

Khirbet Ghozlan Archaeological Project

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Khirbet Um al-Ghozlan is an Early Bronze IV (2600–2000 BCE) period site located on a steep knoll above the Wadi Rayyan, north Jordan (UTM 749729E, 3588534N). The site is only 0.4 ha in size, and in this respect sits comfortably with our traditional understanding of the EB IV period, during which people abandoned large, fortified, mounded sites and dispersed into small, undefended, rural settlements. However, Khirbet Ghozlan is remarkable for a monumental enclosure wall that surrounds the entire Ghozlan knoll. Why defend such a small site (Fig. 1)?

The answer may lie in the site's upland location. Khirbet Ghozlan is one of several EB IV enclosure sites located on the well-drained slopes of the rift escarpment in areas well suited to upland horticulture. Such sites may have served as specialized processing centers for upland tree crops such

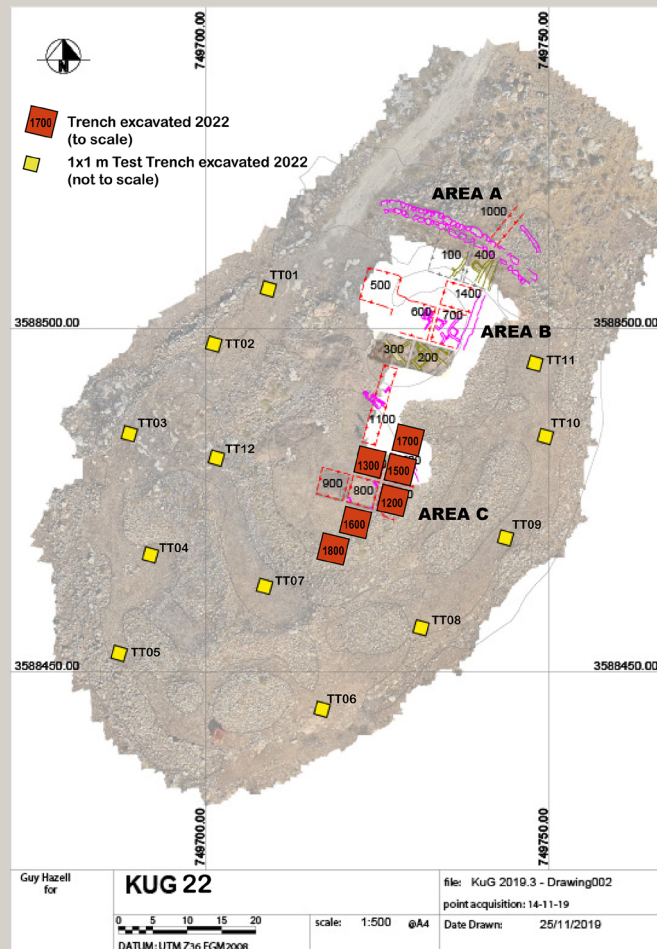


Fig. 1. Location of excavation areas and trenches in 2022. (Image by Guy Hazell.)



as olive (*Olea europaea*) and were defended to protect seasonally produced stockpiles of valuable liquid commodities, such as oil.

To test this hypothesis, the British Museum has undertaken three seasons of excavations: in 2017 and 2019, excavations investigated the enclosure wall (area A) and a so-called storage compound (area B); in 2022, the BM conducted a final season, 19 February–10 March 2022, once conditions of the pandemic allowed for travel. These excavations focused on a domestic compound (area C), as well as ten test trenches across the site, discussed below.

Area C

Area C denotes a flat terrace within a ring of heaped rubble. Limited excavations in 2019 exposed a possible courtyard (trenches 800 and 900) with associated architecture under the rubble ring (trenches 1200 and 1500). The 2022 excavations discovered that the rubble was tumble from a large, curved retaining wall in which rubble had infilled two parallel walls. The resulting rubble-filled wall defined the east side of a network of rooms (trenches 1200, 1500, 1600, and 1700) laid out against a central courtyard (trenches 800, 900, and 1300). The continuation of rubble tumble on the unexcavated west side of area C suggests that a network of architecture defined by the east wall actually encircles the entire terrace, with an open courtyard in its center (Fig. 2).

A doorway through the east wall (trench 1200) provided access to several rooms. Intriguingly, the east wall was constructed as segments between the compound's single-row walls, indicating that the internal walls were constructed before the external east wall was built. This relationship suggests the area C compound was constructed as a single event according to a carefully prepared plan, supporting similar conclusions drawn from excavations in areas A and B.

Several storage jars with charred lentils were discovered in one room (trench 1600), although the compound yielded fewer such jars than the “storage compound” (area B). In contrast, three rooms contained hearths of burned, flat stones consistent with domestic activity. These differences suggest that the area C compound was used for domestic activity.

Test Trenches

Ten 1 x 1 m test trenches (TTs) were excavated across the site to determine whether the entire area defined by the enclosure wall (0.4 ha) was occupied. Cultural deposits were detected in TTs east and west of the upper terrace (TTs 01, 02, 09, 11), but topsoil overlay natural and/or bedrock in TTs excavated south of area C (TTs 03, 04, 06, 07, 08, 12). We can conclude that only the northern half of the enclosed Ghozlan knoll was occupied—approximately 0.25 ha. This reduced site size further contrasts with the substantial construction of the enclosure wall and the planned layout of the buildings within, suggesting the site served a particular function within a complex rural landscape in upland Jordan in the late 3rd millennium BCE.

Acknowledgements

The 2022 season was funded by the British Museum (BM) Research Board, by the Friends of the Middle East (BM), and as a Gerald Averay Wainwright Fund Research Grant (University of Oxford).

References

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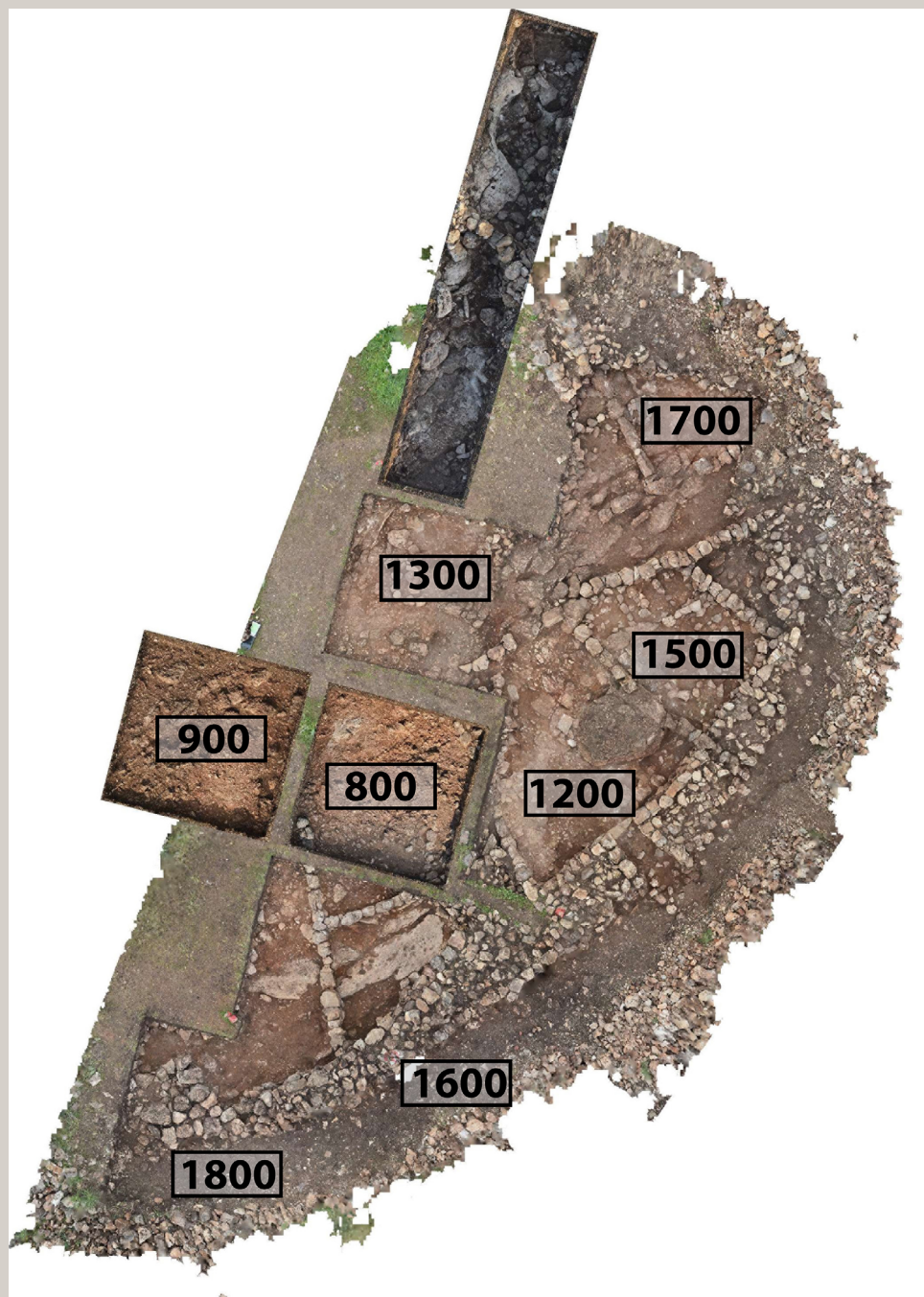


Fig. 2. Orthogonal plan of area C trenches after the baulks were removed (north aligned to top of page). (Image by Guy Hazell.)