



## SCIENCE AND RESEARCH CENTRE

THE BREIÐDALSSSETUR CENTRE 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.

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

### OUR MISSION IS:

- Support universities and students in any kind of research and teaching in the area.
- 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 enlighten the life and work of Dr. Stefán Einarsson, a linguist and writer from Breiðdalur valley and thus contribute to the protection and heritage of the Icelandic language.
- To exhibit the history of the building, the village of Breiðdalsvík and surrounding rural areas.
- To contribute to the development of sustainable economy in Breiðdalsvík and thus promote growth and infrastructure enhancement in the community and elsewhere in East Iceland.

## WELCOME TO THE OLD COOPERATIVE (GAMLA KAUPFÉLAGIÐ), THE OLDEST BUILDING IN BREIÐDALSVÍK!



THE OLD COOPERATIVE (Gamla Kaupfélagið)  
hosts Breiðdalsssetur, research and heritage centre.

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## BREIÐDALSSSETUR



## RESEARCH & HERITAGE CENTRE

BREIÐDALSVÍK, EAST ICELAND



## LINGUISTICS

### STEFÁN EINARSSON

STEFÁN EINARSSON (1897-1972) was born and raised in Höskuldsstaðir in Breiðdalur valley. He was a well-respected writer, correspondent 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.

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.

Einarsson was the first one in Iceland to record ethnological information (spoken language samples) on magnetic tape. At least some of 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, Einarsson worked diligently at recording and preserving local place names and other geographical data in the East Fjords and Breiðdalur valley in particular.

He was one of the prime initiators in publishing "Breiðdæla", the urban history of Breiðdalur valley area, 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 Einarsson's personal items, letters, books and photos, including some of his original tape-recordings from Breiðdalur valley, that provide a good overview of the life and work of this remarkable scholar.



## GEOLOGY

### G. P. L. WALKER

GEORGE P. L. WALKER (1926-2005) was one of the world's leading volcanologist in the 20th century. He 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 students 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.

At that time the ideas behind plate tectonics were in their infancy and here, Walker had recognised one of its key concepts: crustal spreading. He showed that the dykes cluster into swarms and that substantial extension (i.e. lateral movement of the crust) is required to facilitate lava pile formations.

He and his colleagues also identified a series of extinct central volcanoes in the region and made the correlation to the active rift zone today.

Furthermore, he established the altitude of the original surface of the volcanic succession based on the levels at which particular zeolites are found.

Walker also took many photographs on his expeditions to Iceland and they are a valuable 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, rock thin sections, reports and maps. Some of them are available on the homepage.

As such, Breiðdalssetur serves as an educational and information centre on the geology of the Eastern Fjords, underpinned by the work and legacy of this world-renowned scientist.



## THE LOCAL HISTORY

### THE OLD COOPERATIVE

THE OLD COOPERATIVE (GAMLA KAUPFÉLAGIÐ) was built in 1906. It is the oldest building in Breiðdalsvík. It housed the local store for the people of Breiðdalur valley and its rural surroundings until 1956 as well as an apartment that was utilized until 1970. After that, the house was used for a range of activities.

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 (a hotel today), which also featured the first elementary school in Breiðdalur valley.

However, the village did not rise in the valley, but at Breiðdalsvík bay, which became the locus of growing 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 valley 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.