

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
WEMYSS RENEWABLES LIMITED**

**BALLIEMEANOCH
HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEMES
LOCH AWE, ARGYLL**

**Desk study
and
walk-over survey
August 2013**

*Lismore
Dollerie Terrace
Crieff, Perthshire
PH7 3EG
Tel: 01764-652638
email: scotarc@btinternet.com*

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a desk study of archaeological sites and monuments and walk-over surveys along the routes of a three proposed hydro-electric schemes near Balliemeanoch on the east side of Loch Awe, Argyll. The surveys were carried out by Scotia Archaeology at the request of Oliver Hickman of Wemyss Renewables Limited who supplied maps showing indicative routes for the schemes. The three projects are termed Schemes A, C and D.

Initially a desk study was undertaken of readily available sources relevant to any sites of archaeological or historical significance that may be located within the vicinity of the three schemes. These sources include:

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

the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS), archaeological advisors to Argyll & Bute Council; and

early editions of Ordnance Survey (OS) maps.

In this report sites are listed according to numbers allocated by RCAHMS or by WoSAS: for example NN02SW 5 (RCAHMS); and Pin 48742 (WoSAS).

Following the completion of the desk study the three walk-over surveys were completed on 2 August 2013, the weather being unsettled but mainly dry at the time.

SCHEME A

THE SITE

Scheme A is located a short distance north-east of Sonachan House, the intake for the scheme being on the Allt na Dail-fearna, at approximately NN 0473 1990. From there the penstock will run north-westwards for some 650m to a power house on the north-east bank of the same burn, at approximately NN 0428 2036. The power house will stand close to a metalled farm track, once the principal route along the east side of Loch Awe but since superseded by the B840 which runs closer to the edge of the loch.

THE DESK STUDY

No sites of archaeological or historical significance were identified within or very close to the areas that might be affected during the proposed development although a few were noted in the general area.

NN02SW 5 Cairn (possible)

At NN 041 203, in a field near Sonachan House, is a possible round cairn measuring 13-15m in diameter and 1.5-2.0m high. There are traces of what might be kerbing on the north side. However, this feature may prove to be a field clearance cairn.

This putative cairn is located 330m west of the proposed site of the power house.

NN02SW 48 Enclosure

The first edition OS 6-inch map (Argyllshire 1873, sheet 112) depicts a roughly circular enclosure centred on NN 0460 2025. Part of the enclosure is shown on recent OS maps.

The edge of this feature is located approximately 70m north-east of the penstock route.

THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

The penstock will run along the north-east side of the valley of the Allt na Dail-fearna, roughly parallel with the burn itself. Its route passes through steeply sloping ground, across rough pasture of coarse grass with frequent patches of reeds, blaeberry, bracken and other vegetation.

The only features encountered close to the route were the remains of three drystone boundary walls, all aligned approximately north-east/south-west. Photographs of walls were taken at locations where they tended to be most visible and not necessarily where the penstock will run through them although it is almost inevitable that the pipeline it will cross them at some point.

1 Boundary wall (photos 1, 2)

This structure was identified at NN 04385 20328 and appears to be constructed of earth and stone rather than purely drystone rubble. It is shown on the first and current edition OS maps.

2 Boundary wall (photo 3)

Very little survives of this wall which was photographed at NN 04475 20264. This feature does not appear on either the first or current edition OS 6-inch maps although what appears to be its extension to the south of the burn does.

SCHEME C

THE SITE

Scheme C is located a short distance north of Balliemeanoch, the penstock feeding off the Allt Mor with the intake point being at approximately NN 0237 1736. It will run along the north side of the burn on a roughly east to west course for some 1.2km. The power house is to be sited at approximately NN 0139 1690, on the north bank of the burn and very close to the metalled farm track that runs to the rear of Balliemeanoch.

DESK STUDY

Existing records show no sites or monuments that might be affected by the proposed development, the only one in the general area being well to the south of the Allt Mor. It is described briefly below.

NN01NW 3 Creag A'Chaibeil

About 300m north-east of Balliemeanoch farmhouse, at NN 0144 1672, stand the remains of a small, oblong building, thought to be a pre-Reformation chapel, standing within an irregularly shaped enclosure. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 4227).

THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

The penstock will run along the north side of the valley of the Allt Mor, across fairly steep ground covered in rough vegetation comprising mostly coarse grass, reeds, blaeberry and bracken.

The remains of three boundary walls were identified during the survey, all aligned roughly north-west/south-east.

1 Boundary wall (photos 4-6)

This wall runs towards the burn along steeply sloping ground and was photographed from NN 01512 16993 where it has been cut by a farm track. It stands to a maximum height of 0.8m and appears to be built predominantly, if not totally, of field boulders. This structure appears on the first and current edition OS 6-inch maps.

2 Boundary wall (photos 7, 8)

Very little survives of this feature, much of it being covered with bracken at the time of the survey. It is thought to be built of earth and stone although this could not be confirmed. The wall was identified and photographed at NN 01957 17204. It is not shown on the first or current edition OS 6-inch maps.

3 Boundary wall (photos 9, 10)

This wall is built entirely of field boulders and is now demolished to only one or two courses. It was photographed at NN 01976 17217. It is shown on the first and current edition OS 6-inch maps.

Walls 2 and 3 are very close to each other and are likely to have served the same function at different times, wall 3 probably being the earlier. A post and wire fence, running between these walls and parallel to them, appears to be the most recent of a sequence of three such boundaries.

SCHEME D

THE SITE

Scheme D will take water off the Allt a' Chrosaid which runs east to west a short distance to the south of Balliemeanoch farm. The intake point will be at approximately NN 0196 1611, the penstock then running westwards to the power house on the right bank of the burn, at approximately NN 0114 1608. Its overall length will be some 900m.

THE DESK STUDY

Only one site of potential significance was identified close to the proposed route of this hydro scheme.

Pin 48742 cultivation remains, stony spreads

At NN 01166 16129 is a patch of ground given over to piles of stones of no obvious form or shape. They could be the remains of former structures but are most likely pre-improvement clearance dumps associated with a patch of rig and furrow cultivation lying to the immediately north and centred on NN 0117 1617. Where seen, the rig extended over an area roughly 70m north-east/south-west by 40m wide. The rigs are aligned north-east/south-west.

This monument is located only a short distance from the west end of the penstock and the power house.

THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

1 Clearance dump (photos 11, 12)

At NN 01554 16121 is a dump of field boulders measuring overall approximately 2m by 2m. Although the ground is generally quite steep in the vicinity of this stone dump, there is a small, relatively level and well drained platform to its immediate west, perhaps where crops were once grown. There is no trace of rig cultivation in this area although the farming of small, isolated fields such as this was a practice that continued well into the 20th century in places.

2 Boundary wall (photos 13, 14)

The fragmentary remains of what appears to be an earth and stone boundary wall, surviving to a maximum height of 1m, were identified at NN 01639 16127. Although effectively running north/south, the wall meanders considerably, according to the topography and is built partially into the slope. This feature is shown on the first and current edition OS 6-inch maps.

3 Boundary wall (photos 15, 16)

The remains of a drystone field wall, running north/south, were identified at NN 01762 16137. It appears on the first and current edition OS 6-inch maps.

Pin 48742

A thorough investigation around the location of Pin 48742 (see Desk Study) revealed no trace of cultivation remains. The putative area of rig and furrow appeared to be simply natural undulations and the piles of stones erosion products from higher ground or glacial material (see photos 17 and 18).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The few sparse remains encountered during the three surveys were all associated with agricultural practices. With the exception of a small field clearance dump, they are now-defunct field boundaries. Although there is no clear evidence to sustain the argument, it is thought likely that those walls built entirely of stone date to the 19th century while those constructed of earth and stones may be features of the pre-Improvement landscape.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to avoid these old boundary walls during trenching for the three hydro schemes. However, it is recommended that, where possible, trenches should be excavated through these features where they have already been demolished, such as where farm tracks have been cut through them. If damage is unavoidable, then it is proposed that walls should be reinstated to their pre-excavation condition following the completion of site work.

It is quite possible that the remains of further boundary walls lie masked temporarily beneath dense vegetation; indeed, map evidence does suggest this. If such features are exposed once the vegetation dies back then they should be treated in a similar manner to those exposed during the walk-over surveys.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

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

Scheme A

- 1 Boundary wall at NN 04385 20328, viewed from the south
- 2 Boundary wall at NN 04385 20328, viewed from the north
- 3 Sparse remains of boundary wall at NN 04475 20264, viewed from the south

Scheme C

- 4-5 Boundary wall cut by farm track at NN 01512 16993, viewed from the south-east
- 6 Boundary wall cut by farm track at NN 01512 16993, viewed from the north-west
- 7 Boundary wall at NN 01957 17204, viewed from the north
- 8 Boundary wall at NN 01957 17204, viewed from the south
- 9 Boundary wall at NN 01976 17217, viewed from the east
- 10 Boundary wall at NN 01976 17217, viewed from the south-east

Scheme D

- 11-12 Field clearance dump at NN 01554 16121, viewed from the east
- 13-14 Remains of earth and stone boundary wall at NN 01639 16127, viewed from the east
- 15-16 Stone boundary wall at NN 01762 16137, viewed from the east
- 17-18 The location of site Pin 48742, viewed from the east