Jon J. Vidis and his memorial in Laxardalur

In the lovely Laxardalur valley, just beneath the turf farm at Thvera (Þverá), a basalt column stands six feet high. It was erected in 2009, in the memory of Jon J. Vidis, born at Thvera in 1894. The monument is named Jonssteinn (a stone for Jon).

Jon J. Vidis was, by his family, referred to as the head of the Vidis family. Jon never married and had no descendants, but supported the family in many ways, and as a result thereof, is well respected by family members.

The memorial was erected by two more supporters; The Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration and The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF). Jon was a surveyor of towns, harbours and roads, all around Iceland, for decades, and an influential member of the IOOF. He was respected, loved and admired by all, as a hard-working, generous, sociable, intelligent and influential person.

Jon´s very detailed maps of harbours, in the scale of 1:500, are still in use, when other maps don´t suffice. In the sixties Jon surveyed roads in the Westfjords of Iceland, which proved to be a turning point in road construction in this country. He was a foreward thinking man, and his roads were 8 meters wide at that time, and were laid in beautiful curves through the land and over the heaths.

Jon also designed houses, photographed and designed many view-dials, distributed all over the country. Here, on this page, you can see a photo of one of them, located on Mt. Husavikurfjall by Husavik, a town in the vicinity of Thvera in Laxardalur.

As a surveyor you need two assistants. During his long period of employment Jon needed many assistants, who were mainly students, much appreciating a well-paid summer job, travelling all around the country. Many of these were Jon´s nephews and great-nephews. Being married into the family, I frequently hear these men talk about these adventurous times – and I love it!

And as an anecdote for you turists. Jon and three companions were the first ones to travel in a car across Sprengisandur, the center of the Icelandic highlands. They drove in their open Ford T model of 1926, from the agricultural areas in the south, to the north coast, in a few days, in 1933. This was, and still is, considered as an important and courageous exploration, in the early days of modern travelling.

Jon J. Vidis died in 1975. The family name Vidis was taken from a little island in the river Laxa, where it runs by Thvera, close to the monument, with the name Vidir. Vidir is the Icelandic name for willow (salix), a tree found in several different varieties in Iceland. Vidir may also refer to the island as being well-grown.

The famous salmon river Laxa has its origin in Lake Myvatn. It then runs down the Laxardalur valley, where it is full with trout, admired by many fishermen. After that it falls down into Aðaldalur valley, where it is full with salmon, no less admired for its beautiful surroundings and plentiful catch.

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