



*Dr Heather Jackson stands within the Area S at Jebel Khalid in front of one of the many ovens excavated in this area.*

ing at least one narrow chamber suggestive of a storeroom or arsenal (although no definite evidence of either has so far emerged).

The remains of a flimsy east-west wall and a further tan-nur (constructed from a broken pithos)—both uncovered in plot 101—represent late Hellenistic squatter activity (Phase IV) also seen in the Governor's Palace and Domestic Quarter.

## **AREA S** **Dr Heather Jackson**

Area S, perhaps a commercial area, is located on flattish land at the top of a path up the ravine from the river Euphrates, i.e. a convenient position for the portage of goods to and from river transport. The colonnade of a large public building facing east onto an apparently empty space had been found in previous excavations (1989-1993) but no complete picture had emerged either of the boundaries of that building or the surrounding building complex. The 2006 campaign re-opened excavation in this area and made some progress towards defining the complex to the north and west. This year (2008) we have established the northern and western boundaries, which enclosed the complex apparently without access on those sides. The western boundary wall acts as a retaining wall for a road

leading to the Housing Insula. The northern boundary wall, a thick double one with a drain on the exterior, lies almost across the mouth of a stone quarry, which was probably used for the building of walls here and in the Housing Insula: all the walls are of stone and not of mud brick, at least on the ground storey.

Inside this enclosure to its south is the building with the colonnaded front, which contains some originally very large rooms (subdivided in later phases), an inner courtyard and steps to an outer court facing east. A long N/S wall appears to divide it from a different complex to the north, which contains a row of symmetrically sized and placed large rooms opening into one another. These are neither shops nor domestic rooms – could they have been the offices of river transport officials or companies? A deep, rectangular pit cut in the bedrock in one room could have had an industrial use. The only domestic features found were several ovens but these largely belong to the third and last phase when a squatter-type settlement was in residence.

The 2008 team also excavated further east towards the river. Here a N/S street was found, probably serving the quarry. This area produced, on either side of the street, a maze of primary, secondary and tertiary walls, reflecting the three main phases of occupation. One room (T36) was used as a dump in the later 2nd century BCE, the date attested by a stamped amphora handle and several lamps from that period. A significant find in the same room was an Egyptian amulet of faience. Another highlight was the discovery of a fragmented wine press and stone vat, *ex situ*, in the courtyard area to the east of the colonnaded building. This indicates wine-making but not necessarily on a commercial scale. The function of Area S is still uncertain.

*Excavation underway in Area S at Jebel Khalid.*

