

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**CLACHAN-SLOY
TOWER LINE**

**Desk study
and
walk-over survey
June 2010**

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a desk study of archaeological sites and monuments and a walk-over survey along the overhead 132kv power line between power stations at Clachan and Sloy in Argyll. Vehicular access is needed to the entire line in order to paint each metal tower. To ensure that no archaeological sites or monuments are damaged during that operation, Scottish & Southern Energy plc (SSE) commissioned a desk study of the route and a walk-over survey along it.

The tower line runs from Clachan Power Station, at NN 1920 1326 north-eastwards along Glen Fyne as far as NN 2025 1427 where it returns eastwards as far as the west side of Loch Sloy, at NN 2730 1287. From that point it runs south-eastwards, alongside the loch and the Inveruglas Water, to NN 3002 0920 from where it turns eastwards as far as the Grid Substation above Sloy Power Station, at NN3085 0918.

The surveys were undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology at the request of Max Bigham, wayleave officer for SSE.

The enclosed maps show sections of the proposed new power line (marked in blue) where there are potential archaeological issues. These sites are marked in red.

In addition to the archaeological survey, Scotia Archaeology was requested to identify any pylons upon which birds were nesting.

THE DESK STUDY

The sources consulted for this work included:

the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), including the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS); and

Archaeology Scotland's annual journal *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

The corridor taken as the basis for the assessment was a nominal 100m wide although this was extended in case sites located beyond the corridor might extend into it.

INVENTORY OF SITES AND MONUMENTS

There are few recorded sites and monuments along the tower line although a small number lie within a short distance of it.

Sites and monuments are listed according to the numbers allocated by RCAHMS (eg NN75NE 44) or the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) (eg WoSAS 1439).

NN21SW 3 Auchreoch: farmstead

The first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map of 1874 depicts a farmstead comprising two unroofed buildings (one of them a longhouse) at NN 2085 1408. This settlement is not shown on recent editions of the OS 1:10,000 map.

NN21SE 1 Allt a'Chnoic: shieling huts, structure

The first edition OS 6-inch map of 1874 shows what appear to be two unroofed shieling huts and one unroofed circular structure centred on NN 2605 1347. The 1976 OS 1:10,000 map shows four unroofed structures.

WoSAS 1439 Sloy-Inveraray: archaeological environmental survey

A desk assessment and walk-over survey were undertaken within this area in 2003 when 13 sites of interest were recorded, 12 of them being of medieval or later date and one described as an historical landscape.

Several of these structures are located close to site NN21SE 1 (see above) and are assumed to include those described in that entry. There appears to be some confusion in this entry: 12 structures are mentioned whereas 14 are described. They include the following:

NN 2609 1346 Nine drystone structures on the banks of the Allt a'Chnoic

NN 2606 1346 A possible enclosure

NN 2601 1326 An oval, stone structure which is eroding into the burn

NN 2613 1343 An eroded, rectangular structure

NN 2611 1343 Several structures

NN 2609 1346 The ruins of a massive rectangular house and other structures.

NN21SE 5 Allt a'Chnoic: enclosures

At NN 2633 1292, at the south end of an open area where five glens meet, are three contiguous enclosures, all aligned north/south. They lie in a hollow bounded by a broad stone and turf bank that forms the east side of all the enclosures. It has been suggested that these enclosures mark the site of a drover's stance.

THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

The survey was undertaken on 10th and 18th June 2010. On both days the weather was warm and sunny and ground relatively dry as a consequence of very low rainfall for some time.

The route of the power line runs north-eastwards from Clachan Power Station through a gravel quarry as far as Tower 40 (a distance of 1.4km), where it returns eastwards across the flood plain of the River Fyne to Auchreoch. From Auchreoch it continues eastwards for 6km over undulating moorland as far as the head of Loch Sloy. It skirts the west side of the loch and the Inveruglas Water, which issues from the south end of the loch, to terminate at Sloy Power Station, this final stage being 5.6km long. The overall length of the route is some 13km.

Very little of archaeological significance was encountered during the survey although an update of all features of interest found in the desk study and on the ground are listed below. They are listed roughly east to west.

1 Sheepfold (Photos 1-2)

A large sheepfold is located close to the power line at NN 19432 13495, a short distance north-east of Tower 36 and approximately 300m north-east of Clachan Power Station.

2 Possible enclosure (Photos 3-5)

The remains of what may have been an enclosure were noted some 50m south of Pylon 40. It survives as a wall/bank, 0.5m high and 0.5m thick, running south-west from NN 20264 14223 for 80m where it returns to the north-west before petering out after 10m. A farm track cuts through this putative enclosure and may well have contributed to its demise.

3 NN21SW 3 Auchreoch farmstead/sheepfold (Photos 6-7)

No trace of this farmstead, which is depicted on the first edition OS 6-inch map but not on modern versions, was visible during the walk-over survey. However, a substantial sheepfold at NN 20950 14160 is located very close to the recorded site of the farmstead, at NN 2085 1408, and the two may have been related.

4 NN21SE 1 Allt a'Chnoic: shieling huts, structure

These structures are located roughly 500m north of the tower line and were not investigated during the walk-over survey.

5 WoSAS 1439 Sloy-Inveraray: archaeological environmental survey

The structures identified during this earlier survey appear to include those noted by RCAHMS as NN21SE 1 and were not investigated during the walk-over survey.

6 NN21SE 5 Allt a'Chnoic: enclosures (Photos 8-12)

These enclosures are located within the angle of two farm/estate roads that meet at the head of Glenkinglas, around NN 2633 1292. They also lie close to the power lines that run through this area.

7 Trackway and retaining walls (Photos 13-14)

The survey identified a small section of an old trackway, barely 1m wide, around NN 29014 10453, almost directly below the power line and 600m south of Sloy Dam. It runs north/south along the steep west side of the valley but is visible only for a short distance, partly because of vegetation cover and silting.

At this point, both sides of the track are defined by retaining walls, each surviving to a height of 0.6-0.7m. The wall on the upslope would have protected against landslips while the lower one prevented the track eroding down the hill.

NESTING BIRDS

No bird nests were noted on any of the towers during the walk-over survey. However, this should not be taken as absolute proof that there are none, simply that none was obvious to the observer.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Repainting the towers on this power line should pose minimal threat to the archaeological record. The shielings and other structures around Allt a'Chnoic (Sites 4 and 5) lie well away from the line while the sheepfolds at Clachan and Auchreoch (Sites 1 and 3) are very clearly visible, upstanding structures and would be avoided automatically by vehicles.

The scant remains of what was possibly an enclosure (Site 2) lie some 50m from the tower (see Photos 3-5). However, the access road leading to Pole 40 cuts across this feature and care should be taken to ensure that vehicles avoid the remnants of the walls that once surrounded the enclosure.

The remaining two sites are perhaps more vulnerable and note should be taken of their locations when accessing towers. The three contiguous enclosures (Site 6) situated where farm/estate tracks meet at Allt a'Chnoic are potentially at risk and their locations should be noted before work commences in this area (see Photos 8-12).

Less obvious is the short stretch of trackway to the south of Sloy Dam (Site 7). It lies close to the power line and could provide a convenient, level route for vehicles travelling between towers. While such access is unlikely to disturb the track itself, great care should be taken not to damage the retaining walls either side of it.

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

- 1-2 Sheepfold at NN 19432 13495, viewed from the east
- 3 Wall and enclosure at NN 20264 14223, viewed from the north-east
- 4 Wall and enclosure, viewed from the north-west
- 5 Wall and enclosure, viewed from the west
- 6-7 Sheep pens at NN 20950 14160, viewed from the south-east
- 8-9 Enclosures centred on NN 26312 12921, viewed from the north-west
- 10 Enclosures centred on NN 26312 12921, viewed from the south
- 11-12 Enclosures centred on NN 26312 12921, viewed from the south-west
- 13-14 Old trackway and retaining walls at NN 29014 10453, viewed from the south-east