

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**OVERHEAD 33KV AND 11KV
POWER LINES ON
THE ISLE OF GIGHA
ARGYLL**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEFS
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2016**

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

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological watching briefs undertaken in September and October 2016 for Scottish & Southern Energy plc (SSE) during the excavation of trenches for new wooden poles on several overhead power lines on the Isle of Gigha, Argyll. Some lines were high voltage (33kv) and others low voltage (11kv).

Several of the poles are located close to known sites of archaeological significance which prompted watching briefs being undertaken during excavations for their replacements. Where it proved expedient, trenching for some (although not all) poles located beyond archaeologically sensitive areas was also monitored.

GIGHA

Gigha is a small island, a short distance from the west coast of Kintyre and measures some 9.5km north/south by a maximum 2.5km wide. It appears to have been inhabited continuously since prehistoric times, as demonstrated by the standing stones, burial mounds, forts, duns and later monuments scattered around the island.

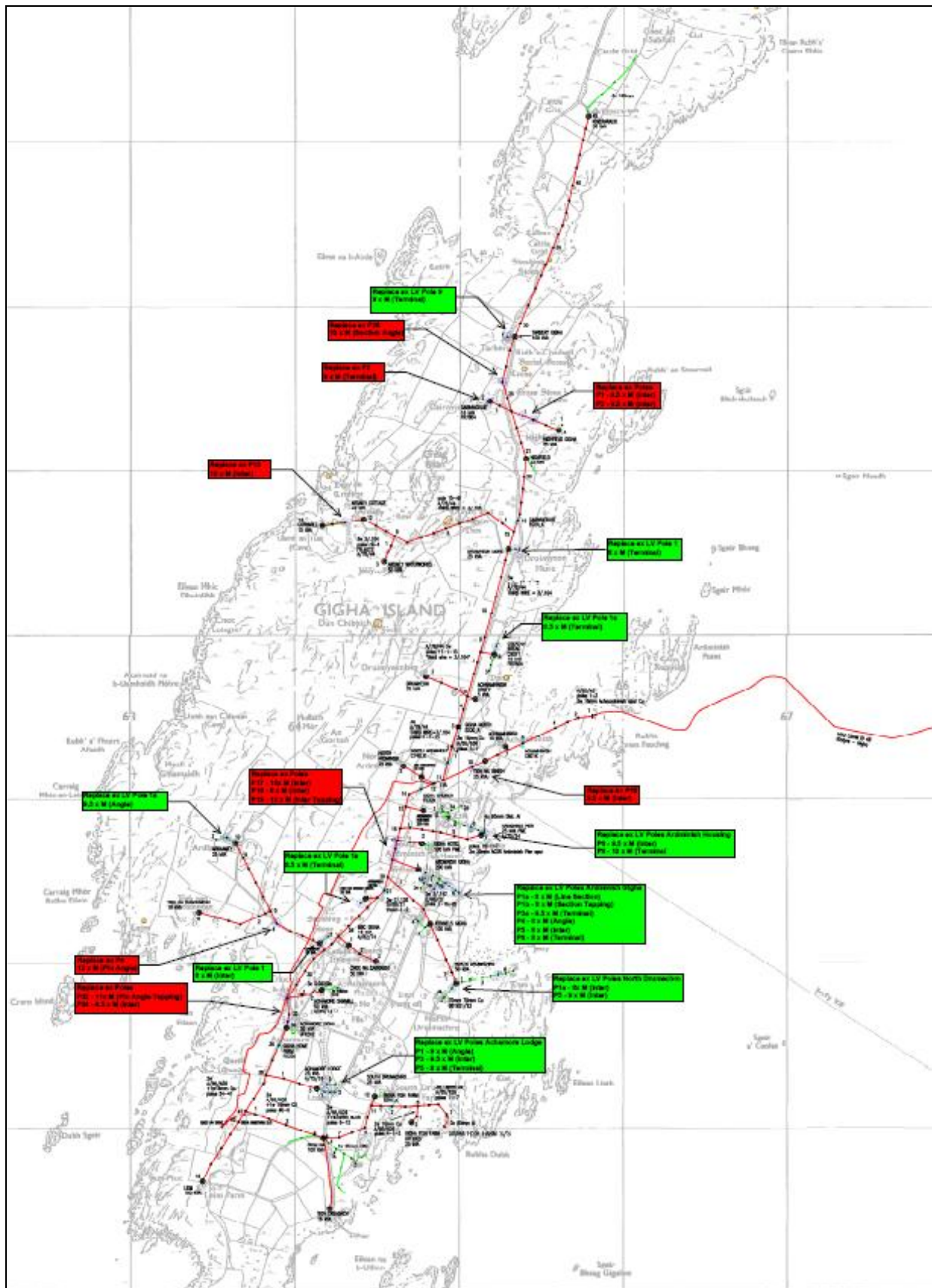
The island's population was at its highest (around 600) during the 18th century but it declined steadily until the beginning of the present century when residents numbered barely more than 100. However, following a community buyout in 2002 numbers have steadily increased with more than 160 people living on the island today.

THE WATCHING BRIEFS

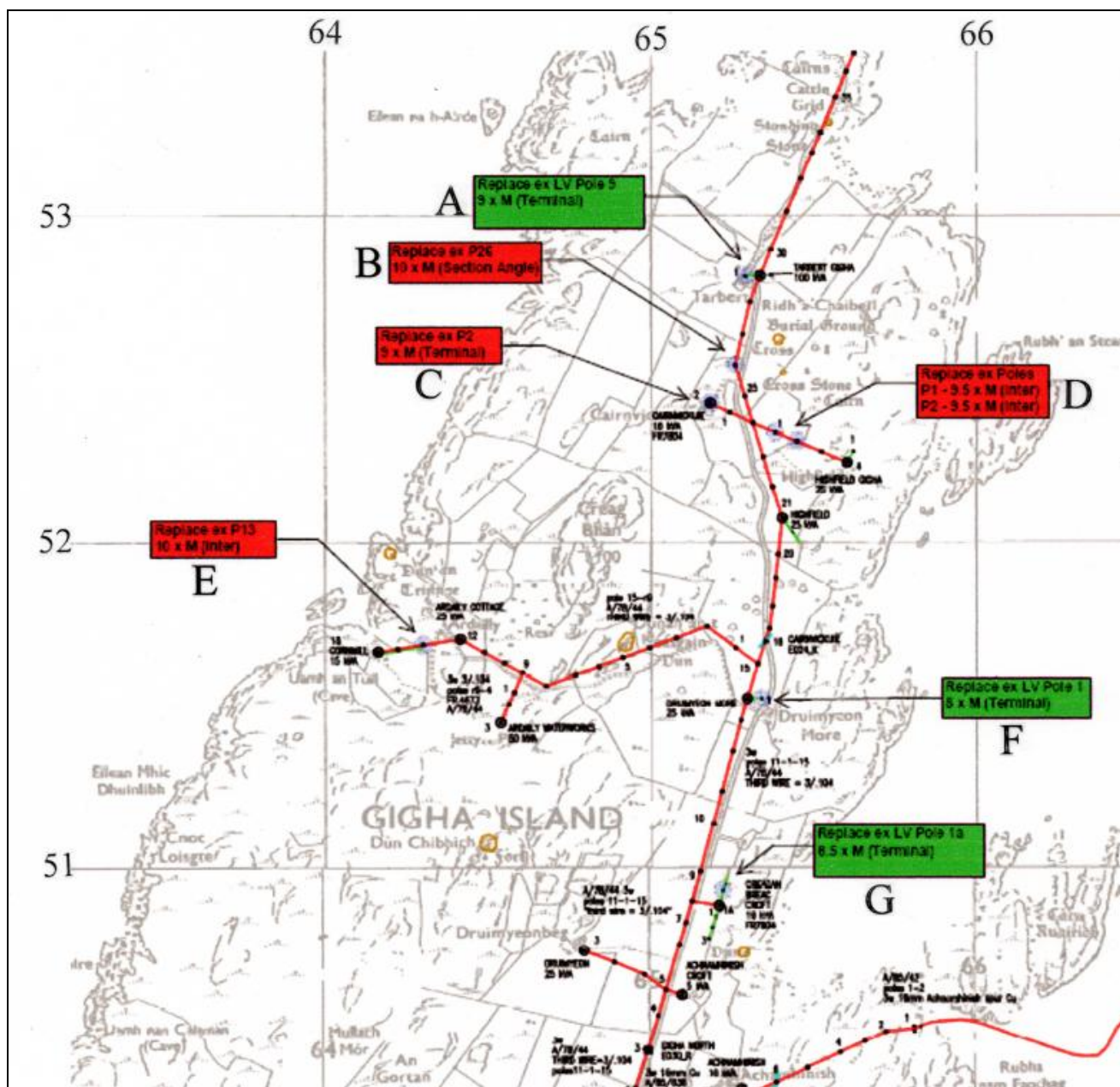
The refurbishment was undertaken on behalf of SSE by Power Lines, Pipes & Cables Ltd (PLPC) and the watching briefs by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology. This work was carried out in two stages, between 20 and 22 September and from 4 to 10 October 2016. The map overleaf shows the sections of lines where poles were replaced, red blocks signifying high voltage (HV) and green low voltage (LV) lines. These sections have been attributed letters on the larger-scale maps.

The areas are arranged on the maps in roughly alphabetical order, north to south, although the refurbishment work did not always adhere to that order. For the HV lines the intention, where possible, was to remove the old pole and place the new one directly into its socket. Where this could not be achieved a larger trench was excavated by machine.

Known sites and monuments of archaeological or historical significance are listed here according to databases held by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), eg NR65SE 20. Scheduled Ancient Monuments have been given the prefix SM, eg SM3227. Where RCAHMS has not catalogued a site the database maintained by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) is used, eg WoSASPin 62748.



Map showing areas of overhead line refurbishment on Gigha



North end of Gigha showing areas of operation

AREA A (LV)

Work at Pole 9 in Area A was undertaken independently prior to the commencement of this project.

AREA B (HV)

No work was undertaken at Pole 26 during this project.

AREA C (HV)

Pole 2 in Area C is located at NR 65185 51372, to the south of Cairnvikuie Farm within a field covered predominantly with bracken and reeds. Although the farm's name is thought to be derived from 'Carn Mhic Aoidhe' (McKay's Cairn) there is no record of a cairn having been identified in this area.

The old pole was removed from its socket and its replacement slotted directly into it, there being no requirement to excavate a new trench.

AREA D (HV)

Two poles were replaced in this area where a small cairn was reported in 1961 (DES 1961, 14). It was identified during this operation as a grass-covered mound at NR 65302 51360, towards the edge of a field close to the island's main road (see below).



Burial mound in Area D. Cairnvikuie Farm (Area C) can be seen beyond

Pole 1

Pole 1 is located in a pasture field at NR 65401 51285, some 200m south-east of the burial mound. The trench for the new pole measured 1.8m east/west by 0.7m wide and 1.6m deep. It cut through 0.25m of orange-brown sandy loam and underlying glacial till of orange-brown sand, silt, gravel and small pebbles. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered and no artefacts retrieved from the trench.

Pole 2

At NR 65477 51252, Pole 2 is located on a rocky knoll in an area covered with scrub, brambles and bracken. The trench for the new pole measured 2m east/west by 1m wide and 1.6m deep, cutting through 0.2m of topsoil which lay directly on bedrock. The earlier pole trench was probably excavated using explosives. Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered on this occasion.

AREA E (HV)

It had been intended to replace one pole (Pole 13) in this area but a recent examination of the line demonstrated that another (Pole 3) should also be replaced.

Pole 3

Pole 3 stands in a pasture field some 400m south-east of Dunan An T-seasgain (NR65SW 5), a fort or dun and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM3227). Its remains sit on a rocky knoll at NR 6493 5067.

This pole was lifted out of its socket and its replacement inserted directly into the hole without the need to excavate a trench.

Pole 13

Several archaeological features have been within the vicinity of Pole 13. These include: the remains of the former settlement of Ardaily (NR65SW 15) centred on NR 6427 5076; a corn mill (NR65SW 10) at NR 64150 50656; and, some 400m to the north, the fort of Dun an Trinnse (NR65SW 3; SM3229) at NR 6421 5095.

The replacement of Pole 13 did not require the excavation of a new trench, the new pole being inserted directly into the hole vacated when the old one was lifted out.

AREA F (LV)

Work in this area was not monitored because of the absence of sites of archaeological interest in the area.

AREA G (LV)

Pole 1a

Pole 1a is located at NR 65264 50023, at the base of a rock outcrop covered in gorse and brambles just beyond a pasture field. It stands some 190m north of Dun Buidhe (NR64NE 10) at NR 6529 4972 and within an area studded with the remains of rig and furrow cultivation.

The trench for the new pole was excavated to the immediate south of the old one and measured 1.8m north/south by 0.8m wide and 1.6m deep. It cut through 0.4m of dark brown loam and underlying glacial till of buff clay and shattered bedrock. No features or deposits of

archaeological significance were encountered within the trench and no artefacts retrieved from it.

AREA H (HV)

Pole 10 in this area was not replaced at this time.

AREA J (LV)

In 1924 a short cist burial (NR64NW 19) was uncovered during quarrying at NR 6495 4890, a short distance north of the schoolhouse at Ardminish and some 200m from Pole 6 of Area J.

Pole 6

Located to the immediate west of the old pole, the trench for the new pole was excavated through a grassy verge at NR 65076 48820. The trench, measuring 2m north/south by 0.8m wide, cut through backfill from the old pole trench as well as 0.2m of dark brown topsoil over shattered rock and underlying bedrock. Nothing of archaeological interest was exposed.



Trench for Pole 6 in Area J, viewed from the north

Pole 8

Pole 8 is located at NR 65151 48788, close to what is now the Boathouse Restaurant on the east shore of Gigha. The trench for the new pole was opened to the west of the old pole and measured only 0.8m east/west by 0.6m wide. Only the backfill from the earlier trench and, at a depth of 0.6m, bedrock were exposed.

AREA K (HV)

Prehistoric activity in the vicinity of Area K has been attested by a cup-marked boulder (NR64NW 76) identified at NR 6480 4840 and a flint axe rough-out and a spindle whorl (NR64NW 10) found at approximately NR 6470 4870, to the rear of the Gigha Hotel.

The three poles (17, 18 and 19) replaced in Area K stand at the edge of a pasture field, on ground sloping down towards the east coast of the island.

Pole 17

New Pole 17, a tapping pole located at NR 64666 48707, was placed directly into the hole resulting from the removal of the old pole, there being no need to excavate a trench.



Area K: new Poles 17, 18 and 19 being inserted; viewed from the north

Pole 18

It was not possible to insert the new Pole 18 into the socket from the old one and a new trench had to be excavated at NR 64660 48653. It measured 2m north/south by 0.8m wide and 1.6m deep although bedrock was reached at 0.2m, below 0.2m of orange-brown topsoil. Nothing of archaeological interest was found.

Pole 19

New Pole 19 was placed directly into the socket from the old one at NR 64654 48586.

AREA L (LV)

Pole 1a in Area L was not replaced during this operation.

AREA M (LV)

A total of six poles, arranged on two lines in a flat, very wet field, were to be replaced. However, Poles 1a, 1b and 3a, in a line to the rear of a row of houses, were not changed during this phase of work.

In 2010 several features were uncovered during an archaeologically controlled topsoil strip for the construction of a new access road to nearby Tigh an Rubha (WoSASPin 62748). These features included two groups of pits, several of them interpreted as fire pits.

Pole 4

The trench for Pole 4 measured 1.8m north/south by 0.8m wide and was excavated to the north of the old pole, at NR 64935 48487. Bedrock was reached below 0.2m of clayey topsoil with nothing of archaeological significance being uncovered. The trench became waterlogged almost immediately after it was opened.

Pole 5

Located at NR 64974 48451, the trench for the new pole was excavated to the north of the old one. It measured 1.8m north/south by 0.7m wide and 1.6m deep, cutting through coarse grass, 0.4m of black, peaty topsoil and glacial till of pink-brown clay and small, rounded boulders. Nothing of interest was uncovered.



Replacing Pole 5 in Area M

Pole 6

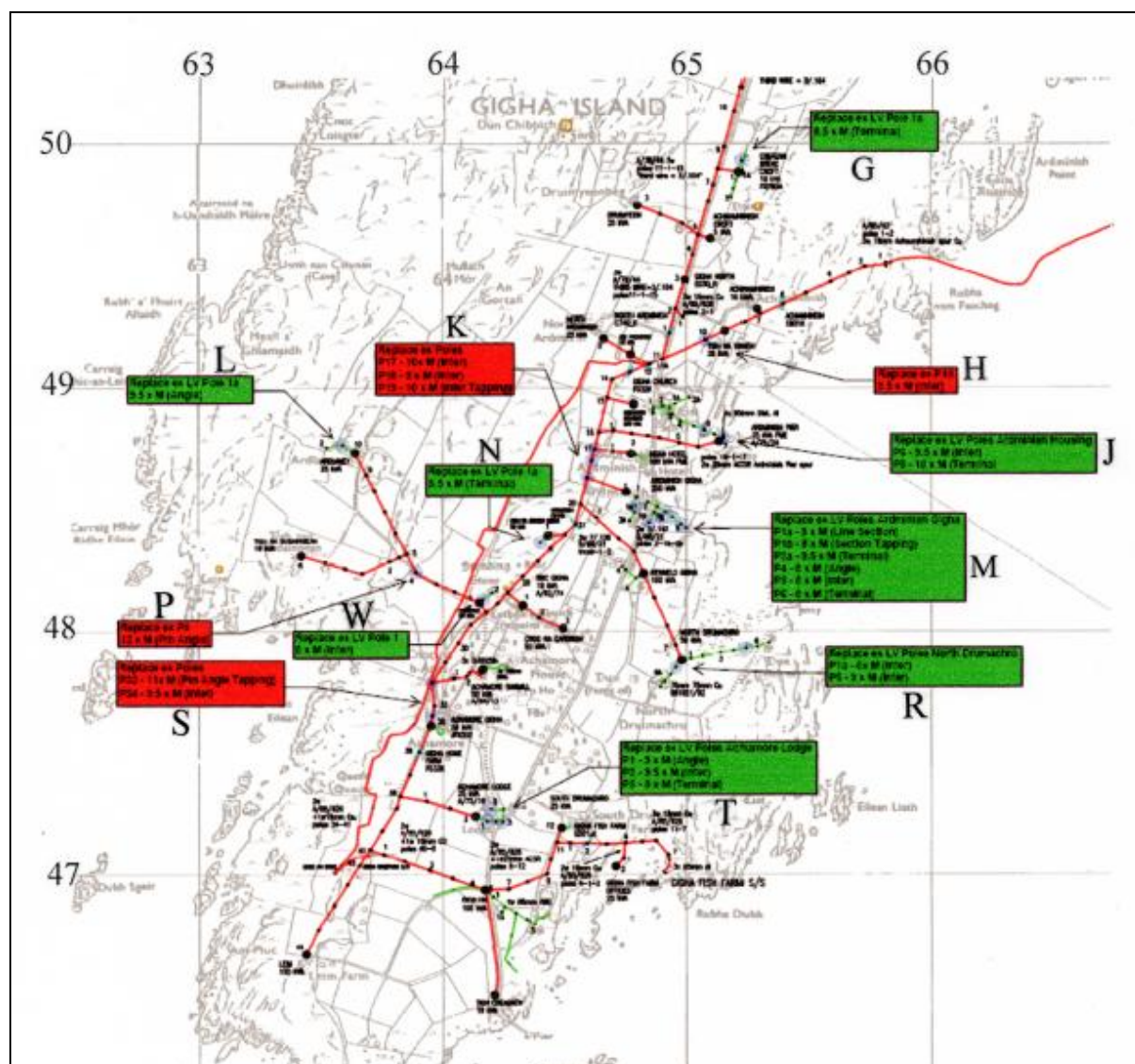
The old pole stood at the base of a ridge of bedrock at NR 65013 48415, some 5m north-west of Tigh an Rubha. The trench for the new pole was located to the immediate west of the old pole and measured 1.5m east/west by 0.7m wide. Other than the backfill from the old pole trench, it cut through 0.3m of dark brown loam and 0.7m of pale brown glacial clay and pebbles which bottomed onto bedrock.

AREA N (LV)

Pole 1 in Area N was not changed during this operation.

AREA P (HV)

Pole 4 at NR 63884 48251 in Area P was replaced without the need to excavate a trench for the new pole.



South end of Gigha showing areas of operation

AREA R (LV)

Each of the two poles changed within Area R is located relatively close to the remains of a dun. One (NR64NW 12) is located at NR 6478 4780, to the west of Pole 1a and a short distance north of North Druimachro; the remains of the second (NR64NE 2) stand at NR 6547 4787, close to Pole 5 and to Gallochoille Cottage. In addition, cists (NR64NE 1) have been found near North Druimachro Farm although their precise locations remain unknown.

Pole 1a

The trench for the new pole was excavated to the north-east of the old one, at NR 64956 47815 on sloping ground uphill from a waterlogged field. It measured 1.8m north-east/south-west by 0.6m wide and 1.6m deep, cutting through 0.4m of dark brown, peaty topsoil and the yellow and grey glacial clay which lay below it. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were uncovered in this trench and no finds retrieved from it.



Trench for new Pole 1a, Area R, viewed from the north-west

Pole 5

Located at NR 65244 47926 in an area densely covered with small trees, brambles, gorse and bracken, the trench for the new pole measured 1.8m north-west/south-east by 0.6m wide and 1.6m wide. It was excavated through 0.6m of black, peaty soil and the grey glacial clay and bedrock which lay beneath it. Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered at this location.

AREA S (HV)

Excavations for Poles 32 and 34 in Area S were not monitored, there being no known archaeological sites in their vicinity.

AREA T (LV)

Although there are no known sites of archaeological interest in this area, sufficient time was available to monitor pole-changing around Achamore Lodge.

Pole 1

The trench for Pole 1 was located to the north of the old pole, at NR 64196 47245, against the garden wall of Achamore Lodge in an area of deciduous woodland. It measured 1.8m east/west by 0.8m wide and 1.6m deep, cutting only through backfill from the old pole which gave onto glacial till of orange sand and pebbles. Nothing of archaeological significance was exposed in this trench and only recent artefacts retrieved from it.

Pole 3

Pole 3 is located at NR 64262 47226, between a field wall and the main road. The trench for the new pole was opened to the south of the old one and measured 1.8m north/south by 0.8m wide and 1.6m deep. It was excavated through backfill from the old pole together with 0.5m of dark topsoil and undisturbed pale yellow beach sand. No features or deposits of archaeological interest were uncovered.

Pole 5

Pole 5 stands to the south of Creamery Cottage, at NR 64283 47270. The trench for the new pole, to the immediate south of the old pole, measured 1.5m north/south by 0.8m wide and cut through turf, 0.3m of dark garden soil and glacial till of coarse orange sand, gravel and pebbles to a total depth of 1.6m. Nothing of archaeological significance was found in this trench.

AREA W (LV)

Several sites of prehistoric and later dates are located in the vicinity of Keils Cottages near where Pole 1 of Area W stands. These include: an ogham stone (NR64NW; SM259) at NR 6426 4817; cists (NR64NW 26) at NR 6427 4818); a standing stone (NR64NW 3) at NR 6420 4806; and St Cathan's Church and Kilchattan Burial Ground (NR64NW 1; SW3307) at NR 6433 4808.

Pole 1 sits atop a small ridge of rock at NR 64166 48126, a short distance west of Keils Cottages. Only a very thin layer of soil overlay bedrock which was probably removed by explosives for the old pole whereas a breaker attached to a mechanical excavator was employed in 2016.

REFERENCE

DES Discovery & Excavation in Scotland. Archaeology Scotland.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

Only a small number of the photographs listed below are contained within this report. The complete catalogue forms part of the project archive deposited with RCAHMS.

- 1 Area C: old Pole 1 being removed; viewed from the north
- 2 Area D: burial mound at NR 65302 51360; viewed from the south
- 3 Area D: burial mound at NR 65302 51360; viewed from the east
- 4-5 Area D: old Pole 1 being removed; viewed from the north
- 6-7 Area D: old Pole 2 being removed; viewed from the south
- 8 Area D: trench for new Pole 2; viewed from the south
- 9 Area D: trench for new Pole 1; viewed from the south
- 10 Area K: Pole 19 being placed in trench; viewed from the west
- 11 Area K: Poles 17, 18 and 19; viewed from the north
- 12 Area K: trench for Pole 18; viewed from the west
- 13 Area K: trench for Pole 18; viewed from the north
- 14 Area W: trench for Pole 1 being cut through bedrock; viewed from the south
- 15 Area W: trench for Pole 1 being excavated; viewed from the south-east
- 16 Standing stone NR65SE 22; viewed from the north-west
- 17 Standing stone NR65SE 22; viewed from the south
- 18 Cairns NR65SE 10 and NR65SE 15; viewed from the east
- 19 Cairns NR65SE 10 and NR65SE 15; viewed from the south-east
- 20 Area J: trench for Pole 6; viewed from the north
- 21 Area J: trench for Pole 8; viewed from the north
- 22 Area M: trench for Pole 5; viewed from the north-west
- 23 Area M: trench for Pole 5; viewed from the east
- 24 Area M: trench for Pole 4; viewed from the north
- 25 Area R: trench for Pole 1a; viewed from the north-west
- 26 Area R: attempting to access Pole 5
- 27 Area R: trench for Pole 5 excavated as far as bedrock; viewed from the south-east
- 28 Area G: trench for Pole 1a; viewed from the west
- 29 Area G: new Pole 1a being inserted into socket; viewed from the west
- 30 Area M: trench for Pole 6; viewed from the west
- 31 Area T: trench for Pole 1; viewed from the north
- 32 Area T: trench for Pole 5; viewed from the east
- 33 Area T: trench for Pole 3; viewed from the west
- 34 Area T: positioning new Pole 3; viewed from the south