



Building 66

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Chapter 22

Building 66

Lisa Yeomans

(with reference to a report by Richard Turnbull)

B.66 has not been completely exposed and is still partially sealed by midden layers from Sp.279 (Chapter 27). Upper parts of the walls within Sp.312, however, were exposed by the removal of the overlaying midden and the some post-abandonment infills. Sp.312 is the main room of the building and additional northern storage space would have originally abutted this and the southern side of B.59. Although the building was slightly smaller than B.59 to the north and B.55 to the northeast, it did have the same broad layout as these two buildings. The plan of the layout of B.66 is completed by the wall alignments seen in the base of the foundation trenches for B.41 (Fig. 22.1) where the north wall of the northern storage room could be seen abutting, or abutted by, the south wall of B.59. There was no plaster on the walls of this space. From what could be seen in plan, the northern storage space was divided in two and there was an additional space to the west (Fig. 22.2). The construction of B.66 has been assigned to Level 4040 G (see Chapter 4, Fig. 4.28).

The internal measurements of Sp.312 were 4.42m north to south with a width of 3.36m. The southwest corner of the building was truncated by the foundation trench for B.41 (Chapter 31). The floor level of the space was not exposed but a number of the internal features of the room were visible at the level that excavation ceased. Two east-west aligned partition walls projected approximately a third of the way into the room from the eastern wall. Traces of a bin were visible between these walls. One post-retrieval pit F.4066 was identified against the northern side of the western wall and plaster 40mm thick was visible around all of the internal walls. A thin plaster was visible on the northern wall F.3046 and this would probably have been from less frequent plastering of the northern storage space.

Building 66 Phase A: Closure/infilling

(Fig. 22.3 Harris matrix on CD)

From the excavated infilling units and the deposits that can be seen in section, it would appear that the building was abandoned rather than closed and infilled with the intention of immediate rebuilding. The lowest pure midden deposit

is (14136), a layer of loose pinkish ash assigned to Sp.279 (Chapter 27). This sealed further layers of ash and collapsed mudbrick in the northeast and northwest corners of the building. In the northeast corner, this layer of ashy material (13194) contained two horncores. *“The smaller sheep one was just within the fill, the larger cattle horncore lay on the east side of the unit with its tip plastered into the wall and maybe the rest of the horncore had been disturbed or pulled away from the wall”* (US 13194, RT, 01.08.2006). Analysis of the horncores showed that the sheep horncore 13194.x1 was probably from a domestic animal and the freshness of the bone suggested that the horn-sheath was still on when the bone was deposited. 13194.x2 is a complete adult cattle horncore, possibly female. This may have well have been partially plastered into the wall; subsequent collapsing and crushing made it appear as though the tip was set in the plaster. It appeared as though the horncore had fallen from higher and come to rest next to the wall plaster (Fig. 22.4). A photograph showing the horncore lifted and conserved is shown in Figure 22.5.

In the northwest corner of Sp.312 there was a deposit of dark burnt material and ash (14145) containing a large amount of animal bone. This lay over a deposit that consisted of a mix of ash and mudbrick material, and towards the north wall of the building there was a distinctive reddish orange indicating burning. Removal of the layer showed that *“towards the corner there is some wall plasters where the layers have been charred black (although the surface layer is gray) indicating in situ burning”* (US 14145, RT, 01.08.06). A small bit of a structure was revealed in this corner and it was tentatively suggested that these deposits and the charred plaster might have been associated with an oven. This now seems unlikely as ovens are usually along the southern wall (although northern ovens do occur as in B.6). It was also postulated that the evidence of burning might have been from a fire within the building at the time of abandonment. Most of the infill of B.66, however, was not removed and so the abandonment sequence was not fully understood. Analysis of the faunal material provided further evidence as the small but dense concentration of faunal remains suggested *in situ* burning. The bones were

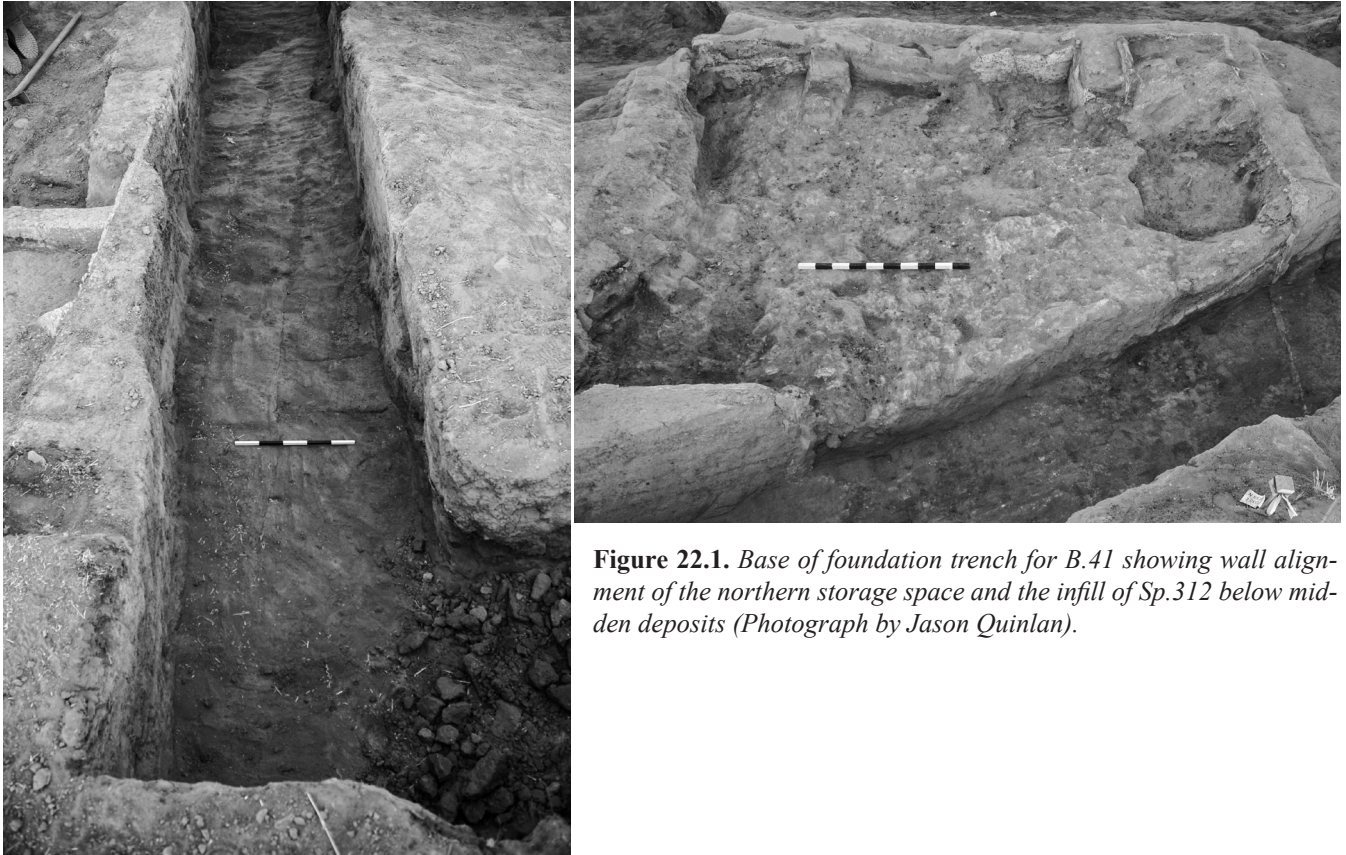


Figure 22.1. Base of foundation trench for B.41 showing wall alignment of the northern storage space and the infill of Sp.312 below midden deposits (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).



Figure 22.4. Horncore 13194.x2 possibly collapsed from a higher wall installation in the northeast corner of Sp.312 (Photograph by Richard Turnbull).



Figure 22.5. Horncore 13194.x2 lifted and conserved (Photograph by Jason Quinlan).

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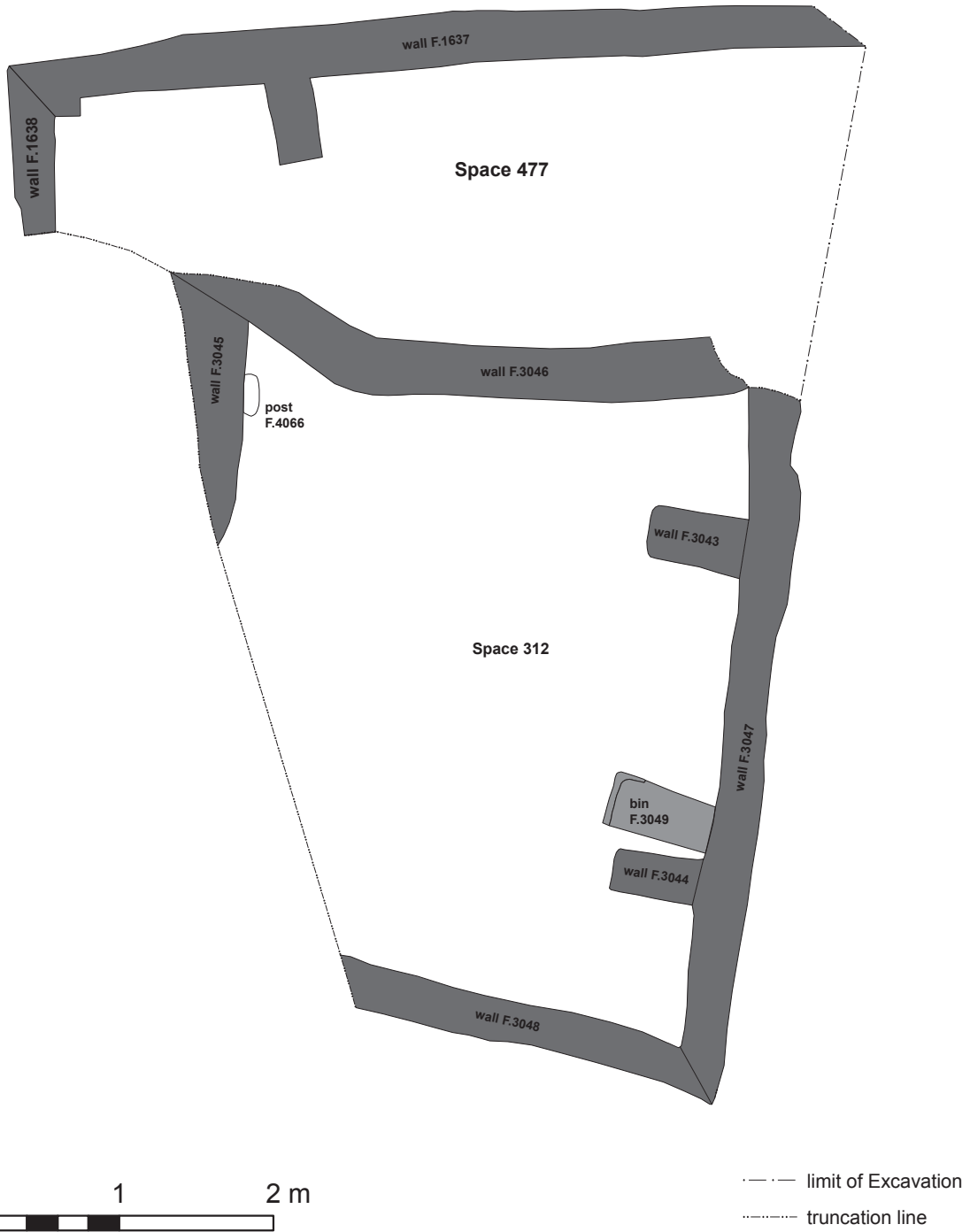


Figure 22.2. Plan of B.66 (Plan by Camilla Mazzucato, Cordelia Hall and David Mackie).

not weathered and many large pieces had remained intact despite carbonization. The taxa represented included sheep/goat, cattle and hare with many of the sheep/goat bones being the meat-bearing bones of the skeleton. Cattle were restricted to a few bones, while hare included a large femur and two scapulae. The assemblage was described as very coherent, and seemed to include the remains from domestic meals, over a relatively short period of time. From this evidence, it was suggested that the corner of the abandoned structure B.66 had been used as a windbreak so as to process food outside and the fire had scorched the still upstanding wall plaster. There was probably a component of midden deposition in the unit and from this a small worked bone assemblage comprised pressure flaker, split sheep/goat radius point and a further bone point. It seems that the infilling deposits were an accumulation of midden and building collapse with the midden deposits designated as Sp.279 sealing the collapse. The interleaved deposits of midden and collapse/infill could be seen in the section. The height of the surviving walls must have been substantial as the floor layers cannot be seen in the section.

Summary

The evidence from B.66 was the clearest evidence of the unusual infilling sequence seen in the cluster of buildings consisting of B.55, B.64 and B.66 as well as in other buildings under the unexcavated midden to the south and perhaps extending beyond the limit of excavation to the west. In B.66, it was clear that the walls of the building had never been intentionally demolished; they just gradually fell down as other activities were taking place in the area. If, as suspected, there was a large-scale abandonment of a cluster of buildings, it must have been a major event within the history of the settlement and something that ideally would be investigated in future excavations.

Acknowledgements

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