

Introduction by R. Friel



As we enter the fourth and final week of the season the timetable will be tight but achievable. Excavation will continue through to Thursday, with Friday being taken up with photo cleaning and photography followed by the final planning, recording and sampling on Saturday. The site will be closed by Sunday with equipment stored and accommodation cleared concurrently. The majority of the team will fly home on Monday morning, leaving Ant, Julia and myself to enjoy three days of travelling, including three ferry journeys.

On Tuesday the team will undertake a field trip lead by Símun V. Arge of Føroya Fornminnisavni (the National Museum of the Faroes). The itinerary will include the Medieval settlement of Kirkjubøur, the Viking age burial site at Tjørnuvík both on Streymoy and the Viking farmstead of Toftanes, Leirvík on Eysturoy. This trip will be fundamental to the students, developing their understanding of Faroese archaeology, whilst placing the ongoing excavations within a wider regional context.

Week four by A. Mustchin

This week saw the end of excavating for this season. It also witnessed a significant change in the weather with many days, including the final trip day, being very wet and windy. This was accompanied by a fall in average temperature and a noticeable reduction in daylight hours; the Faroese summer was over! Work on site was not hindered however and the excavation was concluded without any significant last-minute problems.

Visitor Book

This week we have had 77 visitors from the Faroes, Denmark, Sweden and Germany and a special visit from the mayor:

“Very interesting and beautiful site, good luck!”



“Good luck with your work, you are re-writing our history.”



“We came on a windy and rainy day to photograph the church, and had a pleasant surprise. This could be an attraction for tourists. Good luck!!”



“Thank you for your enthusiasm and ongoing research, helping us to understand where we came from.” - Mayor of Sand.



Primary floor surfaces were reached in two areas of the structure's interior. On the north side, last week's 'gully' features gave way to an earlier 'floor' of thin ash middens over sand. An arrangement of cobbles and a square-cut negative feature were discovered within this material although work was halted before these could be formally investigated. They may constitute some form of hearth and ash pit and will be fully explored next year. In the southwest extension of site, the primary floor was quickly exposed beneath the reinstated 'backfill' of 1978. A square 'hearth' was discovered here surrounded on three sides by deposits of laminated turf. The sides, back and base of this feature were stone-lined although almost all associated 'soft' deposits had been previously removed. Carbonised cereal grains were recovered from material above the base however and may in future provide a Radiocarbon date for the early use of this site.

Unfortunately, time constraints limited excavation of material within the core southern confines of the structure. A burnt feature in this area was however exposed and sampled for archaeomagnetic dating. This technique uses known past changes in the Earth's magnetic field to date the last heating and cooling of a material and has never before been used in the Faroes. A pilot study from this site would therefore be very exciting and help to establish the potential of this technique for future work in the region.

Half-sectioning of the burnt stone pile to the east of the structure this week quickly revealed a make-up of loosely packed stones and wind-blown sand. Small patches of midden were discovered near the base of the pile and were systematically sampled prior to the final recording of this feature. Continued removal of midden 'dumps' and sand accumulations between the stone pile and outer eastern wall of the structure also further defined a stone feature in this area. This now appears to constitute a cobble-paved pathway consolidated with midden and leading from the side of the stone pile to the structure's entrance, truncating the outer turf walls. A shallow sondage was begun to investigate the nature of this entrance 'passage' and will be completed next year.

A final trip day this week gave most of the team their first taste of the broader Faroese landscape and archaeological record. Símun Arge compiled a full itinerary and also acted as guide to this educational excursion. Among the sites visited were the Viking burial ground at Tjørnuvík and Toftanes, a complex of Viking Age and later Medieval buildings at Leirvík. The trip was very much appreciated and helped the students to understand the broader context of their work in Sandur. It is anticipated that excavations will continue at Við Kirkjugarð in 2010, a proposal that has met with great enthusiasm from the local community. We extend heartfelt thanks to all who have supported our efforts this year and look forward to returning to the Faroes.



This year the excavation team on the Faroe Islands were joined by ArchaeoFX, a business run by Bradford University postgraduate student Tom Frankland. Funded by Business Link, the purpose of the collaboration was to examine the potential of excavators having access to CGI (computer generated imagery) on-site. This work is proving to be very successful, both in helping the excavation team to develop ongoing interpretation and to convey archaeological concepts to interested members of the public. Further information and results of this partnership will shortly be made available on www.archaeofx.com.



The student view

by A. Mager

The excavation was brought to a close this week, including a very professional photo clean considering the dreadful weather. The structure appears to have taken the form of a 'workshop', the abundance of charcoal and burnt stone, and the presence of at least two 'hearths' strongly suggesting an industrial nature. The site is consequently unique to Faroese archaeology. The site will also be the first in Faroe to have archaeomagnetic dating applied. The samples taken this season will hopefully form the basis of a student project in Bradford and we all look forward to seeing the results.

On Tuesday, Símun led us on an entertaining and informative visit to a number of archaeological and historical sites. These included the medieval cathedral site of Kirkjubøur and the Viking and later settlement at Toftanes, Leirvík. It was interesting to see how different our site was to previously known structures in the Faroes and we'd all like to thank Símun for a fantastic time.

The Faroese contingent provided a perfect end to the season with a slap-up meal of roast lamb and potatoes, and a mountain of pancakes. This gave us all the energy we needed for the final push. The Faroes have been an experience we'll never forget and we all hope to return in the future.

Student view special

by R. Sørensen

My name is Rannvá Sørensen and I am a Bachelor of Near Eastern Archaeology from Copenhagen University. In September I will undergo my Masters in Prehistoric Archaeology. This is a program concentrating on Denmark, Scandinavia and their broader European relations. In some ways this is totally new to me, as my undergraduate degree focused solely on Near Eastern history and the archaeology of this region. My previous excavation experience is also limited to the Near East.



Two years ago I attended a four-week dig in Jordan. The excavation methods used at Við Kirkjugarð have been broadly similar but I feel I needed to gain archaeological experience that was relevant to my forthcoming Masters. As I expected, working on Sandoy has been very educational. Although many of the methods are similar, some are quite different! The finds, structural archaeology, soil textures, unpredictable weather, and scientific methods used are all new to me, and this experience will no doubt benefit my future career in the north.

Working with the team from the University of Bradford, both students and supervisors, has been a great experience. They made me feel right at home amongst them. The supervisors were always ready to answer questions and I have gained a lot from their extensive knowledge of North Atlantic Archaeology. Over the last four weeks I feel I have gained a great deal of confidence and expertise that I can apply elsewhere.

A final word...

The Members of the University of Bradford team would like to take this opportunity to express their thanks for the kind welcome and continued interest and support of the community of Sandur. In particular, we would like to thank the local council for sponsoring the cultural evening hosted in the village of Dalur.