

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN
ELECTRICITY NETWORKS AND
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND**

**EXCAVATIONS AT
DEMOLISHED STRUCTURE
AT CRAIGNAVAR TOWNSHIP,
GLEN ALMOND, PERTHSHIRE**

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INTRODUCTION

This document describes the results of investigations undertaken at the site of the derelict pre-Improvement township of Craignavar, Glen Almond, Perthshire. This work was carried out following the unauthorised partial demolition of a ruined structure during the refurbishment of an overhead power line that runs through the settlement. The site is designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), one protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979, meaning that the permission of Historic Environment Scotland (HES) would be required before any such work could commence.

The overhead power line passes east/west through Craignavar, one of its poles (Pole 107) standing in the north-east corner of the scheduled area. This pole was replaced in March 2017, when damage was wrought to a small building at the east end of the township. As a consequence, HES called an on-site meeting with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) and Scotia Archaeology on 10 August 2017 to determine the best course of action to protect and investigate the surviving archaeological record.

HES decided that before further on-site work was undertaken SSEN should complete a Scheduled Monument Consent form and an accompanying Mitigation Strategy document outlining the strategy for carrying out this work. SSEN commissioned Scotia Archaeology to produce this document which was subsequently approved by HES.

THE SITE



*Extract from first edition OS 6-inch map
showing the remains of Craignavar in the mid-19th century*

Craignavar now comprises the remains of at least 15 rectangular buildings and a corn-drying kiln, together with several enclosures and field walls, set into a near-level shelf of land on the

lower slopes of Meall Reamhar on the north side of Glen Almond. It is located 1km west of Newton Bridge and 10km north of Crieff and is centred on approximately NN 8780 3175.

The township is listed as NN83SE 4 by in the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE); its Scheduled Monument Number is SM10853, the scheduled area extending short distances in each direction beyond the limits of the buildings and enclosures.

Although no obvious date can be ascribed to Craignavar, it is thought likely that its origins lie within the 18th century although some of the visible structures probably date to the following century. On the evidence of the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (Perthshire 1867, sheet 83) which shows all the buildings to be roofless, it had been abandoned by the middle of that century.

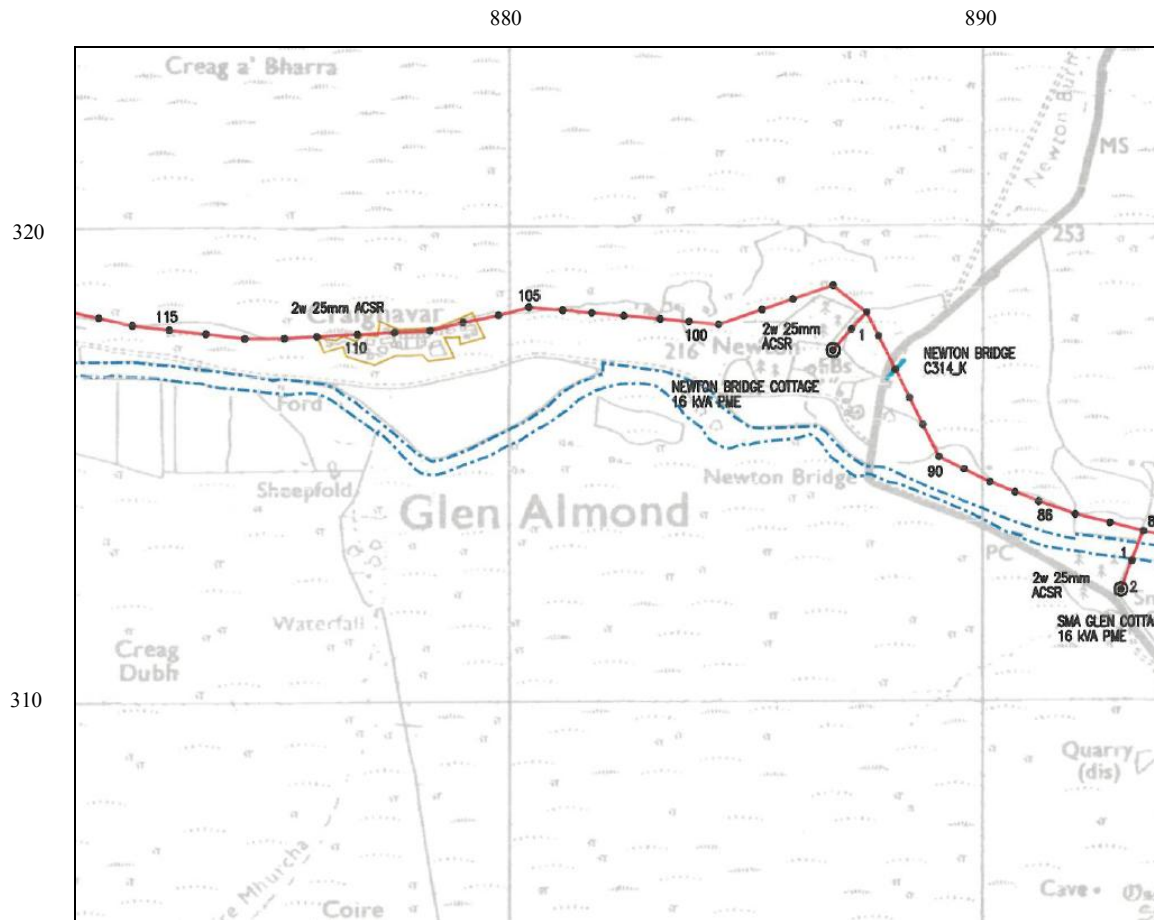


Aerial view of Craignavar from the south, showing the small demolished structure (labelled SITE) in its far north-east corner

In March 2017 SSEN replaced Pole 108, situated some 60m east of Craignavar. At the same time it was decided that Pole 107 was also in a parlous state and would need to be replaced too. It is unfortunate that during that operation significant damage was wrought on one of the structures within Craignavar. It appears that masonry from the demolished building was used to level some of the waterlogged ground nearby to enable easy access for mechanical excavators and other machinery to the pole to assist in its erection.

The damage comprised the destruction of a small building (described here as Structure A) in the extreme north-east corner of the site (see photograph above). It was also thought that part of a nearby field wall, perhaps a head-dyke, was also damaged although it has been shown

since that the wall belonged to an enclosure associated with the same farmstead containing Structure A (see below).



Map, based on one supplied by SSEN, showing the location of Craignavar and the power line running through it

The stone from which Craignavar was built is of very local origin, being mainly metamorphic with occasional boulders of igneous material. Large amounts of scree are visible on the steep slope to the north of the settlement, some of the boulders being massive.

THE INVESTIGATIONS

The investigations were carried out by John Lewis and Sam Scott of Scotia Archaeology between 7 and 9 May 2018 during weather ranging from warm and sunny to cold, wet and windy. Initially it was difficult to discern how much of Structure A had survived and it was only after some of the extraneous rubble deposited by SSEN had been removed that its outline became clearer.

All of the spoil was removed by hand and stored a short distance from Structure A. It had been the intention to take this material beyond the limits of the scheduled area but the waterlogged, slippery conditions rendered this policy inadvisable on health and safety grounds.

Structure A

Located at the extreme north-east corner of Craignavar, this small building appears to have been one unit of a farmstead comprising a long-house aligned east/west and divided into a series of compartments probably with a byre at its east end, together with what may have been a barn set at right angles to it. Stretching from the west end of the long-house to Structure A were the remains of a field wall enclosing what may have been a stack yard. It is interesting to note that the surviving remains of the enclosure wall spread over the demolished north wall of Structure A demonstrating that the enclosure was not an original feature.



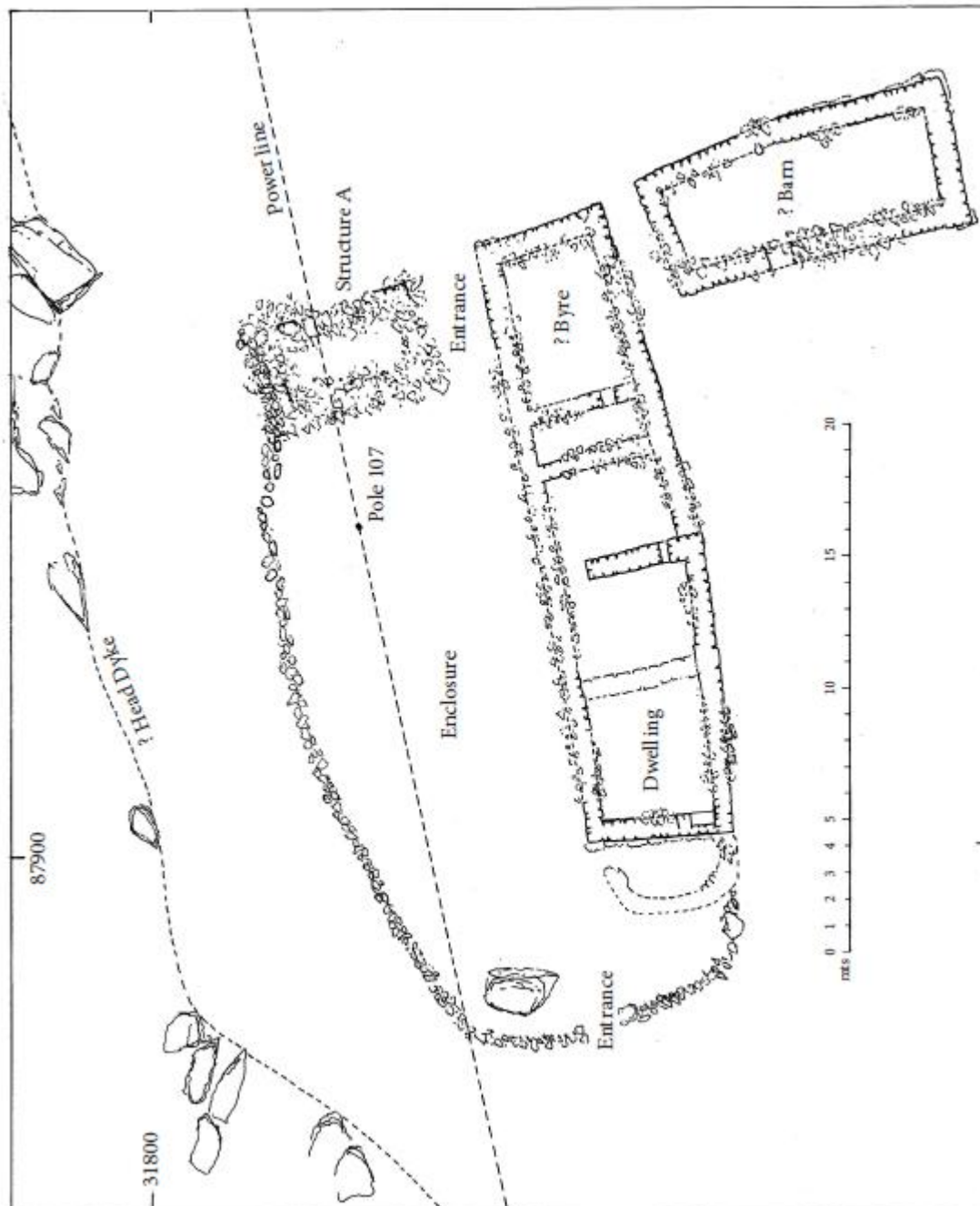
*View, from the east, of replacement Pole 107
with demolished Structure A in the foreground*

Rubble resulting from the deliberate collapse of its walls and from erosion was removed by hand from the building's interior. Within the rubble was dark brown, silty material washed in from the surrounding area by water pouring off the adjacent slope. When Craignavar was inhabited the water would have been diverted around the buildings but clearly drains have since become silted up and perhaps damaged. Water ran through Structure A during the entire investigation and clearly will continue to do so in future. It collected on the south side of the building despite some of it escaping through a drain in its south-east corner. This drain is described in more detail below.

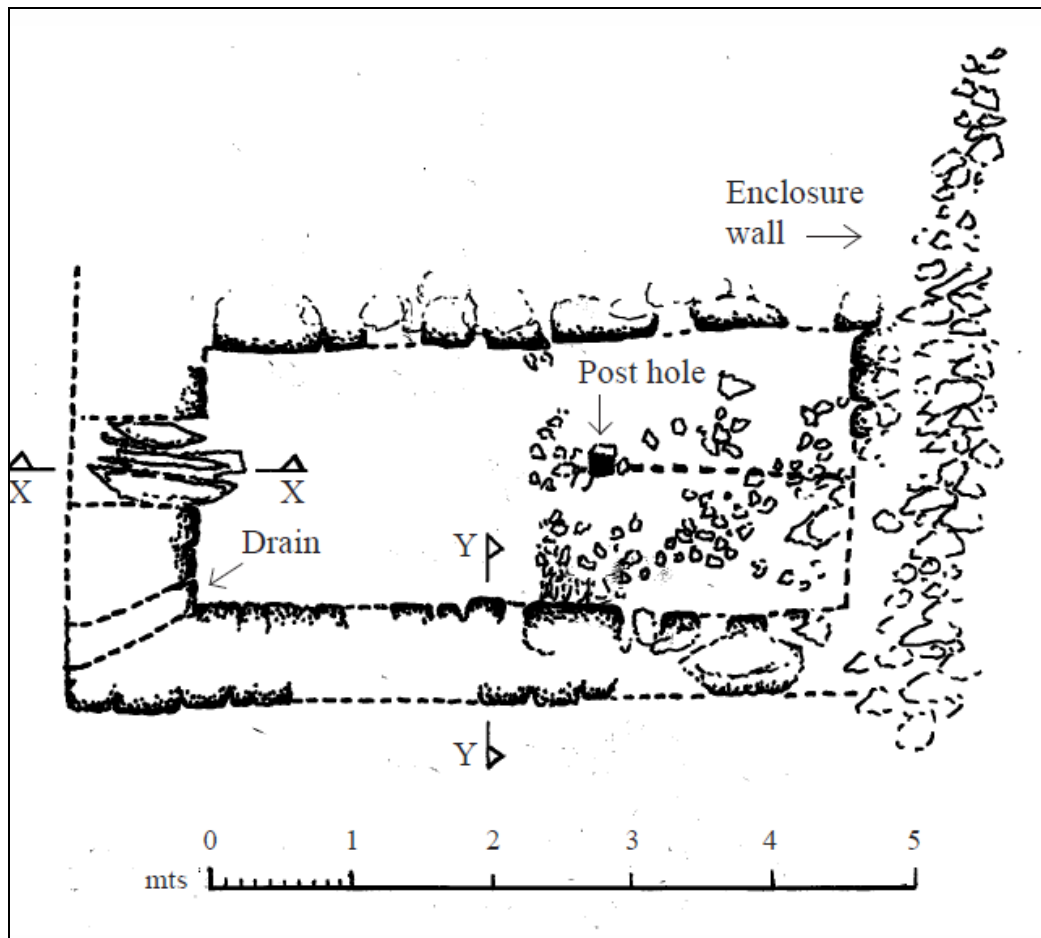
Structure A was centred on NN 87921 31793 and measured 4.6m north/south by 1.9m wide internally within walls built of random rubble of local origin. Its east and west walls were 0.7m thick while its gables were more substantial at 0.9m thick. The building was sunk some 0.2-0.3m into the ground, the lower courses of the west wall functioning effectively as a

retaining wall. Over most of their lengths the walls stood to a height of 0.3-0.4m although at the south-west corner of the building the masonry attained a maximum height of 0.9m.

The remains of a cobbled floor, set into the underlying glacial till of orange sand and gravel, survived in the north half of Structure A but was absent elsewhere. Probing in the south half of the building, which continued to fill with water, failed to identify anything that could be construed as a stone floor.



Structure A and associated buildings



Structure A showing excavated features

Set into the cobbles, 1.8m from the north wall and midway across the building's width, was a small socket, 140mm square and 50mm deep. It would have carried a timber upright probably supporting a partition dividing the north end of the building into two stalls. The presumed position of this division is shown as a broken line in the plan of Structure A.

Running through the south-east corner of Structure A was a drain, 300mm wide, presumably to remove fluid waste from the interior of the building. Its function would have been enhanced by the natural north to south slope within the building. Unblocking the drain during the excavation helped alleviate flooding but this action could not prevent water flowing into it from the north.



North end of Structure A showing some of the cobbled floor in situ



Drain exiting from the south-east corner of Structure A

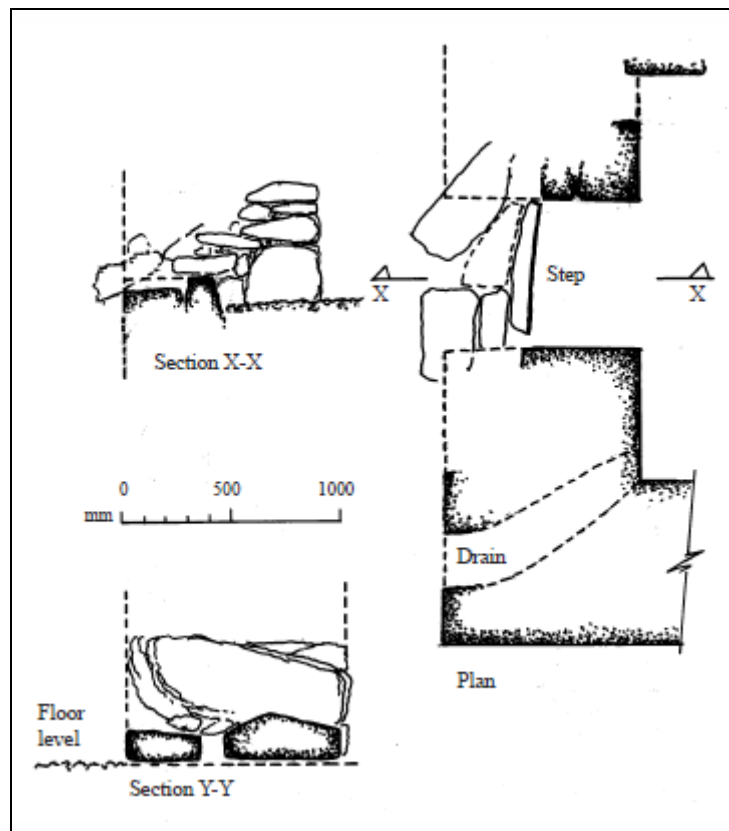


Blocked doorway in the south wall



The unblocked doorway in the south wall

There was an opening, 0.7m wide, in the south wall that had been blocked at some stage. This doorway, with a step midway through it, gave access to a passage leading into the east side of the enclosure. It is not obvious why the opening was blocked.



Plan of doorway in south wall and sections X-X and Y-Y

In common with all other buildings at Craignavar, Structure A appeared initially to have been of drystone construction. However, a close examination of one of the large foundation stones in its east wall revealed traces of sandy clay which is thought to have been used for bedding (but not bonding) the structure's masonry. An investigation elsewhere in the settlement identified similar material within the lower courses of some of its buildings. This suggests that at least some of the buildings utilized bedding material for their masonry, material that would have leached out from the upper courses once the roofs had been removed.

Other features

It is a matter of debate whether there was a head-dyke at Craignavar. There are traces of such a structure to the east of the township but upslope from the settlement itself the only candidate for such a structure is a spread of very large boulders deposited naturally as scree. It is possible that smaller stones were placed between these boulders and then later removed but there is no clear evidence of this.

FINDS

No artefacts of any age were retrieved from the excavation.

CONCLUSIONS

It came as something of a surprise to the excavators just how much of Structure A survived. The complete outline of the building could be traced although the outer face of its west wall was set into the ground, thus acting in effect as a retaining wall at the excavated level.

It is thought likely that this building was used, at least originally, as a small byre for two cows. The cattle would have been kept in stalls at the north end of the building, allowing waste to flow downhill towards the drain in the south-east corner. Bedding of straw would have been topped up inside this byre and cleared out periodically onto a midden to be spread on cultivated land in the spring.

There is no obvious reason why the doorway in the south wall was blocked. Denying access to its interior suggests that the building was no longer in use and perhaps at least part-demolished, the blocking perhaps stopping animals wandering into the enclosure. The enclosure itself appears to post-date the demise of Structure A, at least on the evidence of the masonry of the former overlying the demolished north wall.

It was a common arrangement at such settlements for individual farmhouses to incorporate a byre at one end of the building. However, it is conceivable that at some stage at this particular farmstead (and perhaps others at Craignavar and elsewhere) the house was given over completely to domestic apartments with cattle over-wintering in a separate building such as Structure A.

FUTURE WORK

Following a meeting on 10 May 2018 between Richard Heawood of HES and John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology, acting on behalf of SSEN, it was decided that the exposed remains of Structure A should be protected. This will be achieved by covering the floor of the building with a geotextile membrane which will be concealed by a thin layer of aggregate (type 1) over which some of the excavated rubble will be replaced. This work is to be carried out carefully under archaeological supervision.

In addition, HES requested that the blocking in the south wall opening should be replaced. Following these operations, SSEN will remove any remaining spoil from the site.

While the findings of the investigations at Craignavar proved more interesting than might have been expected, they are not considered to be sufficient to warrant publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Several of the photographs listed below are included in this report. The full record forms part of the site archive.

- 1-2 The site viewed from the west
- 3-5 The site viewed from the east
- 6 Structure A viewed from the north
- 7 Structure A and Pole 107 viewed from the east
- 8 Structure A and associated farmstead viewed from the north
- 9-15 Shots from various directions of Structure after the removal of most of the rubble from its interior
- 16-19 General shots of Craignavar
- 20 Structure A, its interior fully excavated, viewed from the south
- 21-22 The north end of Structure A, viewed from the south, showing the cobbled floor
- 23 The cobbled floor, viewed from the south
- 24 The post setting in the cobbled floor, viewed from the south
- 25 The drain in the south-east corner of Structure A, viewed from the north
- 26-27 The outlet of the drain, viewed from the south
- 28 View of Structure A, from the south, showing the remains of the enclosure wall overlying the building's north wall
- 29 View from the north of the south wall of Structure A showing the blocked doorway
- 30 The south wall with the blocking removed from the door, viewed from the south
- 31 The flooded south end of Structure A with the doorway unblocked, viewed from the north