep. Below this was a tan sandy subsoil 02, about 0.2 m deep. Below this was light tan sand and gravel 03, apparently glacial.

The apparently glacial gravel was generally consistent with the undulating and irregular terrain in this area. The very organic topsoil and rather deep subsoil was consistent with the soil having built up naturally over a long time, with very little disturbance to cause erosion or mix the layers.

### *Access Track*

The proposed access track was generally covered with grass. The upper part of the track ran obliquely down the existing slope of the hill, with no visible sign of alteration. The lower part was partly confined by the undulating terrain to follow a naturally-defined route which may have been previously utilised, at least by modern farm vehicles (not just the vehicles making tyre tracks in the snow on the day of the watching brief). Near where the upper track merged into the lower part, on the E

(downhill) side, was a very low and irregular platform 04, probably natural, perhaps half a metre high and three or four metres across. It could not be identified with any confidence as artificial.

### 3 Conclusions and Recommendations

The Watching Brief and initial walkover did not reveal any obvious signs of artificial features. The generally high, steep, irregular and exposed terrain would always have made the area more suitable for rough pasture than for cultivation or settlement. It is possible that there may have been more substantial utilisation in localised pockets of level and sheltered ground, and perhaps the formation of trackways for movement of animals and people. No obvious evidence of this was seen in the present very brief investigation.

A brief review of existing evidence, especially aerial photographs, might show more clearly how the development area fits into the wider pattern of pre-improvement land-use around East and West Blair, and whether there were any particular features which might merit further investigation, for example by watching brief. Given the nature of the site and terrain, features which cannot be seen on aerial photographs are unlikely to appear in a general, untargeted watching brief or walkover survey.

The appropriateness and scope of further work should ultimately be decided by Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust on behalf of the Council.

### 4 Bibliography

Bowler, D P 2017 East Blair Wind Turbine, Glenfarg: Archaeological Watching Brief on Topsoil Stripping, Written Scheme of Investigation. Alder Archaeology Ltd, Perth.

Winlow, S 2017 Terms of Reference for a Walk-over Survey, Land 450m NW of East Blair Farm, Glenfarg. PKHT, Perth.

## Appendix 1 Context Register

<i>No:</i>	<i>Description</i>
01	Turf and brown peaty topsoil, 0.1 m deep.
02	Tan sandy subsoil, 0.2 m thick.
03	Light tan glacial gravel.
04	Small ?natural platform on lower ground to E of proposed access track.

## Appendix 2 Photographic Register

<i>Image No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>View</i>
001 – 2	Turbine base at start of clearance. Marked out 12 x 12 m. Ground slopes down to E. Light dusting of fresh snow. Clearing S – N.	N
003	Light tan glacial gravel 03 revealed in irregular sondage in NE corner.	NE
004	View from proposed track up to turbine base, occupied by vehicle and digger. Ground falls away steeply from base to N.	S
005	Small ?natural platform 04 on lower ground to E of proposed access track.	SE
006	View from proposed access track N to Glenfarg Reservoir.	N
007	View from proposed access track N to Glenfarg Reservoir, after crossing field boundary. Proposed access track descends steeply ahead then turns away sharply to R.	N
008	View down proposed access track after turn to R. Track descends to meet larger track ahead, which turns R and continues level towards water works.	NE

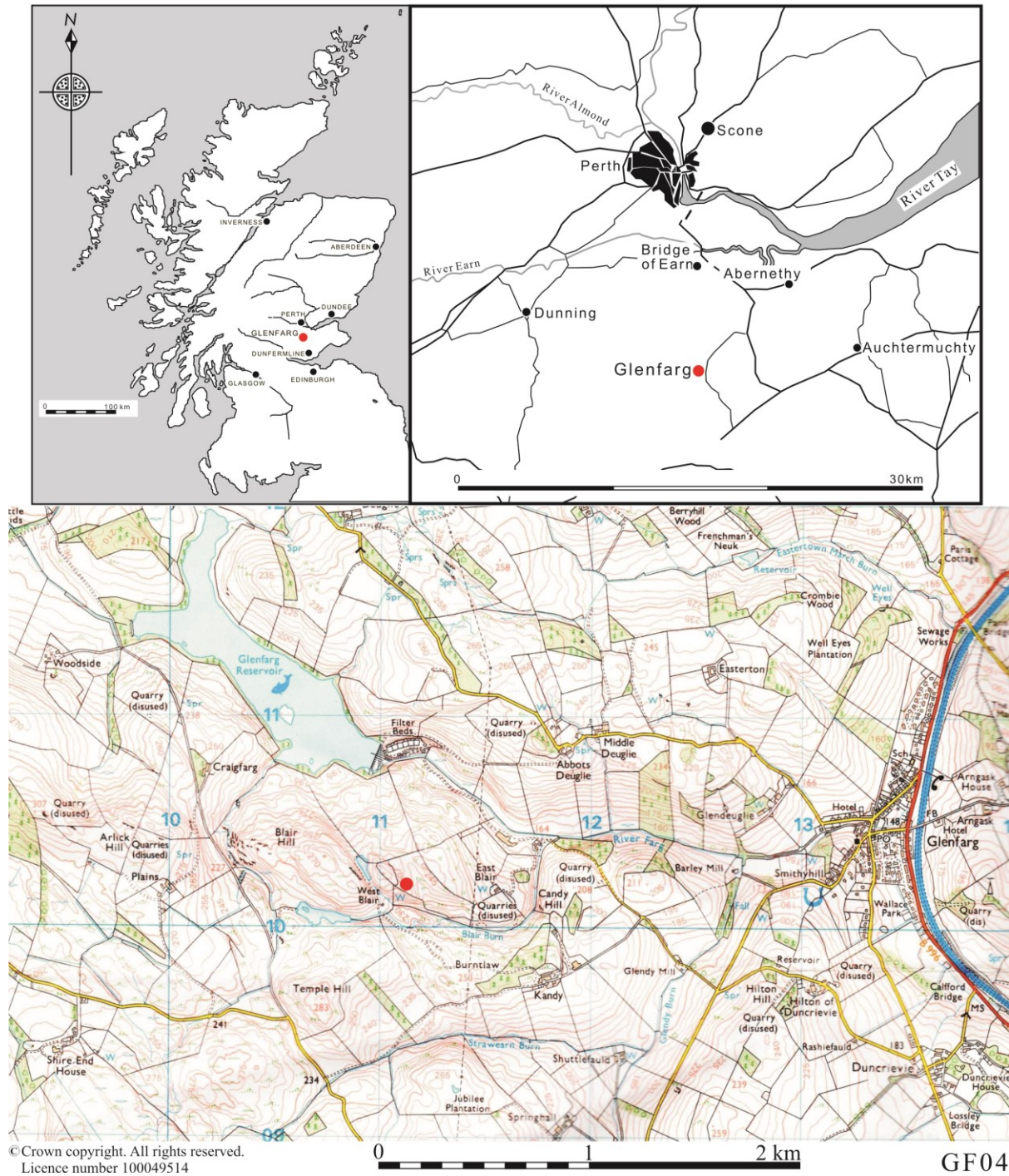
### Appendix 3 Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Perth and Kinross
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Archaeological Watching Brief, East Blair Wind Turbine
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	GF04
<b>PARISH:</b>	Glenfarg
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	David Bowler
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Alder Archaeology Ltd
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Watching Brief and Walkover Survey
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	n/a
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Pre-improvement Landscape
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	NGR NO 1114 1022
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> November 2017
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> November 2017
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	n/a
<b>MAIN DESCRIPTION:</b> (NARRATIVE) (May include information from other fields)	Alder Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Absolute Solar and Wind Ltd to carry out a watching brief on topsoil stripping of a wind turbine base overlooking East Blair, Glenfarg. A rapid walkover was also carried out of a possible access track route. The site is located on high, steep and irregular glacial terrain, now rough pasture, not far from a pre-improvement agricultural landscape. No obvious artificial features were found, perhaps due to the small scale of the intervention, and also because the site may be too steep and exposed to have attracted more intensive use.
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	To be determined
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Absolute Solar and Wind Ltd
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Alder Archaeology Ltd, 55 South Methven Street, Perth PH1 5NX
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	<a href="mailto:director@alderarchaeology.co.uk">director@alderarchaeology.co.uk</a>
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION</b> (intended/deposited)	HES/NRHE (intended)



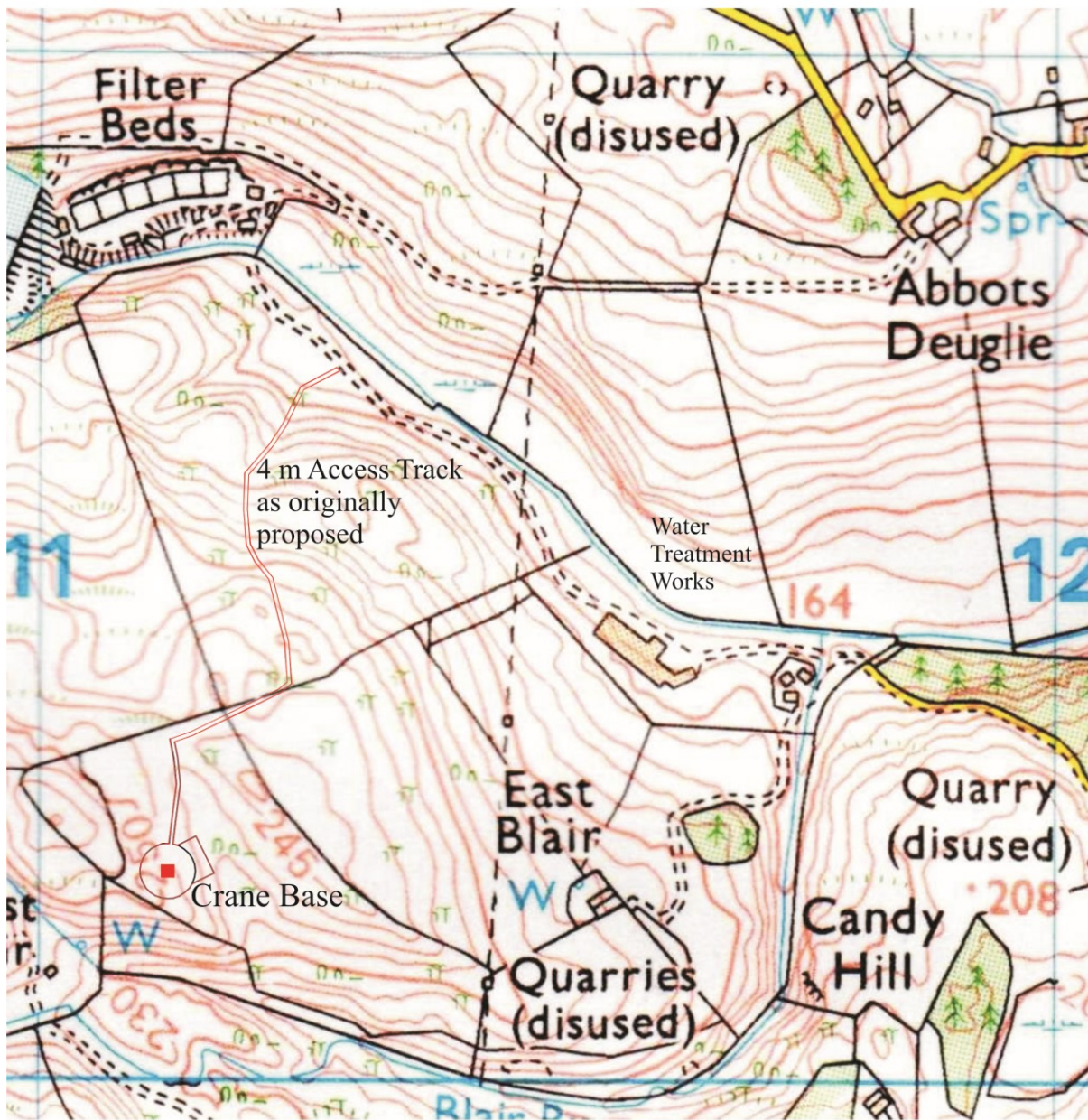
# East Blair Wind Turbine, Glenfarg Location

Illus 1

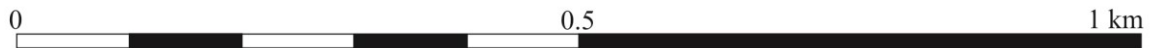


# East Blair Wind Turbine, Glenfarg Base and Access Track

Illus 2



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■ 12 m square turbine base, stripped area

GF04