

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**OVERHEAD LINE
LOCHGILPHEAD
TO
PORT ANN**

**Watching brief
May 2011**

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during the replacement of a pole carrying an overhead power line from Lochgilphead to Port Ann, Argyll. Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE), who undertook the refurbishment of the line, commissioned a desk study of sites and monuments of archaeological and historical significance lying close to the pole (Pole 28) that was to be replaced.

The desk study and watching brief were commissioned by Denise Harbut of SSE and undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology, the fieldwork element of the project being carried out on 12th May 2011.

THE DESK STUDY

The remains of the pre-improvement settlement of Tomban are located in the vicinity of Pole 28 which stands some 2km south-east of Lochgilphead and 2km south-west of Port Ann. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) states that the settlement (NR88NE 41) survives as the remains of four structures centred on NR 887 855. Six-figure grid references are accurate only to within 100m and the precise locations of three of these structures are not known although their dimensions are given as 9.6m by 5.7m, 17m by 5m and 9.85m by 4.7m.

Recent work has pinpointed the location of the fourth structure, interpreted as a kiln, at NR 88784 85546 with the caveat that this reading should be taken as accurate only to within 10m. The kiln measures 6.5m by 6.0m and stands to a height of 1.6m, indicating that it should be easy to spot on the ground. The grid reference suggests that the kiln is quite close to Pole 28 and, as a consequence, an archaeological watching brief was undertaken during its replacement. Originally, it had also been the intention to replace Pole 27, some 100m further east, but SSE later decided not to change it.

The sources consulted for the desk study included the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Archaeology Scotland's annual journal *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

Pole 28 is located at NR 88826 85536, atop a natural mound some 50m north of the A83 road. This small knoll, together with a considerable area around it, had been cleared of commercial forestry a short time before the overhead line was refurbished.

Initially, a strip of ground, measuring 12m east/west by 3-4m wide, to the west of the pole was cleared of vegetation, topsoil and some of the underlying glacial material to enable a mechanical excavator to sit securely on level ground. Thereafter a trench, measuring 1.5m east/west by 0.8m wide and 1.6m deep, was excavated to the immediate west of the old pole which had been severely damaged by woodpeckers. The old pole was then removed, the new one installed in the same position and the trench backfilled.

The trench cut through peaty topsoil, barely 0.1m deep, and underlying glacial till of orange sand, gravel and pebbles. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered within the pole trench or in the surrounding area that had been stripped beforehand.

No trace of any structures that might be associated with the former township of Tomban was visible on the knoll although some parts of the mound were covered with brash from forestry operations which could have masked such remains. The only feature noted during this exercise comprised the remnants of a small, rectangular building on level ground to the immediate east of Pole 29, some 110m west of Pole 28 at approximately NN 88710 85525. This structure appeared to be a domestic building rather than a kiln; indeed, the kiln described by RCAHMS should be located between Poles 28 and 29 although there was no obvious trace of it on the ground.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The photographs listed below form part of the project archive and are not included in this report. They have been given the prefix LG-PA2011.

- 1-2 Area to the immediate west of Pole 28 stripped of topsoil, viewed from the east
- 3 View to the east from Pole 28
- 4 View to the west from Pole 28
- 5 View to the north from Pole 28
- 6 Trench for replacement Pole 28, viewed from the south
- 7 Trench for replacement Pole 28, viewed from the west
- 8 View from the west of Pole 28 on the knoll
- 9 Structure adjacent to Pole 29, viewed from the north
- 10 Structure adjacent to Pole 29, viewed from the north-west
- 11 Structure adjacent to Pole 29, viewed from the west