

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
ON BEHALF OF
MR PHILIP BOWDEN SMITH**

**BRAEVALLICH
HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME
LOCH AWE, ARGYLL**

**Report of
archaeological watching brief
July 2011**

*5 Bank Street
ABERFELDY
Perthshire
PH15 2BB
Tel & Fax No: 01887-820880
email: scotarc@o2.co.uk*

INTRODUCTION

Argyll & Bute Council has granted planning consent to Mr Philip Bowden Smith to construct a new hydro-electric scheme at Braevallich, Loch Awe, Argyll (Planning Application reference number 10/01828/PP). Prior to permission being granted, Firat Archaeological Services carried out a desk study of documentary and cartographic sources relating to sites of archaeological and historical importance located on and close to the route of the pipeline that would take water from a nearby burn to a new power station.

Braevallich is located on the south shore of Loch Awe, some 10km NNE of Ford. The intake of water is on the Allt Doire nan Sobhrachan, at NM 95160 06440, from where the pipeline will run through forestry plantation as far as NM 95447 06838 and then downhill through sheep pasture as far as the pumping station at approximately NM 95510 07232.

In January 2009 Firat undertook a walk-over survey of the north half of the route, from the edge of the forestry as far as the original location of the power house at NM 95591 07515 although subsequently its site was moved some distance south of that point (see below). A small number of sites of archaeological significance were identified during that survey although the shift in location of the power house meant that some of them are now located beyond the development area. A summary of the results of Firat's walk-over survey is given below.

Another walk-over survey was carried out by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology on 19th April 2011, along the course of a proposed new track giving vehicular access to the pipeline. The new track will run from the end of an existing track at NM 95677 07225 to the new power house site at approximately NM 95510 07232. No structures or features of archaeological or historical significance were observed on or near the course of the new track.

SITES IDENTIFIED BY FIRAT

Firat identified a small number of sites of archaeological interest between the north edge of the forestry plantation and the proposed site of the power house. They comprise remnants of what appears to be a post-medieval farming landscape together with some post-Improvement features. Reference to Firat's report (Baker 2009) should be made for details of these sites which are described briefly here.

Site 1

A drystone field wall dividing the forestry from pasture land and crossed by the pipeline at NM 95440 06850 is almost certainly of post-Improvement date while remnants of a nearby wall and a possible track might be earlier.

Site 2

The remains of rig and furrow are visible over a wide stretch of this area, one parcel of which is centred on approximately NM 95490 07850. Firat identified the remains of a possible structure within the rig and furrow although later investigations have cast doubt on this interpretation.

Site 3

The remains of a drystone field boundary, possibly contemporary with the pre-Improvement field system nearby will be crossed by the pipeline at approximately NM 95490 07030.

Site 4

More rig and furrow agriculture was identified around NM 95500 07140.

Site 5

A canalized burn may be crossed by the pipeline at NM 95469 07255.

Site 6

A mound of rubble at NM 95520 07342 was interpreted as the possible remains of a corn-drying kiln although this interpretation is open to question. This site is not now threatened during the installation of the pipeline.

Site 7

Between NM 95469 07255 and NM 95458 07181 are the turf-covered remains of an old track.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

Following the results of the desk study and surveys and on the recommendation of its archaeological advisers, the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS), the council attached a condition that a programme of archaeological investigation should be undertaken in conjunction with this development. This was intended to safeguard sites that might be adversely affected during the installation of the pipeline.

This work was carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy 23 (Planning and the Historic Environment) and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI). The scheme was agreed by WoSAS and approved by the planning authority before development work commenced within areas designated as being of archaeological significance. This WSI, submitted by Scotia Archaeology, described a programme of works whose implementation was intended to mitigate any actions that might damage the surviving archaeological record during the development.

The watching brief was undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology on 12th July 2011. Only those sections of the pipeline cutting through or near known or suspected archaeological sites were monitored during excavation, these specific trenches being dug prior to the commencement of the main development. The trenches were dug using a 1.8m-wide toothless bucket attached to a 360° mechanical excavator under the supervision of the archaeologist.

Site 1 (Photos 1-3)

A section was cut, at NM 95447 06858, through the drystone dyke which marks the boundary between the forestry plantation and the pasture land to its north although a modern post and

wire fence has also been installed to its immediate north. The wall measures approximately 1.2m (4 feet) high and is of substantial construction and almost certainly of post-Improvement origin.

A short distance to the south of this wall and running parallel to it is an earthen bank, some 2.5m wide at its base and 0.6m high. A section was cut through the bank which consisted almost entirely of earth with very few stones and which is probably upcast from what appears to be a drainage ditch running between the bank and the wall.

Site 2 (Photos 4, 5)

A trench, some 18m long and 1.8m wide, was excavated from NM 95485 06927 to NM 95490 06939, through sloping ground across the rig and furrow of Site 2. Although the rigs were clearly visible on the ground surface, their contours were not well defined in the trench section, the topsoil being 0.15m deep throughout with no discernible difference along the length of the trench.

There is nothing to suggest that these rigs have been levelled deliberately, the entire area now being given over to pasture rather than arable farming and it is possible that the shallow nature of the rigs and furrows results from their being in use for a comparatively short period.

Site 3 (Photos 6, 7)

A section was cut through the field boundary of Site 3, at NM 95488 07047. It was built of small, rounded boulders intermixed with earth and redeposited subsoil and measured 1.2m wide at its base. Its original height is unknown although, on the evidence of boulders scattered either side of the wall, it had clearly stood higher than its surviving 0.6m although perhaps not by much.

Site 4

An examination of putative Site 4 indicated that there is no rig and furrow in this area, only hummocks of rough grass within boggy ground. However, it is quite possible that these natural features might be mistaken for rigs under the snowy conditions experienced during the initial walk-over survey.

Sites 5, 6 and 7

These sites are located beyond the limits of the development and will not be affected by it.

REFERENCES

Baker, F 2009 *Braevallich Farm, Loch Awe, Argyll: Proposed Hydroelectricity Scheme. Report of a rapid Archaeological Walk Over Survey and Method Statement for Archaeological Work*. Unpublished report to Mr Philip Bowden Smith.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The photographs listed below are contained within the digital site archive and are not reproduced in the report itself.

- 1 Section through drystone dyke adjacent to earth bank at NM 95447 06838, viewed from the east
- 2-3 Section through earth bank at NM 95447 06838, viewed from the east
- 4 Trench through rig and furrow, viewed from the south
- 5 Trench through rig and furrow, viewed from the north
- 6 Trench through earth and stone bank at NM 95488 07047, viewed from the west
- 7 Trench through earth and stone bank at NM 95488 07047, viewed from the south