



Wedging was the main method of quarrying; here, a "wedge line" with spaced holes for injecting wedges

Situated far out in the Eastern Desert in Egypt, Mons Claudianus is one of the most spectacular quarry landscapes in Egypt. The white tonalite gneiss was called *marmor claudianum* by the Romans, and in particular it was used for large objects such as columns and bathtubs. Giant columns of the stone can be seen in front of Pantheon in Rome, and it was also much used in the roman forum; in fact, another name of the stone is for this reason *granito del Foro*. Even larger columns were left in the quarries due to breakage or other failures, and one can see all steps in the Roman production of columns. The rock must have been of particular good quality for making columns, due to the planar foliation which contributed in giving the columns high strength. In addition to the quarries themselves, the site displays logistical features and a fort and living areas for the work force. Mons Claudianus was excavated in the 1990's by the University of Southampton. It is possible to visit Mons Claudianus through tourist agencies ("desert tourism") in Hurgada. (Tom Helda)



Giant column left in the quarry



From one of the well preserved houses in the fort