

**A Roman ring with an intaglio of Bacchus, from Revesby, Lincolnshire**

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This early Roman silver ring contains a finely carved carnelian intaglio with an image of Bacchus, the god of wine and revelry. Before discussing the intaglio's imagery in more detail, the early date of the ring (late 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC / 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD) is worthy of note. The issue of how quickly and completely the native Britons succumbed to Roman ways is complicated, but the classical imagery of this ring suggests that its owner had adopted Roman religion, or at least wished to make an outward show to that effect. Perhaps the original owner was not British at all, but an official who had come across from the continent, bringing his ring, perhaps itself an heirloom, with him?

The pale orange carnelian intaglio shows the standing figure of Bacchus (on the right), draped about his lower half and with a thyrsus (a pinecone-topped staff) in his extended left hand. His head is turned to the right to observe a naked satyr, who is bending away from Bacchus, but has his head turned back to face the god. The satyr holds something in his hand, which may represent a pedum (a shepherd's crook). A similar intaglio is known from Vienna, but in that example Bacchus is naked, and has a panther at his feet.

The cult of Bacchus is well attested in Britain, with hundreds of examples of Bacchic imagery to be found on mosaics, ceramics and on jewellery. The Lincolnshire museum collections feature a ring from Lincoln with a grotesque theatrical head which may have Bacchic connections, but this is the first item from Lincolnshire that the museum has acquired which features the clear image of the god. The ring forms one of a growing collection of objects from Lincolnshire which display such classical religious imagery.

The ring was discovered at Revesby, and was purchased with the kind assistance of the Friends of Lincoln Museums and Art Gallery.

