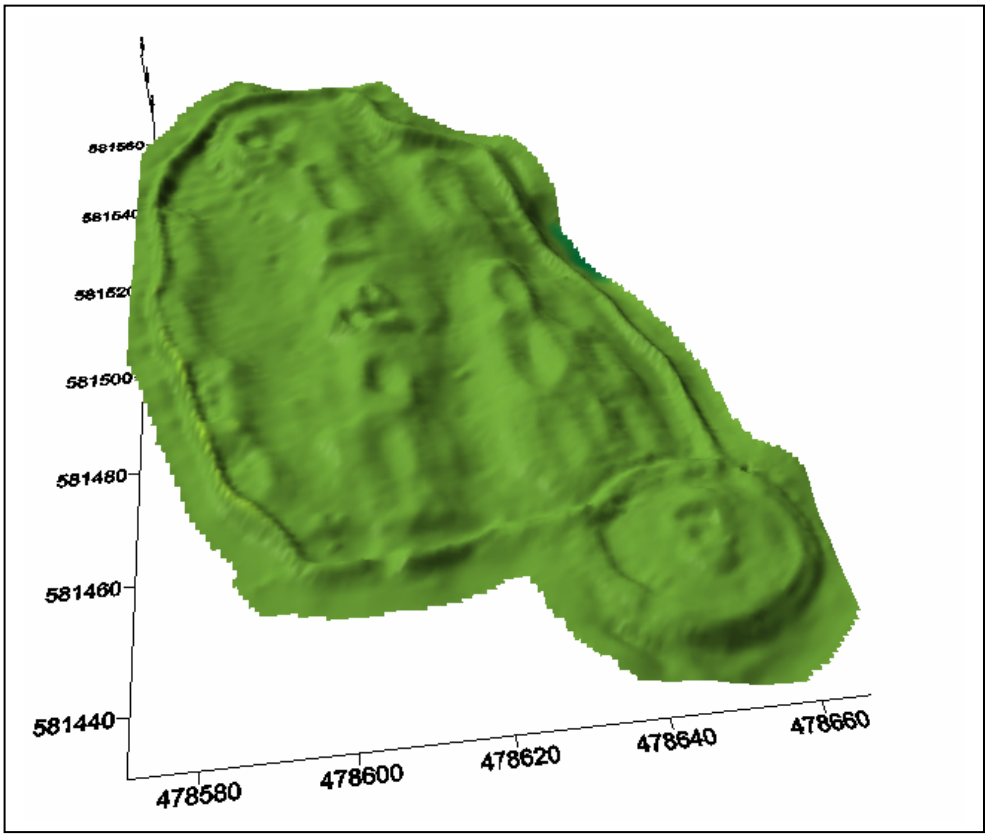
ÞINGHALD AÐ FORNU - FORNLEIFARANNSÓKNIR 2003



Adolf Friðriksson (ritstjóri)

Höfundar: Adolf Friðriksson, Colleen Batey, Hildur Gestsdóttir, Garðar Guðmundsson, Magnús Á. Sigurgeirsson, Howell M. Roberts og Jim Wollett.

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Inngangsorð

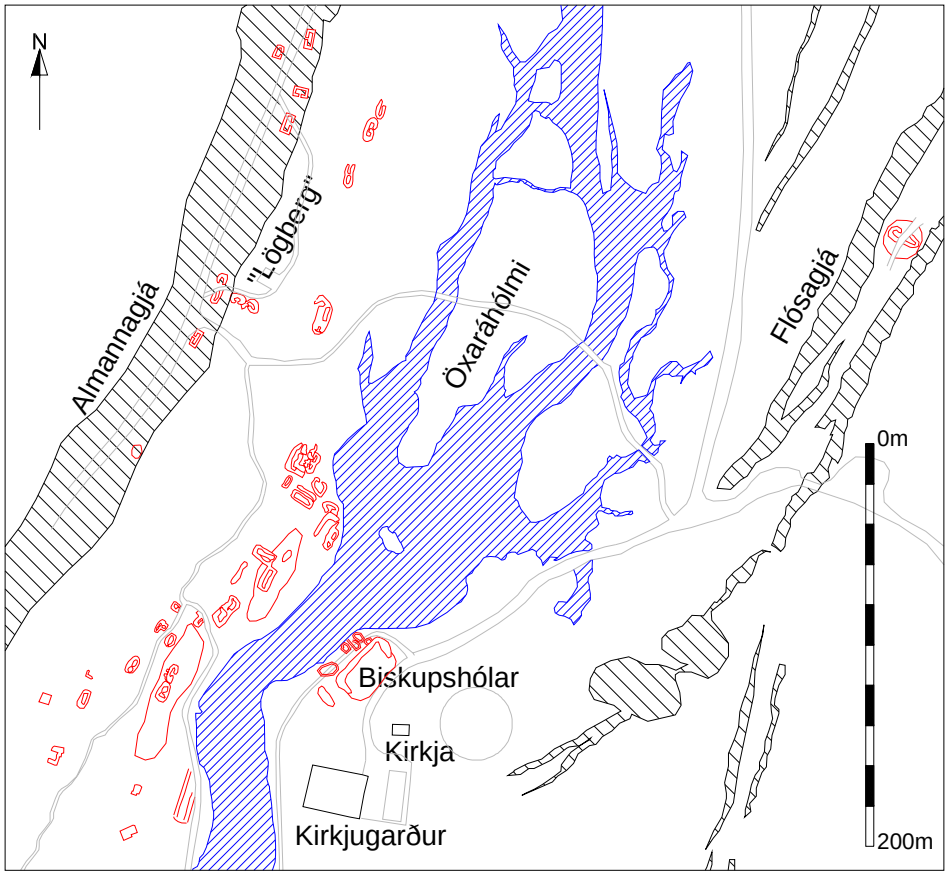
Árið 2003 var annað ár verkefnisins Þinghald að fornu. Markmið þess er að rannsaka minjar um þinghald á Íslandi, kanna aldur þeirra og ástand, athuga skipulag þingstaða, staðsetningu, og þróun. Hér er sagt frá rannsóknum á Þingvöllum og Hegranesþingi í ágripi, en ítarlegri lýsingar er að finna í þeim skýrslum sem á eftir koma í þessu hefti.

Alls unnu á þriðja tug vísindamanna og sérfræðinga við rannsóknirnar. Verkefnisstjórar eru Adolf Friðriksson og Sigurður Líndal. Aðrir þátttakendur voru Oscar Aldred, Colleen Batey, Matthew Brown, Astrid Daxböck, Garðar Guðmundsson, Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir, Hildur Gestsdóttir, Inga Sóley Kristjönudóttir, Yekaterina Krivorgskaya, Magnús Á. Sigurgeirsson, Óðinn Haraldsson, Howell Magnús Roberts, Rúnar Leifsson, Stefán Ólafsson, Susanne Kahn, Freya Sadarangani, James Taylor, Uggi Ævarsson og Jim Woollett.

Þingstaðaverkefnið og fyrirliggjandi afrakstur þess hefur víða verið kynntur fyrir fróðleiksfúsum almenningi og fjölmiðlum. Eftirtalin erindi voru haldin á árinu: Adolf Friðriksson, Hvað geymir jörðin á Þingvöllum? *Aðalfundur Hins íslenzka bókmenntafélags*, Þjóðmenningarhúsinu 30. nóvember 2002; -Þingstaðarannsóknir 2002. *Ráðstefna Félags íslenskra fornleifafræðinga*, Norræna húsinu 18. janúar 2003; -Um fornleifar og skáldskap. Þingvellir og bein Jónasar. *Útgáfuhátíð Bjarts*, Súfistanum 9. apríl 2003; -Fornleifar á Vestfjörðum. Vorþingstaðir, kuml og aðrar minjar. *Vestfirðir á miðöldum*, Menntaskólanum á Ísafirði, 13.-15. júní 2003; -Fornleifarannsóknir á Þingvöllum 2003. *Fimmtudagsganga á Þingvöllum*, 26. júní 2003; -Þingvellir and the local assemblies. Recent Work. *Meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage List Nomination work group*, Þjóðmenningarhúsinu, 4. ágúst 2003; -Archaeology, Heritage and Tourism in Iceland. - The Truth and some other Problems. *CAES, Circumpolar Arctic Environmental PhD Studies Workshop*, Odda, Reykjavík 9. – 10. ágúst 2003; -Héraðsþingin, *Eyrbyggjuþing*, Stykkishólmi 30.-31. ágúst 2003.

Aðstandendur verkefnisins eru þakklátir Kritnihátíðarsjóði fyrir veglegan stuðning við rannsóknirnar. Jafnframt standa þeir í þakkarskuld við starfsmenn þjóðgarðsins á Þingvöllum, Þingvallanefnd, starfsmenn Valhallar, landeigendur Garðs á Hegranesi, og rannsóknarfólki á Hólum í Hjaltadal.

Þingvellir 2003



Mynd 1. Yfirlit yfir rannsóknarsvæði á Þingvöllum.

Árið 2002 var gerð forkönnun á Þingvöllum við Öxará. Tilgangur hennar var að athuga ástand minjanna og ákvarða hvar væri fýsilegast að gera frekari rannsóknir með uppgrefti. Grafnar voru könnunarholur við "Njálsbúð" vestan ár, á Miðmundartúni, Biskupshólum sem eru milli kirkju og árbakka, og norðan Biskupshóla á árbakka Öxarár að austan. Í ljós kom að á Biskupshólum væru töluverðar mannvistarleifar, vel varðveittar og hluti þeirra m.a. mjög forn eða allt frá upphafi þinghalds. Var því ákveðið, í samráði við Þingvallanefnd, að leggja áherslu á rannsóknir á Biskupshólum.

Uppgröftur hófst á ný 2. júní 2003 og stóð til júníloka. Til þessa höfðu einungis verið grafnir mjóir könnunarskurðir, en nú var opnað stórt svæði á norðanverðum Biskupshólum (sjá mynd 2). Úrvinnslu er ekki lokið, en niðurstaða uppgraftar sumarsins er í aðalatriðum sú að hann

Mynd 2-3. Frá Biskupshólum

staðfestir þær ályktanir sem dregnar voru árið áður um rannsóknargildi svæðisins. Þarna eru margar, vel varðveittar byggingaleifar og þær elstu eru mjög líklega frá 10. öld. Eru það einu minjarnar innan þinghelginnar sem vitað er að sé frá þeim tíma. Fremst á mynd 2 sést norðurveggur á mjög stóru mannvirki sem líklega er frá þjóðveldisöld. Enn sem komið er sést aðeins brot af þessari byggingu þar sem stærstur hluti hennar liggur undir ógröfnu svæði sunnan við og verður það opnað í áföngum næstu sumur.

Yfir þessu stóra mannvirki eru leifar yngri minja. Óvíst er um hlutverk þeirra, en þær gætu verið búðaleifar þar sem engir gripir eða önnur ummerki fundust er gefa til kynna að þar hafi staðið útihús eða bæjarleifar. Athyglisverð er byggingin sem sést á mynd 3-4. Svo virðist sem

þar hafi verið grafinn skurður eða rás og hún fyllt með grjóti sem lagt hefur verið til á reglulegan hátt. Einkennilegt er að byggingin virðist vera hringlaga, eða a.m.k. með hálf-bogadregnum norðurvegg. Um aðra hluta hennar verður ekkert sagt á þessu stigi þar sem rúmur helmingur hennar er enn ógrafinn. Svo virðist sem um sökkul undir timburbyggingu sé að ræða. Ekki er kunnugt um sambærilegar byggingarleifar hér á landi.

Mynd 4-5. "Grjótsökkull" á Biskupshólum.

Auk uppgraftarins á Biskupshólum var haldið áfram leit að öðrum minjum á og við þingstaðinn. Að þessu sinni var lögð áhersla á að kanna mannvistarleifar á austurbakka Öxarár og leita ummerkja um öskuhauga og aðra staði þar sem úrgangur hefur safnast upp á fyrri tíð. Notaður var til þess lítill kjarnabor. Borað var á um 70 stöðum vestan og norðan uppgraftarreits á Biskupshólum, við tóftir sem fundust í trjálundinum suðvestast í Miðmundartúni og í miðju túninu. Lítilsháttar ruslalög fundust norðan stóru tóftarinnar á Biskupshólum, og við mannvirkin í trjálundinum. Engir stórir öskuhaugar komu í ljós. Frekari könnun á svæðinu gæti leitt í ljós fleiri staði þar sem úrgangur safnaðist fyrir. Í næsta rannsóknaráfanga verður uppgraftarsvæðið á Biskupshólum stækkað til suðurs og gerðar frekari rannsóknir á Miðmundartúni.

Forkönnun á Hegranesi 2003

Uppmæling og fornleifauppgröftur fór fram á Hegranesþingstað dagana 30.júní til 11.júlí 2003 undir stjórn Hildar Gestsdóttur og Garðars Guðmundssonar. Markmið rannsóknarinnar var að athuga aldur og gerð meintra búðaminja, og aldur og hlutverk garða á svæðinu, og meta rannsóknargildi minjastaðarins.

Minjastaðurinn var allur mældur upp og gerð af honum nákvæm kort.

Grafið var á tveimur stöðum, syðst og nyrst á minjastaðnum. Nyrðra svæðið nær yfir hluta tóftar í norðausturhluta minjasvæðisins, en sú búð hefur eitthvað skemmst þar sem rofabarð afmarkar austurhluta svæðisins. Í ljós kom að búðin er hlaðin úr torfi og grjóti, og að torfið hefur verið tekið stuttu eftir að gjóskan úr Heklugosinu 1104 féll. Yfir og umhverfis tóftina voru móöskulög með dýrabeinum. Bendir það til þess að rusli hafi verið hent rétt út fyrir búðina, og líklegt er að reglulega hafi verið mokað út úr henni. Yfir öllum mannvistarlögum lá svo gjóska úr Heklugosinu 1766, sem þýðir að búðin hefur verið komin úr notkun þegar gjóskan féll.

Syðra uppgraftarsvæðið var þar sem mætast hringlaga garður (kirkjugarðsveggur?) og stærra garðlag (túngarður?). Þessir garðar virðast vera seinni tíma mannvirki, þ.e. yngri en þingstaðurinn. Við uppgröftinn kom í ljós að hringgarðurinn er að mestu byggður úr torfi, einhverntíma eftir 1104. Sá stærri er reistur úr lábörðu grjóti, hann er ekki hlaðinn, heldur hafa steinarnir verið lagðir óreglulega í garðinn. Grjótið úr honum liggur að hluta yfir hringlaga garðinn, og því er stærri garðurinn yngri. Gjóskan úr Heklugosinu 1766 lá einnig yfir þessum minjum, og greinilegt var að svæðið sem þeir umlykja hafi lítið sem ekkert verið í notkun í þó nokkurn tíma áður en hún féll. Inni í hringlaga mannvirkinu komu í ljós regulegar, aflangar gryfjur, sennilega eftir líkagröft, enda er og líklegt að hér hafi verið kirkja og kirkjugarður. Þörf er á frekari rannsóknum til að staðfesta það með vissu.

Það sem mest kom á óvart í uppgreftrinum var að mannabein fannst í efstu ruslalögum búðatóftarinnar á norðursvæðinu. Um var að ræða hægri lærleggjarhöfuð, líklega úr konu. Ekki er vitað hvernig eða hversvegna það var í búðatóftinni, en ekki er ósennilegt að beinið hafi borist úr meintum kirkjugarði við e.k. rask þar á fyrri tíð. Við það vaknar sú spurning hvort að kirkjugarðurinn hafi verið í notkun samtíma þingstaðnum.

Niðurstaða rannsóknanna staðfestir að á Hegranesi væri unnt að gera árangursríkan

fornleifauppgröft. Æskilegt væri að kanna m.a. betur syðri hluta svæðisins og staðfesta að þar séu leifar bæjar og kirkju og athuga hvort þar hafi verið byggð og eða kirkjan í notkun samhliða þinghaldi eða eftir að þingstaðurinn hafði liðið undir lok. Eins væri mikilvægt að rannsaka fyrr en síðar tóftaleifar á austurbrún minjastaðarins enda liggja þær undir verulegum skemmdum.

Howell M. Roberts:

Excavations at Þingvellir 2003 - A Preliminary Report

Summary

Fornleifastofnun Íslands undertook research excavations at Þingvellir between the 2nd and the 26th of June, 2003. Excavation targeted remains within an area at the northeastern end of "Biskupshólar" – an area of positive earthworks historically associated with temporary structures used by the Bishop of Iceland and his retinue for the annual assembly. These remains consisted of numerous stone alignments, and parts of stone faced turf walls. They are interpreted as being fragments of an as yet unknown number of temporary structures, each of which may have undergone numerous episodes of repair and reconstruction. Positive dating evidence was somewhat limited, but deposits excavated in this area are believed to be from the post-medieval period.

The project was funded by the Kristnihátiðarsjóður and conducted in co-operation with the Þingvellir National Park, and forms part of a larger study into the practice and nature of administrative and judicial assemblies (Þinghald að fornu).

Introduction and Background

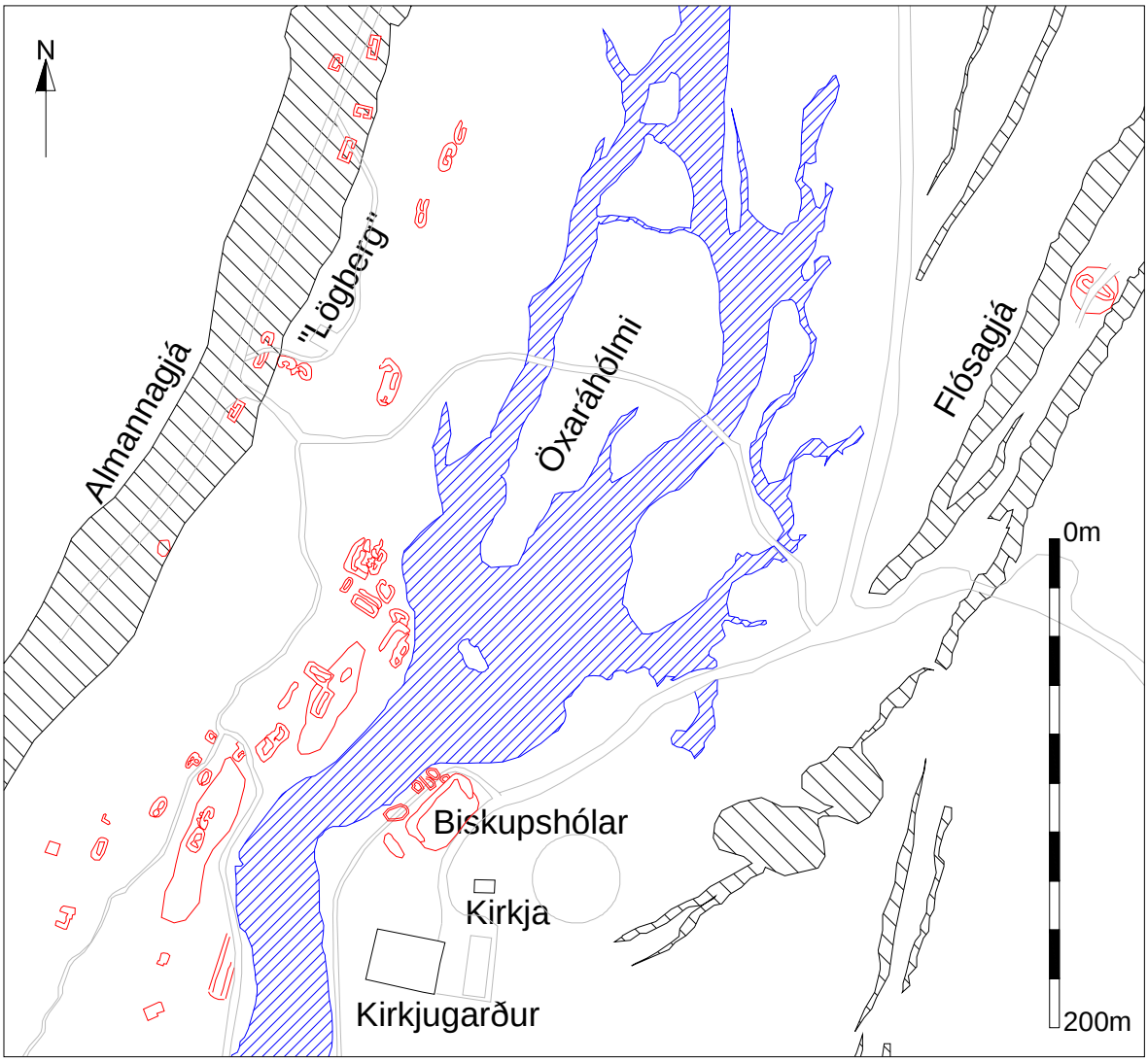


Figure 1 - Plan of visible structures (in red)

Excavation at Þingvellir in 2003 forms part of the second year of a five year project (Þinghald að fornu) aimed at better understanding the archaeology of assembly sites throughout Iceland. Although these sites are broadly "well known", and have been a topic of study for over a century, very little archaeological excavation has actually been undertaken at any of the Icelandic assembly sites. Much of our information about these assemblies comes from documentary and antiquarian sources. "Þinghald til forna" aims to begin the process of redressing this issue. Þingvellir is located at the northern shore of the lake Þingvallavatn, within a valley dominated by cliffs and seismic fissures. The Öxará river runs through the site, dividing the area of archaeological interest.

The majority of visible archaeological features are to be found on the western bank of the river, within an area measuring some 425m in length and up to 120m wide. A second apparently smaller cluster of archaeological features are located on the eastern bank, close to the modern church and farm. A number of outlying structures, and further areas of potential study may be noted – both on the peninsula "Spöngin", and to the south of the modern farm at Miðmundatún, where remains were noted during cable laying work in 1957. Furthermore, erosion of the riverbanks, and changes in the water level of the lake may have caused the loss of parts of the original area of the site. The precise count of visible remains is of course somewhat debatable, but the map produced by Samúel Eggertson on behalf of Matthias Þorðarson in 1929 indicates 37 distinct structures and a further 8 possible features. This total is held to be by no means an exhaustive record of areas of archaeological potential.

The current project began in 2002, with the mapping and evaluation of the "Biskupshólar" area, evaluation of the Miðmundatún area, further evaluation of 2 structures to the west of the river, and the testing of 2 potential features on the eastern river bank. Five evaluation trences in the Biskuphólar area all revealed complex structural remains, primarily stone built walls.

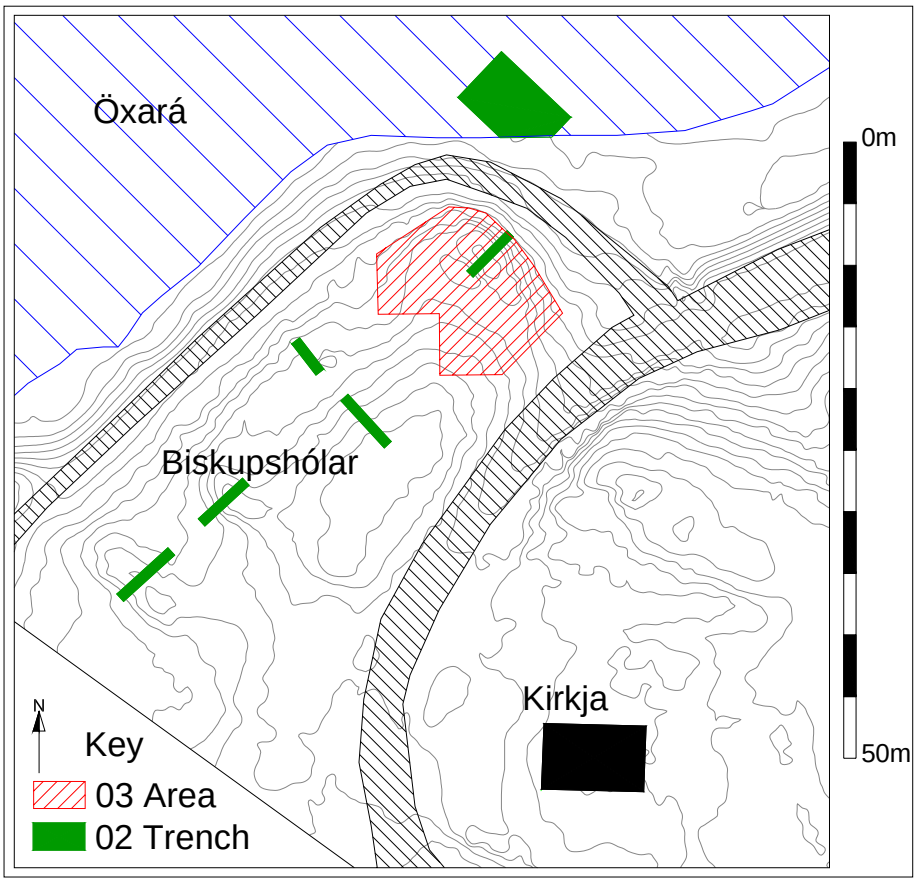


Figure 2 - Biskupshólar

In 2003 the project focused on excavation in the "Biskupshólar" area. A team of 6-8 people spent 4 weeks exposing and recording archaeological remains, within a single open area measuring circa 130m². The excavation area is aligned with the national grid and centered on E 397175 N 418975, ISN93. The Biskupshólar area is currently open grass lawn, sloping gently from circa 104m above sea level at the centre-southeast down to circa 101m at the riverbank. The Biskupshólar area, limited by the Öxará at the west, the churchyard at the southwest and a tarmaced roadway at the southeast, measures circa 55m in length, 28-30m in width and has a total area of approximately 1500m².

In addition to the open area excavation, a coring exercise was conducted at the northwestern edge of the Biskupshólar area, and in the area surrounding the church and farm, for purposes of prospection and to typify the soil profile (see Woollett, below).

Aims and Methods

Previous work at Þingvellir by Sigurður Vigfússon, in 1879 had indicated a simple rectangular structure some 30m in length in the Biskupshólar area. A study of the surface topology in 2002 could in some ways be interpreted to correlate with this, but a higher degree of complexity was noted. Evaluation trenches within the area more than confirmed this complexity – revealing multiple phases of construction and the remains of many apparently separate buildings. The primary aim of excavation work in 2003 was to shed some further light on the connections between various structural elements, and to hopefully recover some well stratified dating evidence. Subsidiary aims included typifying the nature of any potential occupation deposits, and seeking a clearer explanation of Sigurður Vigfússon's interpretation.

To achieve these aims a single contiguous area was targeted for excavation, that forming the northeastern part of the Biskupshólar area. It is in this area that some further complexity was noted on Samúel Eggertsson's map, and within this area that a substantial stone faced wall was noted by evaluation in 2002.

Survey control points were establish using a Trimble DGPS station. The excavation area was subsequently laid out in regular 5m² grid squares using a Nikon DTM 750 total station theodolite. Turf and topsoil were removed by hand. All archaeological deposits were subsequently hand excavated. All archaeological deposits were planned and described using pro-forma recording sheets, and the excavation methodology adopted was one of single

context planning. This record was supplemented by digital and conventional photography as appropriate.

As the excavation area lies within the core area of the National Park, and is thus a focus for public attention, care was taken to present information about the work, by means of both tours and signposts. Further care was taken to disrupt the public activity of the park as little as possible, and excavation proceeded with a view towards minimum intervention and maximum preservation of the visible monument. Although this forms a constraint upon archaeological research, the decision was taken not to remove or disturb any significant structural remains at this time. Once a broader understanding of the uppermost structures is available, it may then prove appropriate to further investigate earlier deposits at this location.

Results

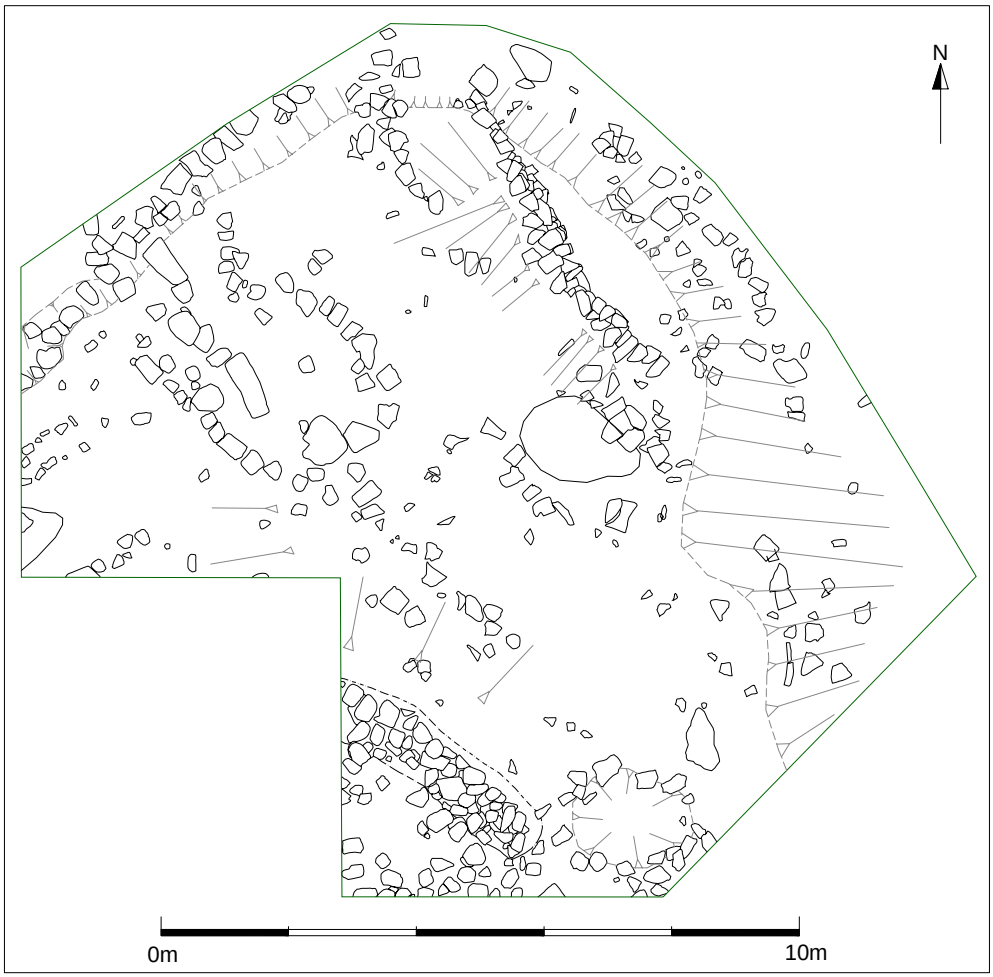


Figure 3 – Biskupshólar Excavation Area 2003

Following the removal of the turf and topsoil, the fragmentary remains of numerous stone alignments and features immediately came to light. The purpose and relationships of all these elements are by no means transparent at this time. Further excavation in this area will be necessary to clarify these issues.

Nevertheless, a number of distinct features were recorded, and numerous layers of overburden, colluvium and aeolian deposition were removed. These uppermost deposits contained very little obvious anthropogenic input, although some occasional charcoal and turf fragments were noted. These overburden layers were typified by fairly extensive turbation, possibly as a result of frost action, and or root action (See Appendix 1, below).

Major Features

Group 307 – located in the southwestern corner of the excavation area was an irregular slightly curvilinear feature. Group 307 is contained by a negative cut (306) measuring circa 0.6m in depth, 0.8m wide, and visible for a length of at least 3.8m within the current excavation area. The latter ditch was filled by irregular, angular stones (305) measuring up to 0.4m in width, within a matrix of loose, turbated orange brown silt (304). This feature can plainly be seen to extend beyond the current excavation area. Feature 307 is of unknown function, and awaits further excavation. It maybe hypothesised that this represents a foundation, and that it also serves a drainage function. Alternatively, this feature may be interpreted as structural debris infilling a ditch - that possibly served to demarcate a particular area.

Figure 4. Vertical view of feature 307. North is at the top of the frame.

Figure 5. Oblique view of Feature 307. The camera is facing the south east.

Group 331 – located in the northeastern portion of the excavation area, this feature is a multi-phase stone faced wall, with a core of turf and soil.

Figure 6. Group 331 seen from the northwest. The scale is 2m.

Group 331 comprises at least 5 episodes of construction - contexts (326), (327), (328), (329), and (330). Each of the latter contexts is a portion of the visible stone facing, and consists of up to 5 random courses of unshaped angular stone.

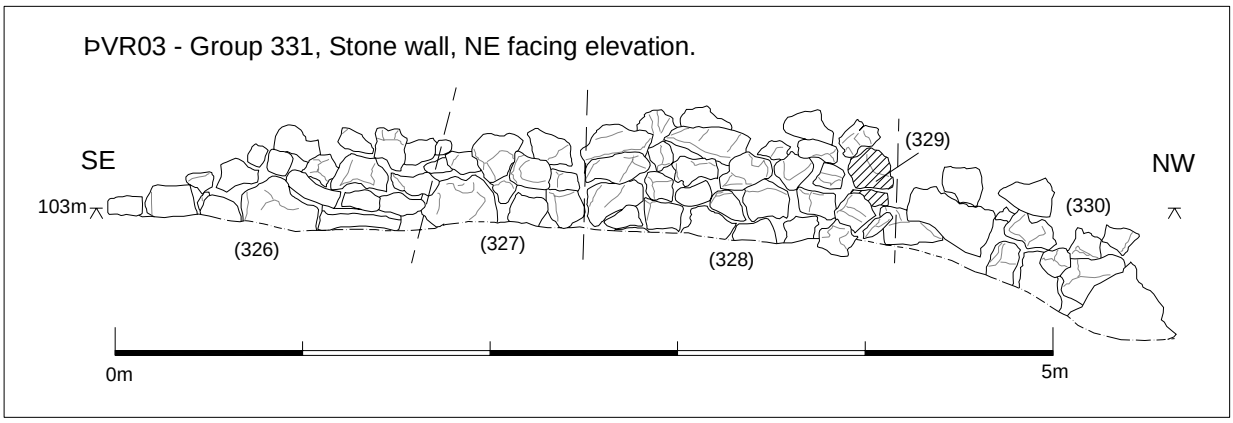


Figure 7 – Elevation of Group 331

Group 331 sits upon a bank of turf and soil (unexcavated), and may yet prove to be more extensive than is currently visible. The northwestern face of Group 331 is the ”fair face” of the wall, and this was sealed by a deposit of degraded turf (325). The latter deposit was sealed by aeolian deposits.

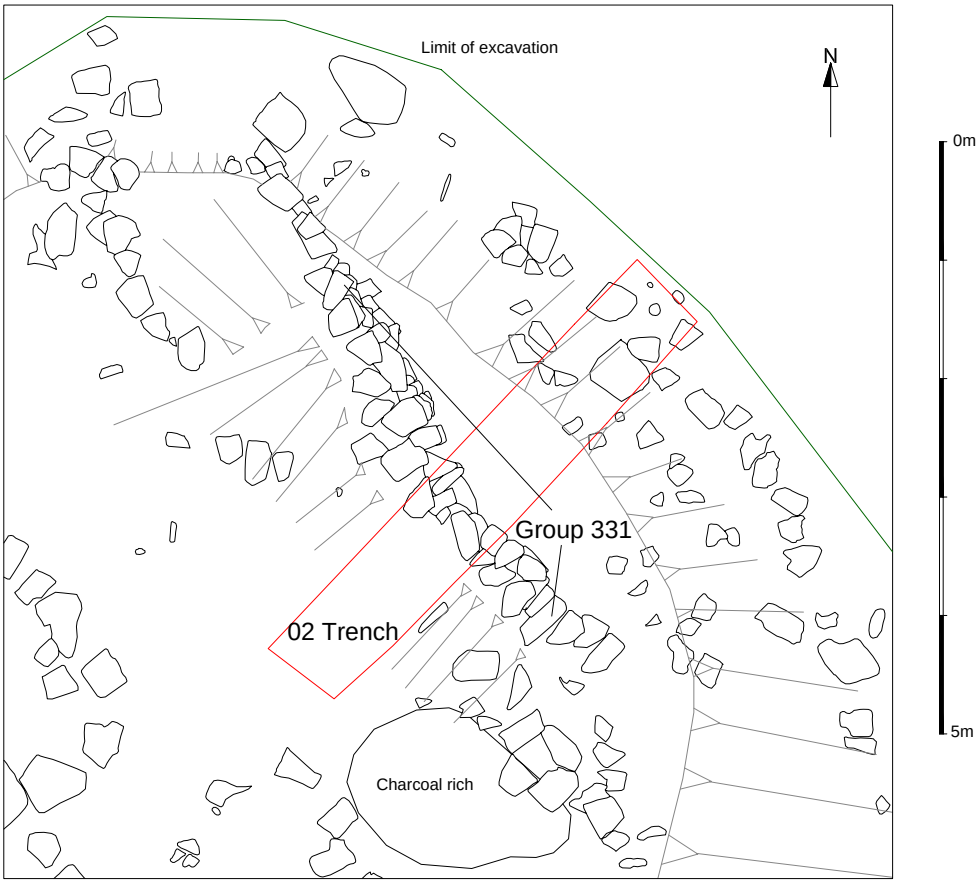


Figure 8 – Detail plan of Group 331

To the southwest of Group 331, the ground surface drops away rapidly, towards further clusters of aligned stone at the north, and to a charcoal rich deposit at the south. The northern stone cluster is thought to represent the inner facing of the wall, thus indicating a wall up to 1.7m in width. The charcoal rich deposit to the south may be interpreted as an occupational deposit – although it is insubstantial and awaits excavation. Further aligments of stone are visible at the bottom of the slope to the northeast of Group 331. These may form part of an underlying earlier phase of construction, or could represent tumble from Group 331. Beyond the northeastern limit of excavation the land drops away rapidly towards a modern track, and beyond there to the riverbank.

Possible Alignments

The remaining excavated material is comprised of numerous alignments of stone. Prior to further excavation the nature of these remains unclear. Some analysis of these is none the less possible, and some groups of similar alignment may be discerned (see below).

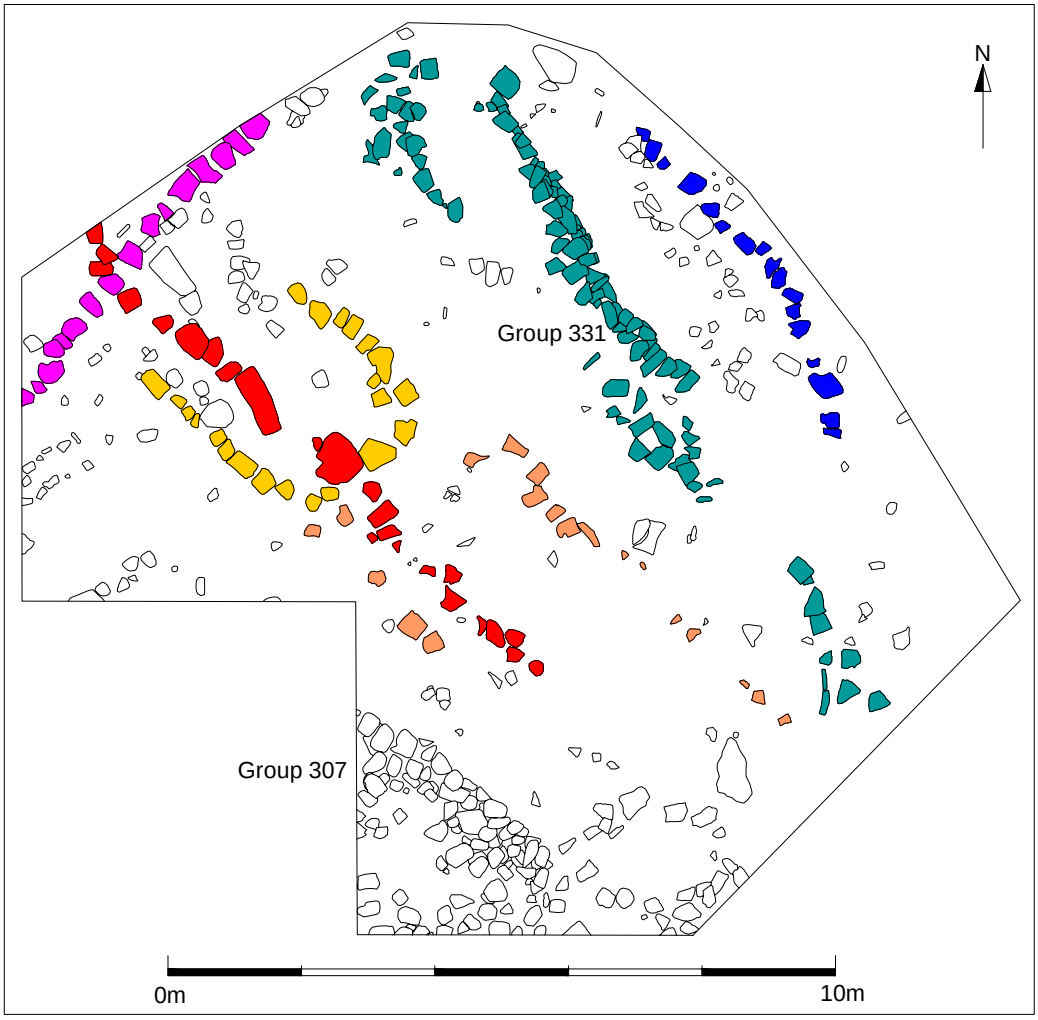


Figure 9 – Possible significant alignments of stone within the 2003 excavation

These are presented here for heuristic purposes. A few items are of note. At the northwestern limit of the excavation area was a linear arrangement of stone, seen to be within a shallow cut or depression (shown above in magenta). This regular, single line of stone would correlate well with a simple rectangular structure encompassing the Biskupshólar area. One may also note that this feature is rather less substantial than eg. Group 331, and is not aligned with other noted features. It is possible that this represents a demarcation of the area rather than a building per se. Other stone alignments within the central western portion of the excavation area (shown above in red, orange and yellow) may be seen to have similar aligments. However, that alignment is thought unlikely to belong to the same structural phase as Group 331.

Appendix 1 – Context Register

No.	Area/ Tr.	Type	Group	Description / Information	Date dd.mm.yy	ID
300	BH	Group		Pre-excavation multi-context plan	11.6.03	HMR
301	BH	Layer		Overburden / hillwash	13.6.03	JST
302	BH	Layer		Mid brown clay silt with charcoal inclusions	14.6.03	UÆ
303	BH	Layer		Orange brown humic silt – basal part of topsoil horizon	14.6.03	GAG
304	BH	Fill	307	Silt fill of cut [306]	18.6.03	FS
305	BH	Fill	307	Stones filling cut [306]	18.6.03	FS
306	BH	Cut	307	Curvilinear ditch	18.6.03	FS
307	BH	Group		Comprising (304), (305), & [306]	18.6.03	FS
308	BH	Layer		Grey brown sandy silt with charcoal	18.6.03	GAG
309	BH	Layer		Compact grey brown sandy silt with charcoal	19.6.03	GAG
310	BH	Group		Comprising [311] & [312]	20.6.03	JST
311	BH	Cut	310	Shallow pit / hollow	20.6.03	JST
312	BH	Fill	310	Bio/cryo-turbated orange brown sandy silt	20.6.03	JST
313	BH	Group		Comprising [314] & [315]	20.6.03	FS
314	BH	Cut	313	Large irregular hollow	20.6.03	FS
315	BH	Fill	313	Loose, turbated orange brown silt	20.6.03	FS
316	BH	Layer		Mid yellow brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal	20.6.03	GAG
317	BH	Layer		Dark orange brown silt with possible turf fragments	20.6.03	UÆ
318	BH	Layer		Mid orange brown silt sand – aeolian?	20.6.03	JST
319	BH	Structure		Stone alignment – wall remnant	23.6.03	OH/UÆ
320	BH	Layer		Orange brown sandy silt with turf collapse, abutting possible wall.	23.6.03	FS
321	BH	Layer		Red brown sandy silt. Colluvium/aeolian	23.6.03	JST
322	BH	Layer		Yellow brown clay silt	23.6.03	UÆ
323	BH	Deposit		Dark red brown mixed deposit beneath/amongst (319)	23.6.03	GAG
324	BH	Layer		Dark orange brown sandy silt. Colluvium/aeolian	24.6.03	FS

325	BH	Layer		Degraded turf collapse abutting Group [331]	24.6.03	GAG/RL
326	BH	Structure	331	Stone facing – abutts 327	25.6.03	HMR
327	BH	Structure	331	Stone facing - abutts 328?	25.6.03	HMR
328	BH	Structure	331	Stone facing – repair to 329?	25.6.03	HMR
329	BH	Structure	331	Stone facing	25.6.03	HMR
330	BH	Structure	331	Stone facing	25.6.03	HMR
331	BH	Group		Wall – comprising (326), (327), (328), (329), (330)	25.6.03	HMR
332	BH	Group		Post-excavation multi context plan	26.6.03	FS

Colleen Batey:

Interim Finds Discussion: Thingvellir 2003

Introduction

A total of 42 Finds Units were recorded in this excavation season, including items of various metals (iron perdominantly, but also copper alloy and lead), a small quantity of ceramics , glass , stone and clay pipe stems, as well as bone and teeth material. These are scattered through several contexts with notable concentrations of some 14 Finds Units from Context 136, Turf and Topsoil and a further three from Context 301 which is hillwash/overburden. In addition, Context 303 is described as the basal part of the topsoil horizon and accounts for a further five Finds Units.This means in effect that 22 out of the 42 Finds Units are essentially unstratified, although the nature of the finds, discussed below, does shed some light on the activities taking place at the site in more recent phases. The remaining contexts represented in the finds material are silty layers in the main. Exceptions to this are Context 317, a silt with turf fragments (Finds 60, 61, 76 and 81) which could be collapsed structure as is Context 325 (Find 82) and Context 323 (Find 68) is a wall deposit associated with Context 319. The finds will be discussed by material type, and those which have significant contexts will be highlighted.

Metals: Iron

Finds Number	Object Type	Context	
49	2 Nail/rivet	117	Charcoally yellow - brown silt
50	18 Nails	136	Turf and Topsoil
51	14 Misc	136	
52	Clasp	136	
53	Buckle	136	
54	Nail/fitting	301	Overburden/hillwash
55	Nail Head	301	
56	2 Nails	302	Mid brown charcoally silt
57	3 Misc	303	Basal part of topsoil
58	4 Nails	303	
41	Nail/Fitting	308	Grey brown charcoally silt
47	Hook	308	
59	Misc	308	
43	Nail head	315	Loose turbated silt
60	3 Objects	317	Orange brwon silt with turf fragments
61	2 Nails	317	
62	3 Nails	318	Possible aeolian sand

Table x: Iron Finds by Context

17 Finds Units of iron were scattered through 9 contexts (see Table x above). Of these 10 are certainly nails, many complete and including structural nails such as those in Find 50 from the topsoil, as well as flat sectioned ones with elongated heads such as Find 59 from Context 308 or Find 61 from Context 317 which are identified as horse-shoe nails. Additional horse-related finds include part of a horse-shoe Find 51 from Context 136, fittings for horse-harness such as the buckle Find 53 from Context 136 and possibly Find 52 from Context 136. which is a leather fitting. In contextural terms, many of these are from the topsoil deposits, but concentrations in Context 308 and 317 may indicate areas of either use or dumping. The

recovery of horse-related items is not unexpected in this context as this was clearly the mode of transport to the annual gatherings and in many cases, urgent repair work may well have been needed to be carried out on site. Of the other items which can be identified, the hook Find 47 from Context 308 should originally ahve been attached to a wooden post or similar, but its specific function can only be guessed without further associations. In dating terms all these finds are most likely to be Post Medieval in date, although it is difficult to be certain with some of the nails or items with so much corrosion.

Metals: Copper Alloy

48	Indet	136	Turf and topsoil
63	Cartridge Case	136	
64	Indet	136	
65	Nail	136	
66	Button	136	
67	2 nails	136	
40	Button	308	Grey brown charcoally silt
44	Nail	308	
46	Indet	308	
68	?Bullet	323	Mixed deposit associated with stones 319

Table x: Copper Alloy finds by context

10 Finds Units of copper alloy were recovered, of which 6 are from the Turf and Topsoil, 3 from the deposit 308 noted in relation to the iron as a dump of usage area and a single find of a bullet from Context 323 from within the wall fill of 319. the tyeps of object represented include both a cartidge case and a bullet, 3 finds of nails or tacks, 2 buttons with flat or domical surfaces and 3 items which are currently indeterminate. In the case of the cartridge case etc and buttons, loss would have been accidental, but it is unclear whether the nails, of such malleable metal as copper alloy were in fact hammered into wood or associated with leather originally. In each case, there is unliekly to be anything in this part of the assemblage which predates the Post Medieval period.

Metals: Lead

The singlf Find Unit 42 from Context 308 is a series of 5 pieces of lead shot, presumably associated with fowling activities in the vicinity of the water. These are likely to be relatively recent in date, and certainly fall in the Post Medieval range.

Glass

A single Find Unit, 69 from turf and topsoil 136 included sherds of green bottle glass and sherds of clear window glass. In terms of dating this is all relatively modern and indicates both the proximity of a building, and the location of a well-earned rest with liquid refreshment looking over the river!

Clay Pipe (Identification Natascha Mehler)

There are four clay pipe stems from Finds Unit 70 from the topsoil 136 which have been dated on the basis of the bore size to the 17th and 18th century. There provenience is unknown, but most such pipes are imports from the Netherlands.

Ceramics (some Identification by Natascha Mehler)

There are 3 Finds Units of ceramics from this assemblage. Finds 71 and 73 from the Turf and Topsoil 136 and Find 72 from Context 301, Overburden. Amongst these, Finds 71 and 72 are both stoneware, possibly originally from germany and dating to the 17th century. There is a wall sherd with ridged decoration and a narrow rim sherd which is likely to be from the same vessel, identified as an ointment jar. The largest group of sherds, Find73 includes 63 sherds of more recent glazed wares, including sponge wares and decorative sherds from various tea sets.

Stone

There are 4 Finds Units of stone, 74, 74 and 76 are predominantly unworked and probably of little significance, with a small slate fragment as part of Find 74 which may be part of a whetstone or a writing slate and which is obviously imported. Find 45 from Context 308 is

part of a finegrained whetstone, of reddish stone and which is liekly to have been an import to Iceland.

Bone and Teeth

Theer are 6 Finds Units of bone and teeth, in many cases very badly abraded. There is ec-vience in the dental amterial of both cattle and sheep, and in the bone assemblage cattle-sized bones are present. In terms of the weight of this material, the largest amount is from Context 136 (turf and topsoil) , at 333.60gms and Context 325 has 156.93gms. Other contexts, 301, 303, 316 and 317 are all of lesser quantity.

Conclusion

The material represented in this assemblage is varied and in all cases where it can be ascertained of Post Medieval dating. There are a small number of imported items, such as the ceramics and probably the glass and clay pipes as well as the small whetstone, but it is most likely that the bulk of the metalwork in the form of the ironwork is produced in Iceland. In terms of assisting with the identification of context function, the turf and topsoil finds are disturbed, and the hillwash deposit 301 also suggests that the finds are likely to have been disturbed from their original contexts. However, Context 308, a grey brown sandy silt with charcoal has a concentration of finds which would suggest either a floor surface or more likely a midden dump.

Jim Woollett:

Report of an Archaeological Soil Core Survey conducted at Thingvellir, 2003

Introduction

From June 25 to 27, 2003, a *Landscapes Circum Landnám* Project field crew carried out a limited programme of soil core testing at the site of Thingvellir, in conjunction with the Fornleifastofnun Íslands. The survey focused on limited areas of this complex and extensive site, specifically on the periphery of the "Biskupshólar" turf structure, the Thingvallabær farm's homefield and a broad area of meadow south and east of the farm and the Thingvallakirkja churchyard. This survey project was intended to determine if midden deposits with preserved organic remains, or any trace of cultural refuse or other archaeological contexts, were present in buried soils in these areas.

Locations of survey transects and individual soil core tests are presented in Figure 1. Surveys in each of these areas will be detailed below. The surveys were conducted with the use of an Oakfield soil core tester equipped with a 3/4 inch tubular bit, and a 50m tape. In order to provide an extensive initial survey, individual soil cores were placed in wide regular intervals (generally 3 to 4m apart) along straight transects. The orientation of these transects was determined by the location of features and local topography. The members of the field crew who contributed to this work included Matthew Brown, Yekaterina Krivorgskaya and Jim Woollett, while members of the FSÍ field crew provided additional aid.

Transects 1 and 2: Biskupshólar

Soil core tests were made in two transects outside the northern and eastern walls of the Biskupshólar turf structure, between the modern edge of the Öxará river and a public footpath running along the water, outside the structure's walls (see Figures 1 and 2). These tests were intended to locate any midden deposit located outside the structure. In theory, water bodies, depressions and slopes present favourable locations for refuse accumulation nearby

habitations, whether through deliberate deposition or reworking of yard debris. The area north of the turf structure is a plausible location for refuse accumulation as it drains the slope and limited "yard" area outside the structure. It is somewhat out of the way and out of direct sight of people using the structure and yet it would have been within a stone's throw of the structure's entrance.

A gravel footpath covers much of the area close to the house. Unfortunately, the path limited soil core tests to a narrow band along the shore edge where only thin deposits of sediment were present above bedrock. Areas to the south, west and east of the structure were under open excavations in 2003 and hence were not tested.

All of the tests in Transect 1 (Tests 1 to16) were shallow, with turf and medium brown organic silt bottoming out on bedrock within 50 to 60cm (and up to 90cm) of the surface in almost all locations. In general, a lower body of more dense, sandy to silty soil, variably of light brown to medium brown to red-brown in colour, was present in the last 10 to 20cm of sediment overlying bedrock. This layer is possibly comprised of *in situ* peat or turf enriched with anthropogenic nutrients.

Trace quantities of charcoal were noted in cores throughout the area, especially in the lower soil layer. The presence of charcoal at this relative degree of depth may be an indication that *in situ* archaeological deposits are to be found relatively deeply, covered by extensive post-occupation soil and turf development. Alternatively, soil mixing processes (bioturbation or cryoturbation) have displaced these small artifacts of human activity throughout the soil profile.

Cores closer to the turf structure (Tests 8 to16) indicated a deeper and somewhat more complex stratigraphy in that area. Patches or lenses of sandy-silty brown turf with red-stained mottles or streaks, perhaps indicating local water-logged conditions or wall collapse material, were noted at depths of 40 to 60cm in Tests 8, 10, 11 and 15, immediately down slope of the turf structure's wall. Charcoal flecks were most common in basal sediment layers above bedrock in areas around the structure walls, especially in Tests 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15 (most notably 11, 14 and 15). Finally, and most significantly, small calcined bone fragments and a few apparent mushy bone fragments were noted in Test 15, just above bedrock at about 60cm below surface. Traces of calcined bone were also observed in the rocky stream bottom adjacent to Test 15, suggesting that some refuse materials were deposited in the stream or that archaeological deposits have eroded into the stream.

Transect 2 consists of five core tests aligned along the water's edge, extending from the vicinity of the northeast corner of the turf structure to an area of boggy ground 14m east.

This set of core tests generally revealed deeper stratigraphic columns than those of transect 1, as loose sediments gave way to bedrock or gravel at depths of 75 to 90cm below surface. Peaty, medium brown organic sandy silts dominated the stratigraphy of all these cores. In the deepest tests, grey silt, red-brown clayey silt, light brown sandy silt, dark brown, organic, coarse sand, and coarse red sand lenses were present immediately above the bedrock. Throughout the transect, traces of charcoal were present in loose sediments within approx. 75cm of surface, with denser (though not remarkable) concentrations in Tests 17 and 18, those closest to the turf structure.

The depth of the sediment and soil column increased markedly at the eastern extreme of Transect 2. In Tests 20 and 21, cores were inserted up to 160cm deep and were terminated in sterile, wet layers rather than bedrock. These lowest layers included gravel, coarse reddish sand and uniform red-brown fine silt with some clay, suggesting that in that area, a depression in the underlying bedrock floor was filled with sediments related to both standing and moving water and latterly, perhaps, to the presence of a bog. Charcoal was observed no deeper than 90cm below surface in this transect.

Transect 3

Transect 3 was located on the raised southern bank of the Öxará, approximately 40 to 80m south of the Thingvallabær farm house. The area presently includes open birch woodland and grassed meadow. The southern end of the transect was adjacent to the northern edge of a set of previously excavated test trenches and turf structures; the transect was intended to map the limits of any traces of cultural debris related to this occupation. The 39m long transect was tested with 15 soil cores in 3m intervals (numbered Tests 22 to 35).

Tests along this transect showed that a medium brown turfy organic silt was present throughout the area, extending from under vegetation to depths of about 30 to 75cm. In some locations, it was impossible to extend cores deeper than 30-35cm below surface, due to the presence of loose rock or bedrock. Trace quantities of charcoal were identified in the top 30cm of almost all of these tests. In Tests 23, 25, 26, 28, 32 and 33, charcoal ranging from trace quantities to patches of chunks larger than 3mm diameter were noted from approx. 30 to 90cm below surface.

Core testing demonstrated the presence of a thin scatter of cultural debris and perhaps a thin, midden deposit approximately 3 to 9m east of the easternmost trenched turf structure (in Tests 23 to 25). Small numbers of well-fragmented calcined bones were observed in Tests

23 and 25 in upper soil layers as well as in Test 29. Further, a body of greasy, red-brown peat and possibly peat ash was observed in Test 25, at a depth of 70-80cm below surface. Finally, very thin lenses of fine grey sediment, either wood ash or tephra, were observed in Test 24 at approx. 80cm below surface and, in Test 25, at 50cm below surface. In general, all forms of cultural debris were less common in the east of the transect.

Transect 4: Thingvallabær and Thingvallakirkja Churchyard

A fourth transect of soil core tests was located along the southern margin of the grassed yard of the Thingvallabær farm house just north of a copse of woods, in the hope of avoiding any soil disturbance related to modern landscaping around the farm house. It also runs into an area of boggy ground south of the Thingvallakirkja churchyard, adjacent to the shore of the Öxará. This transect was 77m long and included 21 tests in 3m intervals, excepting a disturbed area housing a buried tank or cistern.

Tests 36 to 41 showed a relatively thin layer of light to medium brown turfy, silty soil 15 to 55cm thick, with patches of fine, silty, red turfy soil, in the southeastern-most corner of the farmhouse yard and adjacent garden. These soils overlaid a layer of grayish silt and gravel and rock. These lower layers were water-saturated in 2003 and exuded an odour distinctive of reduction reactions.

In Tests 42 to 47, the surficial layer of brown silty, turfy soil, from 30 to 50cm thick, included thin scatters of charcoal and calcined bone (especially in Tess 42, 43, 46 and 47). Small fragments of rotten wood, patches of peat ash and fragments of decomposed turf were also present in this layer, possibly suggesting that this layer includes poorly sorted fill or was disturbed by other means. Beneath this, alternating layers of dark grey organic silt and red-brown silty turfy soil, containing charcoal lenses and occasional charcoal chunks, wood bits and some calcined bone fragments, were generally present to depths of about 90 to 150cm. Tests 45, 46, and 47 contained the most notable traces of organic remains in Transect 4. Most of the charcoal was present between 30-70cm below surface. Traces of charcoal were, however, were observed as deep as 110cm below surface and calcined bone was recovered from below 125cm below surface. Sediments were completely waterlogged muds at approx. 90-120cm below surface.

The tests immediately south of the farmhouse (Tests 48 to 53) all had medium brown silty, turfy soil with charcoal flecks under the modern grassy ground surface. This layer was thin however, as rocks or dense angular gravels were found everywhere between 10 and 30cm

below surface. Both the rock and the topsoil may be redeposited spoil or fill, related to the construction of the house and subsequent landscaping.

Three final soil core tests (Tests 54 to 56) were made extending from the western edge of the grassed yard into a very wet boggy area. These tests found densely fibrous, waterlogged organic-rich peat with thin silty layers extending down to 60 to 90cm below surface. Some traces of charcoal, peat ash and wood fragments were observed in the upper 30cm of Tests 54 and 55, but very little in comparison to Tests 45 to 47.

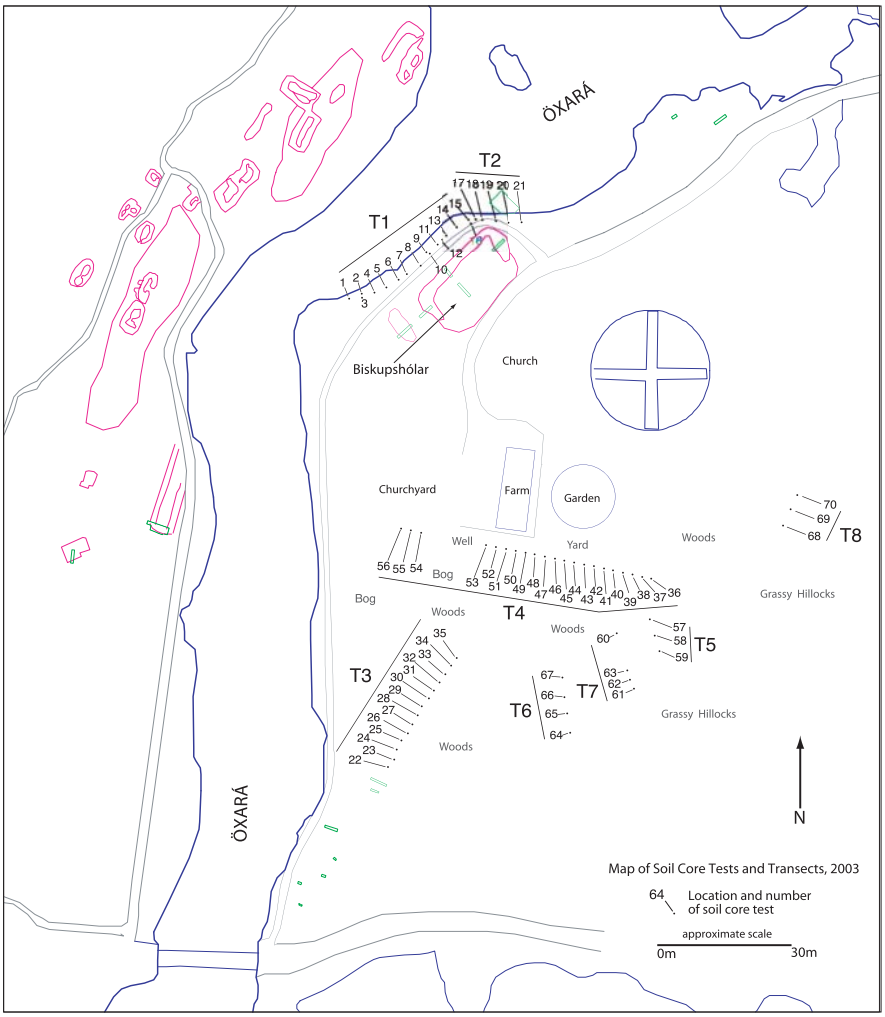


Figure 1: Map of Soil Core Tests made in 2003

Transect 5

Transect 5 was a small series of tests (Tests 57 to 59) running from the top to the bottom of a hillock in a open meadow approximately 30m southeast of the Thingvallabær farmhouse. These tests, along with those of Transects 6, 7 and 8, were intended to determine if scatters of refuse materials were present in meadow areas away from the farmhouse and already documented turf structures, such as those related to outbuildings and to soil amendment.

The upper 30 cm of sediment in soil cores from transect 5 tests was comprised of dark

to medium brown organic silt with some charcoal and traces of calcined bone and small patches of pale brown-orange silty, turfy soil, possibly indicting some local soil disturbance and amendment of soils in the meadow with household or fuel wastes. Charcoal and calcined bone fragments were most common in Test 57, at the top of the hillock. Under this, to depths of approx. 40 to 50cm, was medium brown-orange turfy organic silt. Traces of charcoal were observed in the lower portion of Test 57 at the top of the hillock but not in the others. The tests ended in rock at depths of about 50cm.

Transect 6

Transect 6 consisted of four soil tests extending from the top to the bottom of a hillock about 30m south of the Thingvallabær farmhouse. These tests had thin (approx. 30 cm thick) layers of light to medium brown organic silty soils. Flecks of charcoal and traces of calcined bone were present in this upper layer in Tests 66 and 67, at the bottom of the slope. Beneath the surficial soil were clean, brown, silty sediments, coarse sand and impenetrable rock, except at the base of the slope (Test 67). In that test, a sterile underlying layer of medium brown to orange turfy silty soil with some iron staining was observed between 30 and 60cm below surface was observed, along with a final layer of pale yellow brown silty soil, terminating in rock as 68cm below surface.

Transect 7

Transect 7 extended from the top of a hillock in the meadow southeast of the Thingvallabær farmhouse, approximately 15m east of Transect 6 and 20m west of Transect 5. It consists of four tests; three tests on the top and north-facing slope of the hillock and one at the very base of the gully beneath it. These tests were intended to fulfill the same sampling purposes as Transects 5 and 6, while the test in the gully bottom (Test 60), was in addition intended sample a location where any refuse accumulation in the immediate vicinity would likely accumulate through fluvial, colluvial or aeolian processes.

Test 60, locate din the damp bottom of the gully, had an overlying layer, approximately 30cm deep, of thick turf and light brown turfy organic silt with some traces of charcoal visible between 25 and 30cm below surface. Orange-brown, turfy, organic silt was observed from about 30 to 60cm below surface, with traces of charcoal and calcined bone. Beneath this, from about 60 to 90cm below surface, was light brown somewhat organic silt with thin darker brown organic soil laminations.

The cores on the adjacent slope (Tests 61 to 63) had surficial soil layers of firm, medium brown, turfy, organic silt between 25 to 30cm thick, overlying red-brown organic silt. Tests 61 and 62 had traces of calcined bone and charcoal in the upper soil layer. Test 61, at the top of the slope, had an additional layer of dark turfy soil associated with charcoal, suggesting that there might be a buried cultural layer or at least a buried soil containing cultural refuse, in this location.

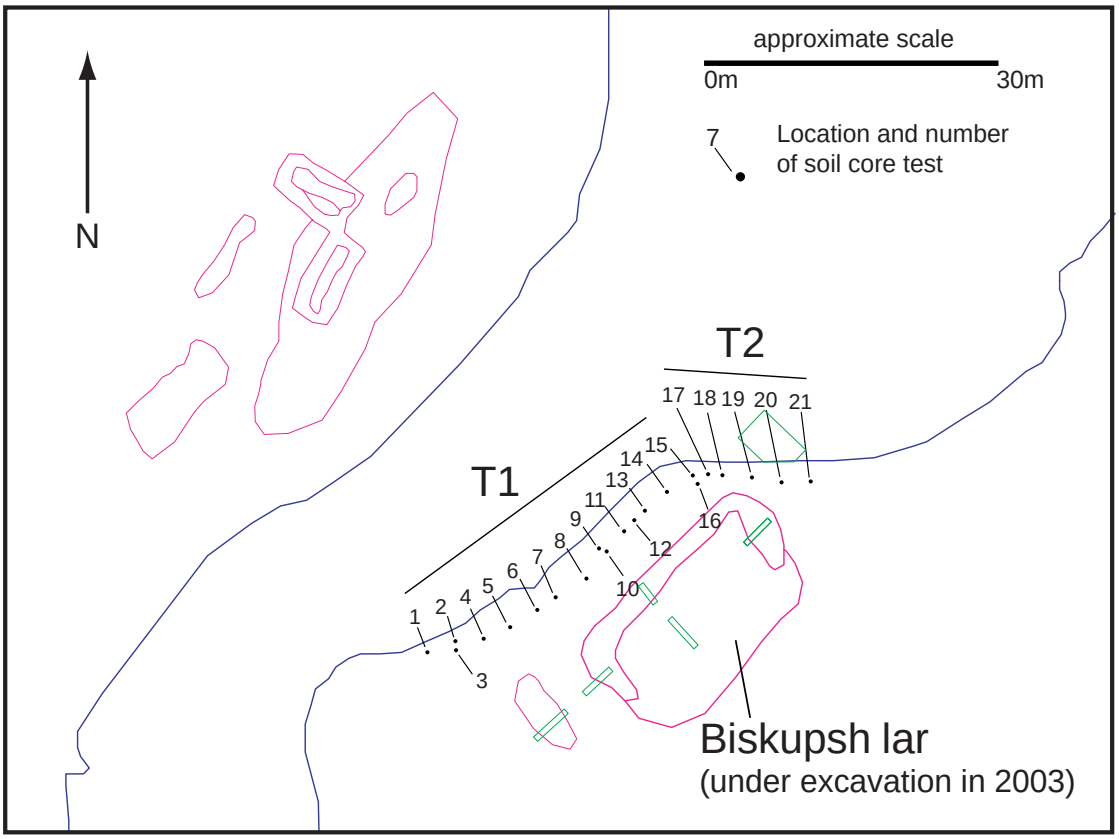


Figure 2: Map of Soil Core Tests in Transects 1 and 2 around Biskupshólar

Transect 8

Transect 8 consisted of three core tests (Tests 68 to 70) and was located by itself on high ground in an open meadow about 60m east of the Thingvallabær farmhouse, adjacent to some modern gardens. These tests found a thin surficial soil layer of medium brown organic silt without visible cultural refuse. The presence of mottles of red-brown turfy organic silt in Test 70, however, may indicate some previous soil disturbance in this location.

Summary of Results and Possibilities for Future Work

The soil core survey reported here was intended as a brief and initial sub-surface survey of the Thingvallabær locality. Four general portions of the site were tested with 70 soil cores arrayed in eight transects. These areas included the Biskupshólar turf structure, an open meadow adjacent to a cluster of other turf structures, the southern edge of the yard around the Thingvallabær farmhouse and Thingvallakirkja churchyard, and portions of a large, open meadow south and east of the Thingvallabær farmhouse. These soil core tests were thereby intended to sample subsurface deposits near known areas of occupation of the ancient Thingvellir and Thingvallabær sites, and areas without known occupation but which might have received archaeological inputs through limited forms of occupation or building, or through deposition of refuse or soil amendment.

This project found no obvious evidence of dense midden accumulations of the scale of those excavated in recent years at many permanent Viking Period and Medieval farm sites in Iceland. Nevertheless, several zones with less dramatic scales of accumulation of cultural debris were defined.

A modest component of cultural detritus was found around the north and east walls of the Biskupshólar turf structure. These materials included charcoal flecks and calcined bone, which were most plentiful in the vicinity of the corner between that structure's northwestern and northeastern walls, at depths of approx. 40 to 60cm below surface. Most traces of cultural refuse around this structure were buried 30cm or more below the modern ground surface, suggesting that this refuse was deposited at or near the level of bedrock, near the waters edge, and that there may have been little post-medieval disturbance of this particular structure. Soil mixing processes may however, have, disturbed any buried occupational level.

A second modest concentration of refuse (charcoal, calcined bone and possible peat and wood ash) was noted around Test 25, near previously tested turf structures southwest of the Thingvallabær farmhouse. Finally, a third concentration of organic materials (charcoal, calcined bone, peat ash and wood fragments) was observed in the vicinity of Tests 45 to 47, east of the Thingvallabær farmhouse, at the southern edge of its rear yard. These materials were present at considerable depth, from 30cm down to about 120cm below surface, but are of ambiguous age given obvious modern efforts at landscaping which have likely included infilling and leveling, around the farmhouse.

Tests in the grassy meadows east and south of the Thingvallabær farmhouse did not define notable concentrations of cultural refuse, except in two locations at the top of small

hillocks (Tests 57 and 61) where quite modest and ambiguous concentrations of charcoal and calcined bone were noted in sub-surface sediments. Nevertheless, trace quantities of organic remains were found in surficial soils in most tests throughout the meadow areas, possibly indicating that household or fuel wastes were distributed in broadcast fashion to local fields as a means of amending local soils.

In light of the results of this very limited survey, future soil core survey work at the site might usefully concentrate on wooded areas south and north of the Thingvallabær farmhouse and around Test 25 (Transect 3), areas that were not tested in 2003. As well, deep cores might be necessary to determine the presence of well-buried midden deposits in the lawn-covered yard east of the farmhouse. The three locations with more concentrated cultural materials identified in 2003, noted above, should be tested in more systematic fashion, in order to sample their contents and to better evaluate their distribution and age.

Adolf Friðriksson og Garðar Guðmundsson:

Hegranesþing

Á Hegranesi norðaustanverðu er stór rústaþyrping sem sögð er vera leifar Hegranesþings í Skagafirði. Hegranesþings er getið í nokkrum sögum, t.d. í *Grettis sögu* (*ÍF* VII:229), *Ljósvetninga sögu* (*ÍF* X:83), og í *Guðmundar saga* (*Biskupa sögur* I:490). Athyglisvert er að svo virðist sem þingminjarnar hafi veirð týndar á 18. öld. Þegar Árni Magnússon spurðist fyrir um þingið í upphafi 18. aldar fékk hann þær upplýsingar frá sóknarprestinum að enginn vissi hvar þingið hafi verið haldið. Hinsvegar væri rústaþyrping norðan við bæinn Garða, sem sumir töldu vera búðir sjómanna eða kaupmanna, en presturinn lagði til að þar gæti þingið hafa verið haldið. (Chorographica 1955:94-95). Finnur Magnússon (*FF*: 615-639) nefnir í stuttu yfirliti til fornleifanefndar frá 1816-17 að leifar gamals þings sé að sjá í Hegranesi. Fyrsta nákvæma lýsing á minjunum kemur frá Kålund 1879. Hann segir minjar sjáanlegar norðan við Garða, og taldi um 40 búðir og hringlaga tóft, um 4 faðma í þvermál, sem gat verið dómhringur (Kålund, Bidrag, 1879:78-79). Sigurður Vigfússon (Árbók 1892:110-117) skoðaði þennan sama stað fáeinum árum síðar og taldi 46 búðir og fann tvo hringa. Hann áleit þarna einnig vera garðlög og tóftir frá síðari tímum. Annan hringinn mældi Sigurður 90 fet og taldi vera lögréttu þá sem nefnd er í *Grettis sögu* (*ÍF* VII:230). Brynjúlfur Jónsson (Árbók 1901:20-23) skoðaði einnig staðinn og tók heilshugar undir þá túlkun Sigurðar. Daniel Bruun (1899:31-35) gerði allnákvæman uppdrátt af staðnum 1896. Þar eru alls um 80 tóftir sýndar á Hegranesi. Bruun reyndi að greina á milli sýnilegra tófta og taldi að eftir að þingið hafði verið yfirgefið hafi bær verið reistur þar og tún með túngarði sett yfir staðinn.

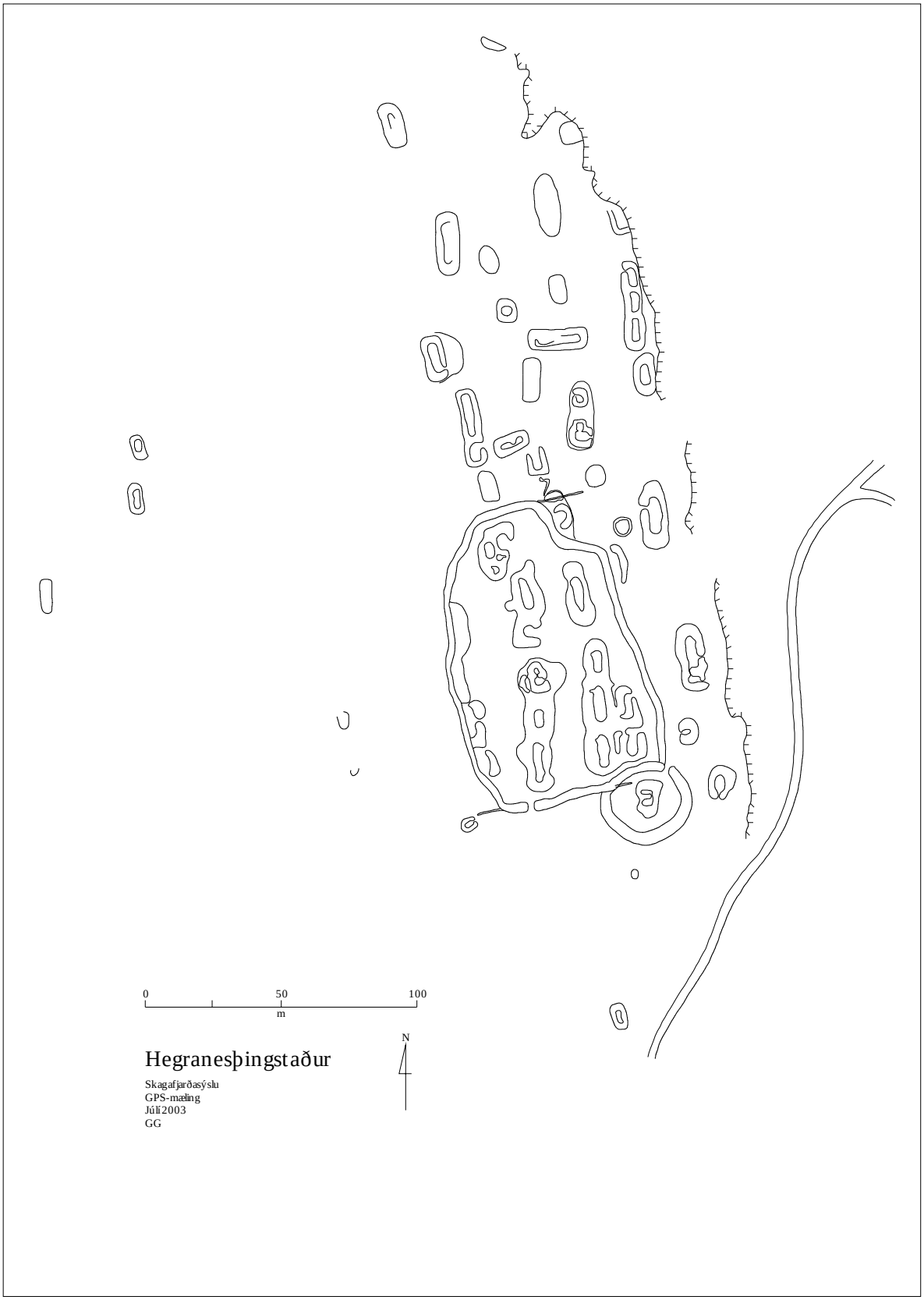
Árið 1974 var gert rask í austanverðum minjastaðnum er vegagerðin skemmdi hluta einnar

tóftar með jarðýtu. Þjóðminjasafn rannsakaði þessa tóft árið eftir. Í ljós kom að nær hálf tóftin hafði verið eyðilögð, en sá helmingur sem eftir var sýndi að undirstöður veggja höfðu verið úr grjóti, með tvöfaldri röð af steinum, og torfhleðslu ofan á. Kol og brennd bein fundust innan tóftar en ekkert eiginlegt gólflag. Innan tóftarinnar voru litlar stoðarholur, um 5-7 sm í þvermál. Niðurstöður uppgraftarins gefa til kynna að tóftin hafi verið e.k. dvalarstaður, en ekki til langdvalar, og því gæti hún mögulega hafa verið þingbúð. (Guðmundur Ólafsson og Mjöll Snæsdóttir, Árbók 1976:78).

Uppmæling og yfirborskönnun 2003

Sumarið 2003 voru minjar á Hegranesþingi mældar upp og kortlagðar. Þegar þær minjar sem nú eru sjáanlegar eru bornar við lýsingar á staðnum frá 19. öld, virðist sem staðurinn hafi ekki skemmst mjög mikið. Í aðalatriðum má segja að þar séu misstórar tóftir, sem flestar snúa eins, þ.e. N-S, og liggja í u.þ.b. þremur röðum, hver af enda annars. Bruun taldi sig sjá fleiri, en ógreinilegri tóftaraðir ofar (vestar), en ekki voru ummerki um þær sýnilegar við yfirborskönnun 2003.

Ástand minjastaðarins er betra en flestra þeirra svonefndu þingstaða sem til þessa hafa verið kannaðir á síðustu árum. Tóftir sem voru nyrst austanmegin eru horfnar, og tóftir sem liggja með austurbrúninni eru að skemmast. Bakkinn er að blása og úr honum hrynur laus malarjarðvegurinn. Í brattanum austan undan staðnum má sjá einstaka stein sem líklega er hleðslugrjót. Tóftir sem nefndar eru nyrst á staðnum finnast ekki lengur. Þar voru a.m.k. 5 tóftir sem nú eru flestar horfnar eða illgreinilegar. Fyrri rannsakendur hafa talið vera lls um 40-50 tóftir í þessum þremur röðum, en okkur telst að þar séu um 35, og eru sumar ógreinilegar en flestar allglöggar. Sunnan megin á þingstaðnum er gamall túngarður, og stórt hringlaga gerði við hann. Innan hans sunnantil eru miklar rústir sem minna á bæjarrústir. Líklega hefur þar verið reistur bær og kirkja, sem farið hafa í eyði fyrir nokkrum öldum síðan.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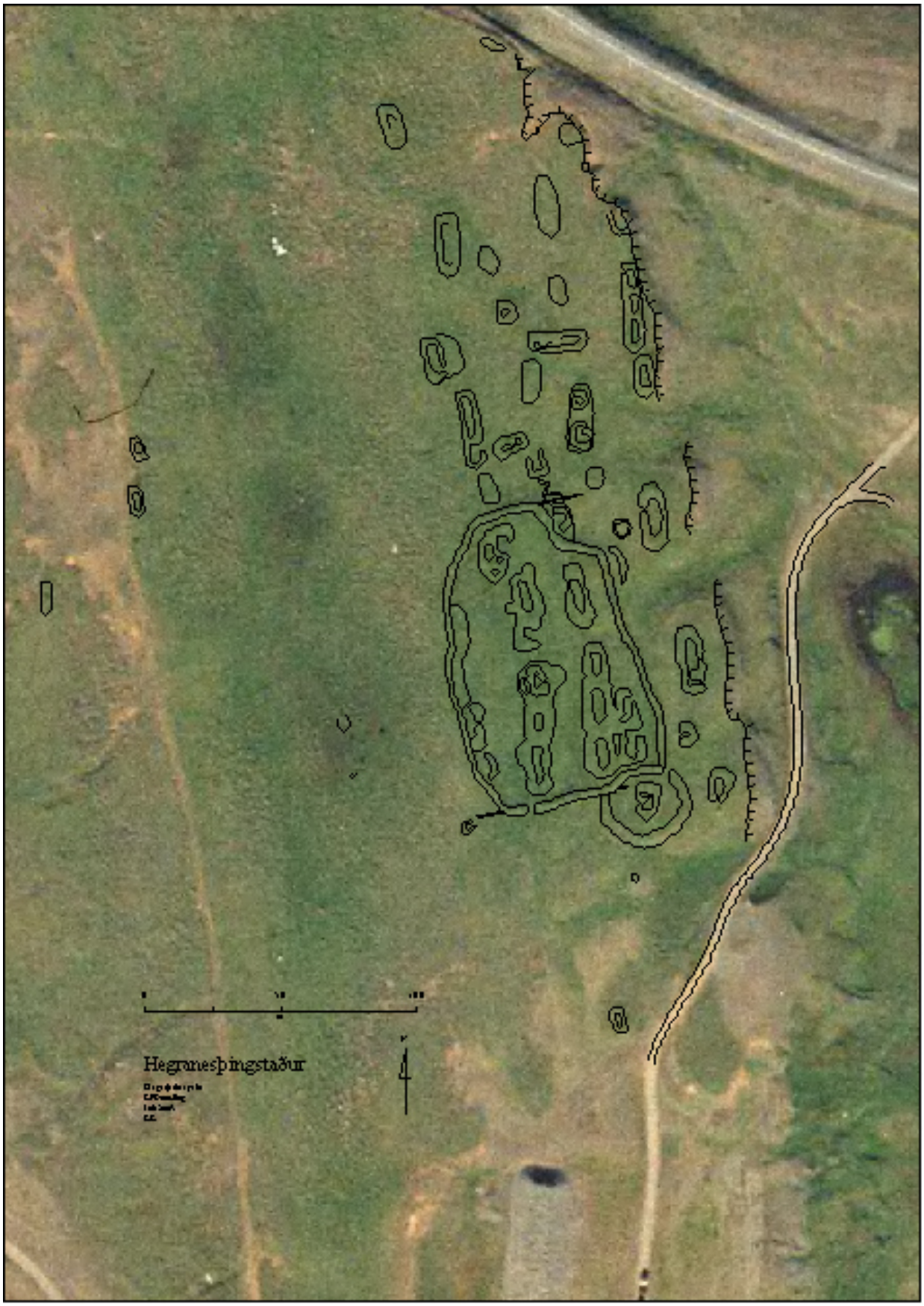
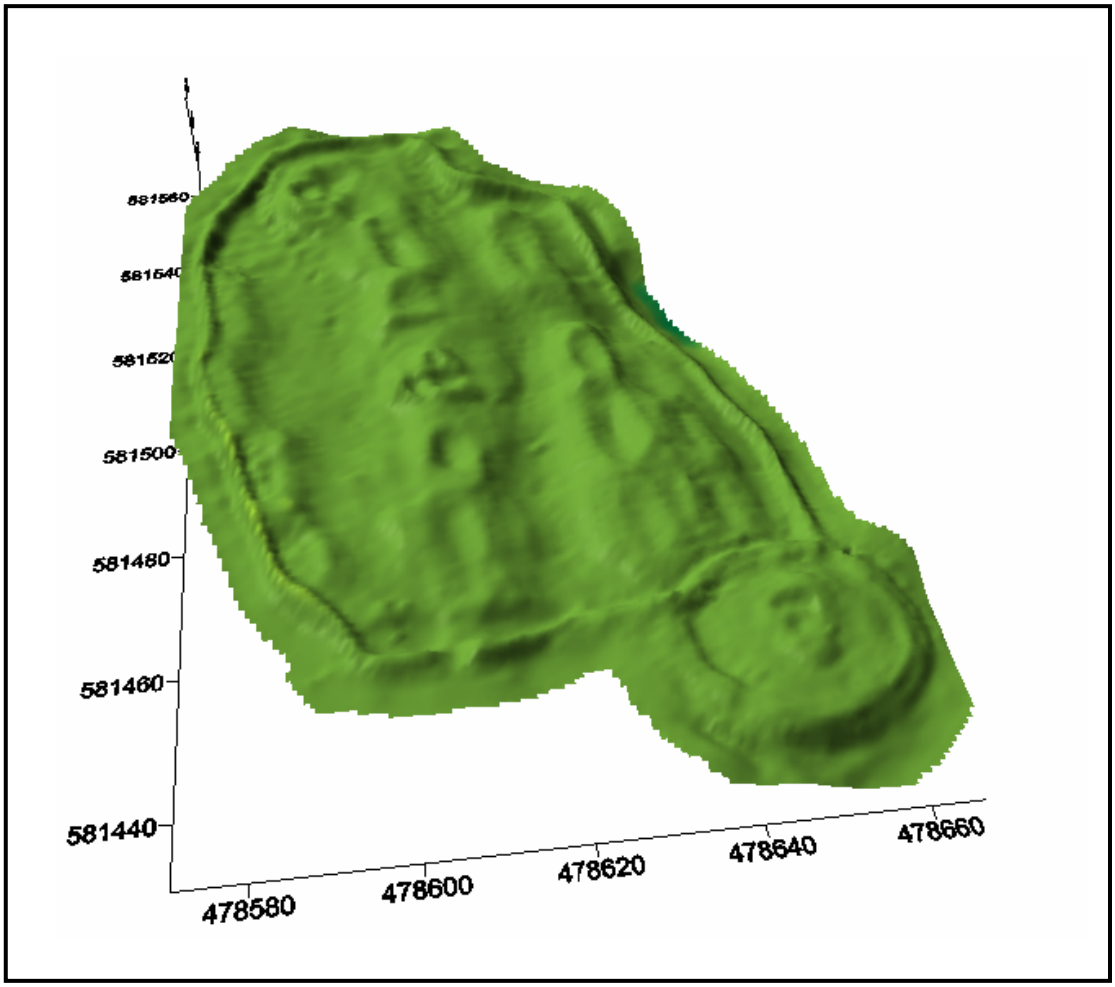

Hegranesþingstaður



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Hildur Gestsdóttir:

Fornleifarannsókn á Hegranesþingstað 2003

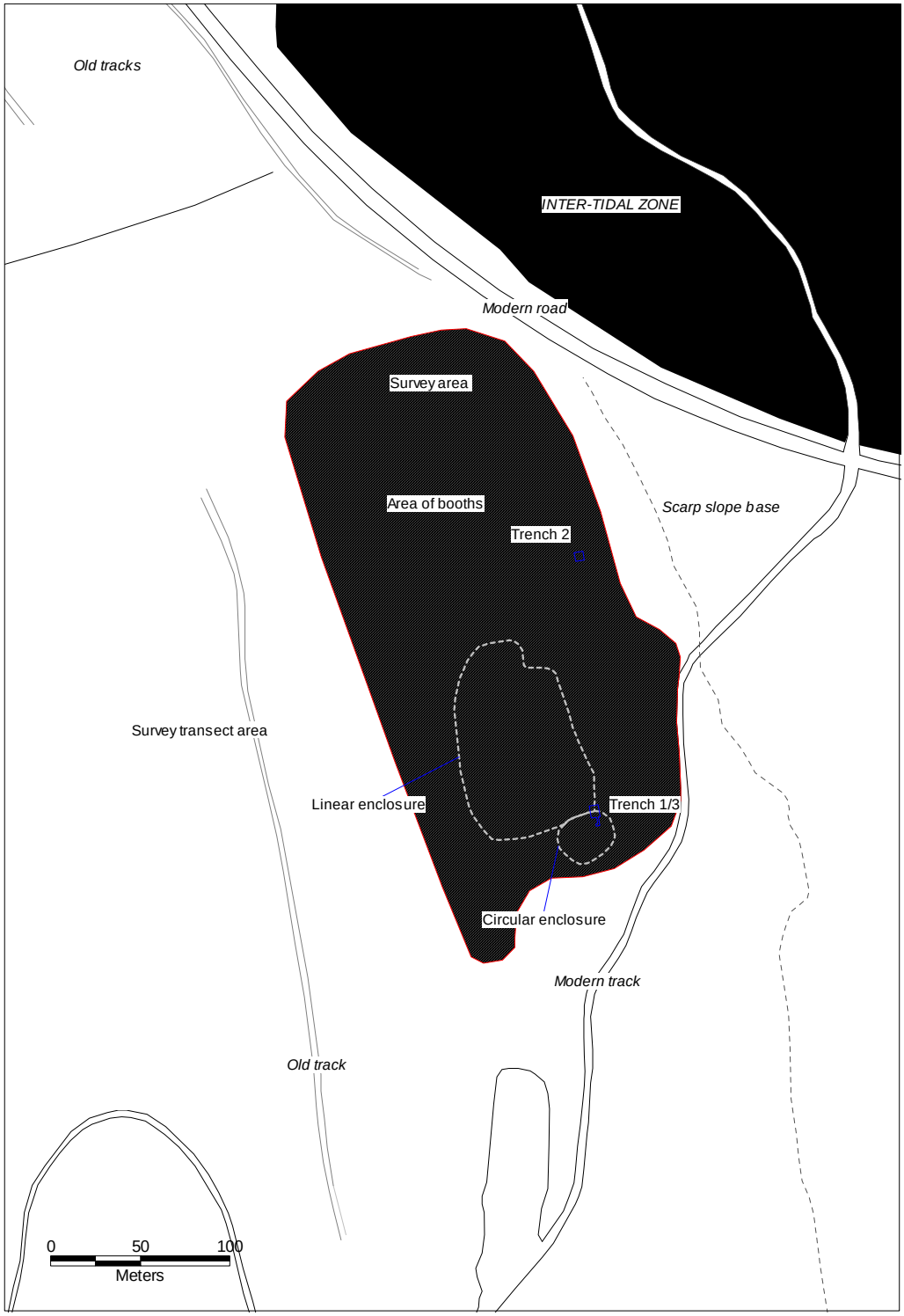
Með viðbótum eftir Colleen Batey og Magnús Sigurgeirsson.

Inngangur

Markmið og aðferðafræði

Fornleifauppgröftur fór fram á Hegranesþingstað í Skagafirði dagana 30. júní til 11. júlí 2003. Markmið rannsóknarinnar var að athuga aldur og gerð búðaminja, og aldur og hlutverk garða á svæðinu, og meta möguleika á frekari rannsóknum á þingstaðnum í framtíðinni. Grafin voru upp tvö svæði: svæði 1 er syðst á minjasvæðinu, á mörkum hringlaga garðs, sem er um 30 m í þvermál, og stærri garðs sem umlykur um 8000 m² stórt svæði. Þessir garðar virðast vera seinni tíma mannvirki, þ.e. yngri en þingstaðurinn. Ekki eru til ritaðar heimildir um hlutverk þeirra, en fræðimenn sem skoðuðu Hegranesþingstað á 19. öld settu fram ýmsar tilgátur, t.d. að hringlaga garðurinn væru leifar dómhrings, og að sá stærri væri túngarður sels, eða jafnvel býlis (Adolf Friðriksson, 1994). Svæði 2 var yfir einni búð á minjasvæðinu norðanverðu, en sú búð hefur eitthvað skemmst þar sem rofabarð afmarkar austurhluta svæðisins.

Rannsóknaraðferðir voru þær sömu og beitt hefur verið við fornleifauppgreftri Fornleifastofnunnar Íslands. Torf og yfirborðaslög voru fjarlægð með handafli. Grafið var eftir jarðlögum í einum fleti, eftir hinni svonefndu Harris Matrix aðferð (*single context*



Mynd 1. Yfirlit af Hegranesþingstað

planning). Einnig var stuðst við snið þar sem við átti. Hverju jarðlagi, skurði og fyllingarlagi (samheiti *context* eða eining) var gefið númer. Allar einingar voru teiknaðar og í sumum tilfellum ljósmyndaðar, bæði á litskyggnur og stafræna myndavél, og skráðar á sérstakt eyðublað.

Samhliða uppgreftinum fóru einnig fram GPS-uppmælingar á því svæði þar sem minjar eru sýnilegar á yfirborði, og verða þær nýttar til að gera yfirborðskort af Hegranesþingstað.

Þessi rannsókn var þáttur í verkefninu *Þinghald að fornu*, en verkefnisstjórar eru Adolf Friðriksson og dr. Sigurður Líndal. Verkefnið er styrkt af Kristnihátíðarsjóði og unnið í samvinnu við Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag og Þjóðminjasafn Íslands.

Sérstaklega ber að þakka Ragnheiði Traustadóttur, stjórnanda Hólarannsóknarinnar, en hún útvegaði húsnæði, fæði og aðra aðstöðu fyrir leiðangurinn, og auk þess unnu þrír nemar úr fornleifaskóla Hólarannsóknarinnar við uppgröftinn. Einnig ber að þakka aðstandendum Félagsbúsins Garði, landeigendum, fyrir að veita leyfi til uppgraftar.

Starfsmenn við uppgröftinn voru Astrid Daxböck (Hólarannsókn), Hildur Gestsdóttir (FSÍ - stjórnandi uppgraftar), Inga Sóley Kristjönudóttir (Hólarannsókn), Oscar Aldred (FSÍ) og Óðinn Haraldsson (Hólarannsókn). Garðar Guðmundson (FSÍ) sá um GPS-uppmælingar og Magnús Á Sigurgeirsson greindi gjóskulög.

Niðurstöður uppgraftar

Svæði 1

Svæði 1 var ferhyrnt að lögun, 5,4 x 7,1m og aflangur skurður í suður frá suðvestur horni svæðisins, sem var 5,9m á lengd, 1,0 á breidd, fyrir utan syðstu 2,0m sem voru 2,5m á breidd. Yfirborðslagið [01] lá í suðurenda svæðisins yfir [02] sem var ljósbrún mold sem lá ofan í troðnum slóða [08] sem fylgdi ytri brún stærri garðsins. Þessi slóði var um 50cm á breidd og um 10cm á dýpt, en var ógreinilegastur þar sem hann beygði fyrir hornið á garðinum. Gjóskan úr Heklugosinu 1766 lá að hluta niður í troðninginn, en hefur líklegast eitthvað verið troðið niður í hann, og er því ekki ólíklegt að hann hafi verið í notkun bæði fyrir og eftir að gjóskan féll.

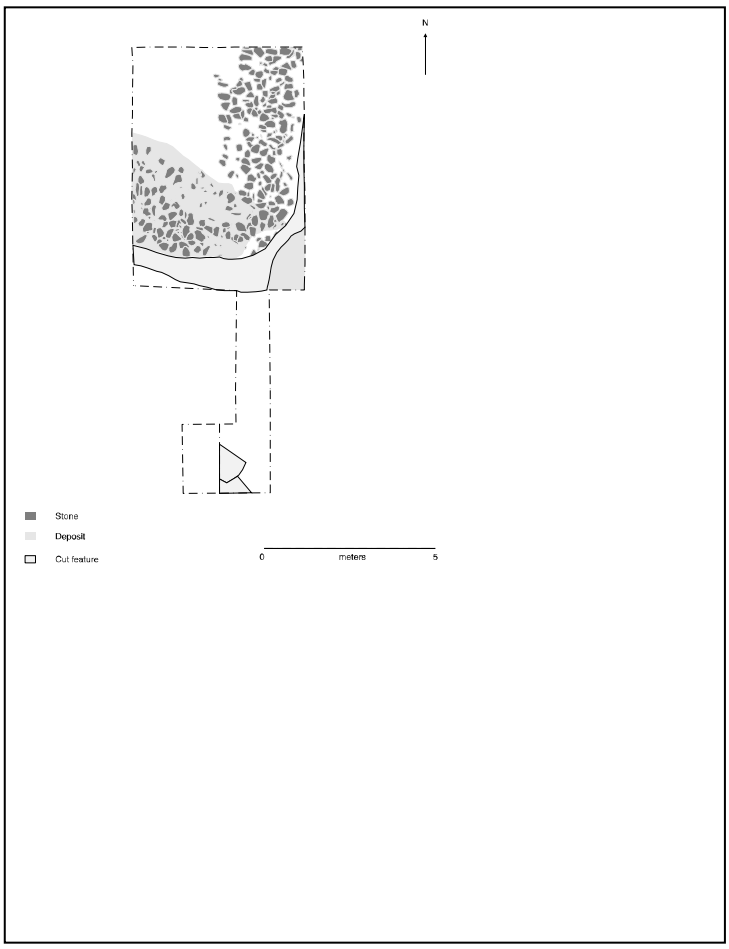
Í norðurenda svæðisins lá yfirborðslagið yfir mósöskubletti, [09], 91cm í þvermál og 5cm þykkur sem lá svo yfir [10] = [19], sem var 20cm þykkt vindborið lag sem lá upp að báðum görðunum á uppgraftarsvæðinu, og bendir til þess að ekki hafi verið um mannaferðir á svæðinu í þó nokkurn tíma áður en H-1766 gjóskan féll.

Mynd 2. Svæði 1

Við uppgröftinn kom í ljós að hringlaga garðurinn er að mestu byggður úr torfi eftir 1104. Sá stærri var úr sjávargrjóti, ekki hlaðinn, heldur hafði grjótinu einungis verið hrúgað upp til að mynda garðinn [25]. Grjótið úr honum lá að hluta yfir hringlaga garðinn, og því er stærri garðurinn yngri (sjá mynd 2). Skarð er í hringlaga torfgarðinn þar sem sá stærri [25] liggur yfir hann, en ekki er ljóst hvort að þetta er rof vegna seinni tíma garðsins, eða inngangur í hringlaga gerðið. Prufuskurður (0,8 x 2,5m) var tekinn í gegn um stærri garðinn [25] í norðaustur til að staðfesta að það grjót sem sást á yfirborði væri ekki hrun úr stærra mannvirki. Grjótinu í garðinum hafði verið hrúgað upp yfir eldri mannvistarlög, [20] sem var blandað torflag.

Í skurðinum suður frá suðaustur horni uppgraftarsvæðisins, inni í hringlaga mannvirkinu, var torfblandað lag með hreyfðri H-1104 gjósku [22], 10cm þykkt, sem í norðurenda skurðsins lá yfir öðru torfblönduðu lagi, [21], sem hefur ekki enn verið fjarlægt, en í suðurenda skurðsins lá það yfir að minnsta kosti tveimur hugsanlegum gröfum, [23] sem skar [24], sem báðar höfðu H-1104 gjósku í fyllingunni (sjá mynd 3). Grafið var að hluta niður í [24] til að staðfesta að um skurð væri að ræða, en vegna tímaskorts var ekki hægt að grafa hana alla upp. Því er þörf á frekari rannsókn til að staðfesta með vissu að hér sé um grafir að ræða.

Mynd 3. Grafir(?)



Mynd 4. Svæði 1.

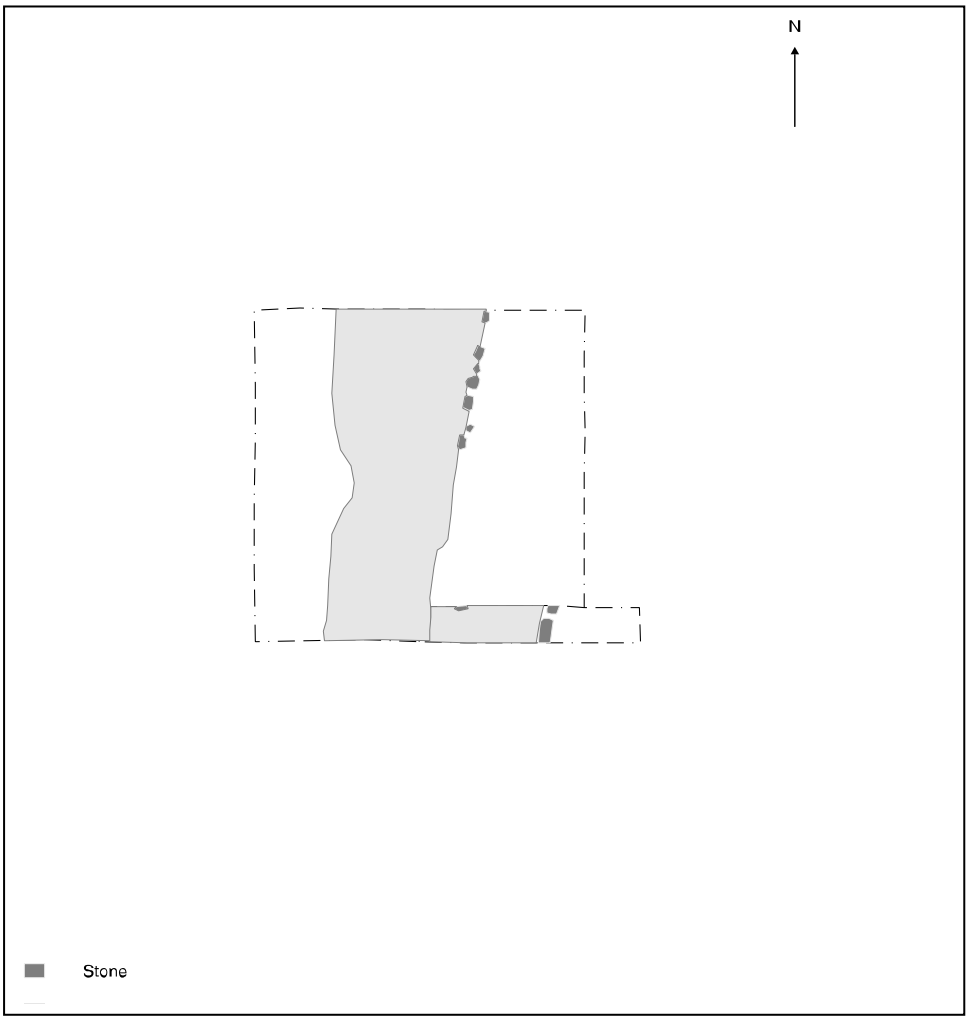
Svæði 2

Svæði 2 nær yfir búðatóft í norðausturhluta Hegranesþingstaðar. Tóftin er mjög greinileg og snýr norður-suður. Austurbrún tóftarinnar er við rofabarðið sem afmarkar austurhlið þingstaðarins, og trúlega hefur tóftin eitthvað skemmst vegna rofs í bakkabrúninni. Svæði 2 var 5,0 x 5,0m að stærð og lá þvert á miðjan vestur langvegg tóftarinnar. Yfirborðslagið þar, [03] lá yfir gjóskunni úr Heklugosinu 1766, og því hefur lítið verið um mannaferðir á svæðinu eftir að sú gjóska féll. Við uppgröft kom í ljós að yfir og umhverfis tóftina voru mikil moldar- og móöskulög með dýrabeinum, sem höfðu myndað lágan garð umhverfis tóftina. Bendir þetta til að rusli hafi verið hent rétt utan við búðina, og er líklegt að reglulega hafi verið mokað út úr henni. Þær minjar sem sjást á yfirboðinu eru því leifar þessara garða eða ruslahauga, en ekki búðatófta. Undir yfirborðslaginu, vestan megin á uppgraftarsvæðinu, utan við þennan garð var [05], 52cm breitt, 5cm þykkt áfokslag sem safnast hafði upp við bakkann.

Mynd 5. Svæði 2

Það var ofan á [07], 15cm þykku torfhrun lagi. Innan við garðinn lá yfirborðslagið hins vegar ofan á tveimur malarsandslögum, [04] og [06]. Þessi lög lágu svo öll yfir [16] sem var 15cm þykkur, 60cm breiður einfaldur torfstrengur sem lagður hafði verið ofan á bakkann. Þessi lög

sem og ruslalögin mynda garðinn umhverfis tóftina. Innan við þennan garð var tekinn prufuskurður í suðaustur horni uppgraftarsvæðisins (0,6 x 3,2m), og þar komu í ljós nokkur móöskulög, [11], [12] og [13], 2-6cm þykk, sem eru hugsanlega yfirborð seinni tíma notkunar á garðinum, en þau eru samtvinnuð við lög sem mynda garðinn (og hafa ekki enn verið fjarlægð) sem bendir til þess að myndun þessara laga og garðsins hefur gerst á sama tíma. Undir þeim var svo uppsafnað moldarlag [14] = [15], 20cm þykk sem lágu yfir eiginlegum veggjum mannvirkisins. Veggirnir eru hlaðnir úr torfi og grjóti, og hefur torfið verið skorið stuttu eftir að gjóskan úr Heklugosinu 1104 féll, því gjóskulagið í torfinu er um sentimeter á þykkt, en H-1104 gjóskan í Skagafirði er víðast örþunn. Yfir öllum mannvistarlögum lá gjóska úr Heklugosinu 1766, sem þýðir að búðin hefur verið komin úr notkun þegar gjóskan féll. Flest þessara laga hafa ekki verið fjarlægð.



Mynd 6. Svæði 2.

Finds from Hegranesþing 2003

Colleen Batey

Svæði 1/ Area 1

Two finds units were recorded from this trench: <06> from layer [20] is a piece of industrial debris, probably iron slag and <07> from the same context comprises two conjoining corroded iron fragments which may be part of large bent nail. In both cases, further work is required to fully interpret these items, by Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) in the case of the industrial debris to determine the nature of the material, and by x-ray for the iron find to determine the precise shape of the item.

Svæði 2 / Area 2

Five find units were recorded from the trench which investigated a booth some distance from the boundaries examined in Svæði 1. Two finds of industrial debris <03> from layer [05] and <04> from layer [06] will require SEM analysis to determine the precise makeup of the debris. Find <05>, from layer [14] is a broken iron nail with apparent distorted flat head, although x-ray may confirm that the head is infact the *in situ* rove and that the head is missing. It is highly corroded, although the shank seems to be circular in section.. Find <01> from layer [04] is potentially the most interesting item recovered. It is a twisted round-scetioned strip of copper alloy which appears to have traces of tinning along one side. It was initially considered possible that this was a fragment of a bracelet, but this is less likely. The two ends are both broken and not cut and apart from the possible tinning, there is no decoration. SEM analysis could also assist with the identifying the metal composition, and if the tinning is indeed confirmed then it would be more likely that the piece is originally part of an item of jewellery or more likely a handle for some domestic vessel.

All the finds recovered are unfortuanetly not chronologically sensitive, and although those from Svæði 2, the booth are potentially more likely to have a domestic function, this is not as clearly defined as might be anticipated. The fragmentary nature of the finds from Svæði 2 confirms that the deposits are midden debris deposits which have been dumped on top of and adjacent to the turf structure of the booth itself.

Mannabein

Mannabein, fundarnúmer <02> fannst í efstu ruslalögum [2] við búðatóftina nyrst á minjastaðnum (Svæði 2). Þetta var brot úr hægri lærlegg úr fullvöxnum einstakling, líklega úr konu (Bass, 1995). Ekki er vitað hvernig eða hversvegna það var við búðatóftina. Ef rétt er að kirkjugarður sé syðst á staðnum (Svæði 1), þá er líklegast að beinið hafi borist úr gröf sem skorin hefur verið af yngri gröf eða við annað rask í kirkjugarðinum. Við það vaknar sú spurning hvort kirkjugarðurinn hafi verið í notkun samtímis þingstaðnum.

Gjóskulagagreining á Hegranesþingi 2003

Magnús Á. Sigurgeirsson

Þann 7. ágúst 2003 voru gjóskulög skoðuð á tveimur sniðum á rústasvæðinu, annars vegar í búð við austurmörk rústaþyrpingar (svæði 2) og hins vegar í garðlagi sunnan til á svæðinu (svæði 1). Um er að ræða lauslega athugun sem framkvæmd var eftir að uppgreftri lauk á svæðinu.

Svæði 1

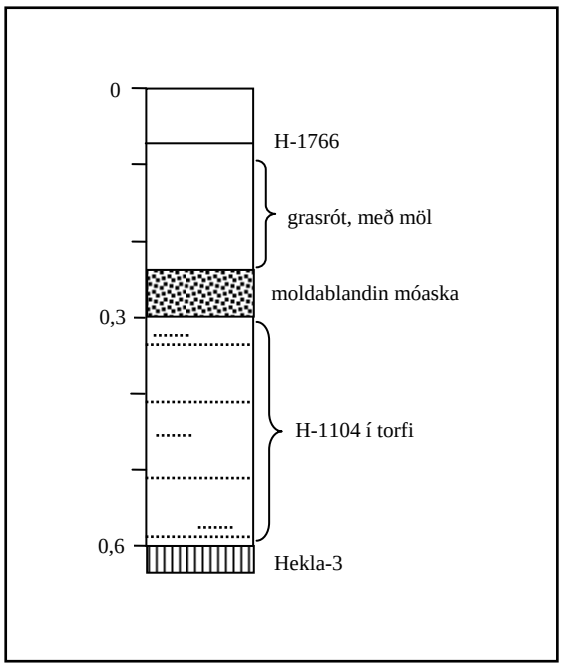
Í sniðinu í garðinn (túngarður Litla-Garðs ?) mátti sjá gjóskulagið H-1766 yfir honum. Önnur góskulög voru ekki sjáanleg. Hekla-1104 er í torfi garðsins. Hekla-1766 lá einnig yfir grjótlögn í litlu hringlaga gerði við suðurenda túngarðsins. Sennilega mætti fara nær um aldur þessara mannvirkja með því að grafa dýpra og skoða gjóskulög undir þeim.

Svæði 2

Yfir búðartóftinni sást einungis gjóskulagið H-1766 (sjá mynd 7). Í torfi tóftarinnar eru linsur af gjóskulaginu H-1104. Lagið var að minnsta kosti fimmfalt í sniðinu (gróf litla holu niður með sniðinu). Torfið liggur næst ofan á forsögulega Heklulaginu H-3, sem er um 2900 ára gamalt. Allmörg dæmi eru um að gjóskulagið H-3 hafi verið nýtt sem gólflag, eða undirlag gólfs, og kann svo að hafa verið í umræddri búð í Hegranesi. Gjóskulagið leiðir vel vatn og er ennfremur það fínkorna að það þjappast vel við átroðning.

Gjóskulagaathugun bendir til að búðin sé talsvert eldri en H-1766 og hafi verið byggð nokkru eftir árið 1104. Gjóskulagið H-1300 sem er áberandi í Skagafirði var ekki sjáanlegt í torfinu

sem gæti bent til að það hafi verið skorið áður en gjóskan féll. Í ljósi þess má telja nokkrar líkur á því að tóftin sé frá 12.-13. öld. Nær verður ekki farið um aldur tóftarinnar að svo stöddu. Telja má víst að með umfangsmeiri uppgreftri mætti fara mun nær um aldur tóftanna með hjálp gjóskulaga.



Mynd 7. Snið í búðartóft í Hegranesþingi í Skagafirði.

Niðurstöður

Niðurstöður úr þessari rannsókn sýndu að hringlaga garðurinn, sem líklega er kirkjugarður, er að mestu byggður úr torfi eftir 1104, og að hann er eldri en stærri garðurinn sem er byggður úr upphrúguðu sjávargrjóti. Notkun þessara tveggja garða hefur verið hætt þó nokkru fyrir 1766, en að svo stöddu er ekki hægt að segja til um hve löngu.

Rannsóknin á búðatóftinni leiddi í ljós að hún er hlaðin úr grjóti og strengjatorfi sem skorið er stuttu eftir 1104. Hins vegar er sú tóft sem sést á yfirborði leifar garðs sem hlaðist hefur upp úr rusli og útmokstri úr mannvirkinu, líklegast á löngum tíma. Búðatóftin er komin úr notkun fyrir 1766, en að svo stöddu er ekki hægt að segja til um hve löngu fyrir.

Niðurstöðurnar úr þessari forrannsókn benda til þess að Hegranesþingstaður bjóði upp á töluverða möguleika til frekari rannsókna. Enginn heildstæður uppgröftur hefur farið fram á

þingstöðum til þessa, og því má mikið bæta við þekkingu okkar á gerð búða og uppbyggingu þingstaða yfirleitt. Einnig væri áhugavert að rannsaka þróun á landnýtingu á svæðinu, en hún virðist hafa verið nokkuð fjölbreytileg.

Heimildir

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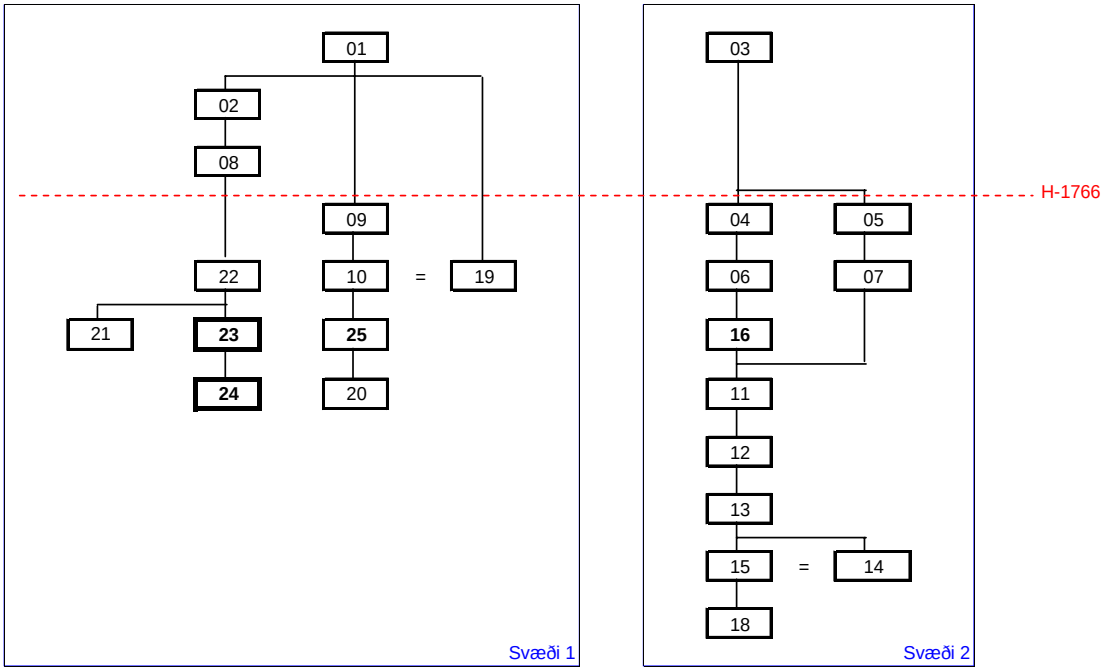
Viðauki 1: Matrix



Viðauki 2: Finds

Number	Unit	Object	Material	Count	Weight (g)
01	04	Vessel	Cu - Composit	1	
02	07	Human	Bone	1	30
03	05	Slag	Iron	2	12
04	06	Slag	Iron	16	73
05	14	Nail	Iron	2	9
06	20	Slag	Iron	1	66
07	20	Nail	Iron	2	177

Viðauki 3: Units

Unit	Type	Area	Description	Material	Process
01	Deposit	1	Topsoil	Undefined	Undefined
02	Deposit	1	Windblown material sealing H-1766 tephra	Mixed Silts	Aeolian
03	Deposit	2	Topsoil	Undefined	Undefined
04	Deposit	2	Gravel rich, sealed by H-1766	Gravel	Surface
05	Deposit	2	Windblown material on outside edges of structure	Mixed Silts	Aeolian
06	Deposit	2	Finely sorted gravel material	Gravel	Surface
07	Deposit	2	Turf collapse and windblown material	Mixed Silts	Collapse
08	Cut	1	Footpath	N/A	Surface
09	Deposit	1	Peat ash	Peatash	Surface
10	Deposit	1	Windblown material, northwest corner	Mixed Silts	Aeolian
11	Deposit	2	Peat ash and charcoal flecks and some gravel	Composite	Surface
12	Deposit	2	Dark ashy charcoal rich deposit	Ash	Surface
13	Deposit	2	Mixed peat ash and charcoal	Peatash	Surface
14	Deposit	2	Brown deposit with H-1104	Mixed Silts	Undefined
15	Deposit	2	Brown deposit with H-1104 (within revetment	Mixed Silts	Undefined
16	Deposit	2	Turf? Wall/build-up	Turf	Wall
17	Group	2	First phase pf structure	N/A	Undefined
18	Deposit	2	Gravel deposit	Mixed Silts	Undefined
19	Deposit	1	Windblown material	Mixed Silts	Aeolian
20	Deposit	1	Mixed turf debris	Mixed Silts	Spread
21	Deposit	1	Turf debris with H-1104	Mixed Silts	Disturbance
22	Deposit	1	Turf debris with H-1104	Mixed Silts	Disturbance
23	Deposit	1	Mixed gravel and turf debris	Composite	Grave
24	Deposit	1	Mixed gravel and turf debris	Composite	Grave
25	Deposit	1	Stone boundary wall	Stones	Wall