

CHAPTER 6

REPORT ON THE 1986 EXCAVATIONS CHAPEL 556

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6.1 Introduction

Chapel 556 belongs to the group lying separately from the others, to the north-east of the north-east corner of the Village. Dug in 1922 by Woolley (*COA I*: 107-108), they occupy a south-facing slope at the head of the valley, not very far below the surface of the plateau. To the east a small side valley actually runs up to the very top. The decision to work here arose from a curious feature to be seen on the plateau around the top of this side valley. The surface stones have been carefully cleared to create small square enclosures linked by narrow paths. On seeing alignments like this one possibility has to be considered: that they could be modern, perhaps even the work of Peet or Woolley's own men. There are two reasons for doubting this. Peet and Woolley directed their men to trench the hillsides and plateau surface extensively in the search for tombs. Some of the trenches have cut into one of the enclosures. The other reason is that one of the little paths runs directly down the side valley towards the north-east chapel group. Well before reaching the chapels it vanishes under drifted sand which chokes the valley floor. When the path was made, therefore, more of the stony bottom of the valley must have been exposed than is the case now. If the pathway had been recent, much of the drift sand would have had to be removed, and there is no sign of this.

At the level of Chapel 556, the easternmost of the group, the top of a stone wall could be seen crossing the valley, evidently forming the side to an outer courtyard which had escaped excavation in 1922. It seemed worthwhile to investigate whether the narrow path had passed through this wall by means of a deliberately created gap, something which would directly link the stone enclosures to the chapel, and thereby date them.

The results were not quite as expected. The stone wall turned out to be the side to an annexe for a substantial part of Chapel 556 which had never been excavated. This led to the complete excavation of the building, including the re-clearing of the part dug in 1922 (Figures 6.1, 6.2). By the end, however, little real light had been shed on the enigmatic pathway and enclosures, although it had been established that the stone wall was itself a post-Amarna Period replacement of an earlier brick wall.

6.2 Chapel 556: the main part

The *COA I* plan (Plate XXV) covers only the Inner Hall and Sanctuary, which conform to the stereotyped design of Workmen's Village chapels (Figure 6.2). A bench-like altar [2753] filled about half of the rear wall of the Sanctuary room, the eastern and western parts of which had raised floors [2755, 2757]. During or after Woolley's excavation the fill of the altar had been cleared out leaving only the surrounding wall. The whole was separated from the Inner Hall by a transverse corridor with plastered floor [2759]. Within each door was a step [2758, 2761], corresponding to the steep natural slope of the hillside. When the Inner Hall was cleared it was found that the old excavations had not reached floor level, and had, in fact, only skimmed off a layer of surface sand, leaving the rubble fill [2298] untouched. Although much of the structure of this unit had been lost through compaction and weathering, its colouration showed it to be more than half composed of alluvial Nile mud. This fact, together with a small number of actual Nile mud roofing fragments with pole and beam impressions, identifies the rubble as the remains of a fallen roof which had completely spanned the Inner Hall, so adding usefully to the evidence for the original roofing of the chapels. The lifting of this layer revealed a pair of benches [2765, 2767] against the walls, separated by a plastered floor [2766] virtually unmarked.

The Outer Hall was one discovery of the current work. It measures 6.60 metres from south to north, and between about 8.50 and 6.70 metres from west to east. It, too, had been largely surrounded by benches. For the eastern half the continuous bench [2805] is well preserved. But on the west only traces remain, from the progressive erosion towards the south-west, which has

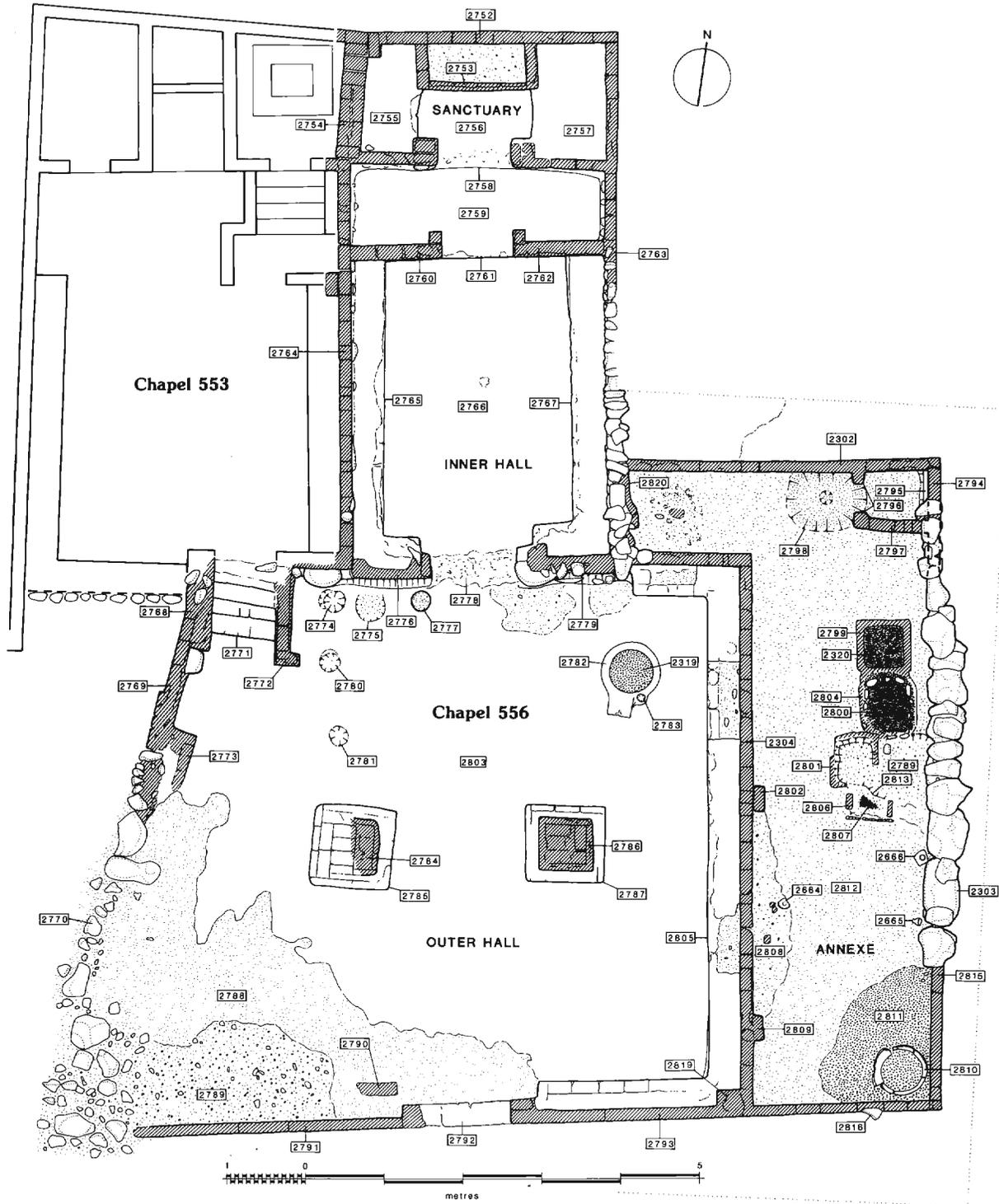


Figure 6.1. General plan of Chapel 556 at the end of excavation (original by B. Kemp). The outline plan of Chapel 553 is taken from *COA I*: Plate XXV.

reduced the walls to the lowest irregular line of stones [2770]. One small part [2773] is preserved against the west wall, whilst a further trace [2790] lay beside the west side of the entrance [2792] in the middle of the southern wall. Over most of the hall the original mud floor [2803] was preserved, but in the south-west corner erosion had worn down the floor firstly to a packed surface [2788], and further into the corner the bare desert itself [2789]. In the north-east corner of



Figure 6.2. View of the rear part of Chapel 556, including the Sanctuary, looking north-west.

the hall a hearth had been built into the floor. It consisted of a circular ridge of marl mortar [2782] with an internal diameter of 55 cms., a square projection on the south formed from two bricks, and a small protruberance [2783] supporting a cup-shaped hollow. No pottery bowl had been used as a lining. The hearth was found filled with fine grey ash [2319]. In the opposite corner on the west several circular depressions [2774, 2775, 2780, 2781] have been cut into the floor, some of them deliberate and presumably intended for supporting pottery storage jars. In another the buried neck of a vessel [2777] had served as a pot stand.

Although the Outer Hall is relatively large it was entirely roofed. Two square brick piers [2784, 2786] resting on square brick bases [2785, 2787] had supported the roofing beams. The rubble fill [2314, 2315, 2448] had been even more affected by weathering and erosion than that in the Inner Hall. Nevertheless, tell-tale patches of dark alluvial Nile silt lay in the middle of the floor. Indeed, around the north and east edges of the room there was a degree of separation between this lower rubble layer that probably represents the roof and brickwork from the pillars, and an upper layer [2305] containing groups of more-or-less articulated bricks which probably



Figure 6.3. General view of Chapel 556, looking north.

derives from the collapse of the walls including those flanking the entrance to the Inner Hall [2776, 2779].

An interesting feature of the chapel as a whole is the staircase in the north-west corner of the Outer Hall, which led up to Chapel 553. Its position shows that the Outer Hall was shared communally by both chapels. Chapel 553 was not re-excavated by the expedition; the outline plan in Figure 6.1 is taken from *COA I: Plate XXV*, with corrections imposed by the different alignment of the rear wall visible from clearance of the north-west corner of Chapel 556.

6.3 The annexe

As with several other chapels, no. 556 possessed an annexe running along one side. It was an undivided space, almost certainly unroofed, which also took in a small piece of ground against the north side of the Outer Hall as well. No doorway is visible, even though a simple opening was normally marked by buttresses to strengthen the wall on either side. The expected position is in the south wall, beside the main entrance to the Outer Hall, but no visible sign remains. The explanation probably lies in the character of the east wall [2303]. As will be explained shortly, this is a post-Amarna Period replacement of an original brick wall. If the entrance to the annexe lay on this side the erecting of this later wall would have destroyed it.

The rectangular space contains three separate features.

A **circular oven**, simply a cylindrical clay oven liner [2810] with internal diameter of around 29 cms. and a small circular hole facing north-west. Unusually this had not been built into the corner by having bricks and marl mortar packed around it. Grey ashes filled the interior and lay on the surrounding ground [2811].

A **group of garden plots** running along the eastern side of the open area. They numbered four, and had evidently not been made at the same time. The most northerly [2799] and most southerly [2806] were square and surrounded by bricks set on edge, the former having an inner space of 52 x 52 cms. Both had originally contained black alluvial soil [2320, 2807]. The second one from the north [2804] had an edging of small stones, and had likewise been filled with black soil [2800]. The second one from the south [2801] was evidently the latest, having cut into its neighbours. It, too, had been surrounded by bricks on edge, but its contents had been dug out anciently by the cut [2813]. This fact will be returned to in the next section.

A **box oven**, in the north-east corner (Figure 6.4), made by walling-off the north-east corner



Figure 6.4. Box oven in the north-east corner of Chapel 556, with contents removed, looking east. Note the ash pit in front of the oven door. The scale is 15 cm.

[2794] to create an almost rectangular space measuring 66/64 x 75 cms. A narrow step or ledge [2795] had been formed at the east end. The western end had been left largely open as a doorway [2796], and in front lay a circular pit [2798] filled with ash (part of [2317]). A layer of ash [2321] also covered the oven floor. The chapel had been abandoned around the time when the oven was being used. As a result a full set of bread moulds had been left in position (Figures 6.5, 6.6). These had later been somewhat disturbed, but not sufficiently to obscure their original configuration. Two kinds of pottery mould had been used: one of them narrow and cylindrical, the other hemispherical and with a foot (Figure 6.7). The former had been stacked vertically in probably three rows of ten, resting against the back wall. At least thirty-four of the latter kind had then been placed in the remaining space in front, probably in two tiers. In the subsequent disturbance (which was ancient) the outer moulds and the west wall of the oven had been kicked or pushed, spilling the moulds outside the confines of the oven. A small lump of basalt had also been thrown in, smashing one of them (no. 68237).

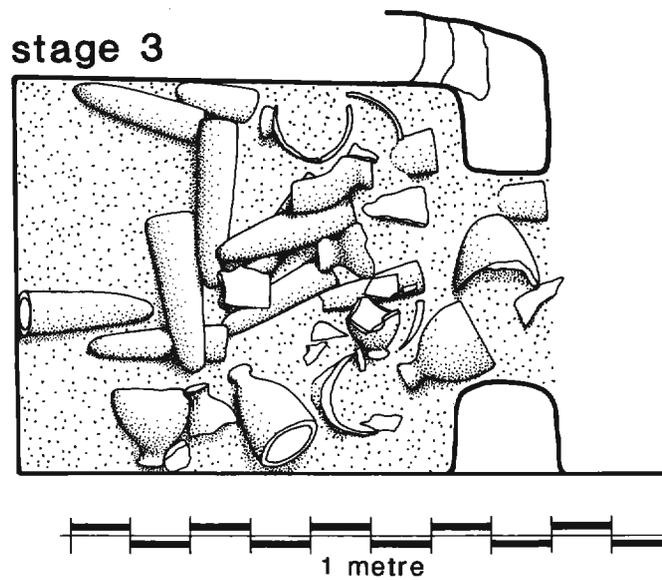
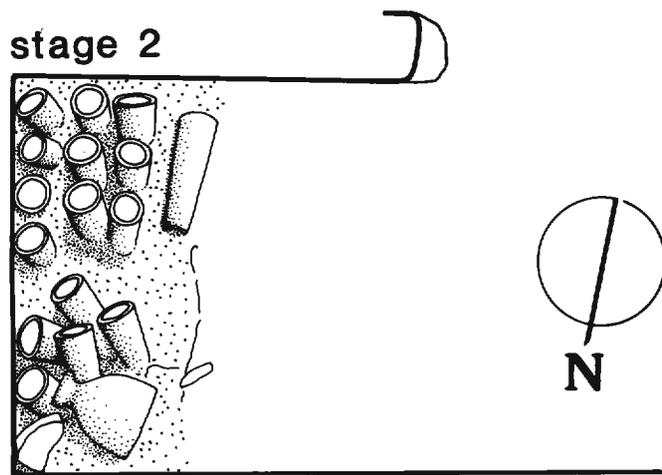
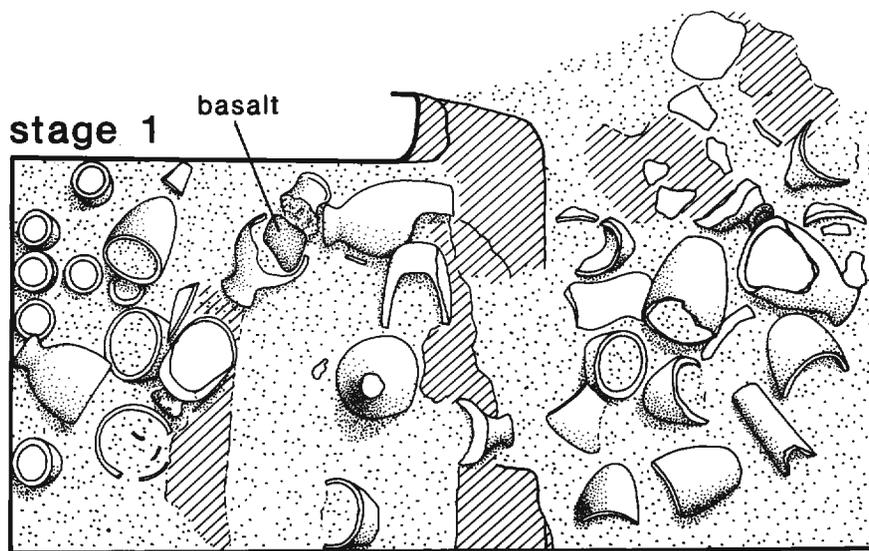


Figure 6.5. Plans of the box oven in the north-east corner of Chapel 556 at three successive stages of excavation, showing the bread moulds (original by B. Kemp).

This was not the first time the oven had been used. A substantial layer of fine grey ash mixed with small charcoal not only filled the the hollow space in front [2798] and lay on the oven floor, but formed a layer [2317] spreading around the outside. It is also possible that at some previous time the western alcove lying opposite the oven had also been used for heating since, although no ash lay on the ground the western and northern walls had been baked red [2820]. The remains of two biconical pottery jars were found in the sand in this alcove. The inside surfaces of the box oven had been baked to a brownish-red colour, penetrating about 2 cms. into the brickwork. The source of the heat, however, is still not clear. No ashy or charred material still clung to the surfaces or lay around the tops of the *in situ* cylindrical moulds at the back of the oven, which were instead firmly encased in hardened sand and rubble. Ash clung to the outside of some of the hemispherical moulds, but since most of these had been disturbed and lay mixed in with the ash from the outside this proves nothing. One possibility is that the heat was generated by a smouldering fire in front of the oven, and directed through the oven door by covering the fire with, for example, damp matting. Nor is it altogether apparent whether the moulds were being baked empty prior to a baking session, or whether they and their dough filling were baked simultaneously. The moulds were invariably empty, but this is no evidence for anything, since insect activity would have thoroughly devoured any food remains.

The presence, at opposite ends of the annexe, of two different kinds of oven is itself of interest. The same contrast appears in the baking half of the Meketra model bakery and brewery (Winlock 1955: 27-29, Plates 22, 23, 64, 65.10, 11). It is possible that the rectangular oven was more suited to baking bread in pottery moulds, an association exemplified at the Middle Kingdom sites of Abu Ghalib and Mirgissa (Larsen 1935: 51, Abb. 4, 58-60; Holthoer 1977, Plate 72.2), and at the New Kingdom ovens beside the Treasury of Tuthmosis I at Karnak North (Jacquet 1972: 154, Plan 1, Pl. XXXIV; Jacquet 1983: 82-83). There is, however, still much to be learned about the details of baking and brewing technology before the archaeological evidence can be fully and rationally explained.

6.4 Description of the bread moulds by Pamela J. Rose

The box oven in chapel 556 produced 64 complete or substantially complete vessels. These were of two types, both handmade, and, on visual examination, of the same fabric. The fabric is of a light brown colour, sometimes showing a dark grey core in areas where the vessel wall is thickest. Large quantities of sand are present in the clay matrix; there are no visible indications of any other tempering material. The resulting fabric is soft, porous and very friable, to such an extent that in many cases the vessel walls had been penetrated and broken by the root-systems of desert plants. The vessel exteriors are uneven and marked all over with numerous shallow finger marks, probably from handling during manufacture, and have a slightly powdery consistency. The interiors of both sorts of vessel are coated with a dark reddish slurry which leaves a thick, powdery layer that flakes easily away from the underlying vessel wall; this frequently spills over the vessel rim and onto the outside, where it turns greyish-black during heating, and in one case assumes the appearance of deliberately applied decoration, although this is probably accidental.

Of the 64 vessels, 30 were long, tapering cylindrical moulds with rounded bases, a type which is well-known in the New Kingdom (Figures 6.7, 6.8; see Jacquet-Gordon 1981: 18-21, Type D). There is little variation in the dimensions of these moulds; the mouth aperture ranges from 5.1 to 5.4 cms. in diameter, and the internal depth from 19.5 to 24.2 cms.; in over half the cases the depth falls between 23 and 24 cms.

The remaining 34 vessels are of a type which has not previously been noted at Amarna, or, as far as I can tell, at any other site of this period (Figures 6.7, 6.8). Their most conspicuous feature is the knob on the base of the vessel which, both from its size in relation to that of the complete mould, and from its curved underside, is unsuitable as a support for the vessel. Only about half the height of the mould is taken up with the cavity in which dough was placed. This cavity has straight sides which curve into a flat bottom. The rim shape is usually squared, but sometimes, where the wall is overly thin, it tapers towards the inner face. The variation in the wall thickness around the vessel diameter, whereby one half can be over twice as thick as the other, and the smoothness of the internal cavity, suggest that the interior was itself shaped by means of a mould which was either pressed into a lump of clay, or over which clay was pressed. The knob could



Figure 6.6. Bread moulds *in situ* in the box oven of Chapel 556. The scale is 15 cms. The photograph corresponds to Stage 2 in Figure 6.5.

then perhaps serve as a means of lifting the shaped vessel.

The dimensions of these vessels show more variation than those of the breadcones. The mouth aperture is on average a little over 11 cms. in diameter, usually round but sometimes distorted. The depth of the interior cavity varies between 5.1 and 13.3 cms.; half fall between 7.5 and 9 cms.

6.5 Later activity

The whole excavated area had escaped robbery in modern times. Beneath the surface sand the rubble from collapsed walls and roofs lay weathered but unbroken, except where stormwater had cut a narrow channel in the north-eastern part. We can thus be certain of the antiquity of the disturbance to the box oven, for the whole was covered by collapsed brickwork. It could well have been caused by the disgruntled owner.

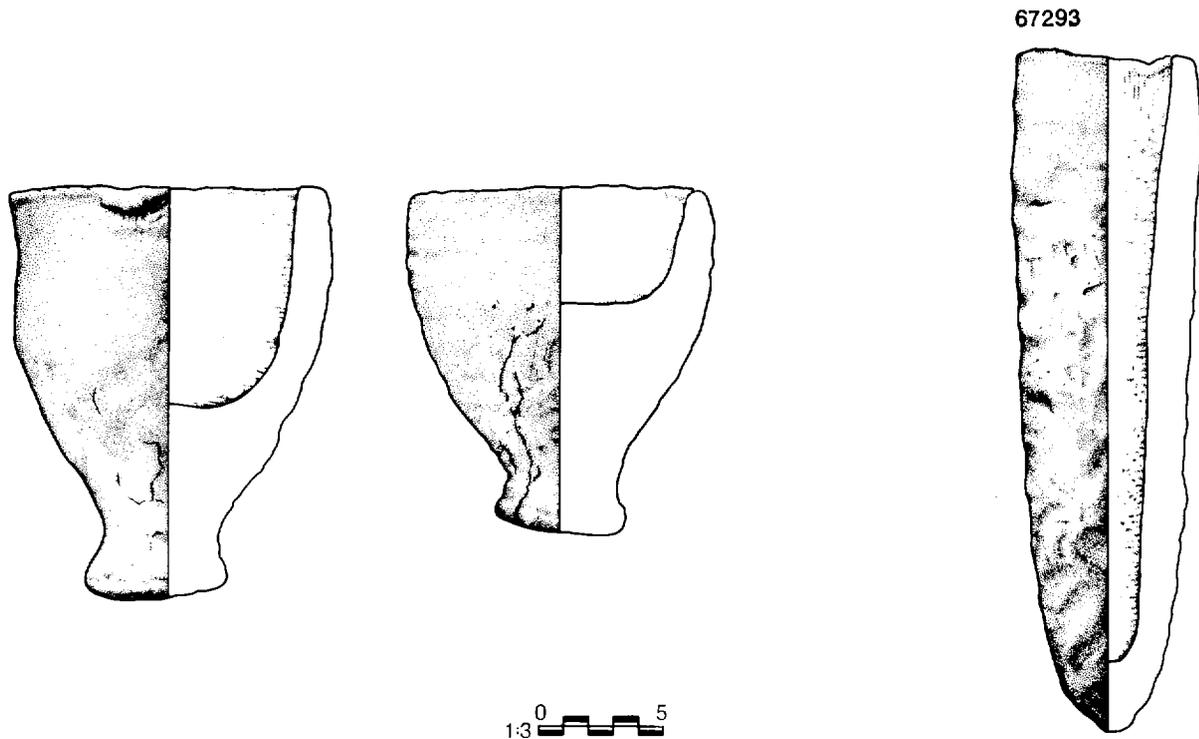


Figure 6.7. Sample of bread moulds from Chapel 556 box oven (drawings by A. Boyce at one-third scale).

There is a reason for emphasising the absence of modern disturbance. The east wall [2303] of the annexe had been reconstructed. The material used was large stones, and at both ends these stones had been set up over the original brick wall [2794, 2815]. Moreover, as they were set up the garden plots seem to have been dug into, leaving the irregular cut [2813] which had destroyed plot [2801]. This by itself is of small interest, but at its south end the stone wall curved around westwards, departing from the line of the original brick wall, and passed across ground made up of decayed brick rubble (part of [2314]; see Figure 6.9). Then beyond a narrow break, a pile of stones [2816] seems to mark its southern limit, standing just outside the southern wall of the chapel, and above the level of the rubble which had collapsed outwards from it [2817]. The evidence together, therefore, seems to point to a more-than-casual attempt to construct a barrier across the foot of the side valley, making use of the ruined east wall of Chapel 556. This is not the first time that slight traces of later activity have been discovered. The most conspicuous were in the north-east corner of the Main Chapel, excavated in 1983 and 1984 (*AR* III: 110-111), and seemed to belong to an animal pen. A reason for wanting to seal off one of the natural exits from the valley would be to stop animals from straying. But as to the date and background of this period of activity we have no evidence of any real value. It does, however, provide another point of reference for the narrow pathway and linked group of enclosures on the top of the plateau.

An area of sand was cleared halfway down the side valley on the line of the pathway to see if it survived beneath the sand, but this turned out not to be the case. However, if the line of the path were continued it would strike the line of wall [2303] roughly in the middle or, if it were to follow the base of the hill round to the south and so continue into the main valley, it would cross the line of wall [2303] roughly where the break does occur. The stone pile [2616] would have marked the other side of the entrance, and it is possible that the wall continued for a short distance further to the south, although this was not tested by excavation. If the pathway took this line it would explain the appearance of the southern end of wall [2304], where it joins the south wall of the chapel [2793] at the buttress [2819]. When the surface sand was first removed a gap appeared to exist in the wall. In its place was part of a larger powdery grey patch representing the top of weathered organic material. Yet when this layer was excavated it was found that no



Figure 6.8. Sample of bread moulds from Chapel 556.

gap existed in wall [2304] after all. This could be the result of the later pathway having crossed the south-east corner of the chapel at this point, long after it had fallen into ruin.

If this were so, it would also date the stone enclosures on the plateau top to this vague but definitely much later period.

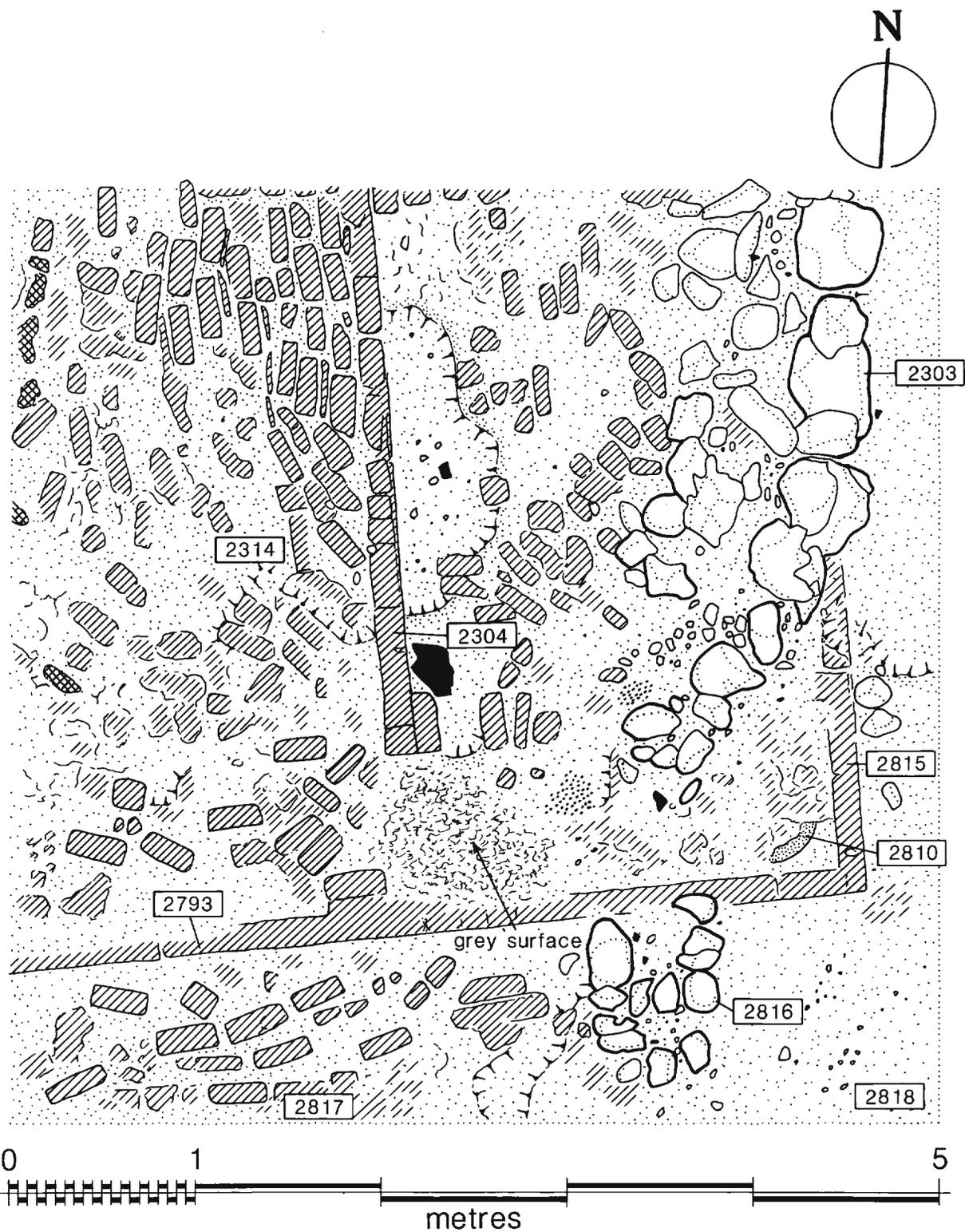


Figure 6.9. Plan of the south-east corner of Chapel 556 at the end of the first stage of excavation, showing the later stone wall [2303] curving across the south-east corner, leaving a gap, and then continued by the stonework [2816] (original by B. Kemp).

6.6 The chapels in retrospect

The Workmen's Village chapels are an important reference source for private religion in the New Kingdom. They owe nothing to the cult of the Aten, and since it is unlikely that the village was occupied by the same people that lived at Deir el-Medina we may take the similarity in chapel design between the two communities as a sign that chapels of this kind were not a unique product of a single unusual community.

The Peet and Woolley report (*COA I*: Chapter IV) provides the basic account of their architecture and contents; the current work has modified some points and added others. These can be briefly summarised as follows:

1) **Re-identifications:** a few "chapels" have been shown to be buildings of another kind, connected with animal keeping. These are no. 523 (*AR I*: 25-27) and nos. 540 and 541 (*AR III*: 60-75). No. 528 is also not an independent chapel, but a courtyard with special features serving the group 529-531 (*AR II*: 39-50).

2) **Additional chapels:** the Main Chapel, no. 561/450 (*AR I*: Chapter 2; *AR II*: Chapter 1) and nos. 570 and 571 (*AR I*: Chapter 3; *AR II*: Chapter 3) are chapels newly excavated; no. 537 had been dug before (*COA I*: 101) but not planned. It was re-cleared in 1984 and later fully planned, confirming that it really was another chapel. At least one more can be identified on the ground which has not been excavated at all: now numbered 558, it lies immediately to the north of no. 521 (*COA I*: Plate XXIV). An outline plan (recording only a concentration of stones) has been added to the 1:250 map of the whole site.

3) **Roofing:** the collection and recording of mud roofing fragments from the Main Chapel (*AR II*: 8-11) and from Chapel 556 (see above) shows that these two chapels were fully roofed from front to back, and the implication is that all the chapels were.

4) **Decoration:** the Main Chapel has provided fragments from extensive wall decoration from various parts (except the shrines), the study of which is still not complete, although a preliminary account is in *AR II*: Chapter 2. The Main Chapel is an exceptional building, but fragments of painted plaster found by Peet and Woolley, as well as two fragments found in 1984 in Chapel 529 (*AR II*: 47) and a small collection of fragments from Chapel 571 imply that the other chapels may originally have been decorated as well. The conditions of preservation in the Main Chapel were exceptional.

5) **Religious practice:** two kinds of evidence contribute, structural and artefactual. Although the design of the chapels is very uniform, individual chapels or chapel groups have unique features which imply a variety of religious observance. Two striking sets of remains relate to observances prior to entering the chapels: the line of T-shaped basins leading up to the Main Chapel (*AR I*: 11-13), and the row of receptacles built into a bench in building 528, which served as a forecourt to Chapels 529-531 (*AR II*: Chapter 4). In Chapel 570 the Sanctuary was also different in design, consisting of a single brick-vaulted chamber reached via a low window (*AR II*: 35-37). Under the heading of structural evidence we can also consider the relationship between chapels and tombs, the latter very few in number. The one tomb discovered in the current work, beside Chapel 570, had never been used, unlike the chapel itself (*AR II*: 35-38). This helps to establish the order of priorities: chapels for family use first, and serving the cult of deceased relatives buried nearby only second. A puzzling element of structural evidence was found in the Main Chapel Sanctuary. The surfaces of the bench-like altars as well as parts of the floors bore groups of narrow scratches or grooves (*AR I*: 22-23, 33). They were frequently located towards edges and corners, though not exclusively so. They did not occur in the other chapels cleared, although something not too dissimilar was found on the floors of small gypsum compartments in Building 541 (*AR III*: 63). The latter circumstance raised the possibility that such scratches are the result of subsequent animal activity, the claw marks of a large dog, for example. The difficulty with this explanation at the Main Chapel is that they are found on the two levels of floor and bench top, including along the very edge of the latter, and must have been made before the walls and roof collapsed to bury these parts in rubble. The marks cannot have been the result of digging through a covering of sand; they must have been made on the surfaces as they lay exposed to the air. There is an alternative explanation. This makes them the result of human activity, from deliberately rubbing the surface with a narrow blade, perhaps to obtain dust from a sacred source for secondary use.

The artefactual evidence itself embraces two categories of material. One of these is the pottery. A fairly complete set of vessels was reconstructed from the Main Chapel (*AR III*: Chapter

7); another sample was obtained from Chapel 571 (*AR I*: 140-143). The other is a small and miscellaneous collection of objects from within the Main Chapel. Two groups deserve to be singled out. The first, from the Outer Hall, were two small painted wooden oars from a model boat. This context brings with it the implication that the model boat was probably a piece of chapel furniture: a miniature portable shrine, in fact.¹ In this connection it is worth noting that a pottery bowl with an outline painting of a boat in black was found actually within the Inner Hall of the Main Chapel (*AR III*: 103, 105, Figure 7.3). It is not so easy, however, to explain why a wooden model boat and a model steering oar were found in the 1920s in house Gate Street 12 (see *COA I*: 74, objects 21/272 and 21/400), and oars and other parts from model boats in Long Wall Street 12 (*ibid.*, 85, Plate XIX, Figure 2, object 22/62), Main Street 2 (*ibid.*, 75, object 21/393) and Main Street 12 (*ibid.*, 82, Plate XIX, Figure 2, objects 22/42 and 22/45). Another was found in one of the Clerks' Houses in the main city (*COA III*: 124, no. 33/236, from house no. 42). The second significant discovery was the top of a wooden military standard found in the Sanctuary (*AR I*: 28, Figure 2.11). The significance of this for the identity of the people who lived in the Village was discussed at the end of Chapter 1. The fact that it was found here also suggests that the chapel Sanctuary may have been seen as a suitable place for the safe-keeping of the standard, an item of ceremonial value.

6) **Secular use:** although the focal point in the design of the chapels was a sanctuary, the outer parts were not intended simply to enhance its sanctity. The brick benches constructed around the walls show that they were used as places of assembly where the focus of interest was the interior space itself rather than the sanctuary lying behind. This interpretation has gained direct support from a restricted part of the floor of the Outer Hall of the Main Chapel, in front of the bench against the south wall. Embedded in the mud floor were numerous tiny pieces of debris: bird and animal bones, short lengths of thread, wood shavings, seeds, etc. These were excavated in a separate operation (*AR III*: Chapter 5). They probably represent debris trampled into the floor made damp and soft at this point from the proximity of a water jar. So whereas most debris from the use of the chapels was regularly swept outside leaving the floors clean, here we have a sample fortuitously left which provides a window on what went on inside. It implies that the Outer Hall was used by people sitting on the benches, eating meals and carrying out simple craft activities, such as spinning and the shaping of wooden objects.

This aspect of chapel use is also illuminated by the annexes which commonly occur amongst the various groups of chapels. Two have been fully cleared by the current excavation: attached to Chapel 556 (see above), and to the Main Chapel (*AR I*: Chapter 2; this volume, Chapter 4). The re-clearance of the building 528, really an annexe to the adjacent group 529-531, should also be included under this heading. In all three cases ovens were present, numbering two in each of the first two instances, and in both cases associated with pottery bread moulds.

Communal, shared meals were evidently a basic part of the life of the chapels, remembering that each chapel probably served more than one family. Moreover, the size and range of provisions in the annexe to the Main Chapel implies something more ambitious still, in the form of communal feasts.

Although the religious cults observed in the chapels remain poorly documented, this does not detract from what the chapels have to tell us about the structure of the community which built them. In the first years of the current expedition it was reasonable to anticipate that several more chapels remained to be discovered, principally along the east side of the village where disturbed archaeological debris was visible. This provided the basis for the estimate given in *AR I*: 10, 80 that about one household in two had constructed a chapel. Our own subsequent work on the east has, however, shown that few chapels were built here, and that we are entitled to consider that nearly all of the chapels originally built have now been located and excavated. These number twenty-three. The total number of occupied houses in the Walled Village was about seventy (see Chapter 3, Appendix for discussion). This means, therefore, that there was one chapel for every three families, assuming that the inhabitants of West Street, probably a different community, used them in the same way.

¹ Cf. the New Kingdom model boat on wheels from a tomb at Medinet el-Ghurab, Brunton and Engelbach 1927: 17, Pl. LII.

If these chapels were primarily funerary then it could be argued that the number partly reflected the rate and expectations of death. This, however, does not seem to have been the case. Their funerary character was secondary. It is more likely that the chapels fitted into the basic rhythm of life in the Village, and thus come close to being the full intended complement. When the Village was finally abandoned only one chapel was unfinished: no. 537, and this was conspicuously separate from the rest at the furthest eastern limit of all building.

In their houses within the Walled Village the villagers had little opportunity to express status and close personal ties amongst families. In this they differed from most of the inhabitants of the main city of el-Amarna. In the chapels, however, this opportunity presented itself, and in the fact that the chapels vary in size and elaboration, and in their interrelationships, we have an important statement about the nature of the community itself. A simple step is to establish the range of sizes. This has been done in Table 6.1, plotted out in Figure 6.11. Two sets of figures have been calculated. One is the floor area of the likely roofed part of the chapels, excluding the open courts which are far more irregular and in some cases not fully explored or (as with 537) not available. The other is the total length of seating bench within each chapel. In some cases this involves an estimation on account of damage, but because of the general symmetry of the chapel interiors it can normally be done with some confidence.

It is very apparent from the site map (Figure 6.10) that many of the chapels form groups, not only through general proximity and common alignment, but sometimes in the sharing of walls and of ancillary elements. In Table 6.1 and Figure 6.11 the chapels are arranged into six groups, leaving three isolated cases (one of them the Main Chapel). Groups 1 and 2 are separated by the intervening Building 523 and also have the weakest degree of physical linkage. Only two excavated chapels belong to Group 1, but adjacent to no. 521 is the one definite unexcavated chapel that has been located and which should probably form part of this group.

In Figure 6.11 we can readily pick out a general progressing relationship between both measured elements, as well as the "average" chapel, covering between 25 and 35 square metres, and with bench length between 6 and 10 metres. There is, too, a general cut-off point in floor area before 65 square metres, only the Main Chapel exceeding this at 84. In bench length, on the other hand, 5 chapels (in addition to the Main Chapel) noticeably exceed the norm, equalling or surpassing the provision of the Main Chapel. All three members of Group 3 do this, as does Chapel 556 when the newly discovered part is included. Group 3, it will be recalled, is the one which possesses the distinctive ceremonial forecourt, no. 528.

From this evidence we can rule out one possibility: that the village had been put together from seventy-odd families drawn from different sources. We seem to have several groupings of households, each one of which (considering the disparity between total numbers of houses and chapels) comprised more than one head of a household, and so occupied more than one house. Some groups (notably of Group 1) had more resources or more determination than others. What is less clear is the meaning of the great diversity in bench provision. Why should nos. 529 and 556 have been designed to sit so many more people than others? Was it a matter of prestige (not matched by the Main Chapel) or were more people either from within the Village or from outside expected to join the communal gatherings from time to time? In this kind of question we encounter the limits of our knowledge of social life in ancient Egypt.

The Main Chapel stood apart from the others in several respects: its size and location, the arrangement of ancillary features within an enclosure wall to create a small temenos, and the ritual external layout marked by the T-shaped basins. Yet despite the overall size and air of distinction it has relatively limited bench provision, arising partly from the absence of benches in the Inner Hall (contrasting with chapels 529-531 and 553, 556). Its seating accommodation was thus selective. It looks much more like a semi-official shrine which served the community as a whole - perhaps the heads of households alone - rather than a particular family or group of families. Indeed, one could envisage that the division of the Village itself into two unequal parts for two separate communities was reflected in the unequal division of the Main Chapel, the lesser part being the North Annexe.

1986 excavation

		bench length (metres)	area (sq. metres)
Group 1	558		32.00
	521	9.10 (est.)	34.77
	522	7.60	31.45
Group 2	524	9.90	62.90
	526	2.50	27.70
	527	5.10	30.72
	525	9.10	33.06
Group 3	22.00 (est.)	58.14	
	530	14.20 (est.)	43.92
	531	14.20 (est.)	35.64
Group 4	532	6.50	22.20
	533	9.10	53.12
	535	10.50	60.06
	536	8.80	29.23
Group 5	570		13.84
	571	9.00	26.22
Group 6	554	13.40 (est.)	56.59
	551	9.00	33.40
	552	9.90 (or 6.70)	51.60
	553	8.30	31.50
	556	25.40	57.60
	537	9.40 (est.)	34.50 (est.)
	555	8.80	27.47
Main Chapel		14.30	83.84

Table 6.1. The Workmen's Village chapels, measured in terms of area of roofed chapel and length of seating benches, and subdivided into groups of contiguous chapels.

shaded areas were devoted to agriculture

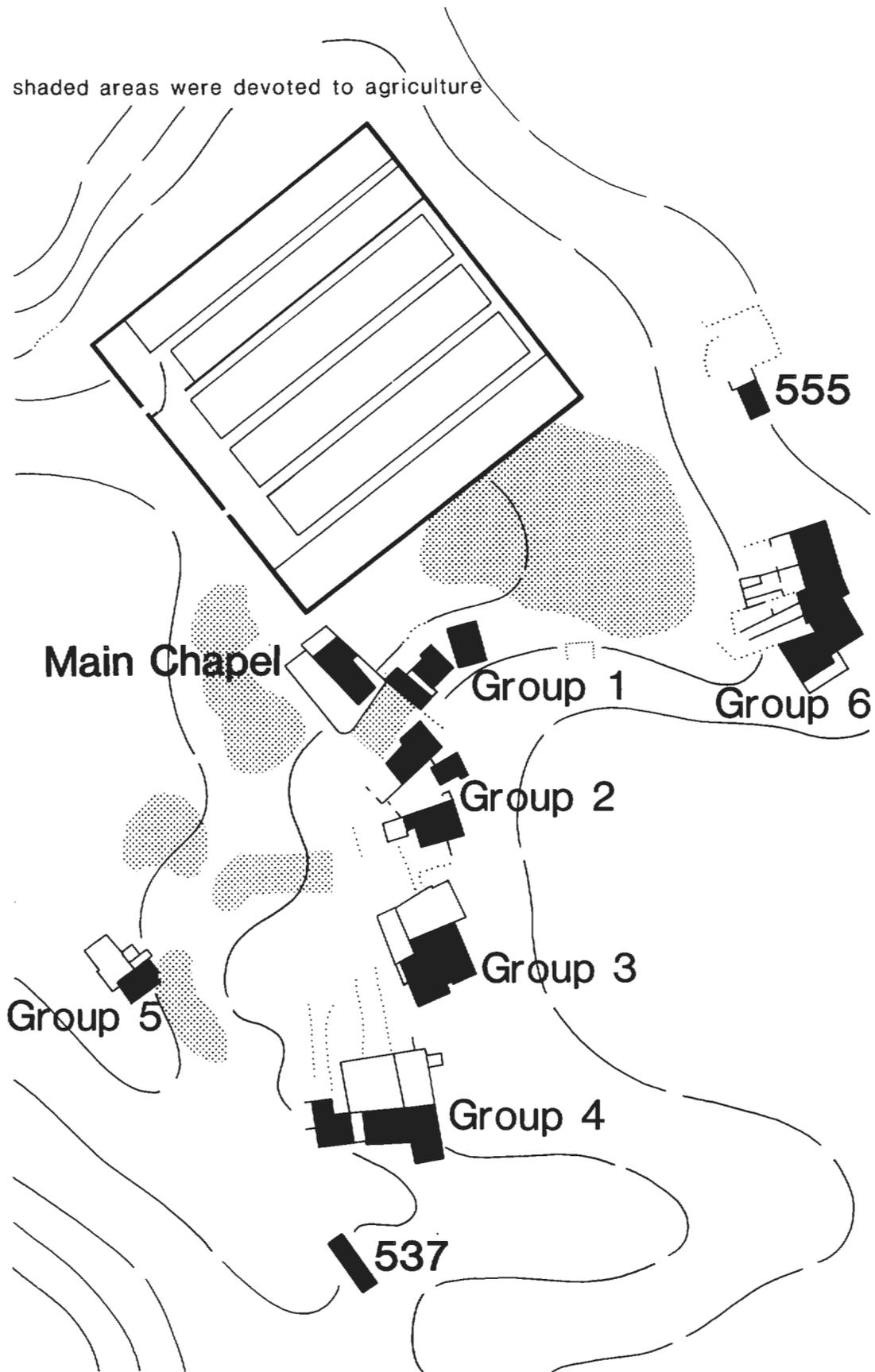


Figure 6.10. Outline plan of the Workmen's Village showing grouping of chapels.

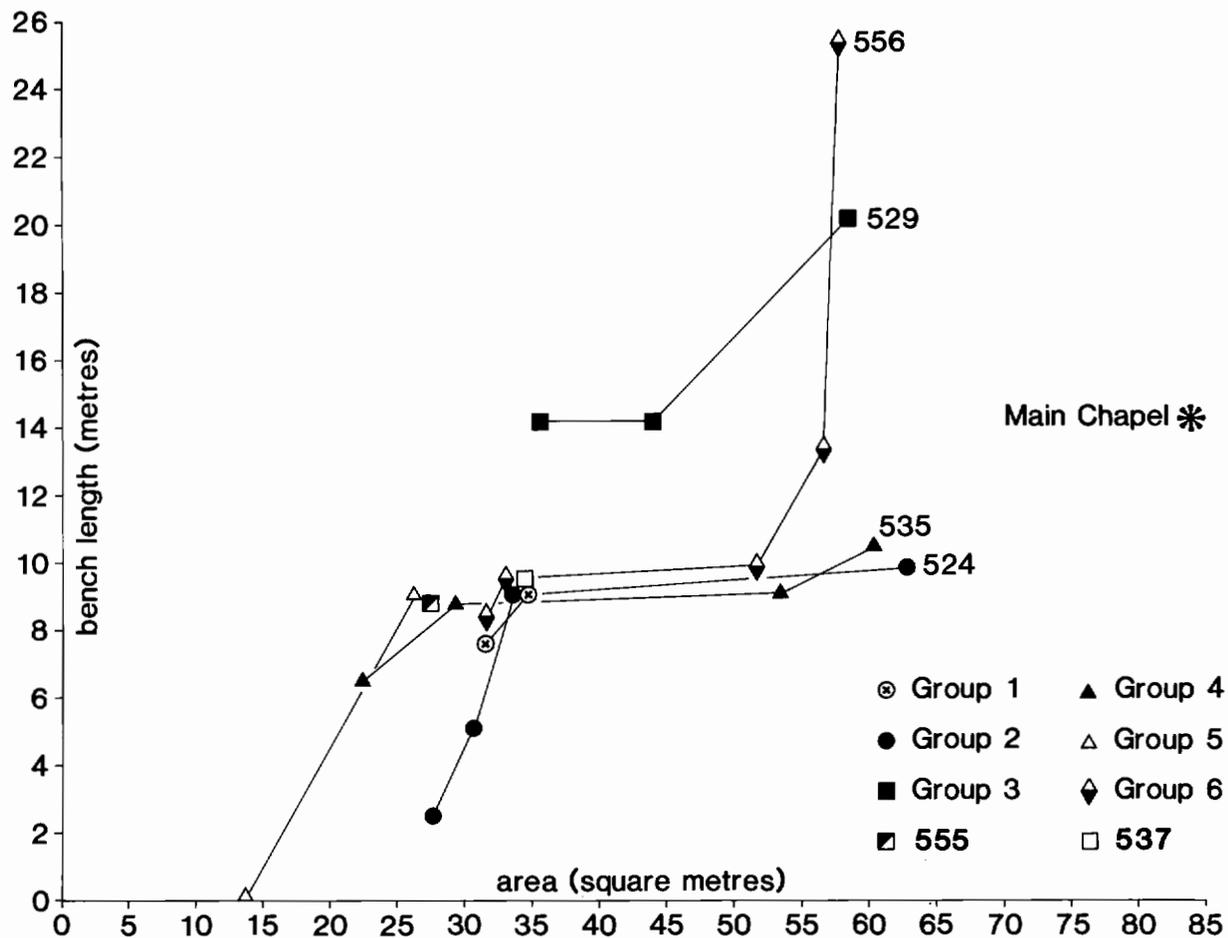


Figure 6.11. All Workmen's Village chapels, plotted according to area of roofed portion and length of wall benches.