

**SKAGAFJÖRÐUR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SETTLEMENT SURVEY 2008:
EXCAVATIONS AT THE TORFGARÐUR MIDDEN, AREA B**

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Location

The midden (Area B) was located to the northeast of the main site near the small east-west running stream (Figure 1 & 2). The area was identified in 2002 by coring and was defined by conductivity and resistivity (see Torfgarður report on coring and resistivity). A 3x3 meter excavation trench was positioned with the southwest corner at east 477577, north 564486 (ISN93) ([figure 1](#)).

Stóra-Seyla is farm number 106 in 1847 Jarðatal á Íslandi (Johnsen 1847). Site number 106 has been used in all excavation records from the 2008 season.

Elevation Surface Model

In 2008 the region surrounding the medieval-modern mound was surveyed with the total station to produce topographic models of the terrain. Survey coverage varied based on the rapidity of surface change ([figure 2](#)). The high resolution surface models were used to topographically correct remote sensing data for variations in surface elevation and aspect. The surface model also provides a record of the mound surface, although little structural detail of the underlying turf buildings is visible.

Excavation

Excavation procedures and documentation followed standard protocols as described in the Archaeological Field Manual 3rd Edition (Lucas 2003). Midden deposits were 100% screened through ¼ inch mesh for the systematic recovery of faunal remains. Screen detritus was retained for examination in the lab. Two liter bulk soil samples were systematically taken from all midden contexts on a 1x1 meter grid for flotation and paleobotanical analysis. Archaeological contexts were mapped by hand and all archaeological drawings were converted to digital format for integration in a GIS. The ISNET93 coordinate system was used for all mapping. Elevations were measured from reference points established from dGPS benchmarks.

Excavation was started on July 24, 2008 and ended Aug 30, 2008.

Contexts

The midden excavation at Torfgarður revealed a relatively undisturbed stratified midden with deposition beginning just below the Veidavötn ~1000 AD tephra and continuing until sometime after the Hekla 1300 AD tephra. Based on extensive coring at the site we believe this late 10th century date is a reasonable estimate for the initial establishment of the farmstead at Torfgarður. The site continues in domestic use until the second half of the 20th century as demonstrated in an earlier, 2002, test excavation. The placement of the 2008 midden excavation was chosen to specifically target the oldest part of the midden.

Beneath the deturfed topsoil [101] there was a layer of bulldozed and highly disturbed turf [102]. The damage to the site does not appear to have truncated the midden in this area as under the disturbed turf there is an in situ layer of aeolian soil [103] capping the midden deposits. There is a thin midden deposit [104] overlying the Hekla 1300 AD tephra. This deposit is similar in inclusions and character to the midden deposit [105] beneath the Hekla 1300 AD tephra. Beneath the Hekla 1300 tephra excavation was broken on arbitrary 10 centimeter levels following the basic topography of the midden: contexts [106], [107], and [108]. In general the midden was highly homogenous with little difference in character or horizontal or vertical lensing. The Hekla

1104 AD tephra is well preserved in the midden and forms a stratigraphic break between contexts [108] and [109]. The Veidavötn ~1000 AD tephra is also well preserved in the midden forming a traceable horizon across the excavation. The midden [110] continues a short distance beneath the V~1000 tephra.

Sequence interpretation

In general, the tephra layers are not co-occurrent with major changes in the sequence and the midden is fairly uniform in character throughout. The midden represents a continuous accrual of domestic rubbish spanning shortly before 1000 AD to sometime after 1300 AD.

Figures

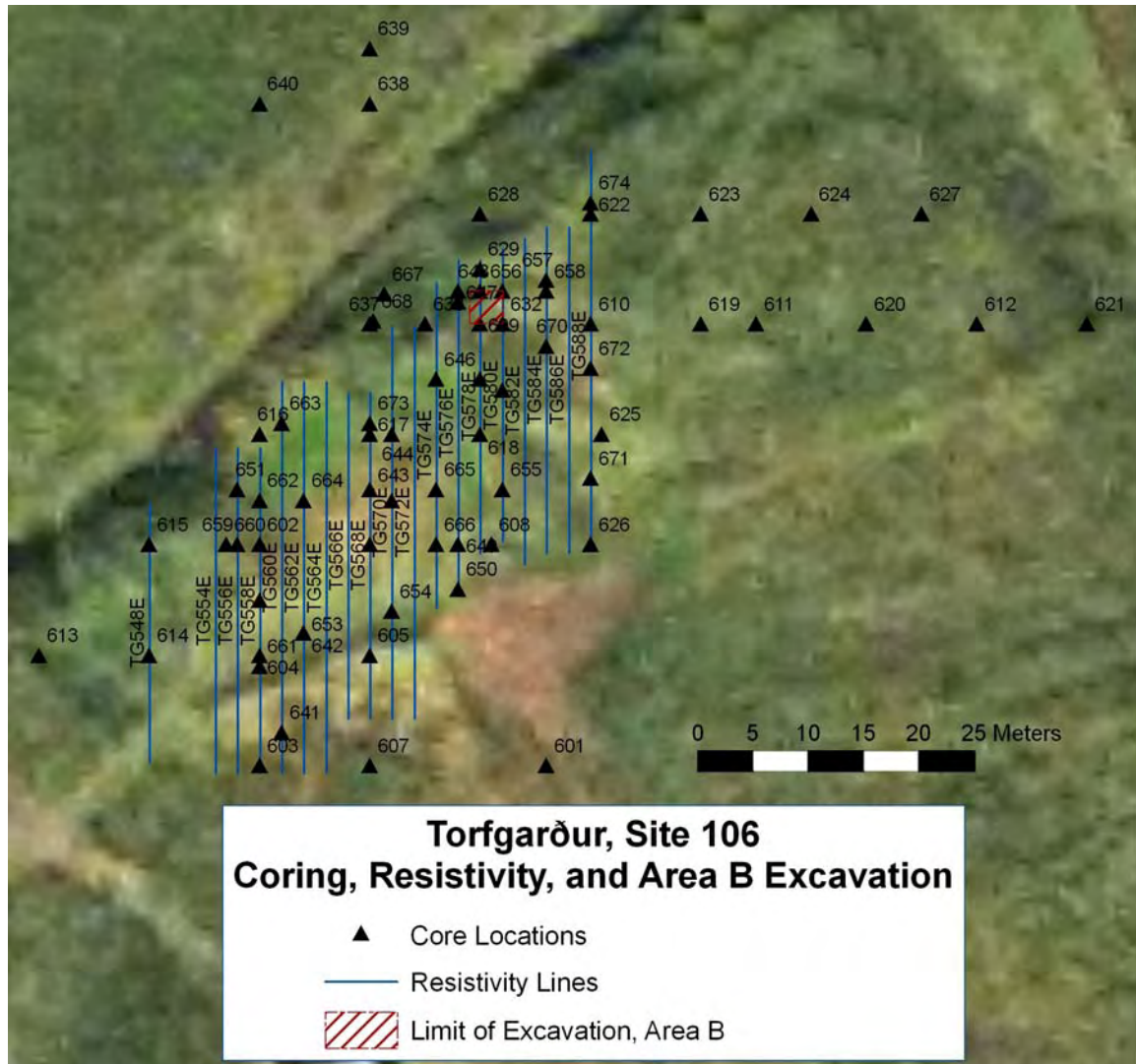


Figure 1. Torfgarður, coring, resistivity, and area B excavation.

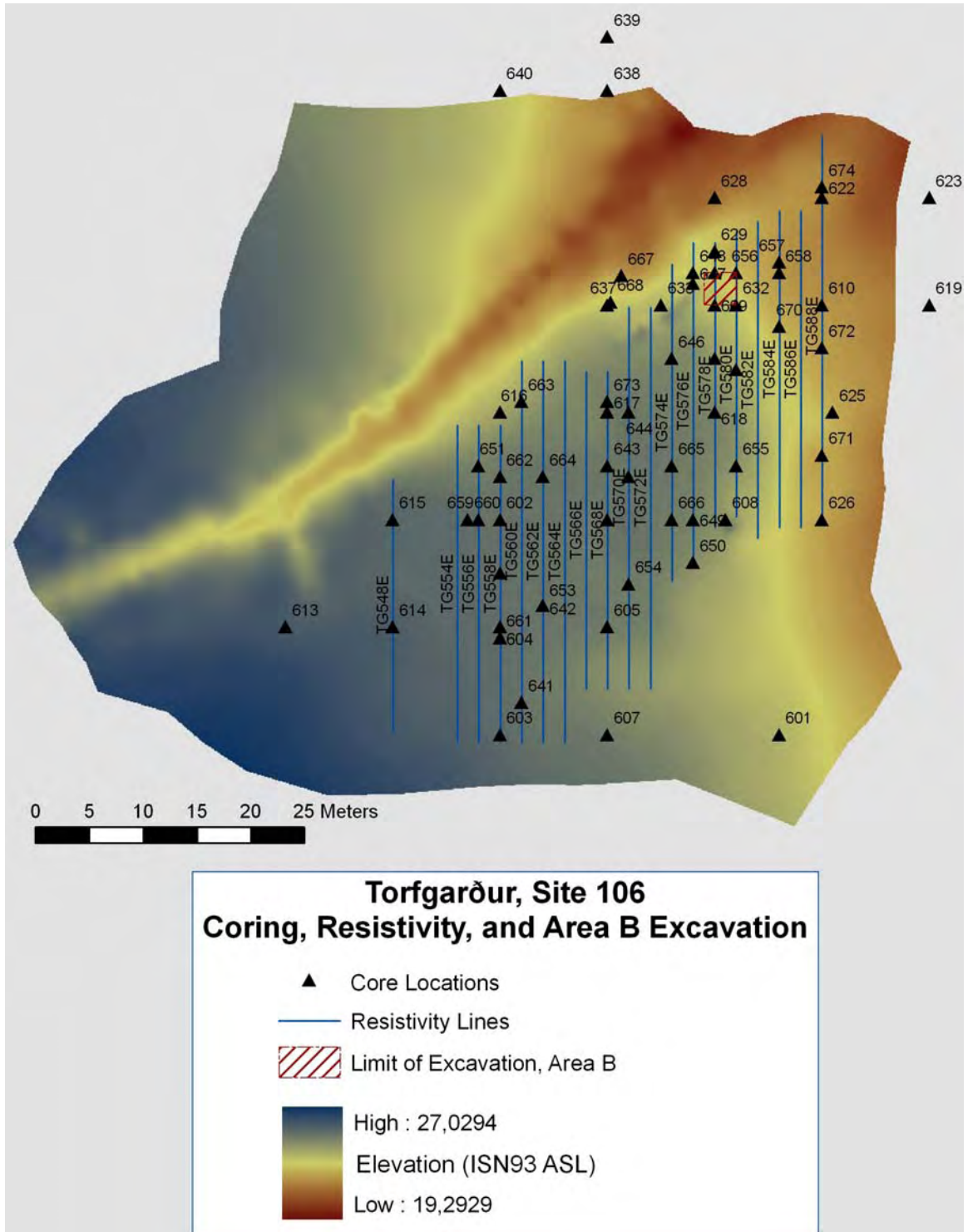


Figure 2. Topographic coverage at Torfgarður.



Figure 3. Hekla 1104 AD tephra.



Figure 4. Upper interface of the midden.



Figure 3. Context 105.



Figure 3. Profile.

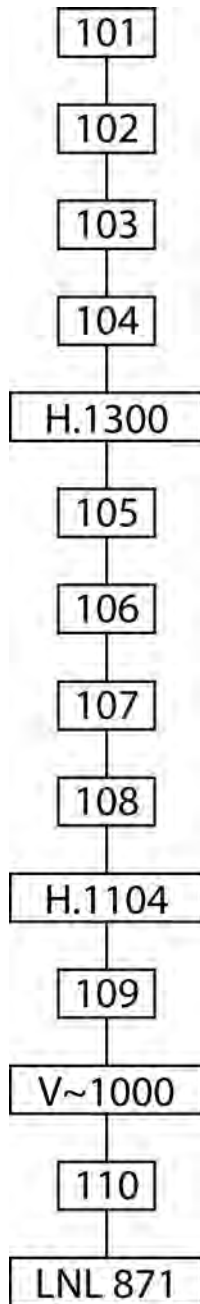
Appendix A. Contexts, Area B

CONTEXT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	DATE	ID
101	Deposit	Topsoil	07/19/2008	JMS
102	Deposit	Loose/bulldozed soil	07/19/2008	JMS
103	Deposit	Aeolian deposit	07/19/2008	JMS
104	Deposit	Midden above H 1300	07/20/2008	JMS
105	Deposit	Midden (Brown)	07/20/2008	JMS
106	Deposit	Midden (Brown)	07/23/2008	RSS
107	Deposit	Peat Ash Midden with Charcoal and Bone Inclusions	07/24/2008	RSS
108	Deposit	Midden (ashy)	07/24/2008	RSS
109	Deposit	Midden	07/28/2008	RSS
110	Deposit	Midden deposit	07/29/2008	RSS
871	Deposit	LNL tephra	07/30/2008	RSS
1000	Deposit	V~1000 tephra	07/29/2008	RSS
1104	Deposit	H 1004 tephra	07/25/2008	RSS
1300	Deposit	H 1300 tephra	07/20/2008	JMS

Appendix B. Animal Teeth and Jaws, Area B

CONTEXT	Caprine	Cattle	Horse	Pig	Other
103					
104	9				
105	20	1			
106	10			1	1
107	2				
108	16			1	
109	4			1	
110	1	1			
1104		1			2

Appendix C. Harris Matrix, Area B



References.

Johnsen, Jón

1847 Jarðatal á Íslandi. Copenhagen.

Lucas, Gavin, ed.

2003 Archaeological Field Manual. Reykjavík: Fornleifastofnum Íslands.