FORNLEIFAEFTIRLIT VIÐ BYGGGARÐ Á SELTJARNARNESI. FRAMKVÆMDARANNSSÓKN

DEVELOPMENT-RELATED MACHINE-EXCAVATION AT BYGGGARÐUR, SELTJARNARNES
- REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING -

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FORNLEIFASTOFNUN ÍSLANDS SES

Front-cover photo shows the excavation area after machine-excavation. Facing north-west.
Photo: Nikola Trbojević

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Samantekt

Hér eru birtar niðurstöður fornleifaeftirlits vegna framkvæmda við lagningu hjólastígs við suðurhluta bæjarhóls Bygggarðs á Seltjarnarnesi. Verkið var unnið af Fornleifastofnun Íslands að beiðni Seltjarnarnesbæjar en um vinnuna við hjólastíginn sá Loftorka ehf. Framkvæmdasvæðið sem vaktað skyldi skv. fyrirmælum frá Minjastofnun Íslands var um 45 metra langt og breiddin um 2,5 metrar (sjá mynd 1). Dýpt vegna jarðvegsskipta á þessum stað skyldi ekki vera meiri en um 0,40-0,45 metrar til að sem minnnst rask yrði á mannvistarleifum. Í ljós kom að svæðið var þegar allmikið raskað frá þeim tíma er vegurinn Norðurströnd var lagður en mannvistarleifar voru þó á þeim hluta svæðisins sem er næst bæjarhólnum (sjá mynd 2 & 3). Engin merki mannvirkja sáust í skurðinum en tvö ruslalög, móöskulög voru skráð (sjá mynd 4, 5, 6 &7). Í smærri ruslalaginu fundust skeljar og dýrabein, en varðveisla þeirra slæm (mynd 8). Telja verður víst að þau mannvistarlög sem í skurðinum fundust tengist búsetu fólks í Bygggarði. Ekki var hægt að aldursgreina mannvistarleifarnar sem í ljós komu á framkvæmdasvæðinu þar sem hvorki gjóskulög né gripir fundust.

Introduction

On August 16th 2016, archaeological monitoring of development-related machine-excavation was conducted at Bygggarður, Seltjarnarnes. The goal of the monitoring was to identify and record archaeological features eventually uncovered during the process of excavation. The excavation-plan implied removal of ca. 40 – 45 m long strip of soil (oriented north-east – south-west, ca. 2.5 m wide and ca. 0.4 m deep) positioned next to the present-day street of Norðurströnd, Seltjarnarnes. Archaeological monitoring was necessary having in mind information from the existing survey-reports (Auðardóttir 2005, Pálsson 2016) about the presence of archaeologically valuable remains in the immediate vicinity of the excavation area. Those reports indirectly suggested that removal of the strip of soil at this location could bring to light remains associated with the nearby farm mound of Bygggarður (cf. Auðardóttir 2005).

The monitoring was carried out by Nikola Trbojević of Fornleifastofnun Íslands, following an agreement/correspondence with the municipality of Seltjarnarnes and development company Loftorka ehf[1]. The monitoring was authorized by Minjastofnun Íslands[2]. Lísabet Guðmundsdóttir of Fornleifastofnun Íslands recorded the site with total station.

Figure 1. Location and extent of the excavation area (colored pink).

[1] www.seltjarnarnes.is, www.loftorka.com; e-correspondence (11.08.2016)
[2] www.minjastofnun.is; e-correspondence (11.08.2016)

Results

The extent of the excavated area subjected to monitoring was ca. 133 m^2 (Figure 1) and the area was excavated down to depth of ca. 0.45 m. The excavation revealed that a large proportion of the site was already truncated by an earlier development work when (gravel- and sand-made) foundations for the Norðurströnd street and infrastructural features (i.e. optical fibre-cables) were laid down.

Figure 2. Excavation area. Facing north-west. The gravel to the left on the photo is in a modern truncation and the brown soil to the right is the archaeological deposit.

Figure 3. Excavation area. Facing south-east. Note truncation made by earlier development work.

The excavation revealed only two unstructural midden deposits, both peat-ash rich. No finds and/or tephra deposits *in situ* have been identified which may help their approximate dating and/or further analysis. However, it seems plausible that those deposits are associated with the neighbouring archaeological feature (i.e. Bygggarður farm mound).

The larger deposit (Figures 4 & 5) was positioned in the central part of the excavated area. It was ca. 18 m long, between ca. 0.6 – 1.4 m wide and it covered an area of ca. 15 m^2. Most of the deposit was fairly uniform and it contained only occasional charcoal bits and decayed patches of turf-debris.

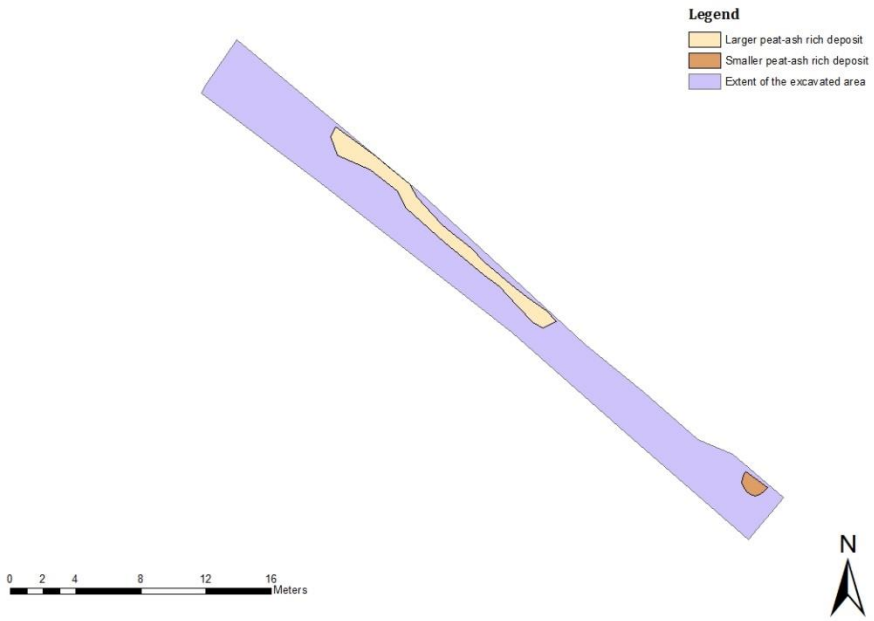

Figure 4. Extent of excavation area and two peat-ash rich deposits.

Figure 5. Part of larger peat-ash rich deposit. Facing south-east.

Still, somewhat higher concentration of turf-debris patches but also presence of collapsed material originating from a neighbouring farm mound was noted in its central part and in the profile of the excavated area at the side adjacent to farm mound (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Part of larger peat-ash deposit with higher concentration of turf debris and remains of material collapsed from the neighbouring farm mound. Facing north-east.

Clearance of the same profile of the excavated area further towards north-west also revealed that there may have been several phases of deposition of the peat-ash material in the past (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Part of larger peat-ash deposit. Note distinct phases of peat-ash deposition (profile). Facing north-east.

The machine-excavation and subsequent clearance of the site suggested that this layer extended over much larger area in the past. Unfortunately, it was truncated by the previously mentioned development work.

At the very south-east end of the excavated area another, minor peat-ash rich deposit was uncovered. Unlike the larger peat ash deposit that occupied the central part of the excavated area, this deposit contained remains of crushed shell and decayed animal/fish bones (Figure 8).

Figure 8. The smaller peat-ash rich deposit. Facing north-east.

Concluding remarks

The development-related machine-excavation at Bygggarður, Seltjarnarness, conducted by Loftorka ehf. revealed no substantial and/or structural archaeological features which would imply initiation of any extensive archaeological research. Only two unstructural peat-ash rich midden deposits were identified and recorded; the lack of finds and/or *in situ* tephra deposits prevents their approximate dating. Still, owing to wider context of their location, they can be brought into connection with the neighbouring farm mound of Bygggarður.

Bibliography

Auðardóttir, M. H. 2005. Fornleifarannsóknir við Bygggarðsvör á Seltjarnarnesi 2004.

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