

Hegranes Settlement Survey: Early Modern and Modern Period Report 2015



| Byli | Mannafjörður | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur |
|---------|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Byli | Mannafjörður | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur | Stofur |
| Rípa | Ami þr. Jónsson | 37.2 | 5 | — | 104 | — | — | — | — |
| Þorvald | Jón. Jónsson | 11.7 | 5 | — | 28 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Þorvald Jónsson | 4.1 | 2 | — | 17 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 8.1 | 2 | — | 25 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 38.6 | 6 | — | 77 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 32.5 | 5 | — | 91 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 21.5 | 3 | — | 78 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 18.5 | 3 | — | 67 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 12.5 | 1 | — | 21 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 24.2 | 2 | — | 110 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 25.0 | 3 | — | 75 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 14.1 | 2 | — | 28 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 12.2 | 2 | — | 56 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 11.4 | 4 | — | 62 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 45.6 | 7 | — | 136 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 2.4 | 3 | — | 46 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | — | 1 | — | 14 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | — | — | — | 13 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | — | — | — | 16 | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Rípa | Jón. Jónsson | 54 | — | — | 1062 | — | — | — | — |



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Pictures on front page – Left: Áshús, built 1884-1886 on Hegrans (photo from <http://www.glaumbaer.is/is/information/two-19th-century-houses>). Right: SCASS test excavations at Ás farmstead (photo by Allison Carlton). Bottom: Scan of 19th century tax records in Skagafjörður, North Iceland.



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SKAGAFJÖRÐUR HERITAGE MUSEUM

The Skagafjörður Heritage Museum is a center for research on local history and cultural heritage in the Skagafjörður region, North Iceland. It is affiliated with the National Museum of Iceland and its main exhibition at the old turf farm of Glaumbær is one of the most visited national heritage tourist attractions. The Archaeological Department of the museum was established in 2003 and engages in contract and research driven archaeology both within and outside the region. The core long-term research programs center on fundamental issues surrounding the settlement and early medieval church history of Skagafjörður and the North-Atlantic region with a focus on developing methodological and theoretical approaches to the geography of early Christian cemeteries. The department is involved in multifaceted interdisciplinary collaboration with Icelandic and international institutions and specialists. Its research portfolio includes bioarchaeology, early metal production, settlement studies, as well as the methodological aspects of archaeological surveying.

FISKE CENTER FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The Andrew Fiske Memorial Center for Archaeological Research at the University of Massachusetts Boston was established in 1999 through the generosity of the late Alice Fiske and her family as a living memorial to her late husband Andrew. As an international leader in interdisciplinary research, the Fiske Center promotes a vision of archaeology as a multi-faceted, theoretically rigorous field that integrates a variety of analytical perspectives into its studies of the cultural and biological dimensions of colonization, urbanization, and industrialization that have occurred over the past one thousand years in the Americas and the Atlantic World. As part of a public university, the Fiske Center maintains a program of local archaeology with a special emphasis on research that meets the needs of cities, towns, and Tribal Nations in New England and the greater Northeast. The Fiske Center also seeks to understand the local as part of a broader Atlantic World.

SKAGAFJÖRÐUR CHURCH AND SETTLEMENT SURVEY

The Skagafjörður Church and Settlement Survey (SCASS) seeks to determine if the settlement pattern of the 9th-century colonization of Iceland affected the development of the religious and economic institutions that dominated the 14th century. The research builds on the combined methods and results of two projects. One has focused on Viking Age settlement patterns. The other has been investigating the changing geography of early Christian cemeteries. Together, the research seeks to understand the connections between the Viking settlement hierarchy and the Christian consolidation.

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Introduction

In 2014 a joint project of the Skagafjörður Heritage Museum and the Fiske Center for Archaeological research at the University of Massachusetts Boston—the Skagafjörður Church and Settlement Survey (SCASS)—received a large research grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The aim of the project is to systematically survey for the oldest settlement and church history in the area of Hegranes, a rocky promontory in the middle of the Skagafjörður region in North Iceland. The area is well suited for study as it is geographically distinct and there is evidence for possible cemeteries at nine of the 12-13 original settlement farms. The primary objectives of the settlement survey are to identify all farmsteads in the Hegranes region, establish their earliest date of occupation, and to measure their extent at different periods in history.

The summer of 2015 was the first of three planned years of intensive survey of farmsteads in the Hegranes region. Five farms were investigated: Ás, Garðar, Hróarsdalur, Keflavík, and Keldudalur. The survey field season started on the 6th of July and finished on the 14th of August.

Primary objectives for 2015 field season were:

1. Identify buried or abandoned areas of past domestic occupation and farm activity.

2. Estimate the extent of farmstead deposits at each farm during three periods of occupation: pre-1104 A.D., 1104-1300 A.D., and post-1300 A.D.
3. Identify and date the earliest occupational deposits at each farmstead.
4. Identify early Christian household cemeteries associated with the farms.
5. Investigate the history of changing patterns of farm and cemetery distribution in relationship to the institutionalization of secular power and the Catholic Church in Iceland.

For a more detailed explanation of SCASS research objectives, description of the Hegranes region, and overall survey methodology, see the SCASS 2015 Survey Report (Bolender et al. 2015).

In addition to its primary objectives, SCASS works with the post-1300 landscape of Hegranes in important ways. For instance, SCASS uses later historical documents including maps and tax documents to understand the impact of the settlement on the later history of Skagafjörður. Meanwhile, test excavations in farm mounds which in general targeted earlier deposits (see Bolender et al. 2015) often contain post-1300 deposits. These test excavations provide a small

| Site | Farm Name | Excavation | Size (m) | SW Corner Easting (ISN 1993 Lambert) | SW Corner Northing (ISN 1993 Lambert) | Date Opened | Date Closed |
|------|-----------|------------|----------|---|--|-------------|-------------|
| 445 | Keflavík | TP1 | 1x2 | 477259.977 | 581873.889 | 7/10/2015 | 7/10/2015 |
| 445 | Keflavík | TP2 | 1x2 | 477265.966 | 581881.989 | 7/10/2015 | 7/10/2015 |
| 445 | Keflavík | TP3 | 1x2 | 477262.540 | 581893.480 | 7/15/2015 | 7/16/2015 |
| 442 | Ás | TP1 | 1x2 | 479777.502 | 577667.264 | 7/23/2015 | 7/29/2015 |
| 442 | Ás | TP2 | 2x2 | 479774.998 | 577670.693 | 7/27/2015 | 7/29/2015 |
| 442 | Ás | TP4 | 1x2 | 479298.907 | 578798.018 | 8/4/2015 | 8/5/2015 |

Table 1: SCASS excavations with early modern and modern deposits

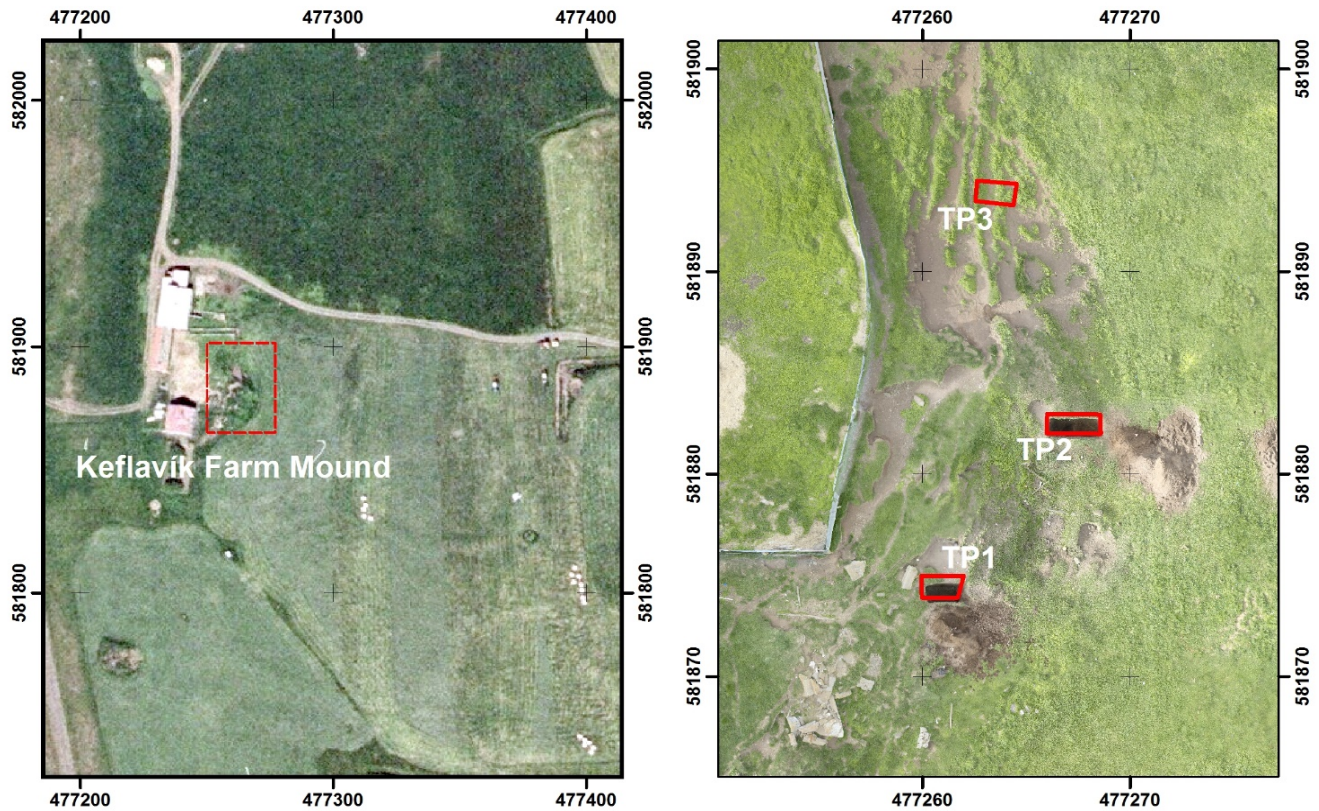


Figure 1: Keflavík test pit locations

but important window into Early Modern and Modern household practices that were impacted by the settlement of the island and the institutionalization of secular power and the Catholic Church but also by forces like the Danish Trade Monopoly and later engagements with increasingly global markets.

Test pits were excavated at the farms of Keflavík (445) and Ás (442) with two complimentary purposes. The primary purpose, in conjunction with the Skagafjörður Church and Settlement Survey (SCASS), was to date the earliest occupation of the visible farm mound and obtain additional faunal material from the earliest layers. Placement of test pits for this purpose targeted the oldest part of the midden from each farm, as determined by previous coring. A secondary, more opportunistic purpose was to get a sense of the amount and kinds of imported material culture – primarily ceramics, glass, clay pipes and other small finds – from upper layers of

the farm mound midden to better understand consumption patterns of households on Hegrans in the Early Modern period before and after the Danish Trade Monopoly and to characterize later history and morphology of farm mounds. In the case of Ás, where one test pit did not produce adequate information for both goals, additional test pits were placed on the site to target later time periods. This work was conducted principally by Anthropology PhD student Eric Johnson at Harvard University. Six of the test pits excavated in 2015 produced imported material culture in post-1300 layers of midden deposits (see Table 1).

Test Pit Summaries

Excavation utilized a single context methodology following protocols modified from the Museum of London Archaeology Service (Westman (ed.) 1994). Contexts, photos, samples and finds were entered to the SCASS FileMaker relational database in the field using an iPad with remote

TP 1

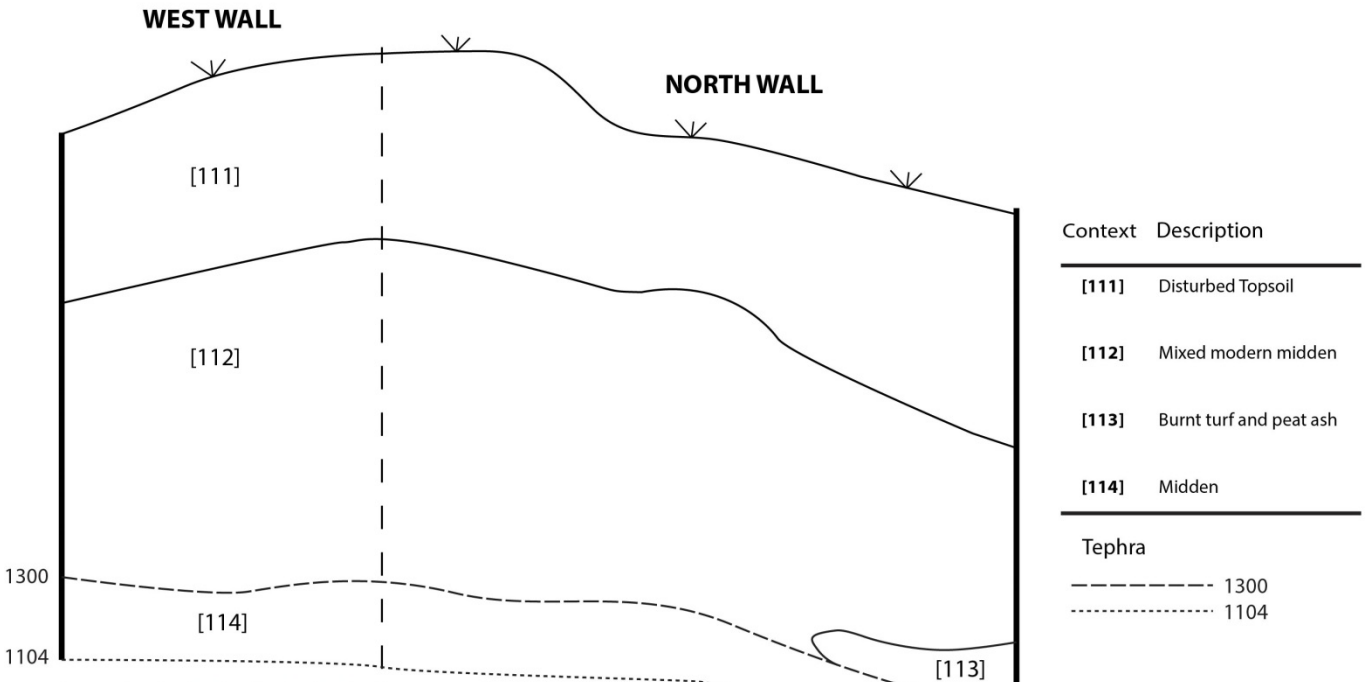


Figure 2: Keflavík TP 1 profile

TP 3

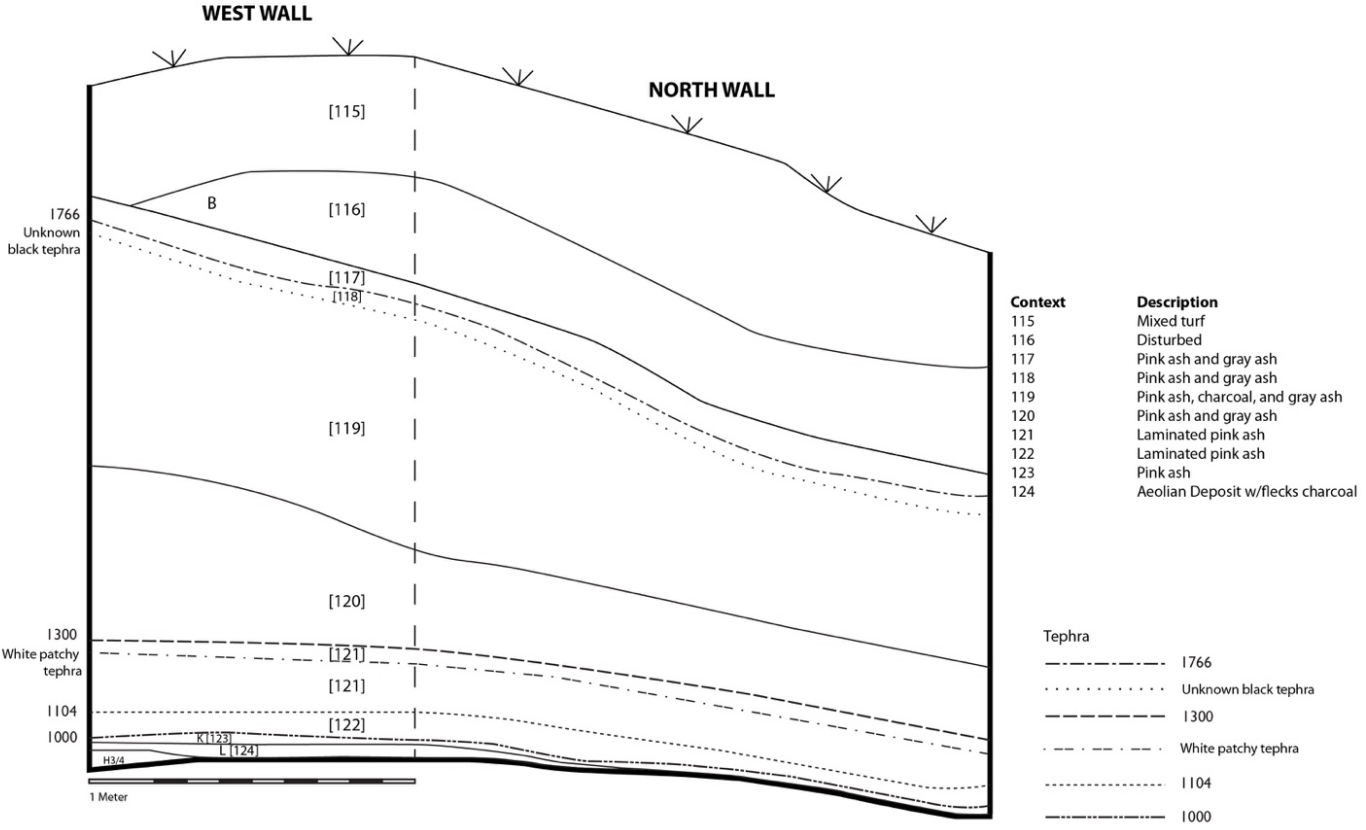


Figure 3: Keflavík TP 3 profile

access to FileMaker Go software. Contexts within the midden were divided in the field by major distinctions in color, composition and inclusions. Additional layers were identified in profile.

445 – Keflavík Farm Mound

At Keflavík (Figure 1), two test pits (TP1 and TP2) were placed in advance of machine clearance of part of the farm mound for the excavation of Keflavík Cemetery (44501) (see Zoëga et al. 2015), portions of which were underneath farm mound deposits. Due to time constraints, 25% of material was screened from layers above the 1300 tephra layer from TP1 and TP2. These test pits yielded primarily 20th century material culture, as many of the deposits had been cut into and filled with modern deposits. Excavation of TP1 and TP2 was stopped at the H1 tephra layer (dating to AD 1104) in order to keep pre-1104 deposits intact for the excavation of Keflavík Cemetery (44501). Beneath the topsoil layer at TP1 [111] was a thick deposit of modern midden [112], containing a dense assemblage of primarily 20th century artifacts (see Figure 2). This layer continued until just above the 1300 tephra layer.

TP2 also contained a 20th century cut and fill event, though not as deep as TP1. It presented some poorly preserved structural deposits in the western end of the excavation. At the same time, the sequence also exhibits substantial 20th century disturbance. Context 104, a pit in the western end that cut through most of the sequence, has a substantial amount of rubber, plastic, and other 20th century material. Context 108, in the western end of the excavation, may be a poorly preserved turf wall that contains the Hekla 1104 tephra in some of the turf wall material. Context 109 appears to be a well-preserved ash deposit under the probable [108] wall. No Hekla 1300 tephra was identified in the sequence, therefore most of the dating is rather

broad. The excavation was terminated at [110] because the deposit was a potential floor. Context 110, only appeared in the western 15 cm of the excavation and the deposit was not excavated (see Zoëga et al. 2015, 9)

TP3 at Keflavík was placed based on a previous coring survey in an area of the farm mound with better preservation of material from all time periods. The slope of interphases between contexts generally followed the slope of the surface, with deposits thickening towards the southwest corner (Figure 3). Ash from upper layers were generally greyish-brown [117-119] while portions of lower layers were pinkish-orange, presumably peat ash midden layers [120]. TP3 was excavated to the H3 tephra layer. TP3 yielded no finds below the 1766 tephra layer, except for a single unidentifiable copper fragment from [120]. The presence of a disturbed fill layer [116] suggests a possible truncation of post-1766 midden layers.

In sum, due to significant 20th century disturbance, test pits from Keflavík yielded very little imported material culture dating from before the 20th century. Large counts of nails and flat glass, especially at TP1, suggest that 20th century material culture may have resulted from larger-scale construction and/or demolition events. The glass assemblage yielded several intact bottles probably used for medicinal purposes. The ceramic assemblage from all three test pits was largely made up of industrial white wares, a trend seen in other farm mound assemblages of a similar date (Lucas 2006). Given that upper layers of middens were truncated, the absence of finds from the late-18th and 19th centuries cannot be used as evidence for the absence of material at the site.

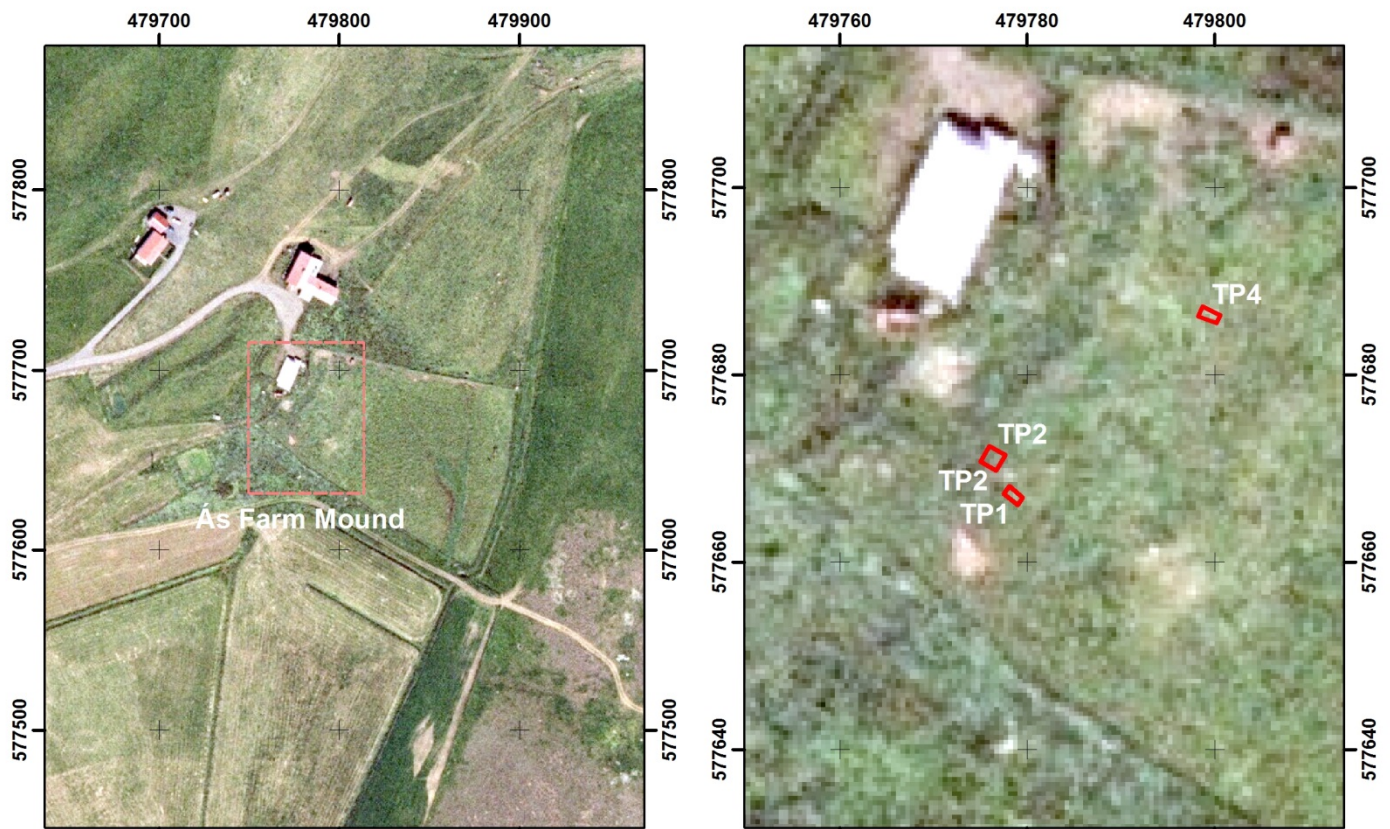


Figure 4: Ás test pit locations

442 – Ás Farm Mound (FIGURE 4)

At Ás, one test pit (TP1) was placed based on coring surveys to target both pre- and post-1300 deposits. Layers generally increased in thickness towards the southwest corner of the unit (Figure 5). The location of the 1766 tephra layer in the uppermost portions of the unit suggests a truncation of post-1766 farm mound layers, seen elsewhere at the site (TP2 and TP4). Beneath the 1766 tephra layer, layers generally alternated between pinkish-orange midden layers and layers of turf. Context [106] contained an entire turf block in the western portion of the unit, extending as a strip of turf into the eastern portion of the unit. Except for a ceramic and glass assemblage from a disturbed topsoil layer [101], TP1 yielded very little post-1300 material culture.

TP2 was placed up the slope from TP1, just west of an erosion profile with 20th century artifacts in

the upper layers, suggesting a more intact post-1766 section of the midden. However, excavation of TP2 revealed a 20th century cut [132] into a relatively homogenous pinkish-brown pre-1766 peat ash midden [121] filled with a loose, ashy grey modern midden [117 & 120] (Figures 6 and 7). Contexts [117] and [120] comprise an artifact-rich midden deposit dating entirely to the 20th century, similar to deposits at TP1 and TP2 at Keflavík. After removal of the 20th century cut, excavation of TP2 was stopped at approximately 60 cm because – when combined with similar deposits in TP1 – a sufficient sample by volume of pre-1766 material had been investigated.

Given that post-1766 deposits had likely been truncated at TP1 and TP2, TP4 was placed based

442 - Ás
TP 1

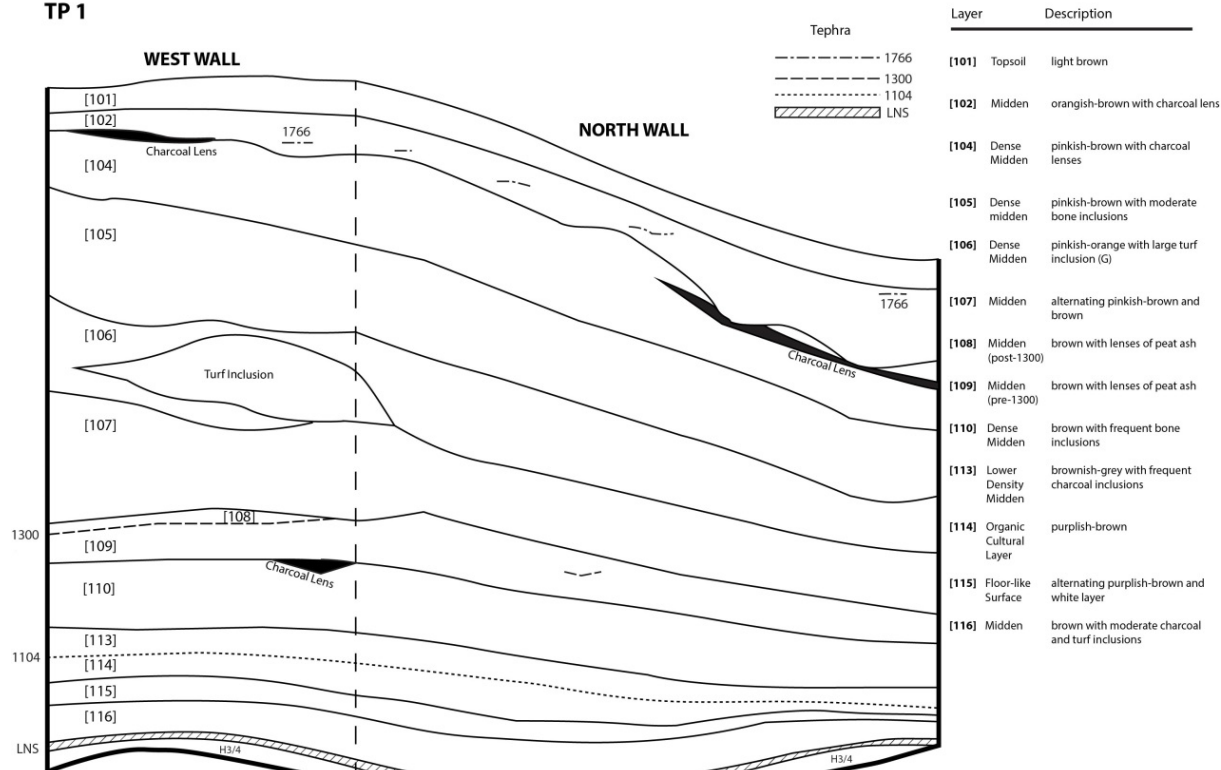


Figure 5: Ás TP 1 profile

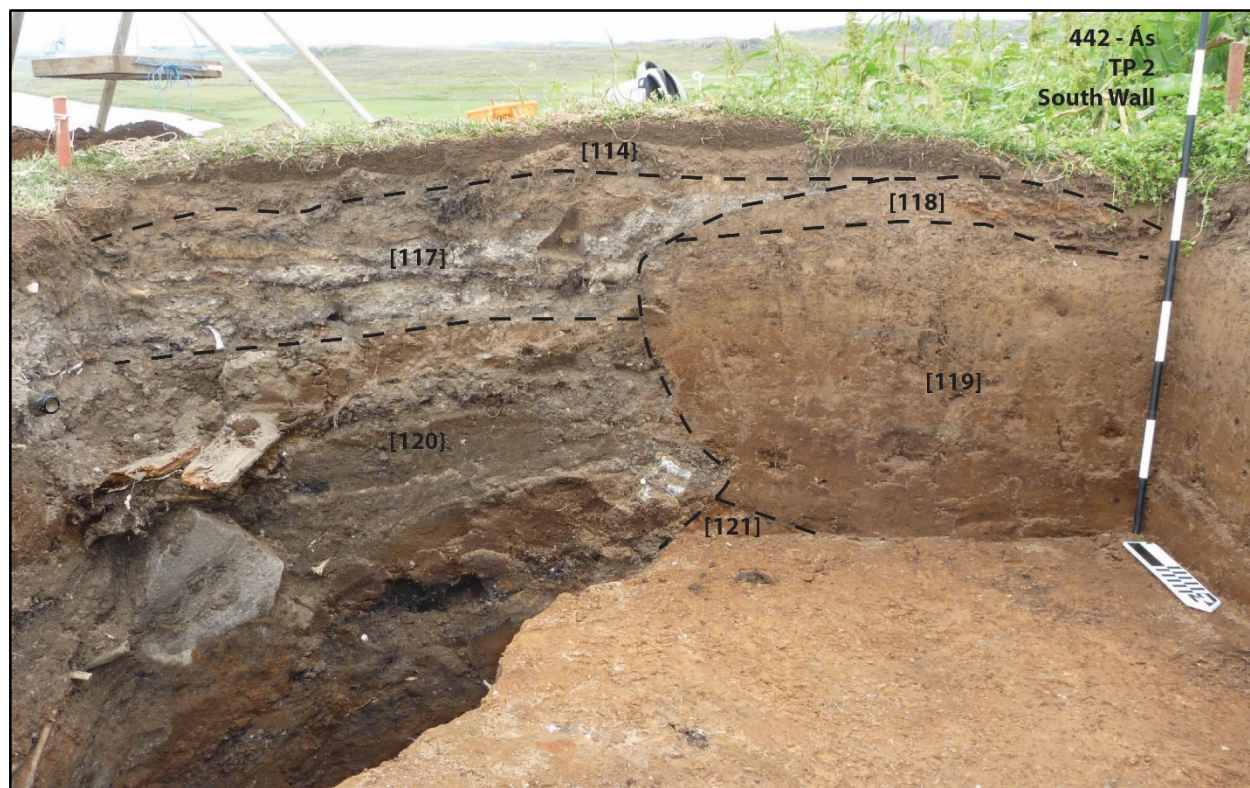


Figure 6: Ás TP 2 profile, South Wall.

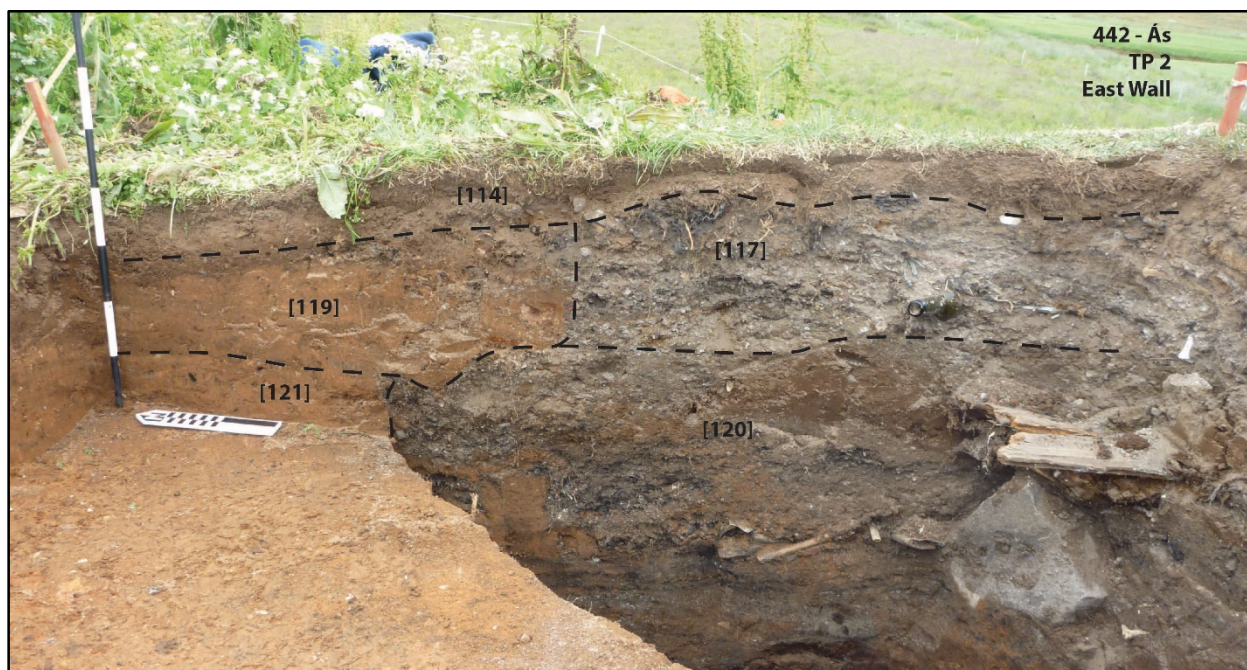


Figure 7: Ás TP 2 profile, East Wall.

442 - Ás
TP 4

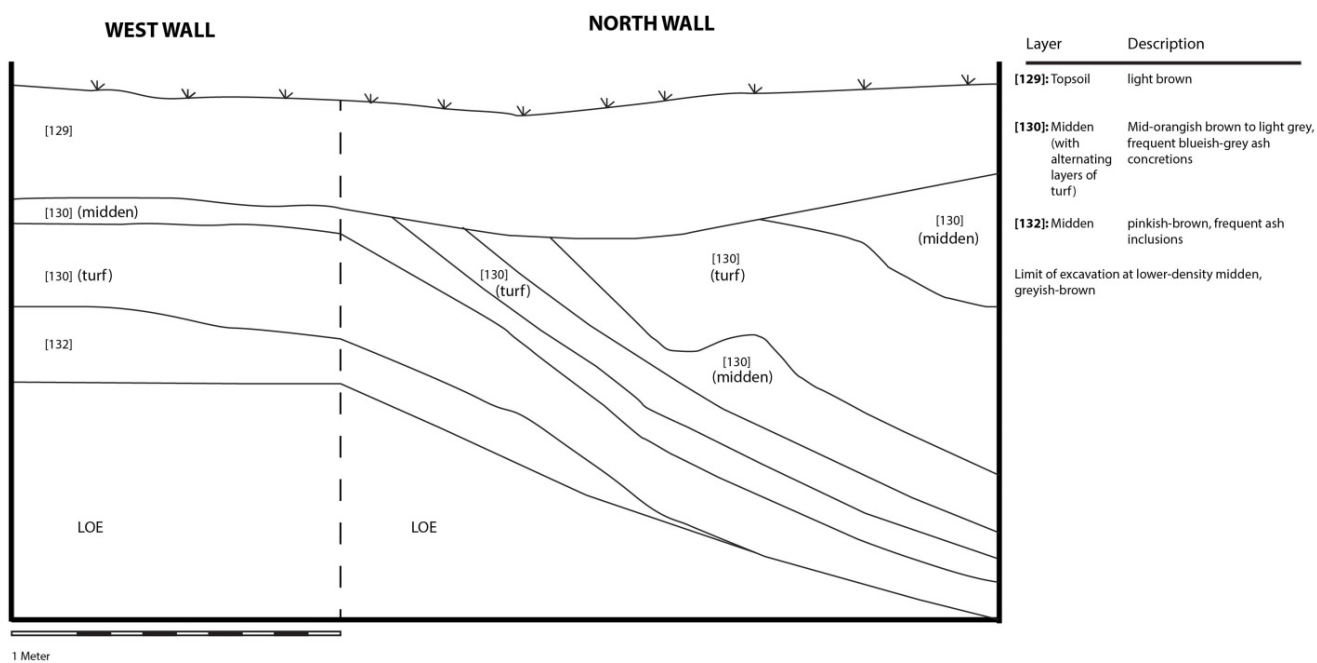


Figure 8: Ás TP 4 profile

on a coring survey to target post-1766 midden deposits elsewhere at the farm mound. Stratigraphy in TP4 revealed that the farm mound had been leveled somewhat, probably in the 20th century, truncating layers of alternating midden and turf at a relatively extreme angle to the topsoil (Figure 8). Beneath a thick topsoil layer [129], these grayish-brown midden layers [130, 131, 132] were intact, well stratified, and yielded a small sampling of redwares, one piece of stoneware and a set of square cut nails, suggesting a pre-1900 TAQ. More detailed artifact analysis would be required, however, to say this with confidence. No 1766 tephra layer was identified in TP4 before the excavation was stopped. Due to time constraints, TP4 was stopped at a lower density midden context approximately 30 cm below a higher-density artifact layer [130/131] after the artifact count had significantly dwindled.

Interpretation

Test pits at Keflavík and Ás confirmed basic trends in studies of farm mounds (see Vésteinsson 2010 for an overview). Relatively few excavations of later farm mound deposits have taken place in Iceland, especially of non-elite households (Lucas 2006; Lucas 2012; Vésteinsson 2010). Therefore, information from test pits at Keflavík and Ás contributes to emerging knowledge of farm mounds and Icelandic households in the Early Modern and Modern periods. Test pits investigating post-1300 layers of middens at Keflavík (445) and Ás (442) yielded information about two key variables 1) farm mound formation morphology and later alterations and 2) household assemblages of imported material culture at each site.

Post-medieval Farm Mound Morphology and Formation Processes

Surface surveys, aerial photography and coring surveys of the farm mound were used to identify and differentiate dwelling spaces and midden areas at Keflavík (445) and Ás (442). At each site, the modern dwelling was located up-slope of midden deposits. In the case of Ás, the two main structures at the site have been removed, but foundations are still visible (see Figures 1 and 4).

In the midden areas of each site, after 1300, layers generally increase in thickness, sometimes quite dramatically. This creates a steeper slope to the farm mound over time oriented towards the dwelling. Post-1300 midden layers sometimes alternated with layers of turf. This may be due to intentional capping of trash or simply coincidental dumping of used architectural material.

Test pits at Keflavík revealed a large scale alteration of the farm mound sometime in the 20th century, probably limited to a small number of depositional events, given the relative lack of stratigraphy and constrained time-depth of artifacts.

In the case of TP4 at Ás, modern alteration of the farm mound seems to have been carried out with the intention of flattening the relatively steep stratigraphy of the older midden. Remains of a fence and a thick topsoil layer suggests this truncation was to create either a more ornamental area in front of the house, a garden, or both.

Material Culture

At the locations chosen for excavation, evidence for pre-20th century material culture was scant. This is due to alterations of farm mounds that took place in the 20th century. These alterations disturbed 19th and 18th century deposits more

heavily than the layers below. In general, whitewares seem to appear in midden assemblages in the late 19th century and continue into the 20th century, paralleling the same trend

observed in other areas (Lucas 2006). However, more analysis is needed to speak more specifically to the introduction and adoption of whitewares in Hegrans at this time.

Appendix: Context Lists

Keflavík TP1

| Context | Description | Context Above | Context Below | Stratigraphic Dating | West Wall Depth (cm) | Notes |
|-------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 111 | Disturbed | Ground Surface | 112 | After 1300 | 0-60 | Heavily disturbed topsoil |
| 112 | Pink ash and gray ash | 111 | 113 & 1300 | After 1300 | 60-155 | |
| 113 | Pink ash and burnt turf | 112 | 1300 | After 1300 | | Akin to cxt 110 in TP2 |
| 1300 Tephra | Gray | 112 & 113 | 114 | 1300 | 170 | |
| 114 | Pink ash and gray ash | 1300 | 1104 | 1300-1104 | 155-170 | |
| 1104 Tephra | White | 103 and 104 | End of excavation | 1104 | 170 | |

Keflavík TP2

| Context | Description | Context Above | Context Below | Stratigraphic Dating | Depth (cm) | Notes |
|-------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------------|------------|---|
| 101 | Disturbed surface | Ground Surface | 1776 | After 1776 | 0-24 | |
| 1776 Tephra | Gray/black | 101 | 102 | 1776 | 24 | |
| 102 | Pink ash and gray ash | 1776 | 103 & 104 | 1776-1104 | 24-60 | Possibly Fill |
| 103 | Pink ash and gray ash | 102 | 108 & 107 | 1776-1104 | 60-90 | |
| 104 | Pink ash and gray ash | 101 | 109 | 1776-1104 | 60-90 | Cut into context 103 & 108 |
| 105 | Pink ash and gray ash | 103 and 104 | 106 | 1776-1104 | 90-100 | |
| 106 | Pink ash and gray ash | 103 & 104 | 108 & 107 | 1776-1104 | 90-100 | |
| 107 | Pink ash, charcoal, and gray ash | 103 & 104 | 109 | 1776-1104 | 80-100 | |
| 108 | Turf | 103 & 104 | 109 | 1776-1104 | 90-120 | Probable turf wall w/1104 mostly on east side |
| 109 | Pink ash and gray ash | 104, 108, & 107 | 110 | Before 1776 | 120-140 | |
| 110 | Greasy and black | 109 | Unexcavated | Before 1776 | 140 | |

Keflavík TP3

| Context | Description | Context Above | Context Below | Stratigraphic Dating | Sample # | Notes |
|--------------|---|----------------|---------------|----------------------|----------|--|
| 115 | Mixed turf | Ground Surface | 116 and 117 | After 1776 | | |
| 116 | Disturbed | 115 | 117 | After 1776 | | Possibly Fill |
| 117 | Pink ash and gray ash | 116 | 1766 Tephra | After 1776 | | Bone inclusions (both burnt and unburnt) |
| 1766 Tephra | Black/gray tephra | 118 | 118 | 1766 | | |
| 118 | Pink ash and gray ash | 1766 | Black tephra | 1776-1300 | | |
| Black tephra | Black/gray tephra | 118 | 119 | 1776-1300 | | |
| 119 | Pink ash, charcoal, and gray ash | Black tephra | 120 | 1776-1300 | | |
| 120 | Pink ash and gray ash | 119 | 1300 | 1776-1300 | | |
| 1300 Tephra | Gray tephra | 120 | 121 | 1300 | | |
| 121 | Laminated pink ash with bits of white patchy tephra | 1300 | 1104 | 1300-1104 | | |
| 1104 Tephra | Yellow-White Tephra | 121 | 122 | 1104 | | |
| 122 | Laminated pink ash | 1104 | 1000 | 1104-1000 | 1 | |
| 1000 Tephra | Gray tephra | 122 | 123 | 1000 | | |
| 123 | Pink ash | 1000 | 124 | 1000-Settlement | 2 | |
| 124 | Aeolian Deposit with flecks of charcoal | 123 | H3-H4 | Settlement | 3 | |
| H3-H4 Tephra | Yellow Tephra | 124 | | Prehistoric | | |

Ás TP1

| Context | Description | Context Above | Context Below | Stratigraphic Dating | Sample # | Notes |
|-------------|------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------------|----------|---|
| 101 | Topsoil | Ground Surface | 102 | post-1776 | | |
| 102 | Midden | 101 | 104 | 1300-1776 | | 1776 tephra layer within |
| 104 | Dense Midden | 102 | 105 | 1300-1776 | | charcoal lenses |
| 105 | Dense Midden | 104 | 106 | 1300-1776 | | moderate bone inclusions |
| 106 | Dense Midden | 105 | 107 | 1300-1776 | 1 | one large turf inclusion |
| 107 | Midden | 106 | 108 | 1300-1776 | | |
| 108 | Midden | 107 | 1300 Tephra | 1300 | | lenses of peat ash |
| 1300 Tephra | | 108 | 109 | 1104-1300 | | |
| 109 | Midden | 108 | 110 | 1104-1300 | 2 | lenses of peat ash |
| 110 | Dense Midden | 109 | 113 | 1104-1300 | 3 | frequent bone inclusions |
| 113 | Lower Density | 110 | 114 | 1104-1300 | 6 | frequent charcoal inclusions |
| 1104 Tephra | | | 1104 Tephra | 1104 | | |
| 114 | Organic Cultural Layer | 113 | 115 | Settlement-1104 | | purplish-brown |
| 115 | Floor-like surface | 114 | 116 | Settlement-1104 | 7 | with alternating purplish-brown and white layer |
| 116 | Midden | 115 | LNS | Settlement-1104 | 8 | charcoal and turf inclusions |
| LNS | | 116 | H3/H4 | Settlement | 9 | sample from side wall |
| H3/H4 | | | | Prehistoric | | |

Ás TP2

| Context | Description | Context Above | Context Below | Stratigraphic Dating | Sample # | Notes |
|---------|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------------|----------|--|
| 114 | Topsoil | Ground Surface | 119 & 117 | 20th Century | | dating based on artifacts |
| 117 | Midden | 114 | 120 | 20th Century | | dating based on artifacts |
| 118 | Midden | 114 | 119 | post-1776 | | |
| 119 | Midden | 114 | 121 | 1300-1776 | | heavy turf inclusions |
| 120 | Midden | 114 | LOE | 20th Century | | |
| 121 | Dense Midden | 119 | LOE | 1300-1776 | | |
| 133 | Cut | | | | | Cut into older midden (118, 119, and 121); filled with 20th century midden (117 and 120) |

Ás TP4

| Context | Description | Context Above | Context Below | Stratigraphic Dating | Sample # | Notes |
|---------|-------------|----------------|---------------|----------------------|----------|---|
| 129 | Topsoil | Ground Surface | 130 | post-1776 | | |
| 130 | Midden | 129 | 132 | post-1300 | | Alternating layers of turf in midden, frequent blueish-gray ash concretions |
| 132 | Midden | 130 | | post-1300 | | |