

# REYKJAVÍK – THE LAST FARMER AT RAUÐARÁ



In the 1981 edition of Morgunblaðið, Gunnar M. Magnússon " *One Hundred Years of Memory of Þorlak V. Bjarnar, the last farmer at Rauðará* ":

"Pastor Björn Halldórsson, the well-known clerk and hymn poet, lived in Laufás in Eyjafjörður. He was born in 1823. His wife was Sigríður Einarsdóttir from Saltvík in Tjörnes, born 1819. Their children were Vilhjálmur, born in 1846, Svava, born 1854, and Þórhallur, born 1855.



[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Vilhjalmur-Bjarnason.jpg>]

Vilhjálmur grew up mostly with his grandfather, Rev. Halldór Bjarnason, a professor at Sauðanes.

At the age of sixteen he began his construction studies with Tryggvi Gunnarsson, a timber master at Hallgilsstaðir in Fnjóskadalur. After graduation, he took up two jobs: working in the winter, but began breeding work in the spring and managed his parents' estate in the summer. At once it was thought that the young priest's son was excellent, energetic, zealous for all kinds of work, flaming with fun, open to progress, kind and unresponsive, and gave good help.

More than twenty years old William sailed to Denmark, spent a year in Copenhagen and studied painting. When he returned home, he began to practice this craft on equal terms with his previous work and painted several churches in North Iceland, one of which was Grímsey Church.

In 1872, Vilhjálmur married Sigríður Þorlákisdóttir, a priest at Skútustaðir Jónsson. She was born in 1853. A little while later, Father Björn bought the farm Kaupung in Eyjafjörður and the young couple moved there. William now mostly quit his job outwards, but focused his energy on his estate and home. He began to build on the land, built a large wooden house and a high-quality coinhouse, grew a field and began to fall sharply.



[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-um-1900-hus-Shiederbergs.jpg>]

*Rauðará about 1900 – Shiederberg's house.*

William was a playful man, and often put together a night by day, especially with spring work and heans. In those years, he struck the daybreak in just over six hours, and was not considered cowards to play it after him. He soon became one of the leading and most valid farmers in Eyjafjörður and received the recognition of receiving an award from the honorary fund of King Christian IX.

But in the midst of this flower, the event occurred that the couple in Kaupngur sold their possessions and moved out of the region. Instead of coming with the current to the West, they went with their four children south to Kollafjörður and settled there at Rauðará, a micro-shoot east of Reykjavík. Their children were Thora, Halldor, Laufey, and Thorlak.



[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-1950.jpg>]

*Red River about 1950. The hospital in Laugarnes far away.*

Rauðará was an ancient farm, but neither large nor useful. Reykjavík became a large farm early on, and everything indicates that in the 10th century it was one of the largest reservoirs in the country.

According to the description of Árni Magnússon and Páll Vídalín in the land register from the year 1703, it is stated that there were five cows on Rauðará, one heifer of the winter, six sheep, five sheep winter-old, two lambs and one horse. There were no men, but torriff, stabbing and peating were sufficient in the homeland. Playful income small. Drivevon small. Roe delicacy very small. Shellfish beach almost none. Muru kernels, beetles and the like can be found, if desired. Home is year-round, but long-suffering a lot. However, there are various obligations and on this small and costly earth: A human loan for a season, two day-trips to Víðey Island. Two horses back home to Bessastaðir. Horse loans one day to transport Víðey-firewood turf from the dry field to the ship. Ship tours, when the Bessastaðir people call. Heyhestur one to the falcons, since they sailed to the Holm. And yet, not all was listed.



[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-22.jpg>]

*Red river at a distance.*

It was in the spring of 1893 that Vilhjálmur Bjarnarson bought this land from the Medical Director of Health Schierbeck for 4500 krónur. William was then 47 years old and his wife, Sigríður, was in her 40s.

The land was accompanied by a land area, about 30 days in total, but most of it was uncultivated, except for the field, which in the best use produced one hundred horses or almost that. Around the meadow were moorland and fuafen, but elsewhere there were blown moles or klapparholt.



[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-hus-Shiederbergs.jpg>]

*Rauðará – In 1891 Hans J. G. Schierbeck Medical Director of Health stone-loaded house on the ground. In 1908, Vilhjálmur Bjarnarson tore down the old apartment building and built a new one in that place.” – Reykjavík City Museum. See the old town at the Red River v.m.*

There was a small stone house on Rauðará river, when Vilhjálmur and Sigríður settled there. Behind it was an old town and an ancient town.

The eruption hill was north of the field, where there was a graystone mine. There sat a long Magnus stonemaker and split rocks into tombstones. Below Goshóll was Gvendarbrunnur. There was a rock, which resembled dys. Good drinking water came up there. Mótak had a Rauðará river east of the marsh, where it is now Noatún.



Mynd úr bókinni Íslenski hesturinn, útg. 2004 af Máli og menningu og Sögusetri íslenska hestsins. Myndin er tekin af Sigfúsi Eymundssyni ljósmyndara af hópi herraanna í útreiðatúr inni við Rauðará í Reykjavík að líkendum árið 1907. Í léttivagninum situr Árni Thorsteinsson landfógeti, aftan við hann er sonur hans Árni tónskáld, gráa hestinn til hliðar situr Lárus H. Bjarnason prófessor og fyrimennið með svipuna í virðulegri stellingu er Ludvig Hansen kaupmaður.

[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-18.jpg>]

From the ramp on Rauðará saw a single and small farm towards the town. The route from the countryside to Reykjavík lay considerably further south, but another road from the town lay by the sea to Rauðará and Laugarnes. This path above the shore was called the love track. There was a "lowly" into Hlemmur. But Hlemmur was the bridge of the Red-river-brook, where he fell to the sea. This stream originated in a draft of a dyke in Kringlumýri. There the whims went west. And in the draft north of Öskjuhlíð they merged with other wetlands and formed a small stream, when the North Moorland descended. From there it went to the fjord. This is called Hlemmtorg.



[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Reykjavik-1902.jpg>]

Map prepared by the National Land Survey of the Danish Military Commission in 1902.

An author has previously written about the Red Adventure. A verbatim description of these writings will be published here: "The farmer at Rauðará soon became aware that it took many hands to take here. He had come to a new settlement, stood in a threshing field, stretching out a prostux into the uncultivated, and when the earth came to pass, the earth was nothing but a little chess, compared to the land which he

had previously sacrificed for his strength. He caught the turf tree at any given time, and began to smooth the two in the meadow. He did not stop until the meadow had become smooth to all directions, as far as it could go. Then he began to bring out the field, as far as it were, and raised stones, and smoothed over it, and overloaded the field out of the rocks. He picked up dirt long distances in wheelbarrows and formed soil, where the rocks were thin. And forarfen thrust him out and filled him up. He showed that he was an agronomian, so there were few examples, worked as young as possible and always had new projects on the knits. Thus, the field grew year by year, but at the same time he felt the need to get more elbow beds. Around that, the country was divided into pieces, which various officials in Reykjavík had. The eastern part of Rauðará was Hagastykki, then a piece of Jónshensson, and further east was the earth's plate Fúlatjörn.



[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/einar-benediktsson-sextugur.jpg>]



The Chief Judge, Schierbeck, owned the Red River, as mentioned earlier, Chief Judge Jón Jensson, of course, owned the piece of Jónsjensson, and Halldór Danielsson owned Fúlutjörn.

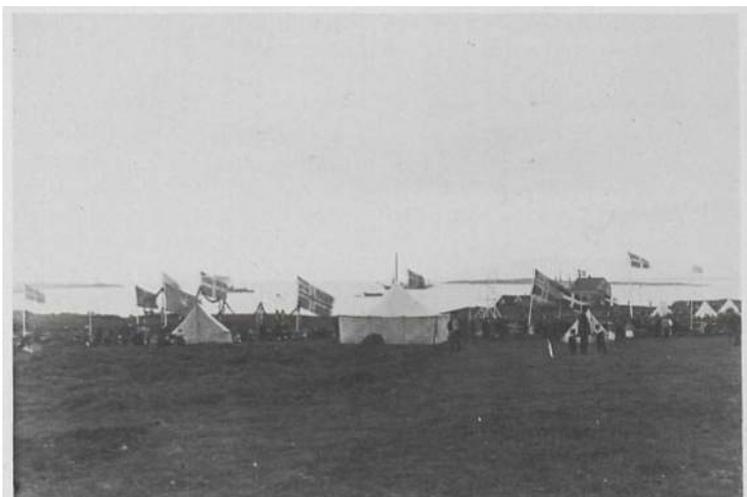
Then came other cultural activists and intellectuals to fall these pieces. Such was the case with the lawyer Einar Benediktsson poet. He wanted to acquire Fúlutjörn and asked the local sheriff to sell him the parcel. The city commissioner was going to do that. When the agreements on this were ready, so there was nothing left but to sign, says Einar: – This is kind of a derivative name, it has to be knocked off the price of the earth with such an ugly name.

Halldór Danielsson thickened by this comment, and said: – Well, then let's leave it to/sign. And there we sat.

This incident caused the town sheriff Halldór to invite Vilhjálmur to Rauðará Fúlutjörn for purchase. William didn't think long and immediately bought the part of the earth.

William's children went like Einar Benediktsson. They thought the name was uncomplicated and began to call this new landauki Lækjarbakki. But William was in a different situation.

– I now like to call it Fúlutjörn, he said, – because for the name I got the land.



2. mynd. Frá hjóðminningardeginum á Rauðarártúni í Reykjavík 2. ágúst 1897. Afstaða lands og sjávar á þessu svæði hefur breyst mikið síðan vegna uppfyllingar. Gatan Sættún er t.d. langt fyrir utan þáverandi fjöruborð. Ljós. Sigmundur Eymundsson. Þjms. L & pr.

[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-4.jpg>]

The farmer at Rauðará did not let that sit with the land purchase. He got a lot of inheritance in addition and got it laid out by the town council. In addition, he bought a land of crafts by Lake Elliðavatn, and brought the new crop out steadily."

The farmer Vilhjálmur had a great time to celebrate that his whole family was united with the farm. In particular, Thorlak, his son. He had from a young age in the north been a participant in the farming at Kaldbakur and was over twenty years old when the family moved to Rauðará. From the turn of the century, the children were in the years of manhood and took their own paths into life. Þóra, who was the oldest of the children, moved north and married Stefán Jónsson at Munkaþverá in Eyjafjörður, Halldór went abroad and studied agriculture, later became a principal at Hvanneyri. He was married to Svava Þórhallsdóttir, his cousin, Laufey married Guðmundur Finnbogason, a land librarian, and Þorlákur married after his father's death in 1919, and married Sigrún



*Rauðará – The photograph is of the mine north of Sjómannaskólinn in 1944, where there was the Reykjavík Grjótnám.*

*A house in this place probably belonged to the Reykjavík Stone Mine, in the register of houses a house is registered at Suðurlandsbraut/Laugarvegur. It was built in 1926 and has been demolished before 1956. Was where it is now Skipholt 33.*

*The mine in Rauðárholt later became the property of the town and in 1923 about 60 people were employed in the quarry. In the same year, a new rock crushing machine was purchased on behalf of the town (Rock Mine of Reykjavík) and it was located in the mine. The mine was closed in 1945 and the machines were then moved to a new mine at Elliðaárdvögur.*

Þorlákur was the most promising man, clear and intelligent, inclined to research and interested in breeding and other equipment issues. He worked with his father on all construction and began early to write observations about the lives of the farm animals, including learning about the equipment. He sought to find in what way it would be most advantageous to use the stock. He published reports on this in the Equipment Journal. From the turn of the century, Vilhjálmur sent his son to an agricultural school in Denmark. When Þorlákur returned home after graduation, he took over the management of the farm at Rauðará. William was quoted as saying that the cost of study had come in in one year. – The cows added more to themselves, which was better known to them to go, he said. The farm of the two fathers at Rauðará river had attracted attention early on. Previously, Rauðará river was seen as a cottage, but within a few years a large farm was built there. The red river milk became famous as the greatest costly milk, in addition to which the Red River cows began to set milk records, one after the other. The farm, which had risen there, also became the pride of Reykjavík.



[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-19.jpg>]

The townspeople now had the option of more and better milk than before, and the man who had sown and harvested was respected with respect. He was awarded a second official award for his work, this time from the Breeding Fund.

In 1908, a large and high-quality residence was built on Rauðará. From there, the beautiful green meadow could be looked over to all directions, — 35 daytime harvests, which had been cultivated in addition to the old field, the most sown plains and also vegetable gardens. The number of haymaking in Heimátún had increased sixfold in the first decade, was now 5–600 horses, the cows were now twenty or more, horses five and quite a lot of sheep.

Vilhjálmur Bjarnarson died in 1912 at the age of 66, while his wife, Sigríður, died in 1933 at the age of eighty.

On the way, the couple placed bauta stones from the Red River.



**Þorlákur V. Bjarnar**

[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/THorlakur-V.-Bjarnar.jpg>]

Thorlak had all the leadership in his hands. Two of his siblings had left the home, but Laufey was still at home. In addition, the home was with Theódór, his half-brother and Anna Nordal. Þorlákur lived with his mother until he married in 1919 Sigrún Sigurðardóttir from Flóaafli in Sandvíkurhreppur. Her parents were Ingibjörg Þorkelsdóttir and Sigurður Þorsteinsson, a farmer, later a real estate agent in Reykjavík. Sigrún's siblings were Árni the Free Church priest, Ásgeir the captain, Þorkell the engineer, Sigurður Ingi, a long municipal manager in Selfoss and Steinunn, living in Reykjavík.

Sigrun was a beautiful girl. She was born in 1896, and when she took over the management of the farm at Rauðará, she turned out to be a great mistress. They lived with a picture and kept up the honor of the Odal. But in their time the city began to go to the Red River. The settlement moved in quickly and eastwards, and it came to pass that Reykjavík began to demand the earth's corners under streets and houses. And in the midst of this attack, Thorlak fell into his chosen, far before his age, in 1932, fifty-one years old.



[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Sigrun-S.-Bjarnar.jpg>]



Sigrún and Þorlákur had four children. The eldest was William, who moved west over the ocean and became the coordinator of the Fiske Museum at the University of Cornell in Ithac in New York State. He is married to Dóra Eiríksson, a West Icelandic woman. The second child of Sigrún and Þorlákur was Ingibjörg, who married Jón K. Hafstein the dentist. She died in 1959.

The third in the series is Þorsteinn, who is married to Elfa Thoroddsen, and the youngest of the children is Sigríður Aðalbjörg, married to Sigurður H. Egilsson big merchant. Sigrún kept up the farming with hard work and brought her children to education.

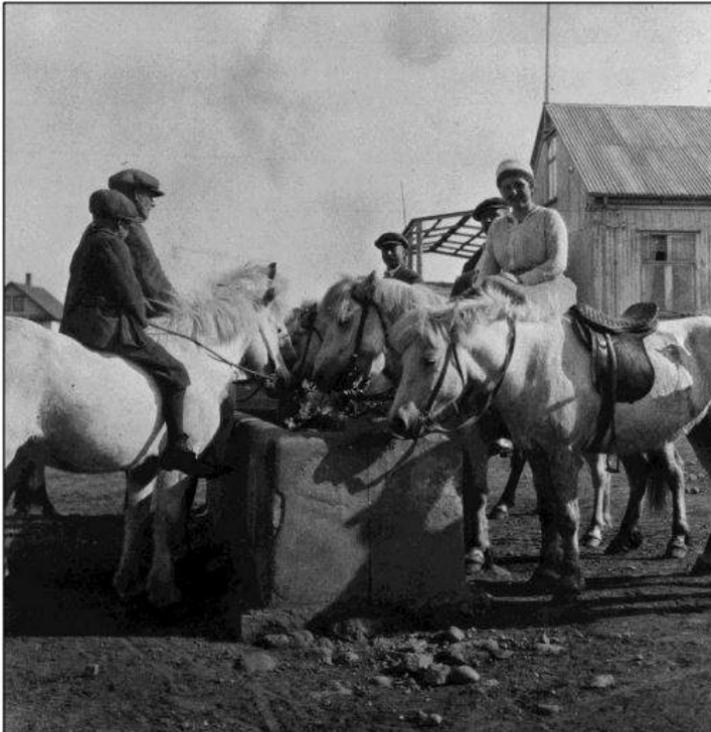
“But the city continued its ruthless offensive to the Red River.

Finally, the earth was surrounded, and for a moment the house stood like a lonely friend in the desert.” The people had to flee. Sigrún moved to Laugabrekka, which is a little further east of Suðurlandsbraut. There she lived with her son Þorsteinn until 1966, when they left farming and moved west to Kvisthagi. Sigrún died on August 10, 1979.

Þorlákur Bjarnar was born on December 10, 1881. And today we remember the centenary of this member.

And the city narrowed its nearer and nearer, finally pressed to the root of its heart, and shoveled away the glorious restoration of the turn of the century, chewing every root, like a hungry animal.

The hula of time and the shell of the city now lies over the old Red River.”

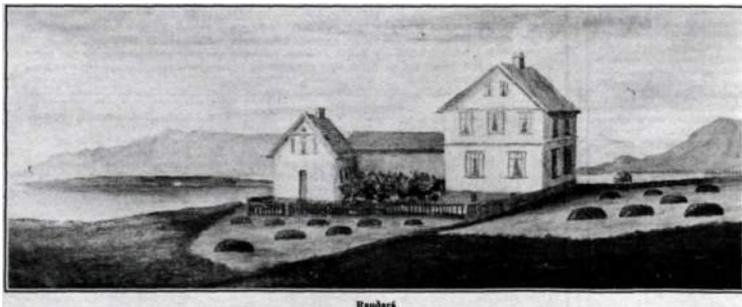


**Mynd 9.** Hestum brynt við vatnsþróna við Hlemm, líklega um 1904-1910.<sup>49</sup>

[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-13.jpg>]

In Óðinn 1909 there is also a discussion about Vilhjálmur and Sigríður: “In the spring of 1893 Vilhjálmur Rauðará bought by Reykjavík from the Medical Director of Health, Schierbeck, for 4500 kr. In the purchase, there was a small stone house for an apartment.

inheritance and has been laid down by the town council. He owns a country of gats and on top of Elliðavatn. Home hay has become 5-600 horses. He will have cut down from the south one 35 days; most of it is seedy in recent years. This summer, he added 3 days. Now his son Thorlak is ready. He attended an agricultural school in Denmark 8 years ago, and William says that the cost of study came in a year. The cows added it, which was better known to go. Þorlákur has for many years put in the Búnaðarrit feed and milk reports from Rauðará, and they show that the cows have been useful. It is all about the catch on Rauðará, that Vilhjálmur has built his great and high-quality living house, which is the picture of here in the newspaper. It was built in the summer of 1908. All the houses are respected 28,000 kr. That's all the drop from the cows. Now it will be unanimous with the experience of those who have been breeding cows with new and new people every year, that they have hardly answered the cost, and it is clear what the difference is between being able to go and not.



Rauðará

[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-1.jpg>]

A book on the 18th year of the Agricultural Journal: "New customs with a new era", and the article was considered both wise and brilliant.

He who wrote this asked William, how much he thanked him, that he had been so well prepared for the days. He thought a little bit, and said nothing but that, "I've had time to carry on."

Vilhjánnur ljek is in Kaupngur in his younger years to beat the day's draw in the field in 6 hours, so was the race and the fun.

Rather, William led by a sher general case. But many sought counsel and help from him. And hardly another farmer was popular in Eyjafjörður. The couple's older daughter, Þóra, is married to farmer Stefán Jónsson at Munka-Þverá in Eyjafjörður. Laufey is a teacher in Reykjavík. His eldest son is the principal at Hvanneyri."

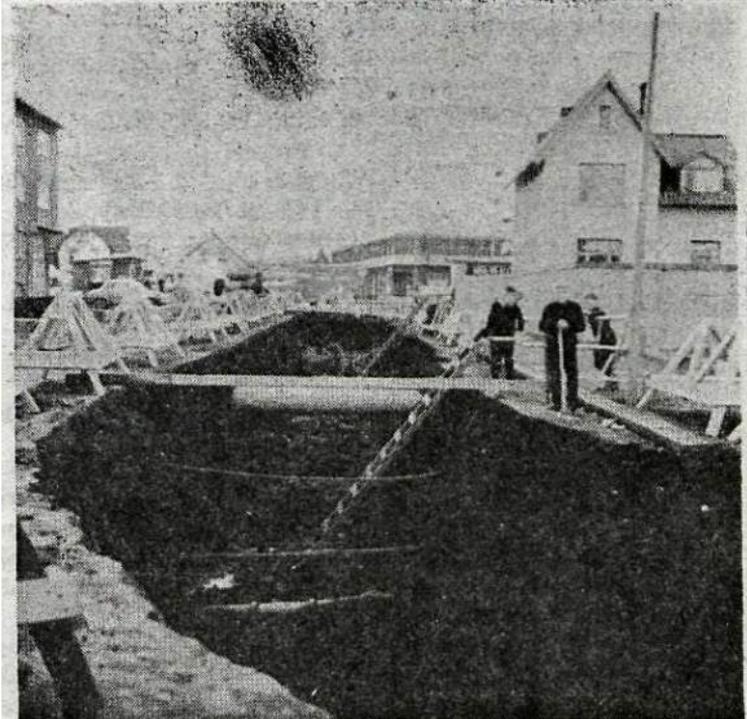


[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-bruin.jpg>]

Rauðará – The picture shows the car Re-24 and ready people on the move, in 1924, behind the gas station and closer

descendants who have not been listed until now. He was a farmer at the Red River in Reykjavík (1845-1912). Vilhjálmur studied construction with Tryggvi Gunnarsson, later CEO, and until now comes yet another connection between the Laufás family and that remarkable man. He sailed to Copenhagen and also studied painting and painted several churches in the north after he returned home. In the summer of 1872, Vilhjálmur married Sigríður, the daughter of Þorlákur the priest at Skútustaðir Jónsson, who was one of the well-known Reykjahlíð siblings from whom the family of Reykjahlíð is counted. Five years later they built a farm in Kaupangur in Eyjafjörður and received an award for equipment construction.

Vilhjálmur bought Rauðará on the outskirts of Reykjavík in 1893 and made it a large farm on an Icelandic scale, just like Bishop Þórhallur, his brother, Laufás. The beautiful house on Rauðará stood where there is now a Freemason Palace by Borgartún, right at the end of Rauðarárstígur.



**Nú er verið að gera nýjan farveg fyrir Rauðará, — og stærri — vegna síaukinnar notkunar á köldu vatni og heitu í Norðurmýri og þó einkum í Hlíðarhverfinu, en Rauðará flytur það til sjávar að lokinni notkun.**

[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-5.jpg>]

William and Sigríður had four children, in addition to whom William had one out of marriage. The eldest was Halldór Vilhjálmsson (1875-1936) principal in Hvanneyri. He was an agricultural engineer from the Agricultural School in Copenhagen, but a principal and also a great farmer at Hvanneyri in 1907 until his death. Halldór made great demands on himself and his students, but his motto was: "Hollow is a homely bale." That's why there was plenty of food in the cages in Hvanneyri. They said he had a delicate temper under a hard shell. His wife was Svava Þórhallsdóttir, his aunt, as he said before."

In the book "Strand Jamestown" Halldór Svavarsson reports that "the timber from Jamestown has also been used in bridges, but there was varying degrees of ambition in their construction as is the case. Thus, planks were laid over the Red River, so that the bridge really resembled a kind of hatch. From then on, the bridge was called Hlemmur.

- Morning paper, 273. 12.12.1981, One Hundred Years of Memory of Þorlákur V. Bjarnar, the last farmer at Rauðará by Gunnar M Magnús, pp. 50-51.
- Odin, 4. 01.07.1909, Vilhjálmur Bjarnason, p. 25-26.
- Worldview, 4. tbl. 01.05.1990, The great farmer at Rauðará and the son at Hvanneyri, p. 95-96.
- Hammer, Christmas newspaper Dec. 2021 – House in Hafnarfjörður built from timber stranded ship – Halldór Svavarsson (Strand Jamestown), p. 6.



[<https://ferlir.is/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Raudara-20.jpg>]