

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
GREEN HIGHLAND RENEWABLES LTD**

**GLEANN DUBH
GLEN DOCHART
HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME**

**Desk study
and
walk-over survey
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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 route of a proposed new hydro-electric scheme at Gleann Dubh. The work was carried out by Scotia Archaeology at the request of Jayson Drummond of Green Highland Renewables Ltd.

THE SITE

The proposed hydro scheme will be located within Gleann Dubh which runs off the east end of Glen Dochart some 6km south-west of Killin in the District of Stirling. It will take water from the unnamed burn that runs through the glen at NN 53391 27564; the outfall is 1.6km to the north, at NN 52525 28850, and the power house nearby, at NN 52495 28820.

From the intake point the route runs through rough grassland that slopes downwards towards the north although the landscape is dotted with numerous undulations resulting from glacial activity. The route crosses a derelict railway line around NN 5265 2830, to the north of which the grazing is generally better than that to its south. Both the desk study and walk-over survey identified the remains of several pre-Improvement structures in the former area while numerous less permanent buildings (shieling huts) are scattered around the hills to the south.

THE DESK STUDY

A desk study of readily available sources was undertaken prior to the commencement of the field survey. The sources consulted for this work included:

the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS);

the Stirling Council Sites and Monuments Record; and

Archaeology Scotland's annual journal *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

The corridor taken as the basis for the assessment was a nominal 200m wide although it was expanded where sites such as townships might extend well beyond the grid references assigned to them.

1 NN52NW 37/SMR5668 Ardchyle: cup-marked rocks

On the north facing slope 240m south-west of Ardchyle school house, at NN 52312 28902, is a boulder measuring 3.0m by 1.4m by 0.6m which bears three cup marks, all 500mm by 200mm, and another possible shallow cup mark.

2 NN52NW 38/SMR5669 Ardchyle: cup-marked rock

At NN 52407 28558 is a boulder measuring 1.6m by 1.0m by 0.5m with one cup and ring-mark.

3 NN52NW 12/SMR202 Glendhu: farmstead

Centred on NN 524 286 are the remains of a settlement which includes three buildings, each measuring typically 20m by 3.5m, and a corn-drying kiln.

4 203 Ardchyl: mound

At NN 5254 2863 is a flat-topped mound known locally as the 'fairy mound'. It is believed to be a natural feature.

5 NN52NW 9/ SMR199 Braval: township, rig and furrow

A township, comprising one roofed, one partially roofed and three unroofed buildings, another unroofed structure and four enclosures is depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (Perthshire 1867, sheet lxxix) as centred on NN 523 284. Eight unroofed buildings and three enclosures are shown on the current OS 1:10,000 map (1977). Faint traces of rig have also been recorded on oblique aerial photography.

A site visit in 1968 identified at least seven buildings, a corn-drying kiln and several associated enclosures. The buildings varied in size from 6.0m by 2.8m to 22.0m by 4.0m, their walls being between 0.3m and 1.8m high.

6 NN52NW 4/SMR213 Braval: shieling huts

At least 20 circular and rectangular shieling huts have been identified within an area centred on NN 523 280. They vary in size from 2-3m in diameter to 7m by 4m with walls now visible as grassy banks up to 0.3m high. Unusually, the shielings are associated with contemporary field systems of small, irregular fields bounded by earth and stone banks up to 0.5m high although there may also be traces of earlier field systems within this area.

THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

The walk-over survey was undertaken by John Lewis on 4th October 2011 during showery, blustery conditions but good visibility. As expected, the remains of pre-Improvement activity were very evident towards the north end of the pipe route although the full extent of this settlement is yet to be determined. In addition, another enclosure and two earth banks were found a short distance to the south of the putative farmstead and a shieling hut was encountered a short distance from the intake point.

Site A

Site A, centred on NN 52510 28680 and located some 150-200m south of the power house, consists of the remnants of a pre-Improvement settlement. The remains encountered during the survey were those of three buildings, a corn-drying kiln and an enclosure. Building 1 (Photos 6 & 7) measures 23m east/west by 5m wide over drystone rubble walls surviving to a maximum height of two courses. Building 2 (Photo 8) measures 18m east/west by 4.5m wide while Building 3 (Photos 15-17) is at least 18m long (its south end has been removed) by 4.5m wide. The kiln (Photos 1-5), now covered in turf, stands to a height of approximately 1m and its bowl is 1.5m in diameter.

A modern fence runs north/south through Site 1 with the kiln and Buildings 1 and 2 being to its east and Building 3 to its west. The remains of an enclosure (Photos 10-12) also extend westwards beyond the fence.

Curiously, clearance cairns (Photos 13 & 14) are spread over the ruins of some of the structures at Site A, suggesting that nearby fields were ploughed after this settlement was abandoned.

Site B

Site B comprises only the remnants of an earth bank (Photos 18 & 19) which runs east/west and which will be cut by the pipeline at approximately NN 5260 2850. It survives as a low, turf-covered bank about 1.5m wide although its original dimensions are difficult to estimate. This feature might have formed part of an enclosure or perhaps a head-dyke associated with the settlement at Site A.

Site C

Centred on NN 52617 28363 are the remains of a large, roughly circular enclosure (Photos 21 & 22) some 25-30m across and surrounded by a low, turf bank which has been eroded away in places.

Site D

To the north of the derelict railway, and parallel to it, is a ruined drystone dyke. A short distance further north is a low, turf-covered bank (Site D), perhaps a precursor of the wall (Photo 20). Again, this bank could have functioned as a head-dyke for the settlement at Site A.

Site E

Site E (Photos 23-26) was located in a slightly elevated position at NN 53203 27788 and survived as the remains of what was probably a small shieling hut although it was difficult to determine its original shape or dimensions from its scant remains.

CONCLUSIONS

The remains of the pre-Improvement settlement at Site A are probably those described by RCAHMS as the farmstead NN52NW 12 although the grid reference assigned to it differs slightly from that recorded in the field. This site appears to stand directly on the proposed route of the pipeline and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to avoid damaging the archaeological record in that area. As a consequence, it is suggested that the pipeline should be re-routed beyond the enclosure that extends westwards from Site A. However, it should be noted that the remains of the township of Braval (NN52NW 9/ SMR199) lie in that direction.

The enclosure at Site D should also be avoided, again by skirting to its west. Ideally, the earth banks of Sites B and C should also be circumvented although this will be very difficult to achieve. Perhaps the best strategy for Sites B and C would be to excavate the pipe trench through existing breaks in these banks.

Site E, the ruined shieling hut, probably lies beyond the area that will be affected by this development. However, it would be advisable to be aware of its position to ensure that it is avoided completely.

As well as excavations for the pipe trench, damage can also be wrought to the archaeological record by the movement of machinery and the storage of materials and care should be taken to keep clear of archaeological sites during these activities.

PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1 The corn-drying kiln within Site A, viewed from the south
- 2 The corn-drying kiln within Site A, viewed from the west
- 3-4 The corn-drying kiln within Site A, viewed from the east
- 5 The corn-drying kiln within Site A, viewed from the north
- 6 Structure 1 at Site A, viewed from the west
- 7 Structure 1 at Site A with the kiln in the foreground, viewed from the west
- 8 Structure 2 at Site A, viewed from the west
- 9 The pre-Improvement settlement of Site A with an enclosure on its west side, viewed from the south
- 10-11 The enclosure on the west side of Site A, viewed from the south
- 12 The south side of the enclosure in Site A, viewed from the north
- 13 A clearance cairn to the west of the fence cutting through Site A, viewed from the west
- 14 A clearance cairn to the east of the fence cutting through Site A, viewed from the north-west
- 15 Structure 3 at Site A, viewed from the south
- 16-17 Structure 3 at Site A, viewed from the north
- 18 The turf bank (Site B) at NN 52549 28505, viewed from the east
- 19 The turf bank (Site B) at NN 52549 28505, viewed from the west
- 20 View to the south from NN 52672 28361, showing a turf bank (Site D) in the foreground, a drystone wall parallel to it and the old railway line beyond.
- 21 The west side of the enclosure (Site C) centred at NN 52617 28363, viewed from the south
- 22 The west side of the enclosure (Site C) centred at NN 52617 28363, viewed from the north
- 23-24 Shieling hut (Site E) at NN 53203 27788, viewed from the east
- 25-26 Shieling hut (Site E) at NN 53203 27788, viewed from the south
- 27 The intake point, viewed from the north
- 28 View to the north from the intake point