

SURTSEY RESEARCH PROGRESS REPORT

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THE SURTSEY RESEARCH SOCIETY · REYKJAVÍK 1992

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SURTSEYJARFÉLAGIÐ – The Surtsey Research Society
P.O. Box 352, Reykjavík, Iceland – Telefax 620815

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INTRODUCTION

The crew on the fishing boat off the south shore of Iceland that peaceful morning on the 14th of November 1963 did not know what was happening when the sea started bubbling. When the column rose they were in no doubt. This was a submarine eruption, the birth of an island, a new land.

The island was given the name Surtsey which in Icelandic means the island of Surtur, who according to old Icelandic belief is the giant who keeps the subterranean fires burning.

The eruption immediately caught the interest of Icelandic and foreign scientists. That led to the formation of the Surtsey Research Committee, later Society, for the purpose of coordinating the scientific work on the island and publishing reports. The island was soon declared a protected national monument. The Society has been entrusted with its management.

This is the tenth progress report published by the Society. They appeared frequently to start with, even yearly when the development of the island was more rapid and the scientific work was intense. Now Surtsey's development has become more settled and the changes slower and accordingly the reports appear with longer intervals. The ninth report was published in 1982.

As for the previous five reports, the scientists Adalsteinn Sigurdsson, marine biology, Eythor Einarsson, botany, and Sveinn P. Jakobsson, geology, have been in charge of the edition of this report. Without such voluntary work this report would not have been published. Guttormur Sigbjarnarson of the Icelandic Natural History Society has managed the publication of the present report.

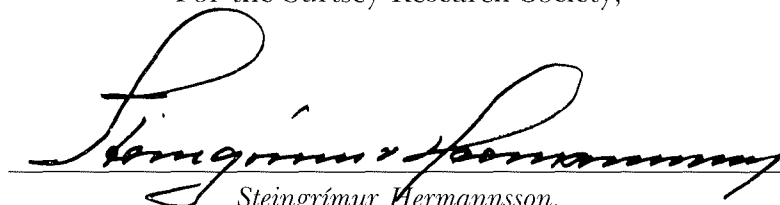
In order to facilitate the scientific work on Surtsey a house was erected there in 1966. This was made possible by a contribution by late Prof. Paul G. Bauer. The house was named Pálsbær (the house of Paul). It served the scientific community well for years but became a victim of geomorphological changes of the island. In 1985 a new house was built at a more settled and stable site. The widow of Prof. Paul S. Bauer, Winifred, contributed generously to its construction. For that we are indeed grateful. The new house has been given the name Pálsbær II.

As acknowledged in earlier reports the scientific work on Surtsey enjoyed for years financial support from several sources. In later years it has mostly been financed by the Icelandic Government and institutions in Iceland and abroad from where scientists have come to work on Surtsey. The Icelandic Coastguard has continued giving valuable assistance primarily through transportation to and from the island. That is highly appreciated.

Next year Surtsey will be 30 years of age. During those years numerous scientists representing most disciplines of natural sciences pertaining to such a development have worked on Surtsey. The papers and reports on Surtsey published in scientific journals and magazines all over the world are counted in hundreds. A bibliography of geological papers is to be found in this report.

Surtsey has added to man's knowledge of the Earth and will hopefully continue doing so. That is certainly needed if man is to succeed in reversing deterioration and even destruction of his environment, so vital for his own existence.

For the Surtsey Research Society,



Steingrímur Hermannsson,
chairman