

Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT
TO
SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN ENERGY**

**COULIN HYDRO SPUR
STRATHCARRON**

**Desk study
and walk-over survey
January 2016**

*Lismore
Dollerie Terrace
Crieff
PH7 3EG
Tel No: 01764-652638
email: scotarc@btinternet.com*

INTRODUCTION

This document describes the results of a desk study of archaeological sites and monuments and a walk-over survey of the route of a proposed 33kv overhead spur power line to Coulin hydro-electric scheme, Strathcarron, Highland.

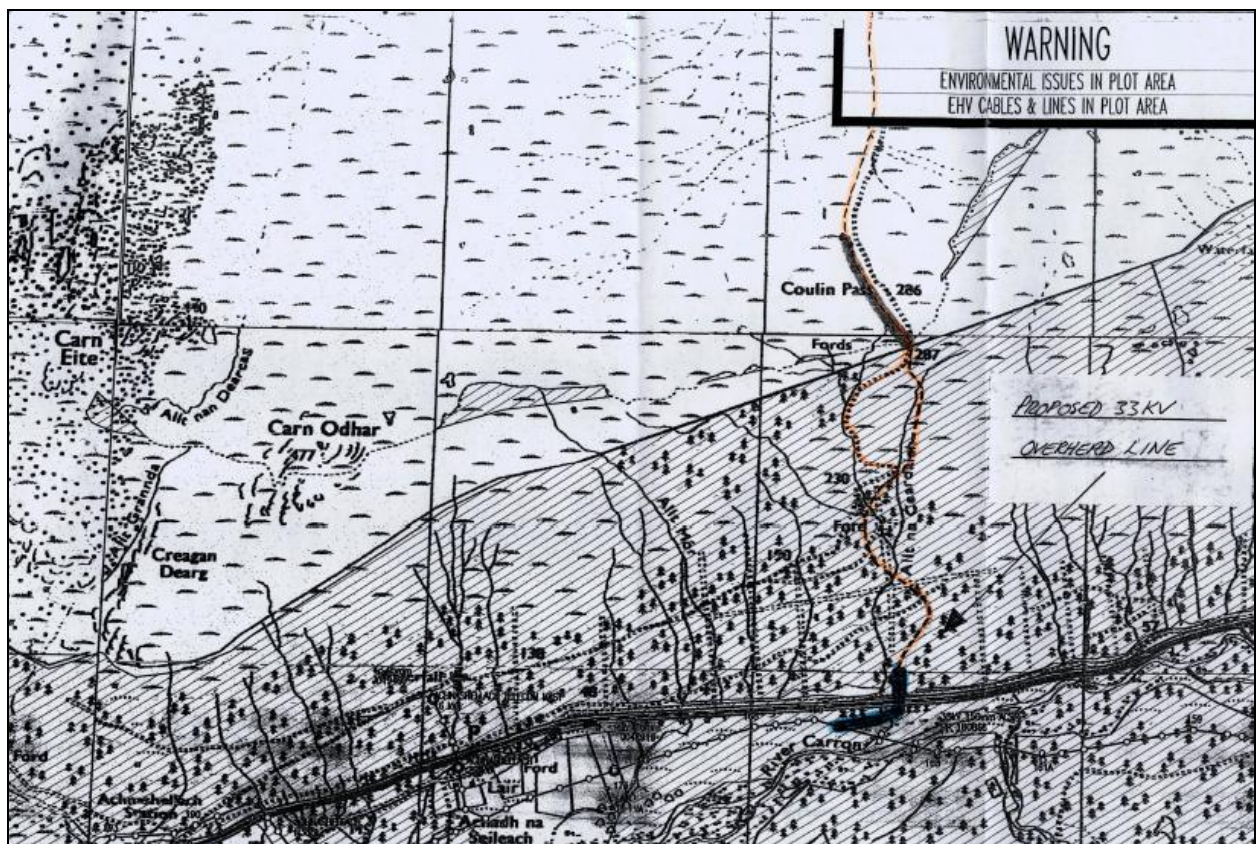
Scottish & Southern Energy plc (SSE) commissioned the survey which was undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology at the request of Max Bigham, wayleave manager at SSE.

THE SITE

The new overhead line will run from Pole 164A, on the north side of the River Carron, on an existing line that runs east/west along Strath Carron, parallel with the river, the A890 Achnasheen to Kyle of Lochalsh road and the Inverness to Kyle railway. The spur will cross the railway and the road, running northwards thereafter.

The survey concentrated within the area between Pole 164A and the point at which the spur will cross the railway. That stretch of line runs along the valley floor before ascending onto a rocky shelf which houses the road and railway. The shelf comprises undulating ground overlain with glacial debris and covered with small trees, shrubs and coarse vegetation. It is cut by the Allt na Ceardaich, close to the new power line.

The survey area is outlined in blue on the map below, supplied by SSE.



Coulin overhead spur: location of survey

THE DESK STUDY

The sources consulted for this work included:

the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS);

the Historical Environment Record (HER) maintained by Highland Council; and

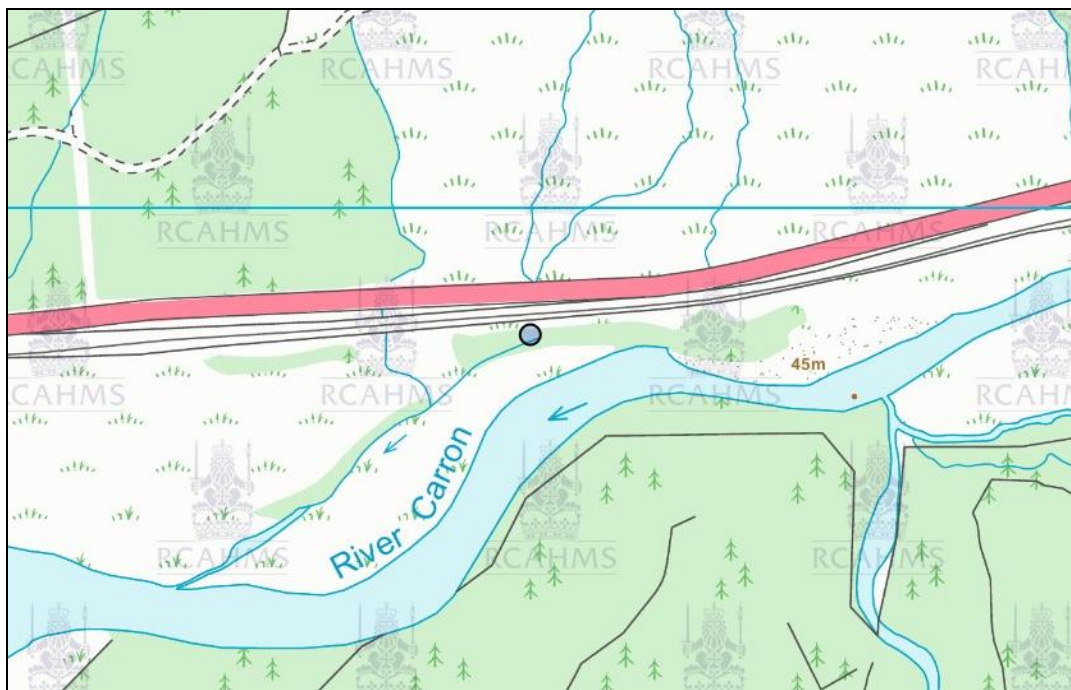
early editions of Ordnance Survey (OS) maps.

Sites and monuments are listed according to the numbers allocated by RCAHMS (eg NH04NW 6) and by Highland Council's HER (eg MHG22788).

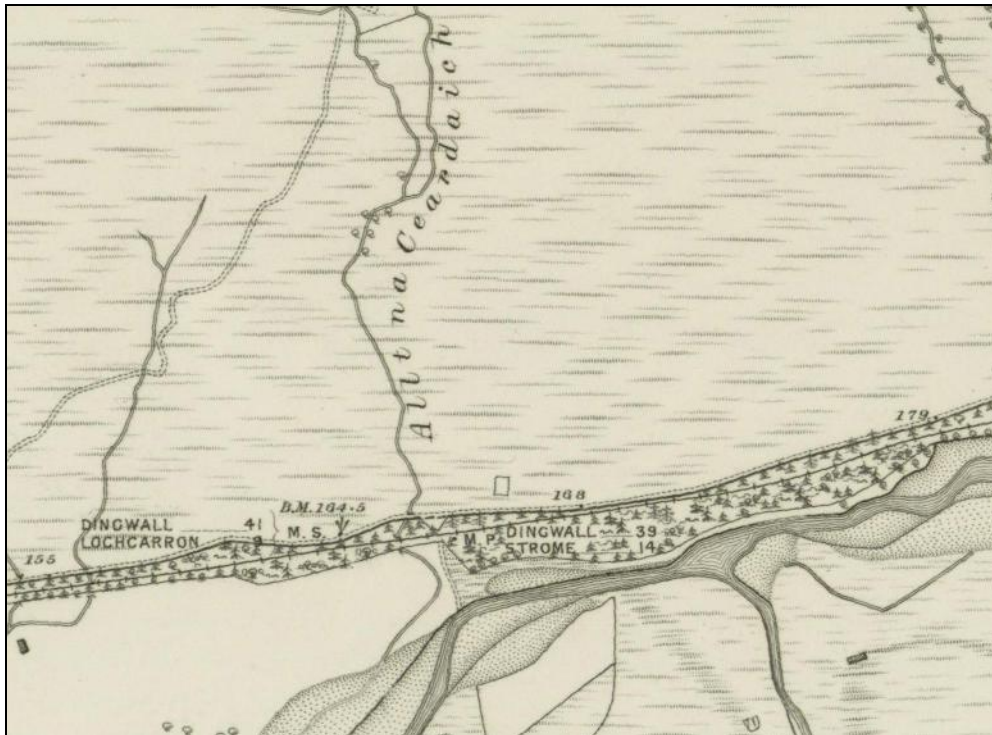
The only site of archaeological or historical interest identified by these sources is described below.

NH04NW 6/MHG22788 Enclosure

The first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map, published in 1881, shows an enclosure at NH 025 489. This somewhat vague grid reference is accurate only to within 100m. Both RCAHMS and the HER place this monument close to the railway, between the road and the River Carron whereas the OS map shows the enclosure to be north of the road (see maps below).



Extract from Pastmap showing position of enclosure to the south of the road



Extract from 1st edition OS map showing enclosure to the north of the road

THE WALK-OVER SURVEY

The walk-over survey was undertaken on 25 January 2016 during heavy rain and when much of the ground, especially on the river's flood plain, was waterlogged. Two possible features of archaeological interest were encountered on the higher ground above the valley floor.



Possible shieling hut, viewed from the north-east

At NH 02432 48893, on a level platform 15m south of the railway line, were what appeared to be the remains of a roughly circular structure, approximately 5m in diameter. It was defined on its north, west and south sides by a low grass-covered, earth bank, 0.3m high. Its east side was missing, perhaps because of erosion or because this putative structure was open-ended.

There was insufficient evidence to state conclusively that this was a man-made structure although it seems less likely to be a natural feature. One possible explanation is that it represents the remains of a shieling hut.

Some 8m to its west was a possible small, roughly circular enclosure comprising a level area, approximately 6m in diameter, defined by raised ground on its north, east and south sides. This could simply be a glacial feature although its proximity to the putative shieling hut might suggest otherwise.



Possible enclosure, viewed from the north-west

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although it was not possible to confirm that either of the two features described above is man-made, there is compelling evidence, including its proximity to the Allt na Ceardaich, to suggest that at least one (the putative shieling hut) was. As a consequence, it is recommended that both features are avoided during the erection of the new power line. New poles should be placed away from these features and, if possible, vehicles kept away from them too.