

IMTO – Italian Mission to Oman

University of Pisa

SUMHURAM

Preliminary Report

July 2018 (SUM18B)



PRELIMINARY REPORT (SUM18B)

July 2018

The second IMTO's campaign of 2018 (SUM18B), under the direction of prof. A. Avanzini, started on July 1st and ended on July 26th 2018.

Excavations were performed in two areas:

Area B: the main purpose was the investigation of the most ancient phase of the building BB7, unearthed in the previous campaigns below the late structure of building BB3.

Area F: a deep-sounding was carried out along the western wall of the so-called Monumental Building 1 to check its foundation and the level of the bedrock in the area.

Excavations were conducted on the field by Mr. Cleto Carbonara. Mr. Said Al- Mashani was also present on the site.

Mr. Cleto Carbonara was responsible for documentation of pottery finds and objects.

Architects Michele Lillo and Andrea Bertozzi, under the supervision of Arch. Stefano Bizzarri, were responsible for the restoration activities carried on in the site.

The work of IMTO has been possible thanks to the collaboration of the Office of the Adviser of His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs in Salalah and in Muscat, in particular Ghanem al Shanfari, Said al Mashani, Ali al Kathiri, Said al Amri, Said al Salmi, Hassan al Jabri. We thank them all, together with all the Museum's team, for their kind helpfulness.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

Excavation in Area B: Building BB7 with rooms A213, A280, A308, A309, A310, A311 (trench supervisor: Cleto Carbonara).

The building BB7 is located in the south-western part of the commercial district of Sumhuram (Area B), immediately to the west of the southern portion of the warehouse complex of the town. It has an almost trapezoidal plan and it is delimited by the walls: M618 to the north, M611/883 to the east, and M365a/861 to the west. Two segments of the southern side of the city-wall, M218 and M350, close the building to the south. It was possible to enter the building from the street/square A74 to the north, passing through a door in M618, near the north-eastern corner of BB7. The inner space of the building is divided in seven rooms, three on its northern side and four on the southern one.

A213

It is the north-eastern room of the building (fig. 2). It was possible to enter the room from outside. A threshold made of two steps marked the entrance. Each one is made of three limestone blocks roughly shaped. A213 is a long and narrow corridor measuring ... , and delimited by M618 to the north, M611 to the east, M881 to the south, and M831 to the west. Other two doors open in A213: the first goes toward south and links A213 with A307, the south-eastern room of the building excavated during SUM18A campaign; the second door goes toward west.

The first operation carried out during SUM18B, was the removal of US991, partially excavated during the previous campaigns. It is an accumulation layer made of loose loam brownish in colour with a clay matrix, crumbled mud-bricks and few scattered limestone blocks very small in size. Traces of burnt and charcoals are concentrated in the northern part of the room. US991 rests on a floor made of packed loam light brown in colour slightly sloping from south toward north. It is at the level of 28.73 m. US991 returned 120 pottery shards: 100 storage; 4 table; 16 kitchen; a stone pendant (S3097) and a fragment of a probable bronze container (MB1051).

Below US991, US1018 was excavated. It is an accumulation layer made of loose reddish loam with several limestone blocks small and medium in size. US1018 returned 548 pottery shards: 433 storage, 28 table, 87 kitchen; two bronze coins (Co 1158, Co1193), a mortar, two incense burners, two whet-stones (S3098-3102), a clay strainer (Cl89). At the elevation of 28.51 m, a new layer was found. US1049 is made of medium compact burnt loam, with ash, charcoals and limestone blocks medium and big in size. They were mainly concentrated in the northern part of the room. US1049 floor is consists of packed loam greyish in colour covered by ashes an charcoals. It has a homogeneous level found at the elevation of 28.22 m (fig. 3). US1049 returned four bronze coins (Co1198-1201), a bi-conical stone vessel (S3104), an iron nail (MI357). The southern part of the room was occupied by a low staircase (fig. 4) made of only three steps made of limestone blocks. It was delimited by the eastern wall of the room, M611, and a thin mud-brick wall on the western side. A squared structure to the west of the mud-brick wall, has been interpreted as the staircase well. Going up through the steps it was possible to enter the room A307, located to the south of A213.

A307

It is located in the south-eastern corner of the building and it was excavated till the earlier level (US1028 floor: 28.20 m) during the campaign SUM18A. After the typhoon Mekunu, the wall M884, which closed the room to the west in the most recent phase of the building, partially collapsed, so it was decided to remove it completely. Below the last row of M884, US1028 was found. It was already excavated in the previous campaign. US1028 is an accumulation layer made of light brown loam loose in consistence with plaster inclusions and limestone chips. The excavation of the western side of the room revealed that during the earlier phase of the building A307 was closed to the west by the corner of the city-wall, and it returned the amazing number of 33 bronze coins (Co1160-1192). In the south-western corner of the room there were a strange structure composed by two rectangular slabs (fig. 5-6). The upper one is set in vertical sense, while the lower one is set horizontally. All the coins were found near this structure. It was surrounded by a very thin layer of yellowish loose loam and traces of ash.

A280

It is located in the northern part of the building, to the west of A213 and it was linked to it through a door in M831. A280 (fig. 7) is rectangular in shape and delimited by the walls M618 to the north, M831 to the east, M885 to the south and M844 to the west. Along M831, there is a mud-brick structure interpreted as a bench (M863). It is preserved for only one row of mud-bricks and its foundation is set on the level of US1004 floor.

Once removed US1004 floor, which in A280 is an earth-packed soil, US1039 was excavated. It is an accumulation layer reddish brown in colour and medium compact in consistence, *circa* 0.34 m thick. In US1039 there were few limestone blocks small and medium in size and several pieces of charcoal particularly in the lower level of the layer. US1039 returned 40 pottery shards: 26 storage, 3 table; 11 kitchen; a bronze coin (Co1194), a bronze bracelet (MB1052). Below the level with charcoals, which has a thickness 0.04 m, US1047 was found. The new layer is at the elevation 28.38 m and it is made of dark brown loam, medium compact in consistence with a clay matrix. Traces of ash and charcoals were found in it. US1047 has a thickness of 0.24 m. A earth-packed soil (fig. 8) brownish in colour at the elevation of 28.14 m was interpreted as floor (US1047 floor). US1047 returned 60 pottery shards: 43 storage, 3 table, 14 kitchen; a whet-stone (S3103).

A311

It is the north-western room of the building BB7 (fig. 7) and has the shape of a rectangular corridor *circa* 5 m long and 1.15 m wide. It is delimited by the walls M618 to the north, M8844 to the east, M889 to the south and M365a to the west. The southern wall of the room was built almost completely with mud-bricks. Limestone blocks were used only for the southern face of the lower row. The room has only one entrance, 0,90 m wide, located in the south-eastern corner of the room, which linked A311 with A280.

The first layer removed is US1004 floor which has a thickness of 0.05 cm and shows some traces of a plaster coating in the north-western part of the room, along M365a. Below US1004 floor, US1040 was excavated. It is an accumulation layer made of loam reddish in colour mixed with several limestone and sandstone blocks medium and small in size and fragments of mud-bricks. US1040 has a thickness of *circa* 0.20 m. US1040 returned 35 pottery shards: 22 storage, 3 table, 10 kitchen; a bronze coin (Co1195). A new layer, US1048, was found at the elevation of 28.42 m. It is an accumulation layer *circa* 0.30 m thick made of greyish dark brown loam medium compact in

consistence with a clay matrix, mixed with several limestone blocks small in size.. A lot of ash, charcoals and traces of burnt have been found in the layer. A circular basin made of limestone was found on the floor in the south-eastern corner of the room. It has a diameter of 0.27 m, and it is 0.10 m high and 0.03 m deep. Its upper recess has a very flat and very well-smoothed bottom. It was filled by burnt loam. US1048 floor (fig. 8) is an earth-packed soil and was found at the elevation of 28.14 m. In the northern part of the room it is covered by ash, while in the southern one it has a yellowish colour. US1048 returned 31 pottery shards: 22 storage, 4 table, 5 kitchen; two bronze coins (Co1196-1197).

A310

It is located in the south-western corner of the building (fig. 9). As the room to the north, it has the shape of a rectangular corridor. It is delimited by M889 to the north, M860 to the east, and M861 to the west. The southern limit of the room is the city-wall. M861 is a mud-brick wall built as a continuation of the stone wall M365a. This two walls together for the western limit of the building BB7. No doors were found connecting A310 with the other rooms of the building. The southern part of the eastern wall M860 is completely collapsed. Perhaps a passage to A309 should be located here.

The first operation carried on in the room is the complete removal of US1031, partially excavated in the SUM18A campaign. It is light brown in colour, medium compact in consistence, and has a clay matrix. US1031 is characterized by the presence of limestone chips and fragments of mud-bricks. Few limestone blocks were found in it, and they were small in size. US1031 returned 79 pottery shards: 66 storage, 9 table, 4 kitchen; a stone vessel (S3096), an oil lamp (Sh862). At the elevation of 28.00 m, the new layer US1038 was found. It is an accumulation of loam grey in colour and medium compact in consistence with a clay matrix. A lot of limestone chips and fragments of mud-bricks were found in the layer. US1038 covered two small stone alignments oriented in east-west direction, that could divide the room in three smaller parts. US1038 floor (fig. 10) was found in the whole room at the elevation of 28.79/28.81 m. It is an earth-packed soil greyish in colour. US1038 returned 7 pottery shards: 5 storage, 2 kitchen.

A309

Among the four rooms in the southern part of the building, A309 is the western-central one (fig. 11). It is a narrow and long room delimited by the walls M885 to the north, M888 to the east and M860 to the west. Also A309 is closed by the city-wall to the south. Two doors opened in A309: the first one to the north linked A309 with A280 and it was 0.86 m wide; the second one (0.84 m wide) was located in the north-eastern corner of the room and linked A309 with A308 to the east. The northern side of the door is preserved for only one row of stones.

US1032, partially excavated in the previous campaign SUM18A, has been completely removed during SUM18B. It is an accumulation layer made of loam with a clay matrix, reddish in colour and medium compact in consistence. Several stones small in size and charcoals were found in it. US1032 was excavated till the elevation of 27.99 m. It returned 13 pottery shards: 7 storage, 4 table, 2 kitchen; a bronze coin (Co1157). Here, the new layer US1037 was found. It is an accumulation layer made of loam medium compact in consistence greyish in colour and with a clay matrix, mixed with several limestone and sandstone blocks medium and big in size and several fragments of mud-bricks. US1037 covered the threshold between A309 and A280. It consists of one step 0.40

m high made of limestone blocks irregular shaped and mud-bricks. In front of the two sides of the passage to A308, there are two stones with a shallow depression on the top. Maybe they were the place where the shutters of the door were fixed. Other four stones were located along the eastern wall of the room M888. It is probable that they were the base for some furniture of the room. US1037 floor (fig. 12) is an earth-packed soil greyish in colour and it was found at the elevation of 27.73 m. US1037 returned 6 pottery shards: 3 storage, 3 kitchen; a bronze coin (Co1159).

A308

It is located in the southern part of the building BB7, to the east of A309. A308 has also the shape of a long and narrow corridor (fig. 13). It was possible to enter the room from the passage located in its north-western corner. A308, as the other rooms in the southern part of the building, leans on the city-wall. The other walls delimiting the room are: M885 to the north, M888 to the west, and M831 to the east. The walls M831 and M888 were built with limestone blocks in their northern part. Their southern one, poorly preserved, was built with mud-bricks.

US1033 was excavated in the northern part of the room. It is an accumulation layer *circa* 0.30 m thick made loam greyish in colour and loose in consistence, mixed with fragments of mud-bricks, limestone chips, and limestone blocks small and medium in size. US1033 returned 4 pottery shards: 1 storage, 3 table; a bronze coin (Co1156). US1008 returned 6 pottery shards: 4 storage, 2 kitchen. The southern part of the room was occupied by US1008, a huge collapse found in the whole southern part of the building. It was made of limestone and sand stone blocks small, medium and big in size. Below US1008 and US1033, the new layer US1036 was excavated. It was found at the elevation of 28.25 m in the northern part of the room, and at the elevation of 28.11 m in the southern one. US1036 is an accumulation layer made of loam with a clay matrix, reddish in colour and loose in consistence. Several ash lenses have been found in the layer, together with charcoals, fragments of mud-bricks and limestone blocks small and medium in size. US1036 floor (fig. 14) was found at the elevation of 27.72 m. It is an earth-packed soil light brown in colour, but it is completely burnt in the northern part of the room. A stand for a South Arabian storage jar with a ring base was found in the centre of the eastern side of the room, near the wall M831. It is a plastered squared structure with a circular hole in the centre. The central hole is delimited by a plastered wall with a splayed external surface. US1036 floor is not preserved along the city-wall. US1036 returned 36 pottery shards: 25 storage, 7 table, 4 kitchen; an iron nail and an iron rod (MI355-356), a stone anvil (S3095).

The complete excavation of the building BB7 confirmed that the southern part of the storehouse complex is composed by six elongated room, and other two with different shape placed in the south-eastern corner of the city-wall. Although some of the rooms of BB7 have the same shape of the stores, the two buildings must be surely considered separated. Indeed they have their own perimeter walls as confirmed by the eastern side of the BB7 and the western side of the storehouses. The wall M611, closing BB7 to the east, runs parallel to the wall M591, closing the store A207 to the west. The building BB7 could be interpreted as a private dwelling. The presence of a staircase confirms the existence of one or more upper storeys. The way how the rooms are arranged is different from the plan of the most common houses of Sumhuram. The main corridor is not the central room of the house, but is located on the eastern side of the building. The main entrance is also placed in the corner of the building and not in a central position as can be seen in the other

houses. The major part of the rooms of the ground floor shows a floor with evident traces of burnt, ash and charcoals, and from them come huge quantities of bones belonging to big-sized animals. Probably these rooms were used as kitchens, or could be related to the conservation of the food. The living rooms instead should be at the upper storey.

It is not clear why 33 coins were together in the room A307. It is difficult that the coins were produced here. No traces of bronze working were found in the room. Albright already supposed the presence of a “mint” in the city of Sumhuram, and he individuated it in the two irregular-shaped room in the south-eastern corner of the town. It could be that the coins found in A307 were the result of some commercial transaction conducted by the owner of the house.

Excavation in Area F: Deep sounding in the street A80, to the west of the wall M276 of Monumental Building 1 (trench supervisor: Cleto Carbonara)

In order to check the level of the bedrock in the area to west of the Monumental Building 1, and the level of the foundation of the wall M276, a deep sounding 1 x 1.08 m was excavated in the northern part of the street A80, between the walls M276, belonging to MB1, and M189 which close the street to the west.

The excavation started from the elevation of 27.01. The first layer to be removed is US1041. It was found only along the wall M276 and consists of light brown loam loose in consistence mixed with limestone blocks small and medium in size. Only few animal bones were found in this layer. US1041 returned 9 pottery shards: 7 storage, 2 table. In the western part of the trench US1042 was excavated. It was partially covered by US1041 and covered the top of the wall M189. US1042 is an accumulation layer made of grey loam loose in consistence with limestone chips and sandstone blocks medium and big in size. Both layers have a thickness of *circa* 0.30 m.

At an elevation between 26.78 and 26.73 m, US1043 was found. It slightly slopes from east toward west. It is an accumulation layer made of loam medium compact in consistence and reddish in colour, with traces of ash, charcoals and limestone chips in it. A big ash lens was in the centre of the trench. US1043 has a thickness of *circa* 0.45 m and rest on a well made floor (US1043 floor) *circa* 0.8 cm thick. It is a earth-packed soil greyish in colour with traces of plaster. US1043 floor returned 4 pottery shards: 1 storage, 2 table, 1 kitchen.

Below US1043 floor, US1044 was excavated. It was found at the elevation of 26.20 m and it is an accumulation layer *circa* 0.35 m thick, made of reddish loam very loose in consistence mixed with a great amount of limestone chips. Several limestone blocks small and medium in size were also found in this layer. US1044 returned 6 pottery shards: 4 storage, 2 kitchen.

US1044 covered US1045. It slightly slopes from east toward west and was found at the elevation of 25.85 m in the eastern part of the trench and 25.80 in the western one. It is an accumulation layer greyish in colour with a great amount of limestone chips and with some limestone blocks small and medium in size. It has a thickness of *circa* 0.30 m.

Below it, US1046 was excavated. It was found at the elevation of 25.60 m in the eastern part of the trench and at the elevation of 25.53 m to the west. It is a layer of loose loam reddish brown in colour mixed with a great amount of limestone chips. US1046 covered the bedrock which was found at the elevation of 25.28 m (fig. 18).

From the excavation inside the Monumental Building 1 we know that its perimeter walls are set on the bedrock. From the new trench in A80 it is clear that the wall M276 is not founding on the

bedrock, but 0.84 m above it, at the elevation of 26.12 m (fig. 19). This fact confirms that the wall M276 was added later to the original structure of the Monumental Building 1, most probably at the moment when the channel going outside the city-wall from the well was built. The foundation of the wall M189 (fig. 20), the western limit of the trench, is set at the elevation of 26.15 m, only three cm above that one of M276. Both constructions could be related to US1043 floor and they could be built at the same time, when US1043 floor was laid down in the street A80 (fig. 22).

Figures

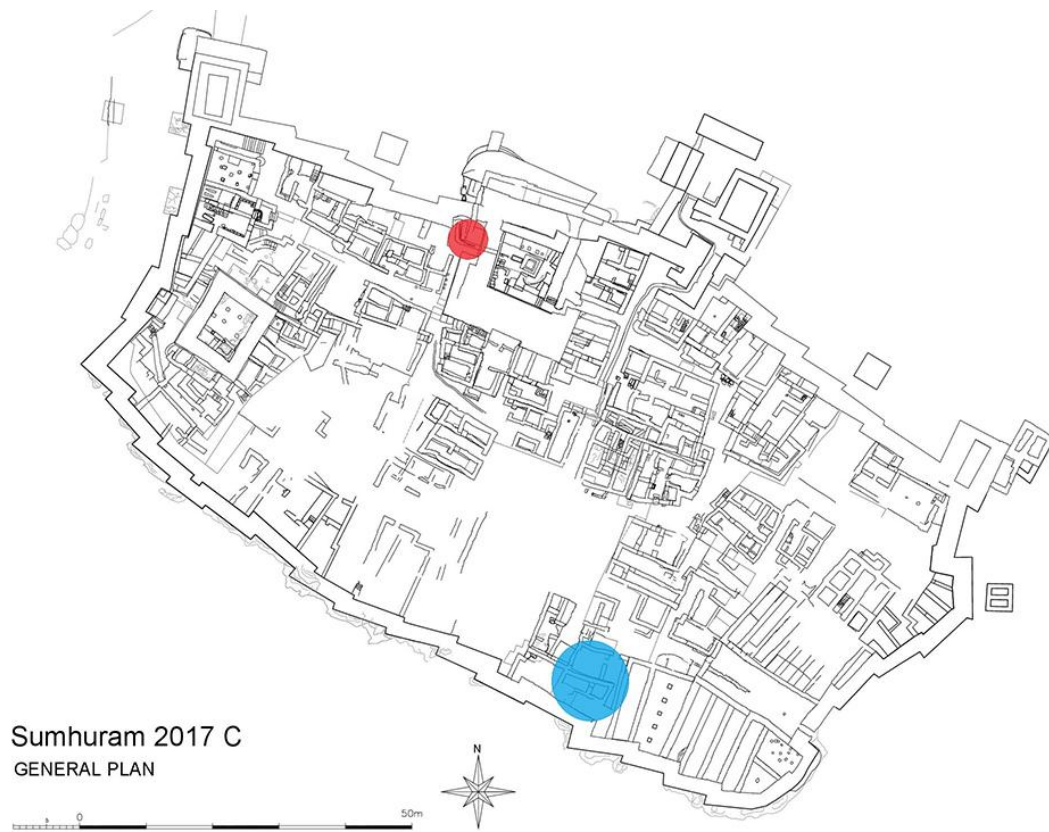


Fig. 1: Plan with the areas of intervention



Fig. 2: Room A213 before excavation from south-east.



Fig. 3: A213 and A307 after excavation from south.



Fig. 4: staircase in A213 from north.



Fig. 5: Stone slabs in A307 from the top



Fig. 6: Stone slabs with coins in A307 from east.



Fig. 7: Western part of BB7 with rooms A280, A311 before excavation from south.



Fig. 8: Western part of BB7 with rooms A280, A311 after excavation from south-west.



Fig. 9: A310 before excavation from south.



Fig. 10: A310 after excavation from south.



Fig. 11: A309 before excavation from south.



Fig. 12: A309 after excavation from south.



Fig. 13: A308 before excavation from south-west.



Fig. 14: A308 after excavation from south-west.



Fig. 15: aerial view of BB7 during excavation

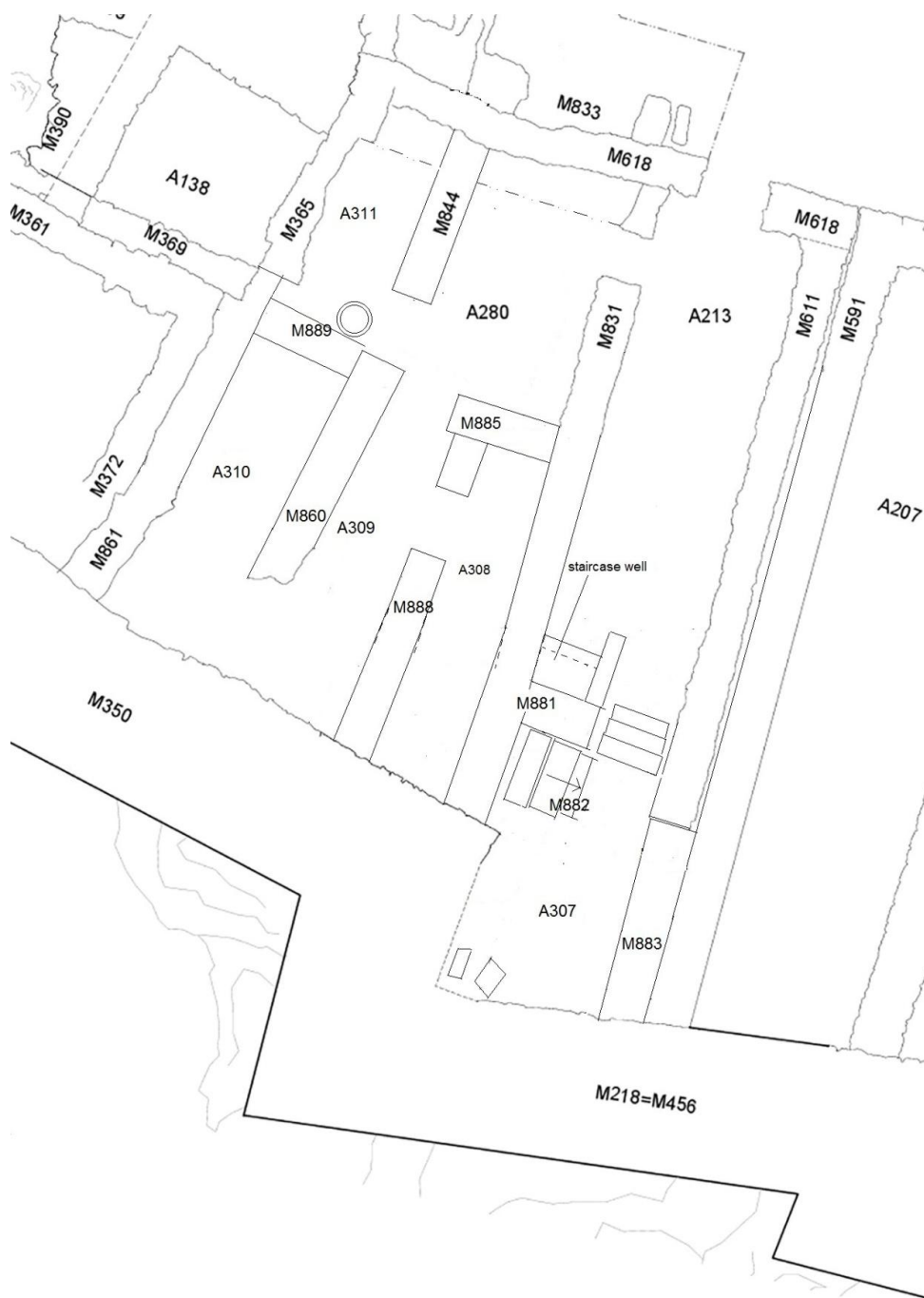


Fig. 16: Building BB7-sketch of the excavated structures.

SUM18B - Building BB7, rooms A280-A311, EW section

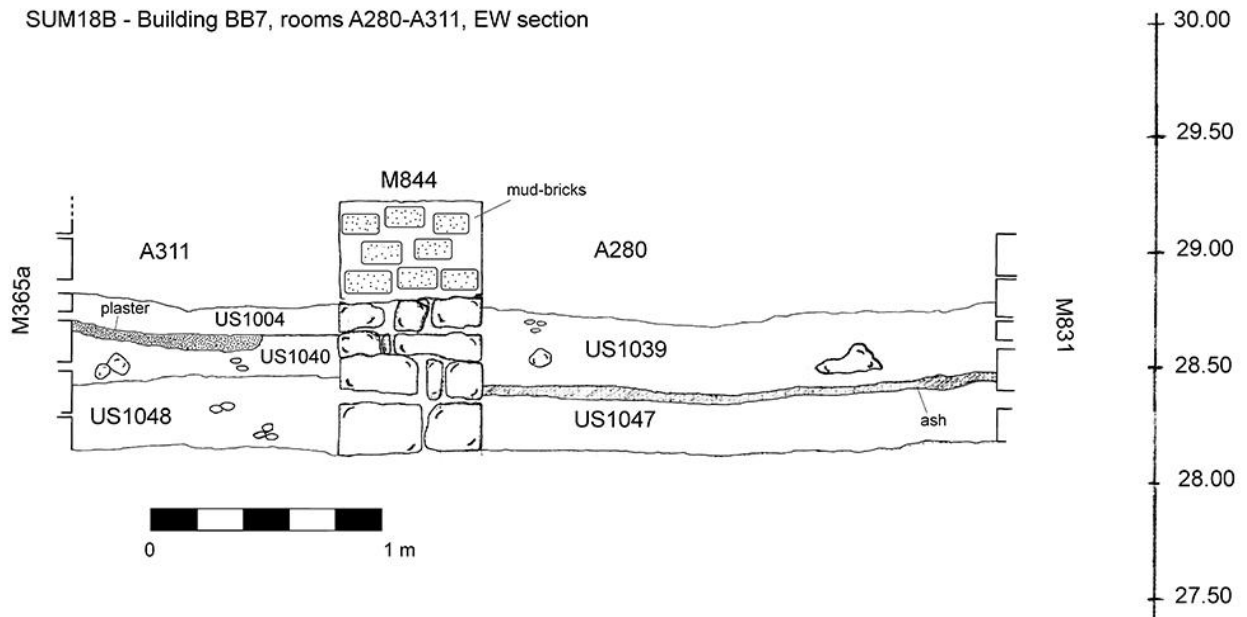


Fig. 17: rooms A280 and A311, EW section



Fig. 18: bedrock in the sounding



Fig. 19: foundation M276



Fig. 20: foundation M189



Fig. 21: Southern section of the sounding

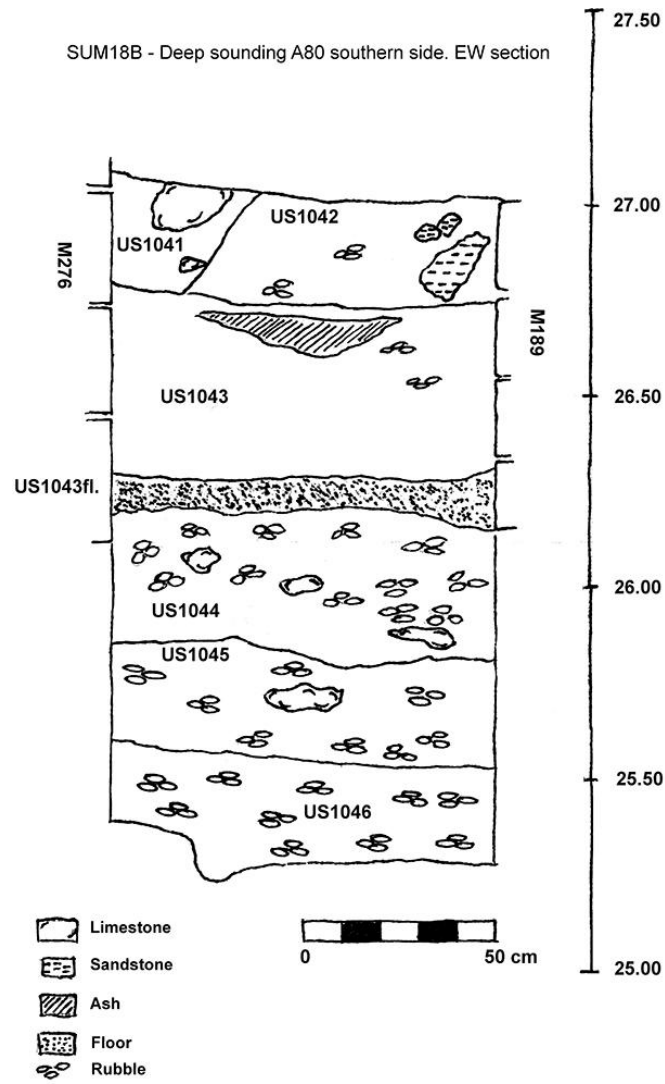


Fig. 22: EW section of the southern side of the sounding in A80

