Introduction

AA 515 consists of the entirety of plot 4, room 3 of Regio VI, insula i. It is the eastern of two small rooms attached to the north of the main large room of the "Stables" in the central portion of the insula (Figure 1). This room has been previously investigated (AAPP03, AA ), though this was a very preliminary excavation relegated to the western third of the room and largely only removed modern backfill. The western room, room 2, was found to have an intact cocciopesto floor with white tesserae accents. This flooring was not found in room 3, allowing further excavation of earlier deposits.

AA 515 was opened for excavation half way through the '05 season. Excavation was not completed, and so this report should be taken as an intermediate assessment of the phasing of the room. Further excavation is needed to develop a complete understanding of the phasing of room 3.

Phase 1

A single-construction meandering wall was built (SU 4), forming a small cubical space walled in on three sides. This feature was of opus incertum construction and increased in thickness toward its base (Figure 2). The final dimensions of the wall have yet to be determined as the base of the wall was not uncovered in 2005 excavation. No plaster remains were found covering the wall, at least not to the depth reached, suggesting that this construction did not hold water or any other liquid material. At the midpoint of the northern leg of the wall, a single, square beam hole was present, angled at
approximately 45°. This hole resulted from the placement of a wooden beam during the construction of the wall, as the mortar is formed around where the beam would have been seated and exhibits the impression of the tree rings in the beam (Figure 3). This beam seems to have been a permanent fixture in the construction of the feature, perhaps supporting a lid or roof. The purpose of this construction with its single beam is unclear. Perhaps it was a dry goods storage cellar. Further excavation will hopefully elucidate a clearer picture of the purpose of the feature.

At present, the feature is confined within the boundaries of final phase room, but the relative sequence of the walls and this feature remains to be seen as the bases of neither these walls nor the SU have been reached yet.

Phase 2

The feature SU 4 was put out of use and the area leveled up. It seems likely that at this point, the doorway in wall 33 would have been in use, but this is speculation as its threshold has not been reached yet. Presumably, this doorway and the window present in the same wall were in use at the same time.

While no finished surface or floor survives in the room, the remains of an earthen undersurface covered a large portion of the area and lipped over several portions of the feature SU 3 (Figure 4). Thus, this surface postdates and puts out of use the feature.

Phase 3

Phase three sees the construction of a thin, opus craticium wall defining the southern boundary of the room (wall 32). This wall had a very clear construction trench on its northern side (SU 11), cutting through the undersurface, SU 3, of phase 2, and presumably cutting through any surface that would have survived (Figure 4). This would be an appropriate phase to see the use of the doorway through wall 33 end, along with the window, and the construction of the brick quoining that creates the doorway in wall 32. Further phasing and information about this wall will be found with the excavation of the northeast third of the main room of the Stables. The threshold stones, SU1 are likely placed in this phase, but again, the seating for these stones has not been excavated at this point. No remains of a final phase surface or floor survive.
Phase 4

Phase four encompasses the modern repointing and reconstruction of the area. The southern wall (wall 32) was strengthened with a modern tile, stone, and mortar infill where the wooden beams of the opus craticium construction had been. Modern rendering obscures a good deal of the faces of the walls. Backfill from the 2003 season and previous years covered the area, along with custodi gravel.

Conclusion

Further excavation is necessary for the understanding of the complete phasing of the room. Additionally, excavation of the final third of the Stables, which abuts the southern wall of AA 515, is necessary to integrate the room into the overall phasing of the suite of rooms.