A while back we reported that the Trust had acquired the 1971 Tolly Cobbold trophy, in the form of a silver (hallmarked Edward Barnard & Sons Ltd, London, 1971) replica of the Bacchante figure after the original bronze statue by the American sculptor Frederick MacMonnies, mounted on a turned wooden base, set with a silver plaque.

He was awarded a gold medal at the Paris Exhibition of 1900 and his exhibit was purchased by The Hon. Douglas Tollemache who shipped it back to London and, in 1920, registered it as his company’s trademark. The image appeared on many beer bottle labels and was widely used for promotional purposes.

The Bacchantes were female devotees of Bacchus (Dionysus), the Graeco-Roman god of wine. In Greek culture they were known for the wildness of their cult ceremonies, but by the eighteenth century, images of dancing Bacchantes were generally used for more decorative purposes.

In 1930s / 1940s American culture the name ‘Bacchante Girls’ was given to good looking, leggy hostesses with sheer skirts who served drinks and company to patrons of the sunken bar at the Biltmore Hotel in Providence, RI.

The Frederick MacMonnies figure, which has a bunch of grapes in her right hand and a child who seems to be showing an unseemly and premature interest in those grapes in her left, underlines the frenzied behaviour recounted! Perhaps those sources which credit Dionysus as the god of intoxication are right.