

# *Scotia Archaeology*

**REPORT  
TO  
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN  
ELECTRICITY NETWORKS**

**UNDERGROUND POWER SUPPLY  
TO THE LAGG,  
ABERFELDY, PERTHSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF  
JUNE 2018**

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## INTRODUCTION

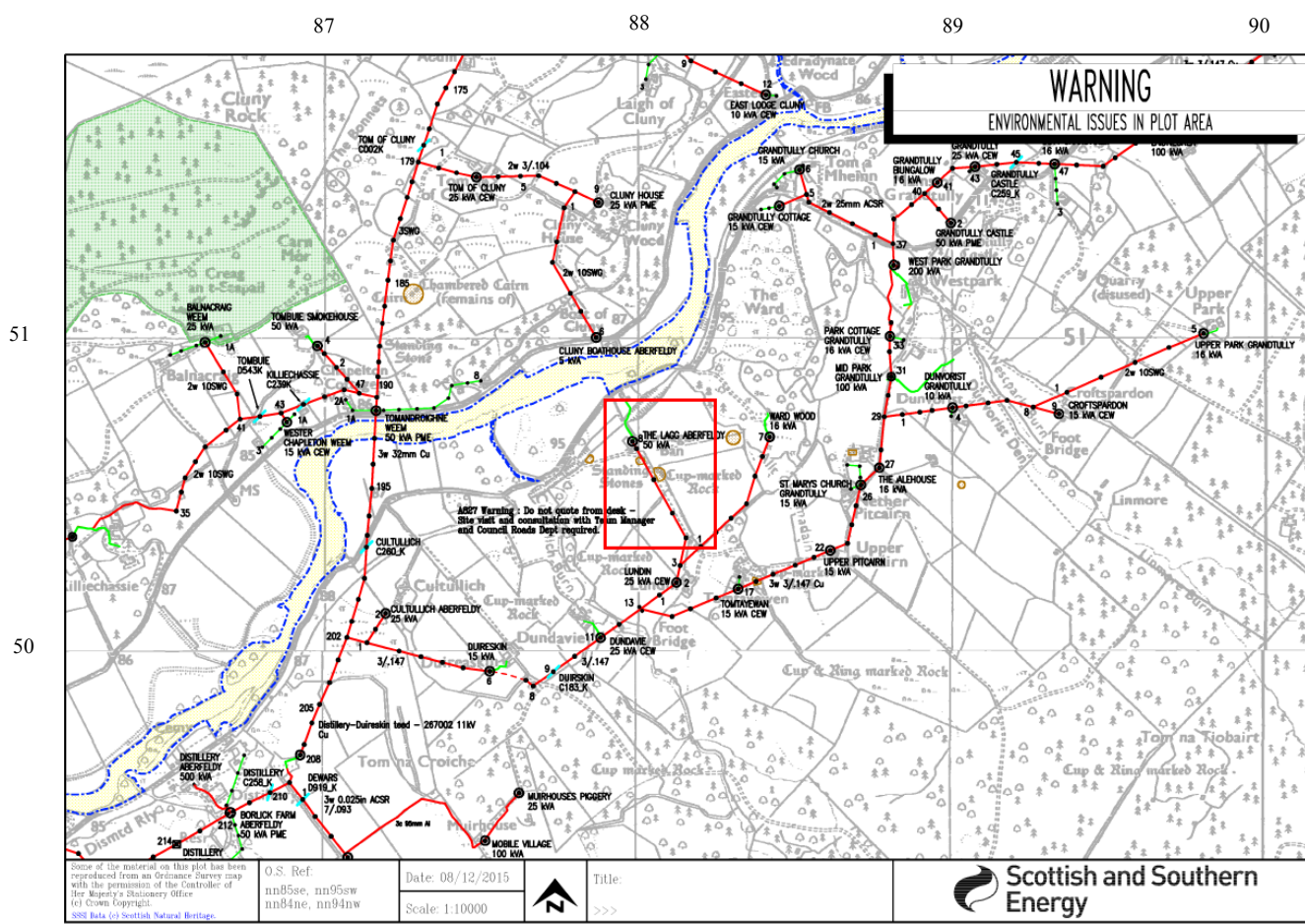
This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken in June 2018 for Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) during the excavation of a trench to accommodate an underground power supply to replace an existing overhead line. The line supplies two properties: Creagan Ban, also known as Distillery Cottage; and The Lagg which sits on the south side of the A827 road, 3km north-east of Aberfeldy, Perthshire.

The overhead line runs very close to a mature oak tree whose growth was deemed to be potentially detrimental to the workings of the line. This meant either that the tree would have to be felled or the line diverted underground, the latter option being preferred by the landowner, Mr Patrick Fotheringham, resident of The Lagg.

## THE SITE

Several important prehistoric monuments are located near to the power line, one of which lies directly beneath it with the oak tree standing within it. Those sites are described below, using the catalogue numbers in the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE), formerly the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCHAMS).

Scheduled ancient monuments are also given their monument number, for example SM1563.



*Location map around The Lagg: the area of investigation is within the red box*



**NN85SE 9**

At NN 8806 5056 are four standing stones forming a small circle sat on artificially levelled ground. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM1563).

The site was partially excavated in 1964 when a central pit containing burnt bone was identified. Although the site remains to be interpreted satisfactorily, it appears likely that the sequence of events at this site began with a pit being dug on the mound and cremated bone deposited in it. Thereafter the pit was refilled and the stones erected.

A second cremation was found at the base of one of the stones and sherds of a corded beaker and a collared urn were also identified within the circle. However, the precise sequence of events at this spot remains unclear.

Some 12m to the south-east of the standing stones is a large cup-marked rock bearing 43 cups.

The existing overhead line runs directly over this monument.



*The stone circle, viewed from the south-east.  
Note the mature oak within the monument*

## NN85SE 8

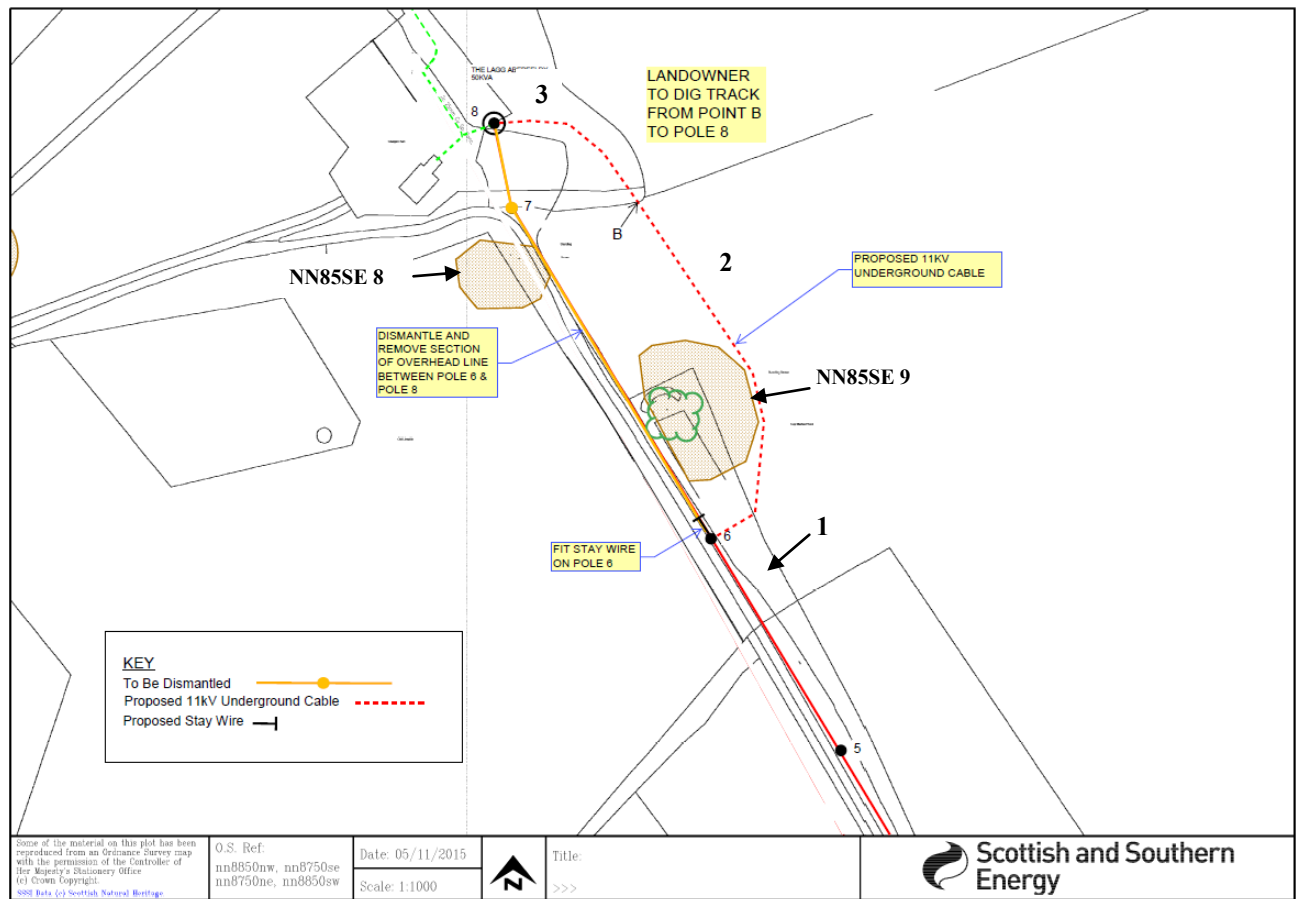
A pair of standing stones are located around NN 8802 5062 although one stone has been moved a short distance in recent times. The stones constitute a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM1565). The existing overhead line runs directly over the east edge of this monument.

## NN85SE 20

Located at NN 8783 5059 is a single standing stone, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM1564). It stands some 150m west of the overhead line and 250m west of the cable trench.

## THE WATCHING BRIEF

Installing the new underground line and demolishing the extant overhead one was carried out by Omexom on behalf of SSEN. The archaeological watching brief was undertaken on 5-6 June 2018 by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology during the excavation of the trench for the underground cable. The weather was dry and sunny throughout.



***The area of investigation over fields 1, 2 and 3. The underground cable trench is depicted as a broken red line and the section of overhead line to be demolished is in yellow. Scheduled areas are shaded in brown***

The underground cable trench ran from Pole 6 at NN 88076 50535, by the side of a farm road, through sections of three fields as far as terminal Pole 8, a short distance east of Distillery Cottage at NN 88016 50645. Its route is shown on the plans, supplied by SSEN,



shown above. The 11kv overhead line continued as far as Pole 8 where a transformer reduced the voltage: in future the transformer will be attached to Pole 6 from where an LV cable will run to the nearby domestic properties.

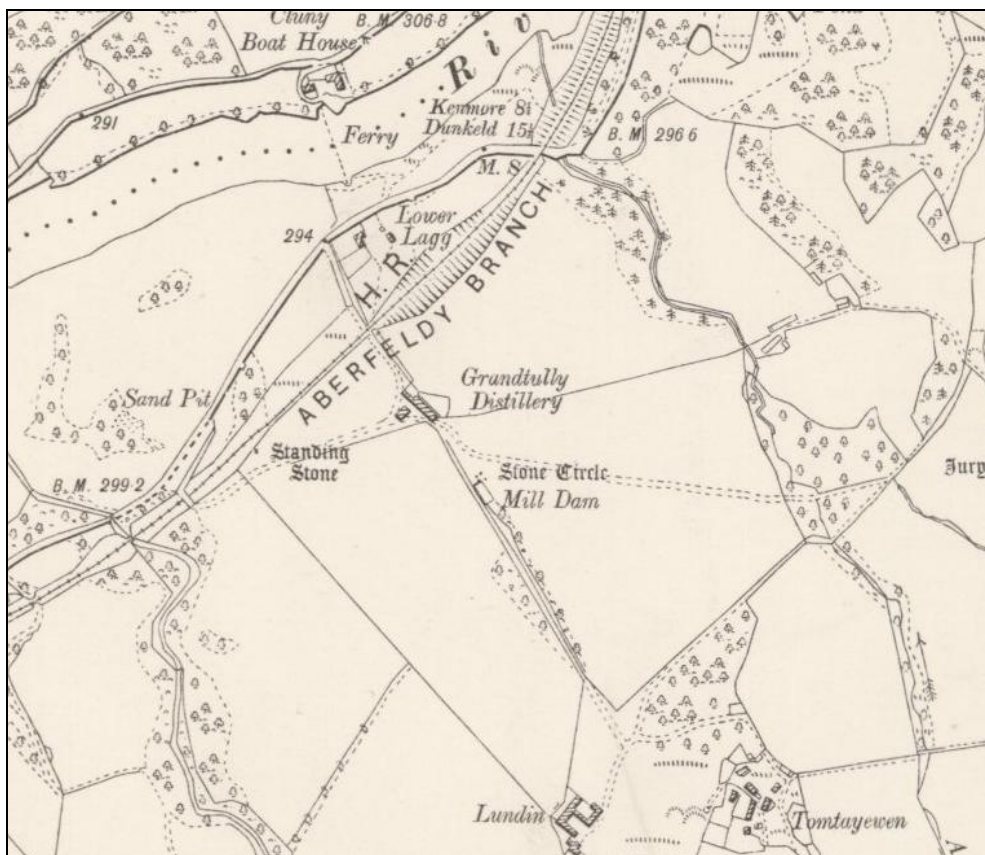
As is evident from the plan above, the route of the cable trench passed very near to the scheduled area containing the stone circle. Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, a representative of Historic Environment Scotland marked out the limit of the scheduled area to ensure that trenching was carried out outside it.

Trenching was carried out using a 5-tonne mechanical excavator with a small, toothless bucket. The trench was approximately 190m long, 0.4m wide and 0.6m deep although it had to be widened in places in Field 3 because of the presence of large boulders (see below).

### Field 1

Field 1 comprises a strip of raised ground, 13-20m wide, covered with coarse vegetation and containing stone circle NN85SE 9. Between the field and Pole 6 is a small drainage gully across which the trench was dug. Apart from this small section, the trench cut through topsoil of pale brown sandy loam, 0.4-0.6m deep, which overlay glacial till of orange-brown sand.

This narrow strip of land has been the subject of landscaping associated with the formation of the drainage ditch and the infilling of a dam feeding Grandtully Distillery that once stood very close to Pole 8 but which has been demolished for some time.



*Extract from the second edition OS map of c1900 showing Grandtully Distillery and its feeder dam adjacent to the stone circle*

## Field 2

Most of the cable trench ran through Field 2 which runs gently downhill towards Pole 8, to the north. Topsoil here was a fairly uniform 0.3m of pale brown sandy loam which gave onto glacial till: this varied greatly over the length of the trench from pure sand, through gravel and pebbles to small and medium-sized boulders.

The only feature noted in this trench was an area of disturbance around NN 88096 50566 which measured some 1m long and continued beyond the base of the trench. Within its fill was a small length of iron pipe of recent origin.



*The cable trench crossing Field 2, viewed from the north*

## Field 3

This area, containing the northernmost section of the cable trench, comprised a natural defile, believed to be a post-glacial run-off channel. It has been the subject of considerable landscaping in recent years to reduce the gradient on its west side and to raise the level of its base. As a consequence, only material of recent origin, including some very large boulders and containing very modern artefacts, was disturbed in this area.





*Cable trench in Field 3, viewed from the south*

## CONCLUSIONS

Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered during trenching and only artefacts of recent origin were retrieved, none of them being retained. However, the proximity of stone circle NN85SE 9 is a clear indication of prehistoric activity in this area, as is also attested by the standing stones of NN85SE 8 and NN85SE 20 and some cup-marked rocks found in the general area. As a consequence, it is recommended that any further ground-breaking activities in this area should also be subject to archaeological monitoring.



*View, from the south, of Field 2 following reinstatement of the cable trench*