

# Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT  
TO  
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**OVERHEAD POWER LINE  
AT PITTRODIE FARM,  
ERROL, PERTSHIRE**

**Watching brief  
October 2014**

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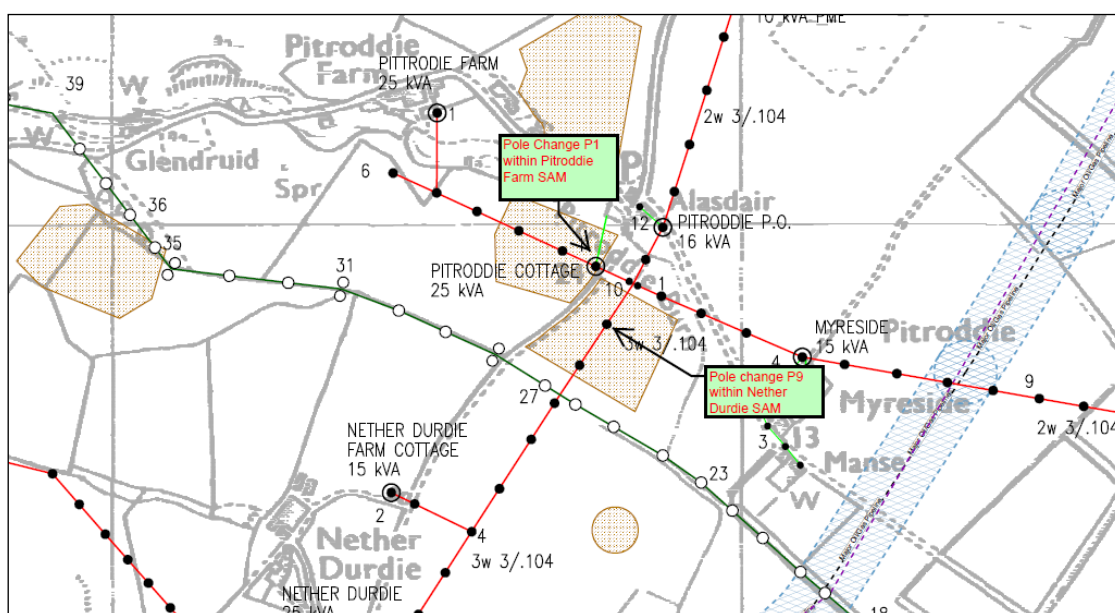
## INTRODUCTION

This document describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during the replacement of a pole on an overhead power line at Pittrodie Farm, near Errol, Perthshire. The exercise was part of a larger project, comprising the refurbishment of several sections of line including part of the spur leading to Pittrodie Farm. The work was carried out by Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE) whose representative, Denise Oudney, commissioned the watching brief undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology on 16 October 2013.

Pole 1 on the Pittrodie spur stands within a Scheduled Ancient Monument, that is one protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979. As a consequence a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), outlining proposals for this work, was presented to Historic Scotland prior to the commencement of fieldwork. The WSI described a programme intended to mitigate any action that might damage the surviving archaeological record. Historic Scotland approved the content of the WSI while SSE agreed to the work outlined in that document and to funding it.

## THE SITE

The Pittrodie spur runs roughly east/west across ground that rises gently to the west and north. Pole 1 stands at the east edge of a field, at NO 21775 24943, the ground being under improved pasture at the time of the watching brief. The field is adjacent to an unclassified road, some 420m south-east of Pittrodie Farmhouse and 10km east of Perth. SSE's map of the area (see below) shows the location of the pole.



*Location of Pole 1*

The road marks the east boundary of a scheduled area (SAM7220) which measures approximately 125-180m east/west by 125-140m north/south. Aerial photography has identified several cropmarks within the area centred on NO 2169 2495, the largest of which appears to comprise the remains of a late prehistoric souterrain, an underground structure probably used for storage. It consists of two interconnected passages laid out in a Z-shape

and, on the evidence of pale lines cutting across part of the structure, with roofing slabs still in situ.

Other features within the scheduled area include several circular and crescentic cropmarks which, based on the findings from excavations at similar sites, probably represent the remains of timber roundhouses.

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) lists another monument (NO22SW 8) on the north edge of the scheduled area. This record describes an entry dating from 1904 which refers to '..a number of ancient graves..', some of which were apparently below large cairns while other graves were on the surface. A visit by Ordnance Survey representatives in 1963 failed to identify any such features and there is no local knowledge of them, suggesting that the 1904 investigator might have mistaken remains of the souterrain and perhaps other structures that had been disturbed by ploughing.

Within a field to the immediate east of the road is another scheduled monument (SAM7221), again identified by aerial photography. This monument also appears to include the remains of a souterrain and several timber buildings as well as what may be an enclosed settlement. The aerial photographs do not show any specific features immediately adjacent to Pole 1 but the area around Pittrodie clearly comprises a rich archaeological landscape, one in which the remains of hitherto unidentified structures and features may yet be uncovered.

To the immediate north-east of Pittrodie and some 500m east of the farm of Nether Durdie are two further complexes of prehistoric features, both of which are also scheduled monuments (SAM7219 and SAM7240, respectively).

## THE WATCHING BRIEF



*Location of the pole trench*

The watching brief was undertaken on a cloudy, damp day with intermittent light rain. It had been hoped that the defective pole could be lifted directly out of the ground and the new one placed within its socket, thus causing minimal disruption to the ground around it. Unfortunately, attached to the base of the old pole was a timber block providing extra stability to the structure which meant that the pole could not be lifted directly out of the ground. A trench had to be dug by a mechanical excavator to remove it.

It was apparent, even at ground level, that a wide area of ground had been disturbed when the old pole was inserted in 1991. This was confirmed during the excavation when it became clear that all of the material that was removed had been redeposited on a previous occasion.

The trench measured 1.6m east/west by 0.7-1.0m wide and 1.7m deep. The material removed from it was a heterogeneous mix of topsoil, comprising mid-brown loam with gravel and small stones, and redeposited glacial till of orange clay and boulders.



*Pole trench viewed from the south*

No structures, features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered within this trench and no artefacts were retrieved from it.

## CONCLUSIONS

Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered during this excavation although clearly the field and the wider area contain a very rich archaeological landscape and one that should be preserved.

**REPORTING**

Copies of this report have been forwarded to SSE, Historic Scotland, Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust and RCAHMS. In addition, a summary report has been produced for publication in *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*, the annual journal of Archaeology Scotland. Site data has been uploaded onto the online digital resource site OASIS.