

# Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT  
TO**

**ALLT-ENERGY LTD**

**PIRNMILL  
HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME**

**Walk-over survey  
April 2012**

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## INTRODUCTION

This document describes the results of a walk-over survey along the route of a proposed new hydro-electric scheme near the village of Pirmill, Isle of Arran, Argyll.

From the intake point on the Allt Gobhlach, at approximately NR 8876 4390, the proposed pipeline will run to the WSW as far as an unnamed burn at NR 8785 4352. From there it will continue to the north-west as far as a turbine house, at approximately NR 8736 4405. An access track will connect the turbine house with a contractor's compound at NR 8725 4395, near the A841 Lochranza to Blackwaterfoot road on the south side of Pirmill. The track will also arc to the north of the pipeline as far as NR 8768 4382 from where the two will share a common course.

Prior to the commencement of the field survey, a desk study was undertaken of known archaeological sites and monuments located along the proposed course of the pipeline. This study revealed a small number of sites towards the west end of the route, around Pirmill. These are listed below with the numbers allocated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) (eg NR84SE 18) or by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS), archaeological advisors to Argyll & Bute Council (eg WoSAS 41684).

### **NR84SE 18 Pirmill: village**

This entry refers only to the village of Pirmill, at NR 8725 4426, with an architectural note concerning a house built in 1936.

### **NR84SE 20 Pirmill: memorial**

A memorial inscription to the Reverend John Kennedy is located at NR 8728 4428. It has Category B Listed Building status.

### **NR84SE 21 Pirmill: church**

At NR 8728 4426 stands the former Church of Scotland which, with its boundary wall and gate piers, is a Category B Listed Building.

### **NR84SE 12/WoSAS 41684 & 17676 Alltgobhlach: township**

A township, comprising 12 roofed and one unroofed building, a kiln and five enclosures is depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (Argyllshire 1868, sheet ccxxvii), centred at NR 874 436. Current 1:10,000 maps show four roofed and one unroofed buildings together with four enclosures.

The overall area designated by RCAHMS as belonging to this township stretches for some 700m north/south by 150m wide. Rig and furrow agriculture has also been identified within this area.

### **WoSAS 17676 Alltgobhlach: kiln**

An element of the township of Alltgobhlach, this kiln is located at NR 8734 4368.

**NR84SE 8 Penrioch: lithic scatter; ring**

A scatter of jade fragments was found in the region of NR 878 443. The assemblage included two worked fragments and a portion of a large ring.

**NR84SE 13 Allt Gobhlach: building**

A single, unroofed building is depicted on the first edition OS 6-inch map of 1868 at NR 8788 4411. One unroofed structure, which may be a building, is shown on current 1:10,000 maps.

**THE WALK-OVER SURVEY**

The desk study and walk-over survey were both commissioned by Allt Energy Ltd and undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology, the field survey being carried out on 7th April 2012.

The westernmost section of the route traverses fields of good quality pasture land on gently sloping ground a short distance north of the extant farm of Alltgobhlach, on the outskirts of Pirnmill. Thereafter, it runs across poorer pasture covered mainly with coarse grass, most of this land being quite boggy even after an extended period of dry weather. Nothing of archaeological interest was encountered on this upland stretch whereas several features were encountered on the better drained area towards the west end of the route. These features are listed below and marked in red on the accompanying map.

**Site 1 Rig and furrow**

An area of rig and furrow is centred on NR 87583 43825. The rigs run roughly east/west and measure 2.3m between summits. A few large boulders at the north end of the rigs may represent the remains of some unknown structure or their location may simply be fortuitous, there being a number of similar stones scattered throughout the field.

**Site 2 Structure**

At NR 87626 43871 stand the scant remains of a structure measuring 5.0m east/west by 2.7m wide within turf-covered walls of which a maximum of one course survives. The side walls of the building are barely visible. To the immediate south of this structure is another patch of rig and furrow, the crowns of the rigs again being 2.3m apart.

**Site 3 Structure**

The remains of another building are located at NR 87657 43914. It measures approximately 3.5m north/south by 2.7m wide within poorly defined, turf-covered rubble walls surviving to one course high. Collapsed masonry lying immediately beyond the north wall may represent remnants of a second, smaller compartment although the evidence is inconclusive.

#### **Site 4 Stone and earth bank**

The considerable remains of a boundary bank were noted at NR 87690 43794. In places it stands to a height of at least 1m while elsewhere it has been eroded down to its base. In all probability, this bank was the head-dyke for the township of Alltghobhlach.

### **CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

All of the sites and monuments identified in both the desk study and walk-over survey are located between the village of Pirnmill and the extant farm of Allgobhlach. Of the four sites encountered during the walk-over survey, three lie almost directly on the proposed route of the pipeline or the new access track, the fourth (Site 1) being only a short distance away. Individual strategies for the four sites are suggested below although more detailed recommendations are set out in the accompanying Written Scheme of Investigation.

On the evidence of the first edition OS map, the 19th-century township of Alltghobhlach has simply evolved into the modern farm, the area marked by RCAHMS as defining the early settlement being merely a nominal one. The structures noted during the walk-over survey are not shown on the early map although they certainly do not appear to be modern features.

#### **Site 1**

The proposed route of the pipeline runs some distance from the remains of the field system at Site 1 although the movement of machinery or storage of materials could well affect it adversely. As a consequence, it is recommended that this area of rig and furrow be fenced off to ensure its survival.

#### **Site 2**

On the evidence of the map supplied by Allt-Energy, the remains of the small building at Site 2 lie almost exactly on the line of the pipe route. From an archaeological perspective, the preferred strategy would be to alter the route sufficiently to avoid this structure. However, this stretch of pipeline is likely to comprise steel, rather than plastic, tubes, making it difficult to re-route them. If so, then it may prove necessary to fully excavate this structure.

#### **Site 3**

This small structure lies close to a proposed access track. It is recommended that the track be diverted to avoid this building which should also be fenced off to ensure that it is protected during construction work.

#### **Site 4**

It will be impossible to avoid taking the pipe through the boundary bank which comprises Site 4. However, this feature is already breached in several places and it should be possible to take the pipe through one of those gaps. In addition, every effort should be made to prevent further damage to what appears to be the head dyke for the early township of Alltghobhach, particularly when taking machinery through or near this structure.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

- 1 Rig and furrow at Site 1, viewed from the north
- 2-3 Rig and furrow at Site 1, viewed from the east
- 4-5 Remains of building at Site 2, viewed from the east
- 6 Remains of building at Site 2, viewed from the south
- 7 Site 2 and rig and furrow beyond, viewed from the north
- 8-9 Remains of building at Site 3, viewed from the south
- 10-11 Remains of building at Site 3, viewed from the east
- 12 View to the north along the head dyke (Site 4) from NR 87690 43794
- 13 View to the south along the head dyke (Site 4) from NR 87690 43794
- 14-15 View to the west from NR 87690 43794