

Midden Investigations at Brenna
Mývatnssveit, N Iceland
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A field report to FSI
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Summary: During the 2002 field season of the *Landscapes of Settlement Project* (directed by *Fornleifastofnun Islands* with collaboration by the NABO cooperative) we visited the abandoned site of Brenna on the shores of Sandvatn (to the NW of Mývatn). A small farm site now much overgrown with dwarf birch and willow had clear boundary walls, several room depressions in a small farm mound, and a clear mounded midden deposit to the NE of the main structure. A small test pit had been dug some time in the past at the base of the midden mound, but this appears to have missed the main deposit and is mainly sterile. Three cores were placed in a line across the upstanding midden mound, and these demonstrated between 50 and 90 cm of deposit extending down to the distinctive local LNS. Fish bone, ash, charcoal, bird egg shell (in some quantity), and burnt mammal bone suggest that this is both a rich and an early deposit. Logistic problems are considerable however, and supporting or maintaining an excavation crew on site would be a challenge.



Main site area at Brenna, looking across the grass covered room depressions towards the brush covered midden (marked by an upstanding Oakfield core)



View of the site area from the S, along approach trail, boat is pulled up at landing about 50 m from the ruin.

Coring Report:

Core 1) on the N edge of the midden mound.

0-30 cm turf and roots, sterile brown silt

30 – 90 cm stratified layers of ash, charcoal, fish bones, and bird egg shell.

Looks very rich and very like a midden.

90 cm LNS with charcoal and egg shell on the surface.

90-109 sterile and then H3 at 110

Core 2) at the approximate crest of the mound.

0-30 cm sterile brown soil (Aeolian?)

30-120 cm stratified layers of wood and peat ash, fish bone, charcoal fragments, large amounts of bird egg shell. Again looks like extremely rich midden.

120-122 LNS with cultural material in direct contact.

Core 3) on the S edge of the midden mound, approximately at the same distance from the center as core 1.

0-30 cm turf, roots, sterile brown silt

30-78 cm stratified layers of ash charcoal, some random t ird egg shell.

80 cm LNS with cultural material in direct contact.

Discussion and Recommendation:

This appears to be an extremely rich and undisturbed midden with a very early beginning. If it were in a more accessible location it would be a prime target for excavation. It would not be impossible to set down gear by boat (esp if an outboard engine can be borrowed) and walk a small hardened crew in and out, but this will be demanding. Not an easy site, but potentially productive.

Attached:

CDR archive of photos.