

Scotia *Archaeology*

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**OVERHEAD POWER LINE
AT SUNDERLAND FARM,
ISLAY**

**Watching brief
November 2013**

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INTRODUCTION

This document describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during excavations for poles for a replacement overhead power line at Sunderland Farm, near Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay. The work was carried out on behalf of Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE) whose representative, Gavin Carswell, commissioned the investigations.

THE SITE

The overhead power line runs east to west through Sunderland Farm, passing a short distance to the south of the farmhouse. This entire line is being replaced, the new one running parallel with, and a short distance to the south of, an extant one. It passes close to two recorded sites of archaeological significance which are described briefly below. They are listed according to the numbers allocated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) (eg NR26SW 11) or by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service, archaeological advisors to Argyll & Bute Council, (eg WoSAS Pin 2040).

NR26SW 11/WoSAS Pin 2040 Sunderland: cists, standing stones, cairns (possible)

In 1838 two late Bronze Age gold ornaments, a bracelet and a cup-ended ornament were found beneath a standing stone during ground preparation to the west of Sunderland Farm. The standing stone was blasted and removed.

At around the same time several burial cists were identified near the farm, some of the cists containing inhumations and others cinerary urns. The grid reference given for all of these findings is NR 245 645 which, although somewhat vague, places them a short distance west of the farm.

WoSAS Pin 53181 Aruadh: farmstead

The first edition Ordnance Survey 6-inch map (Argyllshire 1882, sheet ccvii) depicts the farmstead of Aruadh at NR 24121 64741, some 600m west of Sunderland Farm. At that time it comprised one roofed building and four enclosures whereas one unroofed building and one enclosure are shown on current maps.

The discovery of several prehistoric features near Sunderland Farm suggests that other, similar or related features may still lie buried in that area. As a consequence, it was agreed between SSE, Scotia Archaeology and WoSAS that the excavation of pole trenches for the new line would be monitored from the close to Sunderland farmhouse westwards as far as Pole 65. This would ensure that anything of archaeological significance that might survive in any of the trenches would be investigated and recorded.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief was undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology on 20 November 2013, during high winds and intermittent heavy rain. The trenches were excavated using a 5-tonne mechanical excavator operated by Mr Raymond Stewart of Sunderland Farm, on behalf of SSE. Their locations are shown on the accompanying map, based on one supplied by SSE, the new pole positions being shown in red.

The fields through which the pole trenches were dug were quite flat and covered with barley stubble and short grass. The trenches all measured approximately 1.5m east/west by 0.5m wide and were excavated only as far as the subsoil. Following the excavations the trenches were backfilled and, at a later date, will be re-excavated to a depth of some 1.8m and the new poles inserted.

The pole trenches were centred on the following locations:

Pole 57: NR 24655 64424
Pole 58: NR 24598 64445
Pole 59: NR 24542 64471
Pole 60: NR 24479 64491
Pole 61: NR 24416 64511
Pole 62: NR 24353 64532
Pole 63: NR 24290 64551
Pole 64: NR 24228 64570
Pole 65: NR 24144 64594

Pole Trenches 57 and 58 were located to the south of the farmhouse and were dug through waterlogged ground comprising approximately 0.3m of very dark topsoil and underlying peat. A ceramic field drain was broken in Pole Trench 57, resulting in the trench flooding immediately.

The trenches for Poles 59 to 65 cut through 0.2-0.3m of ploughsoil, comprising mid-brown, clayey loam with lenses of small stones. The ploughsoil overlay glacially deposited clay which was mostly orange but occasionally grey in colour.

No structures, features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered within any of the trenches and no artefacts were retrieved from them.

CONCLUSIONS

The precise locations of the various prehistoric features which comprise site NR26SW 11 remain unknown and, although nothing of significance was uncovered within any of the pole trenches, there remains the possibility that other important features, including burials, may still lie close to Sunderland Farm.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

- 1 Trench for Pole 57, viewed from the north
- 2 Trench for Pole 58, viewed from the north
- 3 Trench for Pole 59, viewed from the north
- 4 Trench for Pole 60, viewed from the north
- 5 Trench for Pole 61, viewed from the south
- 6 Trench for Pole 62, viewed from the south
- 7 Trench for Pole 63, viewed from the north
- 8 Trench for Pole 64, viewed from the north
- 9 Trench for Pole 65, viewed from the north
- 10 View to the east from Pole 64
- 11 View to the east from Pole 65, showing Sunderland Farm in the distance