Telecommunications Mast Base Brodick, Isle of Arran: Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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# Telecommunications Mast Base Brodick, Isle of Arran: Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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#### Abstract

This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken at the site of a new telecommunications mast base and access track northwest of Heather Cottage, Brodick, Isle of Arran. The watching brief was required due to the location of the development site within an area of prehistoric remains, notably a stone circle and several lithic findspots.

A visit to the site was undertaken in August 2017 after the area of the mast base had been stripped before notifying the archaeological contractor. The location of the mast site, built into a steep slope indicates that it would have had limited archaeological potential. The route of the access track also crosses a steep slope through existing mature woodland, and there were no upstanding archaeological sites noted along the route of the track. There would be no intrusive ground excavation for the access track, which would be laid over the ground surface after vegetation and tree removal. Due to the limited archaeological potential of the access track further watching brief was not recommended.

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 An archaeological watching brief was required by North Ayrshire Council in respect to a proposed telecommunications mast installation northwest of Heather Cottage, Brodick, Isle of Arran (Planning Application N/16/01003/PP). The proposed development lies within the administrative area of North Ayrshire Council, which is advised on archaeological matters by West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS).
- 1.2 The programme of archaeological works was advised in keeping with the policies outlined in *Scottish Planning Policy* (2014) and *PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology* (2011) in order to record the extent and significance of any archaeological remains which may be present within the development area.
- 1.3 The fieldwork was carried out on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017. The area of the mast base had been stripped and the ground level lowered before the archaeologist arrived on site. The route of the access track, which also crossed a steep slope through existing mature woodland, was surveyed ahead of track-laying.

#### 2.0 Project Background

- 2.1 Brodick is located on the east coast of the Isle of Arran, on the Firth of Clyde. Heather Cottage is located on a minor road to the north of the B880, off the main road (A841) on the way north out of Brodick village. The development site is beyond Heather Cottage, situated in rough pasture next to a small area of plantation woodland. The site is centred on NGR: NR 99822 37339 (Figures 1-3).
- 2.2 Based on the planning condition, an archaeologist was required on site to monitor topsoil stripping associated with all groundworks for the proposed development. Elements that needed to be monitored included the initial removal of turf and topsoil from the footprint of the proposed new mast, associated service trenches and the new section of access track. The turf removal work was undertaken by KLT on behalf of Dales Surveying Ltd.



Figure 1: Site location map (provided by Dales Surveying)



Figure 2: Site location map detailed (provided by Dales Surveying)

Figure 3: Development site plan (provided by Balfour Beatty)

#### 3.0 Desk-based Assessment

- 3.1 A desk-based assessment was conducted prior to commencement of the watching brief in order to assess the archaeological potential of the area based on previously recorded sites and any historical documentation. A full check of all available historical and archaeological records, aerial photographs and historical maps was conducted using the WoSAS Historic Environment Record (HER), the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE), Ordnance Survey Name Books, Historic Environment Scotland's databases, the National Library of Scotland, statistical accounts and other available records, literary sources or online resources about the site.
- 3.2 The mast and associated section of new access track proposed under this application are located in an area with some potential to produce material associated with occupation during the prehistoric period. The 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1864 (Figure 4) includes annotation indicating that a stone circle formerly stood in the area to the east of Heather Cottage, close to the eastern end of the new access track.

**WoSAS Pin: 4736 NS03NW Glensheraig, Arran Stone Circle** According to the OS Object Name Book of the same year and the New Statistical Account of 1845, this related to a 'very complete' stone circle that formerly stood at the mouth of Glensheraig, which was removed when clearing the field for ploughing in the early years of the 19th century. Although the recorded position of this stone circle would not be directly affected by construction of the mast and access track, its presence does serve to demonstrate early occupation in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development.

3.3 On the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1864 (Figure 4) the area to the east of the stone circle also includes annotation indicating the presence of several standing stones and the discovery of human remains. These also serve to demonstrate early occupation and burial in the region near the development.



Figure 4: OS Six inch-mile 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Argyllshire 1868 (Sheet CCXLIV)

- 3.4 This potential for prehistoric features is reinforced by the discovery of a number of worked stone tools in the area. The HES Flint Database layer in the WoSAS Historic Environment Record records that a blade, scraper, point and core were found on the west side of the valley at 50-60m OD (c. NGR 199900, 637400), while flint scrapers, blades, points and pitchstone items were found at around 50m OD, avoce the river flood plain (c. NGR 199900, 637300). Of particular relevance may be the fact that these worked stone tools are recorded as having been found on the more steeply-sloping ground on the western side of the road, rather than on the slightly flatter ground between the road and the Glenrosa Water, where the stone circle formerly stood. Little detail is available on the circumstances under which these items were found, though it seems more likely that they would have been picked up as single artefacts (during fieldwalking, for example) rather than being discovered as groups.
- 3.5 There are several other records of lithic material being found in the wider landscape, including:

**WoSAS Pin: 13,968 NS03NW26 Glenshurig Burn Flint working site** Situated on an escarpment overlooking the Glenshurig Burn which borders the site to the S and E. When ploughed this site produces much evidence for the working of flint, pitchstone and quartz, with cores, core scrapers, beach pebble cores, blades, flakes and much debris. A quantity of cannel, a piece of struck haematite and two small bifacially flaked leaf-shaped arrowheads were also picked up. The pitchstone on this site was much water rolled (Gorman et al 1993).

**Event id 3,505** Fieldwalking Survey: Old Deer Park, Brodick 2006 Survey To the SW of Brodick Castle a field contains two standing stones and a third stone is located in the field to the east (Figure 2). The majority of the artefacts recovered were of 19th-century origin. These included white glazed pottery, glazed earthenware and stoneware, bottle glass, clay pipes, and roof slates. More unusual finds included a button, burnt and unburnt bone, medieval green glaze pottery, Arran pitchstone and flint. A Neolithic leaf-shaped flint arrowhead was recovered from the northern end of the field while a flint scraper was found close to the standing stones (Gorman, D. and Alexander, D. 2006)

WoSAS Pin: 14,596NR93NE7Glenshurig, ArranFlint AxePart of a flint axe, width 52mm. Partially reworked as a scraper (no other details given)(Gorman et al 1993).

WoSAS Pin: 14,595NR93NE6Glenshurig, ArranStone BeadHalf of a pumice bead or ring (no other details given) (Gorman et al 1993).

3.6 The proximity of the mast to the recorded positions at which these items were found, together with records of other lithic material being found in the wider landscape, suggests that there is potential for sub-surface archaeological material to survive in the area that would be affected by construction of the proposed mast and access track.

#### 4.0 Objectives

- 4.1 The objectives of the archaeological works were:
  - i) To safeguard the archaeological resource from any adverse impacts created by groundworks associated with the development;

- ii) To liaise with North Ayrshire Council, WoSAS and the client in the event of significant archaeological features and/or small finds being unearthed as to the most appropriate response in safeguarding these features either by preservation in situ, if at all feasible, or by archaeological recording;
- iii) To report on the results of the watching brief

#### 5.0 Watching Brief Results

- 5.1 Fieldwork was carried out on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017. The archaeological watching brief was not carried out as per the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 2017). Prior to notification, topsoil stripping and excavation of the subsoil through natural bedrock had already been carried out and the site levelled off (**Plate 1**). It was difficult to determine the depth to which the site had been dug. It appeared that the topsoil was a minimum of approximately 0.50m. The mast base site was situated on a slope of 45 degrees or steeper and the archaeologist was advised by the site engineer that topsoil stripping had been difficult due to the machine sliding on the steep slope and wet grass (**Plate 2**).
- 5.2 An inspection of the area to be stripped for the access track was carried out. This route differs from that shown in green on the plan in Figures 1 and 3. The route in green was described to the archaeologist as a temporary route for which permission had been obtained from the landowner for the delivery of concrete only; it was not to be stripped. An existing track through the mature woodland was being utilised for the access route; this was being scraped clean of mud and encroaching vegetation cleared (Plate 3). An extension of about 100m from the existing track to the base site was to be stripped of vegetation only (Figure 3; Plate 4). This extension crosses a steep slope of 45 degrees or more and most of the ground is planted with mature trees (Plates 5-6). These are the second planting of trees at this site and it is likely that any archaeology present will have been significantly damaged by previous plantings and the removal of the current tree stumps.

#### 6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 The archaeological watching brief was not carried out as per the Written Scheme of Investigation. Topsoil stripping and further excavation work was conducted prior to notification of the archaeologist. However, it does appear that, due to the situation of the mast site on a steep slope, the archaeological potential was limited. There would be only minimal stripping of vegetation and tree stumps for construction of a 100mnew access track, that runs across the steep slope and through existing mature woodland. It is likely that any archaeology in the area of the new track has been significantly disturbed by woodland plantation and further watching brief is not recommended.

#### 7.0 References

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Plate 1: The mast base area upon archaeologist's arrival on site, looking NNE



Plate 2: The mast base area, showing the steepness of the slope, looking N



Plate 3: The existing track having been cleaned, looking SW



Plate 4: The location where the new track will join the existing track, looking S



Plate 5: Looking along the route of the new track, looking S



Plate 6: Looking along the route of the new track towards the mast base, looking S

## Appendix 1 List of Site Photographs

Photo No.	Description	Direction Facing	Date
605	Mast base area upon archaeologist's arrival on site	NNE	09/08/2017
606	Mast base area upon archaeologist's arrival on site	NNE	09/08/2017
607	Mast base area upon archaeologist's arrival on site, showing steep slope	Ν	09/08/2017
608	Mast base area upon archaeologist's arrival on site, showing steep slope	Ν	09/08/2017
609	Mast base area upon archaeologist's arrival on site, showing steep slope	WSW	09/08/2017
610	Mast base area upon archaeologist's arrival on site, showing steep slope	SSW	09/08/2017
611	Mast base area upon archaeologist's arrival on site	WNW	09/08/2017
612	Area where new and existing tracks will join	S	09/08/2017
613	Looking along the route of the new track	S	09/08/2017
614	Looking along the route of the new track towards the mast base	SSE	09/08/2017
615	Looking along the route of the new track towards the mast base	S	09/08/2017
616	Looking along the route of the new track towards the mast base	S	09/08/2017
617	Part of the existing track that has been cleared	SW	09/08/2017





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