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Geophysical Survey

**Caithness-Moray-Shetland
HVDC Link:
Moray Section – Blackhillock Compound**

Archaeological Evaluation

Report No. 3347

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) at the site of a works compound near Keith, Moray (NGR: NJ 438 484 centred) (Fig. 1). This was part of a wider scope of archaeological mitigation works carried out during the installation of an underground high voltage direct current (HVDC) cable from Caithness over the Moray Firth and terminating in Moray. The work was carried out from October 5th to October 7th 2015 and was commissioned by ABB Ltd.

Initially the mitigation strategy for the compound area was a watching brief on the topsoil stripping but it was agreed with the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeological Service that an advance evaluation of this area would be an acceptable variation to the watching brief. An addendum (No2) to the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by CFA Archaeology Ltd on behalf ABB Ltd and approved by the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeological Service.

1.2 Background

The high HVDC line is being constructed in order to link Shetland to Caithness and Moray via several substations along the route.

A targeted evaluation was undertaken at the landfall point at Port Tannachy and this will be reported on under a separate cover.

A watching brief is being undertaken along the remainder of the Moray section between the landfall point at Port Tannachy, 500m west of Portgordon and the substation extension at Blackhillock, 2km south of Keith. This will be reported on under a separate cover.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the project were:

- To establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological features or deposits within the proposed development area through trial trenching evaluation
- To establish the vulnerability of any archaeological features to the proposed development
- To propose mitigation measures where appropriate to avoid, reduce or offset any predicted negative impacts on the archaeological resource.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 General

CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance. Recording of all elements followed established CFA methods.

2.2 Evaluation

The area available for evaluation was slightly smaller than the total area for the compound as it was crossed by overhead electrical cables around which no dig areas were erected. A 10% trial trenching strategy was devised over the total available area. This provided a target of 1350m² of trenching. Overall 17 trenches (Fig. 1) were excavated totalling coverage of 1359 m², just over the required 10% of the area.

The trenches were excavated by tracked excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision to remove topsoil and other soil deposits down to subsoil or the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever was reached first.

All hand excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, by digital photography and by completing standard CFA record forms. Trench locations were recorded using industry standard surveying equipment.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

3.1 General

At the time of the evaluation, ground cover consisted of rough pasture. The topography of the site was in general a slight slope rising from the north-east which levelled off to a flat plateau at the south of the site.

Exclusion zones were erected around the overhead lines surrounding the site, as well as the farmhouse in the centre of the site; no trenches were excavated and no plant movement took place within these exclusion zones.

A full summary of each trench excavated is included in Appendix 3 at the rear of this report. Trench numbers are continuous from an evaluation undertaken during the same phase of work at Mains of Tannachy which is reported on under a separate cover.

3.2 Evaluation

Throughout the site 0.2m to 0.35m of mid brown clayey sand topsoil (**001** generally overlay a thin subsoil layer comprising mid-pale brown/orange clay (**002**) which overlay natural.

Natural (003) throughout the site consisted of pale orangey-brown/bluish-grey clay, with regular bands of degrading schist gravel and yellow/black mottling.

No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

Examples of excavated trenches and spoil profiles are provided in Figures 2-5

4. CONCLUSIONS

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd, on behalf of ABB Ltd prior to the construction of a works compound at Blackhillock near Keith, Moray. Seventeen trenches were excavated to fulfill the 10% evaluation strategy. No archaeological features or deposits were identified.

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with Historic Environment Scotland and copies of reports will be lodged with the Aberdeenshire Council Sites and Monuments Record.

A summary statement will be submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* at the end of the project and will also be reported on through *OASIS Scotland*.

APPENDIX 1: Photographic Register

Shot No.	Summary description
1-5	General shots of site pre-excavation
6	Tr24 soil profile
7	Tr24 post-ex general
8	Ceramic pipe field drain in Tr24
9	Tr25 soil profile
10	Tr25 post-ex general
11	Tr26 soil profile
12	Tr 26 post-ex general
13	Tr 27 post-ex general
14	Tr 27 water pipe
15	Tr 28 soil profile
16	Tr 28 post-ex general
17	Tr 29 soil profile
18	Tr 29 post-ex general
19	Stone-hole in Tr 30 pre-ex
20-21	Post-ex general of stone hole in Tr 30
22	Tr 30 post-ex general
23-24	Tr 31 post-ex general
25	Tr 31 soil profile
26	Tr 32 post-ex general
27	Tr 32 soil profile
28	Tr 33 post-ex general
29	Tr 34 post-ex general
30	Tr 35 soil profile
31	Tr 35 post-ex general
32	Tr 36 soil profile
33	Tr 36 post-ex general
34	Tr 37 post-ex general
35	Tr 38 post-ex general
36	Tr 39 post-ex general
37	Tr 39 soil profile
38	Tr 40 soil profile
39	Tr 40 post-ex general

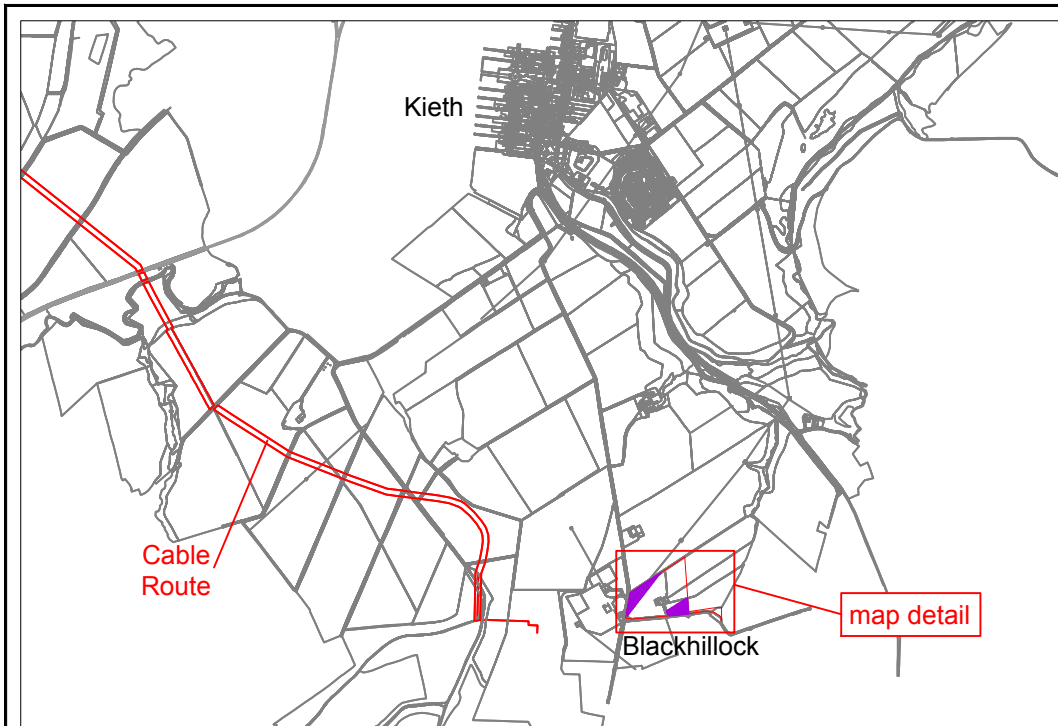
APPENDIX 2: Context Register

Context no.	Description
001	Topsoil - mid brown clayey sand
002	Subsoil - mid brown/orange clay
003	Natural - pale orange-brown/blueish-grey clay/gravel

APPENDIX 3: Trench Summary

Trench no.	Size & Orientation	Depth	Description
24	50mx1.8m E-W	0.3 to 0.4m undulating across length	0.3m to 0.4m of topsoil 001 overlying thin subsoil layer 002 0.05-0.1m in depth above natural 003 . 1 ceramic pipe field drain cut into natural. No significant archaeological remains.
25	40mx1.8m WSW-NNE	0.3 to 0.4m undulating across length	0.3m to 0.4m of topsoil 001 overlying thin subsoil layer 002 0.05-0.1m in depth above natural 003 . No significant archaeological remains.
26	25mx1.8m NE-SW	0.3m NE end, 0.5m centre, 0.4m SW end	0.3m to 0.4m of topsoil 001 overlying natural 003 . No significant archaeological remains
27	50mx1.8m NNE-SSW	0.35mSSW & centre, 0.5m NE	0.3m to 0.4m of topsoil 001 overlying thin subsoil layer 002 0.05-0.1m in depth. Plastic water pipe running E-W through SSW end of trench. No significant archaeological remains
28	50mx1.8m NE-SW	0.3m to 0.4m undulating across trench	0.3m to 0.4m of topsoil 001 overlying natural 003 . No significant archaeological remains
29	30mx1.8m NW-SE	0.4m to 0.5m undulating across trench	0.3m to 0.4m of topsoil 001 overlying natural 003 . No significant archaeological remains
30	50mx1.8m NW-SE	0.35m SE & centre, 0.5m NW	0.35m to 0.45m of topsoil 001 overlying natural 003 . No significant archaeological remains
31	50mx1.8m SW-NE	0.3m SW & centre, 0.5m NE end	0.3m to 0.4m of topsoil 001 overlying natural 003 . 0.15m mixed subsoil 002 NE end. 1 ceramic pipe field drain cut into natural. No significant archaeological remains
32	50mx1.8m NE-SW	0.3m to 0.35m across trench	0.3m to 0.5m of topsoil 001 overlying natural 003 . No significant archaeological remains
33	50mx1.8m NE-SW	0.35m to 0.4m undulating across trench	0.35m to 0.4m of topsoil 001 overlying subsoil layer 002 0.05-0.1m in depth overlying natural. 1 ceramic pipe field drain cut into natural. No significant archaeological remains
34	50mx1.8m NE-SW	0.3m to 0.35m across trench	0.3m to 0.35m of topsoil 001 overlying natural 003 . No significant archaeological remains
35	50mx1.8m NE-SW	0.3m to 0.35m undulating across trench	0.3m of topsoil 001 overlying 0.15m of subsoil 002 in places overlying natural 003 . No significant archaeological remains
36	50mx1.8m NE-SW	0.4m across trench	0.25m of topsoil 001 overlying 0.15m of subsoil 002 overlying natural. No significant archaeological remains
37	50mx1.8m NW-SE	0.3m to 0.35m undulating across trench	0.3m to 0.4m of topsoil 001 overlying thin subsoil layer 002 0.05-0.1m in depth above natural 003 . No significant archaeological remains

38	50mx1.8m ENE-SSW	0.35m to 0.35m undulating across trench	0.30m to 0.35m of topsoil 001 overlying natural 003 . No significant archaeological remains
39	30mx1.8m NE-SW	0.4m to 0.5m undulating across trench	0.4m to 0.45m of topsoil 001 overlying subsoil layer 0.05-0.1m in depth above natural 003 . 1 ceramic pipe field drain cut into natural. No significant archaeological remains
40	30mx1.8m NE-SW	0.35m across trench	0.35m to 0.35m of topsoil 001 overlying subsoil layer 0.05-0.1m in depth above natural 003 . 1 quarried stone field drain cut into natural. No significant archaeological remains



Key:

- Development Area
- Archaeological Evaluation Trench
- Exclusion Areas around overhead electricity lines



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Fig. No: **1** Report No: **3347**

Title:
Location map of Blackhillock showing position of trenches

Project:
Caithness-Moray-Shetland HVDC Link: Moray Section-Blackhillock Compound Archaeological Evaluation

Client:
ABB Ltd

Scale at A3:
1:1000

Drawn by:	Checked:	Date:
GC	SW	13/06/2016

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Fig. 2 - Trench 24 soil profile.



Fig. 3 - Trench 29 post-excavation.



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Title:	Fig. 2 - 3	Report: 3347	Drawn: GC	CKD: SW	Date: 14/06/16
	Client: ABB Ltd				
Project: Caithness-Moray-Shetland HVDC Link: Moray Section- Blackhillock Compound: Archaeological Evaluation					



Fig. 4 - Trench 39 soil profile.



Fig. 5 - Trench 35 post-excavation.



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