



Excavating the site of an ancient copper mine at Chinflon

Fourth mine discovered at Chinflon

New significant discoveries were made by IAMS field workers last summer at Chinflon, in the mountains a few miles south of Rio Tinto where a "cottage" copper industry, with mines, smelters and nearby habitation, dating to the Chalcolithic period, was identified five years ago.

In previous work, three mining systems were investigated, one of which was completely excavated. Exploration has now revealed a further mine with four shafts leading into a large cavity, filled with washed-in material. Excavation has so far reached a depth of 10-12 metres, and more than 30 stone mining tools and numerous pieces of pottery have been recovered.

An interesting feature of the latest discovery is that it appears that the mine was cleared out in comparatively recent times — possibly at the beginning of the present century — with a view to assessing its production potential. The first mine excavated at Chinflon in 1978-79 was also refilled, but in this case the filling was done by the ancient miners, as they developed another enterprise alongside, by simply dumping their material into the old shaft.

The stone mining tools discovered at Rio Tinto

last summer are similar to those which have been found at Chinflon over the past five years, thus indicating that prehistoric copper mining in this part of Spain, though small in its operations, was much wider spread than hitherto assumed.

A preliminary report on the work done by IAMS up to 1979 has recently been published in *Scientific Studies in Early Mining and Extractive Metallurgy*, British Museum Occasional Paper No. 20. A full report will be published as an IAMS Monograph in 1982.

Ingots from Sea

Preliminary reports from the British Museum Research Laboratories, which have been examining ingots recovered from a ship wrecked off the coast of Palestine more than 2,500 years ago (see Newsletter No. 1.), indicate that the tin probably came from Spain and the copper from Cyprus or Anatolia.

Lead isotope research, now being undertaken at Oxford University, is expected to determine the precise origins shortly.