

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
ROROMORE HYDRO LIMITED**

**ROROMORE
HYDRO-ELECTRIC SCHEME
GLEN LYON**

**Archaeological
monitoring and
watching brief
September 2010**

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes a programme of archaeological monitoring and protection of sites during trenching along sections of the route of a pipeline for a new hydro-electric scheme at Roromore, Glen Lyon, near Aberfeldy, Perthshire.

Perth & Kinross Council has granted planning consent to Shawater Limited, on behalf of Roromore Hydro Limited, to construct a new hydro-electric scheme at Roromore, Glen Lyon, Perthshire (Planning Application reference number 08/00910/FUL). Prior to permission being granted, the Scottish Urban Archaeology Trust (SUAT) undertook a desk study of documentary and cartographic sources relating to sites on and close to the route of the new pipeline. This was followed by walk-over surveys of the route in 2007 and 2008.

Following the results of the desk study and walk-over survey and on the recommendation of its archaeological advisers, Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT), the council attached two conditions to a programme of archaeological investigation to be undertaken in conjunction with this development. These conditions were intended to safeguard sites of archaeological and historical significance that might be adversely affected during the installation of the pipeline that would carry water to a new powerhouse.

Condition 14 stated that watching briefs should be undertaken during excavation within two areas of the development while Condition 15 specified that areas close to the pipeline that are deemed archaeologically sensitive should be fenced off prior to trenching.

The archaeological work was carried out in the context of the historic environment sections (in particular sections 110, 111, 123 and 124) of the Scottish Planning Policy and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) outlining proposals to safeguard the archaeological record. The WSI was produced by Scotia Archaeology and approved by the council prior to the commencement of site work.

THE AREA OF INVESTIGATION

The route of the pipeline runs along the east side of the Allt a' Chobhair, on the south side of Glen Lyon, some 25km west of Aberfeldy. There will be a single intake of water from the burn at approximately NN 6253 4537, the outfall from the powerhouse returning into it around NN 6257 4705, some 1.6km to the north. The pipe route runs through mainly rough hill pasture that falls quite steeply from the intake point as far as the flood plain of the River Lyon, a short distance from the pipeline's terminus.

Both the north and south ends of the pipeline run through areas containing the remains of settlements whose origins are believed to date from pre-Improvement times. These are described briefly below, using the catalogue numbers assigned to them by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) (eg NN64NW 19) and by PKHT (eg MPK8750). The numbers allocated to these areas and the letters ascribed to individual structures are those used in SUAT's report.

Site 1: Roro shielings

Just north of the intake point are the remains of several buildings of drystone construction, centred at NN 6251 4551; most of them are probably shieling huts (NN64NW 19;

MPK8750). These huts were probably connected with Milton Roro, at the north end of the pipeline, providing summer accommodation when livestock was transferred to upland pasture. The two settlements are connected by a rough track which, although probably contemporary with these sites, has been upgraded at some stage. However, over the years it has suffered serious erosion, particularly on steeply sloping sections.

Site 2: Milton Roro

Close to the site of the powerhouse and outfall and centred on NN 6263 4688 are the remains of Milton Roro fermtoun (MPK17422) whose origins lie in the 18th century or earlier and which was finally abandoned in the 20th century. It includes remnants of several buildings, ancillary structures and field boundaries. To the east of the settlement, at NN 6273 4688, are the eroded remains of what may be an Iron Age homestead (NN64NW 1; MPK196).

In addition to Sites 1 and 2, SUAT identified several putative features of archaeological significance close to the pipe route, between approximately NN 6244 4638 and NN 6258 4670. These include remnants of early tracks, boundary walls and possible buildings. At least some of these features are now thought to be of natural origin.

THE WATCHING BRIEFS

Before the excavation commenced, post and wire fences were erected around structures lying close to the pipe route to ensure they were not damaged during trenching and that no spoil was deposited on them.

The excavation of the pipe trench was undertaken in two stages. Initially a wide trench was stripped of vegetation and topsoil to provide a track for vehicles moving equipment and pipes. In places the exposed subsoil of sand, gravel and boulders had to be levelled by adding materials. The second stage was to dig a narrow trench for the pipe itself although, because this would cut only through glacial deposits, it was not monitored archaeologically.

The watching briefs were carried out in two phases, Site 1 on 3rd September and Site 2 on 7th September 2010. In each case, a trench up to 8m wide (although much narrower where it passed between the remains of structures) was stripped using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator operating under close supervision and operated by Aberfeldy Groundworks Limited.

Sites 1 and 2 are shown on the accompanying maps which are based on ones produced by SUAT in their report of the walk-over survey. Shaded areas are those monitored during the watching briefs.

Site 1

At Site 1 the proximity of the trench to the remains of shielings and associated structures was even more critical than at Site 2. Those lying particularly close to the trench are Structures A, E, F, G, I, J and K (see SUAT's map for the layout of structures and features at Site 1).

Most of the trench through Site 1 coincided with the existing track although two stretches deviated from it: between the intake and a point adjacent to Structure K; and a stretch around

the east side of Structure I (see Map 2) although for operational purposes the track was also stripped in this area.

There was more variation in ground conditions in Site 1 than in Site 2 where the ground was well drained and topsoil very thin. Here the topsoil varied in depth from 0.1m to as much as 0.5m and in places, where the ground was waterlogged, was very peaty. In addition, many of the large boulders within the glacial till protruded through the ground surface. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered at Site 1: none of the structures lying close to the trench appeared to extend into it and no buried features were exposed.

Site 2

Trenching was monitored from NN 6261 4691 southwards as far as NN 6263 4678, an overall distance of some 140m. In this area, the trench coincided precisely with the existing track that runs between Milton of Roro and the shielings and passed between the remains of several structures, skirting very close to some of them. They are Structures F, I, K, L, M, N and K/Z (see SUAT's map for the layout of structures and features at Site 2).

Very little material had to be removed to expose the underlying glacial till of sand, gravel and boulders. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered and no damage was wrought on any the structures and features belonging to the former settlement of Milton of Roro.

CONCLUSIONS

No structures, features or deposits of archaeological importance were uncovered in the two areas covered by the watching briefs and no artefacts of any description retrieved during the operation.

A visual inspection of the structures at Site 1 suggests that most were shieling huts although, on the evidence of differential states of survival, they were probably not all contemporary. As well as the remains of shieling huts, there appears to have been a kiln while other structures may have been stores. It is thought likely that Structure A, at the north end of Site 1, was a lambing pen and might well post-date the majority of features in this area.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

The photographs described below form part of the project archive and are not reproduced in this report.

Site 1

- 1-3 Views to the north from the intake point during the early part of the excavation through the shieling settlement
- 4 Excavation in progress near Structure K, viewed from the south
- 5 View to the south, looking towards the intake point, from near Structure K
- 6 The approximate location of the intake point, viewed from the north
- 7 View from the south of excavation in progress to the east of Structure J, showing the main trench being dug and, to its west, the track being scraped of debris. Structure K is in the foreground
- 8-9 Views to the south from Structure J
- 10 The trench adjacent to Structure J, viewed from the north
- 11 The trench adjacent to Structure J, viewed from the north
- 12 The trench adjacent to Structure E, viewed from the south
- 13 The trench adjacent to Structure A, viewed from the south
- 14 The trench adjacent to Structure A, viewed from the north-west

Site 2

- 15 View to the south from the northernmost limit of the monitored area
- 16-17 Views to the north through Milton of Roromore