

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
GREEN HIGHLAND RENEWABLES LTD**

**RUMBLING BRIDGE
HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME**

**Desk study
and
walk-over survey
April 2012**

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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 between Rumbling Bridge and Crook of Devon, Perthshire. The work was carried out by Scotia Archaeology at the request of Mairead Murnion of Green Highland Renewables Ltd.

THE SITE

The proposed hydro scheme will take water from the River Devon, near a weir at Crook of Devon, at approximately NO 0315 0013. From there it will run westwards through farmland and commercial forestry before descending through a steep gorge at Rumbling Bridge to a power house whose provisional location will be at NT 0160 9930. The pipe will cross the river at approximately NT 0275 9990 from which point it will take one of two possible routes.

The preferred option is to follow the south bank of the river, skirting around the north and west sides of the forestry plantation, the second choice being to take it along the south-east side of the wood. Both potential routes, each some 2km long, were investigated during the walk-over survey.

THE DESK STUDY

A desk study of readily available source material was undertaken prior to the commencement of field work. The inventory of archaeological and historical sites and monuments listed below was collected from material held by:

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

the National Library of Scotland and its Map Room; and

Discovery & Excavation in Scotland, the annual journal of Archaeology Scotland (formerly the Council for Scottish Archaeology).

Sites and monuments are listed according to the numbering system employed by RCAHMS.

NT09NW 14 Rumbling Bridge Station

The former station is located at NT 018 993. No further details are given.

NT09NW 35 Rumbling Bridge: Craigard House

Craigard House stands at NT 0171 9942. No further details are given.

NT09NW 46 Rumbling Bridge

The bridge crosses the River Devon at NT 01656 99486, linking the parishes of Muckhart to the north and Fossoway.

NT09NW 1 Rumbling Bridge: coin hoard

In 1938 Sir George Macdonald identified nine denarii, ranging in date from Otho (69 AD) to Commodus (180-192), found on Lord Clyde's estate of Briglands Bridge and thought to have formed part of a hoard. This suggestion was confirmed by the discovery, between 1948 and 1957, of further groups of denarii at the same spot, on the steep east bank of the River Devon, some 400m from Rumbling Bridge. The first coins were discovered at the mouth of a rabbit burrow, the remainder by tunnelling under a tree stump.

The coins were found in batches of six or so at intervals along the cutting and there was little doubt that they were all from the same hoard. In all, 179 denarii, from Nero (54-68) to Crispina (wife of Commodus), were recovered by 1957 and by 1972 another coin, of Marcus Caesar, was in the possession of the son of the gamekeeper at Briglands. In 1974 Lord Clyde presented the hoard to the Royal Museum of Scotland although one, dating to the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161) had been lost.

NT09NW 8 Rumbling Bridge: axehead, possible log boat

In 1881 a felsite axehead, 330mm long, was found in a field north of the River Devon, near Rumbling Bridge, around NT 022 999. Nearby, close to Naemoor House (now Lendrick Muir School), four large pieces of charred wood were found, two of which were hollowed on one side and thought to be part of a canoe.

The area of the discovery is in agricultural land between about 0.5 and 1km north-east of the gorge at Rumbling Bridge. The River Devon is a small upper-course river which is unlikely to have been navigable at this point and it is likely that the logboat (if such it was) was used on a former loch in the now-drained land around.

NO00SW 20 Crook of Devon: burgh

This burgh was erected to a Burgh of Barony in 1615. Its somewhat vague grid reference is given as NO 03 00.

THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

The survey was undertaken during fine weather on 12th April 2012 by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology. With the exception of the final stage through the gorge at Rumbling Bridge, both routes are quite level although the forestry plantation is on slightly elevated ground and the trench to house the pipe will have to be excavated to a considerable depth in this area.

Three potential sites of archaeological interest were encountered during the walk-over survey.

1 Mound

In a level pasture field at NT 02432 99809, approximately 20m from the fence that defines its north edge, is a large mound measuring roughly 27m north/south by 21m wide at its base and 8m by 7m on its flat summit. Trees cover most of the mound which is surrounded by a metal post and wire fence, now in a dilapidated state and providing no barrier to animals or humans.

It is possible that this feature is glacial in origin although there are no similar mounds in the near vicinity and its potential as a prehistoric burial site must be quite high. A collection of

large stones in its south-east quadrant could perhaps be the remnants of a cist. Other stones set around the base of the mound are probably the result of field clearance from ploughing.

2 Railway

The course of a former railway running east/west is evident a short distance west of the mound. Ballast, comprising fragments of blast furnace slag intermixed with small rubble, is visible where the bedding for the railway tracks has eroded out at NT 02221 99817.

3 Borrow pit

At NT 01756 99715, near the north edge of the forestry plantation, is a large scoop measuring some 8m square and 1.5m deep. This feature is thought to be a borrow pit and, although apparently predating the plantation, is probably of fairly recent origin.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The only site that appears to be archaeologically significant is the mound although it should be noted that its validity as an ancient monument has not been established. Nevertheless, its similarity to many burial mounds should be sufficient to ensure that it is not disturbed during the construction of the hydro scheme and all activities associated with it.

It is recommended that fencing is erected around the mound with as wide a buffer zone as possible to protect the feature. Furthermore, trenching for the pipeline should be as near as possible to the northern edge of the field, again to avoid disturbing the mound and/or any buried features that might be associated with it.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

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

- 1-2 Possible borrow pit, viewed from the north-west
- 3 View from the south along the summit of the mound
- 4 View from the north along the summit of the mound
- 5 The mound, viewed from the south
- 6 The mound, viewed from the east
- 7 The mound, viewed from the north
- 8 The mound, viewed from the north-west
- 10 The mound, viewed from the west
- 11 View to the east from NT 02221 99817, showing railway ballast in the foreground and the mound in the distance
- 12 View to the west from NT 02221 99817, along a former railway line