

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**BARNLAUNICH FARM, ARDFERN
NEW OVERHEAD LINE**

**Watching brief
October 2011**

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out during the installation of a new overhead power line at Barnlaunich Farm, Ardfern, Argyll. The line, intended for a new house located some 230m south east of the farm, was installed by Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE) who also commissioned the archaeological work which was undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology.

The West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS), archaeological advisors to Argyll & Bute Council, supplied SSE with some information about sites and monuments within the vicinity of the new power line. This information has been expanded in a desk study summarized below.

The new power line is located within an area designated by WoSAS as being of 'particular archaeological sensitivity'. This designation was applied because of the large number of known sites and monuments spread over the area with the corollary that further sites and monuments may well await discovery there. As a consequence, it was considered that any ground disturbance within that area should be monitored archaeologically. The resulting watching brief was carried out on 31st October 2011.

THE DESK STUDY

Specific sites known to lie a short distance of the new line are listed below. They are given the numbers allocated by RCAHMS (eg (NM80NW 13) and WoSAS (eg WoSAS 924).

1 **NM80NW 13/WoSAS 924 Sluggan: cairn**

At NM 8394 0768, on a slight rocky knoll overlooking a small plain, are the remains of a sub-circular cairn. It measures 23m long by 3m high and has a few possible kerbstones around its west side. It has been robbed on its south and east sides and field clearance boulders have been dumped onto this feature.

This cairn is the largest one of several in one field.

2 **NM80NW 7/WoSAS 953 Sluggan: cairn**

A circular cairn measuring approximately 8m in diameter and 0.5m high is located 110m south-east of cairn NM80NW 13, at NM 8401 0760. It is covered with turf although remnants of a possible kerb are in evidence.

3 **NM80NW 24/WoSAS 936 Sluggan: cup-marked rock**

A cup-marked rock is located at approximately NM 841 075. No further details are on record.

4 **NM80NW 4/WoSAS 950 & 951 Sluggan: standing stone and battle site**

At NM 8403 0757 is a pointed stone measuring 2.3m high and 0.75m broad. Tradition relates that this stone marks the site of a battle between Scots and 'Danes'.

5 NM80NW 6/WoSAS 952 Sluggan: possible standing stone

At NM 8404 0761, about 50m north of standing stone NM80NW 4, is a slab set on edge, against which is a scatter of stones. The stone scatter may be a field clearance dump while the larger stone, measuring 1.06m by 0.45m by 0.15m, may be a standing stone.

The monuments listed above are all located roughly 400m north-east of the new power line and on the east side of the Barbreck River, as is the new line. Those listed below are to the west of the river.

6 NM80NW 15/WoSAS 926 Kilbride: cist(s)

Several cist burials were encountered during quarrying over a long period around NM 8385 0777, to the west of the Barbreck River and 500m north of the new power line.

7 NM80NW 4/WoSAS925 Dunan Aula: cist

To the west of the Barbreck River and 400m south-west of the new power line is a massive cist built of four large slabs and a gabled capstone. It is set into the top of Dunan Aula, a natural knoll, at NM 8342 0697, and measures 1.2m by 0.7m. The cist was broken into at some time in the late 18th century when cremated remains were found and an urn destroyed.

The remains of other monuments may well survive in the vicinity of Barnlaunich. Roy's mid-18th-century military survey of Scotland depicts two settlements at this location, one consisting of five buildings and the other probably of seven. In addition, it is quite possible that there was an early Christian chapel in the vicinity of Kilbride.

THE SITE

The overhead line to the new house will connect with an existing line which runs to Barnlaunich Farm and will be supported on five new poles. Poles 1-4 will stand within a level pasture field to the immediate north of the farm, in the lower part of the valley of the Barbreck River which flows into Loch Craignish, a sea loch, near Ardfern. Pole 5 will be sited on the east side of the valley, some 30m north of the new house. Between Pole 5 and the house the cable will run underground although its installation did not form part of this exercise.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

In order to avoid unnecessary disruption within the field, four of the five pole trenches were excavated by hand as far as geological levels, the trenches being completed at a later date by machine when the poles were also inserted. Trench 5 and associated trenches for a stay and an earth cable were located on sloping ground close to the new house, these trenches being dug by machine at the time of the watching briefs.

Pole 1 trench

The trench for Pole 1 was located at NM 83733 07325, to the immediate west of a fence line and some 60m south-east of Pole 9 on the existing line. It measured 1.6m north-west/south-east by 0.6m wide and was excavated through 0.3m of mid-brown, silty loam with gravel as

far as the underlying subsoil of fluvio-glacial gravel. Nothing of archaeological significance was encountered in this trench.

Pole 2 trench

The trench for Pole 2, measuring 1.5m north-west/south-east by 0.6m wide, was located midway across the field at NM 83773 07282. Turf overlay 0.25m of mid-brown, silty topsoil which sat directly on glacial gravel. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered within this trench and no artefacts retrieved from it.

Pole 3 trench

Located at NM 83828 07230, Pole 3 trench measured 1.5m north-west/south-east by 0.6m wide. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in this trench, only turf and 0.3m of topsoil over glacial gravel.

Pole 4 trench

The trench Pole 4 was located at NM 83861 07194, to the immediate west of a modern fence. It measured 2m north-west/south-east by 0.6m wide. It cut through turf and 1.0m of topsoil, most of it hill-wash from the slope to its immediate east. No features or deposits of interest were uncovered and no artefacts predating the 20th century were recovered from this trench.

Pole 5 trench

Pole 5 will be located on the grass- and bracken-covered slope that forms the east side of the valley, at NM 83862 07122. Its trench measured 1.7m north/south by 0.7m wide and was machine-excavated to a depth of 1.6m. It cut through 0.1-0.2m of grey-brown loam and underlying shattered bedrock with nothing of archaeological significance being revealed.

Pole 5 stay trench

This trench, located 6m south of the pole trench, measured 2m east/west by 0.7m wide and 1.7m deep. Topsoil was 0.4m deep at this point, presumably the result of hill-wash, and overlay shattered bedrock with no features, deposits or artefacts of significance being revealed.

Pole 5 earth trench

A trench for an earth cable was excavated between the site of Pole 5 and a point some 30m to its south-west, at NM 83841 07113. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered within this trench which was 0.7m wide and cut through 0.1m of topsoil and underlying shattered bedrock to a total depth of 0.5m.

CONCLUSIONS

Nothing of significance was uncovered in any of the trenches during this exercise. However, the large number of monuments located near Barnlaunich clearly indicates that the area is an archaeologically sensitive one and that archaeological intervention is advisable during ground disturbance there.

PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1-2 Trench 1, viewed from the north-west
- 3-4 Trench 2, viewed from the south
- 5-6 Trench 3, viewed from the north-west
- 7 Trench 3, viewed from the north-east
- 8 Trench 4, viewed from the north-west
- 9 Trench 4, viewed from the north-east
- 10 Trench 5, viewed from the west
- 11 Trench 5, viewed from the north
- 12 Stay trench for Pole 5, viewed from the west
- 13 Earth trench for Pole 5, viewed from the south