

Return of a Greek youth

Elsewhere in this issue of *Minerva* (see pp. 16-19) is a description and interpretation of a highly interesting bronze figurine of the god Hermes, recently acquired by the Manchester Museum through the good offices of James Ede, of Charles Ede Ltd, from the collection built up by the late Nicholas Embiricos in Lausanne. However, this was by no means the only bronze shown to the Museum by Ede, for Embiricos had excellent taste, and a liking for Archaic pieces. Among other items was a beautiful little bronze *kouros* of the early 6th century BC (H. 11cm): while Embiricos undoubtedly acquired him in good faith, further investigation showed that he had been looted from the museum on the island of Samos during World War II, or perhaps during the Greek Civil War that followed. He is listed in all three editions of *Kouroi*, the standard handbook on these statues by the American scholar Prof G.M.A. Richter, first published in 1942. To make the identification secure, the bronze figurine even shares the same blemish on the tip of his nose as in the illustration in that book; he is not an aftercasting, for the dimensions match exactly those given by Richter. After confirming that the bronze had not been deaccessioned legally,



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHARLES EDE LTD.

James Ede was able to return him to his proper keepers in the Greek Archaeological Service at a ceremony in the lecture hall of the Ministry of Culture in Athens on 16 June 2005.

The event was widely reported in the Greek and British press,

but such occasions have become a regular feature of archaeological life in Greece. The National Archaeological Museum in Athens has regular displays of objects that have been returned to Greece, and during 2008 there was a special exhibition in the

new Acropolis Museum in Athens of objects that had been exported illegally (usually after being looted from their findspots) and were now coming home. The inspired title of the show was 'Nostoi', a reference to the stories describing the returns of the Greek heroes from Troy. The exhibition was jointly curated with their opposite numbers in Italy for many of the objects had come from there, and it had already had a showing on that side of the Adriatic.

For myself there was an additional happy final twist to the story of the *kouros*. Last year I was leading a tour around the Aegean, which included a visit to Samos. Normally foreigners are forbidden by Greek law from lecturing or guiding on sites or in museums without a licensed local guide to accompany them. However, when I produced a newspaper cutting relating to the return of the *kouros*, we were immediately led upstairs to the display of bronzes: there was the little figurine, with a large label alongside announcing the fact that he had been returned by a British antiquities dealer. It was splendid to see him back in his proper home – and of course the ever-hospitable Greeks allowed me to tell his story to my tour group.

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