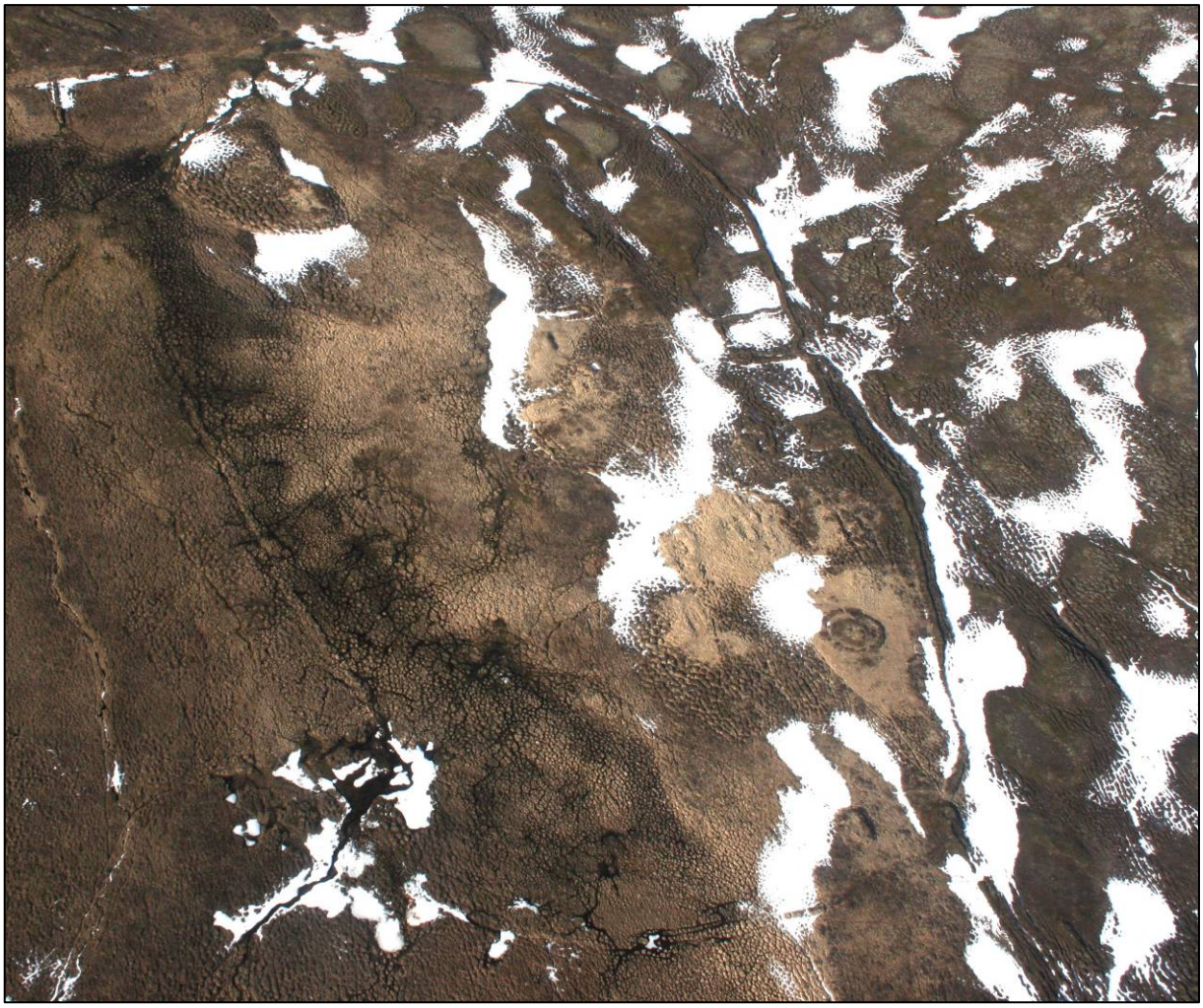
Archaeological Excavations in Þegjandadalur 2007-2008



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Cover image – Einarsstaðir seen from the air, looking SSW.
Courtesy of Árni Einarsson

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Upphaf rannsókna á Þegjandadal

Þegjandadalur heitir dalurinn á milli Laxárdals að austanverðu og Aðaldals og Reykjadals að vestanverðu, í Suður-Þingeyjarsýslu. Dalurinn markast af Þorgerðarfjalli að austanverðu en Múlaheiði að vestan. Hann er um 7 km á lengd og liggur nokkurn veginn í norður-suður frá höfuðbólinu Grenjaðarstað við dalsmynnið að norðan. Dalurinn þrengist til suðurs en er víðastur um 1.6 km. Hæð hans yfir sjávarmáli fer úr um 40 m við dalsmynnið að norðanverðu í um 180 m í dalbotni. Dalurinn er gróinn og hlíðar hans einnig, einkum að vestanverðu þar sem brattinn og hæð yfir sjávarmáli eru minni. Um dalinn rennur lítill lækur, Kálfalækur, en beggja vegna hans er víða mýrlent þó ysti hluti dalsins hafi verið ræstur fram á síðustu áratugum.

Á Þegjandadal er nú engin byggð en þar má finna umfangsmiklar búsetuminjar frá fyrri tíð. Þessar rústir hafa löngum vakið áhuga og forvitni heimamanna sem og fræðimanna, en voru þó lengi vel lítið rannsakaðar. Ritaðar heimildir gefa einhverjar upplýsingar um byggð á dalnum, en eru þöglar um margt og segja til dæmis fátt um endalok hennar. Dalsins er m.a. getið í Landnámabók en samkvæmt henni var dalurinn hluti af landnámi Grenjaðar Hrappssonar sem bjó á Grenjaðarstað.[1] Eftir það er dalsins ekki getið fyrr en á 14. öld, eða 1318, er hann kemur fyrir í máldögum Múla- og Grenjaðarstaðarkirkju. Þar eru sagðir fimm bæir á Þegjandadal vestanverðum, taldir eign Múlakirkju, en ein jörð á dalnum austanverðum, talin eign Grenjaðarstaðar.[2] Bæjanna er aftur getið í máldögum kirknanna tveggja frá 14.-15. öld en bæjanna vestan megin í dalnum er síðast getið í máldaga frá 1525.[3] Svo virðist sem byggð í austanverðum dalnum sé komin í eyði 1458 en það ár er Grenjaðarstað reiknuð selstaða í þeim hluta dalsins.[4] Í máldaga Múlakirkju frá 1553 er engra býla getið á vestanverðum dalnum og eru þau þá öll komin í eyði.[5] Vert er að benda á að þrátt fyrir að bæjanna fimm í vestanverðum dalnum sé getið í máldögum allt til 1525 þýðir það ekki endilega að þeir hafi verið byggðir allt fram að því. Yngri útgáfur af máldaga Múla eru samhljóða þeim eldri og bendir flest til að yngri gerðir hafi verið skrifaðar upp orðrétt og hugsanlega án þess að kannað væri hvort forsendur máldagans hefðu breyst. Að samanlögðu má því segja að ritaðar heimildir bendi til að dalurinn hafi verið í byggð í upphafi 14. aldar og að hann hafi í síðasta lagi verið farinn í eyði um miðja 16. öld.

Engar heimildir eru þekktar um Þegjandadal frá því að hann fór í eyði og fram á 18. öld. Þó að engar skýrar vísbendingar séu um að byggð hafi verið þar eftir miðja 16. öld hafa menn án efa haldið áfram að nýta dalinn og geta fjölmargar heimildir frá síðari öldum um landnýtingu á dalnum, t.d. Jarðabók Árna Magnússonar og Páls Vídalíns frá 1712 og sóknalýsingar frá um 1840. Í heimildum er þess stundum getið að ekki sé vitað hvers vegna

[1] *Íslenzk fornrit* I: 278-79.
[2] *Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn* II: 431-35.
[3] Bæja er getið báðu megin í dalnum í *Íslenzku fornbréfasafni* III, 576-82, en aðeins vestan megin í bindi IV, 17-22 og 375, IV, 468, aðeins austan megin 1461 í V bindi, 280, en báðu megin í dalnum í bindi IX, 322-28.
[4] *Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn* V, 165-66.
[5] Innsti bær í Þegjandadal austanverðum er í landi Halldórsstaða í Laxárdal og hefur verið svo síðan á 16. öld, eins og sést í bréfi dagsettu 2.10.1568, *Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn* XV, 156.

dalurinn lagðist í eyði. Fram koma einnig getgátur um að það hafi verið í plágunni miklu en jafnframt að ástæða þess að dalinn megi ekki aftur byggja sé að kirkjujarðirnar Múli og Grenjaðarstaður geti ekki án haganna verið.[6] Af tiltækum ritheimildum má því helst giska á að dalurinn hafi farið í eyði á 13.-15/16. öld en alla tíð síðan verið nýttur til útbeitar.

Árið 2005 hófu starfsmenn Fornleifastofnunar skráningu á minjum á Þegjandadal í samvinnu við *Hið þingeyska fornleifafélag* og lauk þeirri skráningu sumarið 2006. Niðurstöður hennar voru þær að á dalnum væru fleiri, fjölbreytilegri og fornlegri rústir en áður hafði verið ljóst auk þess sem ástand minja virtist vera mjög gott, einkum í dalnum vestanverðum. Niðurstöður skráningar gáfu því eindregið tilefni til frekari rannsókna.

Fyrstu prufuskurðirnir á dalnum voru teknir sumarið 2006 í tengslum við yfirstandandi verkefni, *Forn garðlög í Suður-Þingeyjarsýslu*, sem styrkt var af Rannís. Heillegt og flókið garðakerfi er á dalnum vestanverðum og voru þar teknir fjórir prufuskurðir í þeim tilgangi að varpa ljósi á aldur þess. Varðveisla gjóskulaga í jarðvegi reyndist misjöfn og að jafnaði betri á dalnum sunnanverðum en norðanverðum. Skurður í garðlag á milli Einarsstaða og Ingiríðarstaða, tveggja innstu bæja á dalnum vestanverðum, leiddi í ljós að garðlagið innsiglaði gjóskulag frá 12. öld og ljóst að það hafði fallið löngu eftir að hætt var að halda garðinum við. Niðurstaða gjóskulagafræðings sem skoðaði skurðinn var að afar líklegt væri að garðurinn og í raun flestir garðanna á innanverðum dalnum, væru byggðir eigi síðar en á 10. öld.[7] Garðarnir voru án efa reistir í tengslum við byggð á dalnum og því má segja að með skurðunum hafi fengist fyrsta vísbendingin um háan aldur byggðar á Þegjandadal, a.m.k. á innstu bæjum að vestanverðu.[8]

Niðurstöður rannsókna sumarið 2007

Niðurstöður fyrstu prufuskurða á Þegjandadal þóttu gefa góða raun og var í kjölfarið ákveðið að halda rannsóknum áfram sumarið 2007. Þar sem fornleifaskráning og frumrannsókn hafði gefið til kynna að umfang fornleifa væri mest á innstu bæjunum tveimur í vestanverðum dalnum, Ingiríðarstöðum og Einarsstöðum, og jafnframt að aðstæður þar væru góðar til aldursgreiningar útfrá gjóskulögum, var áframhaldandi rannsóknum beint að bæjarstæðum þeirra. Markmið rannsóknanna var fyrst og fremst að varpa ljósi á eðli og lengd byggðar á dalnum, auk þess að kanna varðveisluskilyrði mannvistarleifa.

Sumarið 2007 vour teknir fjórir prufuskurðir í heimatúni Ingiríðarstaða; í meintan bæjarhól efst í túni, kirkjugarðsvegg, gerði og garðlag í túni. Að auki var tekinn einn prufuskurður í garðlag á Einarsstöðum. Niðurstöður uppgraftar á garðlögum á báðum jörðum sýndu að þau eru eldri en frá því um miðja 13. öld. Gerðið á Ingiríðarstöðum reyndist byggt eftir 1200 en löngu fyrir 1477. Prufuskurður í gegnum meintan kirkju- eða bænhúsgarð á sama bæ sýndi að hann var byggður á 13. öld eða fyrr, en rannsóknin gaf einnig til kynna talsverð umsvif á sama svæði áður en garðurinn var byggður. Því var ljóst að mannvist eða búseta hafði verið á Ingiríðarstöðum um nokkurt skeið áður en mannvirkið var reist.

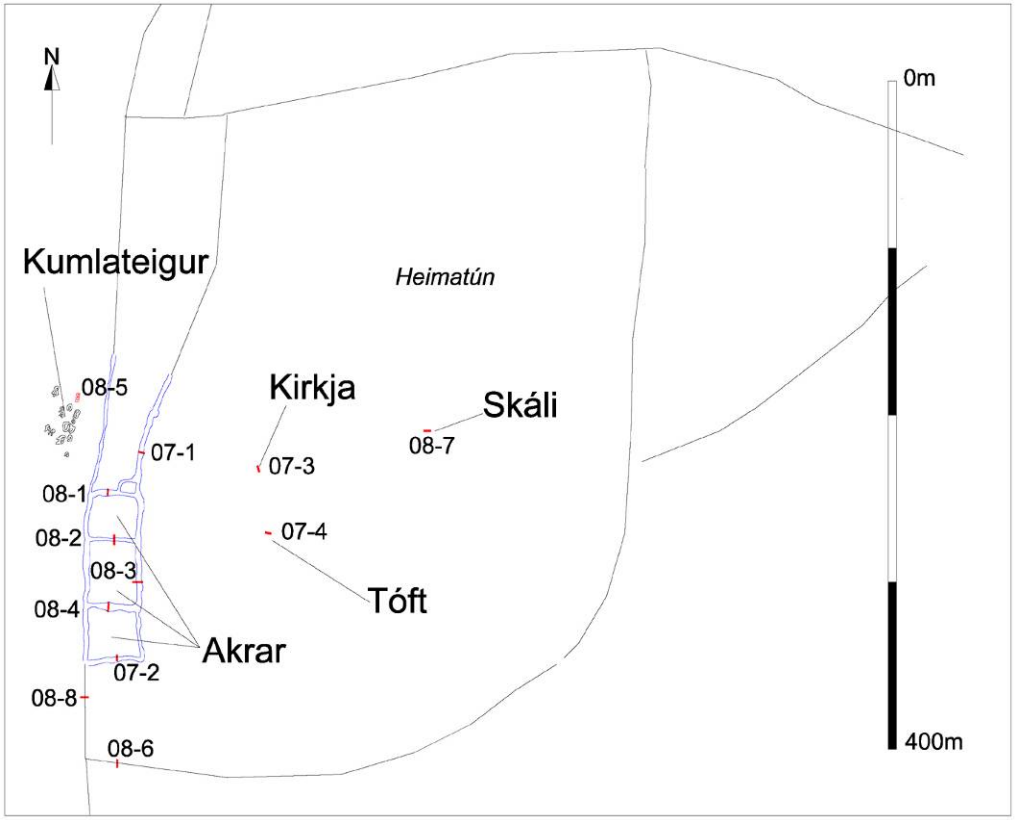
Skurðurinn í meintan bæjarhól, efst í túni Ingiríðarstaða, leiddi í ljós nokkur umsvif undir gjóskulagi frá 1300 og einnig yfir því, þó lítil uppsöfnun virðist hafa átt sér stað um það leyti sem gjóskulagið féll. Hugsanlegt er að ekki hafi verið umsvif á staðnum um 1300, en bæði fyrr og síðar og a.m.k. allt fram á 16. öld, enda ber hóllinn þess greinileg merki að þar

[6] *Jarðabók Árna Magnússonar og Páls Vídalíns* XI. (1943): 198.
[7] Sigurgeirsson, M.Á. (2006): 3.
[8] Sigurgeirsson, M.Á. (2006)

hafi verið endurbyggðar byggingar á síðari öldum og má leiða getur að því að þar hafi verið sel eða beitarhús.

Rannsóknir á Ingiríðarstöðum og Einarstöðum sumarið 2007 bentu til þess að þar væri að finna minjar töluvert langrar búsetu og að búast mætti við fjölbreytilegum og vel varðveittum minjum undir sverði, bæði frá fyrstu öldum en einnig frá síðari öldum þegar dalurinn var nýttur fyrir útbeit. Skurður sem tekin var á Einarsstöðum gaf vísbendingu um að varðveisla gjóskulaga væri þar slakari en á Ingiríðarstöðum og var frekari rannsóknum því beint að mannvirkjum á Ingiríðarstöðum.

Niðurstöður rannsókna sumarið 2008



Staðsetning prufuskurða í landi Ingiríðarstaða 2007 og 2008

Árið 2008 beindust rannsóknir fyrst og fremst að flóknu garða- og gerðakerfi efst í túninu á Ingiríðarstöðum. Alls voru teknir átta skurðir þetta ár og af þeim voru sex í garðlög og gerði í túni, einn í fornlegan rústahól neðarlega (austarlega) í túninu og annar í einkennilegar dældir ofan túns. Niðurstöður prufuskurðanna reyndust framar öllum vonum. Meðal þess sem fannst í prufuskurði í gerði innantúns voru skýrar rákir eða för sem skárust með reglulegum hætti niður í óhreyfðan jarðveg og túlkuð voru sem líkleg plógför. Fundurinn gefur vísbendingu um verklag og lífsviðurværi manna í Þegjandadal til forna og verður að teljast afar merkilegur fundur enda ummerkin einar best varðveittu minjar um slíka ræktun sem fundist hafa frá þessu skeiði hér á landi.

Plógför í skurði á Ingiríðarstöðum

Sá skurður sem tekinn var í fornlegan í rústahól neðarlega í túninu var ekki síður forvitnilegur. Þar kom í ljós veglegur torfveggur og þykk gólfskán og virtist þar vera fundinn mannabústaður frá fyrstu tíð. Sterkar vísbendingar eru hins vegar fyrir því að bæjarhús hafi einnig verið ofarlega í túninu þar sem myndarlegur bæjarhól er greinilegur við hlið meints bænhúss. Án frekari rannsókna er ekki hægt að útiloka að híbýlin gætu verið frá sama skeiði en líklegra verður þó það teljast að fyrstu ábúendur hafi byggt bæ sinn neðarlega í túninu en fært hann ofar þegar fram liðu stundir. Meðal þess sem fannst í skurðinum var fallegur skreyttur beinkambur sem án nokkurs efa telst frá víkingaöld.

Kambur frá Ingiríðarstöðum

Við upphaf rannsóknanna 2008 ráku fornleifafræðingar augun í sérkennilegar dældir, 15-20 talsins, á lágu holti rétt ofan túngarðsins á Ingiríðarstöðum. Dældirnar lágu allreglulega á holtinu og virtust manngerðar og vöktu því forvitni manna. Ákveðið var að opna tvær af dældunum í þeim tilgangi að ákvarða tilgang þeirra og aldur. Uppgröfturinn leiddi í ljós tvöfalt kuml manns og hests. Báðar grafir höfðu verið rændar og var greinilegt að það hafði gerst fyrir 1477. Við ránið hafði allur umbúnaður og lega kumlbúanna raskast mikið, auk þess sem ætla má að stærstur hluti haugfjár hafi verið fjarlægður. Þó fundust í litlum vöndli lítið blýmet og silfurþynna sem hugsanlega hafa verið í leðurpyngju við belti mannsins. Niðurstaða beinarannsóknar sýnir að mannabeinin eru af einum einstaklingi, líklega karlkyns, 35 ára eða eldri. Hrossið var 5-6 vetra en engin merki um slátrun þess var hægt að greina á beinum þess.

Langflest kuml hér á landi hafa fundist við jarðrask eða framkvæmdir af einhverju tagi og eru minjarnar því oft illa farnar þegar fornleifafræðingar koma á vettvang. Eins og áður sagði eru dældirnar á holtinu ofan Ingiríðarstaða15-20 talsins og er fundurinn því einstakur og stórmerkur og kallar eindregið á frekari rannsókn. Sé fjöldi kumla ennfremur í samræmi við ágískanir bendir allt til þess að kumlateigurinn sé einn sá stærsti sem fundist hefur hér á landi. Til að afla fullnægjandi upplýsinga þyrfti að grafa teiginn í heild sinni og opna þannig stórt uppgraftarsvæði. Um er að ræða einstakt tækifæri til rannsókna á stórum og óröskuðum grafreit með afar nákvæmri uppgraftaraðferð og er þetta líklega í fyrsta sinn á Íslandi sem slíkt tækifæri býðst. Ekki ólíklegt að slík rannsókn gæti svarað mörgum áleitnum spurningum, ekki bara um fyrstu íbúa Þegjandadals heldur einnig um greftrunarsiði og nánasta umhverfi kumla hér á landi.

Fornleifaskráning og frumrannsóknir í Þegjandadal hafa sýnt að þar eru óþrjótandi möguleikar á frekari fornleifarannsóknum. Þar er að finna upplagt rannsóknarsvæði til þverfaglegra rannsókna sem veitt gætu innsýn í daglegt líf, lífsviðurværi, heilsufar, mataræði, veðurfar, náttúrufar og þróun landbúnaðar í íslensku dalasamfélagi á 10.-15/16. öld.

Í skýrslunni sem hér fer á eftir verður greint frá rannsóknum í Þegjandadal árin 2007 og 2008 og niðurstöðum þeirra. Umfjöllunin er þannig upp byggð að fyrst er fjallað um aðdraganda rannsóknanna og fornleifaskráningu í dalnum. Þá er fjallað um rannsóknir árið 2007, á Einarsstöðum annars vegar og Ingiríðarstöðum hins vegar, en síðan um rannsóknir sumarið 2008 í sérstökum kafla. Innbyrðis eru kaflarnir byggðir á umfjöllun um einstaka þætti

rannsóknanna, þ.e. greint er frá rannsókn og niðurstöðum hvers könnunarskurðar og birtar ljósmyndir, teikningar og töflur til frekari glöggvunar. Að lokum er fjallað um gripi sem fundist hafa við rannsóknir í Þegjandadal í sérstökum kafla eftir Guðrúnu Öldu Gísladóttur.

Í viðaukum er að finna umfjöllun um niðurstöður greiningar á þeim dýrabeinum, eftir Rúnar Leifsson, og mannabeinum, eftir Hildi Gestsdóttur, sem fundust við uppgröft í Þegjandadal. Þá fjallar Magnús Á. Sigurgeirsson um niðurstöður gjóskulagagreiningar í tveimur köflum, annars vegar fyrir rannsóknarárið 2007 og hins vegar árið 2008. Að lokum er að finna úrdrátt úr skýrslu Fornleifastofnunar (FS 349-04263) um rannsóknir á fornum garðlögum í Suður-Þingeyjarsýslu eftir Oscar Aldred ofl.

Archaeological Excavations in Þegjandadalur, 2007-2008

Background

Trial excavations in Þegjandadalur in 2007 and 2008 represent a direct continuance of research carried out in the valley by survey teams in 2005-2006[9], and of previous research targeting the remarkable boundary systems of Þingeyjarsýsla[10] at a broader landscape level. This previous research highlighted both the extraordinary levels of preservation, and the exceptional density of visible, surviving archaeology within the valley. Today, Þegjandadalur is abandoned, with limited areas of pasture and grain cultivation towards the mouth of the valley, to the north.

The valley is centred on a point appoximately N65°48´ - W17°20´ (lat/long) or E575900 - N590000 (ISN 93). Elevation above sea level rises from circa 40m at the valley mouth to circa 180m at the head of the valley. The valley runs broadly north – south for approximately 7km, and is up to 1.6km at its widest in the north. The area of lowland is approximately 7.3 square kilometres. The valley walls rise steeply to eroded heathland in the east, at circa 400m, and more gently to better vegetated heathland in the west at circa 230m. At the southeastern limit of the valley a saddle gives access to Laxárdalur, at about 250m above sea level.

The northern central part of the valley has in recent times been levelled and drained for pasture, although only a part of this pasture is currently cropped. Grain is also currently cultivated at the northern limit of the valley. The southern central part of the valley is typified by mixed bog and marshland, with grass, low scrub and berries becoming prevalent on drier and more elevated areas. The valley is drained by a small brook at its centre, which remains easily passable on foot in the summer. The valley slopes are heavily affected by þúfurisation (frost hummocking), and have seen some soil erosion, particularly to the southwest.

The upstanding remains of 5 farm sites are clearly visible along the western side of the valley, and the less well preserved remains of 2-3 sites are detectable along the eastern side. All of these sites sit above the marshy central areas, at the feet of the valley slopes. The sites presenting the clearest and best preserved remains are those of Einarsstaðir (the innermost farm site on the western side) and Ingiríðarstaðir (the next innermost farm site on the western side). The historical background of the valley, and the various attributed site names have beeen treated elsewhere[11] and this will not be reiterated in detail in this instance. However, it is apparent that the inner valley of Þegjandadalur has been abandoned to permanent settlement for perhaps 500 hundred years, whilst likely remaining subject to varying levels of seasonal exploitation down to present.

The reasons for this abandonment may be many and varied. These may include climatic change, other environmental decline due to human impacts, possibly depopulation due to disease in medieval times, and deliberate population clearance to facilitate grazing. Several of these factors may of course have worked in concert.

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[9] Hreiðarsdóttir, E.Ó. (2007) *Fornleifaskráning í Þegjandadal: Niðurstöður rannsókna á dalnum sumurin 2005 og 2006* (FS344-05122).

[10] Aldred, O. et al. (2005) *Forn garðlög í Suður Þingeyjarsýslu / A system of earthworks in NE Iceland* (FS292-04262).

[11] Hreiðarsdóttir E.Ó. (2007) *Fornleifaskráning í Þegjandadal: Niðurstöður rannsókna á dalnum sumurin 2005 og 2006* (FS344-05122).

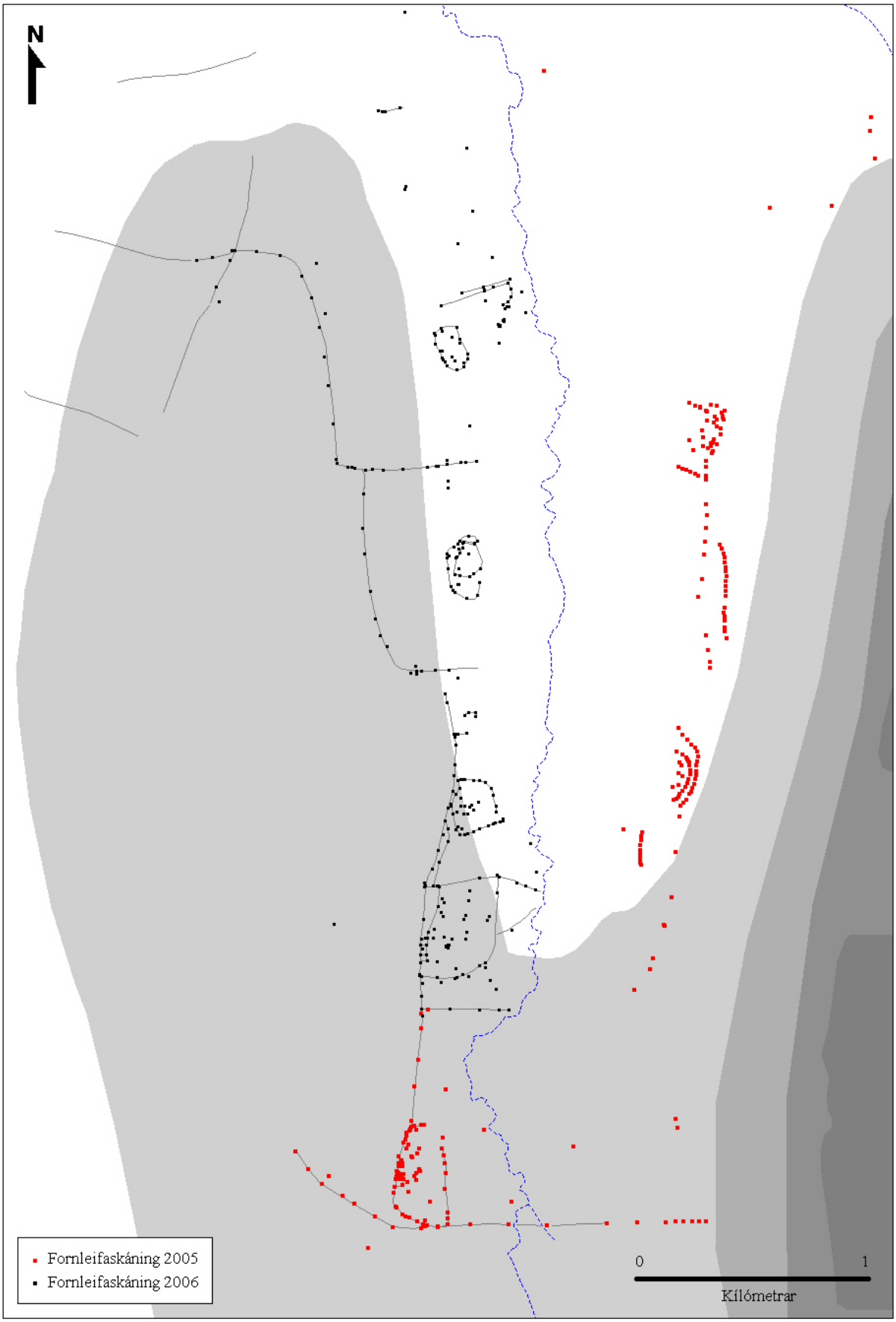

Figure 1 – Archaeogical features in Þegjandadalur

The preliminary goal of research in 2007 and 2008 was to acquire dating evidence for both the establishment of settlement in the valley, and for its abandonment. To this end, the sites of Einarsstaðir and Ingiríðarstaðir were identified as most promising. Both sites exhibit complex systems of boundaries and enclosures that define the farm territories and home fields. These boundary systems in turn form part of a much wider regional boundary system encompassing much of Suður Þingeyjarsýsla, but particularly Tjörnes, Aðaldalur, Reykjadalur and the heaths Fljótsheiði and Hvammsheiði. As the boundaries function (inter alia) to define property extents and areas of homefield exploitation, they are an ideal target to examine the establishment and development of the settlement. Other features and areas that exhibited unusual patterns of vegetation were also examined, as these were thought likely to provide evidence of later re-use.

Access to the sites of Einarsstaðir and Ingiríðarstaðir is limited to a rough track along the foot of the eastern valley slope, followed by hiking across the boggy valley floor for a distance of some 900m to arrive at Ingiríðarstaðir. Alternatively, this site may be reached on foot along the base of the western slope – a distance of some 4km. From Ingiríðarstaðir, the boundary walls and areas at the base of the slope give relatively easy access to the remaining sites along the western side of the valley.

Ingiríðarstaðir in particular presents a complex and unusual system of boundaries and small enclosures (see Figure 2). The date and function of these was largely unknown at the beginning of excavation, and formed a primary target for further investigation. These have therefore been subject to a scheme of systematic trial trenching, aimed at shedding light upon both date and function.

In 2006, as part of a broader examination of the regional boundary system, 4 trenches were excavated in Þegjandadalur, including 2 at Ingiríðarstaðir – see Aldred et al[12]. An excerpt from this report is appended (Appendix 5).

In 2007, 4 further trenches were excavated at Ingiríðarstaðir, and one at Einarsstaðir. Trench ING07-1 targeted one of a pair of large parallel boundary walls. Trench ING07-2 addressed a smaller wall forming part of an enclosure between the parallel boundaries. Trench ING07-3 examined a small circular enclosure, which from its morphology is thought likely to be a churchyard. Trench ING07-4 tested the upper layers of an apparent farm mound, where differential vegetation could be discerned, being still grassed, and not low berry shrub as prevalent elsewhere. Trench EIN07-1 examined the home field boundary of Einarsstaðir, close to its junction with the long inter farm boundary running north towards Ingiríðarstaðir.

[12] Aldred, O. et al. (2007) *Forn garðlög í Suður Þingeyjarsýslu / A system of earthworks in NE Iceland* (FS349-042623).

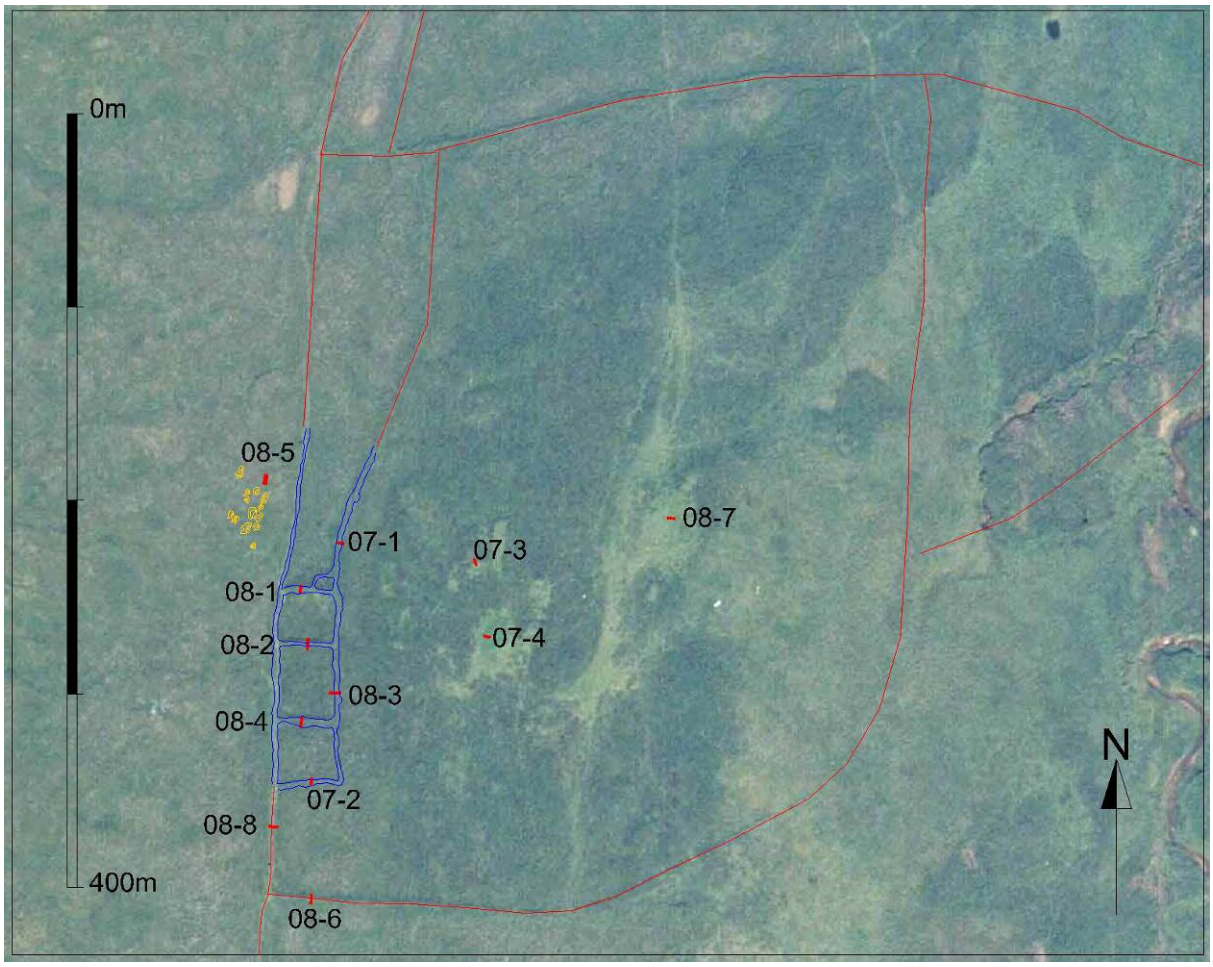

Figure 2 – 2007 and 2008 Trench Locations at Ingiríðarstaðir

Excavations at Ingiríðarstaðir 2007

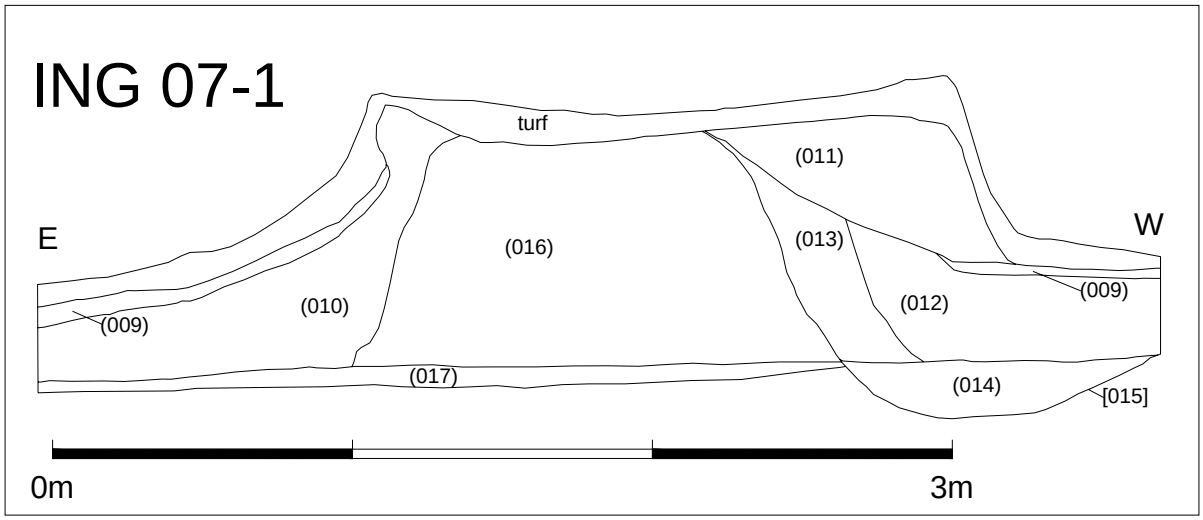

Figure 3 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2007 – Trench 1 – North facing section.

Context	Area	Description
009	07-1	Dark blue grey tephra
010	07-1	Mid brown sandy silt - aeolian
011	07-1	Mid brown sandy silt - aeolian
012	07-1	Mid brown sandy silt - aeolian
013	07-1	Wall collapse (of 016)
014	07-1	Fill (of 015) - mid brown silt with H3 flecks
015	07-1	Shallow ditch/construction cut
016	07-1	Turf wall – strengur, mid brown, red brown, grey and white
017	07-1	Orange brown aeolian silt - modified natural

Table 1 – Trench 07-1 Contexts

Trench ING07-1

Trench ING07-1 was aligned east-west and measured 3.75m in length and 1m in width, reaching a maximum depth of 1.15m at sterile deposits. A substantial well preserved turf wall (016) lay above slightly disturbed subsoils (017) including the Landnám sequence, and was abutted by a shallow truncation to the west [015]. The wall (016) measured up to 1.6m in width and survived to a height of 0.78m. It was the formed of strengur turf, and at least 6 courses of turf were visible. The shallow ditch [015] measured up to 1.05m in width, and 0.20m in depth – and is interpreted as a construction, for turf extraction. The above features were sealed by turf collapse and aeolian deposits, underlying insitu tephra horizons (009) and topsoil/turf. These tephra deposits include a layer dated to 1262 (see Magnús Á. Sigurgeirsson, Appendix 3). The wall, and its subsequent collapse may be seen to be of considerable antiquity, and substantially earlier than the mid 13th century. Unlike many of the other boundaries, in this instance no evidence of reconstruction or repair could be discerned.

Figure 4 – Trench 07-1
Showing wall (016), camera facing east, scale 2m. Truncation of the original ground surface by feature [015] is visible in the foreground.

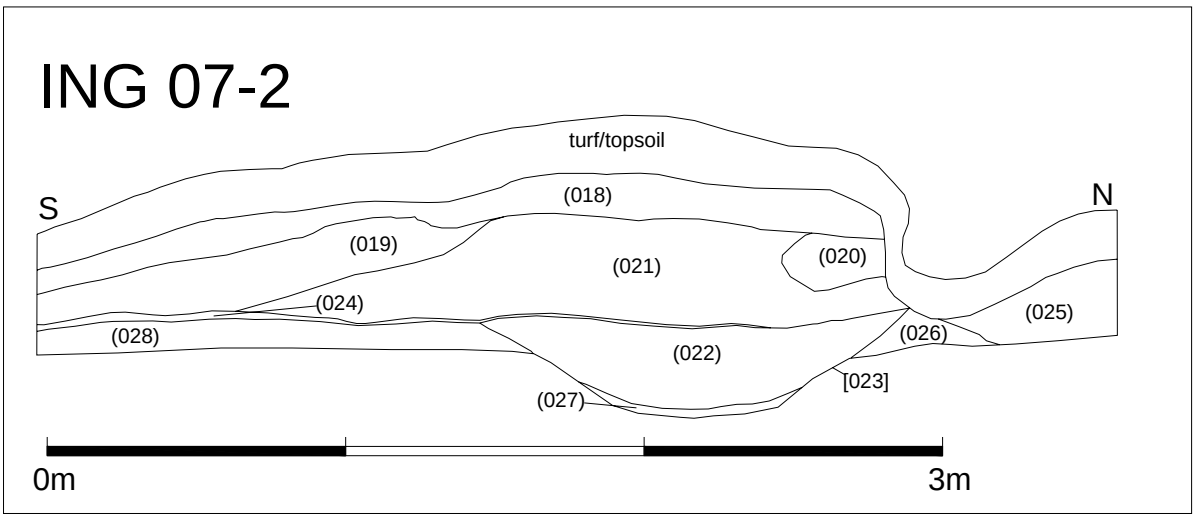

Figure 5 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2007 – Trench 2 – East facing section.

Context	Area	Description
018	07-2	Subsoil - red brown silt, slightly mixed
019	07-2	Redeposited banded white tephra and aeolian silt
020	07-2	Coarse blue/black tephra or sand?
021	07-2	Turf wall - orange brown, black, white. Semi-collapsed
022	07-2	Fill (of 023) - mid brown silt with white tephra flecks.
023	07-2	Ditch cut
024	07-2	Trampled dark grey sandy layer
025	07-2	Mid red brown silt, with white and black tephra flecks
026	07-2	Mid brown silt with white tephra flecks.
027	07-2	Trampled/waterlain laminated dark grey brown silt.
028	07-2	Orange brown aeolian silt - natural

Table 2 – Trench 07-2 Contexts

Figure 6 – Trench 07-2
Showing wall (021), camera facing north, scale 2m.

Trench ING07-2

Trench ING07-2 was aligned north-south through a smaller wall fragment connecting two larger parallel boundaries. It measured 3.60m in length, 1m in width and 1.04m in depth at maximum.

The natural ground surface was truncated by a shallow ditch [023] measuring up to 1.40m in width and 0.30m in depth. This feature may represent turf removal. Laying over the fills of this feature was a poorly preserved turf wall (021) semi-collapsed towards the north, and subject to wind erosion (020). This turf wall comprised 3-4 unclear courses of strengur, seen to contain anthopogenic traces, and several tephra horizons including probably V-1159 and H-1158. This wall, or at least the surviving remains must therefore date to the latter part of the 12th century.

The wall (021) lay beneath a deposit of banded orange silt and yellow/white tephra (likely H3) and this event is interpreted as possible repair of the structure. This layer was in turn sealed by layers of aeolian deposition and topsoil, including the V-1477 tephra horizon, amongst others. The wall had therefore been long out of use, or at least no longer maintained, before that date. The wall (021) is likely to represent a partition or sub-division of a larger enclosure, or perhaps an addition to the enclosed areas to the north (see Trenches 08-1 - 4).

Figure 7 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2007 – Trench 3 – East facing section.

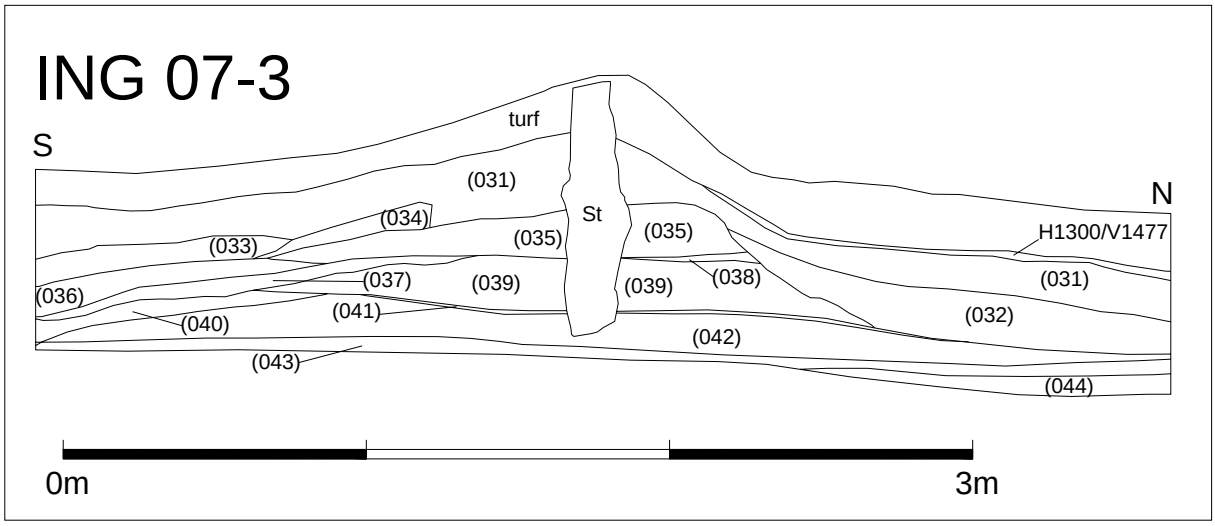

Figure 8 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2007 – Trench 3 – East facing section.

Context	Area	Description
031	07-3	Mid brown enriched aeolian - topsoil
032	07-3	Mixed aeolian and turf collapse
033	07-3	Orange brown aeolian silt
034	07-3	Lens of red turf collapse
035	07-3	Yellow brown aeolian with turf collapse - charcoal flecks at surface
036	07-3	Orange brown silt
037	07-3	Orange brown silt and white tephra - upcast
038	07-3	Orange brown silt and white tephra - upcast
039	07-3	Yellow brown turf wall
040	07-3	Dark brown turf collapse
041	07-3	Dark brown trampled surface
042	07-3	Turf collapse with LNL tephras
043	07-3	Original ground surface? LNL in situ?
044	07-3	Orange brown aeolian - natural

Table 3 – Trench 07-3 Contexts

Trench ING07-3

Trench ING07-3 was aligned north-south and measured 3.75m in length, up to 0.95m in depth, and 1m in width. This trench targeted the northern part of a small circular enclosure containing a small east-west oriented rectangular structure. These are believed to be a church and churchyard, although this supposition, based of similar features excavated elsewhere in Iceland cannot yet be confirmed.

Trench ING07-3 revealed at its base a broad spread of trampled turf collapse (042) containing the landnám tephra sequence, and overlying the natural ground surface including the Landnám sequence in situ. A large vertical angular stone had been placed at the centre of the upstanding earthwork, apparently on top of layer (042), and had subsequently been supported or added to with further deposits of turf (039) forming an ad hoc wall. These features were further sealed by layers of turf collapse and aeolian silts, including a tephra horizon dated to 1300 (Sigurgeirsson, Appendix 3, this volume). The wall (039) is apparently constructed sometime after the first use of the site, and no longer maintained by the late 13th century. This would be consistent with the proposed function as a churchyard wall, and may be regarded as circumstantial support for the notion that Ingiríðarstaðir has an early (pre-christian) date of establishment.

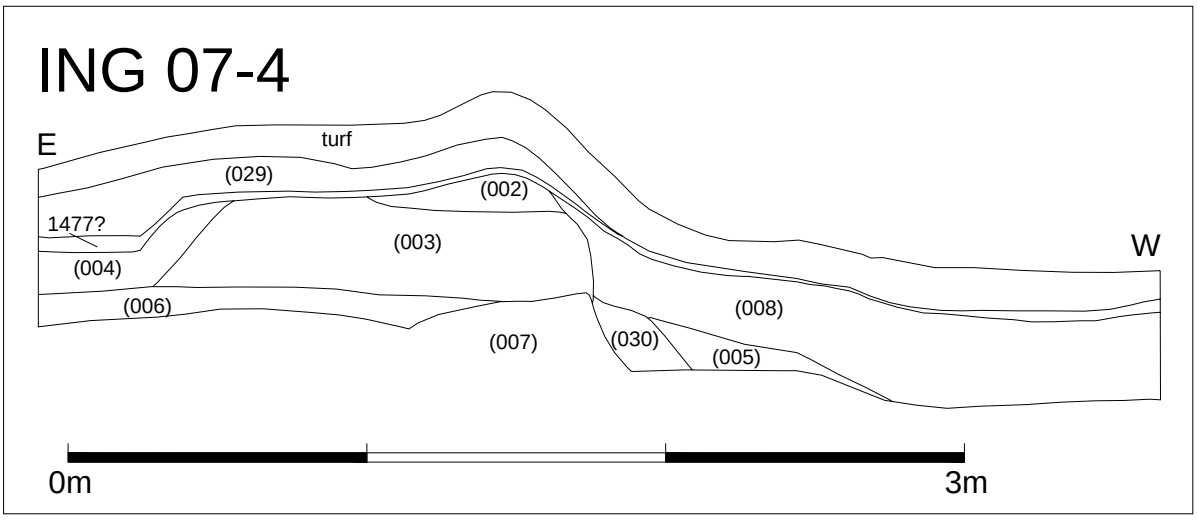

Figure 9 -Ingiríðarstaðir 2007 – Trench 4 – North facing section.

Context	Area	Description
001	07-4	Turf repair - with black tephra stripes (not in section)
002	07-4	Turf repair - yellow brown with blue grey tephra
003	07-4	Turf wall - red brown with grey tephra
004	07-4	Wall collapse (of 003)
005	07-4	Wall collapse (of 007)
006	07-4	Orange brown aeolian silt - some flecks of H3
007	07-4	Turf wall - red brown with pale grey tephra, and orange brown stripes
008	07-4	Wall collapse (of 003)
029	07-4	Orange brown aeolian silt
030	07-4	Mid brown silt with peat ash flecks

Table 4 – Trench 07-4 Contexts

Trench ING07-4

Trench ING07-4 was aligned east-west, and measured 3.75m in length, 0.93 in maximum depth, and 1m in width. This trench targeted only the upper portion of a presumed farm mound, where differential vegetation had been noted (the mound is still grassed) and more recent remains were thought likely to survive.

Very shortly beneath the topsoil at least 4 episodes of turf repair and turf wall deposits came to light (see figure). As these remains were clearly multi-phased and of considerable depth, it was decided not to proceed deeper into the mound than the uppermost remains.

Examination by tephrochronologist Magnús Á. Sigurgeirsson (Appendix 3) confirmed that the uppermost of these construction event contained the V-1477 tephra in turf – indicating at least partial reconstruction and seasonal use into the 16th century. To date, these are the latest remains that have come to light at Ingiríðarstaðir. Remains datable to the 13th century were also discerned. No occupational layers were excavated, and it is thought that further excavation of this farm mound would require a much more substantial effort including large scale open area excavation. This does not fall within the remit of the current research.

Discussion

Test excavation at Ingriríðarstaðir in 2007 highlighted the complexity and variability of the remains, in terms of date, function, and preservation. Evidence gathered from these trenches indicated both early occupation (Trench ING07-3), and much later re-use (Trench ING07-4), whilst the boundary and enclosure walls examined in trenches ING07-1 and ING07-2 showed widely differing morphologies and varying levels of preservation, and reconstruction.

These results reinforced our understanding of the site as one of exceptional potential for the detailed examination of patterns of settlement and abandonment in early and high medieval Iceland – and raised many further questions about the function and development of the boundary systems.

Excavations at Einarstaðir 2007

Figure 10 -Einarstaðir 2007 – Trench 1 – South facing section.

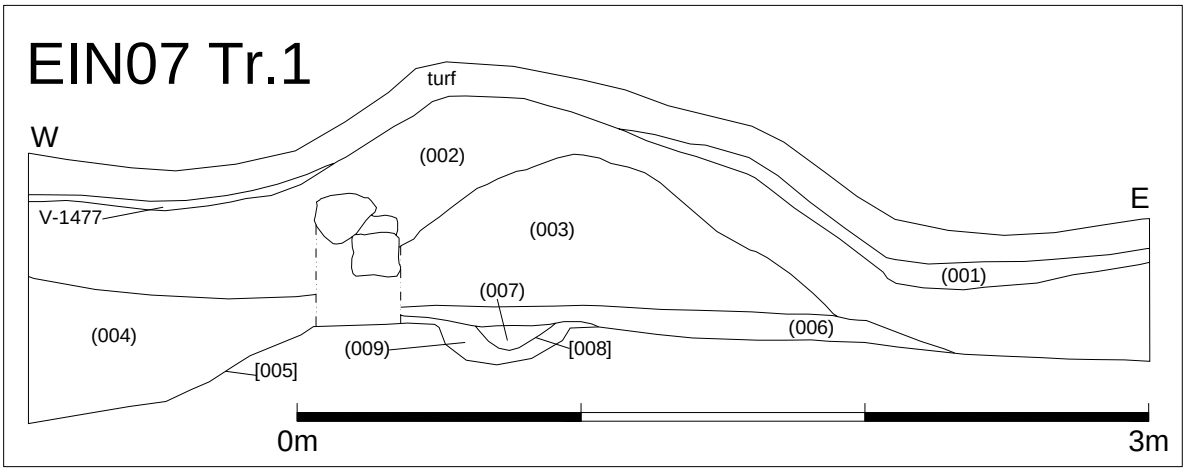

Figure 11 -Einarstaðir 2007 – Trench 1 – South facing section.

Context	Area	Description
001	EIN 07-1	Dark grey/ blue grey mixed tephras
002	EIN 07-1	Mid reddish brown silt with occasional grey lenses
003	EIN 07-1	Turf wall - red brown, with grey tephra, strengur
004	EIN 07-1	Small sub angular gravel and stones, lenses of silt
005	EIN 07-1	Construction cut / erosion face
006	EIN 07-1	Dark grey brown compacted silt
007	EIN 07-1	Mixed red brown silt
008	EIN 07-1	Shallow cut
009	EIN 07-1	Orange brown aeolian / white tephra - natural

Table 5 – Trench EIN07-1 Contexts

Trench EIN07-1

In addition to the four trenches examined at Ingiríðarstaðir, one trench was excavated through the northern part of home field boundary at Einarsstaðir for purposes of comparison.

The trench was aligned east-west and measured 3.95m in length, 1.26m in maximum depth and 1m in width. It revealed the remains of a semi collapsed turf wall (003) formed of strengur, and at either side the natural ground surface had been truncated down to prehistoric tephra horizons. At the west, this truncation [005] was notably deeper than to the east, and had been filled by deposits of coarse gravel and small stones. This may represent a turf extraction cut subsequently enlarged by erosion. The western face of wall (003) contained a number of larger but irregular stones, and it is thought these may be a response to said erosion. Beneath the wall (003) was a small irregular cut [008] of unknown function.

Overlying the turf wall, and aeolian layers were a number of tephra horizons (see Appendix 3) including K-1262. The absence of elements of the LNS tephra sequence may point to early erosion events at this location – and along with the absence of tephra layers within the turf wall (003), this may limit dating possibilities at Einarsstaðir. More extensive work on other features is thought to be highly promising, but beyond the goals of the current research.

Excavations at Ingiríðarstaðir 2008

Both excavations and non-intrusive survey at Ingiríðarstaðir and Einarsstaðir in 2007 highlighted the potential of both sites for further research. Issues of access, preservation and the presence of crucial tephra horizons suggested that Ingiríðarstaðir may form a more immediate target for continued research – along with the presence at Ingiríðarstaðir of a highly unusual system of enclosures adjoining the large parallel linear boundaries.

Detailed examination of the remains at Ingiríðarstaðir, combined with selective and limited investigation of other sites in Þegjandadalur and its environs has the potential to not only clarify the process of settlement within the valley, but also the near unique potential to illuminate the full extent and scope of an early medieval farm. The absence of substantial later remains at Ingiríðarstaðir and Einarsstaðir present a rare opportunity to understand a settlement landscape largely devoid of modern disturbance – disturbance to the structures themselves, but also to the home fields, grazing areas, and wetland.

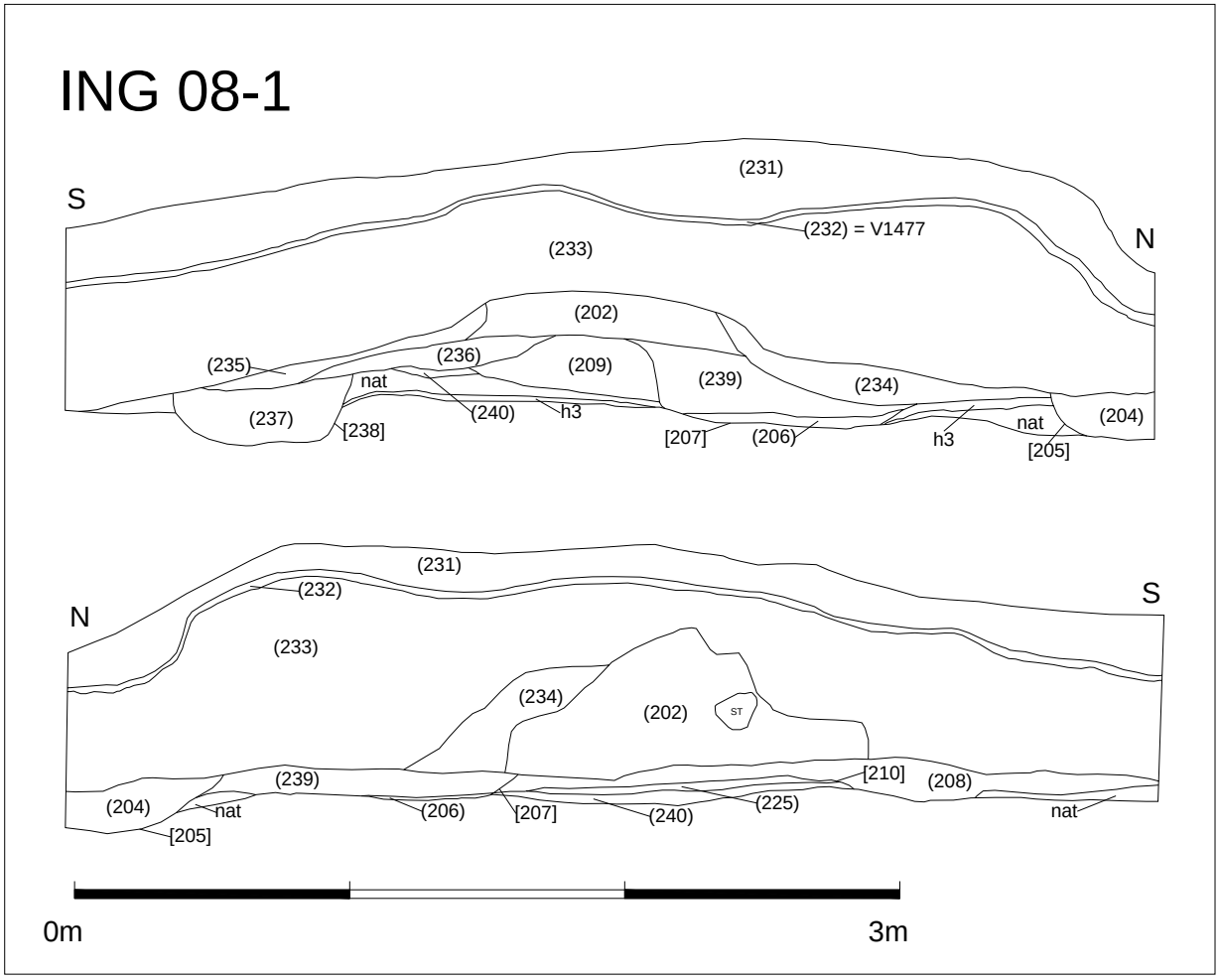

Figure 12 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 – Trench 1 – East facing and west facing sections.

Context	Area	Description
202	08-1	Later turf wall, strengur, 6+ courses, inc LNS, H3
204	08-1	Fill of [205] - mid grey brown silt with orange/white flecks
205	08-1	Construction cut - secondary
206	08-1	Fill of [207] - grey sand and fine gravel
207	08-1	Construction cut - turf extraction?
208	08-1	Mixed grey brown silt, with LNS lenses and charcoal
209	08-1	Earlier turf wall, strengur with LNS, 3+ courses
210	08-1	Irregular shallow cut - erosion in gateway?
211	08-1	Soft dark organic soil - fill of [212]
212	08-1	Cut of stakehole
213	08-1	Soft dark organic soil - fill of [214]
214	08-1	Cut of stakehole
215	08-1	Soft dark organic soil - fill of [216]
216	08-1	Cut of stakehole
217	08-1	Compact upcast - fill of [218]
218	08-1	Cut of stakehole
219	08-1	Compact upcast - fill of [2209
220	08-1	Cut of stakehole
221	08-1	Compact upcast - fill of [2229
222	08-1	Cut of stakehole
223	08-1	Compact upcast - fill of [224]
224	08-1	Cut of stakehole
225	08-1	Mid brown sandy silt - with frequent charcoal fragments
228	08-1	Grey brown silt with charcoal and wood ash - fill of [229]
229	08-1	Shallow, round bottomed cut of pit - not in section
231	08-1	Topsoil
232	08-1	Coarse dark grey tephra - V-1477
233	08-1	Mid grey brown silt with occasional turf fragments
234	08-1	Mixed silt and turf - collapse of (202)
235	08-1	Mixed silt and turf - collapse of (202) - less fragmented
236	08-1	Mixed aeolian silt and turf collapse -derived from (209)
237	08-1	Mixed aeolian silt with flecks of tephra (H3) - fill of [238]
238	08-1	Cut of shallow pit
239	08-1	Mixed aeolian silt and turf collapse -derived from (209)
240	08-1	Homogenous grey brown silt - relict land surface

Table 6 – Trench 08-1 Contexts

Trench ING08-1

Trench ING08-1 examined the northern most of 4 east-west walls forming compartments or enclosures between the 2 long linear boundaries. The trench was aligned north-south and measured 3.95m in length, 1.05m in maximum depth, and 1m in width. This trench revealed the remains of 2 phases of turf wall construction - (202) and (209) – both containing elements of the Landnám tephra in turf, and sealed beneath thick deposits of aeolian silt and turf collapse (233), (234) and (235). These latter layers lay beneath an in situ coarse dark grey tephra horizon – thought to be V-1477.

Wall fragment (209) lay over a disturbed grey brown silt (240) interpreted as a relict land surface. To the north of wall (209), the natural ground surface had been truncated by a shallow ditch [207] thought to be a cut for turf extraction. To the south the natural ground surface was further truncated by feature [210], thought to be caused by erosion, and possibly erosion caused by transit across this area.

Wall (202) sat over wall (209) and deposits associated with its collapse (236) and (239). To the north of wall (202) was another shallow ditch or truncation [205] interpreted as a construction cut or turf extraction for the later wall.

Excavation further revealed 7 small stakeholes beneath the walls (cuts and fils 211-224), and these may indicate a temporary fence or similar, established prior to wall construction.

Trench ING08-1 may therefore indicate at least 3 phases of boundary at this point – all thought to date to a time long before the 15th century.

Trench ING08-2

Trench ING08-2 examined the second northern most of 4 east-west walls forming compartments or enclosures between the 2 long linear boundaries. The trench was aligned north-south and measured 6.02m in length, 1.25m in maximum depth, and 1m in width. This trench revealed remains of three phases of wall construction along with numerous small parallel linear truncations of the ground surface, thought to indicate ploughing.

The earliest of these wall fragments (230) sat upon the undisturbed ground surface, and contained turf pieces including the Landnám tephra sequence. To the north of wall (230) the underlying ground surface had been cut away by feature [288] – a construction cut/turf extraction. That underlying ground surface has further been truncated by a group of narrow, linear, parallel features - [302] and [304] – irregular v-shaped cuts up to 0.12m in depth up to 1m in length and 0.2-0.3m apart (visible obliquely in section, Figure 14, see also plan drawing Figure 13). These are interpreted as being the marks of an ard, or simple plough, and as such may be indicative of arable agriculture. This interpretation will however demand further confirmation from environmental evidence. Whereas the placename element “Akur-“ is widely attested in Iceland, physical evidence of ploughing from this period is of exceptional rarity. It is hoped that future research will include study of pollen profiles from the immediate vicinity of Ingiríðarstaðir.

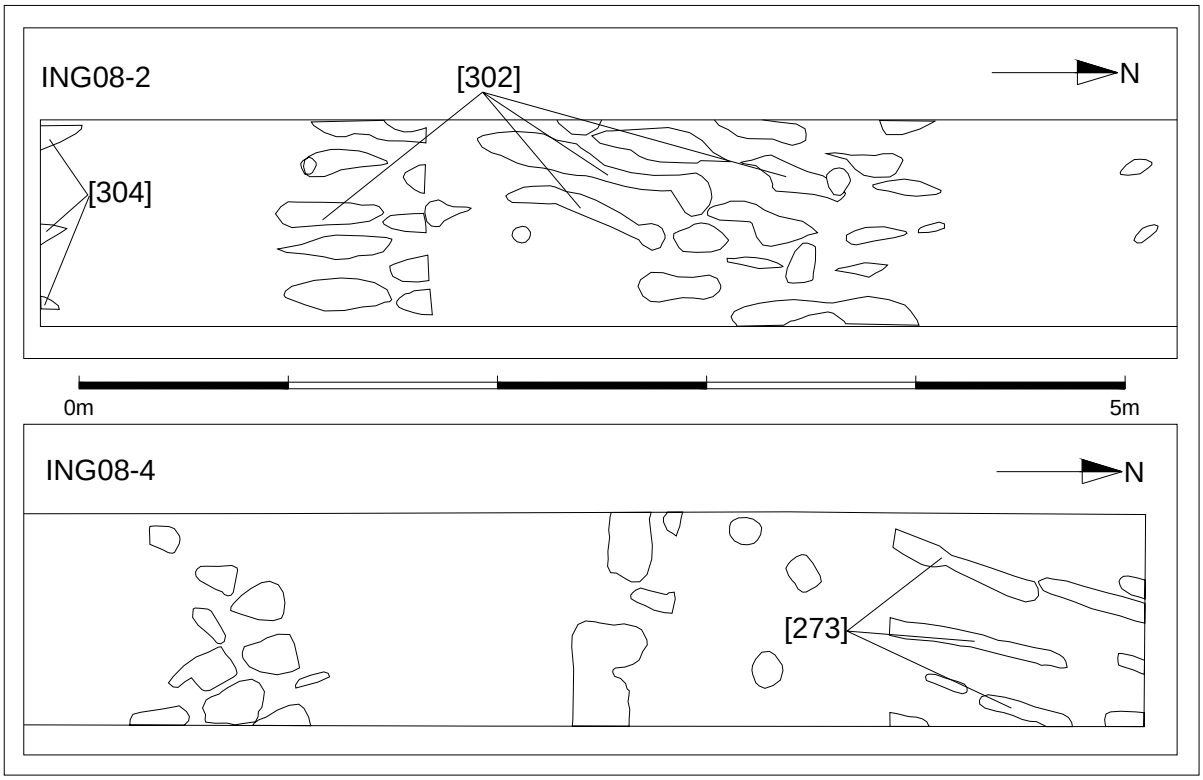

Figure 13 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 – Trenches 08-2 and 08-4 – Plans indicating possible ploughing features [302], [304] and [273].

Features [302] and [304] were sealed by assorted layers of mixed aeolian silts (layers 283-287). Of these, layer (286), adjacent to wall fragment (230) was notable for its compaction and prevalence of flecks of whitish (H3?) tephra – it is interpreted as having been trampled. The latter sequence of deposits sat beneath a second wall fragment (282), roughly constructed and containing whitish (H3?) tephra in strengur turf.

Wall fragment (282) was sealed by tuf collapse (281) and by a layer of mixed upcast (226). Deposit (226) exhibited at its surface an unknown pale blue grey tephra horizon – possibly dating to the 12th century (see Appendix 4). This horizon was in turn beneath a layer of upcast (201), and a further possible land surface or trampled interface (203). The latest of 3 wall constructions (200) sat upon that surface. Wall (200) was formed from at least 4 courses of strengur, including the same blue grey tephra horizon as seen at the surface of layer (226). These features were further sealed by aeolian silts and by a dark grey tephra horizon found to include elements of both the H-1300 and V-1477 events.

The presence of potential evidence for arable agriculture within Trench ING08-2 is of the highest interest, and similar features were also discerned at the base of Trench ING08-4 (see below). The longevity of the boundary wall within Trench ING08-2 is indicated by the multiple phases of reconstruction – although the precise location of this wall has migrated over time. The identity of the unknown tephra seen within wall (200) and elsewhere will undoubtedly merit further study in due course

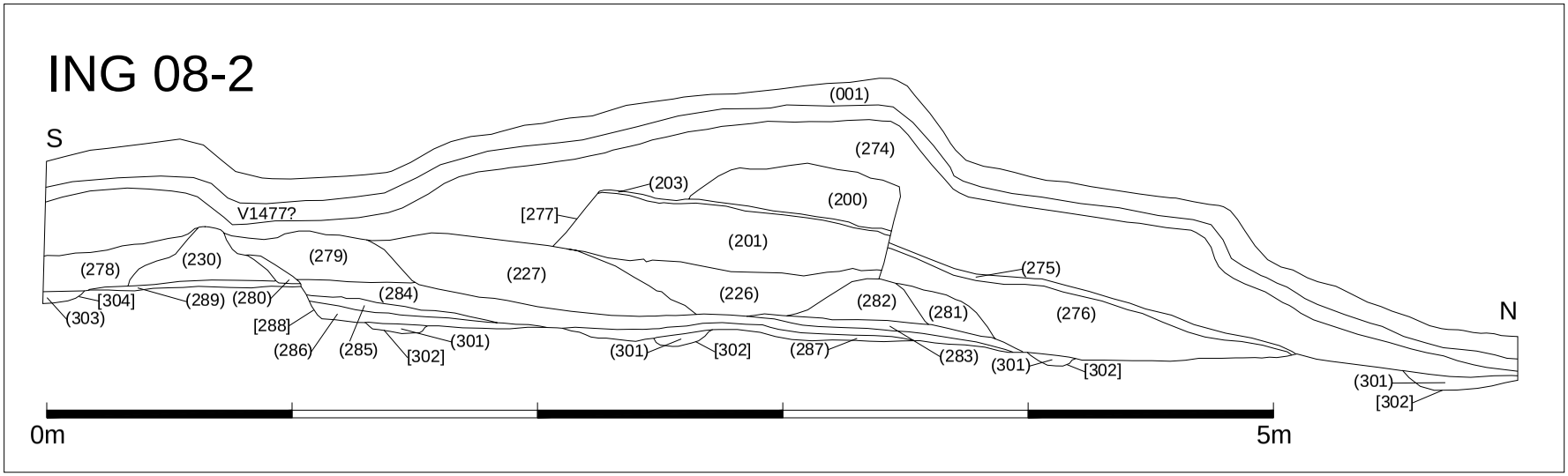

Figure 14 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 – Trench 2 – East facing section.

Context	Area	Description
200	08-2	Turf wall - strengur with blue grey tephra (unknown)
201	08-2	Yellow brown silt with H3 - upcast
203	08-2	Relict surface sealed by wall (200)
226	08-2	Upcast - sealed by blue grey tephra at surface
227	08-2	Turf collapse - associated with wall (230)
230	08-2	Turf wall remnant including LNS
274	08-2	Orange brown aeolian silt
275	08-2	Sandy silt, aeolian - tephra content?
276	08-2	Orange brown silt - aeolian, with some anthropogenic content
277	08-2	Erosion interface
278	08-2	Mixed silt with occasional turf fragments
279	08-2	Turf collapse with LNS - associated with (230)
280	08-2	Mottled upcast, with H3 flecks
281	08-2	Turf collapse with H3
282	08-2	Roughly constructed strengur turf wall, with H3/4
283	08-2	Orange brown silt, slightly mixed with H3/4
284	08-2	Orange brown aeolian silt with occasional H3, sand lenses
285	08-2	Orange brown aeolian silt with occasional H3
286	08-2	Compacted silt with frequent H3 flecks - relict surface
287	08-2	Orange brown aeolian silt
288	08-2	Construction cut - turf extraction?
289	08-2	Orange brown aeolian silt - natural
290	08-2	Mixed turf infill associated with wall (230) - not in section
291	08-2	Mixed orange silt and H3 - fill of [292]
292	08-2	Shallow pit cut
293	08-2	Mixed orange silt and H3 - fill of [294]
294	08-2	Shallow pit cut
295	08-2	Mixed orange silt and H3 - fill of [296]
296	08-2	Post hole cut
297	08-2	Mixed orange silt and H3 - fill of [298]
298	08-2	Post hole cut
299	08-2	Mixed orange silt and H3 - fill of [300]
300	08-2	Post hole cut
301	08-2	Mixed orange silt and H3 - fill of [302]
302	08-2	Ploughmarks - shallow parallel linear v shaped cuts truncating ground surface
303	08-2	Mixed orange silt and H3 - fill of [304]
304	08-2	Ploughmarks - shallow parallel linear v shaped cuts truncating ground surface

Table 7 – Trench 08-2 Contexts

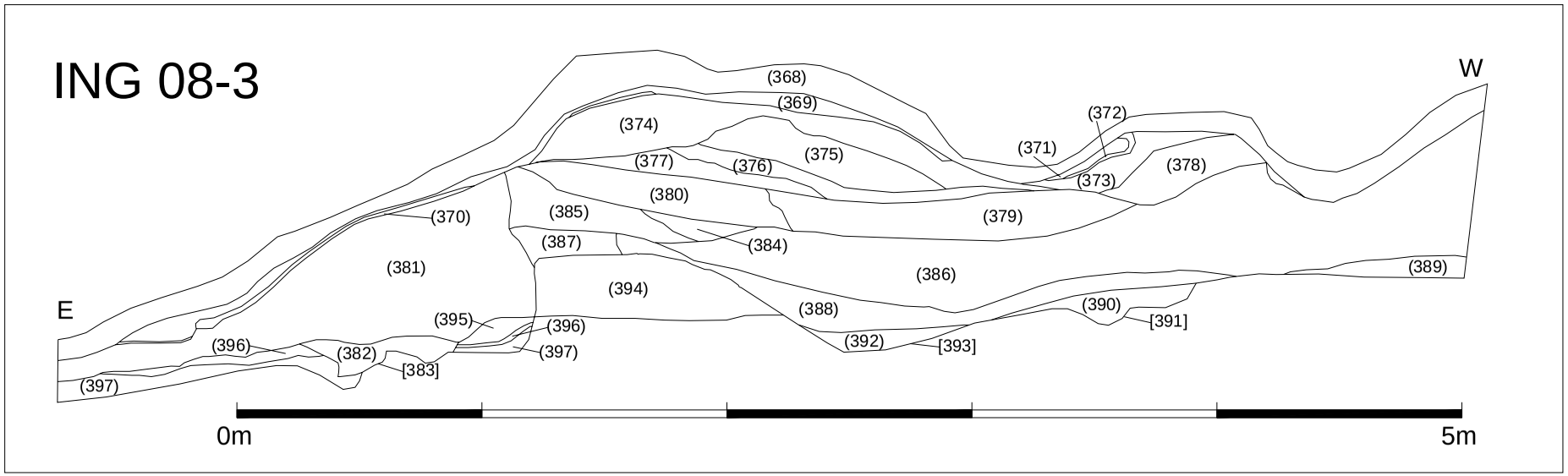

Figure 15 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 – Trench 3 – North facing section.

Figure 16 – Trench 08-3
Showing wall (394) and overlying depoits, camera facing south.

Context	Area	Description
368	08-3	Topsoil
369	08-3	Orange brown silt - aeolian
370	08-3	Coarse dark grey tephra - V-1477
371	08-3	Orange brown silt - aeolian
372	08-3	Coarse dark grey tephra - V-1477
373	08-3	Orange brown silt - aeolian
374	08-3	Orange brown silt with frequent turf collapse
375	08-3	Orange blocks silt with blocks of H3 – wall repair?
376	08-3	Mid brown /yellow brown turf collapse
377	08-3	Mid brown /yellow brown turf construction
378	08-3	Turf wall - dark brown/pale brown strengur - at least 4 thin courses
379	08-3	Dark orange brown aeolian silt
380	08-3	Turf wall repair - dark brown/orange brown - type unclear
381	08-3	Orange brown aeolian silt with streaks of H3/H4 tephra
382	08-3	Mottled fill of [383]
383	08-3	Spade marks
384	08-3	Orange/white upcast
385	08-3	Orange brown silt with white tephra blocks – wall repair?
386	08-3	Dark brown silt with occasional lense/flecks of white (H3?) tephra
387	08-3	Turf wall collapse - derived from (394)
388	08-3	Compacted dark brown silt - track surface?
389	08-3	Compacted dark brown silt
390	08-3	Mixed upcast - fill of [391]
391	08-3	Spade marks
392	08-3	Heavily compacted upcast - fill of [393]
393	08-3	Construction cut - turf extraction?
394	08-3	Turf wall inc. LNS - strengur, 3+ courses
395	08-3	Disturbed natural silt
396	08-3	H3 (?) in situ
397	08-3	Natural orange brown silt

Table 8 – Trench 08-3 Contexts

Trench ING08-3

Trench ING08-3 targeted a portion of the eastern long boundary, where it forms part of the same enclosure examined in trenches 08-2 and 08-4. It was aligned east-west and measured 5.85m in length, 1.45m in maximum depth and 1m in width.

This trench contained at least 2 turf walls, along with 3 likely episodes of wall repair. At the base of the trench wall (394) sat upon the undisturbed ground surface. This wall comprised at least 3 courses of turf strengur, including the Landnám tephra sequence. To the west of wall (394) the natural ground surface had been truncated by a shallow ditch [393] interpreted as a construction cut for turf extraction. To the east of wall (394), the ground surface had been truncated by numerous small irregular events thought to be spade marks [383], or possibly stone throws – although the latter possibility is unsupported by the presence of any stone in the trench.

Wall (394) sat beneath a deposit of collapsed turf (387), and episodes of possible reinforcement and repair (385), (380) and (377). Also, to the west, wall (394) was abutted by a highly compacted grey brown silt (388), filling ditch [393] and likely forming a surface or trackway. The latter features were sealed and interspersed by multiple layers of collapse, upcast and aeolian deposition - (376), (379), (384),(386). Above these, a further deposit of turf (375), possibly a repair, was noted.

Further to the west in Trench ING08-3, as indicated by the surface topology, and further late episode of turf construction (378) was apparent. Wall (387) comprised at least 4 thin courses of turf strengur – although it is perhaps possible that (387) is a collapsed element of the boundary created by earlier events, the turf used in this deposit was notable different from that seen elsewhere. This deposit was closely overlain by a coarse dark grey tephra horizon (likely to be V-1477), and thus wall (387) is thought to have a later date.

Trench ING08-4

Trench ING08-4 examined the second southern most of 4 east-west walls forming compartments or enclosures between two long linear boundaries. The trench was aligned north-south and measured 5.60m in length, 1.15m in maximum depth, and 1m in width. This trench revealed the remains of a turf wall construction and also numerous small parallel linear truncations of the ground surface, thought to indicate ploughing (see also ING08-2, Figure 13).

A turf wall (261) survived to 4 courses of strengur and included the Landnám tephra sequence in turf. Wall (261) sat upon natural deposits, including the Landnám tephra sequence in situ (266). At either side of the wall, the natural ground surface had been truncated, likely for turf extraction – to the south by shallow ditch feature [264], and to the north by features [260] and [258]. Feature [258] is seen to be stratigraphically later than feature [260] and must represent a secondary phase of construction. Feature [258] was also seen to truncate the remains of several shallow, linear, parallel v-shaped features [273] seen to truncate the natural ground surface.

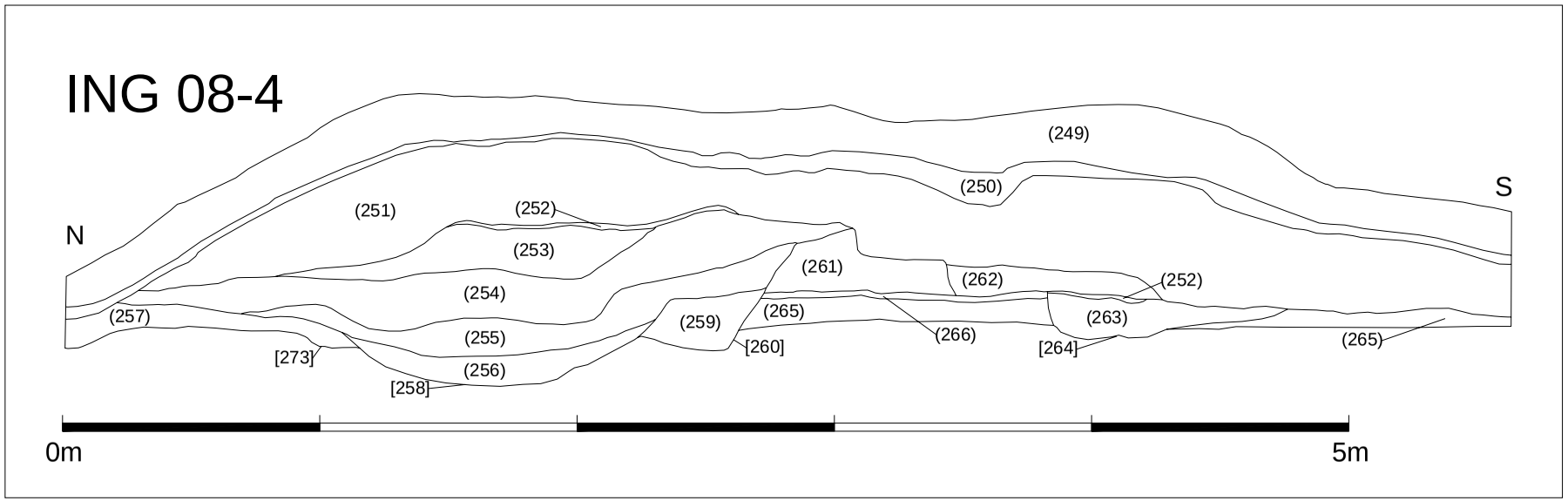

Figure 17 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 – Trench 4 – West facing section.

Context	Area	Description
249	08-4	Topsoil
250	08-4	Dark grey coarse tephra - V-1477?
251	08-4	Mixed grey brown silt, with lenses of blue grey tephra, turf, aeolian
252	08-4	Blue grey tephra - H-1300?
253	08-4	Mixed orange brown aeolian silt with turf fragments
254	08-4	Dark grey brown silt with frequent turf fragments - derived from (261)
255	08-4	Mixed silt and turf - primary collapse of (261)
256	08-4	Compact, homogenous mid brown silt. Surface of track?
257	08-4	Mid orange brown silt with frequent patches of LNS and white tephra - disturbed subsoil
258	08-4	Construction cut - turf extraction?
259	08-4	Dark grey brown silt with occasional turf fragments
260	08-4	Construction cut - turf extraction?
261	08-4	Turf wall - strengur inc. LNS, H3. At least 4 courses
262	08-4	Mid brown silt, occasional turf inclusions
263	08-4	Mixed upcast and collapse
264	08-4	Construction cut - turf extraction?
265	08-4	Orange brown aeolian silt - natural
266	08-4	LNS tephra in situ
267	08-4	Mottled dark grey silt - fill of [268]
268	08-4	Possible posthole
269	08-4	Mottled dark grey silt - fill of [270]
270	08-4	Possible posthole
271	08-4	Mottled dark grey silt - fill of [272]
272	08-4	Possible posthole
273	08-4	Ploughmarks - shallow parallel linear v shaped cuts truncating ground surface

Table 9 – Trench 08-4 Contexts

Construction cut [258] was primarily filled by a compacted mid brown silt (256) – interpreted as having functioned as a surface or trackway. The latter was sealed by mixed layers of turf collapse and aeolian deposition - layers (253), (254) and (255). These in turn lay beneath a layer of fine dark blueish grey tephra (possibly H-1300), a further aeolian deposit (251), and then by a continuous deposit of coarse dark grey tephra (250) thought to be V-1477.

Unlike most of the trenches at Ingiríðarstaðir, no repairs or re-iterations of the boundary wall could be discerned in Trench ING08-4. As in Trench ING08-2, features interpeted as ploughing marks were seen to survive to the north of the ealiest wall construction. This implies that enclosures to the north of both trenches may have been exploited for arable agriculture. However, no signs of this activity were discerned in trenches ING07-2, 08-1 or 08-3. This reflect the original extent of ground breaking, or may simply represent differential survival of these features.

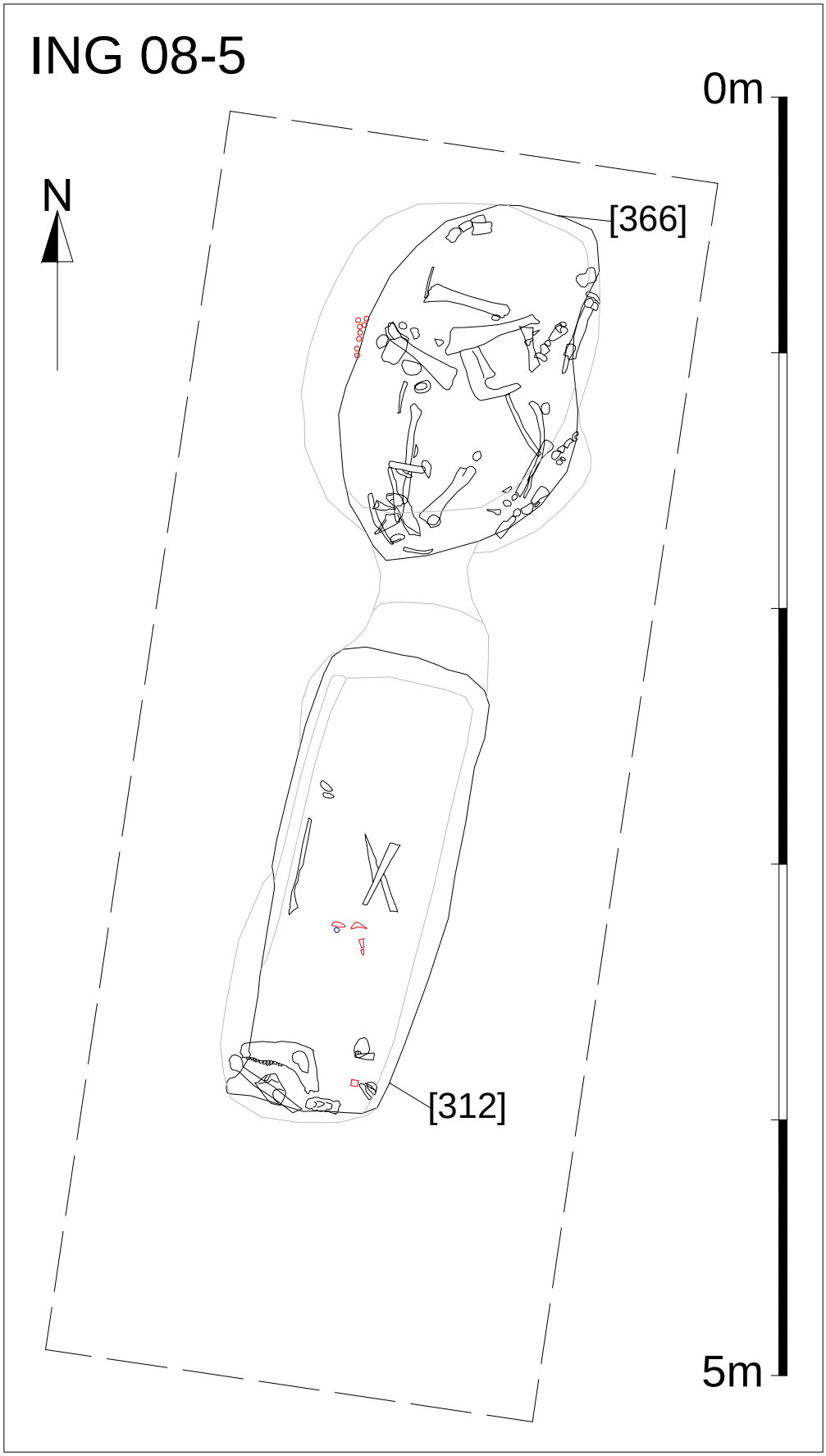

Figure 18 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 – Trench 5
Excavated features and skeletal remains.

Figure 19 Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 Trench 5

Post excavation overview of a pair of pre-christian graves. Camera facing northwest.

A rectangular human grave is in the foreground, and an ovoid horse grave behind.

Context	Area	Description
241	08-5	Coarse dark grey tephra - V-1477 - sealing horse grave [366]
242	08-5	Coarse dark grey tephra - V-1477 - sealing human grave [312]
243	08-5	Dark brown silt with lenses of dark grey tephra -fill of [366]
244	08-5	Dark brown silt with lenses of dark grey tephra - fill of [312]
245	08-5	Organic traces in fill of [312]
246	08-5	Fill of grave [312]
247	08-5	Fill of grave [366]
248	08-5	Fill of grave [366]
309	08-5	Group - Fills of horse burial [366]
310	08-5	Group - Fills of human burial [312]
312	08-5	Cut - human grave
362	08-5	Fill of grave - bone overlay - [312]
363	08-5	Fill of grave - bone overlay - [366] - upper
364	08-5	Fill of grave - bone overlay - [366] - mid
365	08-5	Fill of grave - bone overlay - [366] - lower
366	08-5	Cut - horse grave
367	08-5	Group - associated grave pair - cuts [312] and [366]

Table 10 – Trench 08-5 Contexts

Trench ING08-5

Detailed examination of an area to the west of the long north-south boundary wall at Ingiríðarstaðir filed to shed light on the likely location of a juncture between said boundary and other boundaries extending over the heathland to the west, as seen on aerial photographs, and traced close to the farm site by the 2005-6 survey program. However, a number of other suspected man made features rapidly came to light – a series of shallow, similarly aligned hollows sitting upon a low rise just outside the farm homefield. It was decided to test a pair of these features, to determine date and function. Upon excavation, these features rapidly

displayed the morphology of robbed pre-christian burials, along with fragments of human and animal bone.

To the north the disturbed remains of a horse burial were discovered. These lay within a sub oval grave cut [366] measuring circa 1.50m in length, 0.92m in width and 0.55m in depth. The axis of this feature was aligned NNE-SSW, and the sides were approximately vertical. The base of the grave was cut down into underlying blue grey glacial sandy clay and gravels. The partial and disturbed remains of a horse are discussed in detail in Appendix 1. The grave was seen to be undercut (or possibly collapsed) to the west, and in this area 8 heavily corroded iron objects were recovered, likely to be nails or rivets (shown in red – Figure 18). The grave was filled by a mixture of disturbed orange brown silt and whitish tephra, with occasional fragments of turf containing the Landnám sequence. This fill was excavated in several parts in order to facilitate the recording of bone remains. Overlying these layers, an horizon of coarse dark grey tephra (241) thought to be V-1477, filled a shallow hollow. The grave cut itself truncated traces of the Landnám tephra sequence at the ground surface.

To the south, a disturbed human grave was excavated. The grave cut [312] was approximately rectangular and measured 1.82m in length, 0.70m in width and 0.48m in depth. Grave cut [312] was also aligned NNE-SSW, and dug down to blue grey glacial deposits. The sides of the cut are approximately vertical, or beyond vertical to the south west. Only a few fragments of human bone were discovered within the fills (group 310), along with some elements of a horse, including a jawbone. These remains are discussed at length in Appendix 2 and 1. The fragments of bone at the southern end of grave cut [312] were found to lie beneath several linear streaks of organic material (245) though to be decayed wood, and perhaps the remains of a coffin. At the centre of the grave a number of poorly preserved iron objects were discovered, in 4 pieces (shown in red – Figure 18) – along with another undetermined artefact of whitish corroded metal (shown in blue). These artefacts are currently undergoing conservation. The grave was filled by a mixed deposit of orange silt, whitish tephra and turf collapse (310), and sealed by a layer of coarse dark grey tephra (242).

The graves are interpeted as a pair – associated with one another, and held to be contemporary. Both had been robbed, on at least one occasion, long before the deposition of the V-1477 tephra horizon. The presence of elements of a horses head within the human grave, and seemingly protected by elements of a wooden object are thought to be an original feature of the burial rite – but this is unproven.

Unlike many other burials of this period, the graves did not appear to have been capped by significant stone built cairns, as very little stone was recovered from either grave or its surroundings. Following this discovery, it was decided to carry out a high resolution topographical survey of the immediate area around the graves. Aerial photographic evidence has also been consulted. These are shown below, along with an interpretative plan.

Prior to further investigation it is of course impossible to confirm how many of the visible features are in fact burials, not what percentage of those burials are human, nor are these features dated. Nonethless, the morphology of the surveyed features is entirely consistent with patterning seen at other grave fields, being groups of aligned features separated by distances of 4-6m.

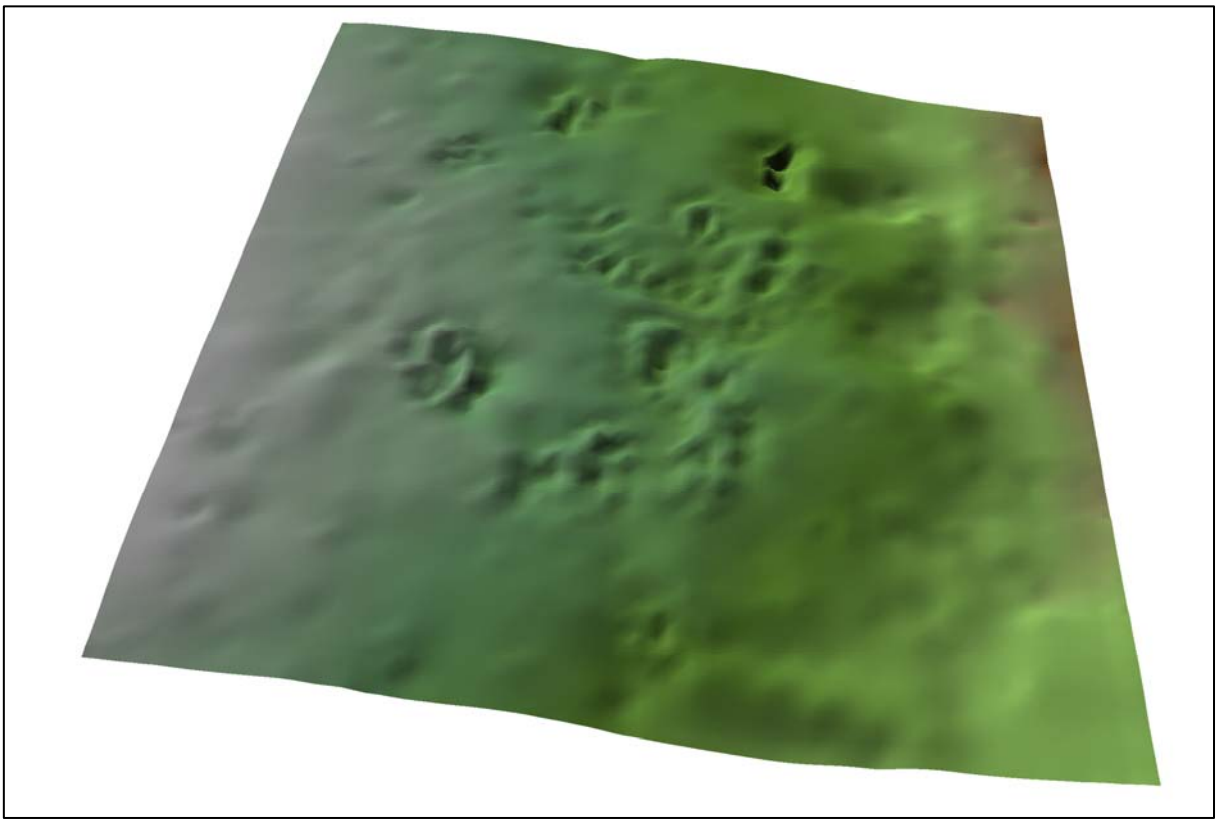

Figure 20 – Pre- christian grave field at Ingiríðarstaðir
Interpolation of high resolution topographic survey

Figure 21 – Pre- christian grave field at Ingiríðarstaðir
Aerial Photograph, looking down and west – excavated features numbered 1 & 2
(Courtesy of Árni Einarsson)

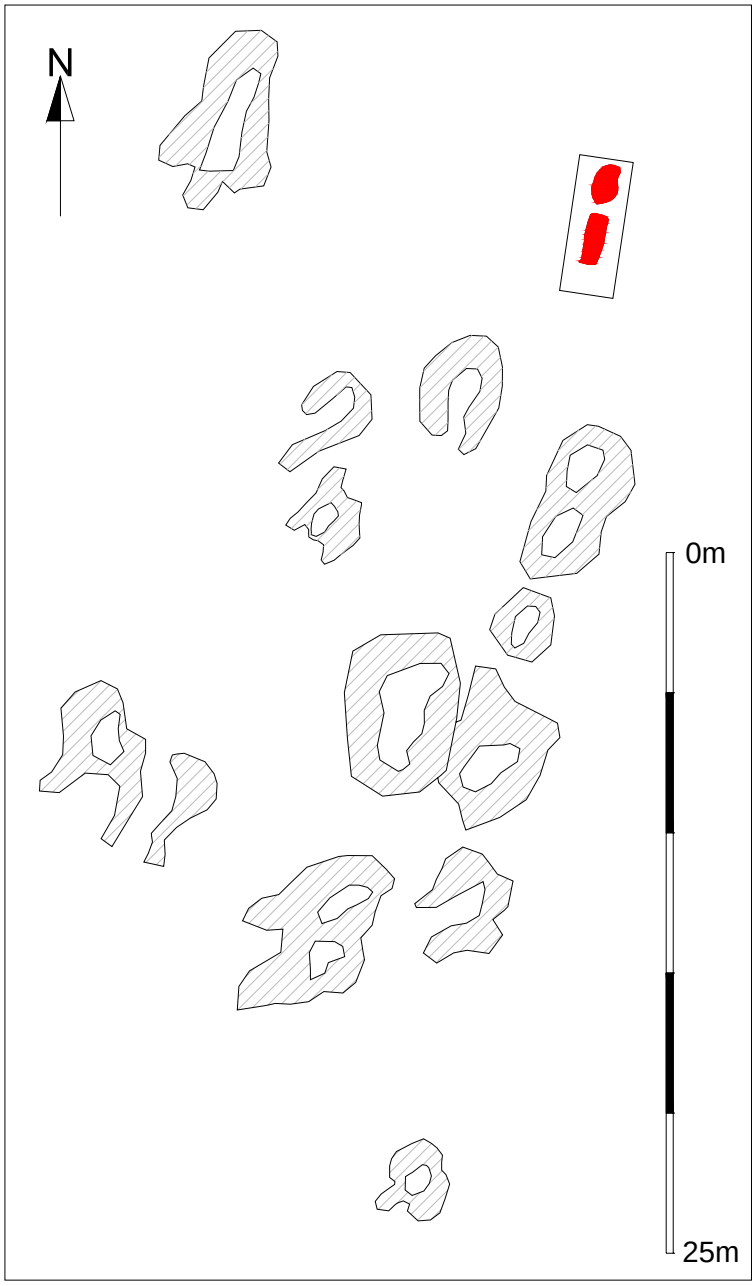

Figure 22 – Pre- christian grave field at Ingiríðarstaðir Interpretative plan.

It is possible to discern perhaps 16-18 features that may be pre-christian graves. Naturally some of the features appear more certain, and others less. Furthermore, as the visible features are thought to have been highlighted by the process of grave robbing in antiquity, it remains possible that further similar features remain unseen, and undisturbed. Whilst it is premature to insist that any more than the currently excavated features are in fact pre-christian burials, it is however appropriate to highlight the potential of what may prove to be the largest known pre-christian gravefield in Iceland. Furthermore, the location itself, in the landscape as well as in relation to the Ingiríðarstaðir farm, the boundary wall and the old route running nort-south through the valley, fits well to the general characteristics of Viking age burial grounds in Iceland.[13]

[13] cf. Friðriksson 2004a, 2004b

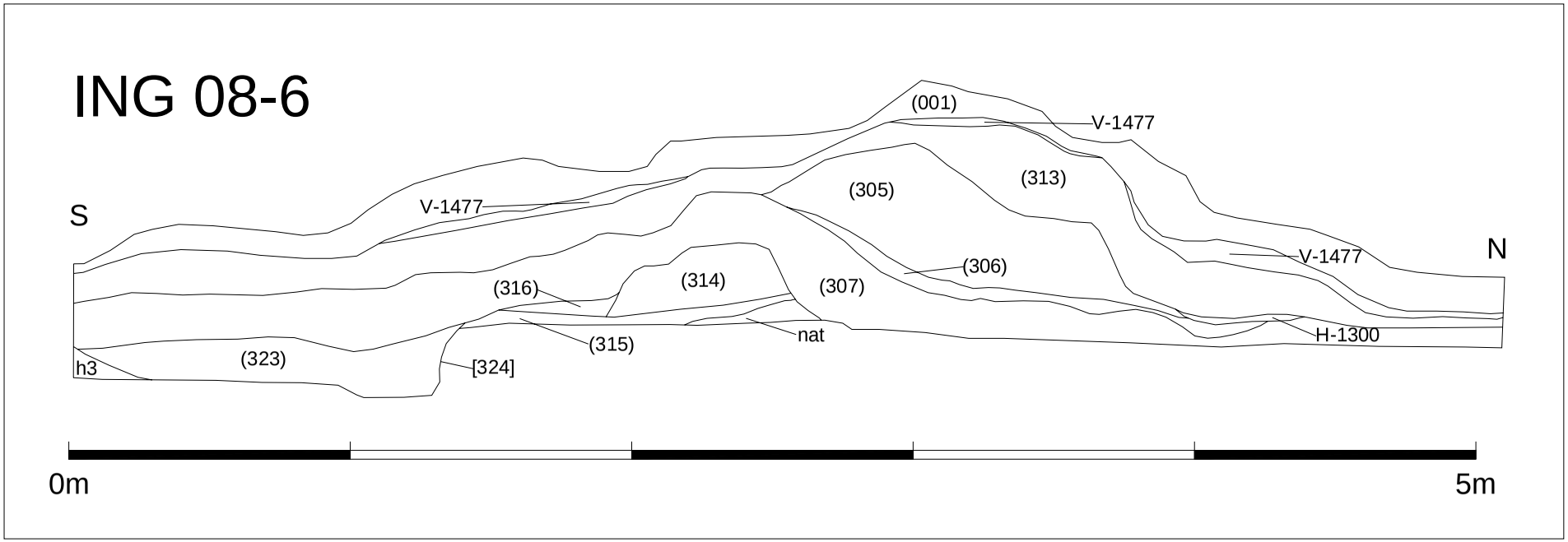

Figure 23 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 – Trench 6 – East facing section.

Context	Area	Description
305	08-6	Turf wall
306	08-6	Upcast, turf debris - levelling under (305)
307	08-6	Orange brown aeolian silt
313	08-6	Orange brown aeolian silt
314	08-6	Turf wall - strengur inc. LNS
315	08-6	LNS in situ
316	08-6	Turf collapse
323	08-6	Compacted upcast
324	08-6	Construction cut - turf extraction?

Table 11 – Trench 08-6 Contexts

Trench ING08-6

Trench ING08-6 targeted the southern homefield boundary of Ingiríðarstaðir. The trench was aligned north south and measured 5.1m in length, 1.15m in maximum depth and 1m in width. At the base of the trench a turf wall (314) was apparent, built of strengur and including the Landnám tephra sequence (see Appendix 4). Wall (314) sat over the Landnám tephra in situ (315), and other naturally deposited sediments. To the south of wall (314), this natural ground surface had beeen truncated by a shallow ditch [324] or turf cutting. Feature [324] was filled by a compacted mixed deposit of orange silt and whitish tephra, which may have functioned as a track surface.

The latter features lay beneath a layer of turf collapse (316) derived from wall (314), and sealed beneath aeolian silts (layer 307). Above layer (307) was a thin band of mixed upcast and turf debris (306), possibly forming a levelling deposit for feature (305) – a secondary wall build. The wall (305) was in turn sealed by aeolian deposits (313) and two tephra deposits - H1300 and V-1477.

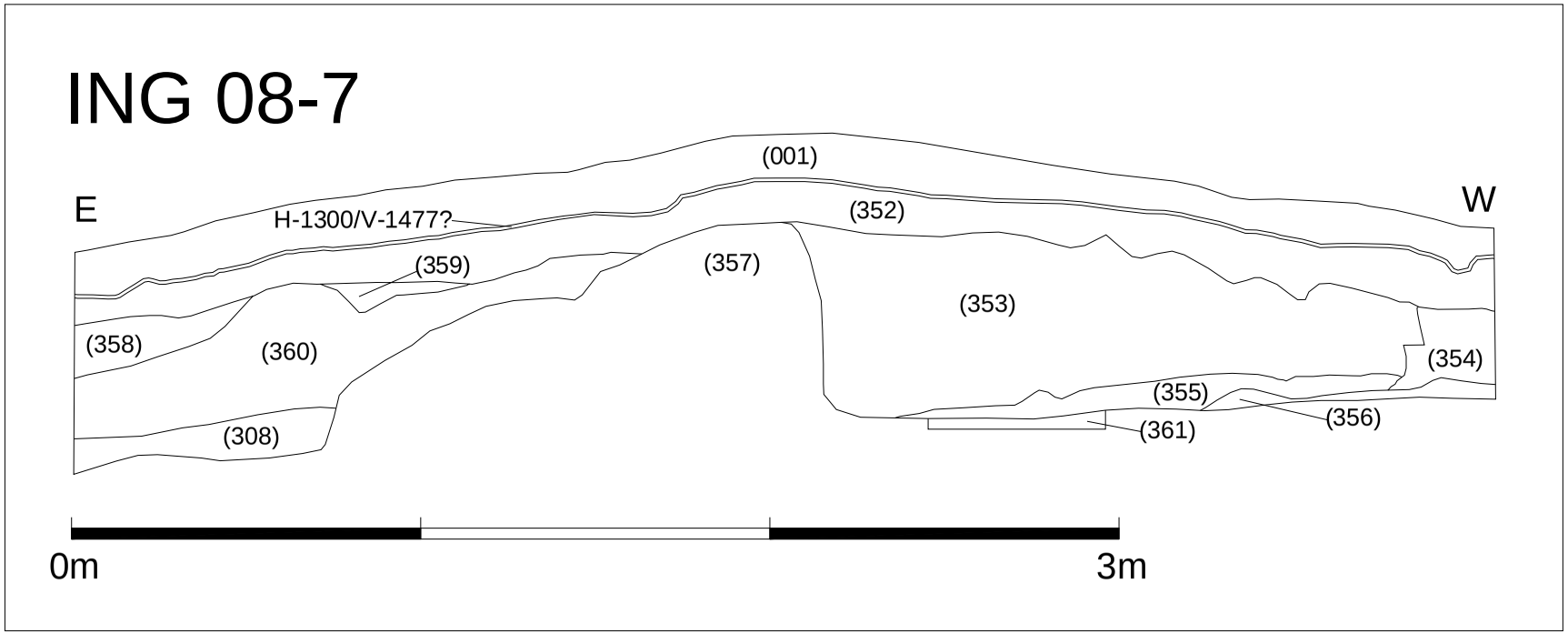

Figure 24 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 – Trench 7 – North facing section.

Figure 25 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 – Trench 7.

Turf collapse including the Landnám sequence (353) laying over an in situ floor layer (361) .
Camera looking south. Scale 1m.

Context	Area	Description
308	08-7	Mixed grey brown silt, with occasional charcoal
352	08-7	Mid brown aeolian sandy silt
353	08-7	Turf collapse, inc LNS.
354	08-7	Dark brown aeolian silt with turf fragments
355	08-7	Dark brown silt - aeolian, with flecks of turf - derived from (361)?
356	08-7	Pale brown mixed silt.
357	08-7	Turf wall, strengur, includes LNS
358	08-7	Dark brown aeolian silt with turf fragments
359	08-7	Dark brown aeolian silt with turf fragments = (358)?
360	08-7	Turf collapse with charcoal
361	08-7	Dark brownish black, compacted. Floor layer.

Table 12 – Trench 08-7 Contexts

Trench ING08-7

Trench ING08-7 examined a cluster of irregular upstanding features towards the centre of the Ingiríðarstaðir homefield. These included an unclear north-south feature, thought to be the remains of a wall. These features remain grassed.

Trench ING08-7 was aligned east-west, testing this feature. The trench measured 4.05m in length, up to 1m in depth and 1m in width. At the centre of the trench a turf wall came to light (357), containing multiple courses of strengur turf including the Landnám tephra sequence. Adjoining wall (357) to the west was a compacted dark grey/black floor surface (361). As these features clearly indicated the internal space of a building, work was discontinued at this point, and both features remain unexcavated. An environmental sample was taken from layer (361), and cleaning of surface (361) recovered a fragmentary antler comb (F – 5 – see below), and a single human tooth (see Appendix 2).

Floor layer (361) lay beneath thin layers of mixed aeolian material and turf collapse (354, 355 and 356). The latter layers were covered by a thick and extensive deposit of turf collapse (353) including well preserved turf strengur (see Figure 25).

To the east of wall (357) the earliest excavated deposit was a mixed grey deposit including charcoal fragments, perhaps derived from an underlying surface. Deposit (357) was sealed by layers of turf collapse and aeolian silts (360, 359 and 358). All latter layers were sealed by a deposit of aeolian silt (352) and by a double layer of blue grey /dark grey tephra including both H-1300 and V-1477 (See Appendix 4).

Features discovered in trench ING08-7 point to the location of early structures, likely used as a dwelling. Dating evidence from the tephra sequence and the artefacts suggest a period of use perhaps in the 10th or 11th centuries. No evidence was found at this location for re-use or reconstruction of these features. Further examination of these structures on a larger scale has excellent potential, but was beyond the remit of the current investigation.

Trench ING08-8

Trench ING08-8 investigated the western most of two long parallel boundaries apparent at Ingiríðarstaðir. The trench was taken to the south of several aparrent enclosures (see above), and was aligned east-west. Trench ING08-8 measured 5m in length, up to 1.28m in depth and 1m in width.

At the base of the trench a very small fragment of turf wall (343) was discovered, including the Landnám tephra sequence. Wall (343) sat over undisturbed natural silt (344). To the west of wall fragment (343) there also survived a thin layer of ash and charcoal (311) sitting on the natural ground surface. Deposit (311) is interpreted as a possible indication of ground clearance. To the east of wall fragment (343) the ground surface had been truncated by a turf cutting [347]. To the west, ground surface (311) had also been truncated by a turf cutting [346]. Feature [346] was filled by a sequence of trampled silts including whitish tephra and turf fragments (342, 326, 322, and 321) interpreted as possible track surfaces, external to the primary boundary.

Deposit (311) was sealed a deposit of mixed upcast (341), perhaps also a construction event. In turn, both deposit (341) and wall fragment (343) were overlain by a further upcast layer (340). Sitting over deposit (340) was a secondary turf wall fragment (329) including an unknown grey tephra. Turf wall (329) showed evidence of erosion at its eastern edge - feature [345]. To the west turf wall (329) was abutted by a further construction deposit (328) of upcast. The latter layer was seen to be contained by semi collapsed turf (327) to the west. Further turf ollapse deposits (325, 320, 3199 were also evident to the west, sealing the track deposits.

All the above features were sealed by a thick deposit of aeolian silt (318), sealed in turn by a coarse dark grey tephra thought to be V1477, and by topsoil.

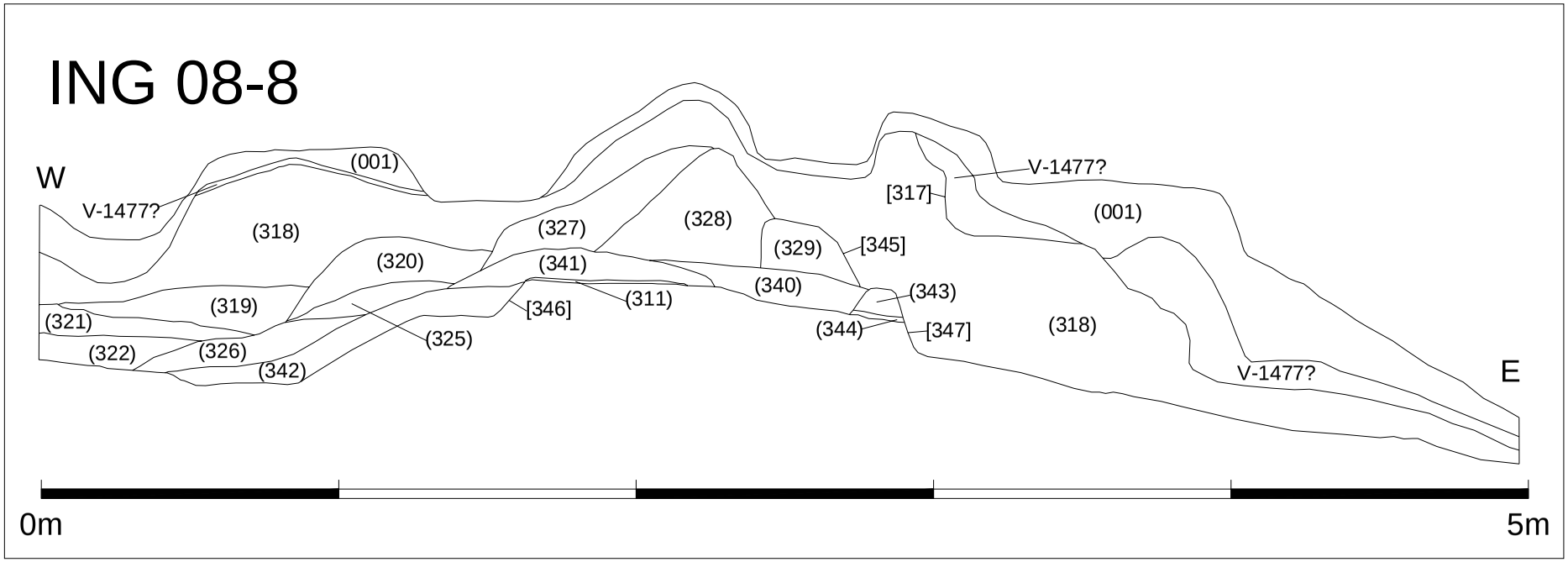

Figure 26 - Ingiríðarstaðir 2008 – Trench 8 – South facing section.

Context	Area	Description
311	08-8	Burning horizon - land clearance?
317	08-8	Erosion interface
318	08-8	Orange brown aeolian silt
319	08-8	Heavily trampled silt with occasional white tephra flecks
320	08-8	Turf collapse inc. dark grey tephra - from (327)?
321	08-8	Trampled silt with turf lenses
322	08-8	Trampled silt with iron pan
325	08-8	Orange brown silt with frequent white flecks - upcast
326	08-8	Trampled silt with turf lenses and white tephra flecks
327	08-8	Turf construction with dark grey tephra
328	08-8	Wall infill - upcast
329	08-8	Turf construction with dark grey tephra
340	08-8	Upcast
341	08-8	Upcast with grey mottling
342	08-8	Trampled silt with white tephra flecks
343	08-8	Remnant of turf wall with LNS
344	08-8	Homogenous orange brown silt preserved under (343)
345	08-8	Erosion interface
346	08-8	Construction cut - turf extraction?
347	08-8	Construction cut - turf extraction?
348	08-8	Mottled upcast fill of [349]
349	08-8	Spade marks
350	08-8	Mottled upcast fill of [351] - organic traces
351	08-8	Shallow post hole

Table 13 – Trench 08-8 Contexts

Interim finds report – Ingiríðarstaðir 2008

Guðrún Alda Gísladóttir

No finds were retrieved during the 2007 field season while 26 finds, in total, were retrieved during the 2008 field season at Ingiríðarstaðir, in Þegjandadalur. Those finds are registered under 18 finds unit. The bulk of the finds are of iron, which are very corroded and now under conservation. Further artefacts are of bone, stone and other metal. Conservation work has been undertaken by the National Museum (Þjóðminjasafn Íslands), and finds processing has been carried out at FSÍ. The metal objects await x-ray radiography and further analysis.

The finds come from four areas – Trenches ING08-1, ING08-4, ING08-5 and ING08-7. Trenches ING08-1 and ING08-4 tested boundary walls. ING08-5 is a pre-christian burial with human skeletal remains in one grave and horse remains in another. Trench ING08-7 is a domestic building (see further discussion above).

From ING08-1 is one find (No. 16) - an iron lump from context (206). This piece awaits x-ray study.

From ING08-4, one find, a whetstone (No. 13) was retrieved from context (254). It is a finely grained dark grey schistose whetstone probably of Norwegian Eidsborg type. It is 70mm long and tapers towards one end. It has two holes in the broader end, possibly the beginning of the perforation process for suspension. The surface of the whetstone is also finely grooved with possible whet marks, and the stone has many wear marks at the narrower end.

From ING08-5 are 8 finds numbers and 13 registered finds; (Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 18 are from context (310), and 14, 15 and 17 from (309). With the exception of Find No. 4 – a small possible weight of a corroded white metal, all of these finds are of iron. Two were diagnosed before conservation, No. 1 as a nail and No. 15 as a rivet. All of these finds are still in conservation and await further analysis. The location of the finds (see Figure 18 above) may suggest that the deceased person had belt around his/her waist, perhaps with a knife.

From ING08-7 are 8 finds numbers and 9 finds registered; a stone manuport (No. 9) from context (353), an antler comb (No.5) a small pebble (No. 7), an iron nail (No. 8), various unidentifiable iron fragments (No. 10), a probable local stone (No. 11) and an iron lump that

still awaits x-ray (No.12) from context (355). Find No. 6 from context (361) is also, as yet, an unidentifiable iron object.

The comb (No.5) is the most diagnostic find from this thrench. It is a single sided composite comb with a convex back, probably made of antler. It is incomplete, being broken away at both ends. It has two surviving iron rivets and two complete teeth plates still intact, and part of the third tooth plate. The side plates are decorated with lightly incised braided decoration with vertical lines at the ends. The comb has close parallels to combs found in Icelandic pagan burials and Viking age sites, which may be dated to 9th - 10 th centuries.[14]

Figure 27 - The antler bone comb found in a floor layer at Ingiríðarstaðir.
Photo: Graham Edward Langford at Þjóðminjasafn Íslands.

[14] See e.g., Kristján Eldjárn (2000) Kuml og haugfé úr heiðnum sið á Íslandi, 396-398; Batey, Colleen (2003) The finds, 14-15.

Table 14 – List of finds from Ingiríðarstaðir

Finds No	Area	Context	Type	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)
1	5	310	Nail	Iron	2	3,15
2	5	310	Object?	Iron	1	3,14
3	5	310	Object?	Iron	1	
4	5	310	Object?	Metal (pb?)	1	
5	7	355	Comb	Bone	1	
6	7	361	Lump	Iron	1	14,4
7	7	355	Pebble	Stone	2	16,9
8	7	355	Nail	Iron	1	5
9	7	353	Manuport?	Stone	1	6
10	7	355	Indet	Iron	1	1,9
11	7	355	Manuport?	Stone	1	8,9
12	7	355	Lump	Iron	1	6,1
13	4	254	Whetstone	Stone	1	9,6
14	5	309	Indet	Iron	1	0,9
15	5	309	Rivet/rove	Iron	5	31.9
16	1	206	Lump	Iron	3	21.8
17	5	309	Object	Iron	1	3,4
18	5	310	Object	Iron	1	1,57

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Appendix 1

A zooarchaeological report on animal bones excavated at a Viking Age burial site at Ingiríðarstaðir in 2008

Rúnar Leifsson

Background

In 2008 a burial (trench 2008/5) containing the remains of a human and a horse was excavated at Ingiríðarstaðir (ING08). The burial faced N-S, with the human grave to the south and the horse grave to the north. The horse was disturbed after grave robbery and some of the bone had been relocated to the southern side, although a majority was scattered on the northern side. All of the horse bone found was contained with in the grave cuts.

Horse bones

The following horse specimens were found:

1 cranial fragment.
1 complete mandible in two large fragments. M3 is erupted, incisors are worn but still quite oval in shape, so the individual is probably not more than 10 years old at most. Two canines are present so the animal is male.
3 incisors, from maxilla, worn but still oval in shape.
1 atlas.
1 axis.
4 cervical vertebrae, fully fused.
14 thoracic vertebrae, fully fused. Two of the thoracic vertebrae have wood remains attached.
3 lumbar vertebrae, all fused together. Pathology: New bone has developed around the articular processes and to a much lesser extent on the centrum epiphyses. Probably the three anterior most lumbar vertebrae.
6 rib fragments.
1 humerus, right, fully fused. Biometrics (Von den Driesch 1976) BT 70,5, SD 38,2.
1 humerus, left, epiphyses broken off.
1 radius, right, fully fused. Biometrics (Von den Driesch 1976) GL 314, BFd 60,1, Bp 78,1, BFp 72,07.
1 ulna, right, fully fused.
1 carpal radial (scaphoid), left.
1 carpal intermediate, left.
1 carpal ulnar (triquetrum), left.
1 carpal accessory, left.
1 carpal second (trapezoid), left.
2 carpals third (capitate), left and right.

1 carpal fourth (hamate), left.

1 metacarpal third, right, fully fused.
1 metacarpal third, left, fully fused. Biometrics (Von den Driesch) GL 213, Bp 46,5, Bd 47,5, Dp 33,2.
1 metacarpal second, left.
1 metapodial second or fourth.
1 femur, right, fully fused, distal epiphysis broken off but present. Biometrics (Von den Driesch 1976) SD 39,4.
1 femur, left, fully fused. Distal epiphysis broken off but present, part of proximal epiphysis broken, preservation is too bad for metrics.
1 patella, left.
1 tibia, right, fully fused, too fragmented for metrics.
1 tibia, left, fully fused. Biometrics (Von den Driesch 1976) Bd 71,6, Dd 45,9.
2 calcanei, left and right.
1 astragalus, right.
1 tarsal central, left.
1 tarsal central & tarsal third, right.
1 tarsal third, left.
1 metatarsal third, right, fully fused, pathology: fourth tarsal is fused with the metatarsal. Biometrics (Von den Driesch 1976) GL 260 (skewed because of pathology), Bp 52,5, Bd 43,3, SD 28,4.
1 metatarsal third, left, fully fused. Biometrics (Von den Driesch 1976) GL 252, Bp 47,4, SD 28,8.
1 metatarsal second, right.
1 metatarsal forth, right.
1 phalanx first, fully fused. Biometrics (Vond den Driesch 1976) GL 77,5, SD 33,0, BP 50,2, Bd 44,8, Bfd 43,1.
1 phalanx first, fully fused. Biometrics (Vond den Driesch 1976) GL 81,3, SD 32,9, Bp 50,7, Dp 37,1, Bd 42,1, BFd 41,2
1 phalanx first, fully fused, too eroded for metrics.
1 phalanx first, fully fused. Biometrics (Vond den Driesch 1976) GL 78,0, Bd 44,2, Bp 50,4, SD 33,1.
1 phalanx second, fully fused. Biometrics (Vond den Driesch 1976) GL 48,6, SD 42,5, Dp 32,2, Bp 51,4, Bd 45,4.
1 phalanx second, fully fused, too eroded for metrics.
1 phalanx second, fully fused. Biometrics (Von den Driesch 1976) Bp 49,1, Bd 48,4, GL 45,4.
1 phalanx second, fully fused. Biometrics (Von den Driesch) GL 48,9, Bd 43,3, Bp 49,6, SD 41,2.
4 phalanges third.
2 proximal sesamoids.
1 distal sesamoid (navicular).
2 unknown small fragments.

Discussion:

The equine bones found in 2008 at Ingiríðarstaðir probably represent a single individual. A majority of the skeleton is present, but because the grave was disturbed in antiquity the bones show differential preservation. It is evident from the canines in the mandible that the horse was male. The individual was at least ca 5-6 years of age when it died. The minimal age

limit is deduced from epiphysial fusion, all the characteristic bones, including the vertebrae, are fully fused. But judging by dental eruption and wear the individual may have been a few years older, up to 10 years. Thus, the animal was in its prime; adult but not aged. The shoulder height of the horse was ca 1.30 m,[15] which is similar to the modern Icelandic breed. Judging by the completeness of the skeleton and the total lack of cut and/or chop marks, a whole carcass was laid to rest in the grave but. No marks are found on the bones that could point towards the cause of death.

An interesting ailment affected the horse's lower back. The 1st, 2nd and 3th lumbar vertebrae are completely fused together. New bone has proliferated around the articular processes, particularly on the left side. The condition is probably not age related because no evidence of osteoarthritis is seen on the articulation surfaces. The fusion more likely occurred due to repeated and ongoing stress to the animal's back, e.g. from riding or pulling or carrying heavy loads.

Figure 1 Lateral view (left side aspect) of the fused vertebrae

15 Based on regression equations from May (1985). Withers height (mm) = GL*appropriate factor. : r Radius: 314*4,111=1290,854. l Metacarpal: 213*6,102=1299,726. l Metatarsal: 252*5,239=1320,228

Another pathology is found in the animals right hind leg. The fourth tarsal is fused with the metatarsal and the central tarsal is in the state of fusing with the third tarsal, there is a line visible between them on the medial surface but elsewhere they are completely fused together with a proliferation of new bone. It is interesting that none such pathology is visible on the left side specimens. This affliction is know commonly as *spavin* and could indicate ongoing stress on the hind quarters but is more likely to be genetic.

Figure 2 Anterior view of the fused central and third tarsals

Wood remains can be found on two thoracic vertebrae, pressed tightly against them. On one vertebra the wood remains are laterally on the left side, but on the other vertebra wood remains are found laterally on the right side and also on the posterior articulation. The wood remains might be the remnants of a saddle, which is further supported by the fact that the wood is present laterally on both sides of the vertebrae.

Figure 3 Lateral view (right side aspect) of a thoracic vertebrae with wood remains

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Appendix 2
Human skeletal remains excavated at Ingiríðarstaðir 2008

Hildur Gestdóttir

The two burials (trench 2008/5) excavated at Ingiríðarstaðir in 2008 contained a total of 14 disarticulated bones or bone fragments which could be identified as human. In addition a human tooth crown was recovered from trench 2008/7.

Methods

The main emphasis of the osteological analysis was to ascertain the minimum number of individuals (MNI) in the burials. To achieve this, the bones are sorted by element, and where applicable right and left side. Where possible bones from the same individual are identified, either by matching up articular surfaces, or the right and left side bones. Similarly bones that obviously belonged to different individuals, for example difference in size or robusticity are separated. Where possible, the age and sex of bones is recorded. The MNI is achieved by counting the most frequently occurring bone, taking into account comparisons of size, age and sex.

Sexually diagnostic characteristics of the skull recorded (see for example Buikstra & Ubelaker, 1994). Age at death could be estimated from dental wear (Brothwell, 1981). No long limb bones were preserved well enough to estimate living stature.

Results

The fourteen bones from the burials represent a minimum number of one individual. The size and shape of the bones are consistent with them all belonging to the same person, although this cannot be stated conclusively. Few diagnostic criteria were preserved. The shape of the palate and the robusticity of the femur are male characteristics, although a diagnosis of sex is far from conclusive. The dental wear suggests that the age at death was over 35. No pathological changes were recorded. A detailed description of the bones recovered from trench 2008/5 can be found in Table A.

A single molar crown (most likely an adult third molar) was recovered from unit [355] in trench 2008/7. The enamel is polished by wear without dentine exposure, indicating an age of over 30 when the tooth was lost. The root has broken off post-mortem, but is impossible to know whether this tooth was lost ante- or post-mortem.

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Table A

Bone	Side	Segment	Comment	Age	Sex	Unit	Count	NMI
Temporal	Right	Tympanic portion.	Very flaked.	Ad.	?	[310]	1	
	Left	Tympanic portion.	Fragmented and flaked.	Ad.	?	[310]	1	1
Maxilla	Bilateral	Palate.	The right and left M1's are both present. Heavy attrition, with most of the central part of the enamel on the crown worn off. Most of the teeth anterior to the molars would have been present, only root preserved. Palate is "U" shaped.	+35	?M?	[309] 4. fylling	2	1
Os coxa	Left	Ilium	Fragment, no sex or age diagnostic features preserved.	Ad.	?	[310]	1	1
Femur	Left	Shaft & distal epiphysis	Distal epiphysis has broken off, but is present. All the cortical bone is very flaked. Robust individual.	Ad.	?	[310]	1	1
Tibia	Bilateral	Shaft only	Cortical bone very flaked.	Ad.	?	[310]	2	1
Fibula	Right	Shaft only	Fragment of shaft.	Ad.	?	[310]	1	
	?	Shaft	x5 small fragments of shaft, some could belong to right bone. Cortical bone flaked	Ad.	?	[310]	1	1
Talus	Bilateral	Complete	Very flaked.	Ad.	?	[310]	2	1
Metatarsal	?	Shaft only	x2 unidentified metatarsals.	Ad.	?	[309] 3. fylling	2	1
TOTAL							**14**	**1**

Appendix 3

Fornleifarannsókn í Þegjandadal, Suður-Þingeyjarsýslu 2007
Gjóskulagagreining

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INNGANGUR

Farin var vettvangsferð í Þegjandadal þann 25. ágúst 2007. Skoðaðir voru alls fimm skurðir á tveimur eyðibýlum, Ingiríðarstöðum (skurðir A-C) og Einarsstöðum (einn skurður) sem bæði eru vestan megin í dalnum. Snið voru mæld og gjóskusýni tekin til frekari skoðunar.

Varðandi lýsingar á gjóskulögum vísast til fyrri greinargerða höfundar um fornleifarannsóknir í Þingeyjarsýslum. Þau gjóskulög sem mest hefur verið stuðst við eru; Landnámslag (LNL) frá því um 870 e.Kr., V~950, H-1158, K-1262, H-1300, V-1477 og V-1717. Auk þess er mikið stuðst við svonefnda Landnámssyrpu (LNS), sem er syrpa 5-6 gjóskulaga sem koma fyrir á 6-8 cm kafla í sniðum. Gjóskulagið V~950 er yfirleitt efsta lagið í LNS á Norðausturlandi.

NIÐURSTÖÐUR

Ingiríðarstaðir

Skurður A – ING07-1: Garður ca. 100 m NV bæjarhóls. Mælt var snið í vesturprófíl skurðsins. Utan með garðinum hefur verið skorið í gegnum LNS, Heklu-3 og Heklu-4 að hluta. Undir garðinum er þunnt móöskukennt mannvistarlag 0,5-2 cm ofan við LNS, sem er bylgjótt og sennilega troðið. Ofan við mannvistarlagið eru skilin við torfið óljós, en um 1-3 cm eru þar á milli. Í torfinu er LNS og Hekla-3 mest áberandi ásamt allþykku ljósbrúnu jarðvegslagi. Ofan á frákasti og hruni vestan við garðinn eru þrjú gjóskulög, V-1477, H-1300 og K-1262? (mynd 1, snið I). Garðurinn er frá því fyrir miðja 13. öld.

Skurður C – ING07-3: Hringlaga garðlag utan um meint bænhús. Skurðurinn liggur í N-S stefnu. Yfir torfi eru gjóskulögin V-1477 og H-1300. Koladreif er upp undir H-1300. Stutt er frá laginu niður á torfhrun, 1-2 cm sunnan megin en um 5 cm norðan megin. Samfellt torflag liggur frá garðinum í átt að bænhúsinu sem er um 2 m sunnar. Torfið situr ofan á LNS og allþykku mannvistarlagi sem er yfir henni. Neðsta torfið inniheldur LNS og mannvistarlag, síðan kemur torf ofar þar sem slitrur af Heklu-3 er áberandi. Enginn niðurgröftur er sjáanlegur. Í LNS eru tvö dökk gjóskulög mest áberandi, dökkgrátt og svart. Garðurinn er frá því fyrir miðja 13. öld. Garðurinn var hlaðinn eftir að búseta hafði varað um nokkurt skeið

á staðnum, sbr. mannvistarlagið undir honum (sama á við um fyrri garð, sbr. skurð A)

Skurður D – ING07-4: Skurður í bæjarhól (mynd 1, snið II. Ekki var grafið í gegnum mannvistarlög í hólnum. Neðarlega í sniðunum er dökkt gjóskulag, að öllum líkindum *in situ*. Lagið er talsvert raskað en má þó rekja eftir endilöngum skurðinum og í endum hans, þannig að víst má telja að lagið sé *in situ*. Á vettvangi var talið að um H-1300 gæti verið að ræða en eftir nánari skoðun á gjóskunni má útiloka að svo sé. Í sýninu eru tvær glergerðir, dökkbrúnt og ljósmóbrúnt, sem bendir til að uppruni gjóskunnar sé í fleiri en einni eldstöð. Um blöndu tveggja gjóskulaga er líklega að ræða. Hugsanlegt er að dökka glerið tilheyri gjóskulaginu K-1262 en um það skal ekkert fullyrt að svo stöddu. Hallast frekar að því að þetta gjóskulag sé eldra. Til að fá úr þessu skorið þyrfti að skoða fleiri sýni úr bæjarhólnum og efnagreina gjóskuna. Einnig væri hjálp í að skoða snið í gegnum bæjarhólinn, niður í óhreyfðan jarðveg. Ofan við gjóskulagið tekur við allþykkt torflag (torfveggur?) sem inniheldur sama gjóskulag. Þar ofan á hefur síðan gjóskulagið H-1300 fallið. Lagið er slitrótt og bylgjótt en er þó að öllum líkindum *in situ*. Gjóskulagið hefur fallið eftir að veggurinn var verulega siginn, nánast útflattur. Efst er síðan torf með V-1477.

Ljóst er að í bæjarhólnum eru mannvistarlög sem liggja beggja megin H-1300. Lítil umsvif hafa verið þarna um það leyti sem gjóskulagið fellur. Síðar, á 14. – 15. öld er byggt aftur á sama stað. Yngsta sjáanlega torfhleðslan í hólnum er frá því eftir 1477, frá 16. öld eða síðar. Þessi torfveggur stendur allvel uppi og er skýr. Gjóskulagið V-1717 sást ekki í sniðunum en það mætti eflaust finna við frekari athuganir.

Skurður B – ING07-2: Garður í hólfi sem er austan við túngarð (tengist honum). Sniðin bera með sér að þarna hafi verið uppblástur (jarðvegsrof) í eina tíð. Gjóskulagið V-1477 liggur sums staðar rétt ofan við Heklu-4. Í neðsta torfinu eru LNS, Hekla-3 og sennilega V-1159 ásamt H-1158. Mannvistarlag er í torfinu. V-1477 liggur yfir torfinu. Rofabarð hefur myndast norðan megin í garðinum en þar steypast gjóskulögin V-1477 og V-1717 fram yfir sig. Garðurinn er hlaðinn eftir 1200 og allnokkru fyrir 1477.

Einarsstaðir

EIN07-1: Snið í garð skammt NV við bæjarhól (mynd 1, snið III). LNS er ekki varðveitt undir garðinum. Rofist hefur niður í Heklu-3 áður en garðurinn var byggður. Torfið er með mannvistarlagi neðan til. Lítið er af gjósku í torfinu, aðeins vottur af LNS annars er torfið úr ljósbrúnum jarðvegi með sandlinsum. Ofan á garðinum eru V-1477 og H-1300. Ofan á torfhruni austan megin garðsins eru V-1717, V-1477, H-1300 og K-1262. Um 3-4 cm eru frá K-1262 niður að torfhruninu. Tvö þunn mannvistarlög eru einnig sjáanleg yfir garðinum (hruni). Garðurinn er frá því fyrir miðja 13. öld.

UMRÆÐA

Vísbendingar eru um a.m.k. tvö búsetuskeið á Ingiríðarstöðum. Er mögulegt að bærinn hafi lagst í eyði um tíma, á 13.- 14. öld og svo byggst aftur að einhverju

leyti. Torf frá tímabilinu 1300-1477 kom fram í bæjarhólnum og sennilega einnig í garðlagi (sbr. skurður B).

Vísbendingar eru um búsetu á Ingiríðarstöðum frá því áður en garðarnir og bænhúsið var reist, líklega frá 10. öld. Mannvistarlag er undir garðlögunum og/eða í torfi þeirra. Sama á við um Einarsstaði en þar mátti sjá mannvistarlag í torfi garðsins.

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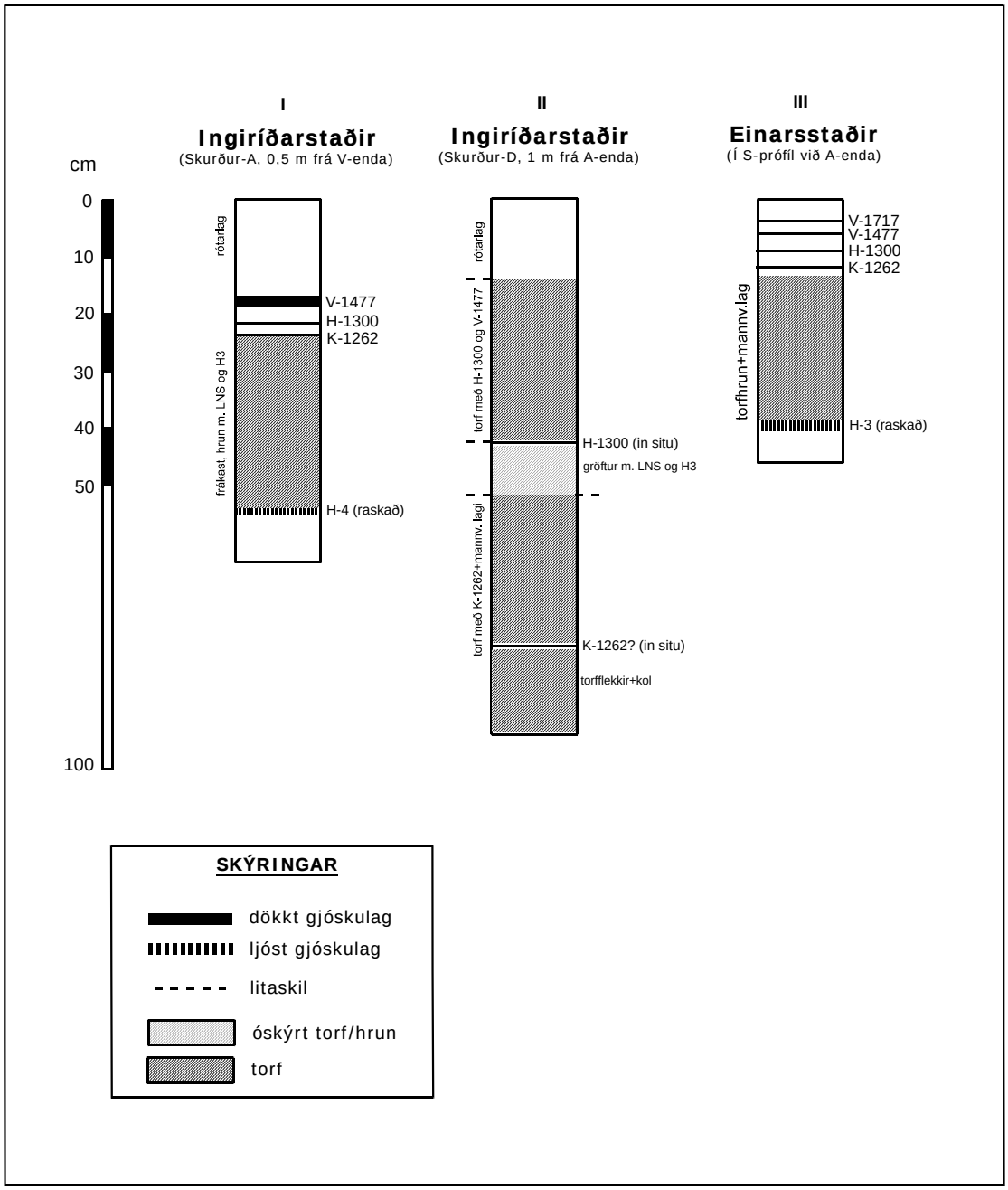

Mynd 1. Jarðvegssnið frá Þegjandadal, S-Þingeyjarsýslu.

Appendix 4

Fornleifarannsóknir í Suður-Þingeyjarsýslu sumarið 2008 Gjóskulagarannsókn

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INNGANGUR

Þann 13. ágúst var farin vettvangsferð að Narfastaðaseli í Seljadal og að Ingiríðarstöðum í Þegjandadal í S-Þingeyjarsýslu til að aldursgreina fornminjar með gjóskulögum. Skoðuð voru snið í fjórum skurðum við Narfastaðasel og þremur í Þegjandadal. Sniðum var lýst og þau ljósmynduð og teiknuð eftir því sem ástæða þótti til. Sýni voru tekin úr gjóskulögum til frekari skoðunar.

Rannsóknir hafa sýnt að talsvert er af gjóskulögum í jarðvegi í Mývatnssveit og nágrenni. Hafa þau nýst vel við aldursákvarðanir á fornminjum. Þau gjóskulög sem mest hafa verið notuð í þeim tilgangi eru, Landnámslagið (LNL) frá því um 870, V~950, H-1104, H-1158, K-1262, H-1300, V-1410, V-1477 og V-1717. Í Mývatnssveit er svokölluð Landnámssyrpa (LNS) skýr í jarðvegi en í henni koma fyrir allt að sex dökk gjóskulög með stuttu millibili. Yngsta lagið í LNS er V~950. Þykkt LNS er á bilinu 6-10 cm (Sigurður Þórarinsson 1968, Guðrún Larsen 1982; 1984; 1992, Árni Einarsson et al. 1988, Magnús Á. Sigurgeirsson 1992, Magnús Á. Sigurgeirsson et al. 1998, Karl Grönvold et al. 1995).

NIÐURSTÖÐUR

Narfastaðasel

Bæjarhóll (skurður #2)

Niðurgrafin bygging, niður í Heklu-3 sums staðar og niður fyrir Heklu-4 norðan megin í skurðinum. Landnámssyrpan, með þremur dökkum gjóskulögum, er í torfi ásamt mannvistarlagi. Yfir meintu V~950 í torfinu er mannvistarlag (með fjólubláum blæ). Í jarðvegi yfir torfinu eru gjóskulögin V-1717, V-1477 og H-1300. Sýni voru tekin á tveimur stöðum úr gjóskulaginu sem lá næst yfir torfinu, annars vegar í vesturprófíl, um 1 m sunnan við vegg, 5 cm yfir torfhruni og hins vegar úr NV-horni skurðs (sjá mynd 1). Bæði sýnin reyndust vera úr H-1300.

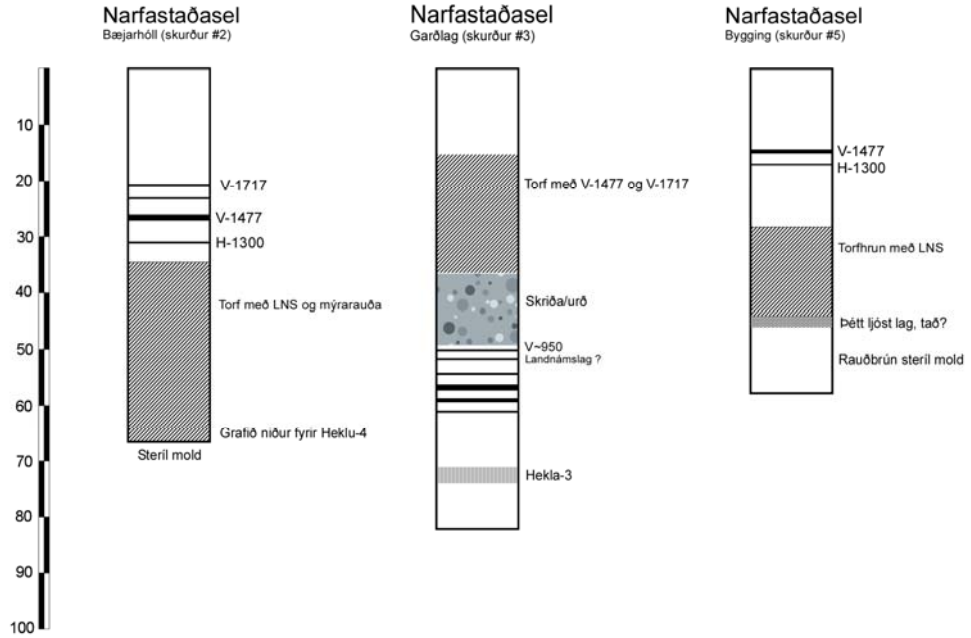
Garðlag (skurður #3)

Tvær skriðutungur úr möl eru áberandi í sniðum skurðsins, sem liggur þvert í gegnum garðinn. Sú neðri liggur því sem næst ofan á gjóskulaginu V~950. Næst ofan á skriðunum eru torfhnausar með gjóskulögunum V-1717 og V-1477. Greinilegar vatnsrásir eru í brekkunni ofan við garðinn sem benda til að um langan aldur hafi runnið úr brekkunni niður á túnið. Víst má telja að á þessum stað hafi verið erfitt að halda garði í viðunandi horfi. Sjá má að girðing hefur verið lögð nokkru neðar í brekkunni,

innangarðs, í seinni tíð. Auk þess að vera túngarður hefur þessi hluti garðsins haft hlutverk sem n.k. varnargarður til að varna því að skriður ættu greiða leið inn á túnið. Torfið efst í garðinum er stungið allnokkru eftir árið 1717, sennilega á 19. öld. Vírgirðing hefur verið sett ofan á garðinn í seinni tíð. Þess má geta að LNS er sérlega vel varðveitt undir garðinum, með a.m.k. sex dökkum gjóskulögum (mynd 1).

Kolagröf? (skurður #4)

Grafið hefur verið a.m.k. 8 cm niður fyrir Heklu-4. Þar fyrir ofan kemur um 10 cm þykkt graftarlag blandað gjósku úr Heklu-3. Þunn kolarönd er neðst í þessu lagi. Yfir grafarlaginu eru gjóskulögin V-1477 og H-1300 (sýni tekið).



Mynd 1. Snið frá Narfastaðaseli.

Bygging (skurður #5)

Yfir torfhruni í S-enda skurðs eru gjóskulögin V-1477 og H-1300 (sýni tekið). Í veggnum er torf með LNS og Heklu-3. Grafið hefur verið um 10 cm niður fyrir Heklu-4. Byggingin hefur sennilega verið grafin niður a.m.k. 30 cm að innanverðu, í gegnum bæði Heklu-3 og Heklu-4 (mynd 1).

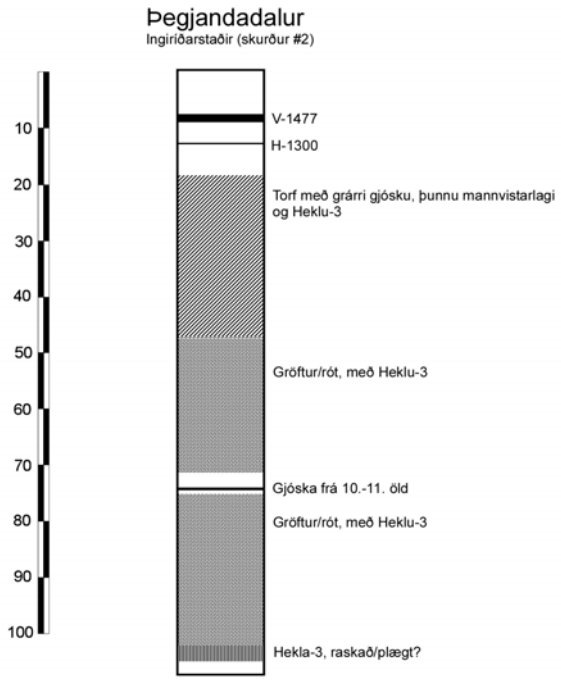
Ingiríðarstaðir

Garðlag (skurður #2)

Stungið/plægt hefur verið ofan í Heklu-3. Næst ofan á Heklu-3 er um 55 cm þykkt graftarlag (mynd 2). Í því miðju er blágrátt fínkorna gjóskulag *in situ*. Hægt er að rekja það á 80 cm kafla. Ofan við graftarlagið, á 18- 46 cm dýpi, er torf sem inniheldur sama gjóskulag. Þunnt mannvistarlag og slitrur af Heklu-3 er einnig í torfinu. Gjóskulögin V-1477 og H-1300 (sýni tekið) eru yfir torfinu.

Rústahóll (skurður #7)

Í veggnum er LNS ásamt þunnu mannvistarlagi. Yfir torfinu liggja tvö dökk gjóskulög, er neðra lagið um 8 cm yfir veggnum þar sem hann er hæstur (suðursnið). Sýni voru tekin úr báðum lögunum. Neðra gjóskulagið er H-1300.



Mynd 2. Snið frá Ingiríðarstöðum í Þegjandadal.

Garðlag (skurður #6)
LNS er in situ undir garðinum. Um 1,5-2 cm eru upp í torfið. LNS og þunnt mannvistarlag er í torfinu (suðurhlið garðs). Garðurinn hefur verið endurbyggður/lagfærður norðanmegin. Þar er einnig torf með LNS og allþykku mannvistarlagi. Blágráa gjóskulagið (sbr. skurð #2) liggur upp á hrun úr norðurhluta garðsins. Yfir garðinn liggja tvö dökk gjóskulög, V-1477 og H-1300 (sýni tekið). Um 10 cm eru frá H-1300 niður á torfhrun vestan megin í skurðinum.

NIÐURLAG OG UMRÆÐA

Gjóskurannsókn leiðir í ljós að í Narfastaðseli eru mannvirki frá því nokkru fyrir árið 1300. Telja má líklegt að mannvirkin séu mun eldri en gjóskulagið H-1300, öld eða meira, en úr því mætti e.t.v. fá skorið með frekari rannsóknum á staðnum.
Öll þau mannvirki sem skoðuð voru á Ingiríðarstöðum í Þegjandadal reyndust vera eldri en gjóskulagið H-1300. Telja má að þau séu talsvert eldri en gjóskulagið, gætu elstu mannvistarlögin verið allt að tveimur til þremur öldum eldri.
Nokkur ráðgáta er gjóskulag sem fundist hefur innan um mannvistarlög á Ingiríðarstöðum, blágrátt að lit og mjög fínkorna. Þetta lag kom fram í tveimur garðlögum (skurðum #2 og 6) í sumar og einnig í bæjarhólnum (skurði D – 07-4) sumarið 2007 (Magnús Á. Sigurgeirsson 2007). Í

greinargerðinni frá 2007 er sagt um lagið í skurði D á Ingiríðarstöðum: „*Í sýninu eru tvær glergerðir, dökkbrúnt og ljósmóbrúnt, sem bendir til að uppruni gjóskunnar sé í fleiri en einni eldstöð. Um blöndu tveggja gjóskulaga er líklega að ræða.“.* Nýleg efnagreining á laginu bendir til að upptök gjóskunnar séu í bæði Veiðivatnakerfinu og Grímsvötnum. Ennfremur kom fram að í laginu eru súr gjóskukorn sem líklega tilheyra Heklu-1104. Þess skal getið að slitrur af gjóskulögunum H-1158/V-1159 virtist vera ofan við blágráa lagið í skurði #6. Það að korn úr H-1104 finnist í blágráa laginu bendir til að það sé ekki fjarri H-1104 í aldri.

Þekkt er að gjóskulög geti varðveist sérlega vel þar sem upphleðsla jarðvegs eða sets hefur verið hröð, s.s. innan um mannvistarlög eða þar sem fokjarðvegur hefur safnast hratt upp. Greinilegt er að slíkar aðstæður hafa skapast á Ingiríðarstöðum. Ljóst er að blágráa lagið á Ingiríðarstöðum hefur varðveist þar sérlega vel vegna góðra varðveisluskilyrða sem þar hafa skapast. Um aldur lagsins er vitað að það er talsvert eldra en H-1300 og yngra en V~950. Telja má næsta víst að lagið sé frá árabilinu 950-1110. Þess má geta að við svonefndar Pálstóftir við Kárahnjúka komu fram tvö dökk gjóskulög á milli V~950 og H-1104 e.Kr. Þessi lög hafa upptök í bæði Grímsvötnum og Veiðivatnakerfinu, samkvæmt efnagreiningum. Í Skagafirði er ennfremur gjóskulag frá því um 1000 e.Kr. sem hefur bæði Grímsvatna- og Veiðivatnasamsetningu (Gunnar Ólafsson 1985, MÁS óbirt gögn).

Ljóst er, að til að fá nánari upplýsingar um aldur blágráa lagsins þarf að fara fram sérstök athugun á því í Þegjandadal. Finna þyrfti lagið í sniðum þar sem áhrifa mannvistar gætir ekki. Þar væri mögulegt að sjá afstöðu þess til annarra gjóskulaga, og ráða nánar í aldur þess. Einnig væri ráð að efnagreina frekar gjóskulög frá 10. – 11. öld.

HELSTU HEIMILDIR

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Appendix 5

Excerpt from Report FS 349-04263

"Forn garðlög í Suður-Þingeyjarsýslu - *A system of earthworks in north-east Iceland"*

Oscar Aldred, Árni Einarsson, Elín Ósk Hreiðarsdóttir and Birna Lárusdóttir

Þegjandadalur

The boundaries in Þegjandadalur are good example of a system that can be de-constructed and analysed more comprehensively than others in the boundary project. This is possible because of inter-related research that has taken place in the valley: a archaeological field survey in the valley in 2005 which was continued in 2006, and aerial survey took place in 2006 before the field season as well as aerial photographs by Árniþór Garðarsson. As a result the excavation of boundaries was placed within the context of other research allowing a fuller narrative of the developmental sequence of boundaries and their relationship to the farm landscape to be discussed.

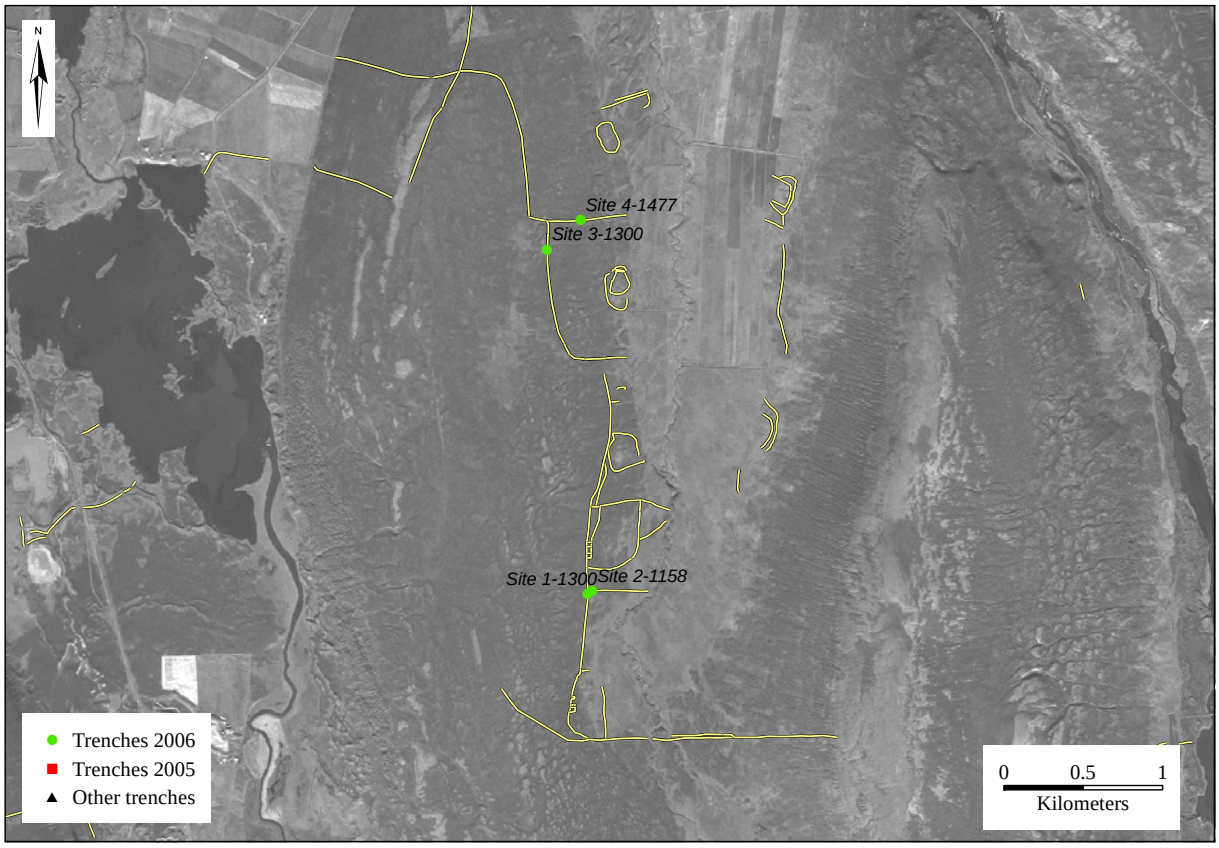

Figure 1. Þegjandadalur: trenches and boundaries.

Þegjandadalur is a small valley, which is today deserted except for several modern farms Múli and Kraunastaðir, at its far northern end, a short distance from Grenjaðarstaður. The valley south of these farms is entirely deserted, and was abandoned from the 16th century. The deserted farms lie on either side of a stream that divides the valley into two halves. The historical information concerning the naming of the farms is confusing, but research by Elín Hreiðarsdóttir suggest that the farms on the east side were called: Skárastaðir (SÞ-250b), Hólkot (SÞ-250c), Bjarkarstaðir (SÞ-250d), Ingiríðarstaðir (SÞ-250e), and Einarsstaðir (SÞ-250f). On the western side: Bjarnastaðir/Gíslastaðir (SÞ-224b), Hrísakot (SÞ-224c), and Hrísar (SÞ-224d). The eastern side contains more deserted farms, as well as a greater density of human activity.

Figure 2. Þegjandadalur boundaries with trench locations 2006 (left) and abandoned farms (right).

For the boundary research of particular interest is the linear boundary that runs north to south on the western side of the valley. Several other boundaries run perpendicular towards the stream (Kálfalækur) from the linear boundary. This system divides the west side into distinct units, bounded on the west slope by a boundary running north to south and to the closed off to the north and south by another and with Kálfalækur on the east which divides the valley into two separate halves. Within these farm units there are other smaller boundaries that formed enclosures or partitions which were either attached to the outer farm unit boundaries or were separate infields, such as at Hólkot and Skárastaðir. The regularity of the system is not

replicated on the eastern side of the valley, but there appears to be remnants of a linear boundary that runs north to south. However, the east to west divisions as seen on the western side seem not to have existed or at least are not preserved today. The valley is closed at its southern end by a boundary which separates the main cluster of farms from Hrísar, an outlying farm c. 2 km south-east of Einarsstaðir.

There also seems to be some variation in the internal arrangement of the farms units in the southern end of the valley compared to the north end. The infield enclosures around the farms of Einarsstaðir and Ingiríðarstaðir, and to some extent Bjarkarstaðir are not isolated from the linear boundary that runs north to south, unlike Hólkot and Skárastaðir whose infield enclosures are c. 500m away from the linear boundary. The infield enclosure type of land organisation is similar to the boundary and farm layout on the western side of the valley, though the preservation makes it difficult to compare and interpret similarities.

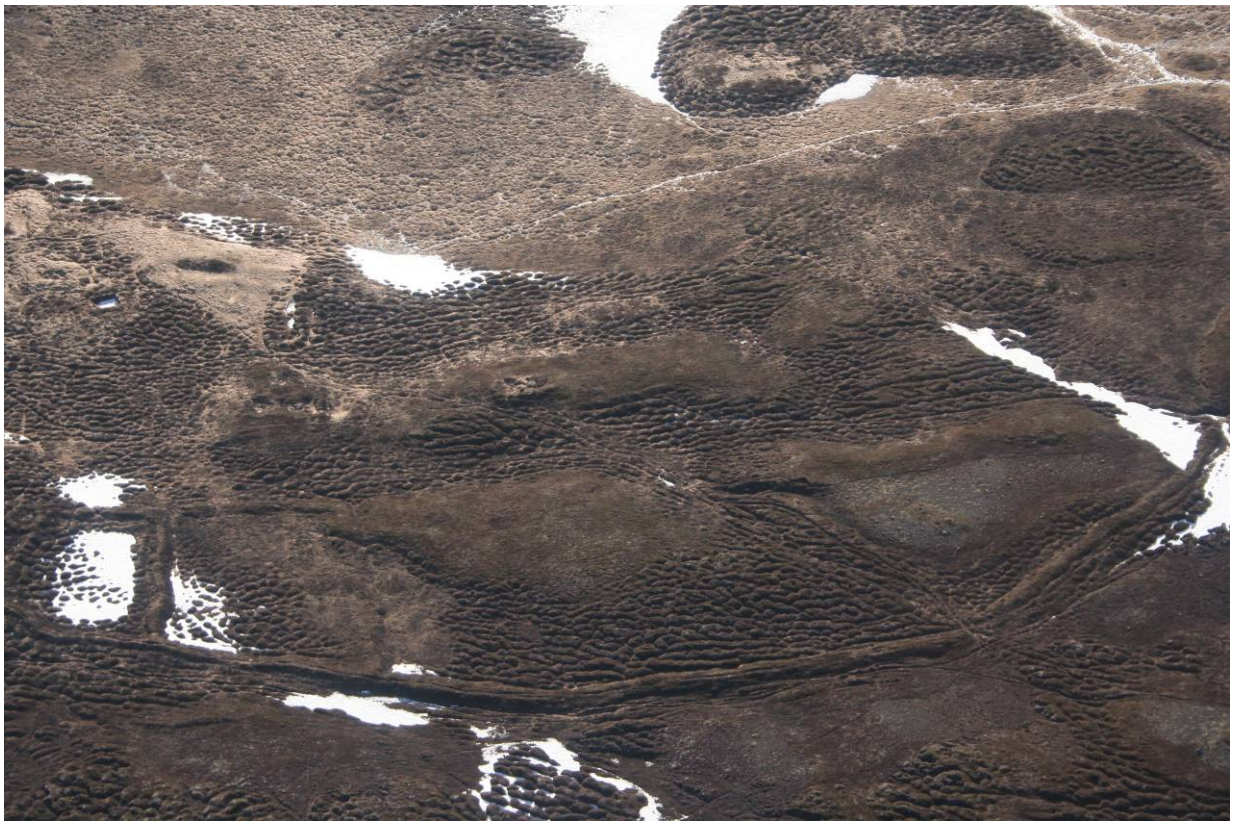

Figure 3. Aerial photograph of Einarsstaðir, looking east (Árni Einarsson May 2006).

The excavations in Þegjandadalur were carried out at four sites, with the main aim of giving a chronology to the outer boundaries and establishing a development sequence. There were at least several different phases visible from a landscape stratigraphy analysis alone, suggesting that a long boundary was laid out in the southern half of the western side with dividing boundaries extending at right angles. At site 1, the linear boundary that runs north to south was a 2 stack construction surviving to c. 0.6m high, with the 1300 tephra lying over it in collapse and soil wash. But the boundary at site 2, which was another 2 stack construction, this time had the 1158 tephra overlying it. This was surprising because the landscape stratigraphy suggested that the site 1, the north to south linear boundary, should be an earlier

build. It is possible that tephra survival was an issue. However, several interpretations are speculated upon.

The first is that the dividing boundaries that run east to west across the slope in the valley were the earliest boundaries with the long linear boundary coming after the establishment of distinct land parcels; this reiterates the symbolic importance of separating one piece of land from another through boundary construction. The second is perhaps harder to demonstrate. Site 2 boundary was actually a remnant of an earlier scheme that was incorporated into a new boundary system; the site 2 boundary was similar to the one at the far southern end of Einarsstaðir. The site 3 boundary seems to be on a different alignment but may be reflecting topographic conditions rather than a different construction event. Site 3 boundary had a 1300 tephra over the boundary, and similar to site 1 boundary had a 2 stack construction. The boundary at site 4 was badly preserved, surviving to a height of c. 0.2m; only the 1477 tephra was visible, and preservation is a question here.