CPAT Report No 1216

Dolgarrog to Pentir Overhead Powerline, Gwynedd
Archaeological watching brief at tower AD27

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Client name:	Interserve
CPAT Project No:	1892
Project Name:	AD Line Mitigation
Grid Reference:	SH 7158 7180
County/LPA:	Gwynedd
Report Title:	Dolgarrog to Pentir Overhead Powerline, Gwynedd. Archaeological watching brief at tower AD27
CPAT Report No:	1216
Report status:	Final
Confidential:	No

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Completion date:	07 August 2013

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Checked on:	08 August 2013	

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R J Silvester	Head of Field Services	
Approved on:	08 August 2013	

Bibliographic reference:
Hankinson, R., 2013. *Dolgarrog to Pentir Overhead Powerline, Gwynedd. Archaeological watching brief at tower AD27*. Unpublished report. CPAT Report No. 1216.

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust on behalf of Interserve Industrial Services Ltd as part of a wider programme of mitigation works associated with the refurbishment of a 132kV overhead powerline between Dolgarrog and Pentir, in Gwynedd. The watching brief was carried out during machine excavations to investigate one corner of the foundations for tower AD27 (NGR SH 7158 7180).

The excavation was placed on the south-west side of the western leg of the tower and covered an area measuring 3.0m north-west/south-east by 2.3m wide. The watching brief formed part of a mitigation strategy developed by CPAT on behalf of Iberdrola Engineering and Construction following consultation with Snowdonia National Park Authority and was conducted owing to the proximity of a rubble-walled enclosure and longhut, on the eastern side of the tower.

The topsoil, modern disturbance resulting from the construction of the tower, and a layer of peat were removed by machine and the resulting surface cleaned and recorded in an appropriate manner. No archaeological features or significant material were observed. Following the completion of recording, the test excavation proceeded within the 3.0m by 2.3m area. No ground disturbance occurred in the surrounding area and the excavation was backfilled on the same day.

1 Introduction

1.1 In July 2013 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) was engaged by Interserve Industrial Services Ltd to conduct a watching brief during the machine investigation of foundations at a number of towers as part of the refurbishment of a 132kV overhead powerline, known as the AD Line, between Dolgarrog and Pentir, in Gwynedd. A cultural heritage assessment for the scheme as a whole was conducted by CPAT in 2012 (Jones 2012) and revised in 2013 (Jones 2013) which included a mitigation strategy developed by CPAT on behalf of Iberdrola Engineering and Construction following consultation with Snowdonia National Park Authority.

Fig. 1 Location plan showing the position of tower AD27

1.2 This report presents the results from a watching brief during work at tower AD27 (SH 7158 7180) which was conducted owing to the proximity of a rubble-walled enclosure and longhut (PRN 4702), on the eastern side of the tower.

Fig. 2 Tower AD27 viewed from the north-east showing the curving line of boulders defining the enclosure (PRN 4702) on the eastern side of tower AD27

2 Watching Brief

2.1 The watching brief was conducted on 5 August 2013 during machine excavations to investigate the foundations of tower AD27. The test pit was placed on the south-west side of the western leg of the tower and measured 3.0m north-west/south-east by 2.3m wide. The watching brief was designed to examine this area and record any archaeological features which might be present prior to their disturbance by the works.

2.2 The topsoil, modern disturbance resulting from the construction of the tower, and a layer of peat were removed under careful archaeological supervision by a machine using a toothless ditching bucket. The resulting surface was cleaned by hand and recorded in an appropriate manner. No archaeological features or significant material were observed. Following the completion of recording, the machine excavation proceeded within the 3.0m by 2.3m area to a depth of around 3.5m. No ground disturbance occurred in the surrounding area and the excavation was backfilled on the same day.

2.3 Numbers appearing in brackets in the following text refer to the individual contexts recorded in the site archive.

Fig. 3 View of the test excavation area with the west leg of tower AD27 behind; the backfill of the foundation excavation is clearly visible. Photo CPAT 3656-0025

2.4 Removal of the modern turf, including brown silty topsoil (1), up to 60mm thick, revealed a layer of redeposited natural subsoil, comprising orange and grey stony silt and some isolated patches of peat (2), up to 120mm in overall thickness, which was derived from the foundation pits at the time when the tower was erected. Layer 2 sealed a deposit of peat, a very dark grey layer (3), up to 70mm thick. The removal of layer 2 also exposed the extent of the tower foundation (6), cutting through the peat deposit and measuring 1.6m north-west/south-east by at

least 0.8m north-east/south-west; it was filled by material (7) which was of identical composition to layer 2. All of the above layers were removed by machine.

2.5 The removal of the peat deposit exposed a mid to light grey clay silt (4), up to 80mm in thickness, which was probably the natural subsoil. This layer was removed by hand down to an orange stony silt (5) to ascertain whether it contained any significant material, but no such material was observed. Observation of the test excavation revealed that the orange silt graded to grey stony silt with increasing depth.

2.6 No archaeological deposits, features or artefacts were observed during the watching brief.

3 Conclusions

3.1 The watching brief covered an area measuring 3.0m by 2.3m against the south-west side of the west leg of tower AD27. The uppermost soil layers were removed by machine under close archaeological supervision, and there was then a limited examination of the deposits by hand prior to their recording. Subsequent excavation of the test pit was by machine, down to its maximum depth. No significant archaeological features or layers were revealed.

3.2 The machine excavation alongside the west leg of the tower was carefully controlled to ensure there was no damage to the adjacent enclosure (GAT PRN 4702) and it can be confirmed that there was no disturbance to any archaeological features and layers outside the area that was examined by the watching brief.

4 References

Jones, N. W., 2012. *Scottish Power Energy Networks Dolgarrog to Pentir 132kV Overhead Powerline Refurbishment: Cultural Heritage Assessment*. Unpublished report. CPAT Report No. 1132.2.

Jones, N. W., 2013. *Scottish Power Energy Networks Dolgarrog to Pentir 132kV Overhead Powerline Refurbishment Ground Investigations and Cable Connection: Cultural Heritage Assessment*. Unpublished report. CPAT Report No. 1188.

APPENDIX 1

PROJECT ARCHIVE

Site records
7 context record forms
6 digital photographs, CPAT film 3656
Photographic register