

## CHAPTER 6

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# Roman Iron Age and Migration period building traditions and settlement organisation at Vik, Ørland

## ABSTRACT

This article examines Roman Iron Age and Migration Period building traditions, settlement organisations and the social relations of two multiphase farmsteads in Fields C and D at southern Vik, Ørland. Firstly and by applying a geometric approach to the Iron-Age buildings, it is established that an axis of symmetry is present in all of the investigated longhouses. It is suggested here that four of the buildings were so similar that they may represent a common building tradition at Vik throughout the Roman Period. Secondly and in terms of settlement layout, it is suggested that, in each phase, a longhouse was accompanied by a smaller building. Several farmstead categories are identified, including the lined, the parallel, the angled and the dispersed settlement. Finally and regarding the social and spatial relations between the farms, it is argued that the evidence points towards the presence of two large, but socially equal neighbouring settlements. The reason for the abandonment of southern Vik in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century is unknown, but it follows a trait seen in many parts of Norway, where sites with continued settlement in the Early Iron Age were abandoned during the Migration Period.

## INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period house remains uncovered on Fields C and D at Southern Vik, Ørland. During two field seasons in 2015–2016, seven RIA and MP longhouses and seven smaller buildings comprising two multi-phased sites were investigated. Remains of a further Roman Iron Age farm and a small Migration Period building were also excavated in Fields A and E, located some 500 m North of Field C. These were however only partly preserved and no longhouses were identified. For this reason, the settlement remains in Field A and E will not be discussed in this article.

The excavation at Vik led to a significant increase in the number of Roman Iron Age and Migration period buildings from central Norway. Furthermore, due to the large areas investigated, the material provided a unique opportunity to examine the spatial and social relations between contemporary neighbouring farms. Prior to the excavations at Ørland, only two Roman Iron Age/Migration Period sites in Trøndelag, from Hovde, Ørlandet and Bertnem, Overhalla had been published (Farbregd 1980; Løken 1992a; Grønnesby 1999, 2000). This article therefore provides a significant addition to the very small corpus of published settlements from this part of Norway.

This article examines the Roman Iron Age and Migration Period building traditions and farmsteads at Vik, focusing on the following research topics:

- *Which patterns in building traditions and settlement layout can be identified in the archaeological material at Vik?*
- *What were the social and spatial relations between the farms at Vik, and how do they compare with other known Roman Iron Age settlements in the region?*

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

### *Geometric observations in early Iron Age longhouses*

Iron-Age buildings are generally identified by the presence of postholes arranged in certain alignments or patterns. In this article, we will apply a geometric approach when considering the posthole arrangement of the buildings at Vik, based on the methodological model recently presented by Theo Gil (2016). This approach focuses on the distribution of internal roof-supporting posts in three-aisled longhouses and their symmetrical relation to the main axial line running along the centre of the buildings. The main theory behind this approach is that the structural elements of the house (the roof-bearing posts) were arranged in relation to this axial line. By placing paired roof-bearing posts equidistant from the mid-axis of a longhouse, a bilateral symmetric arrangement was created, generating an equilibrated and architecturally robust structure (See Gil 2016: 227-230 for a detailed description).

The building remains from Vik largely comprised roof-bearing posts disposed in pairs with little evidence of wall-structures. We will focus on analysing the symmetry between these pairs of posts in relation to the mid-axis of the building. On this analysis, each post pair will form a polygon with

its neighbouring post pair. When tracing diagonal lines between the opposite corners of these pairs, a centre point can be identified. These points should fall in a line along the mid-axis along the building, if they functioned as roof-bearing posts. Although the method is relatively simple and indirectly forms the basis in many field interpretations (see discussion in Diinhoff 2017), it is nonetheless only rarely described or explicitly integrated into building interpretations. We therefore regard this approach as a useful tool in confirming or identifying associated posthole pairs, while it also assists in identifying repairs or replacements which took place after the original building had been constructed (Gil 2016:230-233).

### *Dating and phasing*

Organic material from fireplaces and/or postholes from all buildings were <sup>14</sup>C dated. As discussed elsewhere (see e.g. Diinhoff & Slinning 2013), there are several methodological challenges when dating occupation phases from material from building structures that used posts, especially when stratigraphic evidence is lacking. Issues such as how the organic material ended up in structures, the use of old wood in buildings and fireplaces, and the species of wood used for dating are perhaps the most common factors to be considered in order to limit the sources of error.

Moreover, the <sup>14</sup>C results sometimes show a wide timespan of 150-200 years, and this makes for further difficulties in obtaining the necessary chronological resolution to assign buildings to settlement phases of only 20-30 years. With these issues in mind, a calibration of the overall <sup>14</sup>C dates from buildings, together with the recovered artefact information and spatial layout, forms the main basis for suggesting dates and phases of occupation. Dates from fire-places are regarded here as more reliable than dates from material from postholes, since there is

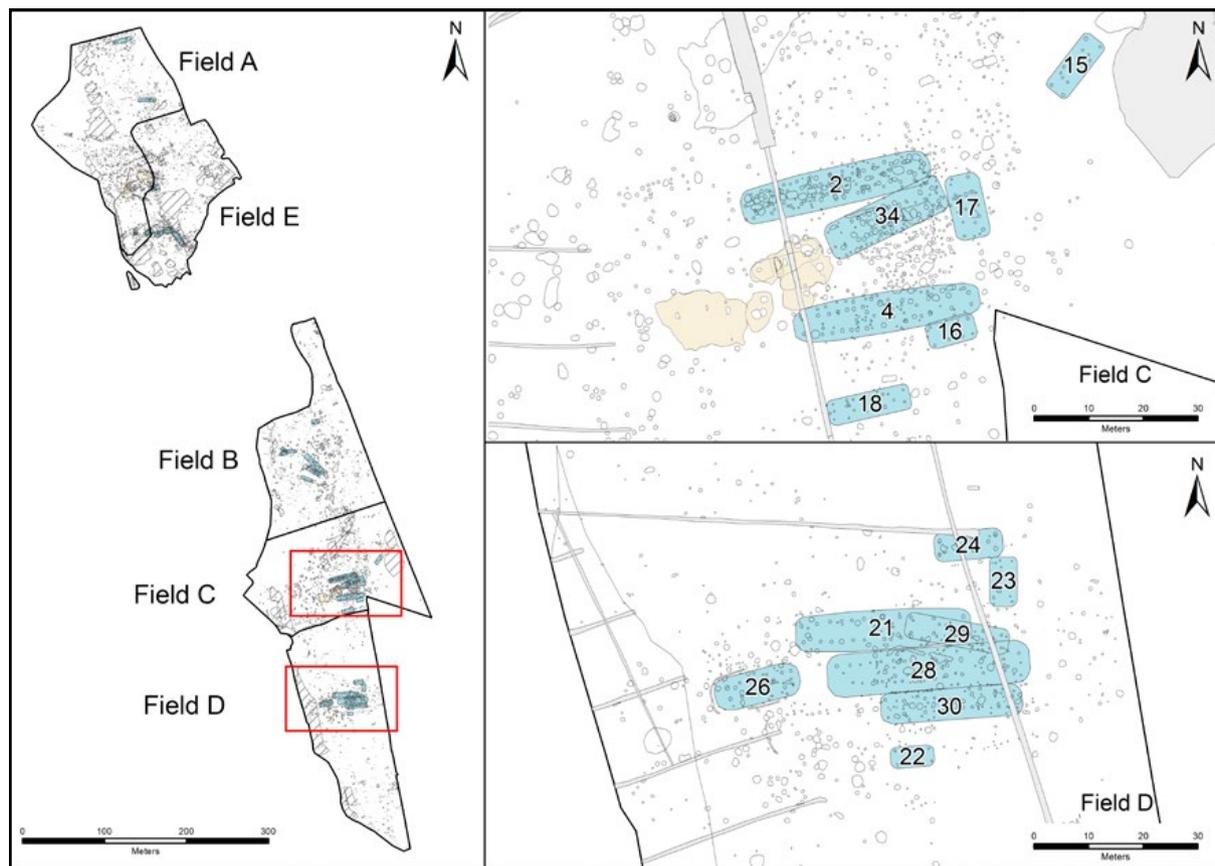


Figure 1. The Roman Iron Age and Migration Period settlement in Fields C and D, in the southern part of the excavation area at Vik. Illustration: Magnar Mojaren Gran, NTNU University Museum.

more uncertainty connected to the original context of the material which eventually ended up in these structures (see Gjerpe 2008: 86-97). Species identification was carried out on all charcoal used for  $^{14}\text{C}$  dating.

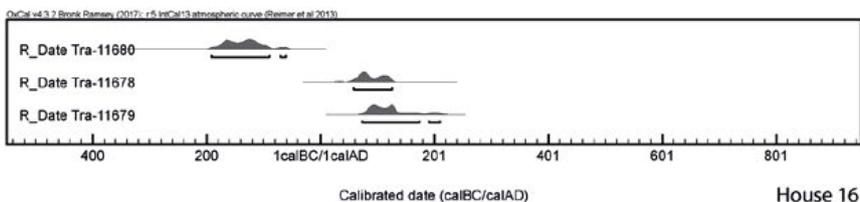
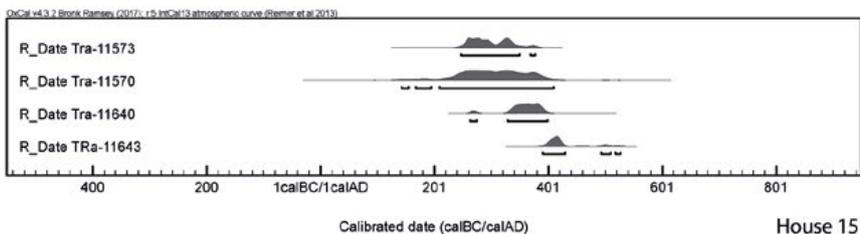
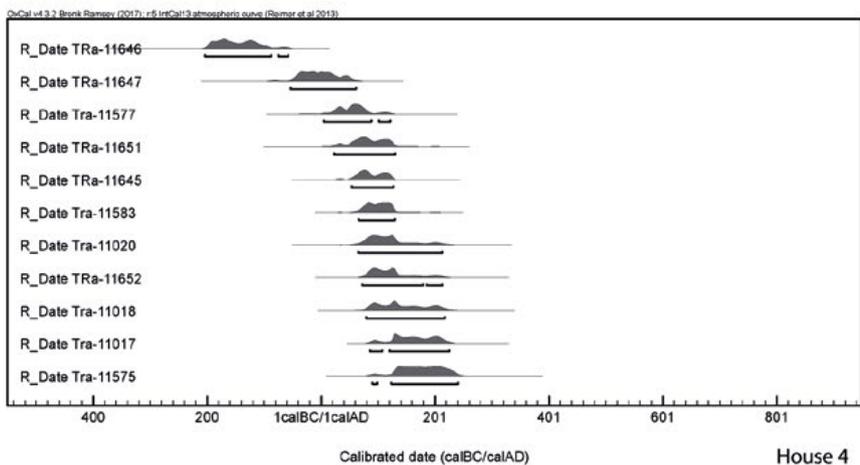
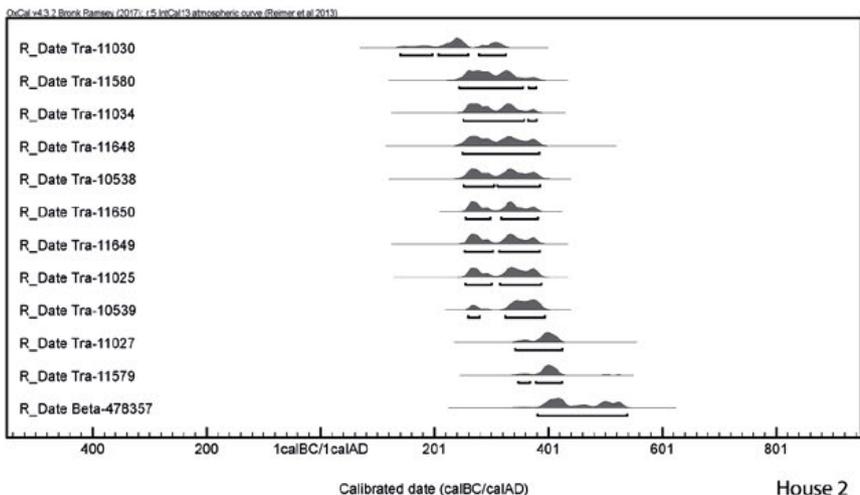
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

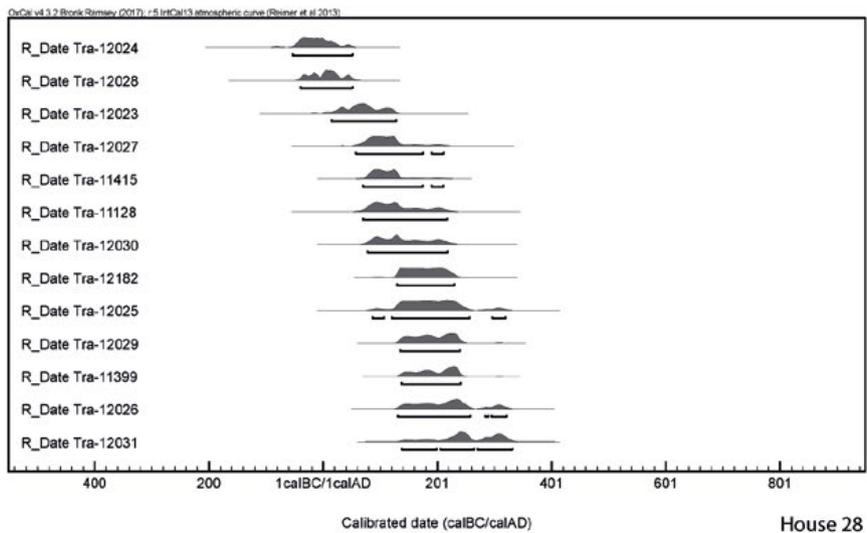
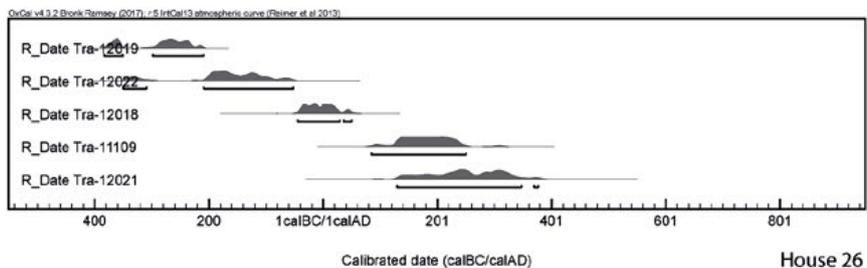
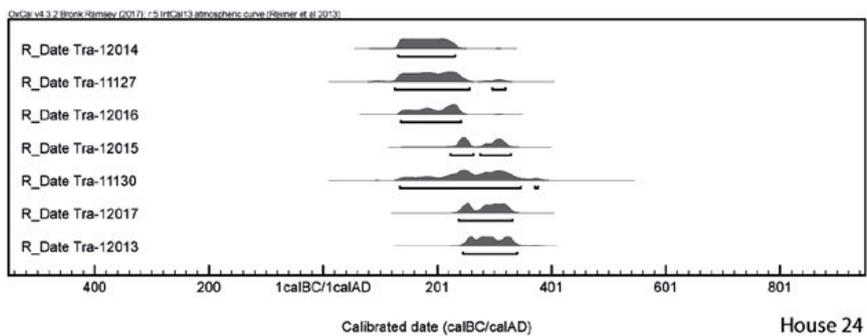
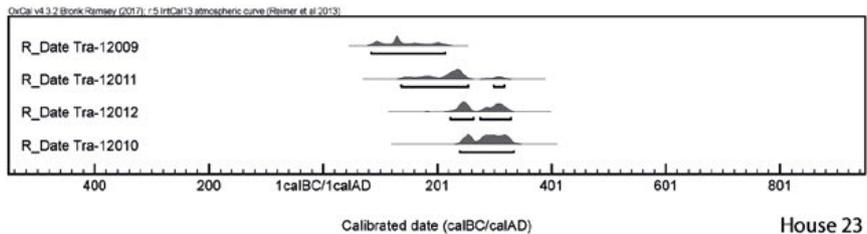
### *The longhouses: architectural and geometrical observations*

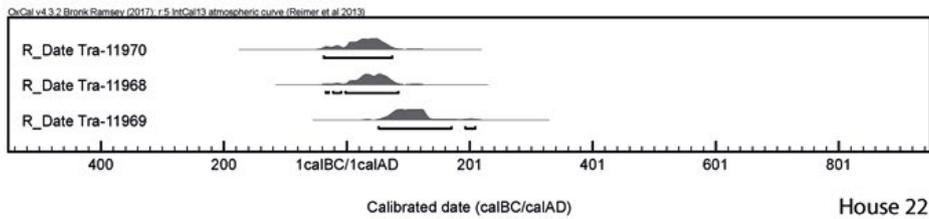
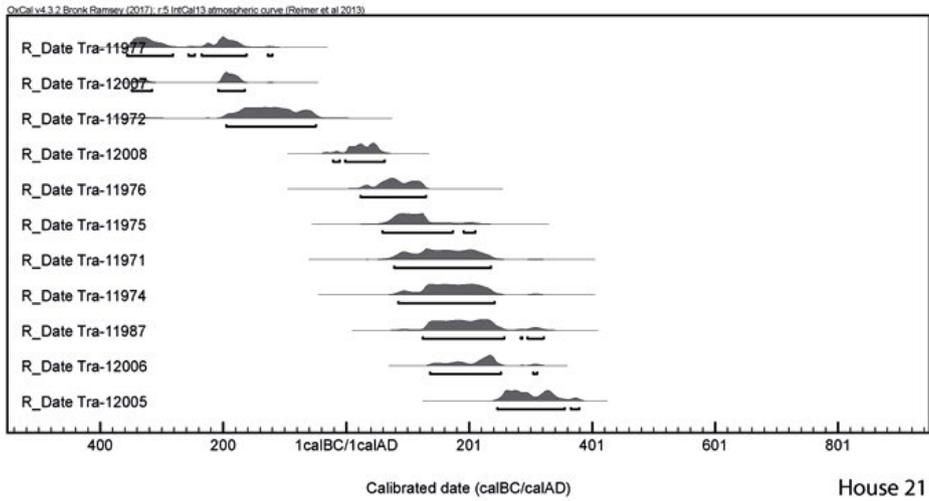
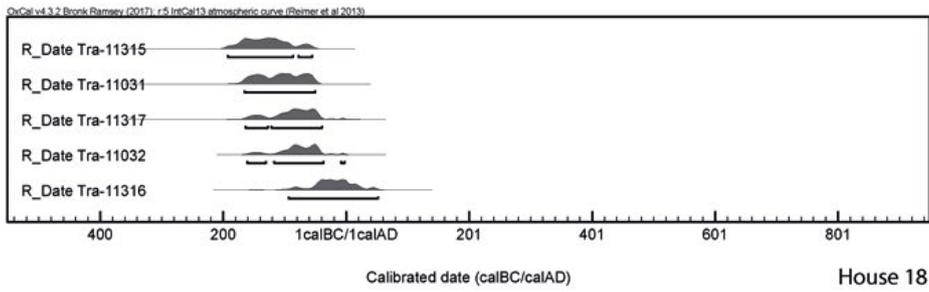
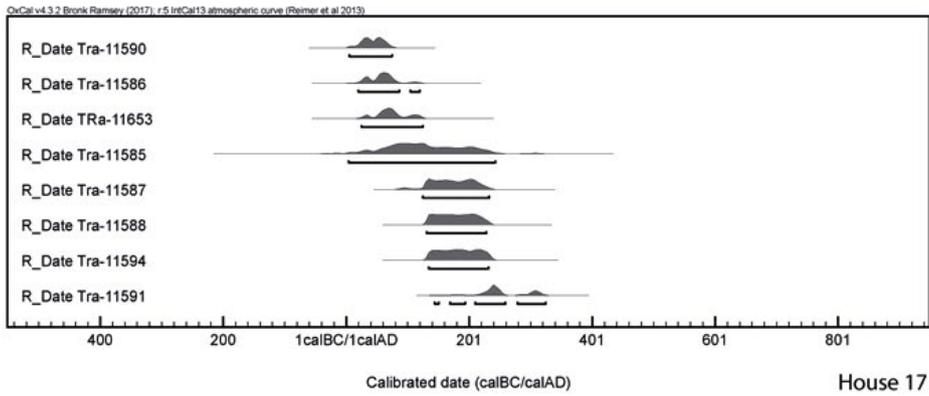
On Field C, two longhouses (Longhouse 4 and 34, see Figure 1) and two smaller buildings (16 and 17) can be dated to the Early Roman Iron Age.

The majority of the dates of both longhouses fall approximately within the period 50–220 AD (see Figure 2). It is, however, not possible to establish a chronological relationship between longhouses 4 and 34, since the  $^{14}\text{C}$  dates are wide and largely overlapping. The latest phase is represented by Longhouse 2a/2b and a smaller building 15, all of which can be placed to the Late Roman Iron Age/Early Migration Period.

In Field D, all buildings comprising five longhouses (21, 26, 28, 29 and 30) and three smaller buildings (22, 23 and 24) belong to the Roman Iron Age. Three of the longhouses (21, 28, 30) were placed







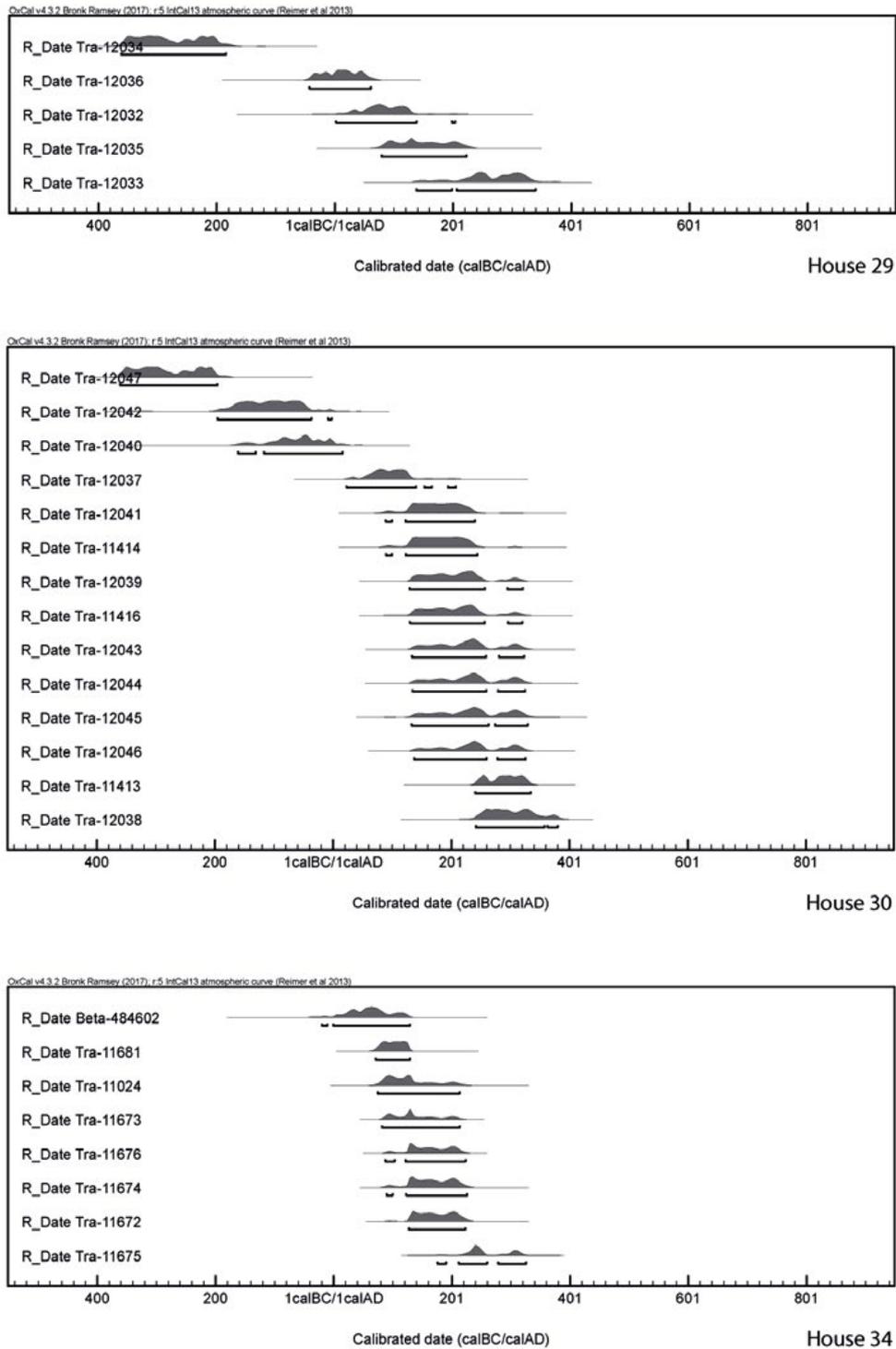


Figure 2. <sup>14</sup>C-dates from the buildings in Fields C and D, Southern Vik.

parallel to each other and the  $^{14}\text{C}$ -dates suggest a successive chronological order, where house 21 is the earliest and house 30 the latest. Stratigraphic observations indicate that Longhouse 29, which partly overlapped longhouses 21 and 28, was built slightly later.

### *Longhouses 2a, 4, 21, 28*

These longhouses had similar lengths, only diverging from 29.7 to 33.3 m. The measurements are based on the well-preserved roof-bearing posts, since evidence of walls and side-aisles was only rarely preserved. Consequently, the dimensions given in this article must be regarded as minimums, and most buildings were probably somewhat larger. This is also true for the smaller non-residential buildings (see below).

The roof-bearing elements of longhouses 2a, 4, 21 and 28 have a very similar symmetrical layout, defined by four main elements:

- a) The western section is characterised by closely placed, but wide trestles creating a broad, central aisle.
- b) The trestle width increases gradually from both gables and reaches a maximum in the central section of the longhouse, which, together with an extended distance between the trestles, creates a large open space.
- c) The eastern section forms a narrower central aisle with fewer trestles, placed further apart.
- d) The paired posts at each gable end are clearly tapered-in.

The western section of the buildings comprises 6 to 7 closely placed trestles, forming an 11.5 – 11.7 m long space in longhouses 4, 21 and 28, and a slightly longer 14.6 m space in longhouse 2a. Here the width of the central aisles measured between 2.4 and 4.2 m, with a clear tendency to increase towards the central area of the house. Regarding the geometry in this part of the buildings, it may be noted that symmetry would still exist even if every other

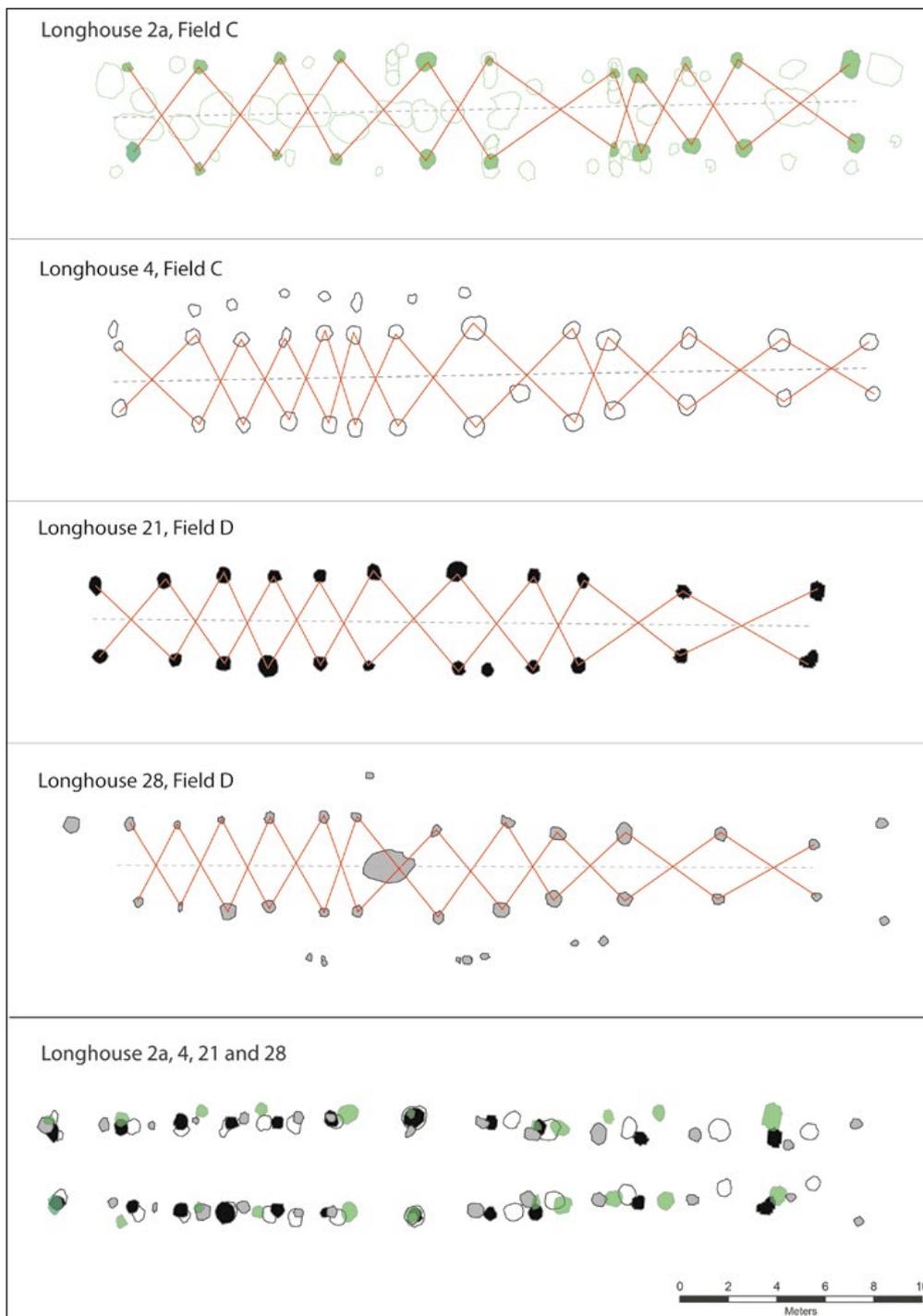
trestle were included in the construction. In a similar case from Forsandmoen (Longhouse 150), Gil (2016:236) suggests that this attribute may be the result of repair, since only half of the posts seemed to be needed for structural purposes. Also Løken (1983: 85) proposes a similar explanation for some buildings from Forsandmoen (Longhouse II). In contrast, we believe that all trestles in the buildings at Vik were erected simultaneously, since this trait is shared by all longhouses of this character and also found in the exact same part of the buildings. While there may be a functional purpose behind this layout, it could perhaps also be the result of a number of social and symbolic reasons (See below).

The wide, open space in the central part of the longhouses forms a 5.1 to 7.2 m long and 3.1 – 4.1 m wide section. This section is largest in the Roman period buildings and becomes slightly smaller with one less trestle in longhouse 2a, and this represents the final phase of the settlement at Vik.

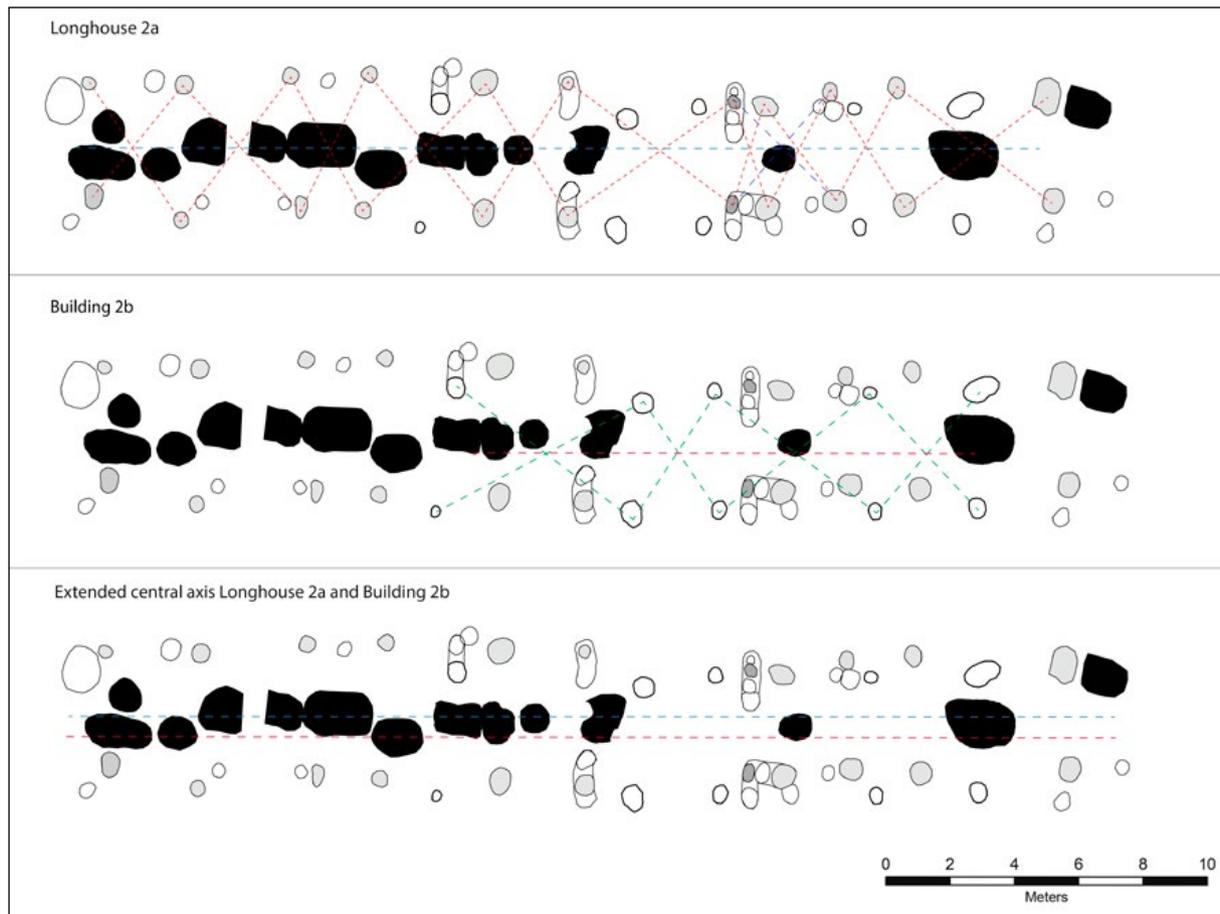
The eastern section of the longhouses comprises 4 to 5 trestles. Here the mid-aisle forms a 9.9-15.9 m long and 2.1-3.4 m wide space which is slightly shorter than the space in the western part of the houses.

All houses were clearly tapered-in at both gable ends, which measured 2.1 to 3.5 m in width. In addition, a pair of corner posts was identified at the eastern end of house 28. The placement of the corner pairs does not appear to be dependent on bilateral symmetry, since the diagonal point is slightly unaligned with the main axis. This trait can also be observed in the geometric analysis of some of the longhouses at Forsandmoen, Rogaland (Gil 2016:233).

As shown in Figure 3, the roof-bearing posts in all four longhouses are consistent with the geometric principles described above. Although Longhouse 2a at first glance appeared very different from the rest, the layout of the roof-supporting posts is comparable



**Figure 3.** Longhouses 2a, 4, 21 and 28. Individually presented with geometric features displayed and as a compilation showing only roof-supporting posts. Illustration: Astrid B. Lorentzen, NTNU University Museum.



**Figure 4.** Longhouse 2a and Building 2b, individually presented with geometric features and as a compilation showing the relation between the buildings' central axis. Please note the two options for the symmetrical post-pairs in the eastern end of house 2, as indicated by the blue line (top illustration). Illustration: Astrid B. Lorentzen, NTNU University Museum.

to the earlier buildings 4, 21 and 28. The sections of Longhouse 2a may, however, have functioned differently compared with earlier periods (see fig. 4). The symmetric analysis also indicates that several posts in the eastern section form a separate, but parallel alignment to the main axis of Longhouse 2a. These postholes (termed 2b) could either be interpreted as a separate 17 m long building or, more likely, a repair/different phase of Longhouse 2a. The posts of 2b were certainly filled with the same dark,

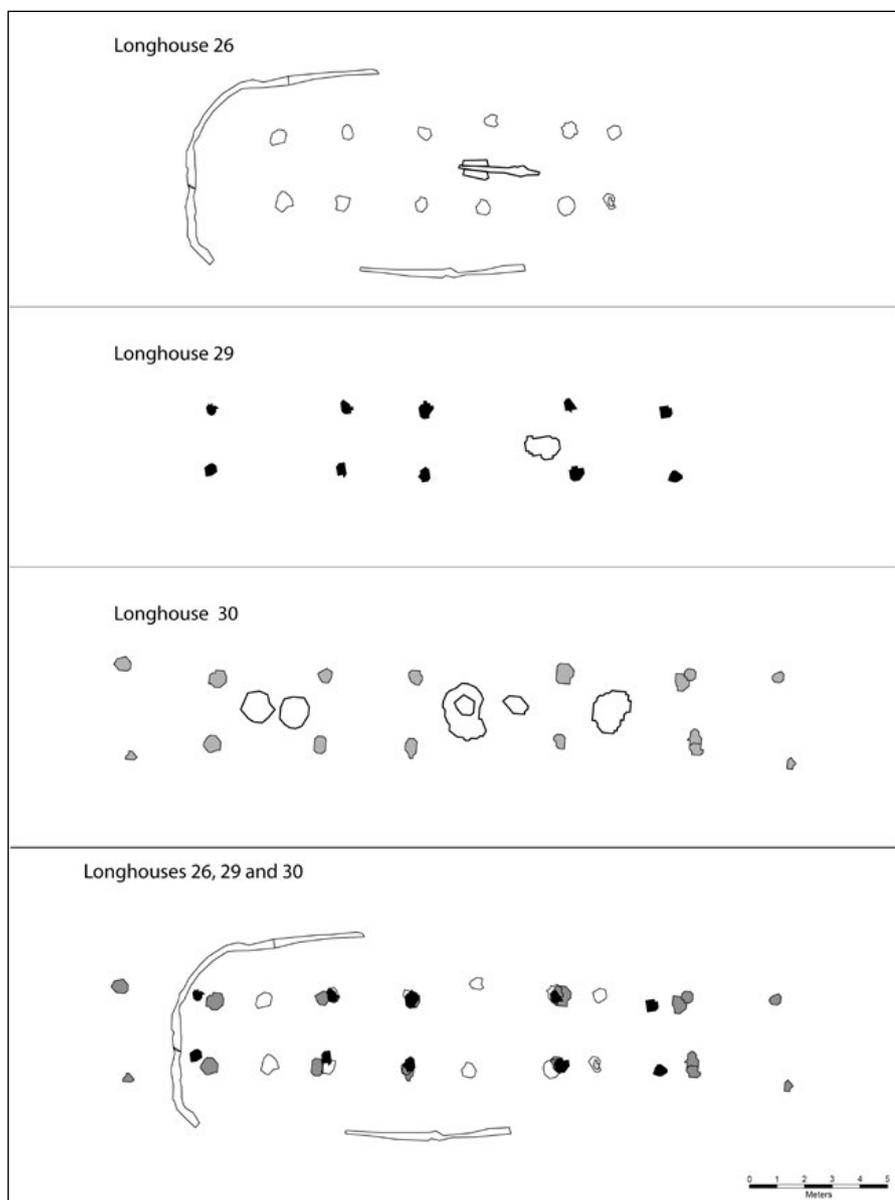
distinctive material as those of Longhouse 2a, and the parallel alignment does not seem coincidental. Moreover, it may be noted that if the axial line were to be extended west of 2b, three fireplaces would sit neatly on the centre of the axial line. This *could* indicate that the phase 2b building was originally longer, but that the remains in this part had not survived. In the rest of this article, House 2a and 2b are therefore regarded as two phases of continued occupation.

***Longhouses 26, 29, 30 and 34***

The remaining longhouses differ from the previously described group, but do not themselves represent a uniform type. Their size varies from 16.5–23.5 m. Although somewhat smaller than the longhouses described above, at least longhouse 29, 30 and 34 appear to have functioned as the main dwelling in their respective settlement phases (see Figure 6). Their

main characteristics are parallel rows of roof-bearing posts, and a lack of closely placed trestles seen in the other longhouses at Vik. The longhouses' main structure consists of five to seven trestles.

Evidence of repair or replacement of posts was identified in longhouses 30 and 34. Longhouse 30 is the latest of the three parallel longhouses located in Field D. It consisted of seven trestles, included



**Figure 5.** Longhouses 26, 29 and 30 presented individually and as a compilation. Illustration: Astrid B. Lorentzen, NTNU University Museum.

two pairs of corner posts, one of which seems to be a repair/replacement (Figure 6). As shown in Figure 6, both phases are true to the geometrical layout of the longhouse and a later context might have disturbed the original eastern corner post.

The geometric examination of house 34 identified evidence of repair in the western section: a trestle replacement that maintained the building's symmetric mid-axis. Figure 7 shows what we interpret as the original placement of the trestle foundations, regularly placed at an equal distance (red dotted line).

At a later stage, the area east of the fireplaces has undergone a repair, as is evident by the addition of two extra trestles (blue dotted line). This represents a deviation from longhouses 2, 4, 21 and 28 since there is not a symmetric arrangement between the second and third trestle, but each of these has symmetry with the first and fourth trestle. This indicates that the two trestles did not stand at the same time, but that one of them (possibly the third trestle) has replaced the other (possibly the second trestle) while the building was still standing.

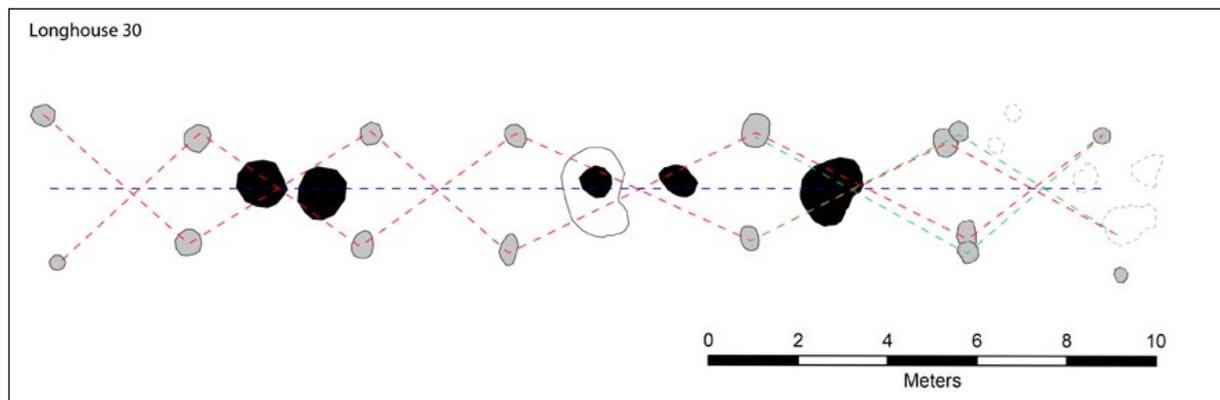


Figure 6. Longhouse 30, with evidence of rebuild, and asymmetrical corner posts. Illustration: Astrid B. Lorentzen, NTNU University Museum.

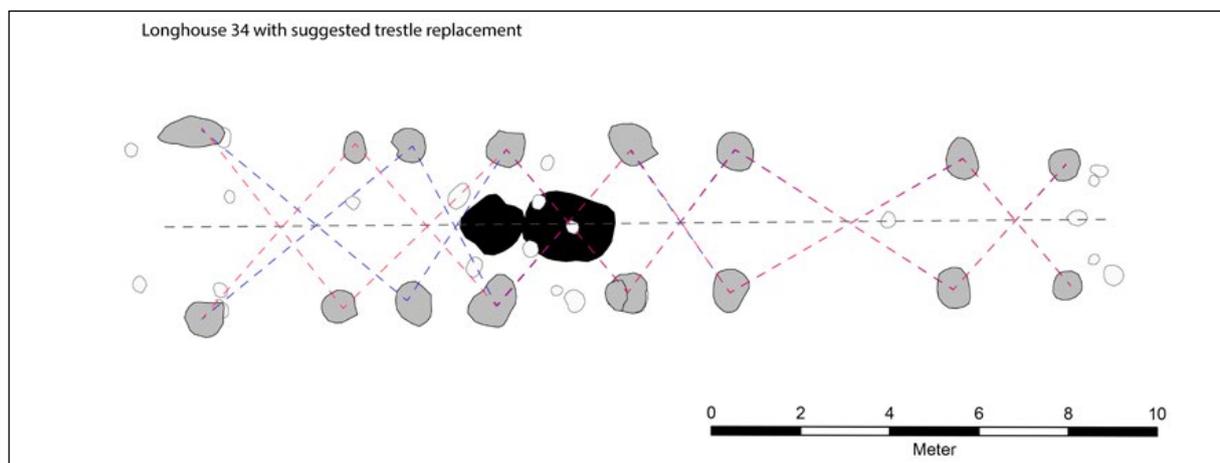


Figure 7. Longhouse 34 with evidence of trestle replacement maintaining the symmetry in the longhouses central axis, in comparison to an unsymmetrical axis in the case of all trestles being concurrent. Illustration: Astrid B. Lorentzen, NTNU University Museum.

## BUILDING TRADITIONS AT VIK – TRENDS AND PATTERNS

The longhouses at Vik were short-lived and only occupied for one generation or so, since longhouses with no or few replaced roof-bearing posts only stood for approx. 30-40 years (Herschend 2017:32). The exception is longhouse 2, which was occupied for longer, as indicated by the phase of repair/rebuilding and by the many fireplaces which were probably not in use simultaneously. It has been suggested that longhouses which were regularly maintained and repaired, could last up to 100-150 years (Børsheim & Soltvedt 2002:254).

While a continuous occupation over three to four generations can be demonstrated in both fields, it is notable that the longhouses only rarely physically overlapped, and, with the exception of Longhouse 29, people appear to have avoided building on the same spot as previous buildings. Instead, new buildings were systematically raised adjacent to the old, and the relative absence of finds and waste indicates that the houses were cleared as part of a deliberate and planned abandonment process.

While some variation exists in the construction of the longhouses at Vik, the consistency in size and layout of the roof-bearing posts in Longhouses 2a, 4, 21 and 28 is striking. These similarities could express a shared idea of how the main dwelling should look and, perhaps, function. Buildings 4 and 21 were the earliest structures of this type in their respective fields, and appear to have been copied by houses 2a and 28, which were constructed parallel to their predecessors. Copying buildings of social and religious importance is a trait seen in many cultures in both historic and prehistoric times (Ó Carragáin 2010:143-149). The practice of replicating attributes of the earliest buildings at Vik, perhaps also with direct incorporation of earlier fabric, may therefore express a deliberate choice to retain an ancestral link with the former settlement.

With regard to building layout, the best parallels to this group are found at Veien, Buskerud and Forsandmoen, Rogaland (Løken 1983, 2001, Gustafsson 2000, Dahl 2009). The latter is often referred to as the “Forsandmoen type”. Forsandmoen and Ørland also represent rare examples from Norway, where a continued building tradition within a limited geographical area can be demonstrated throughout the Roman Iron Age period. Moving further afield, a similarly arranged ground floor is also seen in other parts of Scandinavia such as Slöinge in Halland (Sweden) and Hodde, central Jutland (Denmark) (see Løken 2001: Fig. 7 and 21). Nevertheless, despite these shared characteristics, the four longhouses 2, 4, 21 and 28 at southern Vik do differ from these other parallels, particularly in view of their distinctive and clearly tapered-in gable ends and the consistently different widths of the mid-aisles in the eastern and western part of the buildings. Furthermore, the entrances of the “Ørland-type” longhouses were far less defined compared with the apparently parallel buildings mentioned here.

As already noted, the remaining longhouses at Ørland represented a fairly standard building type comprising two parallel rows of roof-bearing posts. This type is common in large parts of Scandinavia and is also known from several places in the Trøndelag region, e.g. Melhus Field VIII, Longhouse I (Rønne 2005:90), and Hovde Longhouses D and F, and, typologically, even Longhouse E. The latter building was originally interpreted to belong to a Pre-Roman Iron Age based on a date from the original excavation (Grønnesby 2000:42).

### *Entrances*

Entrances were only identified in Longhouse 34 and perhaps also Longhouse 4. The lack of clear entrances in the majority of longhouses at Vik may indicate that these were integrated into the outer

walls of the buildings and thus are more difficult to detect compared with entrances placed offset from the outer walls (Løken 1992a:27-28; Bjørdal 2017:252). The entrance in house 34 was placed off-centre in the western section of the building, while the distance between the two westernmost trestles in building 4 may indicate the presence of two opposing entrances here. The latter may be of the “*central Scandinavian type*”, defined by opposing entrances at each end of the buildings (Herschend 2009; see Gjerpe 2016, Figure 6.1). However, in the eastern part of house 4, the lack of wall posts and the considerable distance between the trestles make it problematic to identify a similar entrance in this part of the building.

### ***Walls***

Four longhouses (4, 34, 26 and 28) had visual traces of walls preserved. The lack of wall posts is relatively common for longhouses in the later periods within the Early Iron Age (Gil 2016:234), and has been interpreted as an indication of wall panelling (Løken 1992a: 27-28, Brekke & Schelderup 1997:11). For longhouse 4 and 34, remains of wall posts have only survived on one side of the buildings. A notable feature regarding the wall of house 4 is the very close proximity between the wall and roof-bearing posts in the southeastern part of the building. Consequently, the side aisles in this section were remarkably narrow. Also, the position of the wall posts in this building indicate a convex wall that narrowed towards the gables. Longhouse 26 was the only building exhibiting a wall ditch, which was visible in approximately half of the building’s circumference. This building had far broader side aisles (1.8-2.6 m) than longhouses 4 and 34 (1.5-1.9 m).

### ***Function and divisions***

It is challenging to figure out how the longhouses at Vik were used, and how they were possibly divided

into rooms, since evidence of entrances, internal structures and partitions is rare and sometimes difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, the layout of the buildings, location of hearths and distribution of finds might provide certain clues. Iron Age longhouses are often regarded as multifunctional, and it is relatively common to interpret one part of a longhouse as a byre or stable, especially if a section has closely placed trestles and lacks hearths (see e.g. Grønnesby 1999, Skare 1999:77, Diinhoff 2011: 216, Løken 2001, Dahl 2009). This function, however, cannot be demonstrated in the longhouses at Vik and is in fact rarely proven archaeologically in other parts of Norway (Bjørdal 2016:246, Gjerpe 2016: 208). Indeed, in Longhouse 2a the section with the closest placed trestles has clearly formed part of the main area for human activity, as is made evident by the finds distribution and by the many fireplaces (see below). This is also true for Longhouse 4, where the majority of grains and animal bones were concentrated in this part of the house.

The presence of hearths in longhouses is often used to identify living quarters, although this interpretation is complicated by the fact that many hearths may have served a range of non-domestic functions and may even have been used in byres and stalls (Schütz & Frölund 2007:161-62, Bjørdal 2016:246). At Vik, fireplaces were preserved in five longhouses (2a/2b, 4, 26, 28 and 34). However, in many cases, they were very truncated, and it is therefore difficult to determine whether these were remains of hearths, cooking pits or other types of fire-producing structures. Longhouse 2a/2b stands out from the other buildings in having as many as 22 fireplaces along most of the mid-axis. It was not possible to isolate the fireplaces into different phases based on the <sup>14</sup>C dates. However, and as noted above, the overall impression is that the fireplaces and the two building phases most probably belong to the same continued occupation, which, in contrast to what

was the case with the other longhouses, probably persisted for several generations. Large numbers of internal fire-places/cooking pits in longhouses are not found elsewhere in Trøndelag, but are known from several sites in western Norway, for instance at Gausel, Hove-Sørbø and Myklebust in Rogaland (see Børsheim & Soltvedt 2002, Dahl 2014).

In the remaining houses, there was no apparent pattern when it came to the placement of hearths which were sometimes located in the western sections (Longhouses 30, 34, 28), the central areas (Longhouses 30, 4, 26, 28) or in the eastern section (Longhouses 30).

As noted above, most longhouses had a wide, open space in the central part of the building. Such rooms are traditionally interpreted as a reception room or a hall, used for formal entertainment and religious feasts by a social elite, located chiefly in manors. The term “hall” is, however, subject to much debate,

and the criteria applied to identify such rooms or buildings differ (Herschend 1993:182, Diinhoff 2011:214, Løken 2001, Carstens 2015:13-16). The matter is further complicated by the fact that an increasing number of houses with large central rooms have been found in recent decades, too many to support the interpretation that halls are only found on magnate estates (see Diinhoff 2011). While there is no room to discuss this subject further in this article, it is worth noting that the open central room is a common trait in the longhouses at Vik. As will be argued below, this indicates the existence of large, and perhaps more or less socially equal, neighbouring farms.

While no definite room dividers could be traced in the Roman Iron Age buildings, there is clear evidence to suggest that the latest building at Vik, longhouse 2a, was physically separated into three rooms. This division is evident in the middle of the building where



**Figure 8.** A well-preserved fire-place in Longhouse 2a. Photo: NTNU University Museum.

four rectangular structures with postholes appear to have formed two opposing entrances leading into the eastern and western part of the building from the smaller central room. The western section was the largest room in the house and functioned as the main space for daily activity, as is evident from a large, central hearth and 10 further fireplaces and cooking pits along the mid-axis of the room. The majority of finds were also concentrated in this part of the house (see Storå et al., Ch.8; and Solvold, Ch. 9). These included a variety of artefacts such as pottery, a quern stone, fishhook, iron fragments, whetstones, nails, knife blade and a large number of animal bones. The animal bones included a near complete foal, dated to 361-538 AD, buried in the extreme western end of the building. This find may represent a ritual deposition in connection with the termination of the house, or an act which took place shortly after the house had been abandoned, perhaps while the remains were still visible (See also Storå et al., Ch. 8).

Small amounts of animal bones and pottery were also recovered from longhouses 21, 28 and 34, but these were too few or widespread to provide clear indications of room divisions.

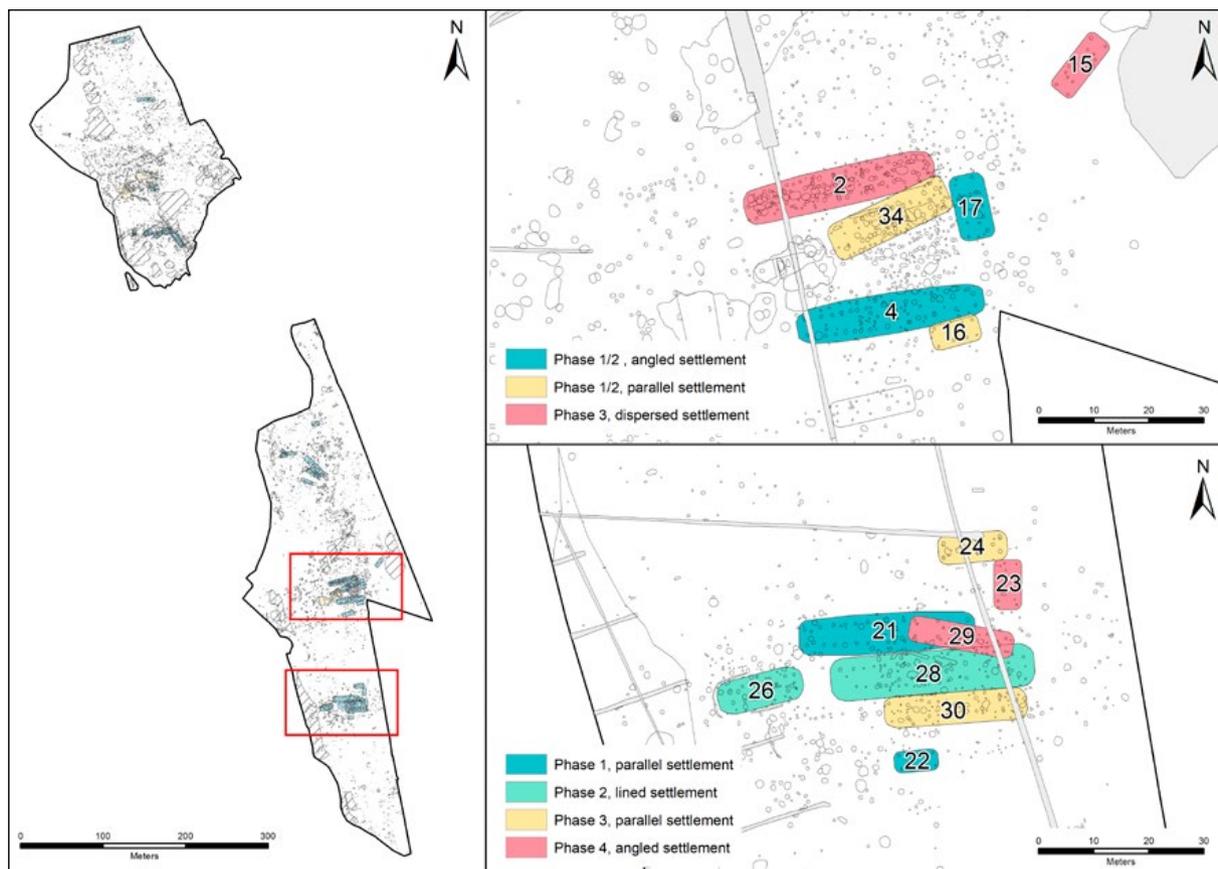
## FARMSTEADS AT ØRLAND FROM EARLY RIA TO MP

### *Settlement organisation*

While pre-Roman settlements are generally abandoned after only one phase of occupation, farmsteads from the Roman period are generally characterised by a continued settlement on the same site over several generations (Herschend 2009, Diinhoff 2011, Gjerpe 2017, but see Fransson (Ch. 5) on continued occupation on a pre-Roman IA farm at Field B). As noted above, this trait is also demonstrated at Roman Iron Age Vik, where there is evidence of three to four settlement phases in both Fields C and D. In the following discussion, we will consider how the individual houses may have been related, and operated collectively as a unit, in the different phases of settlement. It should be noted that the interpretations presented here are based on the premise that smaller buildings with no clear residential function are likely to be associated with one of the longhouses, which probably functioned as the main dwelling house in each phase of settlement. This principle, which harmonises well with <sup>14</sup>C dates and the spatial layout of the buildings, forms the main analytic tool when proposing settlement units. Although no wall-bearing posts have been

Field	Phase	Period	Approx. date	Settlement type
C	1/2	Early Roman period	50-200 AD	Angled settlement (building 4 and 17)
C	1/2	Early Roman period	50-200 AD	Parallel settlement (building 34 and 16)
C	3	Late Roman- / Migration period	200-500/550 AD	Dispersed settlement (building 2 and 15)
D	1	Early Roman period	0-200 AD	Parallel settlement (building 21 and 22)
D	2	Early Roman period	75-250 AD	Lined settlement (building 28 and 26)
D	3	Late Roman period	90-340 AD	Parallel settlement (building 30 and 24)
D	4	Late Roman period	90-325 AD	Angled settlement (building 29 and 23)

**Table 1.** *The different settlement phases in Fields C and D, their approximate age and spatial arrangement.*



**Figure 9.** The different phases of settlement in the southern area of Vik in the Roman Iron Age and Migration Period. Illustration: Magnar Mojaren Gran, NTNU University Museum.

preserved, the smaller buildings can probably be defined as “short three-aisled buildings”, comprising a maximum of 3-4 trestles with a building length of no more than approximately 15 m (see Göthberg 2000:45). In most cases, there is little evidence to suggest their purpose. Unless otherwise stated, these buildings are therefore regarded as ancillary structures of unknown function.

The spatial layout of Iron Age buildings has been divided into five categories, referred to as the solitary longhouse, the lined settlement, the parallel settlement, the angled settlement and the dispersed/scattered settlement (Hvass 1988; Løken 1992b;

Bjørdal 2016). The last category includes buildings “lying at some distances from each other, but which in all likelihood functioned together” (Bjørdal 2016:244). As will be illustrated below, the latter four categories were present at Vik.

#### *The angled settlement*

Evidence of angled or L-shaped settlements was identified in both fields. Both were similarly arranged, comprising an east-west orientated longhouse together with a smaller north-south orientated building located only a few metres northeast of the longhouse.

In Field C, the angled settlement included Longhouse 4 and the smaller Building 17. The latter comprised five evenly placed trestles forming a 10.5 m long building. The only find from this building was a bone from a *ruminant*, and only a small number of fragmented grains were recovered from the postholes. Although the building does not appear to have had a residential function, a fireplace in the northern part of the house may indicate that heat or light was needed for the activity which took place here. While both building 4 and 17 date to the Early Roman Iron Age, different dates from the fireplaces (TRa-11583, cal. 67-130 AD and TRa-11594 cal. 135-232 AD) may indicate that the latter building was raised towards the end of the settlement phase.

In Field D, the angled settlement included longhouse 29 and the smaller building 23. These buildings represent the final phase of settlement in Field D. The latter consisted of four trestles forming a building with a minimum length of 7.5 m which is interpreted as an ancillary structure of unknown function. Both buildings were dated to the latter part of the Roman Iron Age and therefore not contemporary with the angled layout in Field C. Longhouse 29 partly overlaps Longhouse 21 and possibly Longhouse 28. It is thus the only building in Field D which does not respect the layout of the earlier building.

#### ***The lined settlement***

The only example of a lined settlement was represented by Longhouse 28 and the smaller longhouse 26 in Field D. Based on the size and spatial organisation, Longhouse 28 appears to have functioned as the main dwelling in this phase. This was also the only building in this phase with finds (pottery and animal bones) present. Longhouse 26 was nonetheless of a fairly substantial size, measuring 16 x 7 m. Its function is unknown, but a fireplace was present

in the centre and the building may have served a range of purposes. The phase dates to the early RIA.

#### ***The parallel settlement***

Three examples of parallel settlements were recognized, one in Field C and two in Field D.

In Field C, the parallel settlement comprised longhouse 34 and the smaller building 16, although the relationship between these two buildings cannot be ascertained with any certainty because of the rather wide range of <sup>14</sup>C dates from the postholes of the latter building. Building 16 was at least 7.2 m long, and comprised four pairs of roof-bearing posts. While no finds were recovered, three postholes contained charred botanical material, a few *Hordeum vulgare* (barley) grains and some common weeds of *Fallopia convolvulus* (Black-bindweed) and *Stellaria media* (common chickweed). The weeds are closely connected to agriculture, and may have entered the building through harvest and crop processing, or have been used as fodder for cattle (Buckland et al. 2017:68). This indicates that building 16 served as storage, in which cereals, fodder and possibly other material was present.

In Field D, one of the two parallel settlements comprised Longhouse 21 and the smaller building 22. Building 22 consisted of only three roof-bearing trestles, forming a building with a minimum length of 6.5 m, with a possible fireplace in the centre.

Finally, the third parallel settlement at southern Vik was represented by Longhouse 30 and the smaller building 24. The latter was located less than 25 m. north-northwest of the longhouse. However, unlike most of the smaller buildings at Vik, building 24 cannot be classified as a regular ancillary structure. While it was a fairly small building, with an estimated size of approximately 14 x 6,5 m, the postholes were substantial, and two fireplaces were located in the western section. Finds from the building consisted of different types of pottery, animal bones and an

iron nail. While longhouse 30 probably represents the largest dwelling in this settlement phase, building 24 may also have served some additional domestic purpose and certainly appears to have had a different function than storage. This view is supported by the pottery finds, which were few in number, but of similar type to those found in Longhouse 2 (see Solvold, Ch. 9).

### *The dispersed/scattered settlement*

While occupation in Field D ceased sometime before 400 AD, the settlement in Field C continued into the very start of the Migration period. This phase is represented by longhouse 2a and the smaller building 15 located approximately 28 m northeast of the longhouse. The spatial organisation and overlapping dates indicate that these two buildings formed part of a dispersed or scattered farmstead. The smaller building was at least 11.2 m x 3.5 m. Two entrances were visible, one on each side of the building, possibly reflecting the division of the structure into two functional elements.

### ACTIVITY, USE AND ABANDONMENT

In addition to the buildings, further knowledge about farmstead activities at southern Vik can be gained from botanic evidence, osteological material, artefacts and archaeological structures located within the immediate vicinity of the settlements.

Agricultural activities such as cultivation must have taken place in the nearby area, and remains of a relict plough soil dated to the Roman Iron Age (Tra-11596, cal. 236-334 AD) were preserved west of the settlement at Field C. Likewise, an area with similar relict plough soil south of Field D has been dated by stratigraphic observations to the Early Roman Iron Age (Engtrø & Haug 2015:32). Botanic evidence from buildings and other RIA structures confirms that cereals such as barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), hulled barley (*Hordeum*

*vulgare var. vulgare*) and oats (*Avena*) were grown in the surrounding area. Cultivation layers were also present in areas west of the Roma Iron Age buildings in Field D, but only one <sup>14</sup>C-date was analysed, with a result pointing to Pre-Roman Iron Age (TRa-12176, cal. 363-206BC). Further Pre-Roman Iron Age remains, consisting of a building and cooking pits, were also identified between Fields C and D. Although they are located away from the two RIA farmsteads, these remains show that occupation in the area started in the PRIA (see Fransson, Ch. 5).

A larger feature interpreted as a watering hole was found in close proximity to the buildings in Field D. Evidence points towards a watering place for animals rather than humans: organic content from animal trampling, and the settling of disturbed sediment containing finely-comminuted dung (Macphail 2017: 27). This feature lay in an area comprising agricultural layers and could be interpreted as an indication of pastures directly west of the buildings.

The vast majority of osteological material was recovered from Field C; only 24 fragments of bone were obtained from Field D. This dissimilarity is, however, most likely to be due to very different preservation conditions rather than to social inequality, since Field C was located on calcium-rich shell-sand while the natural in Field D consisted of more acidic gravel. Identified species from domesticated animals at Vik include cattle, pig, sheep, sheep/goat and horse. The majority of the bones came from meat-rich parts of the animals, probably refuse that was discarded after consumption. There were generally few slaughter remains present, which could indicate that such waste was deposited away from the main activity area of the settlement (see Storå et al., Ch. 8). The absence of slaughter remains in two waste layers (521623, 524312) on site supports this view. These layers are related to the settlement phase of houses 4 and 17 or/and houses 16 and 34. The

spatial organisation indicates that waste deposition during the Early Roman period was designated to the western outskirts of these farms.

Although the fields at Vik are regarded as agricultural settlements, the exploitation of other resources was also targeted. Sea resources were especially important, made evident by bones from a wide range of fish species and by a large amount of cockles for human consumption. Cod was the most common fish amongst the fishbone material at southern Vik, but other species such as common ling, haddock, pollock and whiting were also consumed. Whalebones and a single bone from a red deer were the only osteological material from wild mammals, which indicates that wildlife resources were of limited importance during this period.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a large number of cooking pits were also associated with the Roman Iron Age settlements at Vik. Some of these lay spread some distance away from the farmsteads, but many of them were also clustered just outside the buildings. This pattern is especially clear with regard to longhouse 4, where cooking pits were clustered immediately east, west and north of the building.

The Roman Iron Age cooking pits show a clear change in the spatial organisation compared with the pre-Roman period when the cooking pits were placed some distance away from the buildings (see Fransson, Ch. 5). This may reflect a wider social change in food practice, where the open air cooking pit sites lose their importance as meeting places and communal meals were instead moved closer to the farm (Bukkemoen 2016). It is therefore interesting to note that cooking pits in the very final phase of the settlement at Vik were not only located outside the longhouse, but also *inside*. Dates from eight of these pits confirm that they are contemporary with the fireplaces of the house. This could indicate a further change in ritual and social practice, where rites associated with the preparation and consumption of

food from cooking pits become more strongly linked to the longhouse, compared with previous periods.

### *The final phase of settlement*

In the last phase of settlement at southern Vik, the buildings were placed further apart than the general trend in the previous period. This may perhaps indicate a change of activity where larger areas than before were included in the daily activity of the settlement. The building organisation and the location of contemporary dispersed structures (fireplaces, pits and postholes) indicate that the central area of activity was located north/northeast of the buildings. Further changes in the spatial organisation are indicated by the waste deposition (500200), which lay south of house 2a/2b. The layers were partly preserved in a shallow depression, which may be the result of repeated removal of waste, perhaps for use as fertiliser in the surrounding fields (see Mokkelbost, Ch. 7). Two outdoor fireplaces were also located south of the house, including a large circular structure (1.8 m in dia.) filled with fish and animal bones. This feature was dated to 425-555 AD (TRa-11026), which indicates that it represents an event towards the very end of the settlement.

A large number of animal bones were recovered in many structures both inside and outside the longhouse, especially the waste layer. The material shows the presence of the same domestic animals as were present in the previous phase, such as cattle, ox, pig, sheep, sheep/goat. The number of pig bones does, however, increase, and there was also a bone from a dog. Fish continues to be an important resource and fishhooks were discovered in and near the longhouse. Bones from a variety of wild mammals such as seal, whale, elk and brown bear may indicate that the exploitation of outlying resources becomes more important than in the previous period, but it could also be the result of a generally larger number of bones deposited in this final phase of settlement.



Figure 10. Working shot of the excavation of Longhouse 2. Photo: NTNU University Museum.

The overall impression is that the people at Vik, in the period when the field was abandoned, had access to a wide range of resources, mainly from farming and fishing, but outlying resources were also exploited. All in all, it appears that the people at Vik had access to resources beyond mere subsistence.

#### **SOCIAL AND SPATIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FARMS AT ØRLAND**

Large RIA farms are known from many parts of Norway. Many of these are traditionally explained as chiefly manors, which functioned as centres for

social, economic and military power and activities (e.g. Myhre 1987, Løken 2001). However, the many open area excavations in Norway in the last two decades have led to a significant increase in the number of large longhouses being identified. In some areas, longhouses with ‘halls’ are situated too close together to support the interpretation that they chiefly represent estates (Diinhoff 2011:218).

While there is no room to discuss this subject in detail here, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that a comparable situation is also present at Vik, where fairly large and similar-sized buildings were located on neighbouring farms, which were

probably settled simultaneously. The Roman Iron Age settlements in Fields C and D lay only 120 m apart. There was no apparent natural precondition for the relative lack of archaeological structures between the fields, which suggests some form of agreed land use or division. Moreover, as mentioned above, a further RIA farm was located at Field A, some 500 m north of Field C. The archaeology in this area was only partially preserved and no long-houses were securely identified. However, a number of postholes were recorded east of the layers and these are likely to be the remains of very truncated buildings. This could indicate a similar organisation as that seen in the ERIA at Field C, where waste deposition was designated to the western part of the farmstead. While the social relationship between northern and southern Vik is difficult to assert, the animal bones certainly suggest that the two areas had rather different subsistence economies. The difference in the husbandry strategies between farms in Fields A and C may suggest some sort of division of work between contemporaneous farms (Storå et al., Ch. 8), but both areas had flexible subsistence economies and access to a wide range of resources.

The farms at Vik appear to have had access to similar resources, with land for grazing and cultivation, and harbours situated further east in the nearby sheltered bay, the importance of which is reflected in the name of the area (Vik meaning bay). The overall impression based on the archaeological evidence suggests the presence of two, possibly three (if Field A is included) large, but probably more or less socially equal, neighbouring farms at Vik in the Roman Period. This largely corresponds with the social structure which Diinhoff (2011) has suggested for western Norway during the Roman Iron Age and early Migration Period. Here he argues for the existence of a more decentralized form of power structure, which “*would allow several*

*in principle socially equal, large farms to appear, even as neighbouring farms*” (Ibid: 220). There is little archaeological evidence to suggest that one of the farms at Vik was superior to the others. Admittedly, there were far more finds and bones recovered from Field C than Field D, which at first glance may give the impression of a social or economic difference; however, as noted above, the large difference in the quantity of animal bone from the two fields is almost certainly the result of preservation conditions, rather than reflecting a true difference in the husbandry resources on the two farms.

While the majority of the Roman Iron Age buildings revealed few or no finds, there was one exception; the south-eastern corner post of building 34, which contained pottery from three different vessels and some bones of horse, sheep/goat. The deposition must have taken place after the post had been removed, and this event appears to be a ritual deposition in connection with the abandonment of the building. At least one of the vessels, a fairly large cooking pot, was complete when deposited. Moreover, the fragments of a small drinking cup have been refitted to a near complete vessel (see Solvold, Ch. 9), and may also have been whole when deposited.

There were indeed certain finds associated with a high status, such as an imported drinking glass and a silver ring, but these stemmed from the final settlement at the southern area of Vik, when only one farm was occupied. The fairly high number of artefacts from this final period was partly a result of the chance preservation of a refuse layer which contained a large number of finds, but also partly a result of a different abandonment practice than seen in the earlier houses. While the limited quantity of finds from the ERIA buildings may indicate a process of deliberate house clearance, the situation was rather different for the final abandonment of the settlement at Vik. At this concluding stage, the



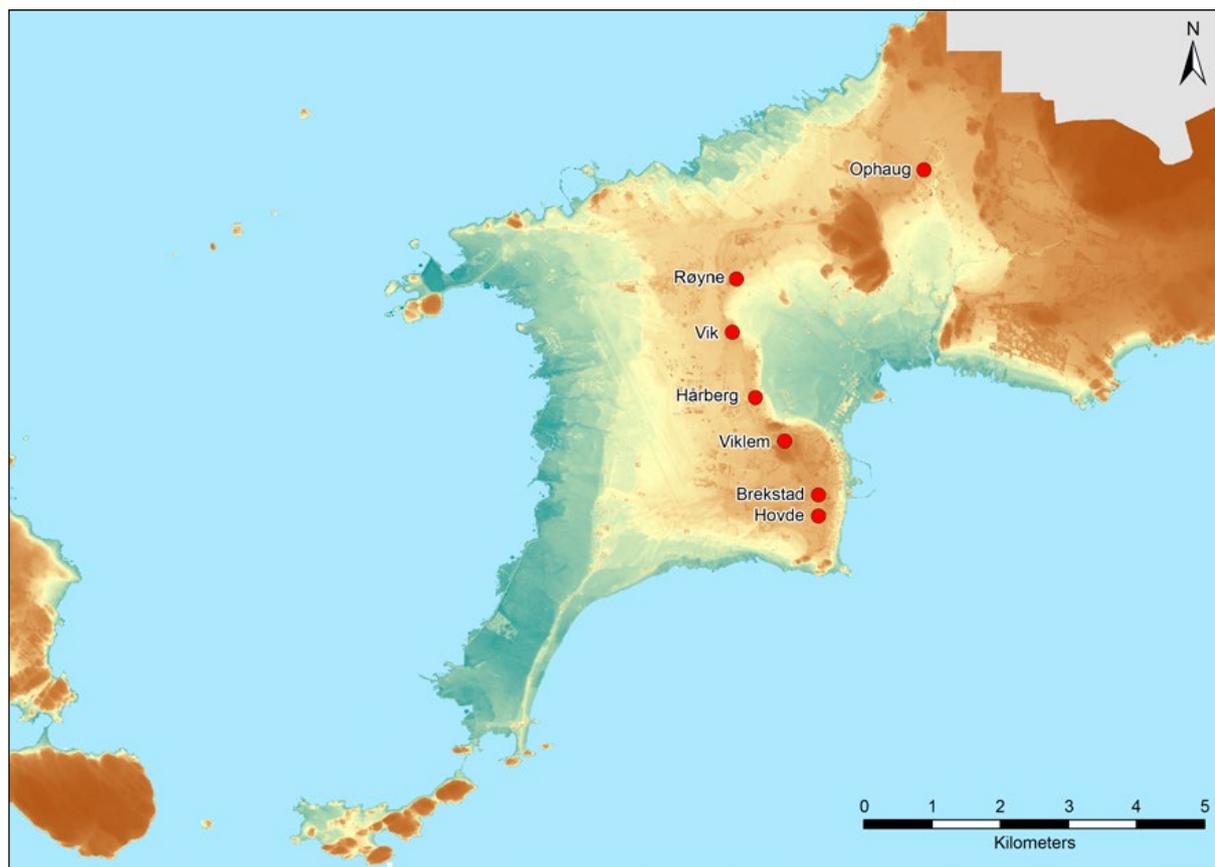
**Figure 11.** Pottery (T27079:1) found in Posthole from Longhouse 34. Photo: Åge Hojem, NTNU University Museum.

building was left without the clearing process of the previous period being carried out.

The only known Roman Iron Age settlement at Ørland prior to the excavations at Vik was situated at Hovde, approx. 2 km south of Vik (Grønnesby 1997, 1999 and 2000). This settlement comprised, as interpreted by the excavator, two parallel longhouses together with a smaller, third building. The settlements at Hovde and Vik are situated some distance apart, and the relationship between them is therefore difficult to determine. They do, however, appear to have been begun at the same time, and the longhouses at Hovde and southern Vik

are of similar size. However, the farm at Hovde was perhaps slightly larger if all three houses were occupied simultaneously, as argued by Grønnesby (2000, 1999). The placement of Hovde within its surrounding landscape, with a navigable port just east of the settlement and wetlands to the west, resembles that at Vik. This could indicate that the farms at Vik and Hovde had access to and exploited a similar range of resources.

Further settlement evidence is reflected in three unpublished excavation reports of Roman Iron Age burials from the vicinity. These include two inhumation burials located at the farm Røine, some



**Figure 12.** Areas of Ørland with identified activity in the Roman Iron Age. Map: Magnar Mojaren Gran, NTNU University Museum.

500 m northeast of the excavated area at Vik. Both burials were modestly furnished, but each contained combs typologically dated to the ERIA (NTNU University Museum accession number: T16237, T16922). Furthermore, two RIA spearheads originate from the farm Hårberg, located just south of Vik (NTNU University Museum accession number: T3775, T3776). Although the spearheads are regarded as stray finds, they do represent a set of weapons typically found in burials and are thus clear indications of occupation in this area.

### CONCLUSION/FINAL THOUGHTS

This article has examined Roman Iron Age and Migration Period building traditions, settlement organisations and the social relations of two multiphase farmsteads at southern Vik, Ørland.

Firstly, and by applying a geometric approach to the buildings at Ørland, we have established that an axis of symmetry is present in all of the longhouses in Fields C and D. Although some differences existed in the layout of the longhouses, it is suggested here that four of the buildings were so similar that they may represent a common building tradition at Vik throughout the Roman Period.

In each settlement phase, a longhouse was accompanied by a smaller building where the longhouse functioned as the main dwelling house. There is, however, no discernible pattern for the spatial organisation of the buildings. In the Roman Period, several farmstead categories have been identified: the lined settlement, the parallel settlement and the angled settlement. The final phase in the Late Roman Period/Early Migration Period was arranged as a “dispersed” settlement, with the two buildings lying at some distance from one another.

Finally, we have argued that the evidence from the southern area of Vik suggests the presence of two large and socially equal neighbouring settlements. During the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the last remaining farm at Vik disappeared, and in the course of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries settlement activity shifted to new sites, such as Uthaug, Grande at Viklem

(Ystgaard, Gran & Fransson, Ch. 1). The reason for the abandonment of Vik is unknown, but the overall impression is that people during the final phase of settlement had access to a wide range of resources beyond mere subsistence. The settlement’s abandonment must therefore be found in some unknown cause not directly related to a lack of local resources. This follows a trait seen in many parts of Norway, where sites with continued settlement in the Early Iron Age were abandoned during the Migration Period (Iversen 2013, Grønnesby & Heen-Pettersen 2015, Bjørdal 2016, Gjerpe 2017).

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