

# *Scotia* *Archaeology*

**REPORT  
TO  
GREEN HIGHLAND  
AND  
EDEN ENVIRONMENT**

**CAMUSVRACHAN, GLEN LYON  
HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME**

**Desk study  
and  
walk-over survey  
June 2011**

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## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a desk study of archaeological sites and monuments and a walk-over survey along the amended route of a proposed new hydro-electric scheme at Camusvrachan, Glen Lyon, Perthshire. A desk study and walk-over survey were carried out by SUAT Ltd in 2007 (DES 2008, 147) but the three branches of the pipeline and the location of the power house have all been relocated since that time. As a consequence, the new routes were re-assessed by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology at the request of Eden Environment and Green Highland Renewables.

## THE DESK STUDY

The sources consulted for the desk study include records held by: Historic Scotland; the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS); Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT); the National Library of Scotland; and *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*, the annual journal of Archaeology Scotland.

## THE SITE

The hamlet of Camusvrachan is located on the north side of Glen Lyon, some 25km west of Aberfeldy, Perthshire. There are to be three intakes for the new hydro scheme, all of them at different locations from those originally planned. The north intake will be taken off the Allt Bhrachain at approximately NN 61917 48830. The east and west intakes will be at approximately NN 62157 48514 and NN 61700 48620, on small streams feeding into the Allt Bhrachain. The combined flow will run southwards to the power house which will be located within Camusvrachan, at approximately NN 61797 47928.

## THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

The walk-over survey was undertaken on 10th June 2011 during dry and mainly sunny weather with good visibility. No sites of archaeological interest were noted along the south half of the pipeline or on its west arm, most of these two sections being covered with commercial forestry, mainly sitka spruce. The north and east arms will run close to their associated streams, through narrow valleys covered predominantly with coarse grass, bracken and scrub. Two sites of archaeological significance were noted within these valleys, one near the north intake and one about 135m upstream of the east intake.

### North intake

At NN 61920 48797, a short distance south of the intake point, are the remains of a rectangular structure measuring approximately 11m north/south by 4m wide. Only one course of drystone rubble masonry survives; indeed, its west wall has been all but removed by the adjacent Allt Bhrachain. The location of this building suggests that it was probably a shieling hut, occupied only during the summer months when the stream was unlikely to flood. However, no other structures or features of interest were noted nearby which is unusual at shieling settlements where it is common to find more than one hut as well as associated structures such as stores.

## East intake

The other site is at NN 62268 48591, approximately 135m upstream of the east intake point. This curiously-shaped structure is roughly triangular in ground plan and set against a steep slope with its apex at the south edge of the stream. It measures approximately 3m north/south by a maximum of 3.5m wide. Up to five courses of drystone rubble masonry survive at the river's edge although the building's walls have been reduced to one to two courses elsewhere. It is possible that some collapsed rubble visible on the opposite bank of the stream is associated in some way with this structure.

One possible interpretation for this structure is that it was a horizontal mill (also known as a click mill) although its remote location and the lack of any other features nearby suggest that this is unlikely. Another, perhaps more reasonable, explanation is that this was an illicit still, a common sight in secluded Highland glens during the 19th century. The adjacent stream would have provided the means for condensing spirit while its remote location would have been ideal to avoid excise officers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is always preferable to avoid damaging archaeological sites during development processes. At Camusvrachan this would mean installing the pipeline well away from the two structures described above. In the case of the east route, the intake would be about 135m downstream of the enigmatic structure found on the river bank at NN 62268 48591 and the structure is therefore unlikely to be affected.

From the maps supplied it is not clear whether the north branch of the pipeline will bypass the remains of the structure identified at NN 61920 48797 or will run directly through it. In the former case, measures should be taken to protect the building; in the latter case a completely different strategy would have to be employed.

To preserve these structures, they should be protected by either post and wire fences or, as a minimum, clearly visible warning tape secured onto rigid posts. As wide a buffer zone as possible should be included within the fenced areas to ensure that the features within them are protected not only from damage caused directly by trenching but also from the deposition of spoil, the storage of materials such as pipes and the movement of machinery. These protected areas should be inspected once fences are in place but before other operations commence. Watching briefs might also be considered necessary to ensure that these sites are not damaged during trenching.

Where it is not possible to avoid archaeological features a minimum of a watching brief should be undertaken during excavations at those points. This would provide an opportunity to record at least some information about these features. It should be noted, however, that in such circumstances PKHT may require more intensive investigations, perhaps the complete excavation of a site.

## REFERENCE

DES *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*. Archaeology Scotland (formerly the Council for Scottish Archaeology).

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**PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE**

The photographs listed below form part of the project archive and are not reproduced in this report.

- 1-3 The remains of a building at NN 61920 48797, near the north intake, viewed from the north
- 4 The remains of a building at NN 61920 48797, near the north intake, viewed from the east
- 5 The remains of a building at NN 61920 48797, near the north intake, viewed from the south
- 6 The remains of a possible still at NN 62268 48591, near the east intake, viewed from the north-east
- 7-9 The putative still, viewed from the south-west
- 10-11 Collapsed masonry on the north bank of the stream opposite the putative still, viewed from the south
- 12-13 The putative still, viewed from the south-east