

# Arcadian enigma

**John Prag** examines a Greek bronze figurine in the Manchester Museum and explores the possibility that it is a unique depiction of *Hermes Tragophoros* – Hermes the Goat-Carrier



In 2001, the Manchester Museum received a substantial bequest from Professor Robert Cook, who had begun his teaching career at Manchester University in the 1930s before going on to Cambridge to become Laurence Professor of Classical Archaeology. It was not his first gift to the museum – he and his brother John, also a Classical archaeologist, had given several Greek vases in the past. The money was to be spent on Greek antiquities within seven years of his death in 2000.

With careful husbanding of grants and great help from James Ede, of Charles Ede Antiquities, I used the first tranche of Cook's bequest to

purchase a Corinthian helmet from the Charterhouse School collection, which was then being sold at Sotheby's. Four years later, not only was Robert Cook's deadline beginning to loom, but so was my own retirement from the Manchester Museum. Again with Ede's help, we purchased a small bronze figurine of Hermes, god of shepherds and flocks, messengers and heralds, and also of thieves (Figs 1, 2). Ede had acquired it from the widow of the Greek ship-owner Nicholas Embiricos, who had probably bought it in the 1950s or 1960s, though it may have been acquired by his father, a collector of antiquities since the 1920s.

The figure stands with the right leg advanced and both arms outstretched

**Figs 1, 2. Bronze figurine of Hermes, late 6<sup>th</sup> to early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Manchester Museum 2006.1. Acquired with supporting grants from the Purchase Grant Fund of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Manchester Museum Delta Travel Fund and Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society Fund. Photos courtesy of Charles Ede Ltd. H. 9.6cm.**