



A Roman Statuette

One of the objects found in the wreck of a Roman ship off the French Mediterranean port of Port Vendres was this small hollow bronze statuette, 115 mm long, of a male black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis*.

Writing about the find in *Antiquity* LIX, the finder, M. Dali Colls, of the Centre de Recherches Archéologiques Sous-Marines at Perpignan, with three collaborators, C. Descamps, M. Faure and C. Guérin, says that the detail of the bronze is so good that identification was not in doubt and 'we cannot doubt that the artist had seen a living example'. It is also in good condition; only the ears and a small piece inside are broken. It could

be dated from three coins found in the wreck: one has the head of Hadrian (117-138 AD), one that of the Empress Faustina the Elder, minted after her death in 141 AD, and the third that of Faustina the Younger, wife of Marcus Aurelius (161-176 AD). So the earliest date is the second half of the 2nd century AD.

The Romans used large numbers of wild animals in the circus which resulted in a considerable trade. They were probably brought, say the authors, from Egypt and the Sudan. The last appearance of a rhino in a Roman circus was very shortly before Roman influence ended in Nubia and the Meroitic kingdom.

Rat Catchers Extraordinary

Hamadryad, newsletter of the Madras Crocodile Bank, describes the newly formed Irula Cooperative's Rodent Control Programme, RATS (Rodent and Termite Extermination Squad) started last January with a grant from OXFAM.

'At a conservative estimate there are five rats to every human being in many parts of India'; the loss of food is enormous. The Irulas are a hunter-gatherer tribe who for centuries have hunted rats for food, and their astounding knowledge makes them the best rat exterminators in the world, as

many farmers in their area know well. But this is the first time that a systematic and scientifically managed service has been offered. The first year is being spent in research; after that requests for assistance are welcome.

When he is called in the RATS manager will assess the site to be worked and draw up a one-year contract. At certain times of the year he will take in a team of at least four Irulas who will dig, smoke out, net, spear and hand-catch the rats.