

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**POLE REPLACEMENT
AT
BARR A CHAISTEALAIN
DALMALLY, ARGYLL**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF**

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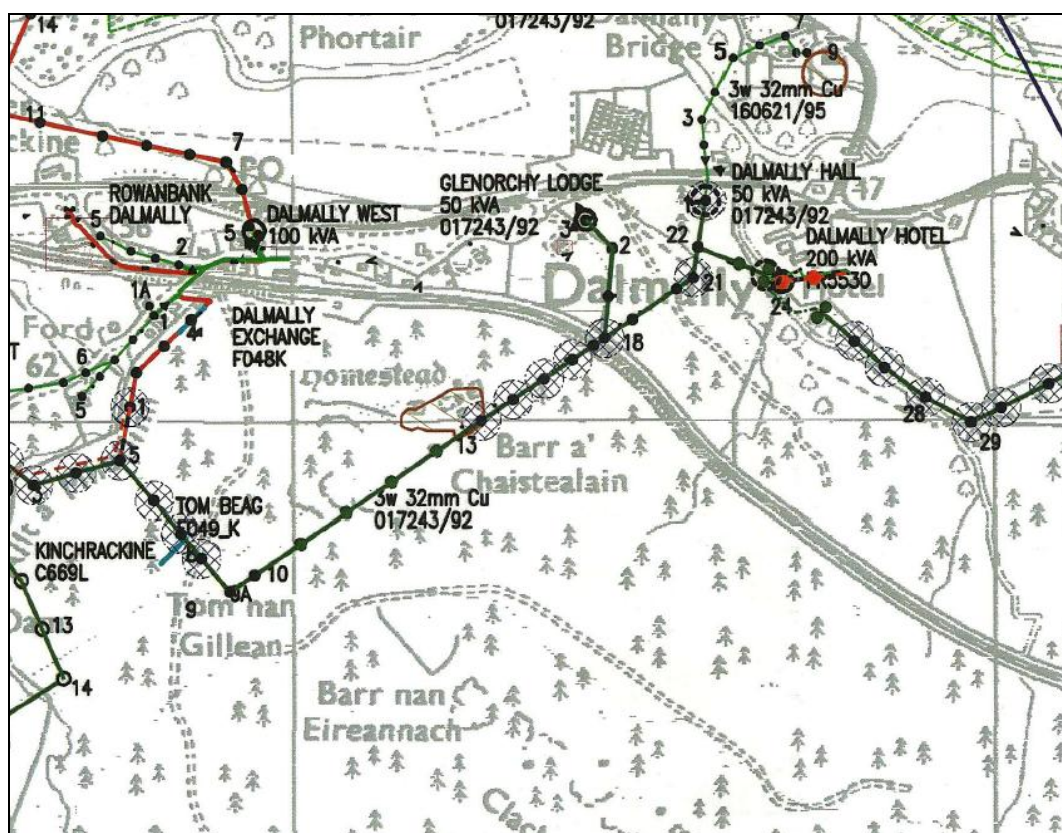
INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological watching briefs undertaken by Scotia Archaeology for Scottish & Southern Energy plc (SSE) during the replacement of two poles on an overhead power line at Barr a Chaistealain, Dalmally, Argyll. The line is to be upgraded from 11kv to 33kv to accommodate the input from the nearby Glen Lochy hydro-electric schemes.

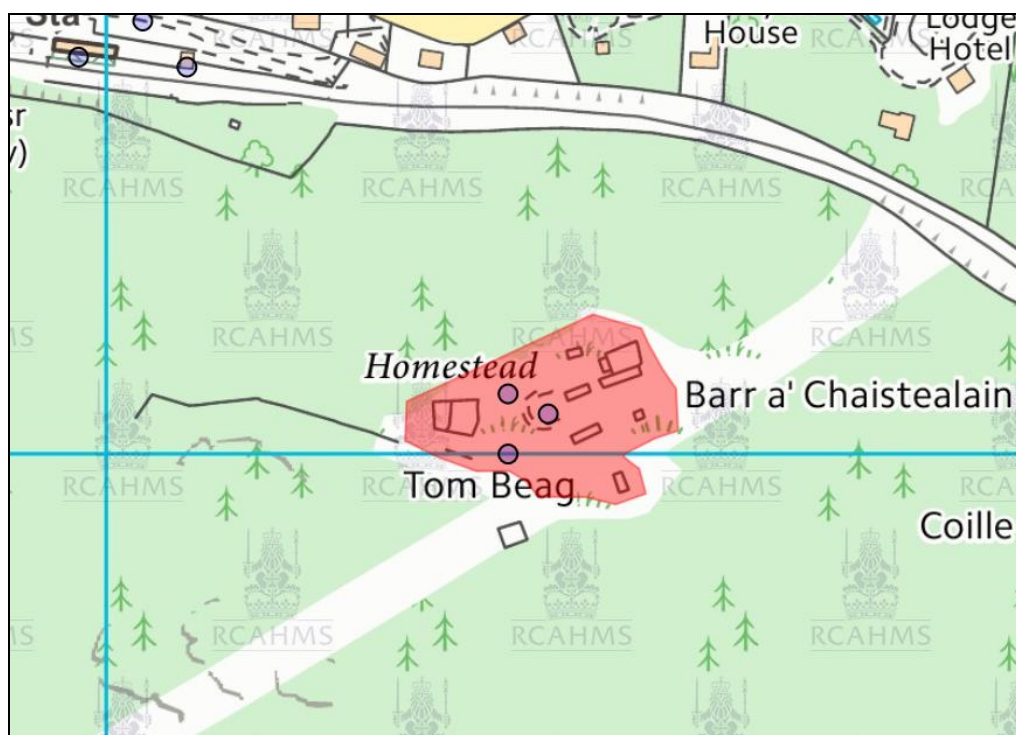
One of the poles (Pole 13) stands within an area designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), one protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979. As a consequence, ground-breaking activity associated with the pole's replacement required a watching brief to be carried out by an approved archaeological contractor. Fieldwork was preceded by the production of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), describing a programme intended to mitigate any action that might damage the surviving archaeological record. This document required the approval of Historic Scotland which was granted prior to the commencement of on-site work.

THE SITE

The power line runs north-east/south-west through a clearing in a commercial forestry plantation, Pole 13 being located some 400m south-east of Dalmally railway station. It stands in a clearing that has been widened to accommodate the scheduled monument, the pole being located towards the east side of the monument.



Map showing the overhead line in relation to Barr a Chaistealain



Map showing the extent of the scheduled area (in pink)

Barr a' Chaistealain (Scheduled Monument number SAM3858) is centred on approximately NN 1622 2702 and encompasses two separate monuments: the remains of a dun, probably dating to the late Iron Age; and remnants of a settlement believed to date from the 15th century to the 1950s. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) has attributed the following numbers to these monuments.

NN12NE 2 Dun

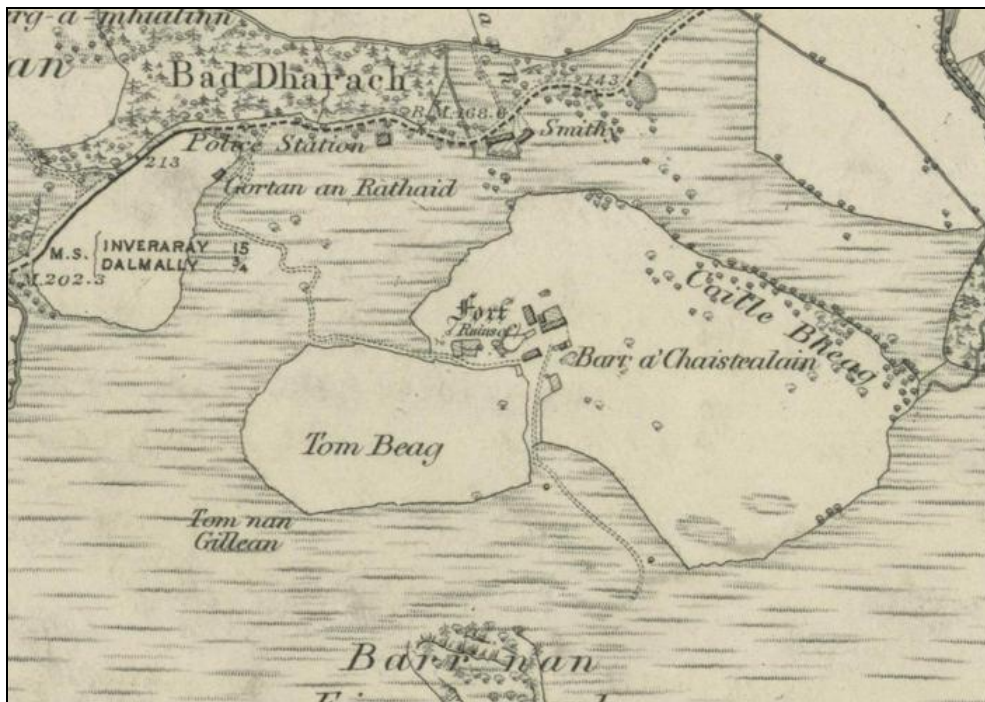
The dun is located in the centre of the later settlement and has been extensively damaged although most of its circular wall can still be traced. The fort measures some 16m in diameter and includes some very large stone blocks within its surrounding wall.

NN12NE 12 Township

The settlement is visible as the remains of seven sub-rectangular buildings, varying between 7m and 22m in length, the larger structures probably being the more recent. These structures are all shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map of 1875 (Argyllshire, sheet 101) (see below).

NN12NE 7 Smithy

One of the buildings within the settlement is believed to have been a smithy of which there have been several in this area. The MacNabs, who are believed to have resided at Barr a' Chaistealain, were the hereditary smiths for the Campbells of Breadalbane since the mid-15th century.



Extract from the first edition OS 6-inch map showing Barr a Chaistealain

THE WATCHING BRIEF

To ensure that the upstanding remains of Barr a Chaistealain were fully protected during this operation a corridor defining the area within which machinery may travel had been laid out across the site. The corridor was bordered by two lines of bamboo rods with red markers attached, all at least 4m from any standing structure. This protection remained in place until the refurbishment was complete.



Barr a Chaistealain, viewed from the east

The watching brief was undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology on 9 October 2015, a mild, damp day, the excavation being carried out using a tracked mechanical excavator. At the same time the opportunity was taken to conduct a watching brief during the replacement of Pole 12 which, although beyond the limits of the scheduled area, is relatively close to the settlement of Barr a Chaistealain.

Pole 13

Pole 13 stands at NN 16277 27001, near the east edge of the scheduled monument with a prominent outcrop of bedrock to its immediate east. The original pole was removed before the trench for the new one was opened to its immediate south-west. The trench measured 2.3m north-east/south-west by 1.7m wide and was 1.6m deep. It cut through coarse grass, 0.3m of black, peaty soil below which was glacial till of grey clay overlying orange clay and gravel with occasional boulders. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered and no artefacts of any age retrieved from the trench.



Pole 13 trench, viewed from the north-west

Pole 13 stay trench

Pole 13 required a stay to be inserted some 10m to its south-east. Unfortunately, this spot was atop the nearby shelf of bedrock and, at the time of the watching brief, it was possible only to remove vegetation and a thin covering of topsoil from this location. The rock will be excavated at a later date using a mechanical breaker.



Pole 13 stay trench, showing exposed bedrock

Pole 12

Pole 12 is located at NN 16206 26964, within the corridor bordered by coniferous forestry some 80m south-west of Pole 13.



Pole 12 trench with new Pole 13 in the distance, viewed from the south-west

The trench measured 2.3m north-east/south-west by 1.8m wide and 1.6m deep. Below coarse grass was 0.7m of dark brown, peaty soil over glacial till of grey clay with gravel and boulders, some of them large. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were encountered in this trench and no artefacts recovered from it.



Pole 12 trench, viewed from the north-west

CONCLUSIONS

Although nothing of significance was uncovered in any of the trenches, the visible remains of Barr a Chaistealain are extensive and, given the length of time that the settlement was active, it is unlikely that every trace of it has been exposed.

REPORT

Copies of this report have been forwarded to SSE, Historic Scotland, the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) and RCAHMS, the latter being the repository of the full site archive. In addition, a summary account has been produced for publication in *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*, the annual journal of Archaeology Scotland. Site data will be uploaded onto the online digital resource site, OASIS.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The photographs listed below form part of the project archive. Some of them are included in this report.

- 1-2 Pole 13 trench, viewed from the north-west
- 3 Pole 13 trench, viewed from the north-east
- 4 Pole 13 trench location, viewed from the south
- 5-8 Barr a Chaistealain, viewed from the east
- 9 New Pole 13 being inserted into trench
- 10 Bedrock exposed at the location of stay trench
- 11 Pole 12 trench, viewed from the north-west
- 12 Pole 12 trench, viewed from the south-west