# Barley Ubiquity in Langholt Skagafjörður

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## Abstract

The Skagafjörður Archaeological Settlement Survey systematically sampled middens for macrobotanical remains in the Langholt region of Skagafjörður. A total of 465 floatation samples were processed and analyzed from 12 sites covering a period from the initial settlement through the early modern period. Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) was found at 7 of the 12 farmsteads. The vast majority of the barley recovered was from contexts dating before the V~AD 1000 tephra layer. No barley was recovered from any site established after the V~ AD 1000 tephra layer. At only two farms, Meðalheimur and Reynistaður, barley was discovered in layers after the V~1000 tephra fall. Reynistaður is the only site where barley was recovered from a context dating to after the Hekla 1104 tephra. It is currently unclear if the barley found in Langholt was domestically grown or imported although there is some evidence for local production from Reynistaður. The results of the systematic sampling program show: (1) that barley can be recovered in relatively small samples (2-4 liters) of middens; (2) that barley was present at a majority of settlements established during the century following the initial settlement of Iceland; and (3) that the general disappearance of barley sometime during the 10th century suggests that barley, either domestically grown or imported, dropped in importance as a part of the farm economy. This early disappearance of barley is not obviously correlated with worsening climatic conditions.