

# The Map of Falljökull

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HARROW SCHOOL, HARROW ON THE HILL, MIDDLESEX, ENGLAND

Although Falljökull is divided into two tongues by the ridge Raudikambur it is all one glacier with a surface area of about 10 square miles whose catchment lies immediately below and to the south of the Hvannadalshnúkur. As the ice slips westward out of the crater of the Öraefajökull giant crevasses form step-faults facing the basin that lies above the icefall that is shown on the map. The floor of this basin contains huge blocks of faulted ice creating a most dramatic landscape. As the ice approaches the edge of the plateau at about 3,500 feet it begins to break up into smaller and smaller blocks prior to sliding in chaotic fashion over the edge. When the sun is on them in the late afternoon the seracs frequently collapse with a thunderous roar. In cloudy weather however such ice falls were occasional, giving evidence that they were due to melting rather than to glacier movement. The ridges either side of the glacier and Raudikambur itself are formed of easily eroded ashes, lavas and tuffs of Pleistocene age. It is not surprising therefore to find ice-cored moraine quite high on the glacier on the southern fall at approximately 3,000 feet. The icefall of the northern tongue divides at about 2,000 feet, forming a small lobe of ice which might be described as the 'shoulderblade' of the glacier.

The whole glacier is called Falljökull but the name Virkisjökull is applied to the southern arm. The two arms join up below Raudikambur but are effectively divided to their snouts by the medial ice-cored moraine. This moraine is a complicated mass of ridges and cones upon which movement is extremely difficult. In all areas this moraine stands higher than the glacier surface. There is an interesting deposit of moraine, still ice-cored, high on the valley side opposite the 'shoulderblade'.

Ablation is so rapid that even on the dullest of days heat may be seen rising from the ice

and ice-cored moraine. The surface of the glacier gives every impression of stagnation. To the south of spot height 1745' pools of water may be seen among the seracs at the foot of the icefall. Crevasses and seracs have markedly rounded edges and the ice supports numerous rivulets that have carved miniature valleys for themselves. Few actually drain off the glacier; in general they disappear into potholes or drain into ice-cored moraine to reappear beyond the snout as impressive vauculian springs. The power of these spouts and of the streams in flood is readily appreciated when one hears the boulders grinding along the bed.

Several non-glacial streams also feed these systems, notably the stream from Hvannadalur which disappears under the ice into a cave. After heavy rainfall a large lake ponds up at this point. Similar lakes occur at the foot of Raudikambur where the two glaciers coalesce and below the northern snout datum pole

