

## Mysteries of Ancient China

ONE MIGHT assume that the title of this exhibition was chosen because nothing better could be thought up; in fact, it is exactly what it purports to be. The exhibition includes material ranging from the Neolithic period through to the Han dynasty, chronologically arranged, but by far the most interesting items are those which completely baffle the archaeologists. This comment is not intended to reflect adversely upon the knowledge or intuition of the scholars who put the exhibition together. It is simply that this collection includes some of the most inexplicable artifacts that this reviewer has ever seen.

Some of the most intriguing items are found in the room which houses material from The Sacrificial Pits of Guanghan. This collection is billed as "the single most remarkable Chinese archaeological find of the last decade", and its contents are described as being unlike anything else in China. Apart from some spectacular full-sized jade models of weaponry, finds include a great bronze statue, some eight or nine feet high, of a robed man with huge hands and an impassive expression. A grotesque bronze head has crazed bug-eyes and something strange balanced on its nose. A few rooms and centuries further on, a 5th-century BC bronze bird with antlers brings another surreal touch to the exhibition.

Most of the artifacts, however, are more straightforward. There is something in this exhibition for everyone. The textual descriptions are generally clear and do not assume prior expertise in the subject. Unlike many British Museum galleries, the display cases are not too cluttered. Artifacts range from the beautiful to the informative. Jade, silks, ceramics and bronzes are well represented. Han dynasty ceramic models of a grain silo

and a fortified manor are astonishing in their detail and preservation, and Prince Lui Sheng's full-body jade suit makes this exhibition a must.

Rob Carter

## Ground Penetrating Radar services

THE CLARK Laboratory at the Museum of London Archaeological Service, established in 1995 to provide archaeomagnetic dating services (see *LA* 7, no. 16, p. 448), is now offering ground penetrating radar as a second service. The technique can provide a fast prospection service to a depth of up to 10m, and is particularly good at detecting utilities and voids, as well as buried drums, tanks, etc. For further details contact Dr Bill McCann or Paul Mackie at the Clark Laboratory, Museum of London Archaeological Service, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB, tel. (0171) 410 2250/2237, fax (0171) 410 2201, email [ajclark@molas.demon.co.uk](mailto:ajclark@molas.demon.co.uk).

## Tebbutt Research Fund

THIS FUND was established as a tribute to the life and work of the late C. F. Tebbutt, OBE, FSA, and applications are invited, from individuals and groups, for grants towards research, including associated expenses, into any aspect of the Wealden Iron Industry.

It is anticipated that approximately £100 will be available from the fund and any interested person should write a suitable letter of application giving details of themselves together with relevant information concerning the research envisaged. Applications should be sent to Mrs Shiela Bromfield, Hon. Sec. WIRG, 8 Woodview Crescent, Hildenborough, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 9HD, not later than 31 March 1997.

*(continued from p. 83)*

A general outline of the book is as follows. The distribution of the Bronze Age mining sites is discussed and listed, a brief history (18th and 19th century) of earlier writings, excavation and research efforts is presented, the technology (ore vein geology/location), mining process; access to the ore's veins, fire setting techniques involved, types of tools used in the actual mining process (stone, bone antler, wood and basketry) are presented and discussed, ore concentration techniques and the smelting process of the concentrated ores (including lack of slag) at the Early Bronze Age mining sites is examined.

The main Bronze Age mining sites dealt with in the book are in south western Ireland; Mount Gabriel and Ross Island (both excavated by William O'Brien), in mid Wales; Cwmstwyth (excavated by Simon Timberlake (Early Mines Research Group)) and Natyeira, in north Wales; Parys Mountain (Timberlake and Early Mines Research Group) and Great Orme (excavated by Andy Lewis (Great Orme Exploration Society)) and in mid England, Cheshire; Alderley Edge.

In the final chapter William O'Brien presents a very brief discussion of the archaeometallurgical problems, both social and technological, which have emerged following the Bronze Age mine excavations and research work. He attempts to list some ways that future archaeological research work on these problems might be approached.

The publication is generally well illustrated, with excellent black-and-white photographs, excavated section drawings, artefact and reconstructed mining scene drawings and a chronological table.

As an introduction to current Bronze Age archaeological mine work it is a useful starting point. It is a pity that the shortness of the book does not allow an more in-depth discussion of some of the problems presented, there could have been longer sections on the problems of understanding fire setting (which seems to require a lot of logistic work and time for very little reward) and the general lack of excavated smelting remains (to date) near any of the Bronze Age mine sites.

Craig Meredith