Romano-British bracelet terminal from Marton, near Gainsborough

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This small gold item is the broken terminal from a bracelet, in the form of a snake's head. The semi-naturalistic head is oval in plan and is very flat, with the details of the head marked out in low relief. A cross hatched section of the body give some indication of the decorative pattern on the remainder of the bracelet, which would have wound around the wearer's arm a number of times.

Snake motifs occupy an interesting position in Romano-British jewellery, with the design known mainly on rings and bracelets. In classical antiquity, the snake did not carry the same negative association with evil and deceit that it would later adopt in Christian mythology, and was instead seen as a creature connected with healing, regeneration and rebirth. The slender image of the snake associated with the healing deity Asclepius may form the basis for the jewellery we find in Britain. It has been suggested that bracelets such as this were worn by pregnant women as protective charms.

Such bracelets are usually found in bronze or silver, and this gold example is the first of its type recorded in Lincolnshire. The Collection has another, complete, bronze example from Ancaster in its collections. Bracelets such as these were a cultural import of the 1st Century AD, but this example could date to any time between the 1st and 3rd Centuries.

The Collection would like to take this opportunity to thank both the finder and the landowner for waiving their right to a reward and donating the terminal to the museum.