

## 13. Sculpture

*A. T. Croom*

1. Relief of Mercury (L:110mm and 80mm W:140mm B:85mm).  
North-east buildings, Anglo-Saxon cemetery, 3754, S185 S198 (*fig. 13.1*)

Small rectangular sandstone block with relief of Mercury, now broken into two non-joining fragments and slightly burnt. The sides and base are smoothly worked, while the back has visible tool marks. The figures stand on a plinth decorated with a groove on the front that does not extend round the sides. Mercury stands against a raised rectangular feature, one edge visible behind his right shoulder and the other hidden behind the *caduceus*, but this feature has disappeared before it reaches his feet and its significance is unclear. He holds a very large *caduceus* in his left hand while his right arm is held out away from his body. His feet rest on a semi-circular mound and there is a cockerel to the left and a goat to the right (the goat, however, is carved with an object against its back making it look more like a Pegasus). Both fragments of the relief are chipped in places, and Mercury's face has been deliberately removed, but it is clear that even before damage and weathering the sculpture was never very detailed.

Mercury is one of the most popular classical deities in Britain, possibly because of his wide-ranging roles as the messenger of the gods, the god of trade and of profit, patron of thieves and of travellers, protector of cattle herds, and escort for the dead on the way to the Underworld. On the northern frontier only Jupiter, Mars and Victory (all deities popular with the military for obvious reasons) have more surviving representations. A larger and finer relief of Mercury is already known from

Newcastle (*CSIR I.1* 205), found 'on the crest of the hill during excavation of the foundations for the High Level Bridge' over the river (see B on *fig. 1.1*).

2. Decorated stone (L:410mm W:290mm B:140mm).

*Via praetoria* (north), Anglo-Saxon cemetery, 538, S52 (*fig. 13.2*)

Fragment of sandstone with no surviving original edges. There is an incomplete, probably triangular motif (and possibly a second although the stone is worn at this point) similar to a pediment or ansate made of stepped mouldings and a hollow centre. It is slightly unusual in that the end has been cut off square rather than left pointed. Between the features is a multi-petalled rosette. Both elements are flanked by a rectangular-sectioned moulding to one side and a small half-round moulding on the other. Rosettes are often used as a space filler (*e.g. CSIR I.4* 148, 154, 155; *RIB I*, 1334; pl. IV, no. 110) and stepped mouldings as panel borders and pediments (*e.g. CSIR I.4*, 148, 149, 155, 156).

3. Phallic symbol (L:160mm W:360mm B:190mm).  
*Principia*, primary wall, 54C, S68 (*fig. 13.2*)

Incomplete rectangular stone, with incised phallus. The front, one side and upper face are smoothly worked, while the others have fractured, uneven faces, sometimes with tool marks. The front face is worn, and the incised decoration is very shallow. Building stones carved with a phallus, either in relief or incised, are frequently found on military sites. The symbol brought good luck and warded off the evil eye.

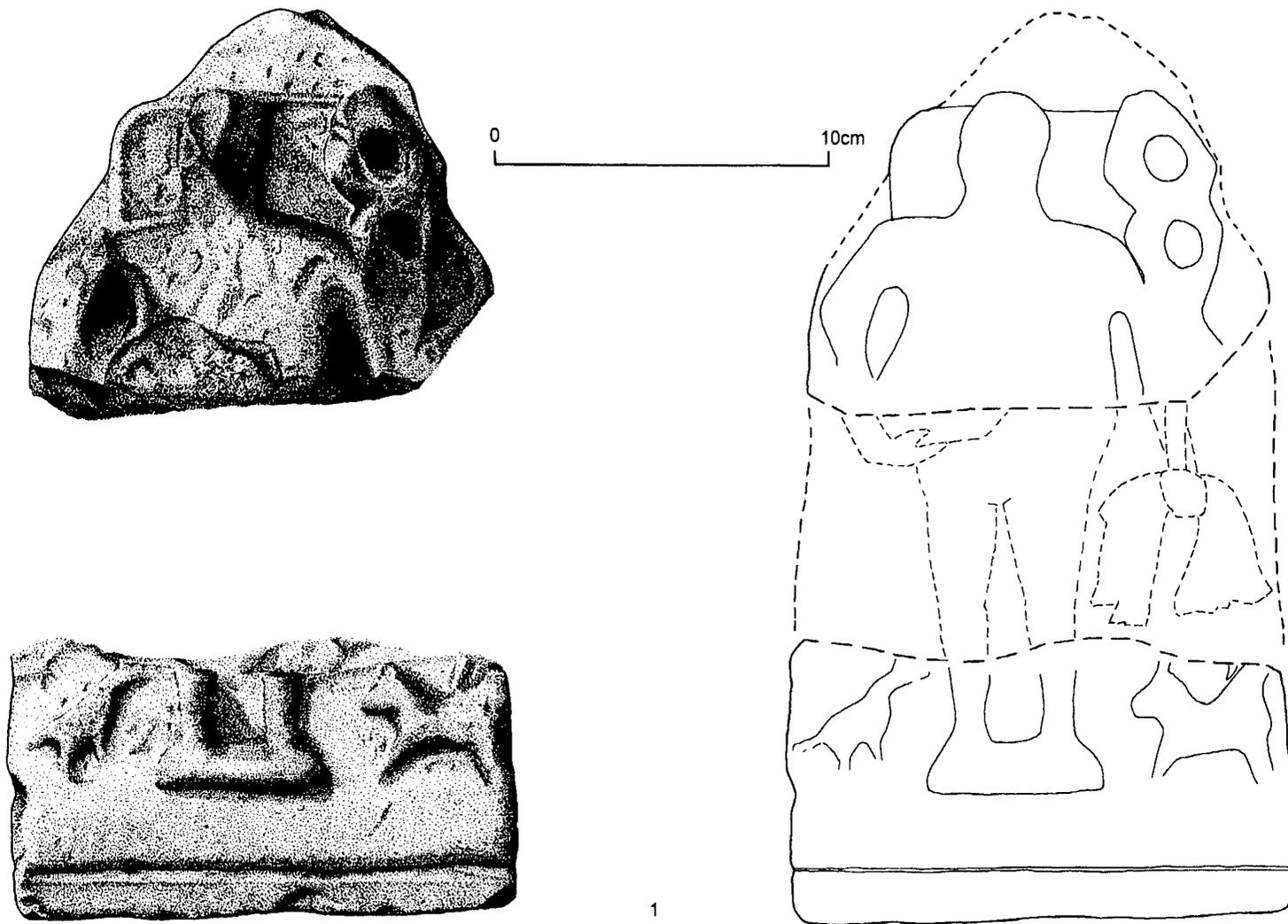
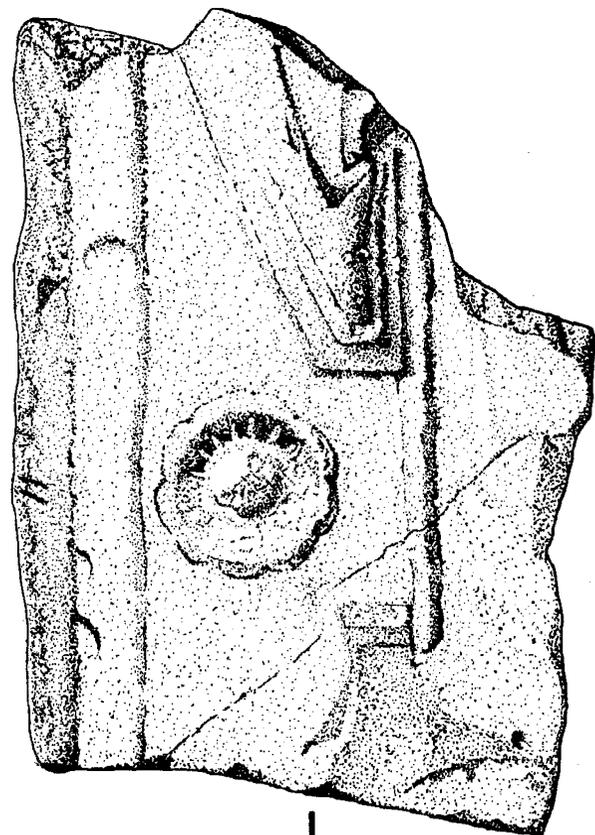
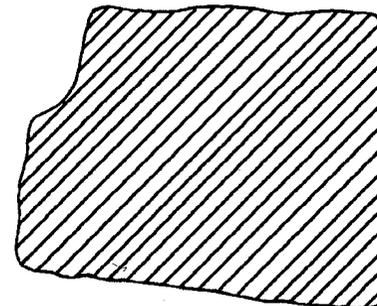
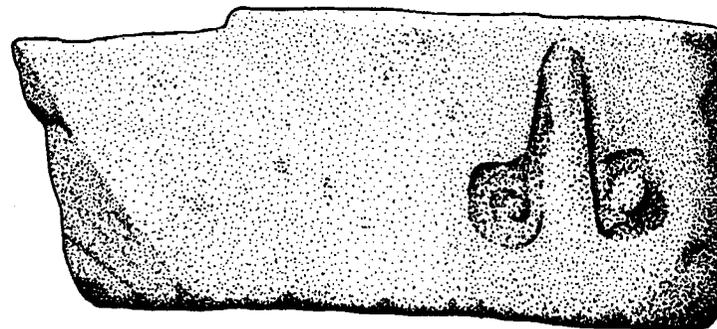


Fig. 13.1 Relief of Mercury. Scale 1:2.



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Fig. 13.2 No. 2, decorated stone; no. 3, stone with phallic symbol. Both at scale 1:4.

