

Heimsmínjar

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Sameinuðu þjóðirnar starfrækja UNESCO, sem aftur hefur á sinni könnu friðun ýmissa merkra svæða á jörðinni. Það eru fjöll, vötn, skógar, eyðimerkur, borgir, byggingar og (önnur) viðkvæm svæði (t.d. Surtsey og Þingvellir). Staðirnir voru 936 í júní 2011. Sérstök áhersla er nú á Atlantshafssprunguna (náttúra og líf) og víkingatímamann í okkar heimshluta.

Á biðlista/tilnefningaskrá (í raun óskalisti) eru 6 íslensk verkefni, sbr. neðan. **Þverá í Laxárdal** kemur við sögu í tveimur þeirra; nr. 2 og 6. Hér fylgir efni sem lýsir verkefni nr. 6 eingöngu, þ.e. varðveislu íslensku torfbæjanna. Það sótti ég á vef UNESCO. Sjá greinargerðir sem fjalla um verðmæti torfbæjanna hér að neðan. Þverá er nr. 12. Fyrst er þó almenn greinargerð.

Sjá aftast í þessu skjali svar Sigurðar Á. Þráinssonar við fyrirspurn minni um framhaldið.

Unesco's International World Heritage Programme: Properties submitted on the tentative list:

1. Breiðafjörður Nature Reserve (2011)
2. Mývatn and Laxá (2011)
3. Viking Monuments and Sites / Þingvellir National Park (2011)
4. Þingvellir National Park (2011) (sem hluti af Norrænu víkingaverkefni)
5. Vatnajökull National Park (2011)
6. The Turf House Tradition (2011). 14 houses. This series only in this document.

General Description of the Series (14 Turf Houses) as a Whole

The vernacular architectural tradition in Iceland dates back to the settlement in the 9th century. It has since been adapted to the local climate, varying environmental resources and the requirements of the society that developed on the island.

The Icelandic turf farmstead has developed from the long house; a Northern European tradition brought to the country by the Nordic settlers. As their name suggests, turf is one of the main materials used for its construction. Timber is used for the structure, turf is laid to form the thick walls and as a cover for the roof. Sometimes stones are used with or without the turf for the walls, and slates can be used as an underlay for the roof. Although the building materials used have not changed much, the form of the turf farm has changed and adapted to a changing context through the ages.

The long-house in Iceland was traditionally one large house which housed all the necessary functions. The longitudinal double-pitched roof was supported by freestanding inside posts and covered with turf. The entrance was placed on the longitudinal side of the house. The outer walls were made entirely of turf or turf and stone. Inside, the house may have been divided into two or three parts by light timber walls.

The shape of the long-house changed over time, and the archaeological evidence shows that other smaller buildings were annexed to it at the rear. The function of each house would be clear, but the data suggests that a house could change function from one period to another. With the accumulation of these smaller buildings, the long-house also decreased in size. Thus emerged a new type of construction; a group of smaller houses connected by a central passage, which has been called the passage-farmhouse (*gangabær*). This is believed to have been the predominant house type from the Middle-Ages until the 19th century. One of the features of this house type was the *baðstofa*, a house used both for working and sleeping, which was located away from the entrance and stood higher than the rest of the complex in order to increase heating efficiency.

From around 1800 another major change can be noticed in the form with the development of the so called gabled-farm (*burstabær*). This development is often attributed to Guðlaugur Sveinsson who published a treatise on this house type. In this case the façade of the farmhouses was reoriented towards the yard and the annexed buildings at the rear were reintegrated into the main building. However, instead of the being one large house covered with one longitudinal roof, the gabled-farm was a series of juxtaposed smaller houses, each with its own roof. This development was particularly dominant in the Southern Iceland, whereas in the north this new style façade was a front to the old style passage-farmhouse at the back.

The technique of building from turf in Northern Europe dates at least back to the Iron Age, although due to poor preservation physical evidence for its true origins could have been lost through time. The Romans used it for the construction of fortresses and defensive walls after their Empire extended to northern regions.

Building from turf has been practiced at different times in many different countries, such as the, Norway, Scotland, Ireland, Faeroe Islands, Greenland, other parts of Northern Europe (such as the Netherlands) and even on the Great Planes in the USA. In those areas it seems that in recent times this technique has been used for the construction of commoner's dwellings, especially for the poor or lower classes, although in earlier times this may have included churches or other types of houses. Iceland stands out in this respect, as the turf building technique was used for all classes and for all types of houses (e.g. homes, stables, churches, chiefly residences, etc.).

A few features set the turf houses of Iceland apart from those found in other countries. This building tradition is still practiced in Iceland, although only by a few craftsmen that have been trained in the know-how from previous generations. The prevalence of walls made mainly from turf is also noteworthy, as is the fact that the interior of the turf houses often is a timber construction. The passage-farmhouse is also a unique design, where the passage between houses is a separate covered construction.

The building methods varied from one region to another, due to a variation in the availability of materials. Turf walls normally have an outer layer, inner layer and central part connecting the two. A different technique or material could also have been used for the lower and upper part of the wall.

The turf is cut from the mineral-based marshlands, usually within a reasonable distance from each farmstead. Special tools are required for the different types of turf sections. Strengur is a section of turf approx. 1 m long and no more than 5 or 10 cm thick at one edge tapering out to the other one. Walls can be built from strengur, by stacking them in layers, although sometimes strengur is used in between rows of stone or across the wall to bind the outer and inner layers together. Torfa is similar, but wider and tapers out from the thicker middle. It is often used to bind the outer and inner layers together. Another commonly used cut is klömbruhnaus, cut with a spade to an angled block approx. 60 cm long, 20 cm high and 30 cm wide, tapering out in one end. The angle can either be to the right or the left and when they are arranged in horizontal rows, the klömbruhnaus forms a herringbone pattern. Snidda is a diamond shape block similar in size to the klömbruhnaus. It can be used to build walls with or without stones, and was also in some cases used for the roof cover.

The durability of the walls varied greatly, the composition of the materials, the quality of the workmanship and the fluctuations in the climate all playing an important role in this respect. Periodic renewal of the turf is necessary, due to the degradation of the root systems that are the binding force of this building material. In some cases entire walls or a house would be dismantled and rebuilt with new turf, although the stones and timber would most likely be reused. One house unit could thus be restored each time, without much disruption to the rest of the complex. In the south where the fluctuations between frost and thaw were relatively frequent in the winter, walls could need rebuilding as often as every 20 or 25 years, whereas in the more stable north where frost set in for the duration of the winter, walls could be expected to stand for up to 50 or 70 years.

One of the particular features of turf houses in Iceland is the timber structure and interior panelling, around which the turf forms an insulating cover. Locally available timber was scarce, so the main sources for this material are driftwood and timber obtained through trade. This meant that the presence of timber was linked to the power and status of each house. Wealthy vicarages, for instance, testify to the power and wealth of the church through the presence of timber panelling and wooden floors in a large number of houses, mainly the living quarters such as baðstofa and living rooms. Commoner's on the other hand, would only have a few, perhaps only one rooms panelled, although in some cases no timber panelling would have been present in the house. Houses with no panelling or timber floors usually have exposed turf walls and dirt floors, sometimes with slates added where needed.

In order to achieve stability the turf walls are very thick, which also serves the purpose of insulation, an important element to consider in the Icelandic climate. Fires that were lit in the hearth kitchen provided some warmth, but heating in the form of oil, coal or wood burning stoves were not introduced until the 19th century.

The knowledge of building a turf house was widespread in Iceland. The farmer and his workers would build and repair houses, based on knowledge passed through generations. Some became excellent craftsmen and were sought after in their region to help with building work. Although these

individuals had greater experience and were likely to deliver better quality work, the know-how was still very common. In the 20th century this changed dramatically, as fewer and fewer turf-houses were being built. This can be explained by the late urbanisation, as it was not until late 18th century that villages started to form and Iceland was predominantly rural until the 20th century. Now at the start of the 21st century, only a few craftsmen practice the trade, and the knowledge is being passed on mainly through the heritage sector.

The nature of this type of vernacular architecture has been to evolve and adapt to changes through the centuries. Changes that have taken place during the time the houses were still inhabited/used, thus form an integral part of their development.

The development of each farmstead, although dependent on many different factors, would take place over many years, with new houses being added and old ones reconstructed as necessary. As timber became more available and heating systems improved, its importance in house construction became more prominent, either through the front-house (framhús) or by building a separate timber house on the site. With the adoption of concrete as a main building material in the 1920's, this also became part of the farmstead, either alongside the turf or as new dwellings for the families. Although turf houses are no longer inhabited, they remain as an indication of each site's long history and connection to the past. Their continued use throughout the country, mostly as outhouses and storage, highlight their role within the evolving agricultural landscape of the Icelandic countryside.

The serial nomination proposed here aims to bear witness to this exceptional type of vernacular architecture, once widespread but which has developed and lives on in Iceland. The 14 properties in the series will represent both the different types of building technique, based on the different sections of turf, and the varied forms of turf houses, such as the passage-farm, the gabled-farm, timber front-farm and churches.

DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL COMPONENT PARTS

1. Austur-Meðalholt in Flói, Árnessýsla, 63° 52,960'N, 20° 54,968'W

Austur-Meðalholt is situated in the flat farmlands of southern Iceland near Selfoss town. The farm is part of the Icelandic Farmhouse cultural institution (Íslenski Bærinn). The houses are from the 19th century.

The farmstead is composed of four clustered houses, around 13 m long and 24 m wide, in addition to a barn and stables. Three houses face the yard to the south, a barn to the east, living room/entrance in the middle and baðstofa to the west. On the northern side of the complex is a hearth kitchen. A turf wall enclosure surrounds a cabbage and potato patch on the western side of the houses and on the northern side is a fenced off area for keeping hay.

The walls are made with stones and stengur. The gables are made from timber and clad with corrugated iron. The rooftops are also clad with corrugated iron.

2. Árbær in Reykjavík, 64° 7,105'N, 21° 49,179'W

Árbær farmstead is situated in the Elliðaárdalur valley in the Reykjavík suburb of Árbær in the south-west of Iceland, once an agricultural area. The old house is part of the Reykjavík City Museum. An open air museum has been built up on the site, with several older buildings having been relocated to the vicinity of the old farm. One of the main thoroughfares to Reykjavík passed Árbær, which became a popular resting place for travellers on horseback. The earliest written sources date from the 15th century. The last inhabitants moved there in late 19th century, rebuilding the houses during 1890-1918.

Árbær consists of six houses and is around 20 m long and 7.8 m wide to the north and 19 m wide to the south. Four houses face the yard, the stables to the north-east, two storey baðstofa, which is divided into three rooms on the lower floor, two storey living room, also divided into three rooms on the lower floor and an entrance to the north-west. The entrance leads to the hearth kitchen and stable. A smithy is located on the other side of the yard. Stables are off to the east, but no other outhouses are present, although the ruins of a barn are still visible.

The walls are made with stones and strengur. The gables are made from timber, with three of them clad with corrugated iron. The same houses have corrugated iron roofs, whereas the other three have turf rooftops.

Árbær is an excellent example of a turf farm, built using the traditional form, but where new materials have been integrated to enhance the house's performance against the elements.

3. Bustarfell in Vopnafjörður, Norður Múlasýsla, 65° 35,101'N, 15° 9,524'W

Bustarfell farmstead consists of a dwelling house and adjoining stables. The farmstead was modernized in the 1960's when new dwelling houses and stables were built and is still inhabited by the same family that has lived there since the 16th century. The farm is located centrally in the farmland of Hofsaárdalur valley in Vopnafjörður in north-eastern Iceland, by the Hofsa salmon fishing river. Though the farm is central in that area, Vopnafjörður is historically isolate. Bustarfell has been a part of the National Museum's Historic Buildings Collection since 1943. The family lived in the old farmhouse until 1966, and the buildings have since then housed the Bustarfell Museum.

The farmstead at Bustarfell is a cluster of 17 houses and is around 30 m long and 26 m wide. Six of the farm's houses are alinged on a south-east axis and face the farmyard, thus forming a gabled farmhouse. To the west are three storage houses, then a living room, entrance and a baðstofa to the east. The main feature that characterises this farm is the location of the baðstofa in the front row of houses, as well as an orthogonal passageway that links all the houses that face the yard. The more traditional passageway leads from the entrance and thus connects the front of the farmstead to the pantry, hearth kitchen, cowshed and internal well, located at the back of the cluster. There are no outhouses still standing at Bustarfell.

The walls are made from stones and turf. On the outside the lower part of the walls is mostly constructed from stones, but the upper part is made of strengur. On the inside the stones in the lower part of the wall have been laid with layers of strengur, but the upper part is strengur only, as on the outside. The roof structure of the hearth kitchen is made from timber that clearly has been

reused from a ship. Due to the fact that the farmhouses were inhabited well into the 20th century they show evidence of modern times, such as that concrete was used to strengthen and seal walls and floors. Electricity was installed, as well as an oil burning stove with concrete chimney, running water and a WC. The gables are made from timber, although the rear gables of the front row of houses are clad with tar paper, and turf covers all the rooftops.

Bustarfell is a large farmstead that highlights the development of the turf house into modern times. The turf buildings were lived in well into the 1960s and the installation of modern conveniences, such as electricity and WC, show how long inhabitation was made possible. Another unique feature is the passageways, connecting the numerous houses together.

4. Galtastaðir fremri in Hróarstunga, Suður Múlasýsla, 65° 27,040'N, 14° 26,073'W

Galtastaðir fremri in Hróarstunga is a modest turf farm - a commoner's dwelling house and adjoining stables. The age of the farmstead is uncertain, but written sources indicate that the site has been inhabited for centuries. The farm was modernized in the 1960's, when a new house was built which is still inhabited. The dwelling house now in use is adjoined to the old turf house. The house is a part of the National Museum's Historic Buildings Collection. Galtastaðir fremri is situated in the harsh farmland of Hróarstunga in eastern Iceland. Hróarstunga is a moor surrounded by water on three sides, glacial rivers to the north and south and the North Atlantic to the east. This area is historically remote and inaccessible and the current connection is by gravel road.

The main feature of Galtastaðir fremri, the baðstofa built over the cattleshed, [a sort of byre-dwelling] dates to 1882 but other parts of the farmstead are older. The farm is around 23 m long and 15 m wide, counting eight houses laid out in two rows. At the front are the storage, entrance, the baðstofa/cattleshed and passageway to the barn. At the back are the hearth kitchen and pantry, connected to the entrance through a passageway and a barn that links with the cattleshed equally with a passageway. Adjoining the farm in the south is a small timber house built in 1961. To the north of the farmstead are two stables and the ruins of another one are located to the south. Galtastaðir is not a gabled farmhouse, but longitudinal walls face the yard on both sides of the entrance.

The lower part of the walls is made from stones and strengur and the upper part from strengur only. The rear of the farmstead is partly built into the hillock. The gables of the storage and entrance are constructed from timber, but the other gables are made with strengur and the roofs are covered with turf.

Galtastaðir fremri is one of the few remaining fjósbaðstofa (byre-dwelling) in Iceland. This type of house is characterised by the positioning of the baðstofa along the yard. As a small farmstead, it shows the dwelling of the poorer classes, it's houses containing only the main necessities.

5. Glaumbær in Skagafjörður, Skagafjarðarsýsla, 65° 36,675'N, 19° 30,285'W

Glaumbær turf farm is a former vicarage, a dwelling house, situated in the densely populated farmland of the inland fjord Skagafjörður in northern Iceland. The farmstead is still inhabited and was modernized in the 20th century with new dwelling houses and stables and is still an inhabited vicarage. The old house is a part of the National Museum's Historic Building Collection and houses part of the Skagafjörður Heritage Museum. The main thoroughfare in the area has long passed near

Glaumbær and still does. The site has been inhabited for centuries; written sources suggest that a church has been there since the 11th century and an 11th century long-house has been excavated at the site. Glaumbær is mentioned several times in the medieval Saga literature. The age of the buildings vary considerably, the youngest dating from around 1880 and the oldest back to mid 18th century.

Glaumbær is composed of 14 clustered houses and is around 32 m wide and 28 m long. Six houses face the yard to the east, forming a gabled farmhouse. To the south is a smithy, two storage houses, living rooms on each side of the entrance and firewood storage to the north. The entrance gives access to a long passageway that connects the other houses; a dairy, the hearth kitchen, three pantries, back entrance, a guesthouse and a baðstofa at the end, divided into three rooms. To the north of the farmstead is the Glaumbær church in the middle of a cemetery. No old outhouses remain at Glaumbær.

The walls are almost exclusively made from turf, klömbruhnaus, snidda and strengur, although stones are present in the lowest part of the walls, thus forming the foundation for the turf walls. All the rooftops are covered with turf, but only some of the gables are made of timber, especially those facing the yard.

Glaumbær is an outstanding example of a large turf farm, built in the northern style. The building technique highlights the extensive use of turf, including the picturesque turf gables at the back of the houses.

6. Grenjaðarstaður in Aðaldalur, Suður Þingeyjasýsla, 65° 49,252'N, 17° 21,057'W

Grenjaðarstaður turf farm is a former vicarage, a dwelling house, situated in the densely populated farmland of the inland valley of Aðaldalur in northern Iceland. The farmstead is still inhabited and was modernized in the 20th century with new dwelling houses and stables and is still an inhabited vicarage. The old house is a part of the National Museum's Historic Buildings Collection and houses part of the Suður-Þingeyinga Folk Museum. The main thoroughfare in the area has long passed near Grenjaðarstaður and still does, the farm lies about 30 km from the town of Húsavík. Grenjaðarstaður was a [settlement estate] and considered one of the very best beneficia in Iceland with many perquisites. It was one of the centres of events in the Saga literature.

Grenjaðarstaður farm consists of ten houses and is around 29 m long and 24 m wide. Five gables face the yard to the east, forming a gabled farmhouse. To the south a storage, living rooms on either side of the entrance and a post-office located in the northernmost house. A passageway leads from the entrance to the hearth kitchen. A side passageway leads on one hand to the pantry and firewood-storage, and on the other hand to the two storey baðstofa at the back, divided into three rooms on each floor. To the east of the farmstead stands Grenjaðarstaður church inside a cemetery. The outhouses are no longer standing.

The walls are made from lava rocks, filled with soil and covered with strengur. All the rooftops have turf covers. The gable types vary, all but three are from timber.

Grenjaðastaður is an excellent example of a large turf farm, built in the northern style, where the lava rocks are used as a key feature of the building technique.

7. Grænavatn in Mývatnssveit, Suður Þingeyjasýsla, 65° 32,439'N, 16° 59,802'W

Grænavatn in Mývatnssveit is a turf farm that consists of a dwelling house and outbuildings. The farm is situated in the volcanic farmland of Mývatnssveit in northern Iceland. The area is on the border of the Icelandic highlands and is approx. 280 m above sea level. The farmstead was modernized in the 20th century and is still inhabited. The old house is a part of the National Museum's Historic Buildings Collection. Though Mývatnssveit is remotely situated on the border of the highlands, it is historically a bountiful area due to the amplexness of food drawn from the Lake Mývatn area.

The farm at Grænavatn is around 30 m long and 8 m wide. The main house, which was built in 1913 under direct Norwegian chalet-style influences (sveiserhús), is a two storey timber house with a turf roof, the façade facing the yard to the west. Adjoining each gable is a single storey shed (lean-to) with a single pitched roof. The south and north walls are made from lava slates. A turf wall runs along the entire back of the house, with a passage between the wall and the timber wall. By the eastern side of the house are the ruins of a large turf house, that was once the inhabitant's main dwelling for the winter months. Outhouses stand to the north of the farm and further away, on the edge of Lake Grænavatn, are stables made from lava slates with a corrugated iron roof.

The timber front house (frambær) is a timber house that rests on a stone foundation and a basement is located underneath part of the building. The walls have lined panelling on the outside, and the interior has various types of panelling, partially covered with wallpaper.

Grænavatn is an excellent example of the last stage of the development of turf farms, where the use of timber had started to take prominence over turf as a building material.

8. Keldur at Rangárvellir, Rangárvallasýsla, 63° 49,300'N, 20° 4,437'W

Keldur at Rangárvellir is a turf farm consisting of a dwelling house and numerous outbuildings. The farm is situated on the southern border of the Icelandic highlands at the edge of the fertile and densely populated Rangárvellir fields farmland. The farm is in the vicinity of Mt. Hekla volcano that has repeatedly threatened the farm and the surrounding area. Erosion has also been a great problem for the farmers at Keldur. During the Middle Ages many of the surrounding farmsteads were abandoned, most likely because of the difficulties caused by the harsh conditions. From under the lava fields surrounding the farm around 200 springs flow with ice-cold water.

Keldur was one of the residences of one of the most powerful chieftain families in Iceland in the Free State era in the 12th and 13th centuries. It is mentioned several times in the medieval Saga literature, Njals saga in particular. The farmstead is still inhabited but was modernized in the 20th century with new dwelling houses and stables. The house is a part of the National Museum's Historic Buildings Collection and is open to the public during the summer. Most of the houses were renovated in the 19th century but much of the wooden features are much older, some dating at least back to the 17th century.

At Keldur numerous outhouses have been preserved along with the old farmhouses. The hall (skáli) is placed alongside the yard, as was common in earlier times. The entrance faces the yard along with the gables of three storage houses and a smithy. Access is from the entrance to the hall, pantry and passageway leading to the hearth kitchen and firewood storage. Next to the hall is a two storey timber house with three rooms on the lower floor and a baðstofa on the upper floor, divided into two rooms by a timber partition. An underground tunnel (approx. 25 m long), possibly from the 12th or 13th century, links the hall with the Keldnaá riverbank.

To the west of the farmstead is a house constructed in 1937. To the east of the farmstead is a sheep fold, stables, cowsheds and a barn. A path leads to that area and another path leads west to a mill house that runs on hydroelectric power. North of the farm is a fence made with stones. To the southeast is the Keldur church within a cemetery and south of there is the Keldnaá river, originating from a number of springs (keldur), that surface from the lavafields above the farm.

The walls are made with lava rock on the inside and outside and filled with a sandy soil. Finely cut snidda is placed between the rocks on the outside. The gables are made from timber. The houses have a slate roof covered with turf. The primary timber structure of the houses have lined edges. The timber baðstofa is clad with corrugated iron. It was built to the west of the complex after a large earthquake in the south of Iceland in 1896.

At Keldur, unique features have been preserved, such as the old hall and the mill house. The discovery, excavation and restoration of the underground tunnel provides an invaluable insight into the social context. Furthermore, the surrounding cultural landscape, with the outhouses and other archaeological remains, highlight the past ways of life.

9. Laufás in Eyjafjörður, Suður Þingeyjasýsla, 65° 53,639'N, 18° 4,344'W

Laufás turf farm is a former vicarage, a dwelling house, situated in the densely populated coastal farmland of Eyjafjörður in northern Iceland. The farmstead was modernized in the 20th century with new dwelling houses and stables and is still an inhabited vicarage. The old farm is a part of the National Museum's Historic Buildings Collection and is managed by the Akureyri Museum. The main thoroughfare in the area has long passed near Laufás and still does. Laufás has been one of the better beneficia with many perquisites and is mentioned several times in the medieval Saga literature. The earliest written sources reveal that a church fire took place there in late 12th century .

Laufás counts 12 houses and the whole complex is around 29 m long and 28 m wide. Most of the farmstead is constructed in the period from 1840-1877, but the origin of the farm is older. Five gables face the yard to the west, forming a gabled farmhouse. To the north is the living room, then entrance, hall (skáli), eider down house (dúnhús) and storage. The entrance gives access to a passageway that connect the other houses; bridal house (brúðarhús), hearth kitchen, pantry and small living room, with a two storey baðstofa at the other end. Both the upper and lower floors of the baðstofa house are divided into three rooms. To the south of the farmstead is Laufás church within a cemetery. The outhouses are no longer standing.

The lower part of the turf walls are made from stone and strengur, but the upper part from turf, klömbruhnaus, kvíahnaus, strengur and snidda, with all the rooftops covered in turf. The gables are

from timber. The living rooms, entrance, bridal house and the entire baðstofa house have panelled interior walls and wooden floors. The rest of the houses have visible turf walls and earth floor. Remnants of a stave construction are present in the passageway, which testifies to the farm's old origins. Part of the farm was built from reused timbers.

Laufás represents a large turf house, built in the northern tradition, where a mixed building technique has been employed.

10. Núpsstaður in Fljótshverfi, Vestur Skaftafellssýsla, 63° 57,614'N, 17° 34,665'W

Núpsstaður turf farmstead and chapel. The farm is situated in the farmland of Southern Iceland on the strip of land between the Vatnajökull glacier and the North Atlantic, adjacent to Vatnajökull National Park. East of the farm looms the majestic Lómagnúpur cliff. The farm is on the border of Skeiðarársandur floodplain. It was the last farm travellers passed before entering the floodplain that was the greatest hindrance on the south coast of Iceland. In 1974 the rivers were bridged and the farm lost its role as the last stop before the great rivers. The farmstead was modernized early in the 20th century and was inhabited until very recently. The same family lived in Núpsstaður since about 1730. The chapel at Núpsstaður is part of the National Museum's Historic Buildings Collection. Although the farmstead is privately owned necessary repairs have been carried out by the National Museum.

A church was built at Núpsstaður in earliest Christian times, or at least sometime before 1200 AD. The Núpsstaður chapel was the first building to come into the Museum's care in 1930. It is used occasionally for services.

Núpsstaður farmstead consists of a group of 15 houses, in addition to the ruins of another four. To the west is a garage (transformed from a stable), two stables in ruins and another one still standing. The other houses are organised in two roughly parallel rows. The southern row is composed of a hovel, storage, smithy and cow-shed. A two storey timber house is located at the end of this row. The northern row consists of three barns, the ruins of another barn, an engine house and a hearth kitchen. The houses are built in a few clusters within the rows, although some stand alone. No internal passage exists between the numerous houses. Close to the houses to the east a chapel stands inside a cemetery.

A sheep fold is located on the outskirts of the adjacent field. A stable with a barn are located to the west of the farmstead and another one quite some distance away to the east near Lómagnúpur cliff where two caves can also be found, once used for keeping the sheep.

The walls are made of stone, both the inner and outer layer of the wall composition. On the outside snidda has been placed between the stones and the walls are filled with sandy soil. Some of the gables are made of timber, whereas others have been constructed using corrugated iron. The walls of some of the houses are however made exclusively from stones and snidda. Roof construction at Núpsstaður is particularly noteworthy, the structural types varying considerably from house to house; some have slates or corrugated iron under the turf cover, whereas others have only corrugated iron. The rafters of some houses are resting only on the stone walls, whereas in others

have triple ridge beam construction on top of two rows of poles. The timber house is clad with corrugated iron and was built in 1928 to replace the old baðstofa, reusing much of the old timber.

Núpsstaður is an outstanding example of the southern type of turf houses, where the cultural landscape has been preserved. The magnificent setting has considerable aesthetic value.

11. Tyrfingsstaðir in Kjálki, Skagafjarðarsýsla, 65° 23,432'N, 19° 7,511'W

The turf farm Tyrfingsstaðir is located in the centre of an area called Kjálki in Skagafjörður in northern Iceland. The farm lies on the boundary between the densely populated agricultural area of Skagafjörður to the north and the uninhabited highland valley of Austurdalur to the south.

The western boundary of the farm is the glacial river Jökulsá which runs through a deep gorge. From the river the farmland slopes gently to the east but soon merges with a steeper mountain slope. The first mention of Tyrfingsstaðir in written sources dates from the year 1478.

The farmhouse is a compound of different structures which date mostly from 1870-1895, the timber house at the front of the compound being the most recent, built in 1904. The compound consists of five domestic buildings, four outhouses and a corral. Facing west is the timber building (framhús), comprising two rooms on either side of a corridor, a living room and a storage room as well as a storage loft above. The entrance is at the centre of the framhús followed by a corridor leading to the back of the house to the baðstofa. The baðstofa was the main living quarters, modernised in 1960, with two bedrooms and a kitchen, panelled on the inside. Opposite the baðstofa are an older hearth kitchen and a pantry. Adjoined to the north are a cowshed and a lamb shed. Parts of the farm were renovated in 1960 and turf house was inhabited until 1969. Within the farmstead the outhouses from the 19th and 20th century still exist although most of them are in ruins. Restoration work at Tyrfingsstaðir is underway.

All the buildings in Tyrfingsstaðir, both the farm and the outhouses are built in the traditional manner from turf, stone and timber. A classic wall is made up of stones and strengur in the lower part and strengur or klömbruhnaus in the upper part. Some of the walls are made solely from turf. Most of the framhús is made from timber, both the front and frame which is of binding task (bindingsverk), however the gables are turf, and the walls are panelled on the inside with staves (from cement barrels). The roofs are made from driftwood and turf.

Tyrfingsstaðir is an excellent example of a turf house set within a well preserved cultural landscape.

12. Þverá in Laxárdalur, Suður Þingeyjasýsla, 65° 43,912'N, 17° 14,751'W

Þverá in Laxárdalur is a turf farm, consisting of a dwelling house and outbuildings. The farm is situated in the Laxárdalur valley in Northern Iceland, by the Laxá salmon fishing river and on the edge of the lava fields of Aðaldalshraun. The farmstead is still inhabited and was modernized in the 1960's with new dwelling houses and stables that are located a short distance from the old turf houses. The house is a part of the National Museum's Historic Buildings Collection. Laxárdalur is today a thinly populated area and no longer a thoroughfare. The turf farm can be dated mainly to the latter half of the 19th century. It is mentioned in the medieval Saga literature.

The farm at Þverá is a cluster of nine houses and is around 23 m long and 29 m wide. Four of the farm's houses face the yard to the east, forming a gabled farmhouse, two living rooms on either side of the entrance and a smithy to the north. The entrance gives access to the passageway leading to the baðstofa at the end, which is divided into three rooms by a timber partition. A pantry and a hearth kitchen are linked to the passageway and gives way to another passage to the cowshed and interior well. To the south of the farm is a storage house and outhouses are within the stonewall marking the field nearest to the farm. A cabbage patch is located in front of the farm and Þverár church is to the southeast of the farmstead.

The walls are made from lava rocks. The rooftops are packed with dwarf-birch and covered with turf.

Þverá is an excellent example of a large northern turf farm, built with outstanding craftsmanship. It highlights the ingenuity employed by its inhabitants, for instance in channelling the local creek into the house for ease of access to water and for use as a cool storage.

13. Víðimýrarkirkja in Skagafjörður, Skagafjarðarsýsla, 65° 32,324'N, 19° 28,226'W

Víðimýrarkirkja is a church situated on Víðimýri farm in the densely populated farmland of the inland fjord of Skagafjörður in Northern Iceland. The Víðimýri farmstead is still inhabited and was modernized in the 20th century with new dwelling houses and stables. Víðimýri is historically an important site and occurs in the medieval literature and was long home to district commissioners and parliamentarians. The church is a part of the Historic Buildings Collection and continues to serve as a parish church.

The church was built in 1834 by local carpenter and parliamentarian Jón Samsonarson. The earliest cartulary dates back to 1318, but it is possible that a church has been at this site since shortly after the Christianisation.

Víðimýrarkirkja measures 10.8 m in length and 8.6 m in width. The church is divided into nave and chancel with traditional closed pews reserved for leading families and a high chancel screen marking the separation of the two, in keeping with traditional seating arrangements. The church interior is completely panelled with unpainted panels, which bear witness to excellent craftsmanship. The walls are made from klömbruhnaus on the inside and outside and filled with soil and turf cut-offs. Both gables are from timber.

Driftwood was used to build the church, as was common in Iceland. The church is surrounded by a churchyard. An early 20th century bell gate to the west of the church stands in a square wooden fence which encloses the church.

Víðimýrarkirkja is an outstanding example of a traditional turf church, with emphasis on use of turf in its construction.

14. Hofskirkja in Öräfi, Austur Skaftafellssýsla, 63° 54,420'N, 16° 42,405'W

Hofskirkja in Öräfi is a turf church located on a farm in the farmland of Southern Iceland on the strip of land between the Vatnajökull glacier and the floodplains of the surrounding glacial rivers. The Hof farmstead is still inhabited and was modernized in the 20th century with new dwelling houses and

stables. This area was until 1974 the most isolated inhabited area in Iceland, but after the rivers were bridged the Ring Road is just a stone's throw away. The church is a part of the National Museum's Historic Buildings Collection and continues to serve as a parish church.

The church was built in 1883-5 by a local carpenter. The first written record of a church on this site dates to 1343. At the time of construction of this turf church, timber churches were being built in most other regions of the country.

Hofskirkja is about 11.5 m long and 9 m wide. The side walls are made from stones and strengur. The front gable and the upper part of the choir gable are made of timber. The roof is covered with turf. The church is according to an old tradition divided into nave and chancel or choir, separated by a chancel screen. However, neo-classical influences are also present in the church, where the inner part of the nave and the chancel is vaulted and low pediments are above the windows and door. Over the first part of the nave the ceiling is flat and the two churchbells are hang from the roof above. The interior is completely panelled and painted.

The church is located inside a cemetery, partly surrounded by a turf wall. A small mound distinguishes each of the graves in the cemetery, a rare feature in contemporary burial practice.

Hofskirkja represents an exceptional turf church, that has integrated influences from timber churches, with architectural details in neoclassical style.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

Criterion (iii): The turf house is an exceptional example of a vernacular architectural tradition, which has survived in Iceland. This building tradition was brought to Iceland during the settlement and the transmission of knowledge has passed through generations to this day.

Criterion (iv): The form and design of the turf house is an expression of the cultural values of the society and has adapted to the social and technological changes that took place through the centuries.

Statements of authenticity and/or integrity

1. Austur-Meðalholt in Flói

The form of the houses has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. Many of the central houses are present, as well as some of the outhouses. The agricultural landscape is still prominent.

2. Árbær in Reykjavík

The form of the houses has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. All of the central houses are present, although some of the outhouses have disappeared. The

integrity of the main complex is intact and despite its location within a Reykjavík suburb, the open air museum on the site has preserved some of the fields surrounding the farm.

3. Bustarfell in Vopnafjörður

The form of the houses has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used for restoration work. The same kind of materials have been used for the repairs as were employed in the last phase of the farm's development, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. All of the central houses are present, although the outhouses have disappeared. However, the integrity of the main complex is intact and it is located within a predominantly agricultural landscape.

4. Galtastaðir fremri in Hróarstunga

The form of the houses has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. All of the central houses are present, as well as some of the outhouses. The agricultural landscape is still prominent.

5. Glaumbær in Skagafjörður

The form of the houses has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. All of the central houses are present, although the outhouses have disappeared. The integrity of the main complex is intact, it is located within an agricultural landscape and the Skagafjörður Heritage Museum has initiated an open air museum on the site.

6. Grenjaðarstaður in Aðaldalur

The form of the houses has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. All of the central houses are present, although the outhouses have disappeared. However, the integrity of the main complex is intact and it is located within a predominantly agricultural landscape.

7. Grænavatn in Mývatnssveit

The timber front house is original and its form has been preserved. The layout of the turf-house ruin is intact and clearly visible. Some restoration work has been carried out, although renewal of materials has been minimal. Only the central house is present, as well as some of the outhouses. The agricultural landscape is still prominent.

8. Keldur at Rangárvellir

The houses have retained their form and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. All of the central houses are present, as well as many of the outhouses within their cultural landscape.

9. Laufás in Eyjafjörður

The form of the houses has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition.

All of the central houses are present, although the outhouses have disappeared. However, the integrity of the main complex is intact and it is located within a predominantly agricultural landscape.

10. Núpsstaður in Fljótshverfi

The form of the houses has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. All of the central houses are present, as well as many of the outhouses within their cultural landscape.

11. Tyrfingsstaðir in Kjálki

The form of the houses has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. All of the central houses are present, as well as many of the outhouses. The integrity of the main complex is intact and it is located within a agricultural landscape.

12. Þverá in Laxárdalur

The form of the houses has not been altered, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. All of the central houses are present, as well as many of the outhouses. The integrity of the main complex is intact and it is located within a cultural landscape.

13. Víðimýrarkirkja in Skagafjörður

The form of the church has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Necessary repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. The church building still serves it's original purpose and is present within the evolving agricultural context.

14. Hofskirkja in Öräfi

The form of the church has been preserved, and traditional methods for turf-building have been used. Necessary repairs have been carried out, with renewal of turf when necessary, as is part of the tradition. The church building still serves it's original purpose and is present within the evolving agricultural context.

Comparison with other similar properties

Icelandic turf houses in comparison with the old Nordic cultural area, Norway, Faroe Islands and the Scottish islands

The turf building technique is an old Northern European phenomenon, which dates back to at least the Iron Age. The Romans used it to build fortresses and defensive walls once their reign reached northern areas.

The turf buildings of Northern Europe were mainly for the poorer classes. What distinguishes Iceland in this respect is that the turf houses were for all classes. The higher classes in Iceland also lived in turf houses, although what set them apart from the commoner's houses was the fact that inside the

turf house stood a timber house (see introductory text). A few turf "chateaux" are still standing, such as at Grenjaðastaður, Laufás and Glaumbær.

The turf building technique has survived mainly in Iceland and in the Faroe Islands. The most distinguishing feature of the Icelandic and the Faroese turf houses is the presence of a timber house within.

One of the particular developments in Iceland has been the passageway-farmhouse, characterised by the construction of a passageway linking all the separate houses to each other.

There are no turf houses on the *World Heritage List*, but there are other types of earthen architecture, such as Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba and Bam and its cultural landscape in Iran. Although full comparative analysis has yet to be carried out, the Turf House Tradition can be compared to other sites where the building technique is based on prehistoric methods, such as Trulli of Alberobello in Italy. Other examples of a building tradition and function include the Fujian Tulou in China which „are inscribed as exceptional examples of a building tradition and function exemplifying a particular type of communal living ... and, in terms of their harmonious relationship with their environment, an outstanding example of human settlement." A similar statement can also be made for the Icelandic Turf House Tradition.

Fyrirspurn til Sigurðar Á. Þráinssonar hjá Umhverfissráðuneyti - og svar hans 30. nóv. 2011

Sæll Sigurður!

Er hægt að svara því hvenær ákveðið verður hvort Mývatn/Laxá og torfbærir verða samþykkt á lista World Heritage eða ei?

Kveðja,

Már Viðar Mátsson,

formaður Vinafélags Þveráarkirkju í Laxárdal

Sæll Már Viðar,

Þessu er ekki hægt að svara. Það er eingöngu búið að setja þessa staði á tilnefningaskrá (Tentative List) hjá heimsminjaskrifstofunni í París. Það er ekki búið að ákveða hvaða staður verður tilnefndur á heimsminjalistann næst, en nú er unnið að alþjóðlegri raðtilnefningu víkingastaða og verður Þingstaðurinn á Þingvöllum tilnefndur sem framlag Íslands í tilnefningunni.

Það hefur ekki verið tekið ákvörðun um það að hvaða tilnefningu verður unnið að næst, en það er í athugun og er heimsminjanefndin að fara yfir stöðuna í þeim málum, m.a. að kanna hvaða gögn eru tiltæk um einstaka tilnefningakosti.

Ég vona að þetta svari spurningu þinni nægilega vel.

Kveðjur,

Sigurður Á. Þráinsson

Deildarstjóri/Head of Division

Skrifstofa stefnumótunar og alþjóðamála/Office of Policy and International Affairs

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