



## Building 55

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## Chapter 17

### Building 55

Lisa Yeomans

B.55 is located within the central cluster of buildings in the 4040 Area, with its occupation roughly coinciding with that of B.64 and B.60. At the end of the occupation of these structures there was a major change in the settlement pattern in the vicinity of these buildings. Not only had the buildings been in use for a long time, but they had been built on at least two phases of earlier buildings. Buildings forming a cluster in this area of the site had, therefore, been in existence for a substantial period of time and had followed the same arrangement when occupation rapidly changed (Chapter 4). Subsequently, after the abandonment of the buildings, the area was used as a quarry and for midden deposition (Chapter 27). It is clear, however, that the quarrying was not an immediate activity, and midden accumulation only occurred after a period when minimal activity took place in the area.

The construction of B.55 occurred slightly later than the construction of B.58 to the west as, unusually, the western wall of B.58 used part of the pre-existing eastern wall F.2105 of B.55. The two buildings therefore shared a single wall in the southeast corner and an additional external double wall was constructed around the northern sides of the two buildings when they were in occupation at the same time (Chapter 4, Fig. 4.29) and both buildings have been assigned to Level 4040 H.

Excavation in B.55 stopped at the final phase of the building's use and, although there is minimal data for the actual occupation of the building, it has provided evidence of the form, layout, closure and infilling of the building.

#### Building 55

B.55 consists of three spaces forming a large square building measuring 8.15m by 8.0m and abutting B.64 to the west, B.57 to the southeast and B.58 to the east. The size of B.55 became evident in 2007 after *“a further midden layer that had built up against the southern and western walls of B.55 was removed revealing the full extent of the building. In layout B.55 is similar to B.59 and the stratigraphy suggests that the two buildings are roughly contemporary with the wedge shaped B.64 squeezed into the gap between the two”* (Diary, LY, 11.07.07). B.64 was constructed after B.55 but there is no excavated stratigraphic relationship between B.55 and B.57. To the north, B.55 faces onto the external area Sp.60 and, stratigraphically, was constructed at the time when the

nature of the external space changed from Sp.133 midden to dumps richer in building material (Chapter 26). This relationship was clearly seen since the construction cut for the double walls surrounding the northern side of B.55 was dug into the top of the Sp.133 midden sequence. After this event the deposits to the north of B.55 were more general dumps rather than the artifact-rich midden deposits found in Sp.133.

The main room of B.55 is Sp.256 with Sp.322 to the west and Sp.247 to the north (Fig. 17.1). The northwest corner of the building had been heavily truncated by pits dug for the extraction of building materials following the abandonment of the building. The foundation trench for the late building B.41 (Chapter 31) also cut the building but the B.41 foundation cut stopped slightly above the level of the floors. Interestingly, given the clustering of the buildings, the overall layout of B.55 and B.59 (Chapter 20) is very similar with the large main space and western side room segregated from one another by a central post and wall partially dividing the space projecting from the north wall. Both buildings also had a northern side room but these differed in shape and surface area. Whereas the northern storage space of B.59 formed an irregular space leading from the northeast side of the room, the northern storage space in B.55 was regular extending along the north side of the building. The northern storage space in B.55 must have been entered from the western side room although the quarry pits had truncated the access point between the rooms. In terms of size, the main rooms of the two buildings barely differed.

Excavation in B.55 removed deposits down to the last phase of use of the building with the exception of the southwest corner where Foundation Trench 14 for the north shelter was dug through the corner of Sp.322 (see Chapter 30). The thickness of the plaster and floor sequences in the building suggested that was in use for a long time before being abandoned. In depth, the floor sequence in Sp.322 measured some 0.4m and the areas of the building that were repeatedly plastered were coated with about 4mm of plaster layers. The following report provides a discussion of the features and layout of the spaces within the building and a discussion of the few deposits that were excavated from the occupation of these spaces, and then provides a description of the material left in the building at its closure and the sequence of infilling deposits that accumulated in the building prior to the quarrying activity that later truncated the northwest part of the building.

## Building 55 phase A

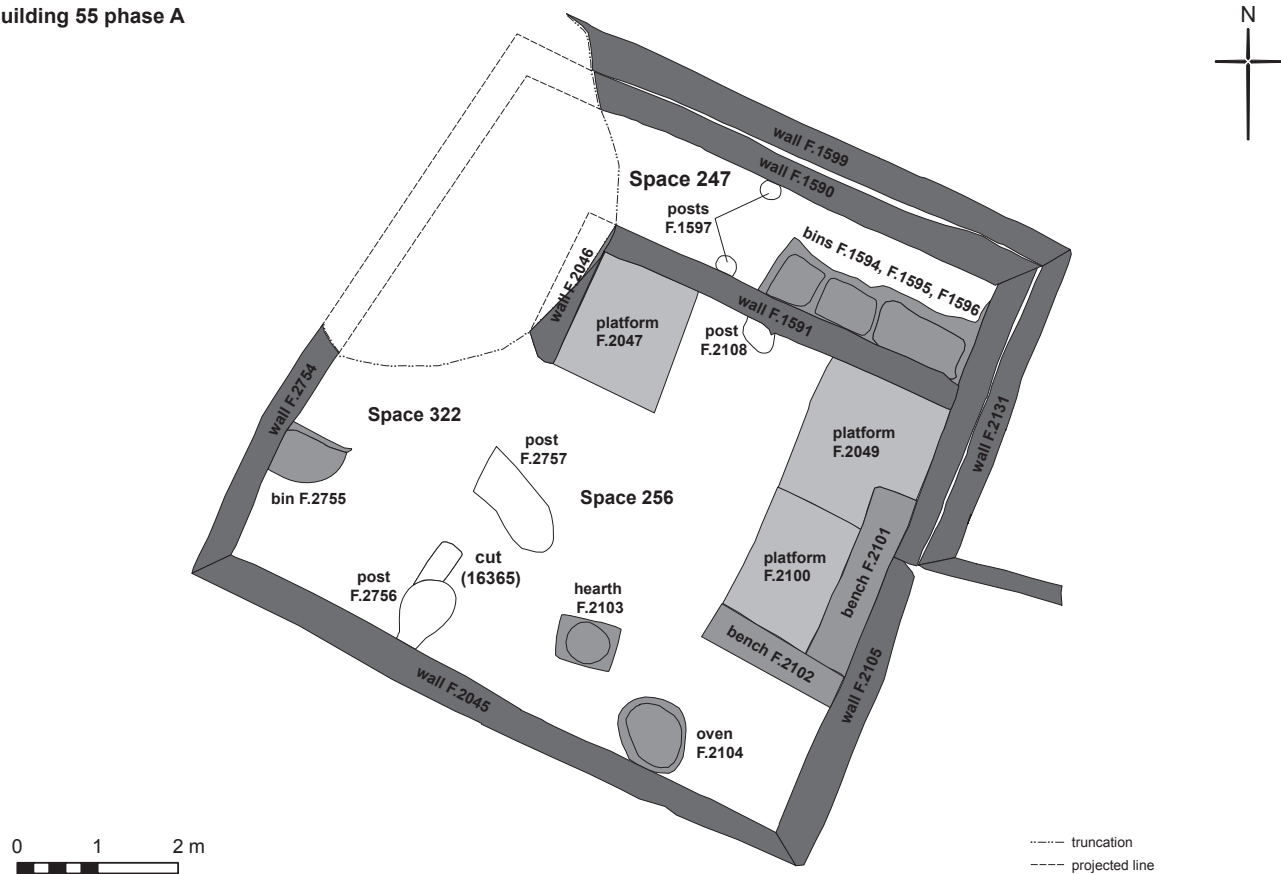


Figure 17.1. Plan of B.55 (Plan by Camilla Mazzucato, Cordelia Hall and David Mackie).

### Space 256

The main room of B.55 was large in size measuring 5.46m by 4.72m and followed many of the conventions for internal arrangement of features within buildings. The building was not fully exposed at one time as the limit of excavation initially meant that only the western part was seen. Fig. 17.2 taken facing south shows the infill of the building at this stage of excavation sealed by midden and truncated by the foundation trench for B.41. The platforms along the eastern wall and the northwest platform can also be seen with substantial slumping evident in the eastern platform presumably caused by the presence of underlying burials. Fig. 17.3 is an east-facing photograph of the same space, taken from beyond the limit of excavation; it shows the edge of the later quarry pits cutting the northwest corner of the room.

A large oval oven F.2104 surrounded by dirty floors was attached to the southern wall. The south wall F.2045 behind the oven had been painted at many times during the phases of replastering of the room as traces of red pigment were visible in the layers of plaster (Fig. 17.4). None of the buildings excavated by Mellaart had wall paintings on the southern

walls associated with ovens and this is also the first example in the renewed excavations. Evidently it was not a common practice to decorate this wall of buildings in this manner but, nevertheless, the occupants of B.55 had frequently displayed painted motifs above the oven. The final plaster layer, visible when the building was abandoned, was painted with a either a partly flaked away solid red design or, more likely, a series of red blocks forming a linear pattern (Fig. 17.5).

A plaster lip extending from the east side of the oven F.2104 was possibly a kerb to contain the ashy rake-out deposits of the oven. The oven would have been a domed structure with an opening on its eastern side. Close to the oven was a hearth F.2103 with both fire installations in the southern third of the main space.

A large platform F.2047 extended from the northwest corner of the building. The northeast corner of the room was occupied by another platform F.2049. A third platform F.2100 had been built against the southern edge of the northeast platform. The surface of the platform slumped considerably into two hollows suggesting that the platforms had been opened many times for burial. The eastern side of Sp.256 also con-



**Figure 17.2.** South-facing photograph of the eastern part of B.55 (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).

tained two benches; F.2101 was a mudbrick construction parallel with the eastern wall. South of this feature and platform F.2102 was a more typical bench, plastered many times with much of the wall plaster lipping around its southern side suggesting that it was an early addition to the room layout.

The northern wall of Sp.256 was also painted but only to the east of the post set against the centre of the wall. To see if the plaster to the west of the post had ever been painted during the use of the building the successive layers of plaster were peeled away and none revealed any paint. The same technique on the eastern side of the wall exposed an intricate pattern (Fig. 17.6) and this painted plaster was left for display. Both red and black paint were used on the plaster, which was decorated with bands of straight edged wavy lines, red painted splayed handprints and a solid red triangle respecting where the corner of the east platform abutted the north wall. There was possibly a white handprint in the centre of the red triangle. The painting continued on the wall behind the platform with more of the wavy design in both red and black paint.

#### **Space 247**

The northern storage room to B.55 was long and narrow in form. There was no internal entrance between the main room and the storage room in B.55 but later pits truncated the western side of the room so Sp.247 could have been accessed

from the northern end of Sp.322. Only the southern wall of Sp.247 was thinly plastered perhaps suggesting a purely storage function with no attempts made to aesthetically improve the room.

Much of the internal area of the room was taken up with three storage bins F.1594, F.1595 and F.1596 built against the southern wall. These were on the eastern side of the space and separated from the western side by a partition. Most of the eastern side was given over to the storage bins with a narrow (c.0.7m) gap where the occupants of the building could have gained access to their stored goods. The evidence for a partition F.1597 consisted of two opposing postholes backfilled with a clay deposit on either side of the room. This partition may have been in the form of a hanging between the two posts or a screen wall (Fig. 17.7). To the west of the partition the room stored another type of food or material goods but again no remains were left to indicate what they were.

#### **Space 322**

Sp. 322 was 2.3m in width with the north part of the room truncated by later quarrying. In the southern preserved part of the side room a number of features were recorded but not excavated. Abutting the western wall F.2754 was a bin or basin F.2755. The foundation trench for B.41 heavily truncated the top of this feature leaving only a portion of its original height but it would have been a shallow scoop with a raised edge.





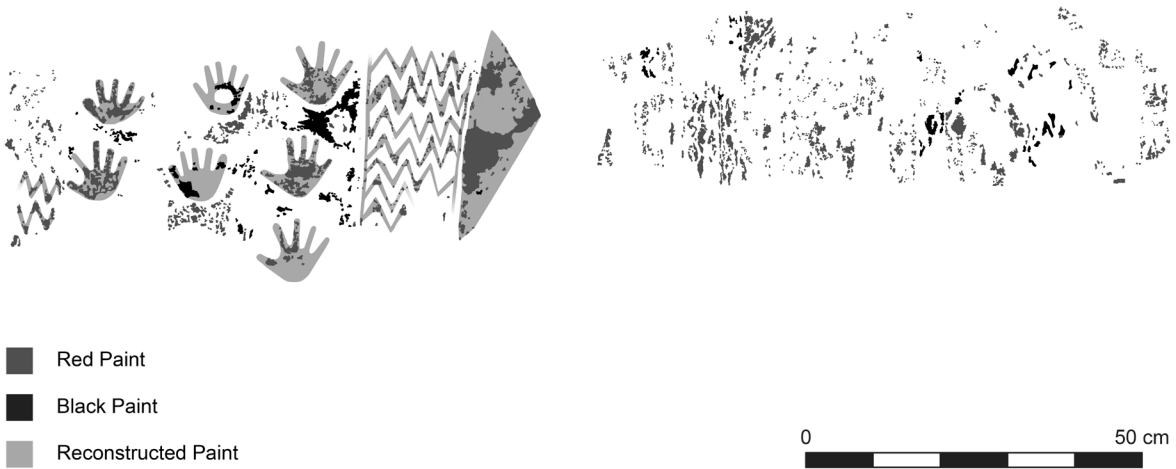
**Figure 17.3.** East-facing photograph of the eastern part of B.55 (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).



**Figure 17.4.** Traces of painted decoration in the layers of wall plaster behind the oven F.2104 (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).

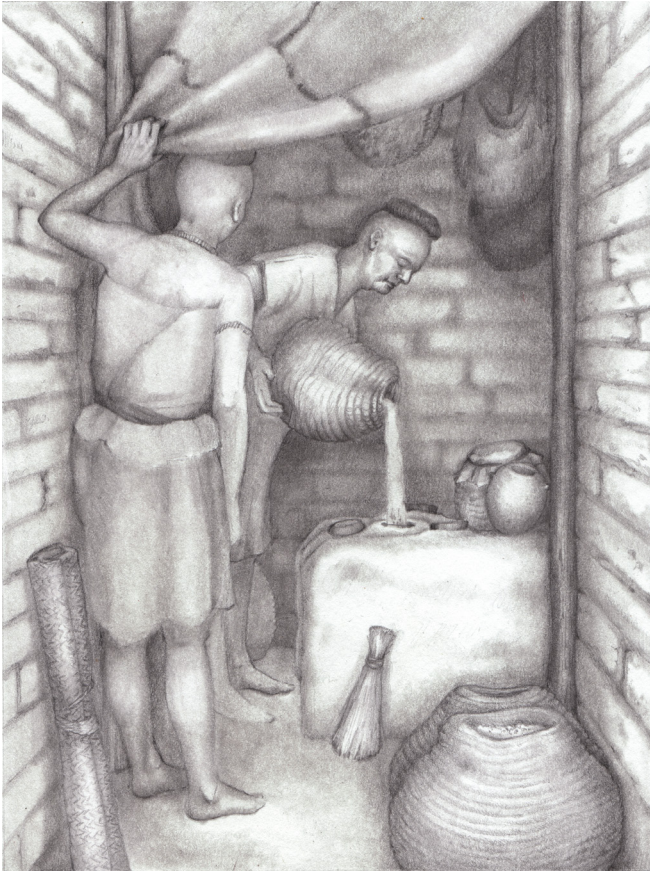


**Figure 17.5.** Close-up of the design painted behind the oven in B.55 on wall F.2045 (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).



**Figure 17.6.** Reconstruction of the decorated wall plaster on the north wall of Sp.256 (Illustration by Kathryn Killackey).





**Figure 17.7.** Reconstruction of the northern storage space of B.55 (Illustration by Kathryn Killackey).

It is not certain, therefore, if this feature was a bin or a basin where grinding or other food preparation could have taken place. A flat stone set into the floor surface in the central part of the room can be seen in Fig 17.8.

A large post-retrieval pit F.2757 was visible in the centre of the space and would have formed part of the divide between Sp.256 and Sp.322. Against the southern wall an additional post-retrieval pit (F.2756) was visible. The wall plaster on the southern wall F.2045 lipped around the scar in the wall but the post may have been removed before the end of the use of the building since a thick, non-laminated plaster had been applied to the wall where the post would have abutted the wall. This plaster layer covered the bare brickwork after the post was removed and suggested that the post was not structural as it had been taken out whilst the building was still in use. There were also traces of a dismantled partition wall projecting from the post-retrieval pit at right angles to the southern wall. All that remained of this wall was a series of floor layers clearly terminating around wall scar (16365). Together with the removed southern post, these features would have formed a more formal division of the building into eastern and western rooms though much of the life of the build-

ing. By the end of the use of the building, the occupants had dismantled these features. This pattern parallels the division between the eastern and western sides of the building in B.59 and in both buildings this boundary was altered through the occupation sequence.

### **Building 55 Phase C: Construction**

(Fig. 17.9 Harris matrix on CD)

Following the conventions for phasing incompletely excavated buildings, the stratigraphic units of B.55 were phased as Phase C: Construction, Phase B: Occupation and Phase A: Closure/Infilling. The only part of the construction phase of B.55, aside from the outer double-wall, that was excavated was in Foundation Trench 14 for the north shelter. In the northeast corner of this foundation trench a 1.95m stretch of the southern wall F.2045 of B.55 was removed with its thick internal plaster (14940). The northeast corner of an abutting building was also shown in the excavation of this foundation trench indicating the presence of more buildings around B.55 beside those exposed by excavation. “*The Foundation Trench diagonally crosses the southern wall of Sp.322 and the external midden (14931) outside within the foundation trench has been excavated to formation level. This revealed the northeast corner of a space formed by walls F.2758 and F.2759 just within the foundation trench. I suspect that this may be related to the building (B.66) that Richard started to define under the midden deposits to the south of B.59 last year*” (Diary, LY, 15.07.2007).

Evidence on the phasing of the construction of the external wall of B.55 was presented in more detail in the write-up of the external areas Sp.60 and Sp.133 to the north of the cluster of buildings where the construction cut for B.55 truncated though midden deposits in Sp.133 (Chapter 26). This “*construction cut is very clear truncating the laminated midden layers of Sp.133 and backfilled with the same midden deposits with the laminations removed by the process. The construction cut was for the construction of the main walls of B.55 and the double wall surrounding the north and west side of the structure. Below the construction cut the walls of another, earlier building were visible but there was a very slight difference in their alignment compared to the later, B.55, walls*” (US 17730, LY, 05.09.2008).

### **Building 55 Phase B: Occupation**

A series of dirty floors (14930) from the southwest corner of Sp.322 were excavated in Foundation Trench 14. A depth of 0.20m of these floors was removed as one excavation unit because of the methodology used to excavate the foundation trenches. The “*dirty floor sequence tends to alternate between layers 3mm in thickness and bands <1mm thick of lighter material and the build-up of the floor layers indicates that the building was in use for a considerable period*” (US 14930, LY, 14.07.07). The archaeobotanical remains from the floors



**Figure 17.8.** South-facing photograph of Sp.322 with thick floor sequence in the foreground truncated by quarrying and stone set into floor (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).

are low in density and are a mixture of crops and wild plants dominated by glume bases from de-husking but without the weeds to identify this sample as processing waste (Volume 8 Chapter 7). Where the large quarry pits also truncated the dirty floors of Sp.322 in the northern part of the space, a number of neonate or infant bones were visible in the section. As these were not reached stratigraphically, they were not excavated, but they did show that, unlike B.59, numerous burials were interred within B.55.

When the building was first exposed a few final occupation deposits were excavated. In Sp.256, tight along the edge of the oven, where the narrow gap between the oven and the wall could not be easily cleaned, was a group of animal bones (12303) probably from the original processing of meat on dirty floors by the hearth. A number of large pieces of animal bone were recovered and these had been broken for marrow extraction but not further processed for grease processing. The bone represents at least two sheep/goats and is dominated by the meat-bearing bones. A few infantile cattle phalanges and a relatively weathered piece of antler may have come from the fill above rather than from processing near the oven. A group of articulated sheep/goat tarsals and a metatarsal were also present. Cut-marks on the bones were generated from dismemberment activities not normally well-represented at the site. It was not just mammals that were processed in

the area, as two sizes of bird are also represented; one is duck size and the other was probably a gray heron. Additionally, a large fragment of eggshell from a large species of bird was recovered. Overall, there was some burning of the bone that would have happened after consumption. This group of bones was clearly an assemblage of waste from processing and consumption around the oven area of the building. In the vicinity of the oven a hearth rake-out deposit (12308) was excavated from in front of the oven opening.

For the foundation for the north shelter, a long, narrow and shallow southern beam slot had to be excavated through the occupation sequence in Sp.256 (Chapter 30). It was impossible to excavate this beam slot in the single context method due to limited time before the shelter was to be constructed. Fill (16149) of hearth F.2103 in Sp.256 is the upper deposit in this sequence and was assigned unit numbers for phytolith and micromorphology samples. Otherwise, the units were, by necessity, just recorded in section. The section showed that the hearth had been cut into the latest floor in Sp.256 and had been re-plastered a number of times with the plasters affected by the heat generated during the use of the hearth. From the section it was clear that the latest floors in Sp.256 were light gray clay surfaces sealing a thick white plaster surface, above make-up and dirty floor layers. These floor layers had been affected by heat in the area to the northeast of hearth





**Figure 17.10.** Pre-form 10326.x4 of a scapula tool (Photograph by Faunal Team).



**Figure 17.11.** Bones and stones (17733) excavated from above floor in Sp.247 (Photograph by Shahina Farid).



**Figure 17.12.** Phytolith impression (12304) of a mat or basket left on the northeast platform (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).

F.2103 indicating that a previous hearth had been installed in the building. The latest floor in Sp.256 lipped up onto platform F.2100. Three plaster surfaces on this platform, separated by make-up layers, were visible in the section where the southern beam slot truncated B.55. A possible burial cut was visible under the second plaster surface. The section also showed that the mudbrick bench F.2101 was built above the latest plaster surface of the platform.

### *Building 55 Phase A: Closure/infilling*

#### *Space 247*

The roomfill in Sp.247 was relatively homogenous and towards the base of the infill deposits were a number of finds probably left in the room when it was abandoned; these were excavated from the interface of the feature surfaces and infill deposits. The eastern side of the infill (10326) contained many fragments of mudbrick collapse and lower in the fill was a concentration of bones as well as a number of stones. Of these, 10326.x1 is part of a large cattle horncore and 10326.x4 is a cattle scapula that is a preform for a scapula tool. The spine of the scapula had been removed and the scar pecked even (Fig. 17.10). The tool, however, is not complete but it could eventually have been used as a shovel for removing food-stuffs kept in the bins. 10326.x4 is a large piece of cattle horncore including some of the frontal and maybe two-thirds of the horncore.

In the west end of the room, another artifact group (17733) comprising bones and stones was excavated from above the floor surface. This was sealed by a substantial area of wall collapse (16788) and contained two large pieces of juvenile cattle mandible 17733.x10 and 17733.x12, possibly from the same animal as the teeth were at the same wear stage (Fig. 17.11). A complete point 16787.x1 made from an unsplit sheep/goat tibia was also recovered from the upper infill. Towards the base of the infill the deposits clearly showed evidence that they were windblown. This demonstrated that unlike many of the buildings, the building after abandonment was not immediately intentionally infilled.

#### *Space 256*

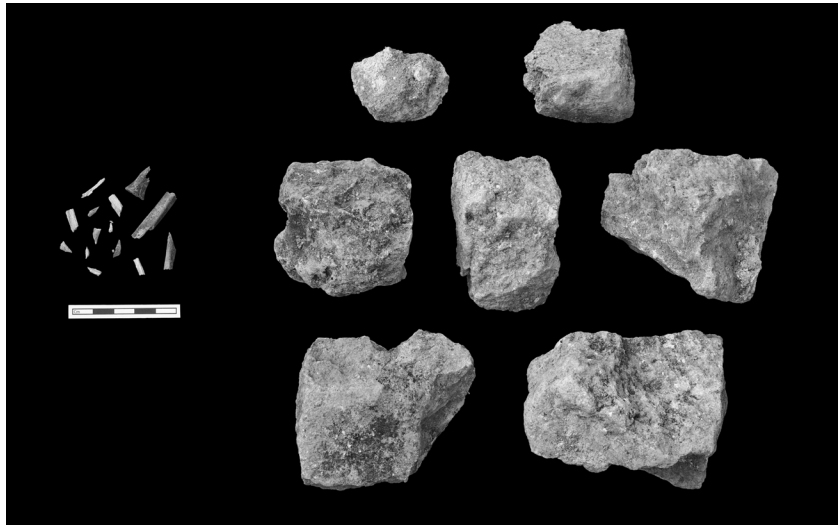
Sp.256 was fairly well cleared out before the abandonment of the building and the room started to infill (10395/12301/12309). The only trace of anything left on the floors was on the northeast platform F.2049 that had been abandoned with a basket or mat left on its surface leaving behind the phytolith impressions (12304) of its base (Fig 17.12). All of the infill deposits were relatively sterile and no concentrations of finds were found above the floors. After this initial infilling the post against the northern wall was dug out (12312) and the cut filled with compact clay (12310). Unusually, no specific finds were found in the base

of the post-retrieval pit; this may be partly to do with the way that the building was abandoned. There was no effort to quickly fill in the building and even the post-retrieval pit was not dug until sometime later – perhaps not until the next construction event in the neighborhood took place. Above the silty clay deliberate backfill of the post-retrieval pit, further layers of infill (10349)/(10357)/(10377)/(10382)/(10398) then accumulated. A number of bone tools were recovered from these deposits. These are all bone points but, given the volume of infill excavated, the number of bone points is not unusual, especially since the infill of B.55 was gradual and contained discarded material as opposed to the very quickly, intentionally infilled buildings that mainly contain demolished structural material. At the west side of the space below an area of wall collapse an “initial deposit appears to be natural silting, possibly windblown, inter-bedded with medium sized delaminated wall plaster fragments. This could indicate that the house was left open for a bit after closure/abandonment and prior to infilling” (US 16792, SF, 25.08.08).

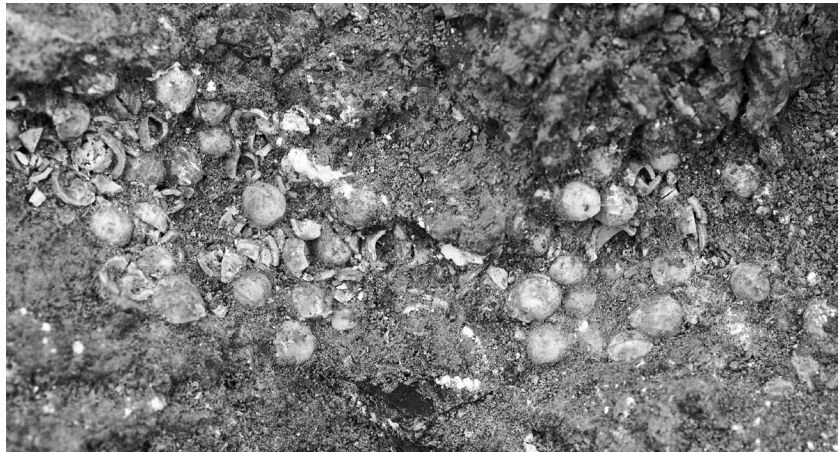
#### Space 322

In Sp.322, the infill was excavated as (14926), described as relatively homogenous, although “towards base perhaps 0.1m from underlying floor sequences was a thin lens of midden-like material which may represent the boundary between the abandonment and demolition events” (US 14926, LY/JST, 12.07.07). Within the roomfill, above the floor, was a group of stones, ground stone and a worked bone (14929). These include four fragments of coarse grinding tools that are made of andesite as well as a couple of bone points 14926.x1 and 14926.x2 that lay on the surface in Sp.322. (Fig 17.13). The two bone points are both made from sheep/goat split distal metapodials and both were still useable when left in the building at its abandonment. Against the southern wall a concentration of hackberries was found in association with a large pounding stone 14926.x3 (Fig.17.14).

During excavation, additional discontinuous lenses of ash were visible in sections through the infill deposits. There was also a slightly higher frequency of animal bone in the upper infill deposits and these factors may suggest that the building was in-filled comparatively slowly allowing more bone to be discarded and ashy deposits to be dumped into the area. This



**Figure 17.13.** Cluster of stones and bone (14929) (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).



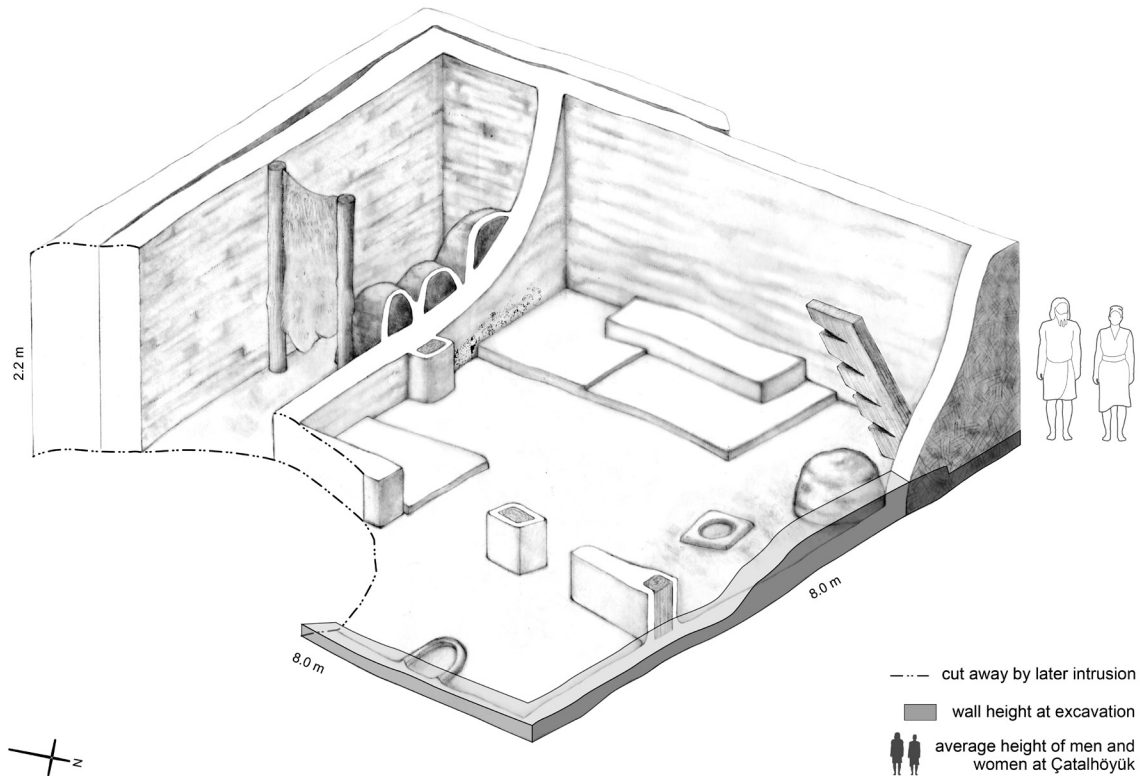
**Figure 17.14.** Hackberry concentration in Sp.247 (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).

may be related to the subsequent use of the space as a midden since there was no hurry to consolidate the ground for the construction of a new building.

## Summary

B.55 is a large building similar in size and layout to B.59. Many of the walls of the main room in the building were decorated including, unusually, the southern wall behind the oven. This was one of the buildings that had only been excavated down to the last phase of use so there was not much information available on the development of the internal features and the occupation material used within the building. The abandonment of B.55 and other buildings in the area fol-





**Figure 17.15.** *Isometric illustration of B.55 (Illustration by Kathryn Killackey).*

lowed what must have been a period of hundreds of years that saw a group of buildings clustered around this part of the mound. When these earlier buildings had been abandoned, they were quickly replaced with another building of similar layout and form. This all changed with the abandonment of B.55 and some adjacent buildings, and the area was left to gradually infill and be used for midden and quarrying. This suggests that there was no one alive or still living at Çatalhöyük who could continue the tradition of buildings in this area of the mound. The evidence we have from Çatalhöyük all seems to suggest that there was a long memory of previous buildings and inhabitants of the site and these were often revered or treated with respect. The shift to use of these buildings as quarries is thus all the more interesting. Disease,

emigration or discontinuation of social groups are just a few possible suggestions for the extensive change in use of space in this part of the settlement. An isometric reconstruction of B.55 is shown in Fig.17.15.

### Acknowledgements

B.55 was excavated under the supervision of Lisa Yeomans in 2005 and assisted by Stanford Field Team students Amelia Strom Hardin and Bradley Heinz. Lisa Yeomans and James Taylor excavated a portion of the building in 2007 during the construction work for the shelter project and some further work was conducted in 2008 by Shahina Farid.