

Introduction by R. Friel



Week three is upon us and it should prove to be an eventful one. On site we will extend the south western trench edge to confirm the structure's full extent, whilst the burnt stone pile will continue to be investigated. The environmental processing continues to produce quantities of charcoal supporting the presently held assumption of an industrial rather than domestic site function. Visitor numbers remain high and this week will see a visit from Andras Mortensen the director of Føroya Fornminnessavn (the National Museum of the Faroes). On the social front the students and staff will attend a cultural evening in the village of Dalur. Here they will learn about past faroese lifestyles, see demonstrations of traditional crafts such as spinning, weaving and knitting and experience faroese foods, music and dancing. Also this week, we will celebrate Sinéad's twentieth birthday with a traditional British beach barbecue and 'international' rounders match.

Visitor Book

This week we have had 40 visitors from the Faroes, Denmark, Sweden and Scotland. Here are some of their comments:

"Thank you very much for an excellent tour around this interesting site! I enjoyed it very much. Good luck!"



"Excellent thing you are doing!"



"Very exciting!"



Week three by A. Mustchin

Work outside of the structure has picked up pace this week. The charcoal-rich midden deposits and wind-blown sand layers sealing the burnt stone pile have been intensively sampled and mostly removed. A large surface of burnt cobbles and a possible drain feature started to appear in this area on Saturday evening. Work next week, the last of this excavation season, will hopefully reveal the relationship of these latest discoveries with the existing external features. Removal of the stone pile has begun in earnest and the resulting cross-sections will be photographed and drawn.

The possible 'annex' to the east of the main structure has developed into something very different. The alignment of burnt stones that first seemed to form the outline of this 'room' now appear to comprise informal footings for a thick turf wall abutting an inner face of substantial semi-faced stonework. Sondages to the north and east of the structure's principle stone walls have revealed distinctive laminations in section indicative of this construction technique. Such a building would have made good use of local building materials, Faeroe being traditionally devoid of any viable timber resource, whilst thick turf walls (over 1m in this case) would protect against the harsh North Atlantic climate.

The inside of the structure has also been a hive of recent excavation activity. Compacted midden 'floors' have been sampled and a great quantity of charcoal has been recovered via flotation. Targeted internal deposits have been 100% bulk sampled and/or dry sieved. Although an abundance of burnt bone and charcoal is being retrieved, un-burnt bone encountered has not generally been recoverable due to its poor preservation state. Several sizeable fragments of whale bone have nonetheless been lifted recently.

A small extension to the trench this week has resolved much concerning the structure's form. Further backfill was removed from a 1978 trial trench running N-S and truncating the present site. The building now appears square in plan with a stone 'hearth' feature in the southwest corner and possible entrance to the southeast. The floor surfaces currently being excavated are also cut by at least two drain or gully features. Although not all contemporary, each appears to have a relationship with the principle drain running down the structure's internal northern edge. The sandy fills of this larger drain were removed on Friday and Saturday revealing a formal stone-built channel based with flags. A number of poorly preserved sheep/goat bones were recorded from the basal fills of this feature. Notable artefacts from the site so far include a whetstone and a number of pieces of slag. Combined with the huge quantity of charcoal being encountered and the comparative lack of 'domestic' small finds, these suggest an industrial character to the site. It is hoped that excavation of the primary floor surfaces next week will cast more light on the situation.



The student view

by S. Harris and M. Holden

The past two weeks have been a steep learning curve, becoming accustomed to the practises of field archaeology on and off the site. Having never been on any archaeological digs before many of the concepts have been unfamiliar to us; even finding bone in the dry sieve is exciting. So far we have been involved in many aspects of the project, from excavation and planning to plotting small finds into 'Penmap' and floting environmental samples. It's really interesting to see the structure taking shape; with each day the nature of the site is becoming more apparent. We only hope the heavy rain holds off until next Sunday.

This week has not been entirely spent on site however. On Tuesday we were all treated to a cultural evening in the small village of Dalur. We were introduced to the occupations and pastimes of a traditional Faroese household. The family spun wool and knitted whilst singing lengthy ballads of old. None of us were any good at spinning! After a customary meal of herring and 8 year old dried mutton we exerted ourselves in a ring dance while the locals sang. The chosen ballad recounted how a bodyguard of Karlamagnus (Charlemagne) had fought a group of highwaymen using the ripped-off leg of his own horse. Needless to say, we're having great fun both in and out of the trench.

Excavations are taking place this year in Sandur from the 22/06/09 to the 19/07/09. Please feel free to visit the site, we are there 9.00 to 17.30 Monday to Saturday and guided tours are provided.