



## The history of the building, the village and locality The Old Cooperative

The Old Cooperative was built in 1906 and is the oldest building in Breiðdalsvík. It housed the local store for the people of Breiðdalur until 1956 as well as an apartment that was utilized until 1970. After that, the house was used for a range of activities, including as a seamen's home, canteen and storage facility. Around 1990, plans to demolish the building emerged and consequently a group of people joined together to establish the Old Cooperative Society that had the aim of preserving the building. Since then it has worked diligently on restoring the building in consultation with the National Architectural Heritage Board.

Well into the 20th century the plan was to establish a village in the middle of the valley close to the Heydalur vicarage. A community centre was built in Staðarborg, which also featured the first elementary school in Breiðdalur. However, the village did not rise in the valley, but at Breiðdalsvík, which was to the locus of activities in fishing and fish processing. It included building a cold storage house, harbour construction, emerging fisheries, a herring factory and stern trawlers in the early 1980s. But even though the village that rose around the Old Cooperative is relatively young, it is not deprived of history. Furthermore, Breiðdalur features strongly in the early settlement of Iceland and for that reason its heritage is rich in stories related to places, people and events reflecting on the history of Iceland.

In the Old Cooperative the history of the building, the village and the locality is emphasized and preserved for future generations; these cultural valuables are accessible at Breiðdalssetur.



The Old Cooperative hosts the Breiðdalssetur, the cultural centre of the people of Breiðdalsvík, and a communal property.

### The house offers:

- Activities of the Breiðdalssetur
- Good facilities for general meetings, conventions and conferences for up to 70 people
- Equipment for meetings, such as a projector, internet access and more
- Good access and elevator

### Opening times:

Summer, daily from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Winter, open by appointment  
+354 470 5565 / +354 470 5560

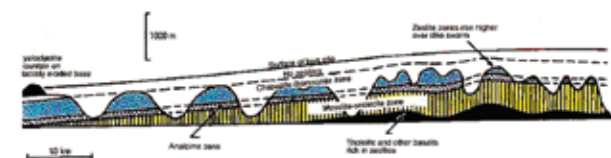
### Gamla kaupfélagið

760 Breiðdalsvík  
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Tel. +354 470 5565  
www.breiddalssetur.is

*Welcome to the Old Cooperative,  
the oldest building in Breiðdalsvík!*

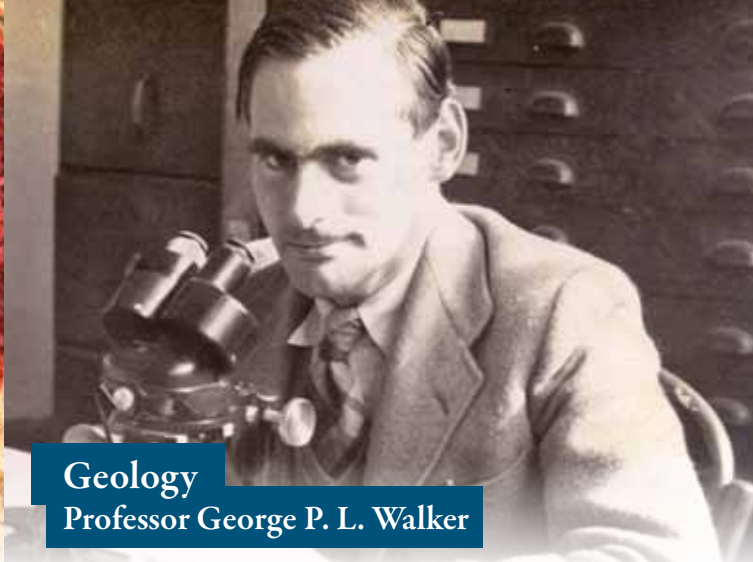


**BREIÐDALSETUR**  
RESEARCH AND HERITAGE CENTRE



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## Breiðdalssetur Science and research centre

## Geology Professor George P. L. Walker

## Linguistics Dr. Stefán Einarsson

The Breiðdalur Centre (Breiðdalssetur in Icelandic) was opened officially in the Old Cooperative Merchant House on 23 August 2008.

The Centre facilitates earth and literary research activity focused on East Iceland as well as hosting exhibitions on the regional geology, linguistics and local history. It also includes a multi-purpose hall suitable for exhibitions, meetings and other cultural events.

The Centre's ambition is to promote and support innovative research and educational activities. Our mission is:

- To exhibit the history of the building, the village of Breiðdalsvík and surrounding rural areas.
- To enlighten visitors on the life and work of Dr. Stefán Einarsson, a linguist and writer from Breiðdalur and thus contribute to the protection and heritage of the Icelandic language
- To showcase the geology of East Iceland by displaying the pioneering and ground-breaking geological investigations in east Iceland by the British volcanologist, Professor George P.L. Walker and his co-workers, during the 1950s and 1960s.
- To contribute to the development of sustainable economy in Breiðdalsvík and thus promote growth and infra-structure enhancement in the community and elsewhere in East Iceland

*The board of Breiðdalssetur hopes that the centre will interest locals as well as tourists and as such will be beneficial to science, culture and the public at large.*

*We look forward to seeing you!*

**Professor George P. L. Walker** (1926-2005) was one of the World's leading volcanologist in the 20th century. He, who along with his students, undertook pioneering and ground-breaking research on the geology in the East Fjords in the sixth and seventh decade of the 20th century.

Walker and his co-workers were the first to map the geology of the East Fjords in sufficient detail to enable accurate 3-dimensional reconstruction of the volcanic succession that makes up the Tertiary Formation in Iceland. He demonstrated that majority of the lava flows, which he referred to as 'plateau basalts' and represented by the gently inland dipping layers visible for kilometres in the mountain slopes of the fjords, were formed by fissure eruptions. Each of these fissure eruptions were fed by one of the many north-south trending dykes that cross-cut the sequence. He also showed that the dykes cluster into swarms and that substantial extension (i.e. lateral movement of the crust) is required to facilitate their formation. At this time the ideas behind plate tectonics were in their infancy and here Walker had recognised one of its key concepts; crustal spreading. He and his colleagues also identified a series of extinct central volcanoes in the region and demonstrated that each is closely associated with a dyke swarm. This work led to the identification of the key building block of Icelandic geology, namely 'the volcanic system. Furthermore, he also established the relationship between the original surface of the volcanic succession and where particular zeolites are found. Walker also took many photographs on his expeditions to Iceland and they are an important source about life in Iceland at the time.

Many of Walker's original documents and items are now preserved at Breiðdalssetur, such as his diaries, notebooks, photographs, thin sections, reports and maps. As such, Breiðdalssetur serves as educational and information centre on geology of the Eastern Fjords, underpinned by the work and legacy of this world renowned scientist.

**Dr. Stefán Einarsson** (1897-1972) was born and raised in Höskuldstaðir in Breiðdalur. He was a well-respected writer and researcher in the field of Icelandic language and literature. During his entire career, over nearly four decades, Stefán worked at the John Hopkins University in the city of Baltimore in the United States, where he held a post of professor in linguistics. However, his mind often strayed back to his homeland.

Stefán was a prolific writer and correspondent. His bibliography contains 525 titles, books, articles and reviews. His correspondence is one of the largest received and stored at the National Library of Iceland and includes letters from many of his contemporaries, in particular Icelandic writers and scholars. Stefán was the first one in Iceland to record ethnological information on magnetic tape. The recordings were made in the Old Cooperative in Breiðdalsvík in 1954 ( now the home of Breiðdalssetur). In addition to his substantial contribution to research of the Icelandic language, folklore and literature, Stefán worked diligently at recording and preserving local place names and other geographical data in the East Fjords and Breiðdalur in particular.

Stefán was one of the prime initiators in publishing "Breiðdæla", the urban history of Breiðdalur, which was released in 1948. It is a landmark publication because it is one of the first publications on the history of rural regions in Iceland.

Breiðdalssetur hosts many of Stefán's personal items, letters, books and photos, including some of his original tape-recordings from Breiðdalur, that provide a good overview of the life and work of this remarkable scholar. It is also possible to listen to recordings of Stefán from Breiðdalur.