

7. Watching Brief British Gas pipeline Harelaw – Onthank

J. Terry

Over the month of June 1992 Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division undertook a watching brief for British Gas (Scotland) on a 16.3km gas pipeline installation from Harelaw (nr. Neilston) to Onthank (Kilmarnock), Strathclyde. The few remains encountered on the pipeline route were predominately that of earlier farming practices, and included Broad Rig medieval cultivation, earthen and stone field banks, and overgrown trackways.

An arrangement of stone trackways (NCR. NS46355228) for access to farms and fields, pre-dating the present road fed system of the 1800s, was recorded on the lower ground to the west side of Moyne Moor, and in this area on the east side of Carswell Hill (NCR. NS46715308) a site of local interest was discovered.

Here remains of two stone founded buildings about a natural mound have been identified as the lost site of 'carshill', which first appears on John Ainslie's 1796 map of Renfrewshire, and three subsequent maps. The precise nature and extent of the site remains unclear from the limited disturbance of the pipeline, but suggestions of a farmstead or minor industrial complex are not inconsistent with the excavated evidence. A review of documentary records and consultation with local farmers failed to provide any further references to the site. However, the demise of Carshill may be dated to pre-1856 with the publication of the 1st edition O.S. maps, which does not record the site name or any relics of buildings.

The only evidence of possible prehistoric remains were recorded at the opposite south end of the pipeline, where a small firing pit (NGR. NS43854194) yielded evidence of iron smelting. Unassociated with further remains or artefacts (within the confines of the pipe trench), this feature remains broadly dated from an Iron Age context to a pre-industrial period.

J. Terry
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