

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during the installation of a replacement wooden pole, as part of the reinforcement of the Dalchonzie to Comrie 11kv high voltage overhead power line on the south side of Dalginross, Comrie, Perth & Kinross. The refurbishment was carried out by Scottish & Southern Energy Power Distribution (SSE). It was commissioned by Allan Coburn, Wayleave Officer at SSE's Tayside & Central Depot, Perth and undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology on 14th October 2008.

The watching brief was a condition imposed by Historic Scotland because the cable route ran across a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the requirement being intended to mitigate any action that might damage the surviving archaeological record during trenching. Consent was granted on receipt and approval of a Written Scheme of Investigation describing the intended programme.

THE SITE

The cable line ran approximately east/west across a Roman temporary camp, part of a complex of Roman fortifications which together constitute a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 1612). These elements were all identified principally by aerial photography although limited excavation and the discovery of artefacts associated with these sites have added to our knowledge of them. As well as the forts and camps, several other monuments have been identified within and close to the scheduled area, the most relevant of which are listed below and given monument numbers assigned by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS).

NN72SE 2 Roman forts

The remains of two Roman forts are centred on NN 7732 2104. They have been almost completely ploughed out and severely truncated on their north-west sides although traces of ramparts have been noted. Evidently, roads ran from the south and east sides of the fort. Coins ranging from those of Vespasian (AD 70-79) to Alexander Severus (AD 222-235) have been recovered from the site.

NN72SE 1 Roman temporary camp

The remains of this temporary camp are centred on NN 7742 2078, just south of the more permanent fort (NN72SE 2). It was identified by aerial photography and appears to measure approximately 300m square. In 1990 excavation uncovered stretches of its ditches which had been backfilled and then recut (Rogers 1993). This camp was crossed by the power supply route.

NN72SE 21 Roman temporary camp

A cropmark just beyond the north-east corner of the Roman fort (NN72SE 2) was identified by aerial photography as the remains of another temporary camp, centred on NN 7735 2096. It is thought to predate the other two Roman fortifications (St Joseph 1969).

NN72SE 5 Stone setting

Towards the south edge of the fort, at NN 7744 2064, are three large stones arranged in a line although they might originally have formed part of a circle. The largest stone bears 22 cup-markings.

NN72SE 22 Enclosure

An enclosure has been identified by aerial photography at NN 7728 2088.

NN72SE 112 Pit alignment

A pit alignment has been identified by aerial photography at NN 7720 2088.

NN72SE 31 Mound

A broad mound has been identified between NN 773 211 and NN 781 203, at the N side of the fort (NN72SE 2).

As well as the monuments listed above, several small-scale archaeological investigations, undertaken within and very close to the scheduled area, have been assigned monument numbers by RCAHMS.

NN72SE 235 Evaluation

In April 2005 trenching in advance of a proposed housing development, centred on NN 7749 2101, identified what may have been the corner of a ditch and associated rampart, perhaps belonging to an annexe to one of the forts (DES 2005, 104).

NN72SE 57 Watching brief

A watching brief, centred on NN 7759 2088, was carried out in 2006 during groundworks associated with an extension to a dwelling house at 14 Landside Drive. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered.

NN72SE 240 Evaluation

An evaluation undertaken in May 2006 at NN 774 211, in the south-west corner of the scheduled area, exposed part of a ditch associated with one of the forts.

The cable line crossed the scheduled area between approximately NN 7723 2073 and NN 7755 2090, much of this route running through the large Roman temporary camp (NN72SE 1). The monument was bisected by the B827 which runs southward from Comrie to Braco. The flat land either side of the road was given over to farmland although housing has sprung up recently just beyond the eastern edge of the camp.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

Watching briefs were intended during the excavation of trenches for a replacement for Pole 5, at NN 7732 2077, towards the west side of the Roman camp and for two new stays at Pole 8,

at NN 7755 2090, at the extreme east end of the site. Unfortunately, the stays for Pole 8 were already in place before there was an archaeological presence on site.

The opportunity was also taken to monitor the excavation for a replacement for Pole 3, located approximately 100m west of the scheduled area, at NN 7714 2070.

Pole 3

Pole 3 was the first pole to be replaced and, although it lay beyond the scheduled area, its installation was observed during this project.

The trench for Pole 3, which was opened on the east side of the existing pole, measured 1.2m east/west by 0.5m wide and 1.7m deep. Below turf was red-brown, sandy topsoil which merged gradually with almost identical subsoil, the latter becoming progressively more gravelly with depth. At a depth of 1.5m this material gave onto grey gravel of presumed glacial origin. No structures or features of archaeological significance were uncovered in this trench and no artefacts retrieved from it.

Pole 5

The trench for the new pole was located against the west side of the old one and measured 1.4m east/west by 0.5m wide and 1.6m deep. It cut through 0.2m of mid-brown, gravelly topsoil and the underlying glacial gravel which varied in colour from red-brown to grey and which had been disturbed on the east side of the trench during the installation of the original pole. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted in this trench and no artefacts recovered from it.

CONCLUSIONS

No structures, features or deposits of archaeological significance were found in these small trenches which were some distance from the ditches that surrounded the camp. Indeed, noteworthy findings are likely to occur at random locations within the interior of this large, temporary camp, as they would for the small camp and the fort to its north. Clearly, however, the possibility of uncovering important findings within this area are very high, as was demonstrated by the two evaluations carried out in recent years at NN 7749 2101 (NN72SE 235) and NN 774 211 (NN72SE 240).

REFERENCES

DES *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*, Council for Scottish Archaeology.

Rogers, I M 1993 'Dalginross and Dun: excavations at two Roman camps', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 123, 277-90.

St Joseph, J K 1969 'Air reconnaissance in Britain', *J Roman Stud*, 59, 109.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

- 1 Trench for Pole 3, viewed from the east
- 2 Trench for Pole 3, viewed from the south-east
- 3 New Pole 3 in position, viewed from the west
- 4 View to the south-east of the Roman temporary camp (NN72SE 1)
- 5 View to the east of the Roman temporary camp (NN72SE 1)
- 6 View to the north-east of the Roman temporary camp (NN72SE 1)
- 7-8 View to the north of the Roman temporary camp (NN72SE 1)
- 9 Trench for Pole 5, viewed from the west
- 10 Trench for Pole 5, viewed from the south
- 11 New Pole 5 being installed, viewed from the south
- 12 New Pole 5 being installed, viewed from the west
- 13 New Pole 5 being installed, viewed from the east