Archaeological investigations in Krókdalur 2005

Orri Vésteinsson ed.

Contributions by Seth Brewington, Guðbjörg Melsteð, Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir, Ramona Harrison, Peter Kuchar, Tom McGovern & Orri Vésteinsson

Fornleifastofnun Íslands
FS387-04192
Reykjavík 2010

Bárugötu 3
101 Reykjavík
Sími: 551 1033
Fax: 551 1047
Netfang: fsi@instarch.is
Heimasíða: www.instarch.is

Picture on front cover shows Ruin 1 in undir Bálabrekku looking north.
Photograph by Orri Vésteinsson August 4th, 2005

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Orri Vésteinsson

Introduction

The name Krókdalur is applied to the highest section of the valley through which the river Skjálfandafljót runs from the central highlands to the coast of northern Iceland. The valley floor of Krókdalur lies between 320 and 500 m.a.s.l. and is mostly a desert. Remains of soil with grassy vegetation, particularly in the valley-sides suggest that the valley was once a much greener place. Place names indicating woodlands and habitations also suggest that not only was the valley once greener but also that people have lived there. Further down the river runs through settled regions, Bárðardalur and Kaldakinn, but Krókdalur has been deserted since records begin, in the 13th century. Reports and folk-tales indicating abandoned settlements in Krókdalur were recorded in the 18th and 19th centuries and from the late 19th century onwards the National Museum in Reykjavík began to receive objects, some of them clearly of a Viking age date found in Krókdalur. The most spectacular of these finds is a silver hoard found in 1909 at the site now known as undir Sandmúla. Unlike most abandoned settlement regions in the highland margins Krókdalur was not surveyed by antiquarians in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. Daniel Bruun skirted the opening of the valley in 1897 describing early sites in Hrauntunga, Hofgarðar and Fiská to either side of it but no archaeological work was carried out there until 1972 when Sigurður Þórarinsson described for the first time ruins in Helgastaðir as well as obtaining a radiocarbon sample from an iron-making site in nearby Smiðjuskógur which yielded a Viking age date.[1]

Highland settlement has been one of the major themes of Icelandic archaeology ever since Brynjúlfur Jónsson first described and reflected on the ruins in Þjórsárdalur in the 1860s. A substantial proportion of the Icelandic archaeological record comes from the highland margins, where early sites are as a rule more accessible than in regions of continuous settlement where medieval deposits can only be accessed by digging through modern and early-modern layers. The quest for easily accessible remains from the earliest phases of settlement has been coupled with an interest in understanding why the highland margins seem so frequently to have been the scenes of abandonment and failure. Early explanations focused on demographic fluctuations, viewing abandonment simply as a result of population decline, reflecting a general socio-economic malaise rather than localised problems. For much of the

[1] A detailed account of the research history of Krókdalur is given in the earlier report: Orri Vésteinsson 2004, *Krókdalur. Fornleifaskráning 2004*, Reykjavík, pp. 13-16.

20th century the focus was however on environmental causes, volcanic eruptions in particular but also, and increasingly, soil erosion. In the 1970s Sigurður Þórarinsson formulated the concept of the over-optimistic pioneer fringe, seeing the abandonment of highland-margin sites as a retreat caused simply by initial settlement stretching further inland than was environmentally sustainable. In this view the abandonment is simply a readjustment, a matter of finding out by trial and, primarily, error, where the limits of habitable land lay.[2] Following directly from Þórarinsson's own rather superficial work two large projects were initiated aimed specifically at throwing light on this issue. Sveinbjörn Rafnsson surveyed highland valleys in the eastern interior[3] and Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir studied three areas, Eyjafjöll and Þórsmörk in the south, a coastal valley in the east and the highland valleys of Skagafjörður in the north.[4] These projects yielded comparable results: evidence of numerous sites clearly abandoned very early, but also evidence for more complex goings-on later, with sporadic re-occupation of some sites and the establishment of new sites at different periods. These projects also raised the problem of characterizing highland sites: how do we differentiate between a proper farm and a shieling,[5] and may there have been other types of sites as well? Are all these abandoned sites actually farms, or does their abandonment reflect a change in the type, rather than intensity, of exploitation?

The Landscapes of Settlement project, growing out of the excavations at Hofstaðir beginning in the early 1990s,[6] is aimed at a broader understanding of the environmental and socio-economic dynamics which shaped early Icelandic society.[7] It has not had a specific highland-margin focus but has inevitably had to address many of the concerns and ideas raised by previous work. In particular the location of sites like Sveigakot and Hrísheimar on denuded land at the margins of settlement in Mývatnssveit has drawn attention to the impact

[2] Sigurður Þórarinsson 1977, 'Gjóskulög og gamlar rústir. Brot úr íslenskri byggðasögu.' *Árbók hins íslenzka fornleifafélags 1976*, 5-38.
[3] Sveinbjörn Rafnsson 1990, *Byggðaleifar í Hrafnkelsdal og á Brúardölum*, (Rit hins íslenska fornleifafélags 1), Reykjavík.
[4] Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir 1992, *Farm Abandonment in Medieval and Post-Medieval Iceland: an Interdisciplinary Study*, (Oxbow Monograph 17), Oxford.
[5] E.g. Guðrún Sveinbjarnardóttir 1991, 'Shielings in Iceland. An Archaeological and Historical Survey.' *Acta Archaeologica* 61, 73-96. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir & Mjöll Snæsdóttir 1993, 'Sel, beitarhús eða afbýli?.' *Árbók hins íslenzka fornleifafélags 1992*, 145-50.
[6] Lucas, Gavin 2009, *Hofstaðir. Excavations of a Viking Age Feasting Hall in North-Eastern Iceland*, (Institute of Archaeology Monograph Series 1), Reykjavík.
[7] Thomas H. McGovern, Orri Vésteinsson, Adolf Friðriksson, Mike Church, Ian Lawson, Ian A. Simpson, Árni Einarsson, Andy Dugmore, Gordon Cook, Sophia Perdikaris, Kevin J. Edwards, Amanda M. Thomson, W. Paul Adderley, Anthony Newton, Gavin Lucas, Ragnar Edvardsson, Oscar Aldred & Elaine Dunbar 2007, 'Landscapes of Settlement in Northern Iceland: Historical Ecology of Human Impact & Climate Fluctuation on the Millennial Scale.' *American Anthropologist* 109, 27-51.

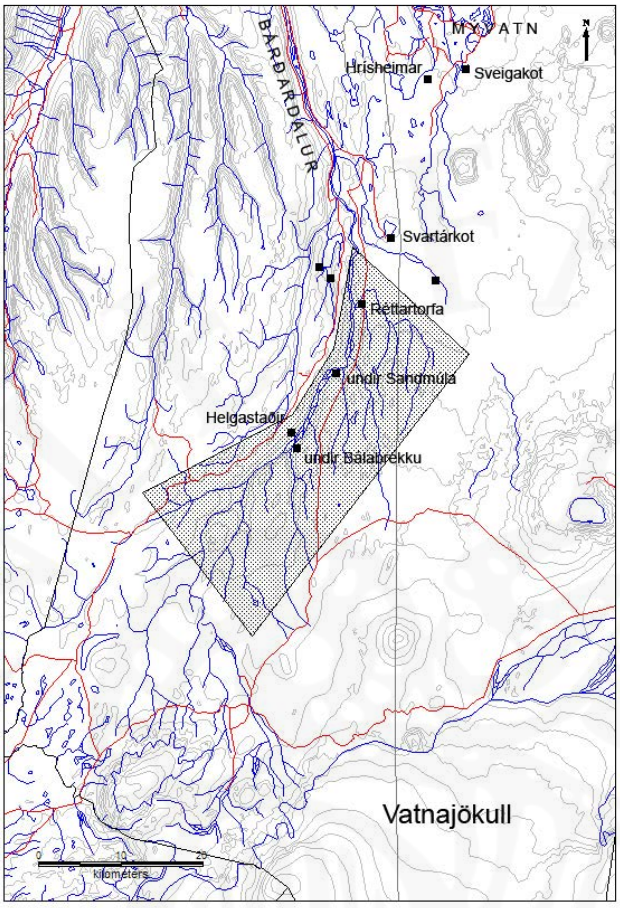

Figure 1. The location of the sites investigated in 2005 with the survey area from 2004 shaded in. Black rectangles indicate Viking age sites.

of human settlement on the highland ecosystem and the role of its deterioration in their abandonment.

It was therefore natural that the team's attention should be drawn to Krókdalur which is the abandoned highland settlement geographically closest to the project's main focus of activity, Mývatnssveit, with added impetus given by the fact that the region had never been systematically surveyed and archaeological remains were known to be eroding there. As a result an archaeological survey was carried out in Krókdalur in 2004, identifying three settlement sites of potential Viking age date, as well as a human burial (possibly pagan) and iron-smelting sites. A fourth early site is postulated buried under thick layers of aeolian soils in a place now called Réttartorfa at the northern end of the valley.[8]

This report describes the results of follow-up investigations carried out in 2005 involving limited excavation at the three sites. The aim was to obtain evidence for the dating of theses sites, produce measured plans of the sites to replace earlier sketches, assess the preservation of archaeological deposits and retrieve artifacts and archaeofauna from undir Sandmúli where in situ deposits were thought to survive. While the survey work in 2004 had been supported by Fornleifasjóður, the excavations in 2005 were carried out by members of field teams working at Sveigakot and Hrísheimar under the banner of the Landscapes of Settlement project, funded by Rannís and NSF, with logistical support provided by Fornleifastofnun Íslands. The fieldwork was directed by Orri Vésteinsson (University of Iceland / FSÍ). Excavation at Helgastaðir took place on July 31st 2005 with the assistance of Przemyslaw Urbanczyk, Robert Zukowski and Maciek Trzeciecki from the Polish Academy

[8] Orri Vésteinsson 2004, *Krókdalur. Fornleifaskráning 2003*, Reykjavík.

of Sciences, Warsaw, while excavation at undir Sandmúla was carried out on Agust 3rd-4th, with Seth Brewington, Konrad Smiarowski and Raymond Petit working under the leadership of Tom McGovern (all from CUNY), while Orri Vésteinsson and Mike Church (University of Durham) carried out the investigation at undir Bálabrekku on August 4th, also surveying a few sites in a section of the valley which had not been walked in 2004.

This report draws together the preliminary results of this fieldwork, describing the interventions at each site, as well as analyses of archaeofauna and artifacts from undir Sandmúla. Also included is a catalogue of artifacts from Krókdalur in the National Museum of Iceland assembled by Guðbjörg Melsteð as an independent project in Museolology at the University of Iceland in 2006. Further fieldwork is projected in Krókdalur in 2010, focusing on the valleys to either side, where further early sites are known to exist.

Orri Vésteinsson

Archaeological excavation at Helgastaðir

The place-name Helgastaðir is recorded already in 1712 along with a tradition that a church had stood there but no ruins are said to have been visible. Later traditions describe Helgastaðir as the centre of a deserted community of 11 or 18 farms and the farm figures prominently in the early 19th century Hrana saga hrings, set in the Viking age. The exact location of the site is however unclear and while there are reports since the 1880s about ruins associated with the place name, and artifacts associated with it were acquired by the National Museum as early as 1909, it is impossible to be certain that all these reports refer to the same site. Several artifacts in the National Museum are said to have been found in Smiðjuskógur which is a name attached to the same side of the valley (variously the whole length between Kiðagil and Galthóll or parts of that stretch) and at least three ruins associated with iron smelting are known in that area. Archaeological features described by Sigurður Þórarinsson in 1972 were not identified again in 2004 or 2005, suggesting that substantial erosion has taken place in the short interval. That in turn means that it is quite possible that remains which in earlier times were associated with Helgastaðir may no longer survive, making it unsafe to attach much significance to the artifact attributions.

What is clear however is that 2,4 km north of Kvíar (where there is a hut and the track ends) there are clear remains of habitation visible in an erosion face. The remains are buried under more than a metre of aeolian accumulation with no signs of the structures visible on the surface although a low mound, some 30x15 m, indicates where archaeological remains may be found underneath. The site is at the southeastern edge of the only sizeable patch of soil left in this portion of the valley, Helgastaðatorfa, which is ca 25 ha, covered with grass and some dwarf birch. It is on a ledge parallel to the river which currently runs some 150 m to the east of it. A small stream runs by on the southern side of the remains which has exposed a spread of smelting slag. Another such spread was found 75 m uphill by the next water channel to the south. This spread is adjacent to a scatter of small stone slabs, clearly the remains of a structure (this site was recorded separately as SÞ-159b:007). A similar site was also recorded 1,8 km further south (SÞ-159b:002) and together with a site described by Sigurður Þórarinsson in 1972, since disappeared, they indicate that iron smelting was once an important activity in this area.

Figure 2. Aerial photograph showing the locations of Helgastaðir and undir Bálabrekku as well as other sites and place names mentioned in the text.

Unlike these iron smelting sites, associated with the place name Smiðjuskógur (lit. 'smithy forest'), the remains in the erosion face at Helgastaðatorfa are undoubtedly of a settlement and can reasonably by linked to the place name Helgastaðir. There is at least no other candidate for a habitation site in this area. When the site was surveyed in 2004 thin but extensive midden deposits were observed in the eroding sections, along the whole 30 metres exposed. In a surface collection of 39 fragments of animal bone 13 were not identifiable, 4 were of large terrestrial mammals, 22 of medium sized mammals. Of these 2 were of cattle, 2 goat, 3 sheep and 9 caprines (total NISP = 16). Although the bone assemblage is too small to assert whether this site was a shieling or a farm it was clearly a habitation involved in livestock rearing, rather than e.g. a temporary iron smelting camp. The extensive spread of the midden also suggests considerable human presence.

In 2005 the objective was to obtain more detailed information about the site, its age and its function. Parts of the exposed section were cleaned in order to record in detail the relationship between the archaeological deposits and the tephras above and below; a break in the erosion face was cut back to assess the nature of the archaeological deposits, i.e. if structural remains could be seen; and a plan of the site was made, i.a. to facilitate future monitoring of the erosion which threatens it.

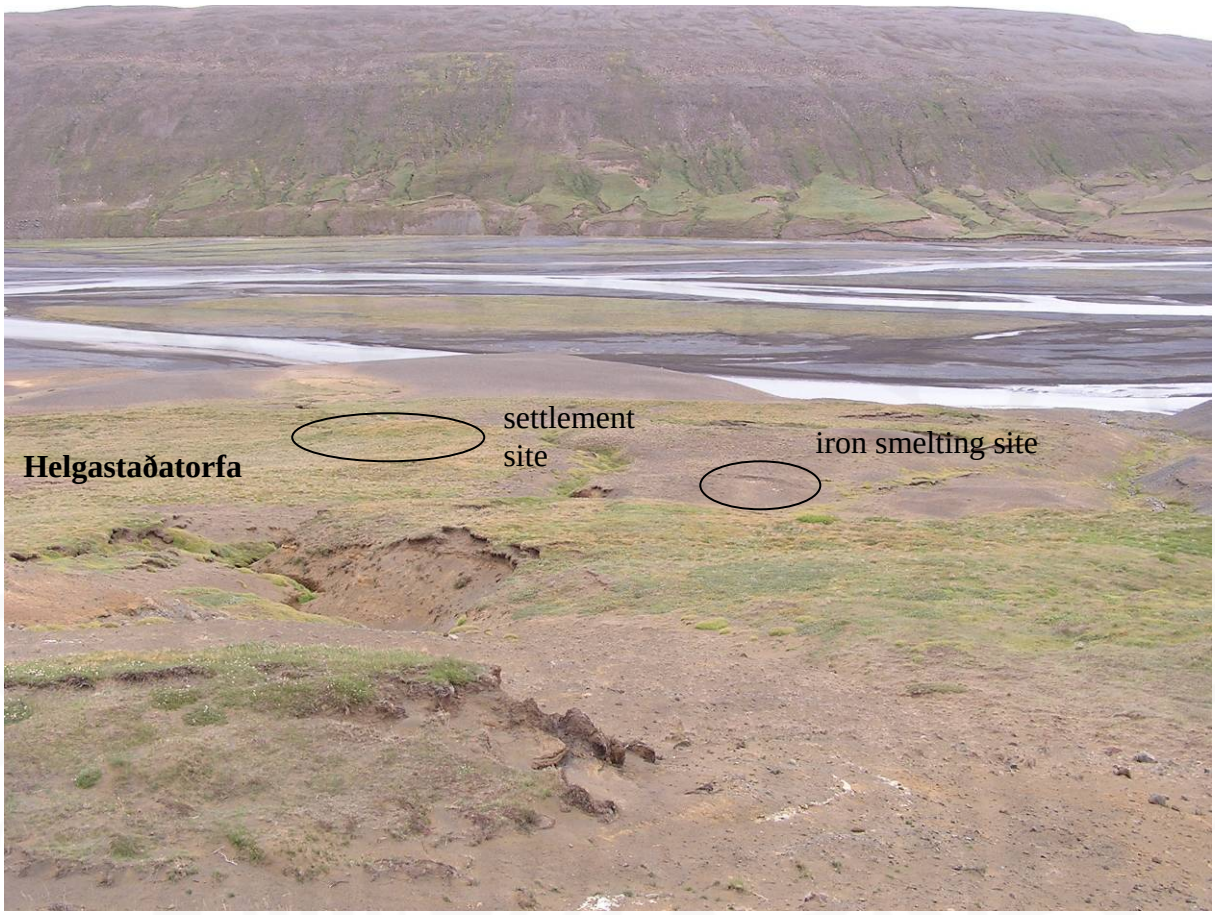

Figure 3. Helgastaðir looking east across Skjálfandafljót.

The plan of the site is shown on Fig. 4. The proposed extent of the buried archaeology is shown with darker shading but the western and northern limits must remain conjectural. They are surmised primarily on the basis of the low rise visible on the surface and a slight change in the vegetation which is denser on the mound than further north and west. On the southern side, where the remains have been truncated by a small stream, a sheet midden was recorded between B and C. This was thickest at A, just inside 10 cm but thinned out to either side. It is possible that this represents an isolated deposit but the northern side of this tongue was not cleaned to ascertain this. Continuous archaeological deposits were recorded between D and H where they had been exposed by erosion but they continue further north and sondages taken at I and J showed midden layers 11 and 2 cm thick respectively. Judging from the absence of stones and the very small numbers of bones found on the surface west and south of the erosion faces it does not seem that significant parts of the site have been destroyed by the erosion. Apart from the two sondages and the cleaning of the exposed sections the only significant intervention was made in a pre-existing erosion breach at the southern end of the

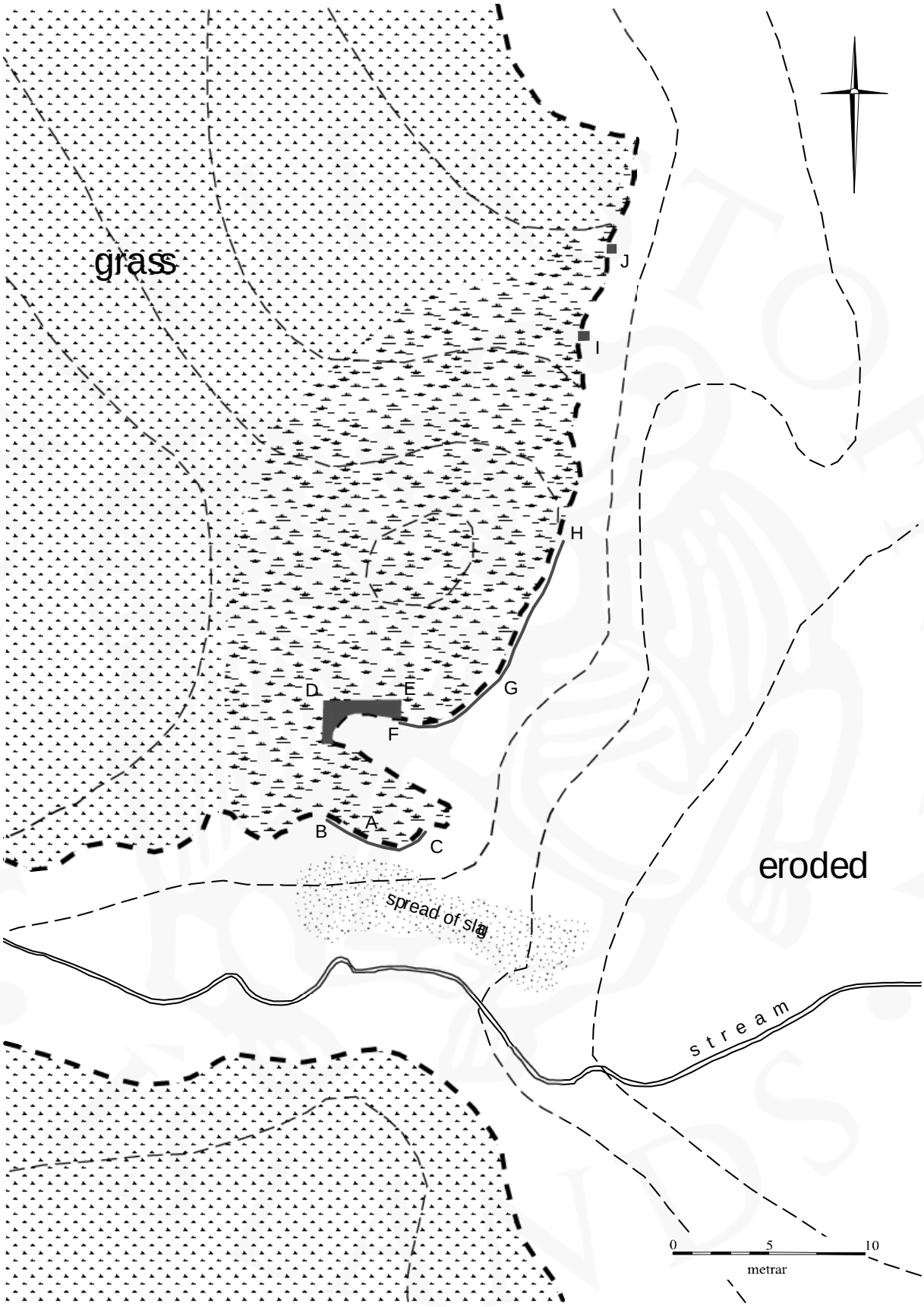

Figure 4. Plan of Helgastaðir showing the proposed extent of the site and the sections of the erosion face where archaeological deposits were observed (A-J).

Figure 5. The breach at the southern end of the site before excavation. Midden deposits were also observed in the chunk of soil in the foreground (A-C). Looking north.

Figure 6. Section 1 under excavation showing the extent of the intervention. Looking northeast.

site. The south facing section which extended furthest uphill was cut back by 5-30 cm and this allowed the recording of section 2 (D-E). Section 1 was recorded between F and G but the same stratigraphic sequence continues all the way to H. This section contains only midden deposits while structural remains were observed in Section 2, suggesting that it is primarily midden deposits at the periphery of the site which have so far eroded and that structural remains are further up-hill, still buried under more than a metre of Aeolian accumulation.

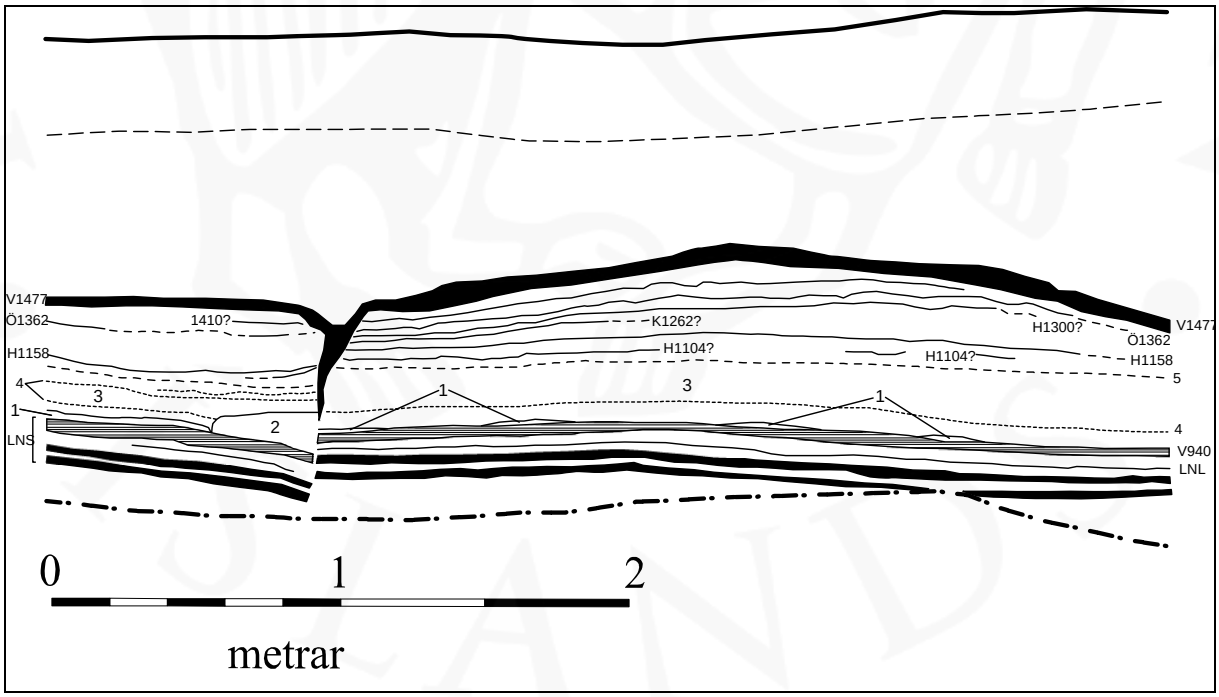

Figure 7. Section 1. The section represents a 4 m stretch facing SSE, curving northeastwards towards the right hand side. The left hand side is further up-hill.

At the base of the sequence the whole *landnám* sequence is found, with the two black layers, the *landnám* tephra itself and above this the V~940 which is upto 2 cm thick. On top of this there are small lenses of aeolian accumulation (1) in several places but otherwise the cultural layers lide directly on top of the tephra. This suggests that the culutural accumulation began soon, but not immediately, after the deposition of the tephra. The cultural layers consist of a single chunk of turf (2), possibly building debris, but otherwise a 20-25 cm thick accumulation of midden layers, very thinly laminated, continuous lenses of light grey to white organic matter with burnt bone and some charcoal, interspersed with lenses of whitish ash (3). There are several lenses of charcoal, more in the upper part, and some of these are indicated on the drawing (4). One of them continues the whole length of the visible section and may represent a burning episode. (5) marks the upper limit of the cultural sequence. This is not very distinct but typically 2-4 cm below the H-1104 tephra. The cultural sequence is sealed by two white tephra layers, identified as the H-1104 and the H-1158. The upper one (H-1158) is continuous but the lower one not. Identifications of the more recent tephras are tentative but the proposed sequence is consistent with published sequences from this part of the country.[9] The crack in the left hand (western) side of the section may be the result of an earthquake, possibly from just before the 1477 tephra fell.

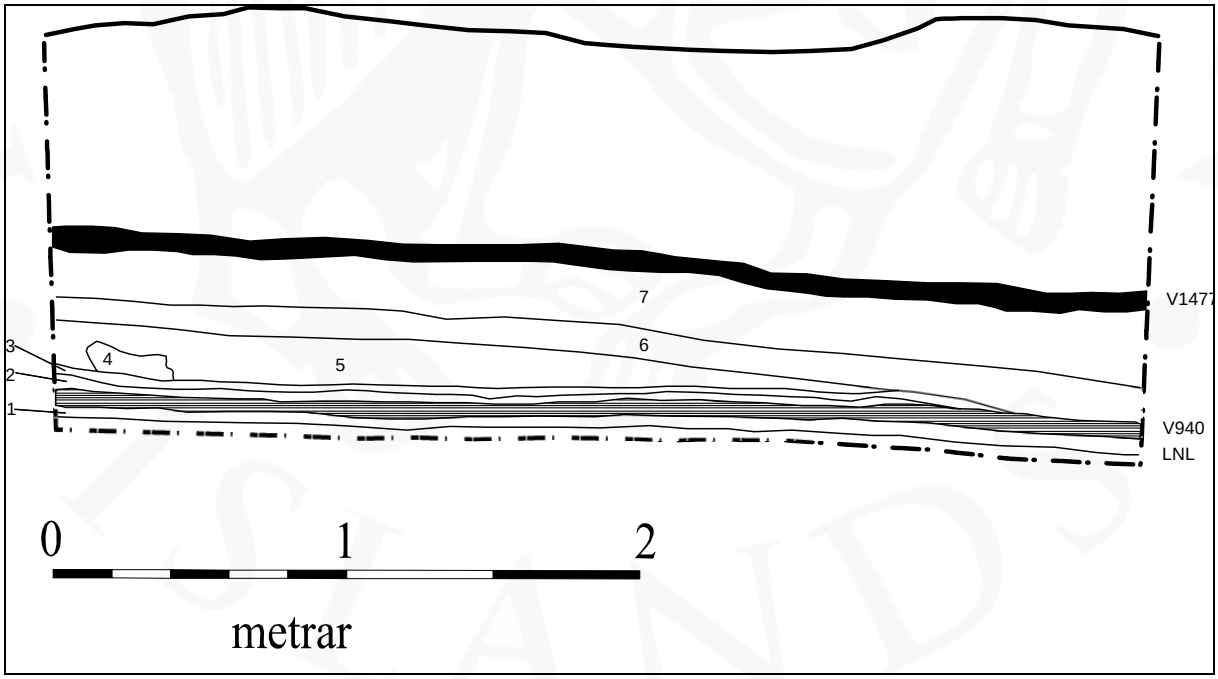

Figure 8. Section 2.

[9] E.g. Magnús Á. Sigurgeirsson, 'Greinargerð um gjóskulög.' *Archaeological investigations at Sveigakot 1998-2000*, ed. Orri Vésteinsson, Reykjavík 2001, s. 39-42.

Although Section 1 is remarkable mostly for its homogeneity, there is clearly more activity towards the left hand side, which is further up-hill and closer to the structural remains recorded in Section 2. The cultural sequence here is also bracketed by the V~940 and H-1104 tephras (the latter not shown on the drawing), but in addition to the same sheet midden (here no. 6) there are layers clearly derived from building activity. In this section there is a continuous 2-3 cm thick layer of natural accumulation on top of the V~940 (2) but on top of that a ca. 2 cm thick cultural layer of dark brown sand with organic remains (3). This is sealed by a chunk of turf (4) and a thicker layer of up-cast (5), characterized by whitish specks of the H3 tephra. This in turn is overlaid by the sheet midden (6 – same as 3 in section 1). This included a fire-cracked rock. (7) is natural.

The up-cast layer grows in thickness towards the west (up-hill) indicating that the location of the digging was in that direction. This and the chunks of turf suggest that there are buildings, probably sunken featured, further west buried within the mound of Aeolian accumulation.

More animal bones were collected in 2005. The majority were retrieved from directly layer 3, some during the cleaning of the section and some from a 20x40x20 cm sample block taken at the eastern end of Section 1. Further bones were retrieved from the ground in front of the erosion face. The majority of those had fallen from the section since the previous year when the first surface collection was made but all can be assumed to come from the same context, the midden accumulation, layer 3. Tom McGovern's analysis of the Helgastaðir bone assemblage is presented in table 1.

Helgastaðir is the only one of the three sites investigated in 2005 which is not completely denuded and where substantial occupation deposits still remain. It therefore has considerable research potential although the logistical obstacles in doing larger scale investigations there would be considerable. The small collection of animal bones does not allow firm conclusions as to whether this was a shieling or a permanent farm, but if anything the latter is suggested by the thickness and extent of the midden deposits (compared e.g. with the more or less contemporary shieling at Pálstóftir and the contemporary farm Sveigakot).

Iron smelting may have been an aspect of the occupation of this site, but it is also possible that the slag remains postdate the occupation. No slag was at least observed in relation to the occupation deposits.

Thomas H. McGovern

The Helgastaðir archaeofauna

A small but interesting archaeofauna was collected in 2004 (surface) and 2005 (stratified) from the inland site of Helgastaðir. Table 1 below presents the 2004 and 2005 collection, including bones identifiable to a useful taxonomic level (NISP) and other bones which could be placed in the Large Terrestrial Mammal (cattle and horse sized) or in the Medium Terrestrial Mammal (sheep, goat, pig, large dog sized). While the total collection is too small to fully quantify, the presence of cattle bones as well as sheep and goat is more suggestive of a farm midden rather than a specialized sel or other herding station. Note the presence of a few goat bones, which are relatively common in Viking Age contexts in northern Iceland but which become rare after ca. AD 1100.

Table 1. Helgastaðir Animal bones

NISP	2004	2005	total	% NISP
Cattle	2	18	20	21.74
Goat	2	1	3	3.26
Sheep	3	5	8	8.70
Caprine	9	52	61	66.30
NISP total	16	76	92	
TNF				
Large terrestrial mammal	2	15	17	
Medium terrestrial mammal	8	26	34	
Unidentifiable	13	71	84	
TNF total	39	188	227	

Orri Vésteinsson

Archaeological investigation undir Bálabrekku

Unlike Helgastaðir no place name is associated with occupation in the opposite side of the valley (for the location see Fig. 2). No artifacts are known to have been found there and ruins are only reported undir Bálabrekku in the second half of the 20th century. One of these descriptions characterizes the site as an "ancient farm" but otherwise no indications of the nature or scale of this site were available until it was surveyed in 2004.

Four stone spreads were identified as the remains of structures in 2004 and a surface collection was made of animal bones. In 2005 test-pitting in five locations within the site revealed that nothing remains of the original land surface and no archaeological deposits are sealed below sand-dunes or otherwise. No indications were found of sunken featured buildings where in situ deposits might remain, but the possibility that such may still be found cannot be discounted. It is unlikely though as practically the whole Holocene soil accumulation has been lost in this place (including the H3 and H4 tephras) and only very deep SFBs could have been dug deeper than that.

The 2005 investigation was therefore limited to the making of a more accurate site plan and a more detailed collection of animal bone (analysed and discussed by Tom McGovern et al below). A single whetstone was found, representing the only artifact associated with this site, as well as two pieces of smelting slag complementing the one found in the previous year.

Ruin 1 is the most substantial structure at this site. It is 24x10 m and has large slabs, mainly along the southwest side, which may indicate that it served, at least in part, as a byre. Supporting this is the fact that the ruins is on a slight incline, with the northern end lower than the sout. Most of the animal bones were found in between the stones of this structure. A pile of loom-weights (#13) at the southeastern end suggests that a loom stood there. Ruin 2 is 16x10 m with a noticeably lesser density of stones than Ruin 1, except in its northwestern corner. The whetstone was found here. Ruin 2 is partly covered by a sand dune which also separates it from Ruin 1. Ruins 3 and 4 are more dispersed scatters of stone, 20x10 and 25x7 m respectively. They are separated by a stream which runs from a spring further up hill, but connected by a spread of bog iron, cakes of hardened red mud with very high iron content, some with iron panning. One piece of smelting slag was found down slope from ruin 3 and

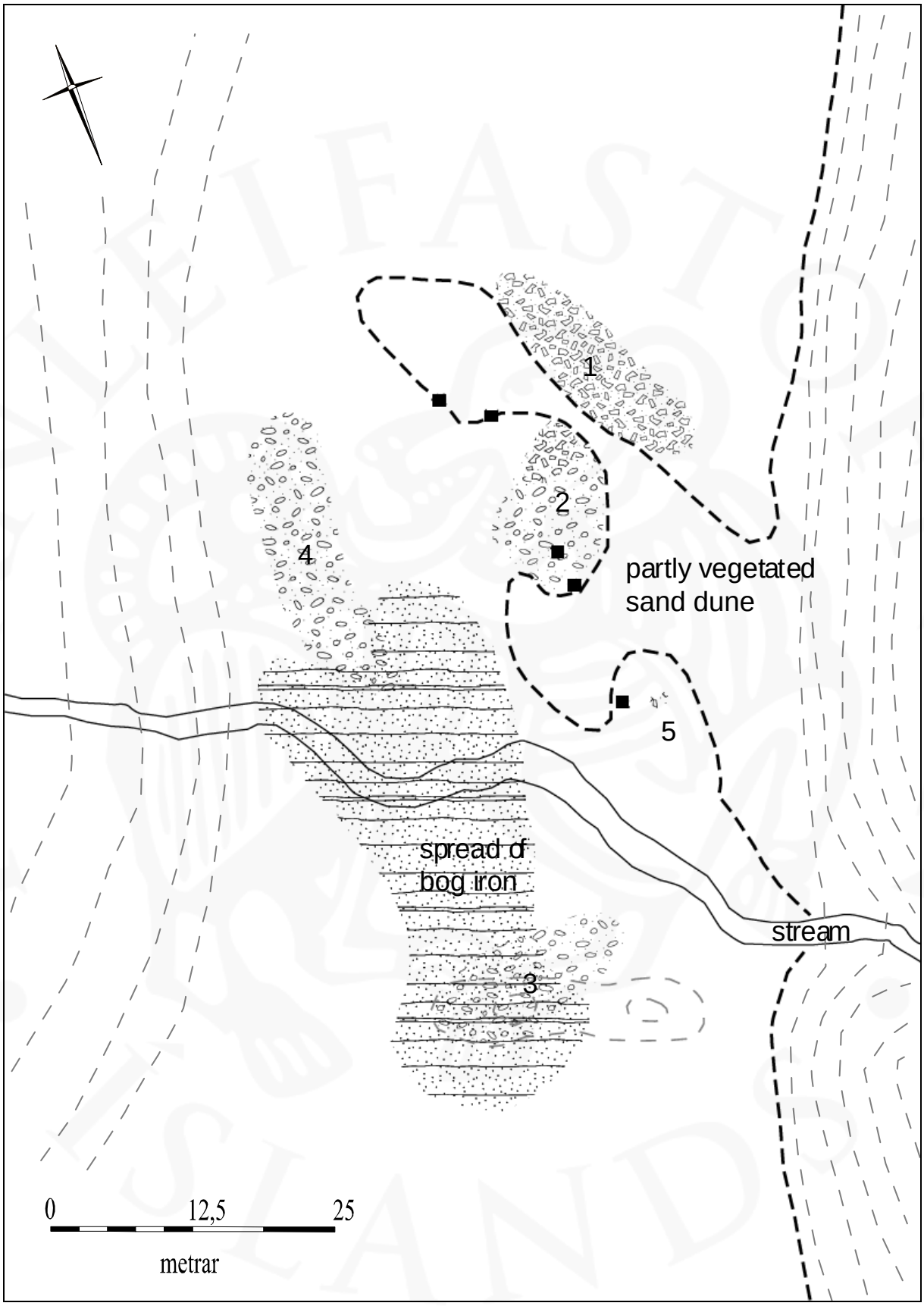

Figure 9. Site plan of undir Bálabrekku. Black squares indicate the locations of test-pits.

Figure 10. Ruin 1 looking southeast. See also front page.

Figure 11. Proposed stall partitions in Ruin 1. Looking north.

Figure 12. Pile of loom weights in Ruin 1. Looking northwest.

two others on the ground south of the sand dune. An isolated hearth (5) is midway between Ruins 2 and 3. This is represented by a pile of stones, with fire-cracked rocks, 2 bones and a scatter of burnt bone, but no charcoal.

The size and number of the structures of this site are consistent with a view of it as a farm. Again comparison with the shileing Pálstóftir suggests a site of a different nature and the evidence for the stalling of cattle and weaving also point to year round occupation. That the cattle shared the same roof as the loom may however suggest that this was a low status site.

The animal bone collection, while larger than the one from Helgastaðir, is still very small. It suggests a similarly mixed economy of cattle and sheep and goats with a single horse bone to make things slightly more interesting.

No dating evidence is available for this site but it is suggested to date to the same period as Helgastaðir and undir Sandmúla on the grounds that it is unlikely that this spot would have been chosen for habitation later on.

Just south of the site a rise down by the river goes by the name of Beinagrindarhjalli. On the southern end of this a human skeleton is reported to have lain on the ground in the middle of the 20th century but these bones have now disappeared. Substantial parts of a horse skeleton were however found on the northern end of this rise, some 500 m south of the site

(SÞ-644:004). It is possible, but improvable, that the two skeletons were a part of a pagan burial ground.

Tom McGovern

Report of midden investigations at undir Sandmúla

Summary: On August 3-4 2005 a midden team (Tom McGovern, Seth Brewington, Konrad Smiarowski, Raymond Petit) collaborated with *Fornleifastofnun Íslands* in the investigation of an abandoned farm site at Undir Sandmúla (SDM). The site had produced prior surface collections of Viking age artifacts, and has been visited by several scholars over the past century. The site was very heavily eroded, with most of the surface reduced to prehistoric till and boulder surface. Scatters of bone in several areas resting directly upon this terminal erosion surface indicated the presence of very extensive (and probably very rich) midden deposits once existing around the surviving structures (1, 2, 3, see Fig. 13). Partially turf covered mounds to the NW (4) and NE (5) of the main hall structure (1) also showed associated bone scatters. It was hoped that these stabilized dunes might cover *in situ* midden deposits as at Hrísheimar and Sveigakot in Mývatnssveit. A systematic coring transect (16 cores all carried to H3 prehistoric tephra) of the larger area 5 unfortunately revealed only sterile, wind deposited banded natural deposits 50-90 cm thick which extended down to either the LNS or the H3 tephra without showing any signs of either *in situ* cultural deposit or the many tephra post dating the LNS. Similar results were provided by straightening of a 18 m long natural erosion face that runs diagonally across the surface of area 5 (unit 1). The LNS could be followed fairly continuously across the unit 1 profile, though in places even this tephra was breached by erosion down to the H3 level. Wind transported deposits visible in the unit 1 profile ranged in size from silt up to 2 -3 mm diameter pebbles, suggesting the velocity and intensity of the erosion events that have flayed the site surface down to prehistoric levels over most of its surface. One of the cores near the south end of area 5 showed ca 5 cm of cultural material, and a second test trench (4 x 4 m, unit 2) was opened around this core. A small deposit of mottled grey ash with a heavy concentration of calcined bone was found *in situ* in an area extending ca 2 m x 0.75 m, with a depth of deposit ranging from 2-5 cm. This *in situ* midden material rested directly upon the upper surface of the Landnám Tephra Sequence with no more than a few millimeters separating the two layers. This small surviving deposit was collected as a total bulk sample for flotation. While the middens once surrounding this highland site seem to have been almost completely destroyed by erosion, the small remaining deposit does serve to suggest some very early occupation of this site.

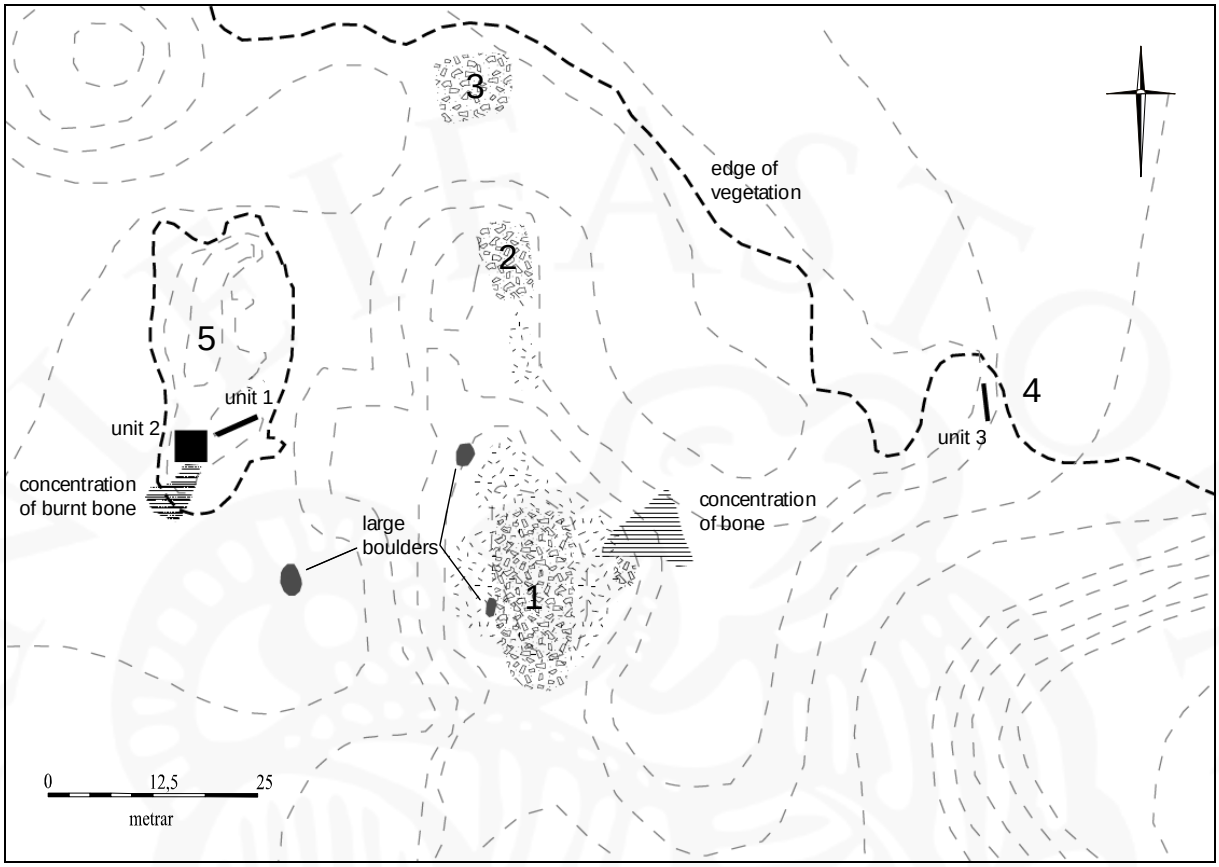

Figure 13. Site plan of undir Sandmúla.

Site Description. The site of undir Sandmúla (SDM) is located at approximately 412 meters above sea level with a GPS reading (+/- 5 m) on the SW corner of midden area 5 of N 65.20246 degrees and W 017.3414. The site is at the base of a steep hill now entirely eroded to gravel/boulder scree, and most of the site area is now stripped of vegetation and soil. Stone alignments indicate three main structures (1,2,3) of which the probable hall (1) is the largest. Bone scatters extend over much of the (see Fig. 13 for site layout). Four soil pH readings on exposed cultural layers produced consistent readings of 6.5-6.75. These readings are closely comparable to the soil pH (very slightly acid to neutral) prevalent in Mývatnssveit and certainly have contributed to the exceptional bone preservation evident on site.

Illustrations & Commentary

Figure 14. Overview of site area from SE looking towards the main valley. Landrover is just beyond the midden area 5.

Figure 15. Scatters of animal bone and fire cracked stones resting upon deflated glacial tills and upon patches of the prehistoric cream white H3 tephra.

Figure 16. Dense scatter of calcined (white burnt) and unburnt but bleached bone and concentrations of fire cracked rocks in the southwest edge of area 5.This proved to be the eroding [002] context after unit 2 was opened in this area.

Figure 17. A cattle metatarsal bone showing bleaching and exfoliation caused by prolonged weathering. Moss and lichen communities had established themselves on many bone fragments, suggesting prolonged exposure. Bones in the erosion scatter included many cattle and caprine (sheep or goat) bones as well as bird and fox. Perhaps significantly, the bone elements represented tended to be the densest in the skeleton. Concentrations of fire cracked stones also suggest the presence of a midden deposit in these deflated areas.

Figure 18. View of midden area 5 from the south, showing the band of white-cream H 3 tephra appearing around the base and work beginning on the clearing of the erosion face profile (arrow, unit 1).

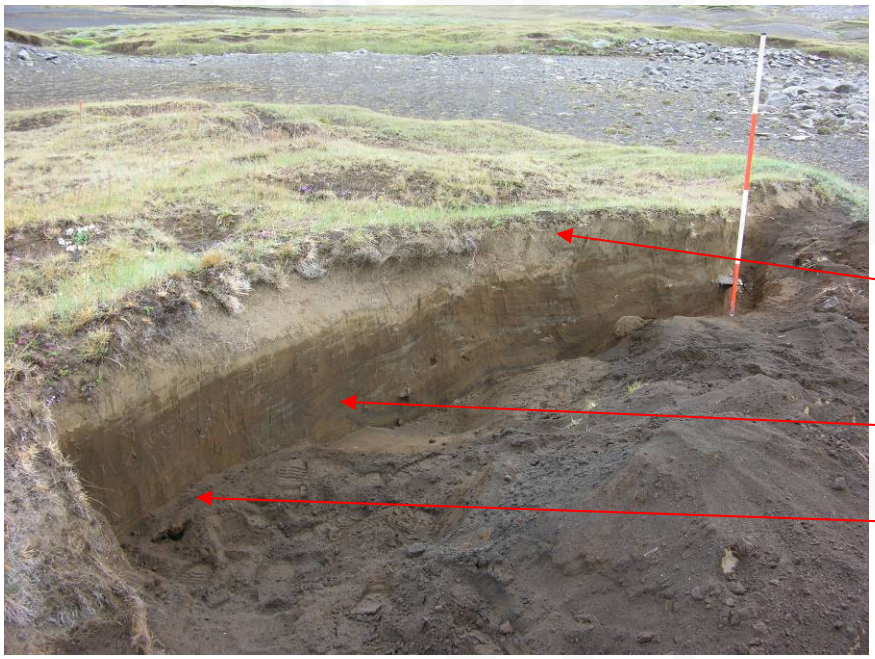

Figure 19. Cleared profile of erosion face running E-W across most of the area 5 mound.

Figure 20. Unit 2 in area 5
Under excavation, 100% dry sieved (4mm) and all in situ midden was bulk sampled for later flotation. From NW

Figure 21. Unit 2 in area 5 showing SE corner of the 4 x 4 m unit with the [002] midden context visible surviving in low patches in the edge of an eroded slope.

The bands of the local LNS are visible beneath the midden deposit.

Figure 21. Ashy midden deposit [002] with fire cracked stones, burnt bone, charcoal, and wood ash and two artifacts (SDM 05 finds 2 and 3). Note that midden, apparently in situ, rests upon the LNS

AREA 5 investigations

Investigations in the sod covered area 5 began with surface collection in three zones, west (A), south (B) and east (C), corresponding to major concentrations of bone on the surface. Coring (carried out with an Oakfield tube type soil corer) was carried out along a 53 m long transect that ran roughly N-S along the long axis of the mound of area 5. Sixteen cores were taken at approximate 2-3 m intervals, reaching the H3 prehistoric tephra consistently at 90-100 cm from surface. Only one core (near the S end of the mound) produced any potential cultural material (2-5 cm thick). The 18 m long erosion face of unit 1 was cut back slightly and cleaned, providing a long E-W profile at approximate right angles to the coring transect. As figure 19 above indicates, the unit 1 profile confirmed the findings of the coring transect, showing widespread erosion down to the level of the LNS, and occasionally below. Bedded windblown sediments ranged in size from silt to 1-3 mm diameter gravel, with accumulation angles suggesting major winds from the SE. Wind transport of such comparatively large gravel fragments suggests a fairly powerful gale. Unit 2 (4 x 4 m) was opened over the core showing potentially in situ cultural deposits and also showing a substantial concentration of small fragments of calcined bone. The calcined bone proved to be associated with the ash deposit, strengthening the observation that this layer [002] is in fact a last in situ layer now undergoing deflation. The [002] ash layer covered an area approximately 2 m x 75 cm filling the bottom of pockets and dips in the soil surface, and nowhere reaching depths greater than 5 cm. As illustrated by Figure 21, the [002] context appears to rest upon the upper portion of the distinctive local LNS.

Area 4 Investigations

A small cultural layer was visible in an exposed erosion profile in the side of a stabilized dune in area 4 (E of area 5). The profile was cleared and drawn (SDM unit 3) revealing a small cultural layer on top of the V~940 tephra.

Figure 22. Location of unit 3 on the edge of a sand dune to the east of the main ruins.

Figure 23. A closer view of the unit 3 profile showing the double black lines of the local LNS, the grey V~940 tephra above, and a small amount of cultural material above the V~940 grey tephra band (1 m scale).

Finds

Figure 24. Find SDM 05- 1. A non-artefactual natural bit of endurated tephra, which resembles simple pottery on first inspection. This look-alike probably accounts for early reports of pottery finds on the site. Found 15 m SE of structure 1.

Figure 25. Find SDM 05-2. Iron nail and clinch plate (rove) found in situ in area 5, unit 2, layer [002].

Figure 26. Find SDM 05-3 Convex side. This is a copper-bronze object with an iron nail or pin through the middle. This small object could be a decorative stud or something similar. In situ find in area 5, unit 2, layer [002].

Figure 27. Find SDM 05-3 Concave side. Same object from other side.

Discussion and Recommendations

The undir Sandmúla site represents an important early high altitude site in the now-remote interior of one of Iceland's great northern valleys. The presence of abundant cattle and horse bones (including some newborn calves) indicates that this was not simply a small sheep station, and the scale of the structures and the apparent extent of the now deflated middens also suggest that this was a substantial farm. While none of the finds are particularly diagnostic, the absence of actual pottery, glass, or other early modern materials and the presence of large volumes of fire cracked stones (typical of Viking age to early medieval middens in Iceland) point to an early date. The soil pH has clearly provided good conditions for organic preservation, as indeed is indicated by the survival of so much long exposed bone in otherwise hostile conditions. If intact cultural deposits (especially stratified middens) were present on the site it would certainly be a very important potential subject for further investigation and excavation. While it is still possible that something like a sunken featured building holding a midden may be hidden somewhere beneath the dune system to the NE of the site, the depth and apparent force of the aeolian erosion events that stripped the centre of the site area down to the LNL and H3 tephra or to glacial till suggest that this may be unlikely. While it would be advisable for a trained observer to periodically visit the site to check for fresh exposure of in situ middens, at present the recommendation must be against committing resources to further excavation of undir Sandmúli.

undir Sandmúla. Finds summary

In total 9 finds were retrieved and registered from the remains of the midden and from the surface at the eroded farmstead undir Sandmúla in Krókdalur in 2005. In post excavation find no. 1 was discarded (unworked sandstone). All the finds were cleaned, dried, repacked and registered in the excavation database. Apart from the discarded find no. 1, all the finds come from midden context 002, in area 5.

The small assemblage consists of 8 finds. There are two almost identical copper alloy decorative studs or mounts. Both are dome-shaped and perforated centrally with copper alloy nail remains in the perforation but a broken shank. The diameter of both is 11 mm and the height 7 mm. Decorative studs are uncommon in the Viking age in Iceland and no examples are known from graves from that period. They are however well known on riding gear in later times.[10]

Two iron finds were retrieved: Find no. 2 is a complete clench bolt with a flat irregularly circular head and a rectangular raised rove. The shank is tapering from the head. The section is rectangular below the head but circular near the point which is hammered to secure the rove. The total length of the clench bolt is 31 mm, inner length 20 mm. The rove is 15x15 mm and the head is 13x10 mm. The preservation of the bolt is excellent and it is comparable to e.g. 9th-11th century clench bolts from York, England. Clench bolts can have other functions than in association with ships, e.g. in buildings or coffins.[11] The other iron find, no. 8 is an unidentifiable irregularly shaped pin, possibly a shank; the size is 28x3x5 mm. Find no. 9 includes three small pieces of slag with burnt bone attached.

Find no. 3 is a small fragment of finely grained, dark grey schistose whetstone with the dimensions 29x7x6 mm. This type of schist stone is most common during the Viking age in Iceland (pre AD 1000) but becomes rarer towards the end of Viking age and falls out of use during the medieval period.[12] Finds no. 6 and 7 are small milky-green coloured flint fragments.

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[10] Þórður Tómasson, *Reiðtygi á Íslandi um aldaraðir*. Mál og mynd, Reykjavík, 2002.
[11] Ottaway, Patrick, *Anglo-Scandinavian Ironwork from Coppergate*, (The Archaeology of York. The small finds 17/6), Dorset 1992, pp. 615, 618.
[12] Sigrid C. Juel Hansen, *Whetstones from Viking Age Iceland. As part of the Trans-Atlantic trade in basic commodities*, MA-thesis, University of Iceland 2009.

Figure 28. From left: Clench bolt no. 2, whetstone no. 3, decorative studs no. 4 and 5.

Discussion

This small assemblage is a good addition to finds that have already been retrieved from undir Sandmúla (see overview and catralogue in Guðbjörg Melsteð's paper, below). All datable finds from undir Sandmúla are consistent with a Viking age and medieval date and the same can be said about the finds retrieved in 2005.

Finds register from undir Sandmúla 2005

Find no 1. Natural stone, surface find (see fig. 24). Discarded.

Find no 2. Midden area 5, context [002]. Clench bolt; Iron; weight: 4,45 gr. Complete clench bolt. Flat irregularly circular head and rectangular raised rove. The shank is tapering, and the section is rectangular below the head but circular near the point. The point hammered flat. Total length 31 mm, inner length 20 mm. Rove 15x15 mm, head 13x 10 mm.

Find no 3. Midden area 5, context [002]. Whetstone; Stone; weight: 2 gr. Small fragment of finely grained, dark grey schistose whetstone. 29x7x6 mm.

Find no 4. Midden area 5, context [002]. Stud; Copper Alloy; weight: 1,11 gr. Decorative stud, domed. Perforated centrally with nail remains, shank broken. Diameter 11 mm, height 7 mm.

Find no 5. Midden area 5, context [002]. Stud; Copper Alloy; weight: 1,13 gr. Decorative stud or boss, domed. Perforated centrally with nail remains, shank broken. Diameter 11 mm, height 7 mm.

Find no 6. Midden area 5, context [002]. Flint; Stone; weight: 0,26 gr. Small milky-green coloured flint fragment.

Find no 7. Midden area 5, context [002]. Flint; Stone; 1; weight 0,82 gr. Small milky-green coloured flint fragment.

Find no 8. Midden area 5, context [002]. Shank?; Iron; weight: 1,09 gr. Irregularly sectioned iron pin. Not tapering. 28x3x5 mm.

Find no 9. Midden area 5, context [002]. Slag; Slag; weight: 2,04 gr. Slag pieces with burned bone.

Tom McGovern, Ramona Harrison, Seth Brewington & Peter Kuchar

Report of Archaeofauna from undir Sandmúla and undir Bálabrekku

Summary

Small archaeofauna from two highland sites located 400 m above sea level, up to 100 km inland in the upper reaches of the Skjálfandafljót river valley indicate the early presence of human settlement in this far inland area. While heavily deflated, the site of undir Sandmúla produced an archaeofauna from a stratified context directly above the Landnam sequence tephra, probably dating to the late 9th or early 10th century. This collection is from a highly burnt ”fireplace cleaning” deposit which limits the survival of fish and bird bones, but a quantifiable number of mammal bone fragments could be identified. The domestic mammal assemblage strongly indicates the presence of a full farm with some variant of the mix of species associated with the Settlement Age in Iceland (cattle, horse, pig, sheep).

Background

This interim working paper presents the zooarchaeological analysis of animal bone collections from two heavily eroded sites in Bárðdælahreppur in Northern Iceland. The long valley of the glacial Skjálfandafljót river extends from the Arctic Ocean in the north well over 100 km into the central inland highlands, and Bárðdælahreppur is today one of the furthest inland settled districts in northern Iceland. The region is today nearly completely deforested and the uplands are heavily eroded, but good grazing remains in valley bottoms and in sheltered areas. The valley has been under investigation by Dr. Orri Vésteinsson (U. Iceland) and *Fornleifastofnun Íslands* (Institute of Archaeology, Iceland) for several years, and in 2004 several inland sites were located with surface scatters of animal bones and tephra sequences suggesting surprisingly early occupation of this inland region. A small surface collection of bone from the site undir Bálabrekku was collected in 2004 and is reported here along with the 2005 surface collection. However, the main focus of this report is the larger, partially stratified archaeofauna excavated in 2005 from the ruins of the site of undir Sandmúla (ca 15 km further north, see Figure 1)

On August 3-4 2005 a midden team (Tom McGovern, Seth Brewington, Konrad Smiarowski, Raymond Petit) collaborated with the FSÍ in the investigation of undir Sandmúla (SDM). Undir Sandmúla is located at approximately 412 meters above sea level, and 100 km from the coast. The site had produced prior surface collections of Viking age artifacts, and has been visited by several scholars over the past century. The site was very heavily eroded, with most of the surface reduced to a prehistoric till and boulder surface. Scatters of bone in several areas resting directly upon this terminal erosion surface indicated the presence of very extensive (and probably very rich) midden deposits once existing around the surviving structures. Four soil pH readings on exposed cultural layers produced consistent readings of 6.5-6.75. These readings are closely comparable to the soil pH (very slightly acid to neutral) prevalent in Mývatnssveit and certainly have contributed to the exceptional bone preservation evident on site, despite harsh conditions of deflation and exposure. Most of these surface scatters (Areas 3 and 4) produced only the densest bone skeletal elements, and even these were heavily weathered, showing exfoliation of the compact surface and strong bleaching. These indications of long surface exposure combined with the small but flourishing moss colonies established on many fragments indicated that the archaeological matrix that once held these bones had been eroded away quite some time ago, and no *in situ* bone bearing deposits could be located near the structural remains.

Partially turf covered mounds to the NW (4) and NE (5) of the main hall structure (1) also showed associated bone scatters. It was hoped that these stabilized dunes might cover *in situ* midden deposits as at Hrísheimar and Sveigakot in Mývatnssveit. A systematic coring transect (16 Oakfield tube cores all carried to H3 prehistoric tephra) of the larger Area 5 unfortunately revealed only sterile, wind deposited banded natural deposits 50-90 cm thick which extended down to either the Landnám (LNS) sequence of ca AD 872+/-2 or the prehistoric H3 tephra without showing any signs of either *in situ* cultural deposit or the many later tephra post - dating the LNS. Similar results were provided by straightening of a 18 m long natural erosion face that runs diagonally across the surface of Area 5 (unit 1). The LNS could be followed fairly continuously across the unit 1 profile, though in places even this tephra was breached by erosion down to the H3 level. Wind transported deposits visible in the unit 1 profile ranged in size from silt up to 2 -3 mm diameter pebbles, suggesting the velocity and intensity of the erosion events that have flayed the site surface down to prehistoric levels over most of its surface. While bone was collected from the surface around the structures (Areas 3 and 4) and from the fill of unit 1 in area 5, none of these collections can be tied to a stratigraphic context and thus cannot be dated.

One of the cores near the south end of Area 5 transect showed around 5 cm of potentially *in situ* stratified cultural material, and a second test trench (4 x 4 m, unit 2) was opened around this core. A small deposit of mottled grey ash and fire-cracked stones with a heavy concentration of calcined bone was found *in situ* in an area extending ca 2 m x 0.75 m, with a depth of deposit ranging from 2-5 cm. This *in situ* midden material rested within 1 cm of the upper surface of the Landnám tephra sequence, representing evidence of very early deposition. The in situ deposit (context [002]) was 100% dry sieved (4mm mesh) as was the loose material directly above the [002] context, which probably derived from the same deposit, but which had been disturbed by erosion. While the middens once surrounding this highland site seem to have been almost completely destroyed by erosion, the small remaining deposit does serve to suggest some very early occupation, and has provided a small but quantifiable archaeofauna probably dating to the late 9th or very early 10th century AD.

Species Present

Table 2 presents the list of species present from the 2005 collection at SDM and for the combined 2004-05 surface collections from undir Bálabrekku.

The Area 5, Unit 2 [002] collection represents *in situ* deposits excavated with trowels and 100% sieved. The other collections represent hand-picking of bones exposed on the surface without any attempt at sieving. The [002] context produced nearly 500 identifiable fragments from a total of nearly 5,000 fragments, along with several artifacts (see Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir's report above). Many small flecks of wood charcoal and many fist-sized fire damaged stones were also present in the [002] deposit. The layer closely resembled very similar "fireplace cleaning" deposits (high percentage of burnt bone, fire damaged stones, ash and charcoal) encountered regularly in other Viking age- early medieval midden deposits in Iceland.

Table 2	NISP	undir Sandmúla							undir Bálabrekku
		Area 5	Area 5	Area 5	Area 5	Area 3	Area 4	Total	Total
Scientific names	*English common names*	Unit 2 [002] Stratified	Unit 2 surface	Unit 1 surface	Unit 1 trench fill	surface	surface		surface
Bos taurus	cattle	104	15	2	5			126	23
Equus caballus	horse	3	2					5	1
Canis familiaris	dog	tooth marks						-	tooth marks
Sus scrofa	pig	6	1	1				8	
Capra hircus	goat							0	2
Ovis aries	sheep	6	2		1			9	5
Ovis or Capra sp.	caprine	358	42	19	10	1	5	435	32
	All Caprines	364	44	19	11	1	5	444	39
	All domestic	477	62	22	16	1	5	583	63
Alopex lagopus	arctic fox	2	1					3	
Laridae sp.	Gull sp.								1
Aves sp.	Bird egg shell					1		1	
Salmonidae sp.	Salmonid fish	1						1	
Mya sp.	Clam sp.	4						4	
Mollusca sp.	Shellfish sp.		2					2	
	total identified (NISP)	484	63	22	16	2	5	5920	64
	Large terrestr. Mammal	67	12	2	1		1	83	12
	Medium terrestr. Mammal	817	112	35	26	1		991	22
	Unidentified fragments	3519	1397	44	32	14	10	5016	4
	total all fragments (TNF)	4887	1584	103	75	17	16	6682	102

Taphonomic Issues- Limits of Comparability

While the stratified [002] context produced enough mammal bone to pass the NABO Zooarchaeology Working Groups threshold for comparability (>300 NISP), it derives from a badly damaged site, where most surface bone was either burnt white (calcined) or bleached and disintegrating. The context itself is limited to an area of a few square meters of surviving ash/charcoal ”fireplace cleaning” deposit, probably not fully representative of the orginally rich, diverse, and extensive midden deposits. While much mammal bone survives combustion

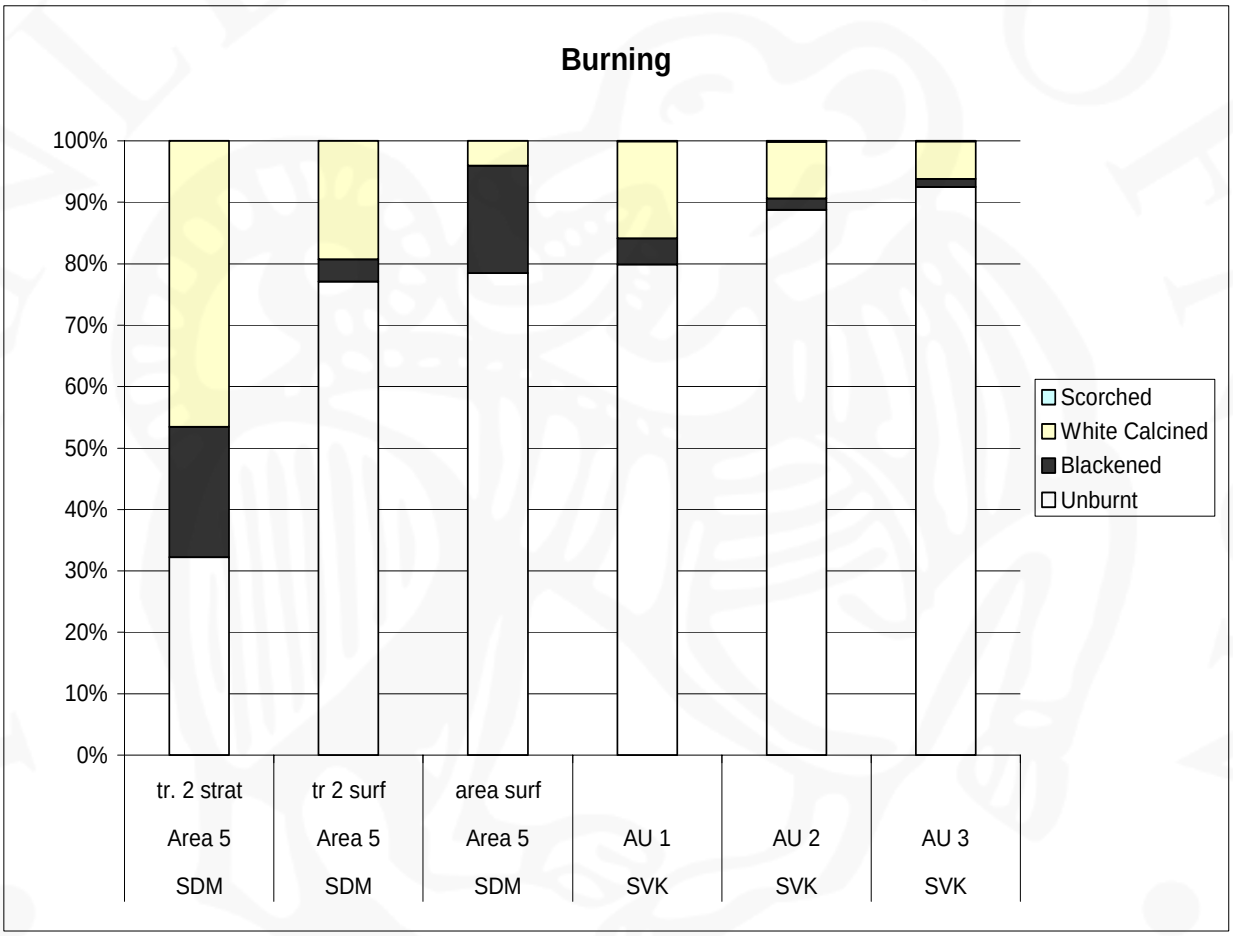

Figure 29. Burning of bones from undir Sandmúla (SDM) compared to Sveigakot (SVK)

while retaining identifiable morphology, almost all fish, bird, and shellfish bone is completely destroyed. One small fragment of burnt freshwater fish (salmonid, probably trout or charr) vertebrae in the [002] collection is thus probably the last survivor of what may have been a great many more non-mammalian fragments.

Figure 29 presents the relative proportions of white burnt (calcined), blackened, lightly scorched and unburnt bone from the stratified [002] context at SDM with the hand collected surface bone from Area 5. Three sieved stratified phases from the Mývatnssveit site of Sveigakot (SVK) are included for comparison. The stratified SDM material clearly

contains a particularly high concentration of burnt bone relative to the Sveigakot phases (which include many ”fireplace cleaning” deposits similar to SDM [002] combined with other less combusted midden deposits).

”Fireplace cleaning” deposits tend to also show high degree of bone fragmentation, as calcined bone has been effectively de-collagenated and reduced to the inorganic calcium and hydroxyapetite mineral components which easily shatter like glass into many small fragments. Figure 30 presents the fragmentation pattern for the three major SDM contexts and the same reference phases from Sveigakot used above. The SDM context [002] fragments group in the lower end of the size ranges (>2 cm) and lack many large or complete bone elements.

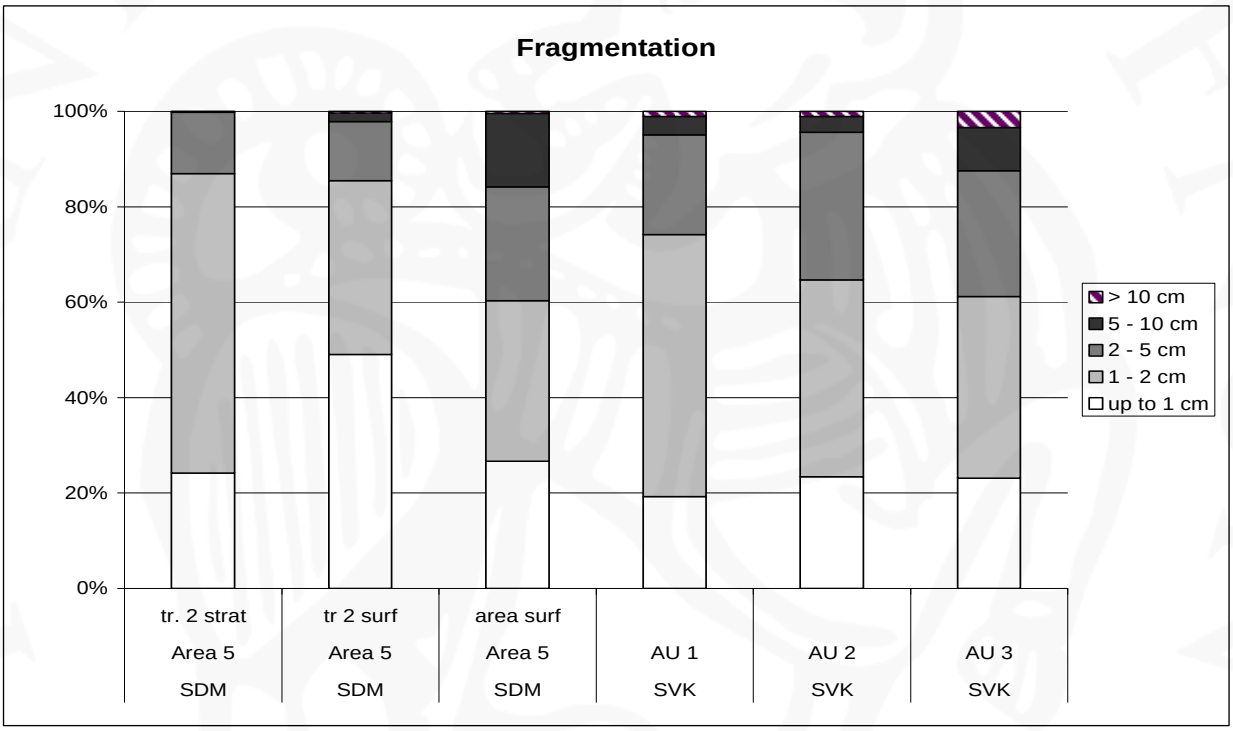

Figure 30. Fragmentation of the undir Sandmúla (SDM) collection, compared with Sveigakot (SVK).

These taphonomic factors limit the comparability of the SDM stratified [002] context, and unquestionably it would have been helpful if the one surviving *in situ* deposit were not so heavily burnt. It would be unwise to make use of the [002] SDM collection in full-collection comparisons with archaeofauna such as the Mývatn sites, and we cannot know if the SDM occupants made extensive use of fish or birds from present evidence. We are also limited in our ability to reconstruct domesticate herding patterns or reconstruct stock size ranges due to the fragmented nature of our domestic mammal bone collection. However, while accepting these limitations, the SDM stratified archaeofauna does have a role in carefully structured inter-site comparisons, and can still shed light on the early economy of the Icelandic interior.

Species Present

Despite taphonomic issues, the list of taxa present in the archaeofauna from SDM and undir Bálabrekku indicate the presence of the full range of what we now recognize as the ”Landnám package” of cattle, sheep, goats, horses and pigs. These species appear in both the stratified and surface collections, suggesting that these deep interior sites were probably full farms rather than specialized sheep herding stations. Dogs are represented (as usual) by their tooth marks on other species’ bones. The presence of arctic fox bones in the stratified context as well as surface collection suggests that fox were hunted as in Settlement Age Mývatnssveit. The use of marine resources and the degree of contact with the coast are unanswered questions, as the clam shell fragments could come from shells retained as spoons or scoops, and the single sea gull bone could come from a wandering individual. Due to the nature of the SDM deposits, we can say little about whether and to what extent the settlers participated in the inter-regional interior distribution of marine fish, sea mammals, sea birds and sea bird eggs documented for Mývatnssveit, Granastaðir in inland Eyjafjörður, or Reykholt.

Domestic Mammals

We can make fuller use of the domestic mammal bone from SDM. Table 3 presents a broad comparison (% NISP of domestic mammal bones) for the stratified [002] context at SDM and

Table 3	SDM	SVK	SVK	SVK	HRH (prel.)	HST	HST
Domestic Mammals %	9th-10th?	Late 9th-10th	Mid-Late 10th c	L. 10th-E. 11th	Mid 10th c-E. 11th	Mid-Late 10th c	L. 10th-E. 11th
	[002] Stratified	***AU 1***	***AU 2***	***AU 3***	***upper***	***AU 3***	***AU 4***
Cattle	21.80	35.76	23.06	21.04	17.00	21.78	24.56
Horse	0.63	0.15	1.29	0.14	0.25	0.33	0.86
Pig	1.26	7.99	7.46	0.79	21.15	3.49	4.50
Caprine total	76.31	56.10	68.19	78.03	61.60	74.40	70.08

	SDM	SVK	SVK	SVK	HRH (prel.)	HST	HST
	9th-10th?	Late 9th-10th	Mid-Late 10th c	L. 10th-E. 11th	Mid 10th c-E. 11th	Mid-Late 10th c	L. 10th-E. 11th
	[002] Stratified	***AU 1***	***AU 2***	***AU 3***	***upper***	***AU 3***	***AU 4***
Caprine/Cattle ratio	3.5	1.6	3.0	3.7	3.6	3.4	2.9

the sites of Sveigakot (SVK), Hrísheimar (HRH) and Hofstaðir (HST) in the Mývatn region.

Figures 31 and 32 graph these data, providing a comparison of relative proportions of major domestic mammals and a direct ratio of all caprines (sheep and goat combined) with cattle bones. While immature bones are particularly subject to combustion and other forms of attrition, a few new born cattle bones were recovered from the SDM stratified contexts, suggesting connections to the better documented dairy economies of contemporary Settlement age sites.

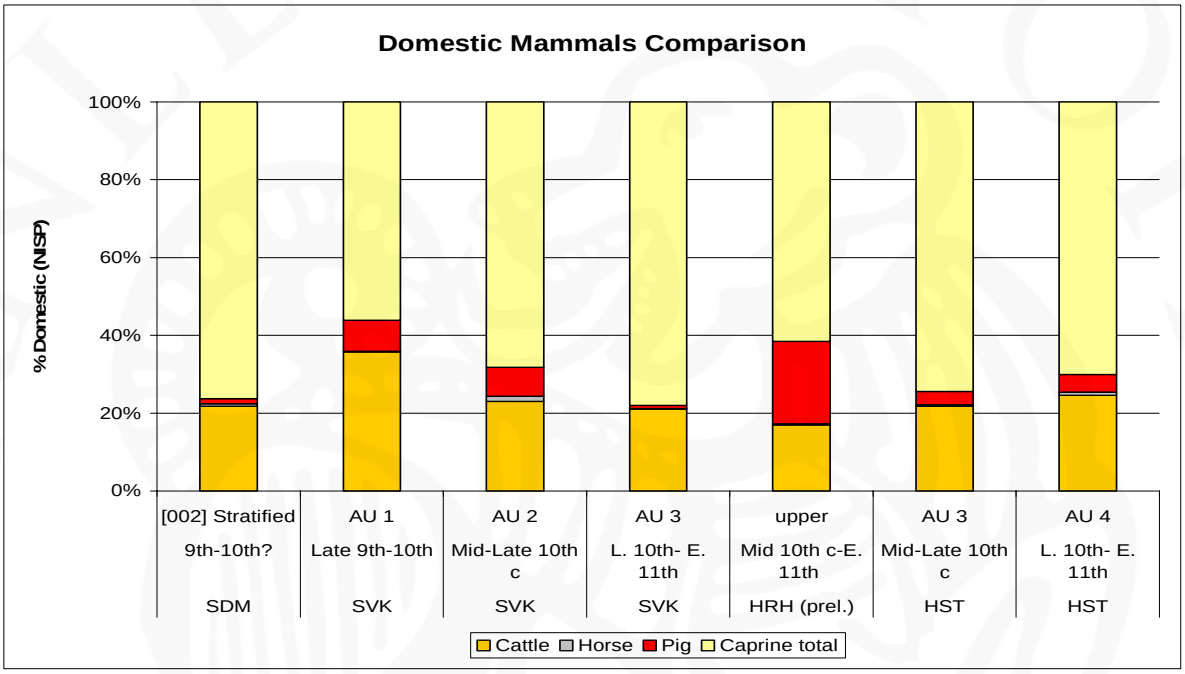

Figure 31. Domestic mammal bones in undir Sandmúla compared to contemporary sites in Mývatnssveit.

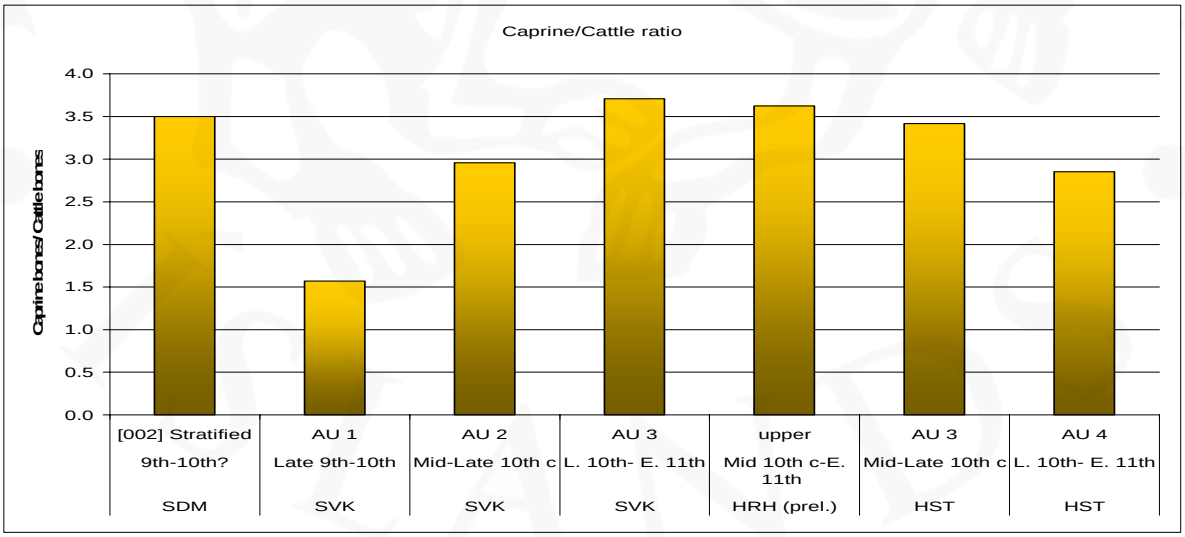

Figure 32. Caprine/cattle ratio at undir Sandmúla (SDM) compared to contemporary sites in Mývatnssveit.

Discussion

These broad comparisons with near contemporary northern Icelandic sites may help place the SDM archaeofauna in perspective, and help to test some competing hypotheses about the economy of this inland site at first settlement:

- *Far inland sites were not managed as full scale permanent farms, but were large versions of later seasonal herding camps.*
- *If far inland sites were permanent farms, they still must have been managed for primarily for sheep production and should show very high ratios of caprines relative to cattle, perhaps similar to the 20:1 ratios common in later medieval and early modern N Iceland.*
- *Far inland farms were managed comparably to contemporary farms closer to the coast, such as the Mývatnssveit late 9th – early 11th century sites.*

As we have seen, the substantial amounts of cattle bone (including both adults and neonatal animals) and the presence of pig and horse bone recovered from SDM indicates the presence of the full range of domesticates that could be expected from a typical 9th-11th c Settlement age farm. This does not support the first hypothesis, which is also not supported by the substantial hall ruin and other structural indications of a permanent farm at the site.

As Figures 31 and 32 indicate, a direct comparison with the more contemporary late 9th-early 10th century phase at Sveigakot indicates significantly more pig and cattle at early Sveigakot than in the SDM archaeofauna, which may well represent adjustment to local environmental potentials at first settlement (recent environmental models by Andy Casely suggest some woodlands along the Skjálfandafljót river and probably extensive grasslands in the uplands around SDM, while it is likely that early Sveigakot was in a fairly dense woodland bordering wet meadows). However, there is no indication of a radically different management strategy of domestic mammals at SDM from the broader range of near contemporary North Icelandic sites. The direct caprine/cattle bone ratio contributes to this picture, placing the early SDM ratio (about 3.5 caprines per cow bone) in the same range as the later phases at Sveigakot, the current Hrísheimar collection, and the earlier phases at Hofstaðir. While the SDM collection leans towards sheep, it is by no means so sheep dominated as the post-1200 AD Mývatnssveit archaeofauna. Within the constraints imposed by taphonomy and time, the undir Sandmúla stratified archaeofauna indicates broad similarity with what we know of Settlement age farming strategy, and tends to support the third hypothesis.

Guðbjörg Melsteð

Gripir úr Krókdal

Inngangur

Tildrög þessa verkefnis voru þau að höfundur kom að máli við Orra Vésteinsson lektor í fornleifafræði við Háskóla Íslands varðandi rannsóknarverkefni í Safnafræði. Orri kom með þá uppástungu að taka saman og gera lista yfir þá gripi sem Þjóðminjasafn Íslands hefur að geyma frá Krókdal, en það svæði hefur verið skráð og rannsakað að hluta til af honum. Þjóðminjasafnið veitti höfundi svo aðstöðu og aðgang til að leita að gripum í gagnagrunni sínum.

Markmið þessarar athugunar var að setja saman skrá um gripi sem fundist hafa á Krókdal og gera grein fyrir megineinkennum þess safns. Í því tilliti er gerður samanburður við sambærilega en umfangsmeiri rannsókn sem gerð hefur verið á gripum úr Þjórsárdal, annarri eyðibyggð þar sem mikið hefur fundist af gripum í uppblásnum rústum. Leitin miðaðist eingöngu við *Sarp* – gagnagrunn Þjóðminjasafns Íslands – en *Aðfangabók* safnsins var þó höfð til hliðsjónar. Leitað var eftir þekktum örnefnum sem Orri Vésteinsson tók til. Þurfti þó oft að fara krákustígsleiðir til að finna gripi frá því svæði sem leitin var einskorðuð við, því ekki voru allir gripir tengdir ákveðnu svæði í gagnagrunninum. Kom þá *Aðfangabókin* að góðum notum. Við greiningu gripanna var eingöngu stuðst við þá greiningu og lýsingu sem fram kemur í *Sarpi* og *Aðfangabók*, en skoðun og greining á hverjum grip fyrir sig myndi kalla á viðameiri rannsókn.

Upplýsingar um gripina sem fundust í Sarpi voru settar inn í gagnagrunn sem höfundur setti upp og eru gripirnir þar m.a. flokkaðir eftir efni, tegund, fundarstað, fundarári og samhengi. Mun slíkur gagnagrunnur auðvelda notkun upplýsinga um gripasafnið í margvíslegum tilgangi.

Höfundur vill þakka Lilju Árnadóttur og Freyju Hlíðkvist Ómarsdóttur hjá munadeild Þjóðminjasafns Íslands fyrir aðstöðu og aðstoð við leitina í Sarpi sem og Aðfangabókum, Guðrúnu Öldu Gísladóttur hjá Fornleifastofnun Íslands fyrir ómetanlega hjálp og ábendingar varðandi uppsetningu á gagnagrunni og síðast en ekki síst Orra Vésteinssyni fyrir ráðleggingar varðandi skýrslugerðina.

Fundarstaðir

Þó svæðið sem leitað var eftir miðist við Krókdal, var leitað eftir ýmsum örnefnum á svæðinu, jafnt bæjarnöfnum sem öðrum stöðum. Gripirnir eru ekki margir sem komu fram við leitina í Sarpi og fundarstaðir enn færri, eða um 210 gripir á 98 fundarnúmerum og þrettán fundarstaðir. Flestir gripanna virðast hafa fundist í eða við ákveðnar bæjarrústir og er hluti af þeim fundinn við skipulagða F en aðrir tilviljunarkenndir fundir gangnamanna. Af þrettán fundarstöðum eru bæjarrústir átta talsins eða tæp 62% en algengt er að lausafundir þ.e. gripir fundnir á víðavangi séu ekki mjög skilmerkilega staðsettir. Má nefna staðsetningar eins og "Krókdalur", "Suðurárhraun"og "framdalir Suður-Þingeyjasýslu" sem dæmi um víðar skilgreiningar sem geta náð yfir stór svæði, m.a. bæjarstæðin. Í sumum tilfellum ná þessar skilgreiningar útfyrir það svæði sem hér er til athugunar, Krókdal, en þar sem ekki er hægt að vita með vissu að slíkir gripir hafi ekki fundist á Krókdal eru þeir hafðir hér með. Af bæjarrústum eru langflestir gripir frá undir Sandmúla, 166 talsins á 60 fundarnúmerum eða um 79% af öllum gripum í þessari úttekt Að vísu má ganga út frá að bæjarrústin undir Sandmúla sé sú sem mest hefur verið könnuð af öllum bæjarrústum í Krókdal. Í grein Matthíasar Þórðarsonar, *Merkur fornmenjafundur*, sem út kom í Árbók hins íslenzka fornleifafélags 1909, kemur fram að haustið 1908 hafi fundust nokkrir gripir fyrir tilviljun við Sandmúla og bað Matthías finnandann, Erlend Þórðarson frá Svartárkoti, um að fara sumarið 1909 aftur að rústinni í þeim tilgangi einum að leita að fleiri gripum (Matthías Þórðarson 1909, bls. 25). Fann Erlendur þá enn

Fundarstaður	**Fjöldi fundarnrúmera**	**Fjöldi gripa**
Bárðardalur	1	1
Framdalir S-Þingeyjars.	2	2
Fiská	2	2
Hafurstaðir	1	1
Hátungur	5	5
Helgastaðir	3	4
Hrauntunga	2	7
Króksdalur	1	1
Óbyggðir v/Skjálfandafljót	2	2
Sandmúli	60	166
Smiðjuskógar	14	14
Suðurárhraun	2	2
Svartárkot	3	3
Samtals	**98**	**210**

Tafla 3. Gripir frá Krókdal og nágrenni flokkaðir eftir fundarstöðum eins og þeir eru flokkaðir í Aðfangabók Þjóðminjasafnsins og Sarpi.

fleiri gripi, þar á meðal fornan silfursjóð með alls 36 silfurbrotum (Matthías Þórðarson 1909, bls. 26).

Á eftir Sandmúlarústum eru flestir gripir úr Smiðjuskógi en þeir eru þó langtum færri en frá Sandmúla eða fjórtán talsins.

Tafla 3 sýnir fjölda fundarstaða og gripa ásamt hlutfallslegri skiptingu þeirra (nöfnin eins og þau eru skráð í gögnum Þjóðminjasafns).

Efnisflokkar og samanburður við Þjórsárdal

Járn er stærsti efnisflokkur gripa frá Krókdal og koma gripir úr járni frá nánast öllum fundarstöðum. Gripir úr silfri koma þar á eftir eða 36 talsins en þeir eru allir úr sama fundinum, silfursjóðnum frá Sandmúla. Einnig er eitthvað um gripi sem ekki eru greindir til efnis í Sarpi, sem getur verið af því að fleiri gripir úr mismunandi efnum eru skráðir undir sama númeri eða einhverra annmarka við greiningu eða skráningu gripanna. Verður þó að telja ólíklegt að skoðun og greining á þeim gripum myndi leiða í ljós breytingu á dreifimynstri gripanna eftir efni. Tafla 4 sýnir dreifingu efnisflokka eftir fundarstöðum.

Fundarstaðir	Járn	Bein	Koparblanda	Steinn	Raf	Gler	Silfur	Hvalbein	Tönn	Blý	Krít
Bárðardalur	x										
Framdalir S-Þingeyjars.	x										
Fiská				x							
Hafurstaðir			x								
Hátungur	x			x							
Helgastaðir	x							x			
Hrauntunga	x										
Króksdal	x										
Ób. v/skjálfandafl.	x										
Sandmúli	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Smiðjuskógar	x		x	x							
Suðurárhraun	x		x								
Svartárkot	x		x								

Tafla 4. Efni gripa frá Krókdal og nágrenni flokkað eftir fundarstöðum.

Eins og áður hefur komið fram er langflestir gripi undir Sandmúla og jafnframt eru þaðan flestir efnisflokkar. Þar hefur einnig fundist gjall, annar af tveimur slíkum fundum frá svæðinu á Þjóðminjasafni, en það er ekki flokkað sérstaklega hér. Smiðjuskógar koma næstir á eftir undir Sandmúla hvað varðar dreifingu efnisflokka. Þar er talið líklegt að rauðablástur hafi verið stundaður og eru fjölmargar ritaðar heimildir sem styðja það (Orri Vésteinsson 2004). Blástursgjall þaðan hefur þó ekki skilað sér til Þjóðminjasafns Íslands. Möguleiki er þó að hinn gjallmolinn hafi komið frá Smiðjuskógum, en ekki er skráð nánari staðsetning um hann en að hann hafi fundist í smiðju í Krókdal.

Járn

Járn er eins og áður sagði stærsti efnisflokkurinn, 83 gripir eða um 40% allra gripa í úrtakinu. Af járngripum eru hnífar algengastir eða 9 talsins þó einhverjir þeirra séu í nokkrum brotum. Aðrir gripir úr járni sem gætu jafnvel talist til merkustu gripa sem fundist hafa í Krókdal eru m.a. öxi, örvaroddur, spjót og tvö sverð. Aðrir gripir teljast frekar til verkfæra eins og bitill, eldstál, önglar, og skafi svo eitthvað sé nefnt. Í safninu er einnig talsvert um járnbúta sem taldir eru sem gripir þó ekki sé hægt að sjá á þeim sérstakt form. Tveir molar úr blásturgjalli eru einnig í gripasafninu en sennilega ekki frá sama stað.

Í Þjórsárdal er járn einnig langstærsti efninsflokkurinn eða 58% allra gripa (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 126). Taka skal þó fram hér að gripasafnið úr Þjórsárdal er langtum stærra og fjölbreyttara en það sem er til umfjöllunar hér. Þar er einnig að finna mikið af gjalli eða um 28% af heildarfjölda frá 20 fundarstöðum (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 129). Vera má að þessi munur skýrist af mismunandi fundaratvikum: stór hluti af gripum úr Þjórsárdal hefur fundist við skipulegar rannsóknir þar sem meiri líkur eru á að gjall sé tekið til handargagns, en gripirnir frá Krókdal eru nær allir lausafundir, tíndir upp af gagnamönnum og ferðamönnum sem eru síður líklegir til að koma óásjálegum gjallbútum á safn.

Steinn

Á eftir járni eru gripir úr steini annar stærsti efnisflokkurinn eða 24% allra gripa. Gripir úr steini hafa þó eingöngu fundist á fjórum stöðum á svæðinu, í Hátungum, við Fiská, Smiðjuskógum og undir Sandmúla. Þar af er Sandmúli með langflesta gripina eða 42 gripi af 50. Smásteinar ýmiskona, eru algengustu tegundir gripa í þessum flokki en þeir eru 19 talsins ef brot eru talin sérstaklega. Brýni eru einnig allmörg, 17 talsins, eða 8%. Kemur það ekki á óvart þar sem brýni eru meðal algengustu funda í uppgröftum og ekki óalgengur L. Snældusnúðar úr steini eru 5 talsins en aðrir tóvinnugripir eins og kljásteinar eru ekki meðal þeirra gripa sem Þjóðminjasafnið hefur að geyma frá svæðinu. Aðrir gripir í þessum

efnisflokki eru m.a. sörvistölur og taflmenn. Tvær af sörvistölunum frá undir Sandmúla eru úr íslenskum steini en slíkir gripir eru mjög sjaldgæfir (Elín Ósk Hreiðarsdóttir 2005, 99).

Í Þjórsárdal hafa fundist 586 gripir úr steini eða 31% af heildarsafninu (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 133). Sama er uppi á teningnum í Þjórsárdal og Krókdal varðandi tegundaflokka; á báðum stöðum eru óunnir smásteinar langstærsti flokkurinn. Hér hafa þessir steinar þó ekki verið flokkaðir sértskaklega til ákveðinna steintegunda eins og gert er í Þjórsárdalssafninu (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 134). Í Þjórsárdal eru brýni einnig stór hluti af gripum úr steini eða um 150 talsins eða 8% af heildarfjölda gripa úr safninu, sem er sama hlutfall og í Krókdalssafninu (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 134-5). Meiri munur er hinsvegar milli safnanna hvað varðar aðra gripi í þessum efnisflokki. Snældusnúðar eru þar á meðal en í Þjórsárdalssafninu er að finna 26 slíka, þar af 9 úr klébergi (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 137). Hlutfall snældusnúða af heildarfjölda gripa er mjög svipaður eða um 1,3% í Þjórsárdal og 2,3% í Krókdal, en munur er á því að enginn af steinsnúðunum 5 frá Krókdal er úr klébergi og reyndar er enginn gripur þaðan úr klébergi.

Silfur

Silfursjóðurinn sem fannst við Sandmúla er þriðji stærsti efnisflokkurinn með sín þrjátíu og sex brot. Þetta mun vera fornt gangsilfur og eru þar m.a. brot af armbaugi, brot af hringju, nokkrir hringar og svo óunnin brot. Þetta mun vera einn af merkustu fundunum á svæðinu og taldi Matthías Þórðarson sjóðinn vera óræka sönnun þess að þarna hafi verið býli á landnáms- eða söguöld (Matthías Þórðarson 1909, 31).

Silfursjóðir eru ekki algengir fundir á Íslandi og er til að mynda einungis einn gripur úr silfri meðal gripa úr Þjórsárdal. Það er mynt frá seinni hluta 10. aldar (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 124).

Bein

Gripir úr beini hafa eingöngu fundist undir Sandmúla og á Helgastöðum og eru þeir 22 talsins eða 12% af heild. Eru gripir úr hvalbeini flokkaðir hér með. Kambar eru þar stærsti einstaki flokkurinn og er þar af einn sem líklega hefur haft bronsfyllingu í skurði við efri brún (sjá gripasakrá hér að neðan). Snældusnúðar, vefjarskeiðar og klömbur finnast þar einnig en vefjarskeiðarnar og klömburin eru úr hvalbeini, en klömburin er eini gripurinn úr beini frá Helgastöðum.

Bein eru hlutfallslega fá í Þjórsárdalssafninu eða einungis um 1%. Eins og í Krókdal eru kambar þeir gripir sem mest er um í þessum efnisflokki og eru þeir flestir í góðu ásigkomulagi (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 122). Klömbur eru þar einnig meðal gripa og

vefjarskeiðar úr hvalbeini er sömuleiðis að finna í báðum gripasöfnum (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 123).

Koparblanda

Gripir úr kopar, bronsi, tini og látúni eru hér allir flokkaðir undir gripi úr koparblöndu og eru þeir 9 talsins frá fimm fundarstöðum. Meðal gripa í þessum efnisflokki eru koparhringir tveir, hringprjónn úr kopar, látúnsdoppa og bronsþynna.

Munur er hér milli gripasafnanna þegar kemur að þessum flokki. Í Þjórsárdal eru gripir úr koparblöndu 48 talsins eða 3% af heildarfjölda gripa (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 125). Munurinn er þó ekki í fjölda gripanna eða hlutfalli þeirra af heildinni því það er mjög svipað í báðum gripasöfnum. Munurinn liggur fremur í tegundum gripanna. Í Þjórsárdal hafa fundist margir fallegir gripir úr koparblöndu, má þar nefna tvær kúptar nælur sem líklegast eru úr kumli, kingu, hringprjóna, hringi og lauf sem er e.t.v af kringlóttri nælu (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 125). Í Krókdal er hinsvegar ekki eins mikið um slíka gripi í þessum efnisflokki. Áðurnefndur hringprjónn er sennilega eini gripurinn sem gæti staðist samanburð.

Raf

Meðal gripa frá Krókdal er ein perla úr rafi og fannst hún undir Sandmúla. Gripir úr rafi eru sjaldgæfir og rafperlur finnast hér fyrst og fremst í lögum frá víkingaöld. Þær eru jafnframt merki um innfluttning þar sem ekki hafa fundist ummerki um vinnslu rafs á Íslandi. Að sama skapi er talið að skart úr rafi endurspegli e.t.v. efnahag þeirra staða sem slíkir gripir finnast á.

Í Þjórsárdal fundust 6 gripir úr rafi, allt tölur, og eru þær allar frá víkingaöld. Fjórar þeirra eru úr kumli og eins og áður sagði gætu þær sagt til um efnahag staðarins sem og þjóðfélagsstöðu einstaklingsins (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 132).

Gler

Einungis einn gripur úr gleri er að finna meðal gripa frá Krókdal. Glerperla, blá að lit, fannst í Sandmúlarúst árið 1909. Hún er af algengri víkingaaldargerð (Elín Ósk Hreiðarsdóttir 2005, 14). Hlutfall gripa úr gleri er mjög svipað í Þjórsárdal og Krókdal. Í Þjórsárdalssafninu eru 21 gripur úr gleri, þar af 19 sörvistölur og fundust 11 þeirra í kumli (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 139). Einnig fundust nokkur brot af sama gleríláinu á Skeljastöðum, en slík ílát frá víkingaöld og miðöldum eru mjög sjaldgæfur fundur á Íslandi. Í ljósi þess hversu sjaldgæfur fundur þettta er, þykir líklegt að brotin séu í samhengi við kirkjuna á Skeljastöðum (Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir 2004, 139-40).

Gripir úr öðrum efnum

Gripir úr öðrum efnum eru ekki margir. Þar má nefna brot af krítarpípu, blýþynnu og dýrstönn. Enginn vefnaður hefur enn fundist á svæðinu og aðrir gripir úr leir hafa ekki skilað sér á Þjóðminjasafnið. Eitthvað er þó um gripi þar sem efni er ekki tilgreint í *Aðfangabók Þjóðminjasafns* né kemur þar fram fjöldi þessara gripa.

Aldur gripanna

Um aldur gripanna eru oftast litlar upplýsingar í Aðfangabók Þjóðminjasafns. Af 210 gripum eru einungis 24 greinanlegir til aldurs. Nokkrir þeirra eru taldir vera frá víkingaöld. Það eru lítið axarblað, sörvistala og kambur í átta brotum, þrjú kambsbrot, örvaroddur, hringprjónn úr bronsi, sverð og spjót sem talin eru úr sama kumlinu þó fundaraðstæður séu óglöggar. Þá er járnöngull talinn frá 900 – 1100, vefjarskeiðar tvær úr hvalbeini eru báðar sagðar vera frá 1000 – 1200, nál úr járni með löngu auga frá því um 1200 og hjólspori líklega frá 12 -14. öld. Þá er eitt sverð talið frá því um siðaskipti. Í nokkrum tilfellum er talað um að gripur sé forn en aldur eða tímabil ekki tilgreint. Er silfursjóðurinn þar á meðal. Um aldur annarra gripa er ekki talað um í aðfangabókum Þjóðminjasafnsins, en um krítarpípubrotið þarf ekki að fjölyrða að það getur ekki verið eldra en frá 17. öld. Athugun á sjálfum gripunum myndi án efa leiða í ljós frekari aldursgreinandi upplýsingar og e.t.v. enduskoðun á sumum af þeim tímasetningum sem gefnar eru upp í Aðfangabókinni.

Fundaraðstæður

Eins og komið hefur fram eru flestir gripir frá Sandmúla en það er einnig mest kannaða rústin á Krókdal. Sumir gripanna eru komnir frá gangnamönnum en meirihlutinn hefur skilað sér til safnsins eftir F af einhverju tagi. Laudafundir, þ.e. fundir á víðavangi eða í óljósum tengslum við rústir eru þó allmargir eða um 25% af heild. Mikið af gripunum frá Sandmúla kom til safnsins eftir leiðangur Erlends Þórðarsonar frá Svartárkoti 1909. Aðrir menn eins og Sigurður Þórarinsson, sem var á ferðinni 1972, Steindór Steinsdórsson árið 1951 og Daniel Bruun árið 1897, hafa einnig verið við fornleifkönnun við hinar ýmsu rústir á svæðinu. Sumarið 1910 gróf svo Heinrich Erke í rústirnar undir Sandmúla. Meirihluti gripa í safninu eru fundnir á árunum 1908 og 1909 eða rétt rúmlega helmingur. 1927 komu 15 gripir til safnsins fundnir af Þorkeli Jóhannssyni og árið 1935 komu svo 14 gripir úr dánarbúi Guðmundar Bárðarsonar, eru þeir allir taldir vera frá Sandmúlarústum en engar upplýsingar eru um hvenær gripirnir fundust þar.

Lokaorð

Gripasafnið frá Krókdal hefur ekki verið skoðað ítarlega hvorki með tilliti til aldursgreiningar né gerðfræðilegrar greiningar. Slík rannsókn myndi án efa skila niðurstöðum um aldur fleiri gripa í safninu sem og gerðfræði þeirra. Helstu niðurstöður sem hægt er að ráða af þessari skoðun á gripasafninu úr Krókdal eru að kléberg hefur ekki fundist á svæðinu og einungis einn gripur úr blýi, ein rafperla og önnur úr gleri. Auk silfursjóðsins gefa þessir gripir til kynna innflutning í sambærilegum mæli við önnur héruð. Þá ekki séu nema tveir gjallmolar á Þjóðminjasafninu má álykta af öðrum vísbendingum að járnvinnsla hafi verið stunduð á svæðinu. Silfursjóðurinn ber merki um góðan efnahag undir Sandmúla. Aðrir gripir líkt og rafið og gripir út koparblöndu geta einnig gefið mynd að efnahag svæðisins.

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Gripaskrá Krókdals skv. Aðfangabók Þjóðminjasafns Íslands

Fundarnúmer	Upprunanúmer Þjms	Tegund Þjms	Fundarstaður	Tegund	Efni	Fjöldi	Fundaraðstæður (L= lausafundur, F= fornleifakönnun	Finnandi	Fundarár	Lýsing
308	1866-5	Hjólspori	Smiðjuskógar	Spori	Járn	1	L	Gunnar Gunnarsson	1866	Gamall hjólspori úr járni. Hann er áþekkur þeim sporum er tíðkuðust í útlöndum á tólftu, þrettándu og fjórtándu öld og er talinn vera frá þeim tíma. Í Aðfangabók segir: "Elstu sporar, sem hafðir voru, voru eigi hjólsporar, heldur broddsporar eða oddar, sem svo eru nefndir í kveðskap, t.a.m. í Helga kviðu Hundingsbana hinni síðari".
309	1866-6	Mél	Smiðjuskógar	Mél	Járn	1	L	Gunnar Gunnarsson	1866	Í Aðfangabók segir: "Stór kjaptamél, lík því er nú tíðkast á bandbeislum".
311	1866-8	Koparsívalningur	Smiðjuskógar	Sívalningur	Koparblanda	1	L	Gunnar Gunnarsson	1866	Koparsívalningur, oddmjór og er annar endinn með holu í.
312	1866-9	Hringur	Smiðjuskógar	Hring ur	Koparblanda	1	L	Gunnar Gunnarsson	1866	Stór koparhringir. Tveir og hálfur þumlungar að breidd.
313	1866-10	Snúður	Smiðjuskógar	Snældusnúður	Steinn	1	L	Gunnar Gunnarsson	1866	Lítill steinsnúður, ávalur annars vegar en flatur hins vegar. Talið að þetta sé líklegast þráðarsnældusnúður.

790	1870-40	Sverð	Suðurárhraun	Sverð	Járn	1	L	Jón Halldórs son	1870	Sverð, tvíeggja með mjórri laut upp eftir brandinum. Hjöltun eru mjó og þunn, með gröfnum spöðum á endunum. Utan um haldði er stór handbjörg, samsett af u.þ.b. Þrettán spöngum, þar ef eru tvær brotnar af, sem á eru grafnar tvö mannshöfuð og ýmsar rósir, flestar ferhyrndar eða þríhyrndar í laginu. Að aftan er svo stór sívalur járnhnappur. Lengd: 102 cm. Talið vera frá því um siðaskiptum. Fannst í Suðurárhrauni, nyrst í Ódáðahrauni.
1598	1877	Öxi	Bárðardalur	Öxi	Járn	1	L	Ingjaldur Jónsson	1877	Axarblað, mjög lítið og líklega fornt. Hliðarnar næstum beinar og er sorfinn bekkur á aðra hliðina 1,3 cm. breiður, neðantil við gatið. Framanverðu er blaðið mjög lítið bogadregið. Lengd: 12 cm. Breidd: 7,5 cm (um egg). Þykkt: 2,8 cm (efst við gatið). Lengd gats: 3,3 cm. Þyngd: 252 gr. Talið vera frá víkingaöld.
2846	1886-119	Bitill	Ób.v/Skjálfanda fljót	Bitill	Járn	1	L	Hermann Jónasson	1886	Bitull úr járni, heill og ósamsettur. Hann er sívalur og beinn, lykkjur eru á báðum endum og stórir beislihringar úr járni í þeim. Bitullinn er talinn forn og fannst blásinn upp úr sandi upp í óbyggðum fyrir vestan Skjálfandafljót þar sem kallaðir eru melar. Hann er sumstaðar mjög ryðbrunnin og höldin mjög slitin að innan. Lengd: 15cm. Þverm: 0,9cm. Þvermál járnhringa:(utan)9,8cm og 10,2cm. (innan) 1,1cm.

2847	1886-120	Skeifa	Ób.v/Skjálfanda fljót	Skeifa	Járn	1	L	Hermann Jónasson	1886	Skeifa, mjög slitin og ryðbrunnin. Hún er sérstök að því leyti að hún er fimmboruð og er eitt gatið á tánni. Stappað er niður fyrir naglhausunum sem gefur til kynna að þeir hafi verið aflangir því förin eru eftir skeifunni endilangri. Hún hefur ekki verið járnmiki því undan götunum er hefur röndin gefið sig inn er þau voru drepin á, sum eru rétt á miðjunni. Hælarnir eru einnig mjög slitnir, nánst ef. Samkvæmt Aðfangabók fannst skeifan um 2 mílum frá efstu bæjum er liggja upp til fjalla ofan Skjálfandafljóts, en þar var áður meiri byggð. Segir þar að þar sé nú einn bær, Íshóll, en að sjáist votta fyrir fleiri tóftum þar á meðal Hofgörðum. Lengd: 9 cm. Breidd járnsins mest: 2,3 cm. Þvermál mest: 10,8 cm. Þykkt: 0,5 cm.
4184	1895-117	Hringja	Hafursstaðir	Hringja	Kopar blanda	1	L	Ólafur Magnús son	1895	Lítil hringja af beisli eða reiða úr kopar. Hún er með gagnskornum og klofnum spaða aftur úr og hefur ólinni verið smeygt þar inn á milli. Utan um ásinn að framanverðu, undir þorninu, er steyptur kúptur hringur og er djúp skora um hann þveran undir þorninum en aðrar minni í ská utan með. (Aðfangabók.)
4337	1896-115	Hnappur	Suðurárhraun	Hnappur	Kopar blanda	1	L	Benedikt Sveinsson	1896	Hnappur úr látúni og hefur platan ofan á honum losnað frá neðri hlutanum, á hana er rist með fornu hnútakroti. Boginn eirnagli gengur í gegnum hnappinn og myndar fótinn. Fundinn í moldarbarði í Suðurárhrauni, sem er nyrst í Ódáðahrauni.

4338	1896-116	Örvaroddur	Svartárkot	Örva roddur	Járn	1	L	Benedikt Sveinsson	1896	Örvaroddur úr járni. Örmjór í oddinn, sem er ryðétinn, en breikkar jafnt að miðju með hvassri egg til beggja hliða og hrygg í miðjunni beggja megin. Fyrir aftan miðju mjókkar hann og þykknar og verður ferstrendur en mjókkar þar aftur og verður oddmjór. Gæti verið lítið spjót sem hefði þá gengið niður í skaftið þar sem enginn falur er á því. Lengd: 13,5 cm. Breidd: 1,5 cm.
4339	1896-117	Bjúghnífur	Svartárkot	Hnífur	Járn	1	L	Benedikt Sveinsson	1896	Bjúghnífur. Frekar ryðétinn að aftan og er ferhyrnt gat á miðju blaðinu. Lengd: 4 þuml. Breidd: 1 þuml.
4539	1899-3	Tala	Fiská?	Sörvis tala	Steinn	1	F	Daniel Bruun	1899	Tala úr steinasörvi með gati í miðjunni og rauðum, gulum og dökkum rákum. Aðallega er hún svört en gult band lagt í krákustíg í röndina og rauðir, dökkleitir þræðir um brúnir og rönd á eftir. Hún er snúðmynduð og flöt beggja vegna en kúpt á rönd. Þykkt: 7-8mm, þvermál: 1,8 cm, þvermál gats: 6 mm.
4540	1899-4	Snúður	Fiská?	Snældu snúður	Steinn	1	F	Daniel Bruun	1899	Steinsnúður, örlítill, úr móleitum, óþéttum steini. Vafalaust forn snældusnúður en óvenjulítill og nokkuð eyddur. Þykkt: 8-9 mm í miðju (er kúptur). Þvermál: 2,4 cm. Þvermál gats: 7-8 mm efst en 10 mm neðst.

4542	1899-6	Eldstál	Hrauntunga Suðurárbotnar	Eldstál	Járn	6	F	Daniel Bruun	1899	Ýmislegt járnarusl, ókennilegt, þar á meðal lítið járn sem líkist eldtáli í laginu. Þetta eru 6 stykki: a) Eldstál, breiðara fyrir miðju en endarnir mjórri og beygðir á rönd upp og sveigðir saman. Smákringla á hvorum enda sem mynda þá handfang. Breidd: 2 cm. Lengd: 5 cm. Þykkt f/miðju: 6 mm. b) Teinn, ferstrendur og boginn í annan enda. Kann að hafa verið öngull en agnhaldið þá af. Lengd: 7,2 cm. c) Hestskónagli. Lengd: 3,6 cm. d-e) 2 naglar hauslausir. Lengd: 3,4 cm og 5,2 cm. f) Járnþynna, lítil með gati.
4600	1899-69	Sverð	Framdalir S-Þingeyjarsýslu	Sverð	Járn	1	L	?	1899	Sverð, talið vera frá 9-10 öld og norskt að uppruna. Hjöltun, miðhluti og efsti hluti af brandinum er samfast og heillegt, en aðeins fjögur brot af fremri hlutanum af brandinum. Lengd heillega hlutans er 42 cm, miðhlutinn 9,5 cm, hjöltin 1,7 cm á breidd hvort um sig og brandurinn 29,1 cm að lengd en 5,5 cm á breidd við hjaltið en 4,6 cm fremst. Hann er með 2 hryggjum hvoru megin, eru annars vegar um 2 cm en hins vegar um 2,5 -2,7 í milli þeirra. Þykkt er mest um 4 mm en sumstaðar er miðjan gagnétin af ryði. Tanginn(miðhlutinn) er 1,9 -2,5 cm á breidd. Hjöltin eru 8,3 og 13,5 cm á lengd og ferstrend í gagnskurð og 2,2 -2,5 cm að þykkt fyrir miðju en dálítið minni út til endanna. Lausu brotin eru 10,7, 10,5, 12,3 og 9,3 cm að lengd. (Aðfangabók.)

4601	1899-70	Spjót	Framdalir S-Þingeyjarsýslu	Spjót	Járn	1	L	?	1899	Spjót, talið vera frá 9-10 öld. Lengd: 36 cm, þar af er fjöðrin 26 cm og falurinn 13 cm. Fjöðrin er 3,5 cm þar sem hún er breiðust. Falurinn er 1,2-2,1 cm í þvermál og 9,2 cm að dýpt. Annað geirnaglagatið er 5 mm að þvermál, hitt er rifið eða ryðbrunnið af falnum. Hryggur greinilegur eftir miðju beggja vegna og er um 7 mm þykkastur. í eggjarnar eru stór og smá skörð. Frá eggjaendanum og að fal eru 3 cm og eru bogar þar á.
5585	1908-125	kringla	Svartárkot	Kringla	Kopar blanda	1	F	Daniel Bruun	1908	Kringla úr bronsi með letri og öðru verki. Einnig ýmislegt annað smádót (9 naglabútar, 9 járnbútar, 9 smásteinar o.fl.) Fannst í öskuhaug í rústum Svatrárkots.
5770	1909-119	Vefjarskeið	Sandmúli	Vefjar skeið	Bein	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Vefjarskeið úr hvalbeini, orðin mjög eydd. Líklega frá 1000-1200. Lengd: 40,8 cm. Breidd: 4,9 cm.
5771	1909-120	Bollasteinn	Sandmúli	Bolla steinn	Steinn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Lítill, kringlóttur bollasteinn. Gæti mögulega hafa verið lampi
5772	1909-121	Hnífsblað	Sandmúli	Hnífur	Járn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Hnífsblað með mjóum tanga.
5773	1909-122	Öngull	Sandmúli	Öngull	Járn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Lítill járnöngull með krók á endanum. Frá 1000-1100. Lengd: 4,3 cm
5774	1909-123	Nagli	Sandmúli	Nagli	Járn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Nagli úr járni. Lengd: 7 cm.
5775	1909-125	Greiða	Sandmúli	Greiða	Bein	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Tvö greiðubrot úr beini.
5776	1909-126	Snúður	Sandmúli	Snældu snúður	Steinn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Brot af snúð úr rauðum steini.
5777	1909-127	Perla	Sandmúli	Perla	Raf	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Perlubrot úr rafi.
5778	1909-128	Perla	Sandmúli	Perla	Gler	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Perla úr gleri, blá að lit.
5779	1909-129	Perla	Sandmúli	Perla	Bein	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Perla úr beini, hvít að lit.

5780	1909-130	Steinn	Sandmúli	Steinn	Steinn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Grár steinn, sporöskjulagaður, flatur annars vegar en kúptur hins vegar og er gróf í röndina umhverfis hann.
5781	1909-131	Smásteinn	Sandmúli	Steinn	Steinn	3	F	?	1909	Þrír litlir og lágbarðir smásteinar.
5782	1909-132	Þynna	Sandmúli	Þynna	Kopar blanda	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Lítil bronsþynna með 3 öngum út frá.
5869	1909-232	Mél	Sandmúli	Mél	Járn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Járnmél með hringum. Mélin hafa verið slegin ferstrend og hringarnir flatir.
5870	1909-235	Hnífsblað	Sandmúli	Hnífur	Járn	4	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Fjögur lítil hnífsblöð, öll með tanga. Mjög ryðguð.
5871	1909-337	Öngull	Sandmúli	Öngull	Járn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1908	Lítill járnöngull með krók á endanum. Frá 900-1100.
5872	1909-238	Nál	Sandmúli	Nál	Járn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Nál úr járni, líklega með löngu auga. Talin vera frá því um 1200. Lengd:4,8 cm. Þykkt: 0,3 cm.
5873	1909-239	Nál	Sandmúli	Nál	Bein	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Beinnál með auga, mjög eydd.
5874	1909-240	Ró	Sandmúli	Ró	Járn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Járnró með gati, mjög eydd.
5875	1909-243	Hófnagli	Sandmúli	Nagli	Járn	5	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Naglar úr járni, fimm talsins. Flestir ef ekki allir hófnaglar.
5876	1909-247	Kengur	Sandmúli	Kengur	Járn	2	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Tveir kengir úr járni.
5877	1909-248	Járnbútur	Sandmúli	Brot	Járn	30	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Járnbútar, um þrjátíu talsins, litlir of ryðétnir.
5878	1909-253	Brýni	Sandmúli	Brýni	Steinn	6	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Brýnisbrot, sex talsins, tvö úr hein en hin úr sandsteini.
5879	1909-255	Snúður	Sandmúli	Snældu snúður	Steinn	3	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Þrjú lítil snúðbrot úr rauðum steini.
5880	1909-257	Steinbrot	Sandmúli	Steinn	Steinn	2	F	H. Erkes	1910	Tveir litlir, rauðir og mjúki steinar með gati.
5881	1909-262	Greiða	Sandmúli	Greiða	Bein	5	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Fimm lítil greiðubrot úr beini.
5881	1909-264	Snúður	Sandmúli	Snældu snúður	Bein	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Mjög eyddur snúður úr beini með mjóu gati.
5882	1909-263	Snældusnúður	Sandmúli	Snældu snúður	Bein	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Snúður úr beini, mjög eyddur og með víðu gati.

5884	1909	Gangsilfur	Sandmúli	Gang silfur	Silfur	36	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Forn silfursjóður. Samtals 36 gripir. Þyngd: 304 gr. 1. Brot af hringju með miklu verki. 2-3. Brot af menjum. 4. Brot af armbaug. 5. Lítið brot með verki. 6. Lítill slöngubaugur. 7-11. Óvandaðir lítlir hringar. 12-36. Silfurbútar og brot, sívöl og ferstrend, sum bein en flest bogin, mjög misjöfn að lengd, þykkt og þyngd.
5885	1909-301	Skafi	Helgastaðir	Skafi	Járn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Skafi úr járni með tanga. Líklegast vefjaráhald frá 1000-1550. Lengd: 8 cm og Breidd: 3,7 cm.
5886	1909-302	Hnífsblað	Helgastaðir	Hnífur	Járn	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Lítið hnífsblað með tanga, ryðétið. Lengd: 12,2 cm. Fannst á Helgastöðum í Króksdal haustið 1909.
6051	1910-158	Netsteinn	Sandmúli	Steinn	Steinn	10	F	H. Erkes	1910	Tíu netsteinar með gati frá náttúrunnar hendi. Einn þeirra stærstur og gæti hafa verið á endareipinu. Í Aðfangabók Þjóðminjasafnsins segir að líklegra sé að þessir steinar séu netsteinar fremur en kljásteinar.
6052	1910-161	Brýni	Sandmúli	Brýni	Steinn	4	F	H. Erkes	1910	Fjögur brýnisbrot úr þremur steintegundum.
6054	1910-166	Greiða	Sandmúli	Greiða	Engar uppl.	3	F	H. Erkes	1910	Þrjú greiðubrot. Það stærsta með huta af kinnunum beggja vegna og útskornu verki á þeim. Frá 900-1000.
6055	1910-166	Hnífsblað	Sandmúli	Hnífur	Járn	1	F	H. Erkes	1910	Hnífsblað úr járni með tanga. Lengd: 4,5 cm. Breidd: 1,7 cm.
6058	1910-172	Dýrstönn	Sandmúli	Dýrs tönn	Tönn	2	F	H. Erkes	1910	Tveir jaxlar úr stórgrip.
6059	1910-174	Vefjarskeið	Sandmúli	Vefjar skeið	Bein	1	F	Erlendur Þórðarson	1909	Brot af vefjarskeið úr hvalbeini og vantar framan af blaðinu. Líklega frá 1000-1200. Lengd: 37,8 cm. Breidd: 3,8 cm.
6060	1910-175	Snældusnúður	Sandmúli	Snældu snúður	Steinn	1	L	Jón Þorkels son	1905	Snældusnúður úr rauðleitum steini, hálfkúlumyndaður. Fannst í Sandmúlarústum og er líklega frá Landnámsöld. Þvermál: 4,1 cm. Þykkt: 2,1 cm.

10103	1927-97	Fiskistingur	Hátungur	Fiski stingur	Járn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Ryðétinn járnstingur með oddi og agnarhaldi framarlega. Lengd: 17 cm. Fannst í uppblasnu eyðibýli í Hátungum, rétt fyrir neðan Svartárkot.
10105	1927-99	Hnífsblað	Smiðjuskógar	Hnífur	Járn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Hnífblað úr járni af tálguhníf sem fannst við uppblásna bæjarrúst í Smiðjuskógum á Króksdal. Lengd: 11,9 cm. Lengd tanga: 4 cm. Breidd: 1 cm.
10106	1927-100	Lauf	Hátungur	Lauf	Járn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Járnlauf, beygt í lykkju í mjórri endann. Lengd: 4,6 cm. Breidd: 0,9-1,3 cm. Fannst í uppblasnu eyðibýli í Hátungum, rétt fyrir neðan Svartárkot.
10107	1927-101	Krókur	Hátungur	Krókur	Járn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Járnkrókur lítillega beygður á báðum endum. Lengd: 5,1 cm. Breidd: 0,1-0,9 cm. Fannst í uppblasnu eyðibýli í Hátungum, rétt fyrir neðan Svartárkot.
10108	1927-102	Járnbrot	Smiðjuskógar	Brot	Járn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Ferhyrnt járnbrot, flatt og frekar þunnt. Lengd: 5,1 cm. Breidd: 2,3 cm.
10109	1927-103	Járnbrot	Smiðjuskógar	Brot	Járn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Brot úr járni, flatt en dálítið undið. Lengd: 4,9 cm. Breidd: 1,7 cm. Þykkt: 0,5 cm.
10110	1927-104	Naglhaus	Hátungur	Nagli	Járn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Kringla úr járni sem líkist naglhaus, ekki alveg kringlótt þó en dálítið hvelfd. Þvermál: 3 cm. Fannst í uppblásnu eyðibýli í Hátungum, rétt fyrir neðan Svartárkot.
10111	1927-105	Hnífsblað	Smiðjuskógar	Hnífur	Járn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Járnbrot, gæti verið tangi af litlu hnífblaði. Lengd: 4,7 cm. Breidd: 1,4 cm. Þykkt: 0,2 cm.
10112	1927-106	Taflmaður	Smiðjuskógar	Tafla	Steinn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Tafla úr hnefatafli. Taflan er úr tálgusteini og er hola í henni að neðan. Þvermál: 2,2-2,4 cm. Hæð: 1,6 cm.
10113	1927-107	Snældusnúður	Hátungur	Snældu snúður	Steinn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Hálfur snældusnúður úr rauðleitum steini. Þvermál: 4,2 cm. Þvermál gats: 0,9-1,1 cm. Þykkt: 1,7 cm. Fannst í uppblásnu eyðibýli í Hátungum, rétt fyrir neðan Svartárkot.

10114	1927-108	Steinbrot	Smiðjuskógar	Brot	Steinn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Steinbrot úr rauðleitum steini, mögulega af snældusnúð. Lengd: 4,2 cm. Breidd: 2,2 cm. Þykkt: 1,3 cm.
10115	1927-109	Brýni	Smiðjuskógar	Brýni	Hein	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Brot úr brýni. Lengd: 4,7 cm. Breidd: 1,3 cm. Þykkt: 0,5-0,7 cm.
10116	1927-110	Steinn	Smiðjuskógar	Steinn	Steinn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Blágrýtisbrot, snúið og slétt af nátturinnar völdum. Steinninn virðist hafa lent í eldi, gæti hafa verið notaður í hlóðum. Lengd: 8,4 cm. Breidd: 5,4-8,4 cm. Þykkt: 5,9 cm.
10117	1927-111	Steinn	Smiðjuskógar	Steinn	Steinn	1	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Blágrýtisbrot, snúið og slétt af nátturinnar völdum. Steinninn virðist hafa lent í eldi, gæti hafa verið notaður í hlóðum. Lengd: 9 cm. Breidd: 10,3 cm. Þykkt: 4,3 cm.
10119	1927-113	Klömbrur	Helgastaðir	Klömbur	Hval bein	2	L	Þorkell Jóhannes son	1927	Klömbrur úr hvalbeini er fundust á Helgastöðum í Króksdal. Klömbrunum er haldið saman með rónagla úr járni og er dálítið brot á öðrum beininu. Beinin eru hvit og skinin sem gefur til kynna að þau hafi legið lengi á bersvæði. Lengd: 10,9 cm. Breidd: 2 cm.
11704	1935-23	Sörvistala	Sandmúli ?	Tala	Stein n	1	L	Guðmund ur Bárðarson	1935	Sörvistala úr dökkgráum steinum með hvítum kvarseitlum og gati sem er þó ekki alveg í miðjunni, óreglulega kringlótt. Í Aðfangbók segir: "Talan er líklega forn því hún minnir á glertölur frá víkingatíma". Þvermál:2-2,1 cm. Þykkt: 1 cm. Talan kemur úr dánarbúi Guðmundar Bárðarsonar, prófessors, og fannst í bæjarrústum eyðibýlis í Bárðardal, líklega Sandmúla.

11705	1935-24	Greiða	Sandmúli ?	Greiða	Bein/ kopar bl.	8	L	Guðmundur Bárðarson	1935	Átta brot úr sömu greiðunni, fornum kambi með víkingaraldalagi. Kamburinn hefur verið gerður úr þykku horni og negldur saman með járnnöglum. Í Aðfangabók segir: "Okarnir hafa verið skreyttir með gröfnu tíglaneti, en auk þess hafa þeir verið gagnskornir uppi við hrygginn og brons fellt í gegnskurðinn. Bronsið er dottið úr en spanskgrænan segir til um að svona hafi þetta verið". lengsta brotið úr kambinum er 10,9 cm. Greiðubrotin koma úr dánarbúi Guðmundar Bárðarsonar, prófessors, og fundust í bæjarrústum eyðibýlis í Bárðardal, líklega Sandmúla.
11706	1935-25	Beislisádráttur	Sandmúli ?	Ádráttur	Kopar blanda	1	L	Guðmundur Bárðarson	1935	Í Aðfangabók segir: "Ádráttur úr kopar, ferskeyttur með kringlóttu gati í hverjum fjórðungi... Í miðjunni hefur verið lítið gat og járnagli í og eru brúnirnar allar þverstrikaðar". Þvermál: 2,65 cm. Kemur úr dánarbúi Guðmundar Bárðarsonar, prófessors, og fannst í bæjarrústum eyðibýlis í Bárðardal, líklega Sandmúla.
11707	1935-26	Löm	Sandmúli ?	Löm	Járn	2	L	Guðmundur Bárðarson	1935	Tvö járnstykki, lítil og flöt. Vafið er upp á endann á öðru þeirra og er lengd þess 2,1 cm en hitt er minna.
11708	1935-27	Þynna	Sandmúli ?	Þynna	Blý	1	L	Guðmundur Bárðarson	1935	Þynna úr blýi,, vafin upp í einskonar sívalning eða hólk. Lengd: 3,15 cm. Þvermál: 9 mm. Þynnnan kemur úr dánarbúi Guðmundar Bárðarsonar, prófessors, og fannst í bæjarrústum eyðibýlis í Bárðardal, líklega Sandmúla.
11709	1935-28	Krítarpípa	Sandmúli ?	Krítar pípa	Krít	1	L	Guðmundur Bárðarson	1935	Brot af krítarpípu. Lengd: 2,5 cm. Brotið kemur úr dánarbúi Guðmundar Bárðarsonar, prófessors, og fannst í bæjarrústum eyðibýlis í Bárðardal, líklega Sandmúla.

11902	1936-4	Hringprjónn	Sandmúli	Hring prjónn	Kopar blanda	1	L	Pétur Ólafsson	1936	Hringprjónn úr bronsi. Hringurinn er úr sívölum þræði og mjórri í endana en í miðju. Hausinn er teningslaga og eru öll hornin sneidd af, koma þannig fram margir fletir. Á miðjufletina, framan og aftan, eru ristir einfaldir ferhyrningar en annars er prjónninn óskreyttur. Leggurinn er sívalur að ofan en ferstrendur að neðan. Er prjónninn talinn vera í ætt við hina skosk-keltnesku hringprjóna. Lengd: 4,8 cm (án haus). 5,6 cm (með haus).
11903	1936-5	Hringluhetta	Sandmúli	Hringlu hetta	Járn	1	L	Pétur Ólafsson	1936	Hringluhetta úr járni og eru bæði barð og króna með einföldu skrauti. Þvermál: 4,7 cm. Hæð: 2,2 cm.
13458	1945-74	Tafla	Sandmúli	Tafla	Steinn	1	F	Steindór Steindórs son	1945	Tafla úr hnefatafli, toppmynduð, gerð út rauðum sandsteini. (Eins í lögun og töflurnar frá Baldursheimi). Þvermál: 2,4 cm. Hæð: 1,9 cm.
13459	1945-75	Tala	Sandmúli	Tala	Steinn	1	F	Steindór Steindórs son	1951	Forn tala úr rauðu steinasörvi. Kúlulaga með flötum skautum en þykkari öðru megin. Þvermál: 1,5 cm. Þykkt: 1 cm (mest) og 8,5 mm (minnst).
13460	1945-76	Doppa	Sandmúli	Doppa	Kopar blanda	1	F	Steindór Steindórs son	1945	Látúnsdoppa með leifar af járnnagla inn í. Þvermál: 1,3 cm. Hæð: 0.7 cm.
13461	1945-77	Hnífur	Sandmúli	Hnífur	Járn	1	F	Steindór Steindórs son	1951	Hnífsblað úr járni. Lengd: 7 cm. Breidd: 1,2 cm.
14733	1951-14	Rauðablásturs gjall	Sandmúli	Gjall	Járn	1	L	Finnur Guðmunds son	1951	Flatur og þunnur gjallmoli (rauðablástur), frekar reglulegur í lögun. Þungd: 380 gr.
14764	1951-5	Brýni	Sandmúli	Brot	Steinn	1	L	Finnur Guðmunds son	1951	Heinbrýnisstubbur, fundin á bæjarstæði Sandmúla. Lengd: 3,9 cm.
14765	1951-6	Brýni	Sandmúli	Brýni	Steinn	1	L	Finnur Guðmunds son	1951	Þunnur brýnistubbur úr dökkgráu flögubergi (skífer). Lengd: 4,2 cm.
14766	1951-7	Brýni	Sandmúli	Brýni	Steinn	1	L	Finnur Guðmunds son	1951	Brýnistubbur úr grágulu flögubergi. Lengd: 2,9 cm.

14767	1951-8	Brýni	Sandmúli	Brýni	Steinn	1	L	Finnur Guðmundsson	1951	Brýnistubbur úr grágulu flögubergi. Lengd: 3,7 cm.
14768	1951-9	Brýni	Sandmúli	Brýni	Steinn	1	L	Finnur Guðmundsson	1951	Brýnistubbur úr grágulu flögubergi. Lengd: 8,4 cm.
14769	1951-10	Brýni	Sandmúli	Brýni	Steinn	1	L	Finnur Guðmundsson	1951	Brýni, þunnt og gult að lit úr flögubergi. Frekar óreglulegt í laginu. Lengd: 13,8 cm. Breidd: 2,1-2,9 cm.
14770	1951-11	Járnbrot	Sandmúli	Brot	Járn	?	L	Finnur Guðmundsson	1951	Fjölmörg brot úr járni, naglar, rær, ofl.
14771	1951-12	Ísbroddur	Sandmúli	ísbroddur	Járn	1	L	Finnur Guðmundsson	1951	Ísbroddur úr járni. Járnið frekar þunnt, bogmyndað og með töngum að aftan. Broddur er framan á því og upprunalega neðan úr endunum á báðum töngunum. Brotið er aftan úr öðrum tanganum og frambroddurinn er slitinn. Breidd: 2,7 cm. Hæð: 1,5 cm. Þykkt: 0,5 cm.
14772	1951-13	Blágrýtismoli	Sandmúli	Steinn	Steinn	1	L	Finnur Guðmundsson	1909	Ferstrendur, reglulegur, blágrýtismoli. Dökkbrúnn og svartur að lit og er gróp ofan í aðra hliðina sem virðist sorfin með járni. Lengd: 17,9 cm. Breidd: 3,9-4,6 cm.
1972-82	1972-82	Fornleifa fundur	Sandmúli	Forn leifa fundur	Ýmis	?	F	Sigurður Þórarinsson	1972	Ýmsir smáhlutir fundnir í Sandmúlarústum. Nagli, brýnisbrot, 3 glerhallar, brot af hárkambi, rauðablástursgjallmoli, brunnin bein og skeljabrot.
1972-83	1972-83	Hnífur	Hrauntunga Suðurárbotnar	Hnífur	Járn	1	F	Sigurður Þórarinsson	1972	Hnífbrot sem fannst rétt við kolagröf um 30 m suður af smiðjutóft.
1974-262	1974-262	Fornleifa fundur	Sandmúli	Forn leifa fundur	Ýmis	?	L	Kristján Geirmundsson	1974	a) Tvö brýnisbrot. Lengd: 7,4 cm og 3,4 cm. Annað með gati og gæti hafa verið rauf upp í annan endann. b) Nokkrar járnleifar, þ.á.m. tveir hestskónaglar. c) Þrjár beinvölur, tvær úr lömbum en sú þríðja og stærsta gæti verið úr kálfi. d) smáhlutir. e) brýni. f) Skeljabrot.

1977-183	1977-183	Járngjall	Króksdal	Gjall	Járn	1	F	Sigurður Þórarinsson	1977	Gjallkaka úr járni. Talin vera úr smiðju í Króksdal. Lengd: 19 cm. Breidd:19 cm (mest). Þykkt: 3 cm.

Viðbætir.

Fig. 33. Aflhólkurinn á sýningu í Safnahúsinu á Húsavík

Ekki hefur verið skipulega athugað hvort fleiri gripir úr Krókdal gætu leynst á öðrum söfnum en Þjóðminjasafninu en þó er vitað um einn á Byggðasafni Suður Þingeyinga á Húsavík, skv. upplýsingum frá Guðna Halldórssyni í tölvuskeyti 22. nóvember 2006:

Það sem stendur í aðfangaskrá um grip BSÞ Nr. 2424 er eftirfarandi:
"Hólkur -"Aflhólkur" úr smiðju, mjög forn. Aflhólkur var pípan sem tengdi afl og smiðjubelg. Sigurður Teodór Kristjánsson, Halldórsstöðum, Kinn, fann þennan aflhólk er hann var í haustgögnum um 1920, þar sem áður var býlið Helgastaðir, fram með Skjálfandafljóti vestanverðu - langt framan við núverandi byggð. Þar í grennd er Smiðjuskógur (nú örfoka land)."

Þetta var komið hér löngu áður en ég tók hér til starfa en forveri minn Finnur Kristjánsson mun fyrst hafa skráð þetta inn í aðfangabók 1. júlí 1991. Hjá þessum hólki fundust skeljabrot, bein og gjall.

Viðbót í skeyti 27. nóvember 2006:

Mál á hólki eru eftirfarandi:
Heildarlengd: 26.4 cm
Þvermál breiðara op: 3.7 cm
Þvermál þrengra op: 2.5 cm
Breidd á festingarhluta: ein hlið 9.7 cm, önnur 9.4 og tvær 9.2 cm

Fleiri gripir úr Krókdal eru ekki í Byggðasafni Suður Þingeyinga

Orri Vésteinsson

Viðbætur við fornleifaskrá

Frekari fornleifaskráning var ekki markmið vettvangsathugananna á Krókdal sumarið 2005 en þó var nú gengið svæðið milli Krossár og rústanna undir Bálabrekku sem ekki hafði verið skoðað árið áður og var þá hægt að hreinsa upp nokkrar eyður þó lítið bitastætt hefðist upp úr krafsinu. Einkum stóðu vonir til að finna mætti rústir þær sem Steindór Steindórsson segir að séu á milli Sandmúla og Bálabrekku en það tókst ekki. Athyglisverðasti staðurinn frá sjónarmiði byggðasögu er gjalldreifin skammt sunnan við Sandmúlarústir (SÞ-200b:032).

SÞ-644:001 *Sóðastaðir* heimild um tjaldstað 65°08.089 N 17°27.381 V
"Þar eru lágar eyrar við fljótið, Krókdalseyrar, og grastorfur í brekkulögginni, Krókdalstorfur. Norðan við miðjar torfur, rétt suður frá Lambá, er Fagradý, eða öðru nafni Brunnklukkudý. Nálægt miðjum torfunum er tjaldstaður fjárvörzlumanna, Sóðastaðir." segir í örnefnalýsingu (Ö-Austurafrétt Bárðdæla a, 4-5). Þessi staður er sunnan við Þrengsli og hlýtur því að vera átt við Syðri-Lambá í lýsingunni.

Lýsingin í örnefnaskrá er ekki nákvæm og koma allmargir staðir til greina, bæði uppi í hlíðinni og niðri á grónum eyrunum. Smávægileg beinadreif er á mel undir rofabarði um 50 m sunnan við lækjargil sem er næst fyrir sunnan Syðri Lambá, á neðsta hjallanum ofan við fljótið. Þar eru bæði kindabein og eggjaskurn og sum beinin mosavaxin. Þessi staður er á 65°08.089 N 17°27.381 V sk 15 m. Um 100 m sunnar er önnur beinadreif og líka eggjaskurn. Beinin á þessum stað gætu öll verið úr einu lambi.

SÞ-644:002 *Kerlingarflötur* heimild um áningarstað 65°07.731 N 17°27.923 V
"Sunnan við Syðri-Lambá er Kerlingarflötur meðfram fljótinu, norður af Bálabrekku. Dregur trúlega nafn af vörðu, sem þarna var hlaðin. Þarna var góður áningarstaður, en vont að komast upp snarbratta brekku. Varð að krækja hana upp." segir í örnefnalýsingu (Ö-Austurafrétt Bárðdæla a, 5).

Sunnan við Lambá eru sléttar eyrar með fljótinu, grínar, en undir hlíðinni sem tekur við þar sem Skjálfandafljót beygir frá Bálabrekku er aðeins hærri stallur og gæti það verið Kerlingarflötur. Einnig eru sléttir fletir ofar í hlíðinni nær Lambá.

Fig. 34. Bræðslugjallsbreiða sunna við Sandmúla. Maðurinn fyrir miðri mynd er við norðurenda breiðunnar. A spread of smelting slag south of Sandmúli. The man in the middle of the frame stands at the northern end of the spread.

Víði vaxin flöt. Brött brekka er ofan við, sandeyrar að neðan. Engin varða sést nú á þessum slóðum.

SÞ-200b:032 rauðablástur 65°11.810 N 17°21.474 V

Um 1 km sunnan við rústirnar undir Sandmúla, heldur nær Krossá en Sandmúladalsá er stór gjallbreiða fast við veginn að austan. Um 20 m eru milli slóðans og lyngmóaflatar austan og ofan við og kemur gjallið undan henni.

Neðan við víði groan flöt en ofantil við mel. Á svæðinu er einnig mikið af járnfellingarbrotum og jarðvegurinn nær alveg rauður.

Dreifin nær yfir 60x18 m svæði sem snýr norður-suður en gjallið er í nokkrum aðalhrúgum og færri brot á milli. Sumar kökurnar eru allstórar (10-30 sm). Gjallið er laust í sér og stökkt en greinilegir taumar í því.

Conclusions

In the highland section of the Skjálfandafljót valley called Krókdalur there are three known settlement sites, and fourth suspected one under Réttartorfa (Hafurstaðir). Of these three two, undir Sandmúla and Helgastaðir, can be dated to the late Viking age. Helgastaðir was occupied between ~940 and 1104, probably for only a part of that period, and undir Sandmúla was also established after ~940 although its end date is less certain. In both cases the archaeology more or less rests on the V~940 tephra suggesting a start of the occupation in the mid to late 10th century. In both cases the archaeolocical evidence is consistent with a single phase of occupation, perhaps one or two generations, and a likely end date can be ascribed to the early or middle part of the 11th century. Two radiocarbon datings on cow bones from the in situ context [002] in undir Sandmúla (Fig. 35) are consistent with this interpretation, although one has a broad date range to the 11th and 12th centuries.[13]

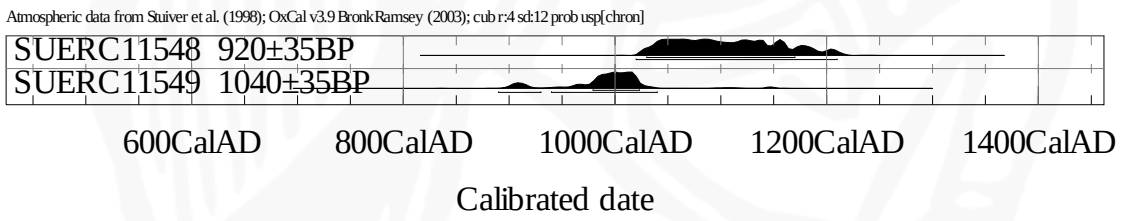

Figure 35. Calibrated radiocarbon dates on cow bones from undir Sandmúla.

No dating evidence is available from the third site, undir Bálabrekku, but the limited remains there, structural and archaeofauna, are comparable to the other sites, and therefore a Viking age date can be tentatively ascribed to it too.

Only undir Sandmúla has produced significant amounts of artifacts and animal bones and these firmly suggest that this site was a farm, probably not a particularly mean one. In particular the silver hoard suggests high status, as does the large hall (structure 1) which may have had dimensions of ca. 25x9 m, comparable to large halls like Skallakot and Ísleifsstaðir. The hall at undir Bálabrekku is smaller, and may have had a double function as a byre and dwelling, but the combined area of buildings at the two sites is comparable, in fact somewhat

[13] **SUERC-11548:** Bone (cow); Delta C-13: -21,5; C-14 Age: 920; Error (1sigma): 35. **SUERC-11549:** Bone (cow); Delta C-13: -21,9; C-14 Age: 1040; Error (1sigma): 35.

larger at undir Sandmúla, although this is no doubt partly a result of greater deflation and scattering of the building stones. The evidence for stalling at undir Sandmúla suggests a farm and the small animal bone assemblages from there and Helgastaðir are consistent with such an interpretation although they do not prove it. In so far as the evidence allows any conclusion it must be that all three sites were short-lived farms, not necessarily of very low status.

There is tentative evidence for pagan burial in the valley. A spear and sword found together on the eastern side of Skjálfandafljót are suggested by Kristján Eldjárn to come from a pagan burial. Its location is otherwise unknown, but human skeletons are reported in two sites. One is Dysjarhjalli midway between Réttartorfa and undir Sandmúla where a deflated mound and a scatter of human bones was examined in 2004 and Beinagrindarhjalli south of undir Bálabrekku where nothing remains.

There is evidence for iron production associated with all three sites, most closely with Helgastaðir. There is also evidence for iron production at other sites in the valley but apart from a radiocarbon dating made by Sigurður Þórarinsson, suggesting a Viking age date for a site in Smiðjuskógur close to Helgastaðir, none of these have been dated and most will be impossible to date as nothing remains except slag and stones. It is possible that the occupation of the three farm sites was partly linked to iron production but it is also possible that the smelting activity belongs to later periods and reflects a post-farming utilization of the valley.

A small but significant number of artifacts found in Krókdalur have made their way to the National Museum in Reykjavík in the past century and a half. Most of these were found in the context of informal archaeological investigations, scholars poking around the ruins and picking up a few pieces, only some of which were, sometimes much later, donated to the Museum. This collection is particularly significant for undir Sandmúla, especially the well-known Viking age silver hoard found there in 1909. Some artifacts are associated with iron production, but a small number of finds with dates from later centuries (including a 15th-16th century sword, and a clay pipe fragment) are probably evidence of traffic through the valley, which was until the 17th century on the route taken by the bishops of Skálholt when the went on visitations to their churches in the East.

The fieldwork in 2005 showed that the ruins at undir Bálabrekku and undir Sandmúla are completely deflated and that practically no in situ archaeological deposits remain at these sites. It seems likely that it was the final vestiges of such deposits which were identified and retrieved at undir Sandmúla. The archaeological potential of these two sites is therefore practically nill, although they should be monitored, as sunken features may still come to light.

Only Helgastaðir has considerable potential. It seems that the bulk of the archaeological remains is still protected under a thick accumulation of aeolian soil but erosion is steadily biting away at this site which will before long go the same way as the other two unless action is taken.

There are two main questions that now beg answers: One is about the relationship between iron production and farming in Krókdalur. Was iron production a significant component of the economy of these sites – perhaps even the reason for their establishment in the first place? Or does it belong to later periods, once the valley had been abandoned for farming, and if so which?

The other question is about the demise of these settlements. Here the obvious culprit seems to be erosion. After all the valley is now practically a desert and two out of three sites are so eroded that nothing remains except stone. But it is not certain when this erosion started and if experience from other highland margin settlements is anything to go by, this relationship is likely to be a complex one.

Orri Vésteinsson

Samantekt

Í framhaldi af fornleifaskráningu sem gerð var á Krókdal sumarið 2005 voru gerðar minniháttar rannsóknir á þremur stöðum í dalnum sumarið eftir.

Á Helgastöðum var hreinsað snið sem sýndi að þar hefur verið búið milli ~940 og 1104, varla nema hluta þess tíma, e.t.v. eina til tvær kynslóðir. Greinileg ummerki um byggingar sáust einnig, niðurgrafin hús, en þau eru djúpt undir Helgastaðatorfu og verður á þessu stigi málsins ekkert sagt um stærð þeirra eða gerð. Fá dýrabein hafa fundist á Helgastöðum en þau benda til að þar hafi verið búið með nautgripi, sauðfé og geitur. Ekki verður fullyrt að þessar leifar séu eftir bæ, fremur en sel, en þó hníga fleiri rök til þess. Greinileg merki eru um rauðablástur hjá Helgastöðum, en einnig á fleiri stöðum í grendinni sem tengdir eru við örnefnið Smiðjuskóg. Ekki er víst að byggðin á Helgastöðum sé frá sama tíma og rauðablásturinn og vel er hugsanlegt að járn hafi verið unnið á þessum slóðum löngu eftir að byggðin lagðist af.

Undir Bálabrekku, handan Skjálfandafljóts frá Helgastöðum, eru gersamlega blásnar leifar eftir bæ. Uppgröftur sýndi að ekkert er þar eftir af mannvistarlögum og allur jarðvegur blásinn ofan í ísaldarmel. Aðeins eru þar eftir steinadreifar sem gefa hugmynd um staðsetningu og lögun bygginga, dálítið af dýrabeinum og eitt einasta brýni. Dýrabeinin gefa svipaða mynd af búskapnum og á Helgastöðum, en byggingarnar eru það umfangsmiklar að enn meiri líkur verður að telja á að á þessum stað hafi verið búið árið um kring. Hugsanlegt er að undir Bálabrekku hafi verið fjós og mannabústaður undir sama þaki því í stærstu byggingunni voru bæði báshellur og kljásteinahrúga, að líkindum eftir vefstað. Mikill rauði er á bæjarstæðinu og nokkrir blástursgjallmolar hafa fundist þar. Engar beinar vísbendingar er að hafa um aldur minjanna undir Bálabrekku en af almennum líkindum þeirra við bæjarstæðið undir Sandmúla og beinasafnið frá Helgastöðum má halda því fram að þessi bær sé frá sama tíma, seinni hluta víkingaaldar.

Best þekktu rústirnar á dalnum eru undir Sandmúla og hafa gripir lengi verið tíndir þar upp og allmargir þeirra hafa borist Þjóðminjasafninu. Meðal þeirra eru silfursjóður sem þar fannst árið 1909, einn fjögurra sem vitað erum á Íslandi. Eins og undir Bálabrekku eru rústirnar undir Sandmúla blásnar ofan í mel en miklu meira er um beinaleifar á yfirborði og vonir stóðu til að rannsaka mætti þar óhreyfðar öskuhaugsleifar. Þær leifar máttu ekki minni

vera, en þó fannst örlítil sletta sem grafin var upp. Ekki er líklegt að meiri mannvistarlög sé að finna undir Sandmúla. Öfugt við hina staðina tvo er bæði gripa- og dýrabeinasafnið undan Sandmúla alldrjúgt og sýnir ótvírætt að þar hefur verið búið árið um kring, ekki aðeins með nautgripi, sauðfé og geitur heldur einnig svín. Skálarústin er í stærra lagi og silfursjóðurinn bendir sterklega til að þarna hafi ekki verið neitt örreytiskot. Byggðin undir Sandmúla hefur hafist um svipað leyti og á Helgastöðum, laust eftir ~940 en gæti hafa varað heldur lengur þó eflaust muni það ekki miklu.

Allar þessar rannsóknir koma heim og saman við að byggð á Krókdal hafi löngu verið komin í eyði á 13. öld þegar sögur fara fyrst af dalnum. Mögulegt er að rauðablástur hafi verið stundaður þar fram eftir öldum og gripir frá seinni öldum (m.a. sverð frá 15.-16. öld og krítarpípubrot) vitna um umferð um dalinn.

Í fyrri skýrslu voru færð rök fyrir því að bæjarstæði Hafurstaða væri undir Réttartorfu, en þar fyrir utan eru Helgastaðir eini staðurinn á Krókdal þar sem enn eru mannvistarlög sem mætti rannsaka. Mikilsvert væri að fá svör við því hvort og þá hvernig rauðablástur tengdist þessari hálendisbyggð á 10. og 11. öld, eða hvort járnvinnslan tilheyri seinni tímaskeiðum. Einnig er brýnt að rannsaka hvort það hafi verið uppblástur sem kippti stoðunum undan búskap Krókdæla eða hvort að býlin voru yfirgefin af einhverjum öðrum ástæðum og uppblásturinn hafi hafist seinna.