

Scotia Archaeology

REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN
ELECTRICITY NETWORKS

RE-ROUTING OF 33KV POWER LINE
AT CROFTMORAIG,
KENMORE, PERTSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF
MARCH 2017

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

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken for Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) during the excavation of trenches for the re-routing of a 33kv power line at Croftmoraig, Kenmore, Perthshire. This work was commissioned by Denise Oudney of SSEN and carried out by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology in March 2017.

CROFTMORAIG

Croftmoraig is a small hamlet on the south side of the A827 road, 6km west of Aberfeldy and 3km north-east of Kenmore in Perthshire. At Croftmoraig the land is reasonably flat, rising towards the south up the side of the Tay valley. To the west of the farm is the well known Croftmoraig Stone Circle (NN74NE 12), a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM5024). It was excavated in 1965 (Piggott & Simpson 1971) when the following chronology was determined.



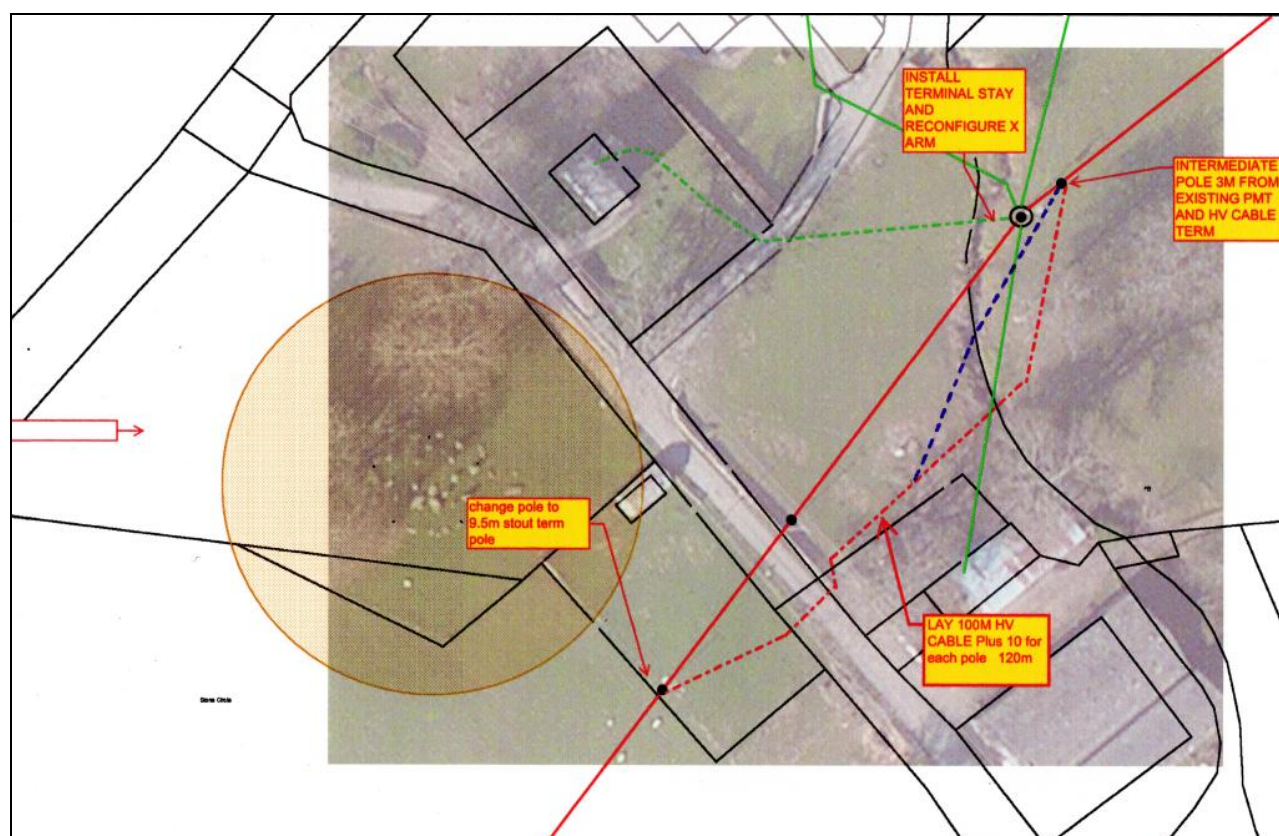
Croftmoraig Stone Circle viewed from the south-east

The initial phase of the monument consisted of a setting of 14 timber posts opening to the south-west. This was supplanted by an oval setting of stones outside of which a stone circle and two outliers were added in its third and final phase. A few graves were also uncovered although these had been robbed. The three phases of structural activity are believed to span the late Neolithic and Early Bronze Ages.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief was undertaken because of the proximity of the stone circle, one end of the cable trench being only a short distance beyond the limit of the scheduled area. Small-scale archaeological investigations undertaken by the Scottish Urban Archaeology Trust (DES 2006, 131) and by Scotia Archaeology (DES 2009, 147) in advance of house-building some 100m north-west of the stone circle uncovered a small number of archaeological features. Although some of these features may have been prehistoric in date, they could well be contemporary with the nearby 19th-century farm.

The overhead power line from Kenmore to Aberfeldy passes through Croftmoraig, the span between Poles 36 and 38 running across the plot of a proposed new domestic residence. As a consequence, it was decided to run this part of the line underground, thus requiring the excavation of a trench between those two poles as well as small trenches for a new Pole 36 and an additional pole a short distance east of Pole 38.



Plan of the new cable trench. The stone circle is highlighted on the left of the drawing

The cable trench was dug by staff of Bolfracks Estate, the current owners of this land, on Monday 13 March and the pole trenches by SSEN operatives on Wednesday 15 March 2017. Both days were dry but cold and predominantly cloudy and windy.

The cable trench

The route of the cable trench is shown on a drawing supplied by SSEN which is reproduced above. The unbroken red line depicts the course of the 33kV overhead power line and the unbroken green lines 11kV overhead lines serving the farm and other houses at Croftmoraig.

Broken lines show the routes of underground cables: the one in green runs to an existing domestic residence while the red one depicts the intended course of the new cable. However, for operational reasons the latter's route had to be amended, the deviation being shown here as a purple broken line.

The overall length of the cable route was approximately 100m, running north-eastwards from Pole 36 at the south-west end of a small field, across a farm road and another field before crossing an unnamed burn, terminating just beyond Pole 38.



*The south-west end of the cable trench, viewed from the north-east.
The original Pole 36 is in the distance*

The cable trench was 0.7m wide and 1.0m deep. It cut through short grass and underlying topsoil of mid-brown loam with some gravel and pebbles which maintained a consistent depth of 0.3-0.4m over most of its length. This material overlay glacial deposits of orange-brown silt, gravel, pebbles and small boulders. Where the trench crossed the farm road the topsoil had been replaced by road make-up comprising boulders and gravel.

As it approached the burn, the topsoil became shallower and poorer in quality, containing a high incidence of boulders within it.

Several blue alkathene water pipes were exposed on either side of the farm road, these pipes supplying the farm and existing domestic residences nearby.



The north-east section of the cable trench with excavation approaching the burn and Pole 38

No structures, features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered in the cable trench and the only artefacts recovered from it dated to the late 19th and 20th centuries.

Pole trenches

The new Pole 36 was located at NN 79795 47225, 1m east of the existing one which was removed thereafter. Its trench measured 1.2m by 0.6m and 1.6m deep. The materials thus revealed were identical to those uncovered in the cable trench: 0.3m of topsoil over glacial till of silt, gravel and pebbles. Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered in this trench.

The cable trench extended 3m beyond Pole 38 where an intermediate pole was inserted to accommodate a transformer to serve the new property, there being a transformer already attached to the extant pole. Its trench, located at NN 79846 47295, measured 1.2m by 0.6m and 1.6m deep. Topsoil was barely 0.2m deep at this point and overlay glacial and riverine deposits of gravel, pebbles and rubble. Nothing of archaeological interest was encountered in this trench.

CONCLUSIONS

No features or deposits of archaeological relevance were uncovered and no artefacts predating the 19th century were retrieved during these operations. Nevertheless, it is clear that the proximity of the multi-phase prehistoric stone circle should dictate that any future

developments involving ground disturbance at Croftmoraig should be accompanied by an archaeological strategy that takes into account the importance of this monument.

REFERENCES

DES *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*. Archaeology Scotland. Edinburgh.

Piggott, S & Simpson, D D A 1971 'Excavation of a stone circle at Croft Moraig, Perthshire, Scotland', *Proc Prehist Soc*, 37, 1, 1-15.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The photographs listed below comprise archive material for this site and not all of them are included in this report.

- 1 View to the south-west along the cable trench to Pole 36
- 2 The cable trench crossing the farm road, viewed from the south-west
- 3-4 Croftmoraig stone circle, viewed from the south-east
- 5 Croftmoraig stone circle, viewed from the east
- 6-7 Croftmoraig stone circle, viewed from the south-west
- 8 View from the south-west along the cable trench in the east field
- 9-10 The cable trench crossing the burn, viewed from the south-west
- 11-12 Trench for the new pole beyond Pole 38, viewed from the north-east
- 13-14 Trench for new Pole 36, viewed from the north-east