Excavation in Area O resumed after a hiatus since the initial season in 2014. That year, three strata were identified in squares H-K/12: Strata O-3 (in association with mixed MB-EB pottery), O-2 (MBII), and O-3 (Iron I-IIA). This season, in an effort to date the strata after analysis of a skeleton lying next to a MBII wall yielded a 10-9th c. date, we opened three squares to the east (K/12) and the north (J/11, K/11). Preservation of later phases appeared to be better in the north and east than towards the west. The skeleton lay partially exposed in the northeast corner of the 2014 excavation with his body continuing into K12. For this report, all pottery and resulting stratigraphic dates are based on preliminary readings and so are considered tentative but suggestive. Stratigraphy and pottery present robust MBIIIB occupation, seemingly domestic, with a dedicated area for burial. Both indoor rooms and outdoor/courtyard spaces are evident (Str. O-2). With no architecture and very little pottery attributed to the Late Bronze, the area seemingly lay open and abandoned until the resettlement in the Iron I-IIA (Str. O-1). In some places, Str. O-1 remains lay directly under topsoil and so are likely compromised by subsequent pastoral-agricultural activity. Indeed, the topsoil layer of ca. 10 cm contained mixed EB-Iron II pottery that might be the result of plowing and other agricultural activities in this part of the mound, which historical photographs show was dedicated to growing crops for the villagers of Abil el-Qameh.

Stratum O-3 was not reached this season.
Stratum O-2

The main Str. O-2 architectural feature is the ESE-WNW Wall 2520 that runs through squares I-K12. Excavation this season suggests early and late subphases based on architectural additions in the functioning of the wall. Early in Str O-2, the structure extends to the south of W2520 with a paved surface to the north. Later in Str O-2, a wall is built that extends to the north of W2520 creating (interior?) spaces in conjunction with the rooms to the south.

Stratum O-2, Early Phase

From east to west, the early phase of Wall 2520 begins east of and under stone installation 5543, runs beside or over 2534 (further excavation is required to clarify this relationship), under W2508, and under W2514, which is bonded to W2513.

Square K/12, looking southwest, lower courses of W2520 running beneath the stones of W2508 and W2513-2514 (ABM17-O-123)

To the south of wall 2520, Walls 2510, 2527, 2533, 2534 and, possibly, 5548 divide the area into rooms ranging in width from 3-1.6m. 2017 excavation squares expanded this architectural unit to the east (K12) and the north (J-K11).
Squares I-K/12 looking west, Str. O-2 walls (ABM-17-O-102)

A further 1.7m eastern extension of Wall 2520 was exposed this season. The construction technique and approximate size of facing stones and cobble fill match the formerly exposed portions of the wall. The exposed eastern end of W2520 has roughly squarish stones suggestive of a doorjamb or corner. There is no further indication of a doorway (threshold or wall continuation) but there is circumstantial evidence that the wall either continued to the east or, more likely, formed a corner with a north-south wall. Evidence for the wall continuing to the east is the very compact, distinctive grey mudbrick (detritus) 5541 that continues along the wall line to the east (visible in Fig. 2). This matrix differs in color from the reddish-brown mudbrick matrices to the north (not numbered) and the south (5542). While no brick lines are visible, the grey mudbrick may represent either a brick threshold or a wall that would be beside and perhaps below W2520 and so perhaps an earlier construction.

A second possibility is that W2520 corners with a north-south wall that has been robbed. The evidence for a cornering wall is circumstantial but suggestive. W2520 does not continue to the east at its current elevation; the possible face at the end of W2520 combined with a single stone that may protrude from the wall line towards the south suggests a corner; the deposit east of the proposed wall (5542) is different than the deposit to the west (5546); large facing stones protrude from the subsidiary baulk under W2509 exactly in line with the proposed wall; and the chalky accumulation 5546 is clearly cut in line with the proposed cornering wall. The cut is quite
clear; most of 5546’s contour is rounded (cut by pit 5536), but at the southeastern end there’s a sharp north-south cut creating a corner. This cut suggests either the chalky accumulation (mudbrick detritus) originally rested against a wall now missing or a later robber trench cut the chalky accumulation, which also indicates the existence of a wall

Square K/12, looking south, pit 5536 and the possible robber trench 5548 cutting the chalky mudbrick deposit 5546 (ABM17-O-138).

Pottery from this proposed trench 5548 was non-diagnostic but baskets from above labeled “transition” (from 5542) included LB and IrI sherds. The IrI pottery may come from an IA robber trench or it may belong to pit 5536 to the west but it distinguishes the matrix from the currently MB deposit 5542 to the east. If walls 2534 and the proposed robbed wall bounded a room, it would be only 1.6m wide with the possibly nicely preserved floor 2540.

The K12 stratigraphically earliest exposed remains associated with W2520 are interior space to the south and outside/exterior space to the north. Restorable pottery from the limited exposure of floor 2540 (2014 excavation) at the level of the W2534 threshold provides a MBA date for the early use of the space bounded by W2520 to the north and W2534 to the west. The chalky accumulation 2532=5546, interpreted in 2014 as a chalky surface, appears to be mudbrick detritus with only small worn sherds (no diagnostic pottery, sherds of “MB?”). This identification of the chalky accumulation is based on preserved mudbricks of the same matrix from Area A. We proceeded down below the elevation of the identified floor in 2014 with no indication of a floor or restorable pottery. Our only restorable pottery came from the Iron Age pit 5536 that cut the floor but contained much MBA pottery as it was cut into MBA matricies.
To the east of the possibly robbed wall is mudbrick detritus 5542, a very compact, reddish-brown mudbrick matrix with small chalk inclusions giving it a whitish cast (Fig. 4). With exclusively EB and MB pottery (thus far), this deposit at the elevation of the bottommost exposed course of W2520 (and Str O-1 W5511) may be contemporary with the Str O-2 wall or may be the earlier deposit on which or into which W2520 was built. Accordingly, 5542 (along with the similar mudbrick matrix 5537 above, pottery readings MB and LB) may pre-date the Str O-2 floor 2540 or be contemporary with it.

Preservation was better north of W2520. Stone pavement 5551, located along the western baulk of square J11, is the earliest exterior feature belonging to Stratum O-2.

Square J/11. Stone pavement 5551, featuring a small patch of supposed plaster covering (Kent photo 5978)

The pavement was constructed of large, relatively flat stones, the largest being approximately 30 cm in width, with a few smaller stones placed in between the larger stones. Pavement 5551 runs for approximately 1.5 m toward the north. The northernmost extent of the pavement is covered in a chunky plaster. The soil in the western section just above the pavement features more white, chalky material but a coherent plaster surface is not visible in the section. Possibly the rough plaster did not cover the whole pavement or it was disturbed in antiquity.

Without further excavation, a firm date for the construction and use life of this pavement cannot be established. However, it is worth detailing a few facts that provide some information that might aid in establishing a date. Although no ceramics were found lying on the pavement, pottery baskets from locus 5549, which covered the pavement, nearly exclusively contained sherds dating to the EB and MB. A few sherds of a red painted ware, tentatively dated to the IA, were likely introduced via pits or wall robbing during the IA. A few stones from wall 2513, from the area where it meets the western baulk of J11, seem to have been robbed out in antiquity. This would have provided an opportunity for the introduction of a limited number of sherds dated to IA. Thus, a date of either the early MB or even late EB seems possible, especially given the fact that the surface was cut by a pit dug in the MB.
Another pavement, 2544, was uncovered in the earliest phases excavated in 2014 in square H12. While the elevations are quite different, 5551 at #366.39 and 2544 at #365.41, these could still represent surfaces constructed and in use at the same time, when one takes into account the slope of the tell and the possibility that terracing may have occurred to increase usable area near the fortification walls. In modernity, there is only a relatively thin pathway of earth separating the western baulk of H12 and the extremely steep incline of the side of the tell. If these two paved surfaces were related, then based on dating conclusions drawn from the 2014 evidence, 5511 could represent an early MB surface or even an EB construction. It is worth noting that the matrix of 2538 (a locus described in 2014 as fill above 2544) also featured an abundance of chalky material, possibly similar to the chalky, plaster material on top of 5551.

Approximately .60 m of soil accumulated between the pavement 5551 and the bottom of the pits that cut it and the Stratum O-2 late phase cobbled surface 5529 above. The depositional processes that resulted in these layers is not immediately clear. Locus 5549, originally thought to be the surface upon which the jars sat, was made up of brown-grey soil with a few flat-lying sherds. The presence of the stone pavement 5551 and the scattering of flat-lying sherds suggests that this might have been an activity surface in antiquity and that the burial pits were coincidentally cut down to nearly this level. In fact, the person who dug pit 5552 may have stopped when s/he encountered the pavement. Locus 5544, above 5549, is very similar in soil color and density, yet it was richer in flat-lying bones, rather than the sherds more common in 5549. The soil in 5540 was a darker brown and finer in nature than in 5544 and 5549 and was largely sterile. Locus 5538 represents another locus of similar soil color but with many more flat-lying sherds, bones, and pebbles. The flat-lying sherds and bones suggest these layers represent successive courtyard or outdoor deposits as would be expected given the known architecture of early Str O-2.

Above 5538, loci 5530, 5531, 5532, and 5534 all lie at approximately the same elevation across square J/11, but were divided due to their relationships to the overlying cobbled surface 5529 and wall 5517. Locus 5532 lies to the west of the wall line of 5517. It was in this matrix that the very top of the last vessel added to pit 5553 was visible (see below). Locus 5530 represents the soil north and 5531 the soil to the south of the cobbled surface 5529. Both consisted of compacted brown-grey soil with very little pottery material. Locus 5534 represents the soil sealed by cobbled surface 5529. It was distinct from the other three loci in that the soil matrix was a sandier, dense brown soil with ash and chalk patches, a few worn tabun fragments, and a few burned pottery sherds.

In short, the presence of flat-lying sherds or bone at various intervals in the build up of this .60 m of material separating the stone pavement 5551 from the cobbled surface 5529 likely indicate that these surfaces were exposed to human activity for some amount of time, though it is difficult to determine how long. Locus 5540, defined by its different matrix and lack of ceramics and bone, could represent an episode of abandonment in which a finer soil was blown or washed into the area. It is also possible that this material could be intentional clean fill. While it is certainly too early to define Area O during the Middle Bronze Age IIB as an intentional burial
ground, as in the case of the necropolis at ‘College Site’ at Sidon, a clean sand fill was deposited on top of the EB architecture into which the Middle Bronze burials were dug. In truth, the depositional processes that created the loci between 5551 and 5529 could have taken place over two hundred years or even just a matter of weeks, in the case of intentional fills.

**Stratum O-2, late phase**

Later architectural constructions constituting the later sub-phase of wall 2520 include W2514-5517 in conjunction with W2513, cobble surface 5529, the jar/pithos burial pits, and possibly the stone installation 5543 built atop W2520. These constructions demonstrate one or perhaps two later architectural subphases within Str O-2. Both W2514-5517 and installation 5543 could stratigraphically belong to early Str. O-1 but because W2514 functions with W2520 and the associated pottery dates to the MBA it is considered a late Str O-2 feature. Stone installation 5543, while utilizing W2520 below, may well belong in Str O-1 (see below) but is presented here in Str O-2.

Wall 2514-5517, bonded to W2513, is attributed to the late phase of Str O-2. Walls 2513 and 2514 together utilize the underlying W2520 to create an interior space north of W2520. W2514 may arguably be assigned to Str O-1 as the bottom course is bedded at the same elevation as the proximate Str O-1 W2508.

Squares J-K/12, looking west; note the founding elevations of W2514 (Str. O-2) compared to W2508 and W2509 (Str O-1) (ABM17-O-102)
Square J/12, looking east; note how W2514 rides over W2520 and bonds with W2513 (ABM17-O-125).

However, given the clear association with W2520, W2514-5517 and the associated MBII remains, the wall is phased in Str O-2.

Extending to the north of Wall 2513-2520, Walls 2514 and 5517 divide the former courtyard/outdoor area into eastern and western spaces. Although the stone line between 5517 and 2514 is not complete, 5517 is on the wall line of 2517 at the same elevation, both wall segments rest on a cobble surface, and 5517 appears to represent the completed face or a corner with a few stones belonging to an abutting wall running east; thus 5517 is being interpreted as a continuation of 2514.
The portion of the wall between 5517 and 2514 was likely robbed out in antiquity. The wall line connecting 2514 and 5517 creates an architectural separation between the west area containing pits with burial jars and the eastern space in which the pithos burial 5554 is located.

Fragments of cobbled surface 5529 run just underneath 5517 and directly up to the floating level of 2514. The full extent of this surface was unclear. While it seems structurally unwise to build wall 2514/5517 directly on top of a cobbled surface, there was little soil present
between the cobbles and the wall stone suggesting that this is a possibility. This cobbled surface 5529 likely represents the use surface from which the pits containing the jar burials in the western and perhaps also the eastern half of the square were cut. Loci above the cobbled surface, 5521 and 5524, both contained Iron IIA pottery indicative of Str. O-1 demonstrating that the MBIIB burial pits were cut before the deposition of those loci. Cobbled surface 5529 seems to curve around what would have been the shape of pit 5553 in the western half of J11, suggesting that it was the digging of this pit that disrupted the cobbled surface. Wall 2514/5517, possibly a partition wall in an outdoor area, divides the space with jar burials occurring to the west of the wall line and the older sub-adult burial on the east side.

Burial pits from the level of cobbled surface 5529 cut through the .6m accumulation of courtyard/outdoor surfaces and pavement 5551 below/

Looking south; 5549 at ground level with pit (5553) containing Jars A and B (juglet) visible in foreground and pit (5552) containing Jars C, D, and E visible further south. Jar C is the easternmost jar, D the southernmost and, E has a grinding stone cover. Stone pavement 5551 is visible on the right side of the slide. Wall 2513 visible in right of image next to Pit 5552. )

None of the pit edges were detected in the heterogeneous outdoor/courtyard deposits into which the pits were cut however stones suggested the pit contours for all three pits, 5552, 5553, and 5554. Pit 5552, measuring approximately 1.5 x 1m and cut through the pavement 5551, held three jars (Jars C, D, and E in excavation records).
Based upon the presence of human remains visible in the field in Jar D, all three jars have been tentatively identified as jar burials. Jar D was partially excavated in 2014 as it is technically located in square J12 but was covered and left in the field at the conclusion of the 2014 season. During excavation this season, the baulk between J12 and J11 was removed to allow for full exposure of the context that existed to the north of wall 2513. The human remains visible in the field in Jar D appeared to be a mix of adult and sub-adult remains. This is similar to a jar burial excavated in 2014 under wall 2537, also including sub-adult as well as adult remains. Jar burials containing skeletal portions from different individuals have also been reported at Sidon. Large pieces of a mostly complete carinated krater with a ring base were used to create a covering or closure for the burial in Jar D. Jar C was slightly east and north of Jar D and did not include a covering. Jar E is north of Jar D and slightly smaller than C and D. It included a loaf-shaped upper grinding stone over its mouth. A few stones were bedded down around the jars, with a large stone, likely taken from the pavement cut by the pit, leaning against the north side of Jar E. All three store jars in Pit 5552 featured rounded bottoms and two handles. The rims of all three jars in Pit 5552 were removed, a practice well-known from other jar burials in the Levant. It is possible that rim joins could be found from the pottery collected in association with the pits or from the 5529, the cobbled surface from which the pits were cut. Jar C was lying on its side with its base facing east while Jars D and E, while also lying on their sides, had their bases oriented toward the west. All three vessels were oriented so that their handles were roughly horizontal, suggesting, perhaps, a sense of right practice in the placement within the pit. Jar C, the least well-preserved, probably in part due to its exposure in 2014, was approximately .55m in length. Jar D was approximately .50m and Jar E was .45m.
Although the shoulder of Jar D is wedged slightly underneath one of the stones in wall 2520/2513, this is not a result of the wall being built after the burial but of the slight expansion of the jar as it fractured, pressing some of the broken pieces under the edge of some wall stones. This placement suggested that the pit was dug directly against wall 2513, indicating that it was visible when the pit was cut. David Ilan’s analysis of burial practices at Tel Dan, approximately 11 km away from Abel Bet Maacah, suggests that infant jar burials are often interred near walls and sometimes feature a circle of stones around the burial. Both of these seem to be true in the case of the burials in 5553.

Sitting at the same approximate elevation as the jars in pit 5552 was another jar (Jar A) with an associated juglet (Jar B) in pit 5553.

![Pit 5553 with Jars A and B (juglet) (Kent 5987)](image)

The rim of Jar A had been removed and it was lying on its side with its base facing roughly north. Jar A did not have handles, unlike the jars in pit 5552, and was approximately .5m in length.

As the tops of all of these vessels were being exposed during excavation, it appeared they might all be sitting on a surface. However, further excavation revealed that all five vessels were sitting in two pits, 5552 and 5553, dug to the same approximate level. The constructed nature of the pit bedded with some small stones and at a similar elevation to 5552 suggests that Jar A likely contains a human infant and the associated juglet was a grave good. The shoulder of Jar A was bedded in a matrix of soil that had a high concentration of chalk or possibly plaster. This could have represented a small plaster construction or sealing on the vessel.

At a slightly higher level, less than 10 cm above the top of Jars A and B, was another jar containing the remains of a young toddler based on field evaluation of cranium size (Jar 1 in the excavation records). Jar 1 was on its side but with its mouth slightly elevated and its base facing
west. Jar 1, unlike Jar A, featured a join for handle on the preserved portion of its body but no handles were present. A small well-shaped and worn black handstone was placed in the opening of the jar. Jar 1, like Jar A, also featured a crude circle of bedding of stones, most concentrated around the shoulder and opening.

After discovery of the cranium in the field, the jar was returned to the field lab with the burial intact for excavation. The individual was buried with her/his head toward the mouth of the jar, positioned like a fetus in the birth canal preparatory to birth. Jar 1, originally thought to belong to an assemblage of jars sitting on a floor, is spatially on top of Jar A suggesting that both jars (Jars A, Juglet B, and Jar 1) belong to a single pit, with one supposed jar burial beneath a known jar burial.

Upper jar in Pit 5553 (Jar #1; confirmed to contain infant or toddler remains) and jar bases) (ABM17-O-136)

To the south and at a roughly similar elevation but slightly higher were the bases of two jars (Jars 2 and 3 in the excavation record). These two badly preserved bases may represent another pit, not cut down as deep, with poor preservation. Evaluation of bone material collected in association with these jar bases will indicate whether any of the remains are human.
It is worth noting that 2 of the 5 known and assumed jar burials from pits 5552 and 5553 included a grinding implement. Jennie Ebeling reports that small stone tools were found in infant jar burials at Hazor and Megiddo. In addition, both pits also featured crude stone linings or surrounding circles made of stone. The “College Site” excavations at Sidon offer a parallel for more than one jar burial in close proximity to another. It is difficult to know whether all the jars were placed in the pits at the same time or if either pit was reopened to insert another individual. Although a more comprehensive survey would be required to draw firm conclusions, it seems the best parallels for the particular aspects of these jar burials and the practices they represent are drawn from northern sites. It would be worth investigating whether Abel Bet Maacah’s jar burials fall within a northern burial tradition, distinct in some ways from more southern Middle Bronze Age sites.

An adult burial (5554), likely an adolescent based on field observations of bone size, covered with 2 layers of pithos sherds, was located on the east side of J11. This individual was oriented with her/his head toward the north facing west partially covered by a large jar sherd suggestive of a helmet.

The cylindrical juglet was also removed. Based on partial excavation, the skeletal elements and pithos extending to the south seem to have been disturbed, likely by the Iron Age burial 5550=2521 that cut into the Middle Bronze Age layers and lay perpendicular to burial 5554. In fact, some skeletal remains thought to belong to 5550 may actually belong to the individual interred in 5554 (see below). A small painted, cylindrical juglet was sitting within the pithos

9329, J/11, looking E, Pithos burial 5554 with ceramic “helmet”; note juglet on the top right (ABM17-O-185)
covering, a grave good belonging to this individual (Fig. 15). A second vessel appears in the baulk just west of 5554 and might also be associated with this burial but, due to the proximity of the two burials, could also belong to burial 5550. The soil matrix directly over the burial 5554 visible in the east section of square J11 is different, more homogenous and containing less stone and sherd material, than the material to the north of a small line of stones that lies north of 5554. This difference in soil is likely evidence for a pit dug for the burial.

Loci 5524 and 5525 represent soil just above the level of the cobbled surface 5529, to the east and west of wall 2514/5517 respectively. Locus 5524 was composed of clumpy brown soil with some stones. The stone material was likely loose or displaced stones belonging to 5529. Locus 5525, west of the 2514/5517 wall line, was a brown soil featuring fewer stones and more chalky material than 5524. The difference in matrix on either side of the wall line may indicate different use histories or depositional processes occurring on either side of the wall in a later phase of O-2.

In the last week of the excavation, the stubs of walls 2514 and 2508 in J11 were removed. A portion of 2508 had been removed in 2014 to better access the skeleton (5550=2521). 2508 was removed back to the 2513 wall line. The soil under the stub of wall 2514 was assigned to Locus 5547 because of the difficulty in associating such a small column of earth with the loci represented in the larger square. The locus was excavated in two baskets, one above locus 5529 and one below.

**Stratum O-1**

**Stratum O-1, early phase**

In K12, several activities are attributed to early Str O-1 before the construction of walls 2530 and 5511 based on the presence of IA pottery or an IA $^{14}$C date: pit 5536, the possible robber trench 5548, burial 5550=2521, and perhaps stone installation 5543.
Rounded pit 5536, measuring 1.3m in diameter, appears to have been cut from roughly the elevation of the stone installation 5543 (Fig. 4). The pit cut the chalky mudbrick detritus 5546 to the south and floor 2540 to the west, and approached W2520 to the north. The eastern extent is uncertain. Perhaps this was a rounded pit that was secondarily cut by the proposed robber trench 5548, or it may have been cut against the proposed robbed wall. IA pottery including collared-rim jars and Phoenician bichrome dates the pit to Str O-1. Pit contents included large sherds and significant portions of vessels (some baskets of which were kept for restoration) plus large cobbles (.2m in diameter and larger) that cluster in the center and along the eastern extent in what is labeled a possible robber trench 5548. Many of the cobbles appeared to be gently sloping down towards the west, especially the easternmost cobbles. Neither the reason for this pit nor the precise elevation from which it was cut was determined. Locus 5536, which covered and filled the pit, begins with the bottom of W2509 and the top of installation 5543 suggesting the pit was cut and filled before the construction of the Str O-1 walls.

The possible robber trench 5548 may pre-date installation 5543 as W2520 was no longer functional so the reconstructed wall that was robbed may have been obsolete as well. The area of the suspected robbers’ trench was initially designated 5542 “transition.” Both the matrix and the large cobbles are similar to the contents of the adjacent pit 5536 but the 5548 matrix is generally more compact. Many of the cobbles lie on a gentle slope down to the west, comparable to cobbles in 5536. The evidence for this trench (and a robbed wall) includes the single stone that may protrude from the southeast corner of W2520 towards the south, the clear cut in the compact chalky matrix of 5546 along the proposed wall line, the wall-like configuration of stones (larger facing stones) that protrudes to the north from the subsidiary baulk under W2509, the aligned of those protruding stones with the cut in 5546, and the more compact matrix of 5542 to the east of the proposed trench. The protruding stones in the north (from 2520) and the south (baulk under 2509) line up beautifully and would create a wall that runs perpendicular to (and is bonded with) 2520. As noted above in connection with the possible Str O-2 wall, no diagnostic pottery was retrieved from the proposed trench though LB and IrI sherds were in the upper elevation baskets designated 5542 “transition.”

The most intriguing Iron Age activity that may pre-date the Str O-1 walls is the human burial partially exposed in 2014 (2521)
The body (2521=5550) lies at what may be the base of the Str O-2 W2520, clearly below the elevation of the Str O-1 W2530. Analysis of the skull identified an adult male from the 10/9th c.!

Physical anthropologist Alon Barash completed excavation of the skeleton in 2017 and offered interpretations based on the field evidence. The individual was muscular but not particularly tall and a leg bone had broken and healed during his lifetime. Surprisingly, the individual lay on his stomach, face down, with his arms at his sides and under the pelvis and his legs together with toes pointed down into the ground. The leg position suggests that either he was wearing shoes that held his feet in place or his legs were tied together. The left arm, with bones that were cut but not severed (according to Claire), was positioned under his pelvis. His right radius and ulna(?) had been cut off and hand bones were found in the mudbrick matrix above the right side of his body. Additional bones, some identified as animal in the field, were found at the elevation of the the individual’s hand bones.
K12 looking north, severed hand bone with additional bones; stones of 5543 at bottom and baulk under W2530 at top (photo by E. Bloch-Smith)

This evidence suggests that the individual was ignominiously buried face down, perhaps with feet bound, arms positioned under his pelvis, with one lower arm hacked off and the second partially severed. He lay alongside the Str O-2 wall and the stone box 5543 but based on the 10/9th c. date must have been intrusive. No pit was noted at the time of excavation but it may have been partially obscured by W2520 and 5543 to the south and the later W2530 to the north. At the eastern end, two large cobbles of a cluster that continues to the east perhaps demarcated the southern end of the burial pit. The very compact, clean, light brown (mudbrick?) matrix encasing the bones (5535 = 2521) continues north into the baulk under W2530 and seemingly to the east under the cobbles.

In 2014, the K12 individual was thought to have been lying with his left hand at his side and his right arm extended in front of his head as finger bones were found to the west of his head. Pithos sherds on his chest and over his shoulder raised the possibility that this was a MBIIB pithos burial
J12, looking west, photo of upper body with overlying sherd (ABM14-O-92)

Additional pithos sherds protruding from the northern baulk of J12 under W2530 bolstered this impression. This season’s excavation answered some questions but raised others. The Iron Age burial apparently coincidentally cut into the burial of a MBIIB adult who was covered by or buried within 2 pithoi (with a decorated cylindrical juglet; see Fig 14 for the 2 pithoi, one inside the other). The pithos sherds thought to be associated with the IA individual derived from the MBA burial (Jar F, locus 5554) and the finger bones above the IA male’s head also belonged to the MBA individual. It is likely coincidental that the two bodies lay at exactly the same elevation, one from the MBA and the second from the IA, with proximate bones. Also coincidentally(?!), both bodies lie in the same seemingly continuous matrix, a clean, very compact, light brown mudbrick matrix (5535, 5549??) that covers the IA body and on which the MBA body lays. There was no evidence in the matrix of bricks or a brick cist construction. Pottery from this locus was only EB and MB, without the expected IA. Yet a further coincidence, both appear to have been buried in pits cut from above. Those burying the IA adult 5550 would have dug a pit that reached and disturbed a MBA burial and then laid their body at the same elevation with mingled bones and pithoi sherds.

The stone installation 5543 first emerged in locus 5523, roughly at the bottom elevation of the Str O-1 W2509.
J-K12, looking north, stone installation 5543 built atop W2520 (ABM17-O-104).

This installation is built into and atop W2520; the builders clearly knew and likely appropriated stones of W2520. Large stones (.40 x .25 m) with vertical faces towards the interior frame a rectangular space or box measuring .75 x .50m. The box sits on W2520 below with vertical facing stones placed against the southern face of W2520 on the south and overlying the northern face to the north. The overlying stones demonstrate that this portion of 2520 was no longer a functioning wall. Only small, seemingly randomly positioned cobbles remained in the interior space providing no indication of the installation’s function or subsequent use. No contemporary surface was identified so whether it was sunken below or rose above the ground surface is uncertain. The adjacent pit 5536 may have been cut from the elevation of the bottom of 5543. This pit contains IrII pottery and so definitively belongs in Str O-1 raising the possibility that 5543 may also belong in Str O-1. Locus 5523 surrounding the installation also contains IA pottery but depending on whether the installation was sunken or raised, the surrounding matrix may be an earlier, contemporary, or later than 5543. If a Str O-2 installation, then the stone box may be contemporary with the later MBA burials sociated with W2514=5517. If, however, 5543 belongs in Str O-1, then it would have been in an open area (early Str O-1) or near the center of the room bordered by walls 2508, 2509, 2530 and 5511 (late Str O-1).

**Middle subphase in Str O-1 (Walls 2530 and 5511)**

Walls 2508 and 2509 were assigned to Str. O-1 based on their preserved top (367.2, slightly below topsoil). Walls 2530 and 5511 are also preserved to the same height but they are bedded far deeper, roughly 366.4 or lower. These two walls may have been deeply founded to function as terracing walls. Both IA and MBA deposits north of W2530 are consistently at a higher elevation than their respective counterparts south of the wall. At each preserved connection, the Str O-1 walls are abutting rather than bonded. Wall 5511 abuts W2530 and W2530 in turn abuts W2508l a pit obliterated the relationship between 2508 and 2509. The deep
foundations of W5511 and W2530 plus rampant pitting explain the uncharacteristically large amount of MBA pottery in Str O-1 deposits.

Walls 2530, 2508 and 2509, forming three sides of a room, were identified as Str. O-1 walls in 2014. This season we uncovered the eastern continuation of walls 2530 and 2509, plus a new north-south wall 5511 that abuts 2530 to the north, and continues into the baulk to the south. A single stone exactly on the 5511 wall line to the north of W2530 suggests a wall continued on the line of W5511 to the north.

All these fieldstone walls are approximately .60m wide and built with large facing stones measuring approximately .20-30 x .20 m and a rubble core. A squarish stone at the eastern end of wall 2509 suggests a doorjamb. The resulting doorway between walls 2509 and 5511 is approximately one meter wide.

This season we added a 1.5m extension to the east for W2509. The construction technique, approximate size of facing stones and rubble cobbles fill remains the same as the previously exposed segment of the wall. Nicely faced stones at the eastern end form a doorjamb creating an approximately one meter wide doorway between walls 2509 and 5511.
Wall 5511 stands to 367.31 for the northern two meters and to 366.91 for the southern 1.9m. The reason for the differing heights is not apparent; all that remains is subsequent fills that covered the extant courses. Neither deposits over the wall line (5512) nor to the east or west evidence a disturbance that might have removed or displaced the missing courses. Deposits to both sides show no sign of terracing down to the south to suggest the wall was intentionally built to differing elevations.

No Str. O-1 floors or surfaces were identified within the room bounded by walls 2509, 2508, 2530, and 5511 either in 2014 or this season. Installation 5543 may be a Str O-1 construction that rests on the Str O-2 W2520 near the base(?) of the Str O-1 walls 2530 and 5511 but it too lacked an associated surface at either its base or its top. IA fills rose against and covered 5543. 5523, to the south and east, is the characteristic reddish-brown matrix with small cobbles. 5519, overlying the installation, was similar to 5523 but with large cobbles. Both these loci contain IrII pottery and so belong in Str O-1. 5527 to the north of 5543 (the locus above the skeleton and so possibly part of the burial pit) was a clean, dark brown matrix with pottery of EB, MB, LB?, and IrI, but not the expected IrII. Loci 5513 and 5519 fill the room above installation 5543. Both are reddish-brown with increasingly fewer cobbles and large and more numerous sherds and bones as you ascend. Pottery from both loci includes EB, MB, and IrII. Given the mix of pottery periods, the matrices are likely fills to level the area for a surface not preserved.

Given the disparity in elevation between the northern and southern halves of W5511, we watched for differing deposits east of the wall line. A difference between the deposits to north and south was evident only with 5526, a northern layer with small cobbles and sherds that didn’t continue to the south. Otherwise, loci at the same elevation, 5512 and 5514, and 5528 and 5533, were the same with no indication of a disturbance between them that would explain the missing courses or differential construction. A discontinuity was noted to the east of W5511 running east-west, on the line of W5545(?). A possible robber trench or poorly preserved foundation was suspected due to scattered stones and thick roots growing along an east-west line but no difference in matrix to the north and south or reasonably well-preserved wall face was detected.
K/12, east baulk, stones of possible intrusion ("transition" baskets) between northern and southern deposits to east of W5511 (Kent IMG 6029)

“Transition” baskets were kept along this line so the material has been isolated. The stones of the possible wall 5545 lie along this line, below the level of the stones preserved in the baulk, at an elevation of 366.85.
I-K/12, J-K/11, looking WSW, note the 3 stones of 5545 that protrude from under W5511 (roughly on the line of W2520 (ABM-O-196))

They protrude from the W5511 line at the bottom of our excavation. It is currently unclear if these stones represent a wall and if it was bonded to W5511 or ran beneath it (Str O-1, O-2 or O-3??).

The area framed by W5511 to the west and W2530 to the north should be within a structure but could be a courtyard. 5539, as well as 5533 and 5528 above are loose, light brown matrices with pebbles. 5526 differs from the loci above and below; the concentration of pebbles, small cobbles and sherds resembles an outdoor deposit. Locus 5514 above is a reddish-brown mudbrick detritus(?) deposit. All of these loci contained MB to IrII pottery so their attribution to Str O-1 is based on both stratigraphy and Iron Age pottery. It is noteworthy that down to 366.6 the deposits east of W5511 have been attributed to Str O-1 based on the presence of IrII pottery. By the same elevation west of W5511, the deposits are compact mudbrick material with EB and MB pottery. If W5511 does not continue down, for which there are preliminary indications on the western face and along the south face of W2530, then the mudbrick matrix should be expected to continue below and to the east of W5511. If the difference between matrices east and west of W5511 persists, then the deposits east of the wall could be a Str O-1 fill, a basement deposit, or a room terraced down to the southeast though the current ground level rises to the northeast.
Late subphase in Str O-1

Two pits may post-date the use of walls 2509 and the eastern extension of W2530. Pit 5515, .75m in diameter, was cut into the “doorway” between W2509 and W5511.

Sq K12, looking north, Str O-1 walls 2530, partially exposed 5511, 2508 and 2509 with pit 5515 at east end of 2509 (ABM17-O-038)

Stones at the surface and vertical sherds at the pit sides defined the pit’s contours. It was first detected near the preserved top of W2509 so it could post-date the wall or have been cut below the earliest surface. A nearly complete IrIIA storejar, missing its rim, filled the pit. If this pit post-dates the wall, it provides a *terminus ante-quem* for W2509.

A second pit may be responsible for the missing stones of the easternmost extent of W2530.
Not until the excavation of 5533 were baskets of the possible pit separated from the remainder of the locus (July 7, 10). The baskets were labeled “transition” within 5533 (and not included in 5539) but no locus number was assigned as there was no clear evidence for a pit. Comparable to the “missing” southern extent of W5511, all that remains are fills that cover the incomplete walls with no indication of what displaced the presumed stone courses.

In the area to the north of the W2530 line in square J11 and K11, Stratum O-1 is composed of three loci that represent a period of abandonment (5521, 5524, 5525) and then a thick deposition layer (5509 and 5522) composed of sherds, bones, and small stones. Loci 5524 and 5525 represent soil just above the level of the cobbled surface 5529 (belonging to Stratum O-2), to the east and west of wall 2514/5517 respectively. Locus 5524 was composed of clumpy brown soil with some stones. The stone material was likely loose or displaced stones belonging to 5529. Locus 5525, west of the 2514/5517 wall line, was a brown soil featuring fewer stones and more chalky material than 5524. The difference in matrix on either side of the wall line may indicate different use depositional processes occurring on either side of the wall in phase O-1. Locus 5521 represents a grey-brown soil with a few chalky patches that is sterile in comparison to the loci above (5509) and those below (5524, 5525).

The presence of Iron Age sherds in all three of these loci suggests that they should be dated to Stratum O-1 but, at this point, they cannot be assigned to any particular subphase. The character of the depositions, approximately .3m in depth, suggests that all three loci might represent the disturbance and accumulation consistent with the abandonment of the area at the end of the MB through the early Iron Age.
Above these presumed abandonment layers, is a coherent depositional layer of flat-lying sherds, bone, and fist-sized stones, called 5509 (equal to 5510 and 5518) in J/11 and 5522 in K/11.

5509/5522, 5516 in lower right (ABM17-O-001)

The pottery from this accumulation ranged from EB to Iron II in date (with one sherd of Islamic painted ware) and produced a number of uncharacteristically nice diagnostic examples for being so close to topsoil. In a few patches, especially in the west of K/11, depositional layers were evident. The characteristics of this locus suggest that in late phase Stratum O-1, the area to the north of W2530 line was an outdoor use space. In K11, this sherd, bone, and stone layer (5522) touches the uppermost courses of 2530, suggesting that this wall was visible and a physical barrier when 5509/5522 was formed. The only other related architecture for this phase in the outside spaces is a single course wall stub (5516) emerging from the northern baulk of J11, measuring approximately a meter in length that sits on top of 5509.

Stratum O-0

In square K12, L5508 a grey matrix with large sherds and bones covered the emerging walls 2530 and 5511. This locus, typical of an outdoor deposit, contained the characteristically mixed pottery from MB to IrII. Loci 5512, 5513, and 5514, located east, west and south of W5511 (and W2520) respectively, were differentiated by their relationship to the exposed wall segments, but all are the same matrix and probably represent the same deposition over the exposed walls. 5512 covered the expected extensions of W5511 to the south and W2509 to the east and so included potential robber trenches or other disturbances that displaced the expected wall stones. All three loci (5512, 5513, 5514) contained mixed pottery of mainly MB, LB, and
IA. 5520 in the narrow strip between W2509 and the southern baulk of K12 may belong with these fills as well.

**Topsoil**

Topsoil, which rose slightly in elevation towards the north and the east, covered the IA remains. The .2-.3m of topsoil over the three new squares J11 and J-K12 (5501, 5502, 5503) yielded pottery ranging from EBA platters to Islamic glazed ware with the majority, not surprisingly, from the MBA and IA. In K/11, a large, round, stone mortar was found sitting just below the ground surface but still in topsoil.

**ABM17-O-190: H-K/12, J-K/11 looking SE, large stone mortar in topsoil layer of K/11 visible in lower portion of image and sherd scatter 5522 also visible running up to W2530 (ABM17-O-190).**