

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO**

MNV CONSULTING LIMITED

**FORDIE HYDRO,
COMRIE, PERTSHIRE**

**Walk-over survey
November 2014**

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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 at Fordie, near Comrie, Perthshire.

On granting planning permission for this scheme, Perth & Kinross Council, on the advice of its archaeological advisors, Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT), attached a condition that a walk-over survey be undertaken within the proposed area of development to identify any hitherto unrecorded sites of archaeological or historical significance within it. Should any such sites be identified, the archaeological contractor undertaking the surveys would need to outline proposals for avoiding those sites or, if that proved impossible, a programme whereby the archaeological record would be preserved by record.

The desk study and survey was undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology at the request of MNV Consulting Limited (MNV). The route of the proposed pipeline and the locations of sites and monuments identified by the desk study and walk-over survey are shown on the accompanying map supplied by MNV.

THE SITE

The proposed penstock will be located to the north of Fordie Lodge, 2km east of Comrie. The intake point will be at approximately NN 7940 2460, on the south shore of a small loch close to the source of the Balmenoch Burn. From there the pipeline will run southwards, roughly parallel with the burn, as far as a turbine house to be sited at approximately NN 7930 2305. The outfall from the turbine house will run back into the Balmenoch Burn.

Some of the pipeline will run close to an estate road which continues northwards beyond the site to join a series of roads and tracks which criss-cross the moorland between Glen Turret and Glen Lednock. Other sections of the penstock will run through rough ground and forestry, mostly commercial coniferous plantations.

DESK STUDY

A desk study of readily available source material was undertaken prior to the commencement of field work. Its results comprise short descriptions of those sites located within the near vicinity of the proposed construction areas.

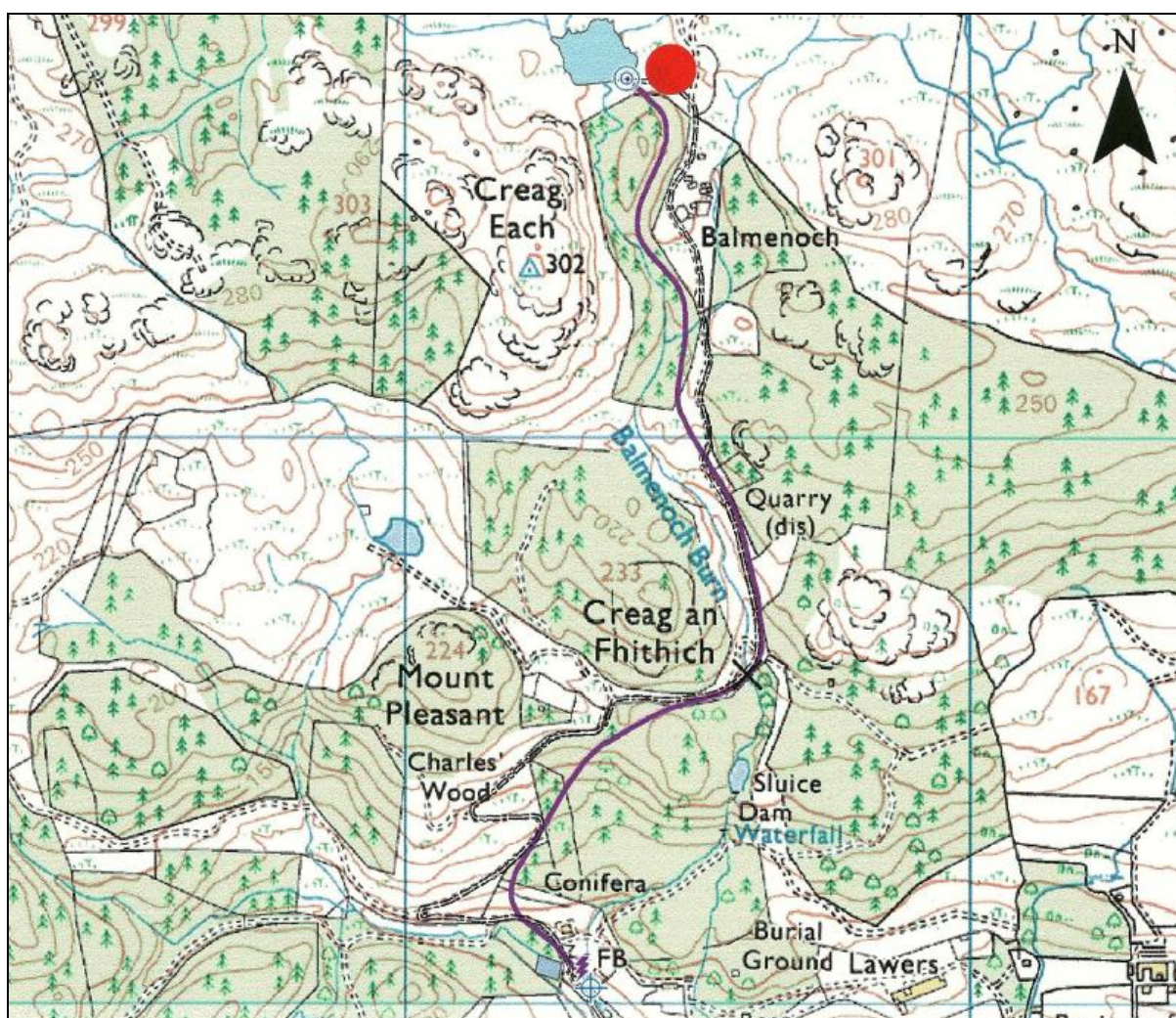
The only previously recorded site of archaeological or historical interest in the vicinity of the penstock route comprises the remains of the ruinous settlement of Balmenoch, located on the east side of the estate road, a short distance south of the intake point at NN 7952 2441. On the evidence of the first edition Ordnance Survey 6-inch map (Perthshire, sheet 94), it consisted of ten unroofed buildings, an enclosure and a lime kiln in 1866. Its Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) monument number is NN72SE 17.

THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

The walk-over survey was carried out on 20 November 2014 during dry but damp conditions. It was not possible to cover the whole of the area through which the penstock will run

because of the estate's concerns for the large number of game birds within it. Although the estate road and the area to the immediate east of the loch where a new access road is to be built were investigated, it was not possible to examine the forested areas.

Nothing of archaeological significance was encountered along the estate road, other than the scant remains of the former Balmenoch settlement which was covered with bracken at the time of the survey. However, potentially significant discoveries were made between the existing road and the loch, in the area designated for the new access road. These discoveries comprise several small mounds, most of which probably contain prehistoric burials. This putative cemetery is marked as a red dot on the map below.



Site map, showing the proposed route of the penstock. The putative prehistoric cemetery is shown as a large red dot towards the top of the map

In addition, the remains of a drystone field wall of probable pre-Improvement age will also be crossed by the penstock, a short distance from the intake point.

The sites are listed below with their locations.

Site 1

The remains of a drystone field wall, a precursor of the fence that now defines the north side of a forestry plantation, will be crossed by the penstock at approximately NN 7929 2335. It survives as one to two courses of drystone rubble mostly covered in moss and other low vegetation.

Site 2

At NN 79449 24680 is a stony mound partially covered with grass and measuring approximately 7m north/south by 3m east/west and 0.5m high.

Site 3

This grass-covered mound, located at NN 79467 24645, measures 5m north/south by 3.4m east/west and 0.6m high.



Site 3 viewed from the north-west

Site 4

Site 4, located at NN 79455 24647, is smaller than the other mounds, measuring 2.4m north/south by 1.4m north/south and 0.3m high. Its south end has been penetrated by rabbits where some stones have been exposed although most of this feature is grass-covered.

Site 5

Located at NN 79423 24615, this mound measures 7m north/south by 3.2m wide and is mostly covered with grass and bracken although some stones are visible at its south end. It is 0.5m high on its west side but 1m high on its east side where the ground falls away slightly.



Site 5 viewed from the east

Site 6

Site 6 is located at NN 79438 24604, a short distance from a fence at the north limit of a coniferous forestry plantation. The mound is covered with grass and bracken although several stones are visible. It measures 5.5m east/west by 3.7m north/south and 0.5m high.



Site 6 viewed from the north

Site 7

This mound, which is mostly covered with grass, is located at NN 79462 24612 and measures 5m north/south by 2.8m wide and 0.5m high.



Site 7 viewed from the north-west

Site 8

Located on the east side of the estate road at NN 79519 24620, this is perhaps the least convincing of these features as a burial mound. It might constitute debris resulting from the construction of the adjacent road although equally it could represent the remains of a burial mound measuring 7m north/south by 3m east/west.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was not possible to investigate the forested areas which constitute a significant proportion of the survey area. However, it should be noted that the planting of commercial forestry involves deep ploughing which is likely to destroy most of the archaeological record that might exist in such areas.

The north end of the pipe trench would breach the drystone field wall (Site 1) although it should be possible either to cross the wall where it is already completely demolished or to reinstate its stonework once the trench is backfilled.

During the construction of a new access road to the intake point clearly the greatest risk to the archaeological record could be wrought within what appears to be a prehistoric cemetery. It should be possible to circumvent the mounds although this should be done with careful planning.

The most obvious danger to these features would be the construction of the road. However, other activities could also pose problems to the survival of the archaeological record, including the deposition and retrieval of spoil, the temporary storage of pipes and other materials and the movement of plant and other machinery.

It is proposed that the putative burial mounds should be protected by secure fences extending well beyond the features themselves. This work should be carried out by the developer under the supervision of an archaeologist to ensure that the sites are protected adequately. The contractor should maintain the fencing throughout the construction of the hydro scheme.

Any ground disturbance, such as the construction of a new access road or the excavation of borrow pits, within the vicinity of the presumed prehistoric cemetery should be accompanied by a watching brief, undertaken by an archaeological contractor approved by PKHT.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

The following list of photographs forms part of the project archive and is only partially represented in this report.

- 1 View to the east from NN 79411 24601, approximately where the penstock will cross the fence and the drystone wall (Site 1)
- 2 Site 2, viewed from the north-west
- 3 Site 3, viewed from the north-west
- 4 Site 4 with Site 2 beyond, viewed from the west
- 5 Site 5, viewed from the east
- 6 Site 5, viewed from the north-west
- 7 Site 6, viewed from the north
- 8 Site 7, viewed from the north-west
- 9 View, from the south-east across the putative cemetery
- 10 View, from the east across the putative cemetery
- 11 Site 8, viewed from the south
- 12 Site 8, viewed from the west
- 13 The scant remains of Balmenoch farmstead, viewed from the south