

CHAPTER 4

REPORT ON THE 1986 EXCAVATIONS
BUILDING 200: ANIMAL PENS AND PLANT BEDS

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4.1 Introduction

Last season saw the first excavation in the area lying to the east of the Walled Village, the final significant portion of the site remaining to be investigated. Despite modern digging it was possible to recover both the plans and the stratigraphic record of structures which had lain to the east of the Village Enclosure Wall. They belonged to a further set of animal pens, designated Building 250. For the 1987 season, instead of continuing the excavations laterally a fresh set of five-metre squares was laid out to the north-east, further up the hill slope and where stone alignments and the mounding up of the ground were particularly prominent (Figure 4.1). Figure 4.8 shows the relationship between this area and that excavated last year. Excavation rapidly revealed what was essentially a continuation of last year's site, although it has been given the separate designation Building 200. The combined results of the two seasons in this area provide a satisfactory key to the surface traces of the unexcavated ground remaining to the east of the Village, which in several places has been disturbed in recent times, throwing up material from buried strata. It creates a strong presumption that the two excavated areas provide a reliable sample of the whole of this eastern zone.

4.2 The animal pens

The one definite group of animal pens occupies the north-east corner of Building 200, and comprises **Areas i to viii**. Illicit digging had led to the removal of a good deal of the original fill of **Areas ii, iii, v and vi**, but the areas along the west side, principally **i, iv and vii-viii** had escaped quite lightly. The building seems to have been laid out as a single self-contained rectangular unit with two pens (**Areas ii and iii**), two feeding-courts (**Areas i and iv**), and a general courtyard (**Area v-vi**), wholly constructed from marl brick, with the exception of the outer gate on the north, where the projecting piers [2199] were of stones in marl mortar, and some parts of the foundations where the bricks were set on a course of stones (principally visible in the original wall [2661] along the east side of **Area iii**). The two pens, **Areas ii and iii**, were rectangular, and originally of similar dimensions, c. 1 by 2 metres. Both had been given a floor of marl mortar thickly overlaid with gypsum. In **Area ii** modern robbery had removed the floor completely, but the edge of the gypsum floor was preserved along the lower part of the walls at the southern end. In **Area iii**, by contrast, the same modern robbery had disturbed only the upper fill, leaving much of the original floor intact: the marl plaster [2656], and the gypsum [2659] in patches, with modern pits breaking through to the underlying desert [2359]. Both pens were entered from the north through narrow doorways [2543, 2660], flanked by brick piers [2178, 2092, 2177]. In the case of the entrance to **Area iii**, pier [2092] contained the remains of the ends of a pair of wooden poles which had been placed across the threshold, 18 cms. above the desert surface.

On the west lay two almost square courts, **Areas i and iv**, measuring 2.10 x 1.90, and 2.20 x 1.80 metres respectively. The dividing wall [2734] had later been knocked down to convert the two courts into a single open space, but the original entrance could be inferred from the stones and bricks set into the floor of **Area iv** at the east end, for use as a step. The marl plaster floor [2722] and wall surfaces had been coated with gypsum [2725]. A hard-packed organic deposit [2723] lay on the floor of the northern half, where a large pottery bowl [2724] had been let into the floor to serve as a trough (Figure 4.4). **Area iv** had seen some modern pitting of the floor. The surviving parts were of marl plaster [2722] with an organic cover [2723], without trace of gypsum or of a trough. The remaining part of the core building, in the north-east, was an open space subdivided into two unequal parts, **Areas v and vi**, by a thin wall [2090]. This looks as though it was an addition to the original layout, and necessitated cutting a separate entrance at the eastern end of wall [2089], with small buttress [2541]. Neither area had a proper floor, the



Figure 4.1. View of the site before excavation, looking east. Most of the boulders lie in square T28. On the hillside above the line of stones probably marks a court in front of a tomb entrance (no. 557).

organic cover in vi passing immediately into desert [2359], and in v into a hard surface of marl and organic matter [2735]. A similar deposit [2736] covered the additional space to the north-west enclosed by a rough stone wall [2201], Area vii. Near the northern edge of the excavation a second stone wall [2203] curves out to create a smaller, inner area, Area viii. Perhaps we have a further paired arrangement of animal pen and court.

As in Building 250 excavated last year (*AR III*: Chapter 2), the passage of time brought changes in layout. Area iii was enlarged to the east by rebuilding the east wall on a new line, and now of a single brick in thickness only [2350]. No attempt was made, however, to remake the gypsum-plastered floor. This sideways enlargement was probably accompanied by a similar enlargement of the space in front, Area vi. Indeed, it would make good sense to relate this activity to the subdivision of Areas v and vi, and the cutting of the second doorway in wall [2089]. With a further lapse of time an organic floor deposit built up, hiding the original carefully made floors, and accompanied by a simplification of plan. Areas i and iv were merged by the removal of the intervening wall [2734]; the same happened with Areas v and vi, for by the time

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Figure 4.3. Areas ii and iii, looking south.

of abandonment the intervening wall there had been demolished to its lowest courses and was no longer visible above the organic floor cover [2087]. In connection with this the second outer doorway was blocked with rubble [2476]. Furthermore, although modern pitting has damaged the record, it looks, too, as if the wall which divided Areas iv and v was also removed, for the final organic fill [2197] seems to have run across its line. Thus at the very end of its history, Building 200 consisted simply of an L-shaped court (Areas i, iv-vi) partly surrounding the two pens, Areas ii and iii.

4.3 Garden court on the south

To the south of Building 200 lay an open area, xvi, evidently enclosed by walls. Short lengths of the east and west walls [2184, 2351], 7.20 metres apart, were found, but the excavation did not take in enough ground to the south for the southern wall also to be located. Although cut into by modern pits, particularly along the west, it can be seen that the whole of this space was covered by a deposit, 12 cms. thick, of ashy alluvial soil, forming an even surface. In the middle, against the south wall [2208] of Building 200, a set of plant growing-plots had been laid out (Figures 4.5 and 4.6). As was usual they had been made by creating a series of small squares separated by low partitions of alluvial mud bricks set on edge [2212]. Each one contained a deposit of alluvial



Figure 4.4. Area i, looking south-east. Note the gypsum floor and sunken pottery bowl.

soil. Some irregular additions had been made on the east, which had subsequently been covered by a low stone wall [2347] (not shown in Figure 4.2, but visible in Figure 4.5). On the west, modern disturbance has exposed the outline of an original low enclosure wall [2537]. This shows that originally twenty of these plots were laid out, in five rows of four (ignoring in the count the double-sized plot in the middle).

Two queries are raised by these plots, one specific to this site, the other general. The soil which filled the plots was not too dissimilar to the overall spread of soil in Area xvi, except insofar as the latter seems to have been more ashy. Was the growing of plants confined to the square plots, or was it done generally across Area xvi, the beds being used for, perhaps, perennial vegetables as distinct from a single winter crop in the main area? This question applies also to Area x.

The more general point concerns the layout of growing-beds of this kind. They appear, both from tomb pictures and from excavated examples, to have been common for the growing of vegetables, presumably on a perennial basis.¹ As far as one can tell from published evidence, and from those discovered by the current expedition, the regularity with which they are laid out varies somewhat, with an extreme of regularity represented by the Mirgissa plots (with an average size of 45 cms., Vercoutter 1967-68: 275), and a high degree of variation exemplified by the plots in the garden of house L50.9 at Amarna (unpublished E.E.S. plan). The degree of variation in the case of the square plots at Building 200 is between 37 and 52 cms., the average plot size being

¹ Examples cited in AR II: 32, note 1.



Figure 4.5. View of the garden plots at an early stage of excavation, looking east. Note the rough stone wall [2347] running along the back of the plots.

42.5 cms. Even with the degree of variation that is present in private gardens, it is evident that there was a generally accepted idea of proper plot size which hovered around a dimension slightly smaller than a cubit (one resembling the "small cubit").

4.4 Areas to the west of Building 200

The ground to the west of Building 200, extending across squares R28 and S28, was divided into a series of open areas, only in the case of Area xiv wholly within the confines of the excavation. With Area x we cannot even be sure that it was enclosed on the north at all. It was not, however, a stretch of blank desert. Except where a modern pit [2235] had cut down to the desert the whole surface was covered with a thick layer of ash and alluvial dust [2234]. Where the thickness could be measured it was about 15 cms., although the upper surface undulated slightly, with a general dip towards the north. An east-west trench, 1.25 metres wide, was cut through this deposit to ascertain its composition. Its maximum depth was 21 cms. It turned out not be an homogenous deposit, but one composed of numerous fine layers that could not be readily separated. Much of it was the mixture of ash and alluvial dust that formed the surface, and to which, beneath the surface, the separate unit no. [2616] was given. Towards the centre spread a deposit of denser ash, containing large lumps of charcoal and pieces of charred wood [2689]. Lenses of compacted marl also occurred within the deposit, the principal one [2737] spreading across most of the area exposed by the trench, and generally lying directly on the desert surface [2359] and itself bearing a thin layer of compacted organic material. The ash and dust layers also contained many sherds, and it is reasonable to conclude that its origin is primarily

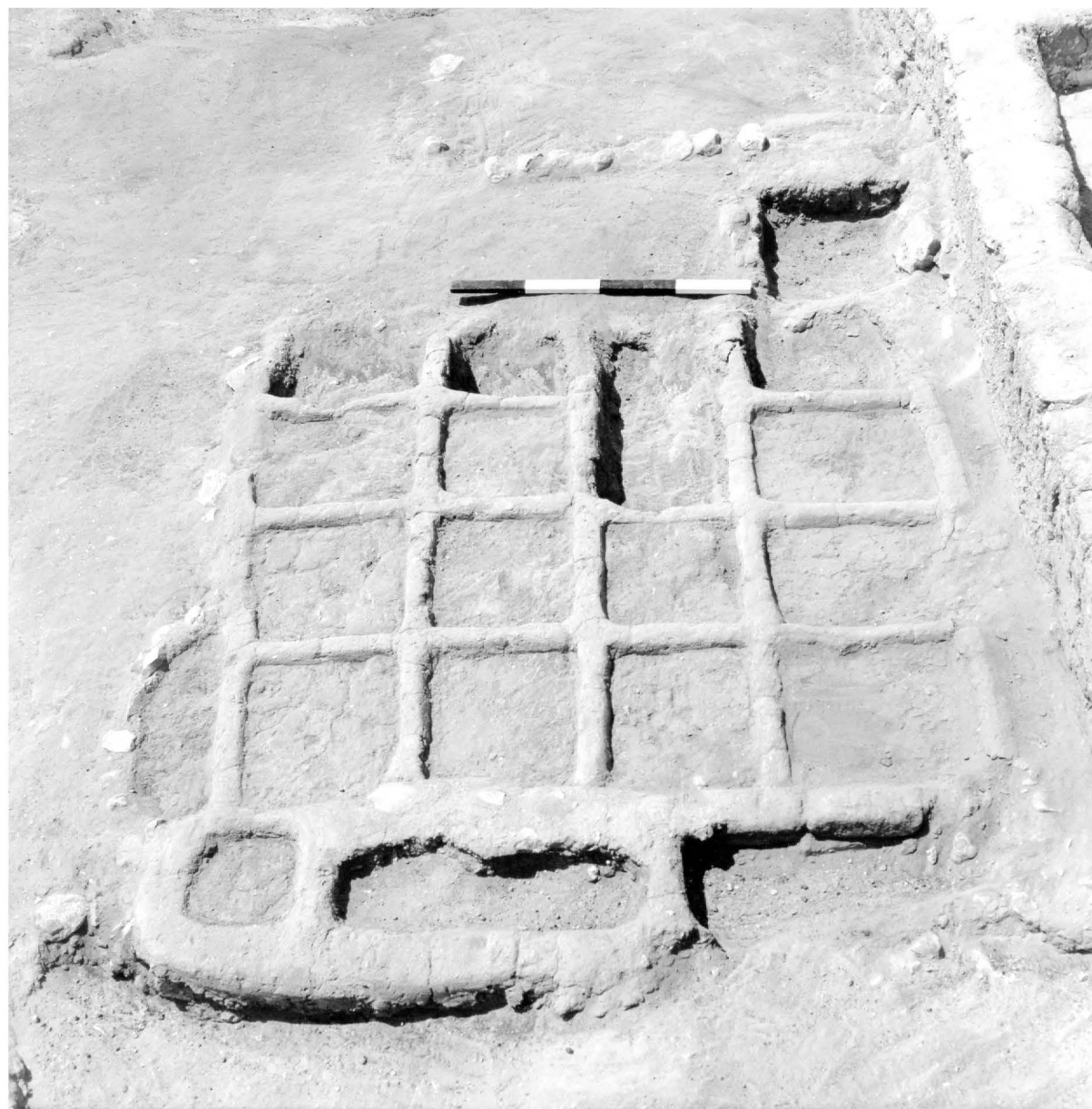


Figure 4.6. The garden plots, looking west, near the end of the excavation.

village rubbish. It cannot, however, represent casual dumping, for the area is very inconveniently placed in relation to the village gateway, and it seems to have been spread with the intention of providing a thick ground cover within this particular area. In view of the proximity of animal keeping and plant growing we can have little doubt that this layer is the result of a deliberate activity.

The adjacent area on the west, Area xi, was surrounded by brick walls of a single brick in thickness. That on the south, [2237], had collapsed southwards and a stretch of it had remained articulated where it fell [2187]. It shows a minimum of eight courses above the standing foundation course, thus a minimum height of one metre. The area contains several structural elements. In the south-west corner the west wall [2453] is interrupted by a break filled with rubble [2730] which includes large stones. This is probably an entrance, the lack of definition perhaps being partly the result of the fact that the excavation ended before a final stage of vigorous probing could be undertaken. At the northern end of wall [2453] lies a small rounded enclosure made from a low curb of bricks and stones [2452], floored with marl plaster, and

perhaps a feeding-trough. In the north-east corner a tumble of stones [2451] announces the likely proximity in the unexcavated ground to the north of an entrance to an inner animal pen with projecting buttresses, a possibility enhanced by the existence of a circular emplacement moulded in marl mortar [2456] for the support of a large pottery jar. The ground of Area xi was covered with a layer, 11 cms. thick, of silt with some ash and sherds [2192], lying over a packed marly surface [2731].

The remaining areas require little comment. One is represented by only the edge of a rough stone-built addition [2182] on the west of Area xvi, Area xv. Most of it must lie in the unexcavated square R27. The small part available for examination contained only sand [2458]. Between it and Area x lies a narrow elongated space, Area xiv, closed on the west by wall [2726]. It is possible that more of this wall on the south remains still buried beneath the compact sand [2388] which was not excavated. The area was floored with a marly organic layer [2189], which had been cut into by a pit [2188]. With the west side of square R28 we are approaching a low-lying sandy tract which is really part of a minor wadi which has descended from the plateau past Chapel 556. One wall, unit [2727], runs directly towards it. As it does so it dips into compacted sand [2729] and more silty organic soil [2728]. There was not enough time to complete the excavation of all deposits in this square, and it is possible that removal of these units would have revealed this wall continuing further west and into the next square, Q28. It has been used as a means of subdividing the ground into two further areas, nos. xii and xiii, but they were not necessarily fully enclosed.

Building 200 and its attendant enclosures is really part of the same continuous spread of such elements of which Building 250, dug last year, was a part. Figure 4.7 shows how the two groups are related to one another. They probably spread no further to the east or south, but it is possible that the current area continued westwards into the ground now occupied by the wadi, and also further to the north. Surface traces support the latter contention, in the form of a solid brick wall which breaks the surface to the north of Building 200, and of a spread of ashy soil which modern illicit digging has thrown up to the north-east of square T28. At this latitude one is drawing close to the ground which belonged to the chapel group 551-556. One chapel, no. 551, actually had its own group of garden plots (*COA I*: 107, Plate XXV). A little to the west we encounter another site, referred to in *COA I*: 69: "Also outside the walls, east of the north-east corner of the village, there were found scanty remains of mud-brick construction, built over rubbish, and containing a quantity of burnt ashes and goat dung. The broken walls did not suffice to make a plan. No objects were found." Today this site is represented by an irregular patch of stones and sherds, measuring approximately 15 by 10 metres (site 150). Part of a limestone trough lies on the surface. It is highly likely that this is an outlier to the same group of animal pens and enclosures, now separated by post-Amarna Period wadi activity. If we extend the limits as far as this we are perhaps talking of a total area of something of the order of 1700 square metres (cf. Figure 6.10). This is the largest area of continuous walling that lay outside the Walled Village, larger even than the animal pen group, Building 350 (*AR I*: Figure 4.7). Perhaps the ground was favoured because it would have been the most sheltered, and this outweighed the fact that it was also the furthest from the water supply and from the entrance to the Walled Village itself. It also forms a natural territory of its own, enclosed on the south by the Main Chapel. It is tempting to see this territory claimed and worked by the same families who also built and owned the chapel group 551-556.

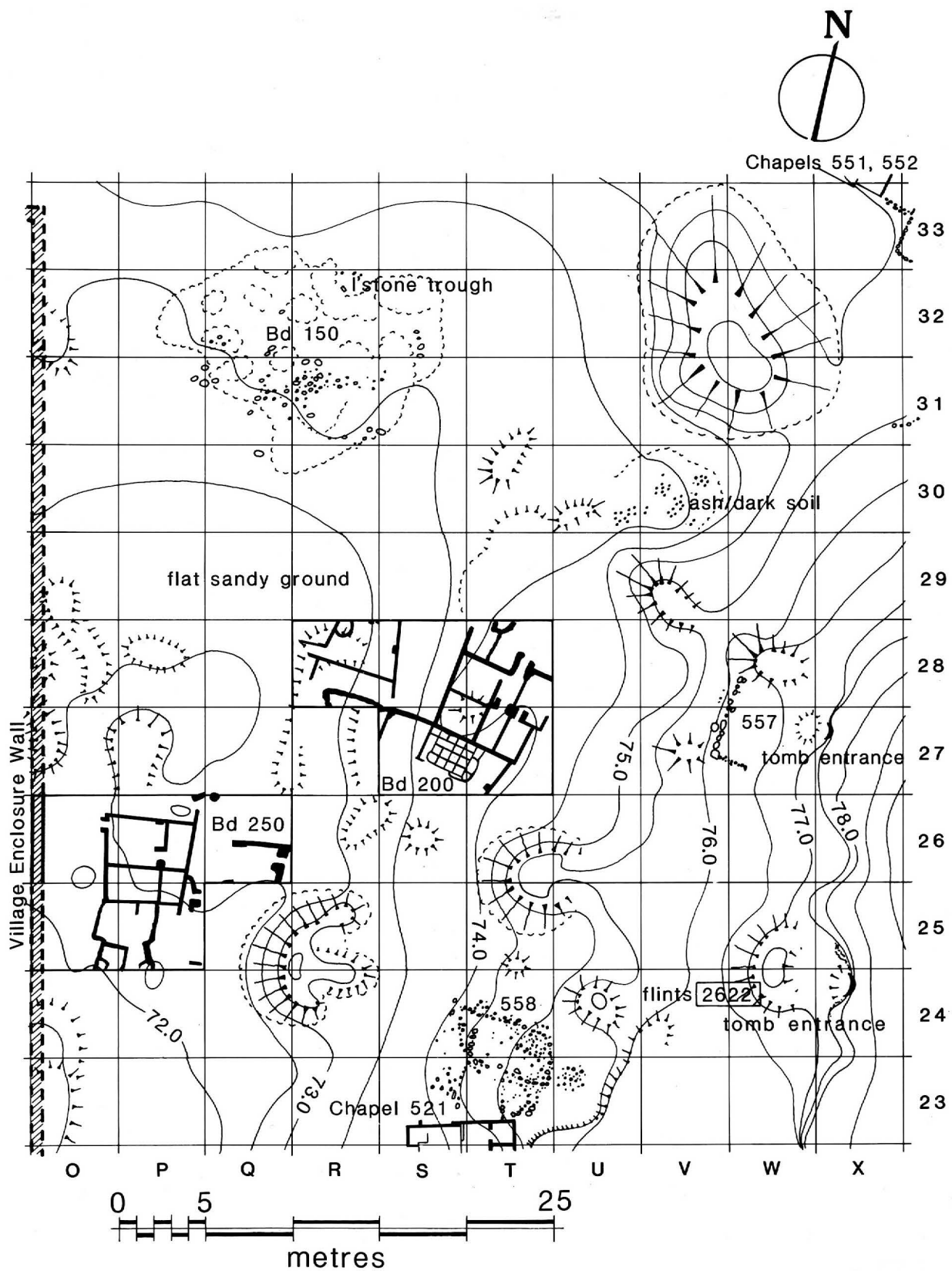


Figure 4.7. General plan of the north-eastern sector, showing the relationship between Buildings 200 and 250. Contours are at half-metre intervals.