

A Prehistoric Site in the Rum area of the Hisma

by

N. P. Stanley Price & A. N. Garrard

The site briefly reported here was discovered by the authors in March 1975 on a visit to Wadi Rum in southern Jordan. The aim of this note is to put on record the location of the site and to take the opportunity of collating previously published reports of prehistoric sites in the Hisma region. Other sites in this area have been the subject only of very brief references by Kirkbride and Harding (with a note on the flints by Stekelis; 1947), Zeuner et al. (1957; Part II of this article was never published), Kirkbride (1960) and Copeland and Hours (1971). These reports together suggest that systematic survey work would result in the discovery of extensive evidence for prehistoric settlement in the region.

Location of the site

The site lies to the north of the road to el Mudawwara at 25 km. from its junction with the Ma'an—Akaba road, and at 7-8 km. beyond the turnoff south to the Wadi Rum (Fig. 1, No. 20; map reference 1975. 8976 (Palestine Grid) on 1:100,000 South Levant series, Sheet NH 36.R3 Akaba). It is to the east of a minor qa, unnamed on the map referred to, which lies between Qa Um Salab to the west and Qa Disa to the southeast and is at the foot of a large sandstone outlier immediately to the north of the new railway embankment. This outlier is one of several which are prominent features of the neck of land between the unnamed qa and Qa Disa. Along its southern foot

erosion has formed a shallow overhang about 70 m. long and a maximum 4 m. deep. Partly under this overhang and extending from it an area of dense occupation debris, c. 150m. by 30m., has been exposed by wind deflation of sand. This debris consists mainly of flint artifacts and waste material but also includes a number of sherds, ground stone objects and a few bone and marine shell fragments. At the southern foot of the adjacent outliers where the sand has been similarly deflated only a few flints were found.

Collection of Material

Since it was possible that the material exposed by deflation was lying in situ on the original land-surface, removal of finds was strictly controlled according to context. The majority of the material was collected from four quadrants based upon an arbitrary point to the south of the main overhang and a few finds of particular interest were removed from other areas. Among the large sample of material thereby recovered, there were no flints diagnostic of microlithic or earlier industries and the nature of the debitage was consistent with a neolithic or later date. Although some of the sherds were evidently of recent origin, a small number of badly weathered coarse wares could be contemporary with the lithic material, although again no diagnostic features of shape or decoration could be discerned. The sandstone arti-



Fig. 1. Prehistoric sites in the Rum area. Contour at 1000m.

facts included two fragments of grinding-slabs, one rubber with indented surface and a large semi-perforated fragment. Two perforated marine shells were found, one a cowrie shell with the dorsal surface removed and polished to make a pendant. Although far from conclusive, a neolithic/chalcolithic date would appear to be most consistent with the material recovered, which is available for study in Amman.

Other prehistoric sites in the Hisma (Fig. 1)

The following sites have been previously reported as having produced prehistoric material, mainly flints. Map references are given as published or where they can be deduced from published accounts.

1. Rubeik. Kirkbride and Harding 1947, pages 22, 25 and Plate 1. To the northwest of the area in Fig. 1.
2. Harabet al Abeyd. Kirkbride and Harding 1947, 21, 26 and Plate I. To the northwest of the area in Fig. 1.
3. Retama. Kirkbride and Harding 1947, 26. Precise location unknown.
4. Qeseir Medeifi. Kirkbride and Harding 1947, 26. Precise location unknown.
- 5., 6. Um el Qeseir. Approx. 195881. Kirkbride and Harding 1947, 16 and 26. Zeuner et al. 1957, 54. Sites 61 and 62.
7. Bir Rum el Atiq. 188900. Kirkbride and Harding 1947, 19 and 26.
8. Ain Abu Nakheileh. 188886. Kirkbride and Harding 1947, 12-13, 26. Zeuner et al, 1957, 54. Site 60 Kirkbride 1960, 231-2.
9. Ain Qattar. 187881. Kirkbride and Harding 1947, 15. Zeuner et al, 1957, 54. Site 59.
10. Um er Rassal. 192877. Zeuner et al, 1957, 47-48. Site 63.
11. Qa Um Salab. 191903. Zeuner et al, 1957, 48-51. Site 66.
12. Qa Abu Qureishi. 181903. Zeuner et al, 1957, 51. Site 67.
13. Ain Rum. Approx. 190886. Zeuner et al. 1957, 54. Site 58.
14. Khirbet Rizqeh. 178876. Kirkbride 1960, 233.
- 15, 16. Two sites near Jebel Rizqeh to the south of Wadi Itm el Umran. No references given, probably near Site 14. Kirkbride 1960, 232.
17. Khirdib Elfileh. 199880. Kirkbride 1960, 232.
18. Jebel es Salaka. 199908. Kirkbride 1960, 232.
19. Wadi Rum. 191896. Copeland and Hours 1971.
20. Hisma 20. 1975.8976. Reported above.

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