

Epicurean Rings / Jewelry / Coins / Mementos

Post by "Joshua" of March 25, 2020 at 8:49 AM

I've been poking into it as well. Early thoughts;

-He does have a daughter named Frances, but there can be no connection to Frances Wright.

-I thought this interesting; "Bligh wrote a best-selling book, "The Mutiny On Board the HMS Bounty". In it he portrayed himself as the ideal Commander of a happy ship, only to be betrayed by "hedonists" who wanted to lead a carefree life in Tahiti." If he's using hedonism as a charge, it doesn't bode well for positioning him as an Epicurean.

-Bligh was known as a strict disciplinarian, and not well loved by the men under his command. Nevertheless he did command occasional loyalty: the history of the ring itself (below) is evidence of that.

-The ring is carved from Bloodstone, and set in gold by a London jeweller. The ring-box gives the jeweler's name, but does not identify the name of the figure.

-After Bligh's death, the ring was given by his daughters to a George Sutton, who had traveled at great personal trouble and expense by sea to testify on Bligh's behalf. The ring was a belated token of thanks to an old friend.

-Bligh's grave features an "eternal flame" sculpture, but not any prominent cross insignia that I can see.

-Now for the figure itself; the man is bearded, with a subtly aquiline nose and a full head of hair. The style is evidently Greek; either the figure was Greek himself, or perhaps a Roman from the Imperial period with Greek pretensions. If the latter, perhaps Marcus Aurelius or Hadrian, both Hellenophiles who were portrayed with beards.

If the former, probably Epicurus. Another possibility is that the ring *is* Epicurus, but the man who wore it had a different view. Maybe he fancied that the figure was Homer; a natural icon for any sailor. Perhaps he thought it was Xeno of Citium. There's a story on reddit about a young man with a large tattoo of Epicurus, which he got on accident thinking it was a Stoic. (Ha!)

No classical figure has been more prominently associated with cameo rings than Epicurus. For that reason, and the similarity with known rings and statues, I suspect that the ring *is* Epicurus. The mysteries that remain; why this Englishman, so abused by public life, should have persisted in it against the advise of the man on his finger-ring.

If we want to know the answer to these questions, we'll need further research into his life and times.