

**An Iron Age bronze boar figurine from Rothwell Top, Lincolnshire**

*Antony Lee, The Collection: Art and Archaeology in Lincolnshire*

Not all of the objects the museum acquires are fresh from the soil. This chubby and cheerful looking bronze boar statuette was found at Rothwell Top, near Caistor in 1990, but acquired by the museum in 2007.

It dates to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC / 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD, and is one of those most interesting of archaeological finds – one that spans two cultures, in this case late Iron Age and early Roman Britain.

The boar was a potent symbol of the Corieltavi tribe, who occupied Lincolnshire as well as most of the modern East Midlands. The image of a bristly, aggressive boar appears on their silver coins as well as on the famous Witham Shield, discovered in the River Witham in 1826.

Other examples of boar statuettes are known in Britain, but they invariably tend to be of the spindly, aggressive type that is seen on the coinage, not the more rounded, naturalistic image we see here (for example, see the boars from Hounslow, now in the British Museum). The prominent dorsal bristles and tusks still mark this boar out as a warrior's totem, just one produced by a sculptor with a better sense of porcine proportions, or at least one who valued the realistic depiction of the boar over one focussing on its aggressive attributes. Perhaps the style of the boar suggests that we are looking at a statuette made with the technical skill of Roman manufacture, but adhering to the belief system of the Corieltavi – the perfect example of the gap between two cultures being bridged.

This statuette is complete and free standing, so it was not made to be attached to a vessel or helmet, as other examples are thought to have been. Perhaps it was produced to be a votive offering, to be deposited in water as the Corieltavi did at the Fiskerton site, or to reside in a shrine?

The boar was purchased by the museum with the kind assistance of The Art Fund and the V&A/MLA Purchase Grant Fund.

