

Site **Aberfoyle Quarry**

N.G.R **NN 505 031**

Project Description

Kirkdale Archaeology was contracted to maintain a watching brief during attempts to stabilise a spoil-heap at Aberfoyle Quarry (centred on NN 505 031).

Report

The quarry is located at around 300 m OD on the E facing slopes of Creag Innich, some 2.5 km NW of Aberfoyle, and is an abandoned slate working, covering approximately 350 x 500 m in area. A road running up a steep slope to the N of Aberfoyle was probably built to provide the original access to the quarry. On the saddle of the hill, where the road is known as the 'Duke's Pass', is an occupied cottage, marking the site of what was once a small mining town, complete with its own school. A track runs from the former mining settlement to the quarry itself.

Aberfoil [*sic*] quarries are shown on the 1st Edn. OS of 1866, with two small quarry faces and a number of small spoil heaps. Two apparently unroofed structures are also shown on the 1st Edn, along with a well.

The 2nd Edn. OS of 1898 indicates that the site was much altered by this date. The two small workings were combined, with a further face begun to the W. A tramway now ran SE towards Aberfoyle, complete with a roofed structure at NN 515 019, where the hillside drops dramatically down to the valley floor (a possible pulley/engine-house). At the quarry itself, four roofed structures are now evident, one being described as a smithy. Where the trackway reaches the roadside, a settlement of eight roofed structures and a school ('Aberfoyle cottaries') is recorded, presumably the housing for miners and their families.

The 1958 OS does not feature the tramway, and four roofed and one unroofed structures are shown at the quarry. By now all the roadside miners cottages, with the exception of the one still occupied, are abandoned.

Presently there is only one ruined structure at the quarry itself. The tramline is clearly visible, in places having its' iron rails in situ. The course of the tramway has been quarried-through in at least three places. With the exception of the still occupied structure, only heavily reduced remains of buildings survive beside the road.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

Forestry Enterprises, the current owners of the site, had decided to attempt to stabilise an old spoil head which was inclined at a dangerous angle, threatening collapse. Historic Scotland requested that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during this work, as possible

remains of the 19th-century industrial complex could potentially have been revealed. The spoil heap was c. 35 m high, and ran NE for approximately 70 m from the NE corner of the quarry. A JCB was used to push material from the top of the spoil heap down its' E facing side to stabilise the mound. In the event, no archaeological traces were observed during the stabilisation exercise, and no finds were recovered.

CONCLUSIONS

The cartographic evidence demonstrates that a quarry was established here before 1866, and that by the end of the 19th century the operation had grown significantly in scale, with its own tramway, settlement and school. After 1945 the quarry was in steep decline, presumably due to the advent of new roofing technologies.

Despite the lack of evidence recovered during the watching brief, there still remains the potential for industrial archaeological survival beneath the spoil heaps of the quarry.