

# *Metropolitan styling: figurines from London and Colchester*

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### **Metropolitan Styling. Metal figurines from London and Colchester**

Emma Durham

London and Colchester have produced the two largest collections of metal figurines from Roman Britain, including a number of types which are not found anywhere else in the province. As one might expect, these assemblages are varied in both composition and style, reflecting the religious and artistic life of Roman London and Colchester. There are particular differences in the proportions of certain deities such as Apollo and Harpocrates, and in the patterns of deposition within the two cities which reflect differing populations and styles of worship. This paper will discuss the composition and distribution of the two assemblages, and then examine a particular group, those associated with the worship of deities of Eastern origin such as Isis and Harpocrates.

#### **The composition of the assemblages**

The 87 metal figurines from Greater London form the largest group from any single site in Britain, and represent 8.8% of the entire British assemblage (Durham 2012). An additional eight figurines which have been found in the Greater London area are also considered here (but not included in Table 1) as they are all located on or near roads leading out from the city. The collection from Colchester is somewhat smaller, consisting of 50 figurines (5% of the whole assemblage) from the immediate area of the Roman town. A further ten come from locations outside the town, including three figurines from the Lexden tumulus, one from Gosbecks Farm and three from the temple at the Royal Grammar School.

The types represented in the groups from London and Colchester are listed in Table 1. There are multiple examples of some classical deities such as Hercules, Mars, Mercury and Minerva, but only single representatives of other less popular deities. The cosmopolitan nature of the London population is emphasised by the presence of imported 'genre' pieces

such as gladiators. In addition there is a variety of birds and animals, many of which are associated with particular deities, such as the cockerel and goat with Mercury.

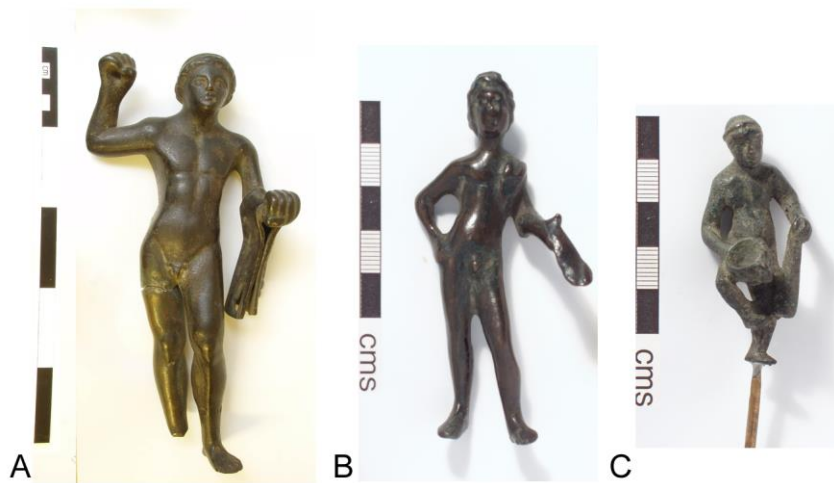


Figure 1. Hercules figurines. a. Durham 2012, no. 86 from Colchester (with kind permission of Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service, accn no. COLEM 1936.900); b. Durham 2012, no. 1045 (with kind permission of the Museum of London, accn no. 2076); c. Durham 2012, no. 1064 (with kind permission of the Museum of London, accn no. 59.94/39)

### *Hercules*

The two most common deities among the Roman figurines from London and Colchester are Hercules and Mercury, who were also the most popular deities in the rest of Britain as well as Gaul (Boucher 1976). Hercules forms the largest single group among the male deities from London, while he is second to Mercury at Colchester. Two probably imported figures are an archer from Queen Street, Cheapside (Henig 1995a, 81; Durham 2012, no. 169) and, from a mid-first century context at Swan Street, Southwark, a seated Hercules with a lion skin draped over his left arm and shoulder (Beasley 2006, 33, fig. 9.11; Durham 2012, no. 816; Wardle unpublished report).

One of the most common depictions of Hercules shows him with his left arm outstretched and draped in a lion skin while his right arm is raised and holds a club (Fig. 1a). Six figurines from London and all five Hercules figurines from Colchester (Durham 2012, nos 84–88) show him in this stance.

There are three further examples of Hercules from London — two (nos 714 and 1045) depict him as a clean-shaven youth with his right hand resting on his hip and the left arm outstretched and draped with a lionskin (Fig. 1b). One (no. 1064) depicts Hercules standing

with his right foot resting against the left calf (Fig. 1.c). He wears a cap and holds a club in his left hand and a two-handled cup in the right. This is the only example of a Hercules in this style in Britain, but there is another standing Hercules holding a club and cup from Gaul (Rolland 1965, pl. 105).

### *Mercury*

Mercury is the second most common figurine type in London, but forms the largest group in Colchester. He is usually shown standing, wearing a *petasos* or with wings springing directly from his head, often with drapery over his left shoulder and arm and holding a purse in his right hand. Like Hercules, the style and quality of production varies from highly classical forms through varying degrees of stylised examples (Durham 2012, nos 9 and 43).

There are also two examples of Mercury wearing a *petasos*, fully draped with a purse in his right hand and a *caduceus* in his left (Durham 2012, no. 36 from East India House, London; Crummy 2006, 60, 67, fig. 29 no. 4, pl. 6; Durham 2012, no. 1041 from St Mary's Hospital, Colchester).

The final form of Mercury depicts him reclining with *patera* in his right hand and *caduceus* in his left (Durham 2012 no. 35). The figurine from London is the only example of this form in Britain. In addition to the figurines of Mercury, three *caducei* have been recovered from the temple at St Mary's Hospital in Colchester (Durham 2012, nos 1038, 1039 and 1040).

### *Apollo*

Figurines of Apollo are not found in any great number in Britain, but there are four definite and two possible examples from London. No figurines of Apollo have been found in Colchester. Identification of Apollo can be difficult as he often lacks obvious attributes, but he is generally depicted as a nude, youthful, standing male, such as two examples from the Thames (Durham 2012, nos 11 and 18). One of two figurines which have been published as Mercury but could be Apollo is a fragmentary figure wearing only a baldric and holding an object against his left side (Green 1976, 224 no. 63; Pitts 1979, 54 no. 26; Durham 2012, no. 39 from the Royal Exchange).

### *Mars*

Mars is not common in either London or Colchester and is represented by only three figurines from London and one from Colchester. Two stylised pieces depict Mars in classical form

with a helmet, short kilt, cuirass and greaves (Durham 2012 nos 23, 33). Of more interest is a figure which is similarly attired to the previous examples but depicted in a naïve style (Durham 2012, no. 24). It is the only example of a naïve figurine in London and is remarkably similar to an example from Tiel in the Netherlands (Jitta *et al.* 1969, 80 no. 33), which may suggest that the two come from the same workshop. The single Mars figurine from Colchester is a typically classical piece, but the execution is slightly stylised (Durham 2012, no. 26). It shows a nude Mars wearing a large crested helmet, with his right hand raised to hold a spear, and is the most common form of Mars in Britain.

#### *Other male deities*

The final male deities are both of the type that one would expect to find displayed in a family *lararium*. One is a togate *Genius paterfamilias* from London and the other two are Lares from Swan Lane, London and Colchester (Durham 2012, nos 113, 103 and 107). The Genius shows the fully draped male typical of these figurines. The Lares both depict a youth in a tunic with overfold and sash and are examples of the *Lar Compitalis*, a dancing figure associated with boundaries in Rome (Alcock 1986, 115). It is interesting that in such large groups there are only three examples of these family gods. As Alcock (*ibid.* 129) points out, the use of these figures in Britain would be associated with Roman concepts, and one cannot know how widespread the idea of Genius was, even among the more Romanised sections of society.

#### *Minerva*

In comparison with the 47 male deities from London and 20 from Colchester, only 12 figurines of female deities have been recovered from London and eight from Colchester, and among the female deities only Minerva and Venus are depicted in any number. London and Colchester are, in fact, the only sites in Britain from which more than one figurine of Minerva has been found. One example from Isleworth, Greater London is seated (Durham 2012, no. 119), while the five from within London itself and Colchester are standing and follow the conventions for the majority of Minerva figurines as they are dressed in long gowns, four have additional drapery and four also wear the aegis and Corinthian helmet (Fig. 2; Durham, 2012 nos 120–124, 1117, 1150). All three of the London figurines which still have arms have the right arm extended (two hold a patera, the hand of the third figure is missing) while the left arm is raised, but both Colchester examples have a raised right arm and lowered left.



Figure 2. Minerva figurines. A. Durham 2012, no. 124 from Colchester (with kind permission of Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service, accn no. COLEM 1925.5062; b. Durham 2012, no. 120 (British Museum, accn no. 1853.0502.16)

### *Venus*

Only two Venus figurines have been found in London, but there are five examples from Colchester. One from Southwark is a Venus Pudica who stands with her left hand covering her groin (Durham 2012, no. 144). Three others (Durham 2012, no. 131 from London Bridge, 136 and 138 from Colchester) depict Venus Anadyomene as she rises from the sea and wrings the water from her hair. Examples of both of these types are found throughout Britain.

Two Venus figurines from Colchester are more unusual. One depicts a standing Venus (Durham 2012, no. 137). She holds her right hand out, palm up, while in her left hand she holds an apple. One other British Venus from St Albans (Durham 2012, no. 132) is depicted in a similar stance with an apple or pomegranate in her hand, but other examples of this form are found on the Continent. Finally, one Venus is in poor condition and poorly executed, but is seated and holds what appears to be a mirror in her right hand (Durham 2012, no. 139).

### *Human figurines*

Apart from the deities and worshippers described above, a number of figurines depicting human characters have also been found. Of particular interest are the two gladiators, kneeling barbarian and rider from London (Durham 2012, nos 170–173). The heavily armed gladiators are of a type which is found elsewhere in Europe but no others have been found in Britain. Similarly the kneeling barbarian with his animal skin cap is unparalleled in Britain, but there

are continental examples and this figurine was probably imported. Images of barbarians are common in the Roman world, especially on coins and military items, but less so in private art (Ferris 2000, 3). However, they are depicted in statuary and on friezes either dying or being killed in battle (e.g. *ibid.* figs 1, 10 and 40) or as captives (e.g. *ibid.* figs 11, 16 and 18).

Barbarians were also depicted in less trying circumstances, and a rider with a beard in thick locks, long moustache and corkscrew hair and holding a circular shield is another unusual and effective piece (Durham 2012, no. 172). He has been identified as an African or Indian elephant rider and is one of three known examples which were probably produced in Italy in the mid-second to third centuries (Eckardt 2014, 83–4).

Two interesting human figurines have also been found in Colchester. The first is a priapic comic actor from the Cups Hotel (Durham 2012, no. 177). The figure wears a mask, the top of his head is bald and his ears are large. His hooded tunic gives him a rather hunchbacked appearance, which is further emphasised by the loose folds of the tunic across his chest. He is shown lifting the hem of his skirt to reveal a large, erect phallus, and a pile of fruits is placed on top of the folds of the skirt. His feet are on a small, flat, rectangular base, and he does not stand upright but leans backwards slightly. Another similar Priapus holding the fruit in his hands rather than on his cloak was recently found at Thorrington, Essex (Worrell and Pearce 2011, 425 no. 20, fig. 21) and a number of figurines on the Continent show the same theme.

The second figurine was recovered during excavations at St Mary's Hospital and shows a draped priestess with her right arm raised to hold a missing object (Durham 2012, no. 1042) and in her left hand she holds a purse or pot. Crummy (2006, 61) believes the object is a purse, and thus favours an association of this figure with Rosmerta, the consort of Mercury. Meanwhile Black (2008, 10) believes that the object is a pot and so suggests a link with Nantosuelta, consort of Sucellus. Whichever is correct, there seems little doubt that this figurine is meant to portray a priestess or deity associated with Romano-Celtic religious beliefs.

### *Birds and animals*

Finally there are the small groups of birds and animals (Table 1). Many birds and animals are associated with particular deities: cockerels, goats, rams and tortoises with Mercury, peacocks with Juno, panthers with Bacchus and snakes with Aesculapius. Dogs and snakes are associated with healing and snakes also with rebirth and the afterlife (Toynbee 1973, 123, 234). Some figurines, such as the cockerel from Hunt's House, Southwark (Taylor-Wilson



2002, 56, fig. 41.1, fig. 25) or tortoise from Balcerne Lane, Colchester (Crummy 1983, 143, fig. 173 no. 4273) could have been part of groups such as the Mercury from St Albans who is accompanied by a ram, cockerel and tortoise (Durham 2012, no. 55). It is also interesting to note that, given the number of eastern figurines in London, while the goose is perhaps more often associated with deities such as Venus or Juno, it is also associated with Isis and Osiris (Toynbee 1973, 263).

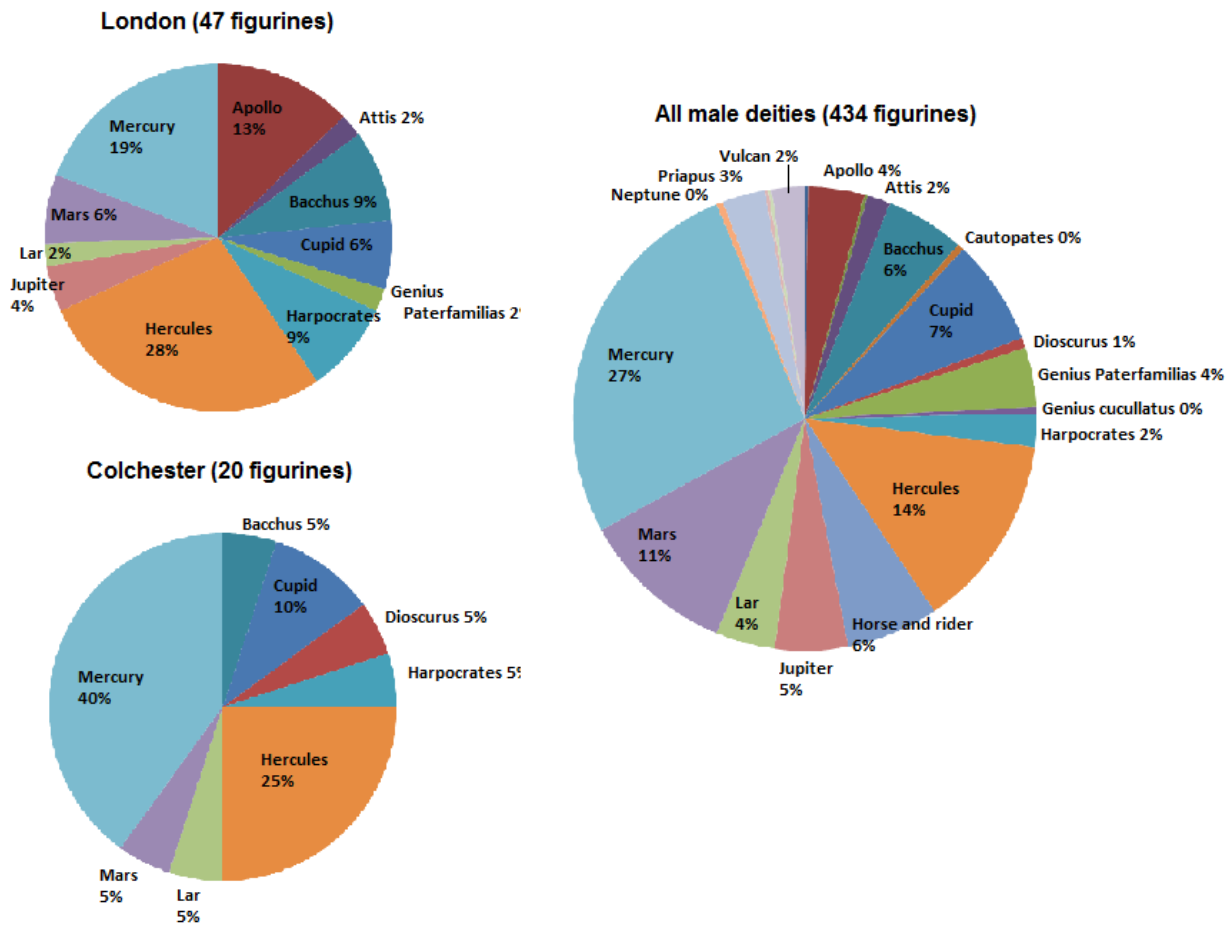


Figure 3. Proportions of male deities from London, Colchester and Britain

### Discussion of the figurine assemblages

In comparison with other large towns in Britain, London stands out not only because of the large number of figurines but also the variety of types represented and while Colchester has a slightly smaller collection of figurines it exhibits a similarly large range of forms. The proportions of the various male deities from London, Colchester and all of Britain are shown

in Figure 3. Hercules and Mercury stand out as the largest groups in all three charts, but the number of Hercules figurines from London and Colchester is particularly high. The only other site from which more than two Hercules figurines have been recovered is St Albans, which indicates a certain popularity of Hercules among the urban population, many of whom may also have been immigrants.

Bird (2008) has recently discussed the evidence for the worship of Hercules in London, citing images in stone, on samian and wall plaster as well as the copper alloy figurines shown here. She points out that, apart from his presence on a monumental arch, fragments of which have been found reused in the Roman riverside wall, and a wall painting from Redcross Way, Southwark, all the finds are of a personal nature (ibid. 139). While we know that three figures are from north of the river and two from Southwark, the lack of a good provenance for the majority does not allow the identification of any clusters that might indicate the presence of a temple.

The proportions of Mercury figurines from the two towns are quite different, and London has a relatively small number of this type. Mercury forms 40% of the Colchester assemblage of male deities, which is due in part to the large number of figurines associated with the temples at the Balkerne Gate (Crummy 2006). Meanwhile the smaller proportion of Mercury figurines in London is offset by the relatively high numbers of Apollo and Harpocrates. While no figurines of Apollo have been found at Colchester, the six from London represent 35% of the assemblage of Apollo from Britain. Like London, Colchester has examples of some of the rarer Eastern figurines such as Harpocrates and the sphinx. There is, however, a concentration in London and the four Harpocrates represent 40% of the total number of Harpocrates from Britain. This concentration of Eastern figurines is in contrast to the lack of one of the better known British types, the horse and rider, which is completely missing from both sites.

The female deities present a rather different picture (Fig. 4). It is immediately obvious that the groups from London and especially Colchester are rather less diverse. However, in spite of the small total number of female deities from these towns, they make up a slightly higher proportion of the figurine assemblages than that for Britain as a whole (London 14%, Colchester 16%, Britain 12%). Both towns contain concentrations of a particular female deity. Minerva is by far the largest group in London (42% of female deities), and the five figurines comprise 15% of the total from Britain. Meanwhile, the largest group from Colchester is Venus (62% of female deities), representing 17% of the total number from

Britain. However, Venus is rather under-represented in London, forming only 17% of the female assemblage there.

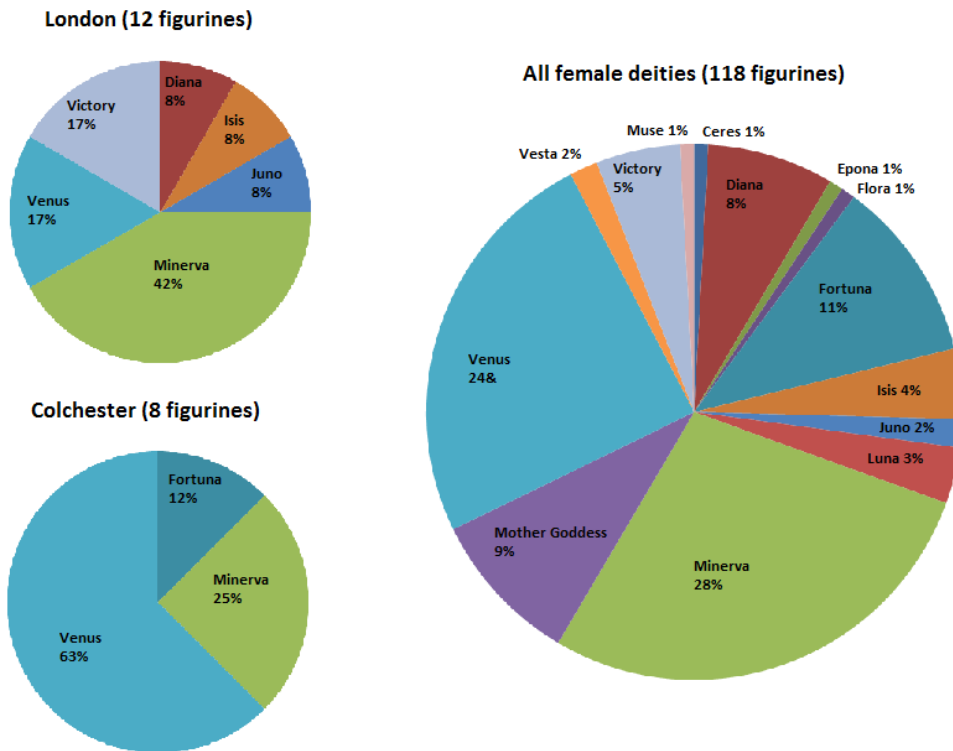


Figure 4. Proportions of female deities from London, Colchester and Britain

Finally the assemblages of birds and animals from these two sites are also rather different. Birds and animals represent 29.6% of the total figurine assemblage from Britain, but comprise only 13.8% of the assemblage from London, and thus are somewhat underrepresented. There are only single examples of all species except the goat and goose in London. Meanwhile birds and animals form 30% of the Colchester assemblage, which is almost exactly the same proportion as in the national assemblage. Given the high number of Mercury figurines from the town, it is not surprising that many are associated with this god, and include two goats, a ram, a tortoise and three cockerels. However, the second most common bird in Britain, the eagle, which typically associated with Jupiter and the military, is not found at either London or Colchester.

The quality of the figurines from the two sites is also quite different. No examples of highly classical figurines have been recovered from within Colchester, but a total of 11 come from London. This represents 12.3% of the assemblage from London, while in Britain

figurines in these two styles comprise only 5.1% of the total assemblage. In contrast, the number of stylised figurines in both London (11%) and Colchester (6%) is lower than that found in the total assemblage (14.1%). Thus the assemblage from Colchester is one in which moderately well executed provincially produced pieces dominate. This is also true in London, but to a lesser extent, due to the larger number of high quality imported pieces in the assemblage.



T - temple; B - bronze statue; ● - 1 figurine; ○ - 1 figurine, uncertain location; ○ - 17, 18, 127, 237, 482, 1119 (uncertain location)

● - 4, 9-12, 147, 172, 1135; ○ - 33, 34, 117, 121, 144, 1112, 1114, 1115 (uncertain location)

Figure 5. The distribution of figurines in London. The map does not represent the city at any one point in time but includes the major constructions of the first to third centuries including the city wall, fort, amphitheatre and road system. Also indicated on the map are the locations of life size or larger bronze statue fragments. T1 – classical temple built adjacent to the forum in the first century AD (Marsden 1987); T2 – mithraeum built in the mid-third century on the eastern bank of the Walbrook (Shepherd 1998); T3 – temple complex in the south-west of the city near St Peter’s Hill (Hill *et al.* 1980); T4 – a small shrine and possible temple at Gresham Street (Bateman *et al.* 2008, 118); T5 – possible octagonal temple just outside the western wall at Old Bailey (Schofield and Maloney 1998, 277); T6 – two temples and associated structures, including a ritual shaft containing an inscription to Mars Camulus, were built at Tabard Square in the second century (Durrani 2004); T7 – possible temple of second to third century date associated with a cemetery at Great Dover Street (Mackinder 2000, 9–10)

## Distribution

A major obstacle in determining the distribution of figurines in Britain is the lack of a good provenance for many of the pieces. A small number of the figurines from London have been recovered from modern excavations, but often even these are from residual contexts. The majority were found in the nineteenth century. Some do come with minor details of their discovery, but many more have no specific details of either when or where they were found, and it is possible that some may not be from London at all.

Thus many of the figurines discussed above are known only to have come from somewhere in London while others have a general area location such as Southwark (8 figures), Lambeth (1), Isleworth (1) and Lewisham (1). This means that only 44 of the 87 figurines could be plotted on a map (Fig. 5). As might be expected the majority fall within the line of the Roman wall around Londinium north of the Thames, while five are from south of the river in Southwark. Three figurines were found in the vicinity of London Wall and a Mercury was found just outside the wall to the north. Other outlying pieces tend to occur on the roads leading out of London such as the Bacchus from Enfield and dog from Brockley Hill (Durham 2010, fig. 116; 2012, nos 830 and 815).

Within the Roman city wall there does appear to be a slight concentration along the lines of the two major east–west roads through the city and from the forum south to the Thames. A small cluster of four figurines also occurs along the roads just inside Aldgate, while two figurines have been found in the cemetery just outside the gate (Hall 1996, 74). There has been much discussion about the deposition of finds in the Walbrook valley (e.g. Maloney and de Moulins 1990; Merrifield 1995), but, while several figurines do appear to come from this area, there is no real concentration. Merrifield and Hall (2008, 126) note that many of the finds from the Middle Walbrook are of copper alloy or iron and are predominantly dress or personal ornaments. However, while few figurines have come from the Walbrook, 16 figurines have been recovered from the River Thames in London. Five of these were found at the same time (Athlete, Mercury, Jupiter, Apollo and Attis) at old London Bridge, and it is possible that they were deposited together. Other figurines that have been found near London Bridge are a Venus, Harpocrates and rider while figurines from unspecified locations in the Thames include two Apollos, Isis, a Satyr, goat and goose. In addition two figurine fragments in Winchester City Museum are listed as having been found in the River Thames: a club from London Bridge and a lower right leg from an unspecified location. Prestige finds such as swords and shields, as well as human skulls, were being

deposited in the Thames for many years before the arrival of the Romans (Wait and Cotton 2000, 108; Schulting and Bradley 2013), and it is interesting to note that not only did the practice continue into the Roman period, but that the quality of the figurines thus deposited is high. Another high quality object from the Thames at London Bridge is the head from a statue of Hadrian (British Museum Accn Number 1848,1103.1). A number of arms and hands from life-size, or larger, statues have also been found in the city (Durham 2012, nos 465, 466, 467, 468 and a hand from Gresham Street), most of which are in an uncorroded condition which suggests their deposition in waterlogged deposits (Bayley *et al.* 2009; Hall and Shepherd 2008, 40). All of this indicates a long-lived tradition of making votive offerings in the Thames.

Apart from votive deposits in the Thames, some figures from London have been found in other ritual contexts. A Hercules was recovered from a first-century ditch in Southwark on a site where offerings in wells or ritual shafts were found (Beasley 2006), while a goat and club were recovered from the cemetery just outside Aldgate (Hall 1996, 74). Finally a stamped lead figure possibly representing Juno was buried in the arena floor at the eastern entrance to the amphitheatre, and a small unidentified fragment from a copper alloy figurine was also found at the amphitheatre (Wardle 2008, 194, 199; Durham 2012, no. 1110).

A location in the city where one might expect to find figurines is at temples. Recent excavations both north and south of the river have uncovered several temples, but the evidence for religious sites in London is still limited. The sites that we do know of are all marked on Figure 3. Slightly further afield, there is a probable temple on the line of Watling Street in Greenwich Park from which several inscriptions and a fragment of a stone statue of Diana have been recovered (Wallower 2002a, 52; 2002b, 80).

While a variety of votive objects, altars and inscriptions have been found, no metal figurines have been recovered from any of these sites, although there is a life-size bronze foot from the temple at Tabard Square (Hall and Shepherd 2008, 30). This is in contrast to Colchester where a number of the figurines are associated with specific temple sites. However, the large number of Apollo figurines from London might be related to the octagonal temple at Old Bailey (T5). Merrifield (1996) has made a case for stone statues from Southwark Cathedral, Goldsmith's Hall and Bevis Marks to represent a Celtic hunter-god who was popular in south-west Britain. The statues depict a youthful figure wearing a cap, with a bow and arrow and quiver. Merrifield (*ibid.* 110) goes on to associate this god with Apollo Cunomaglos, to whom an octagonal temple at Nettleton, Wiltshire was dedicated, and

suggests that the temple at Old Bailey could also be associated with this god (ibid. 110; CSIR 1.10, 43). Although the metal figurines are all classical in style, the presence of a cult to a Celticised version of Apollo in London could account for the number of figures found in the town.

Since figurines were not being deposited at temples in the city, perhaps many were personal objects, either carried with the owner or placed in a domestic *lararium*. Excavated figurines often come from domestic sites, such as the Victory from a rubbish deposit associated with a first-century building at St Martin Orgar Churchyard (Schofield and Maloney 1998, 233), sphinx from a third/fourth-century rubbish deposit on Fenchurch Street (Bluer and Brigham 2006), cow/boar from a post-Roman layer at the possible *mansio* site on Southwark Street (Cowan 1992), and cockerel from a late Roman rubbish deposit at Guy's Hospital, Southwark (Taylor-Wilson 2002).

Although Colchester, like London, has a large number of figurines with no contextual details some 23 have been recovered from excavations carried out at various sites both within the town wall and on the outskirts of the city, and it was possible to plot 29 out of the 50 figurines from Colchester (Fig. 6). The distribution is somewhat biased towards areas where excavations have taken place (Durham 2012, nos 1032 and 1033 from Lion Walk, 1000–1002 from Culver Street, 1034–1037 Balkerne Lane), but others have been found by chance (nos 26, 51, 150, 177 and 1030) which suggests that the slight concentration towards the western side of Colchester is real.

The primary difference between London and Colchester is the number of figurines that have been found in association with temples. The Mercury, goat, cockerel and tortoise found just outside the Balkerne Gate to the west of Colchester and associated pieces such as three *caducei* and two cockerel fittings can be related to the temples on Balkerne Hill near the Balkerne Gate (Crummy 2006). Slightly further west, along the road to London, a stag was found in a pit associated with the temple to Silvanus at the Royal Grammar School (Hull 1958, 238–9; Durham 2012 no. 414). Two other figurines have also been found at the site (Durham 2012, Duck 1148 and Mars 1149), although not from excavated contexts. However, further association with Mercury also appears in the form of two figurines of the god from the area of the western cemetery between Colchester and the Royal Grammar School site (Durham 2012, nos 45 and 50). Crummy (2006, 58) suggests that these figurines could have come either from graves or a shrine to Mercury within the cemetery area.

A final association with Mercury can be seen in the high quality figurine from the temple at Gosbecks Farm, a long-lived site with Iron Age occupation, Roman fort, theatre

and Romano-Celtic temple which is located some four kilometres to the south-west of Colchester (Hawkes and Crummy 1995, 7, 97–103; Durham 2012, no. 43).

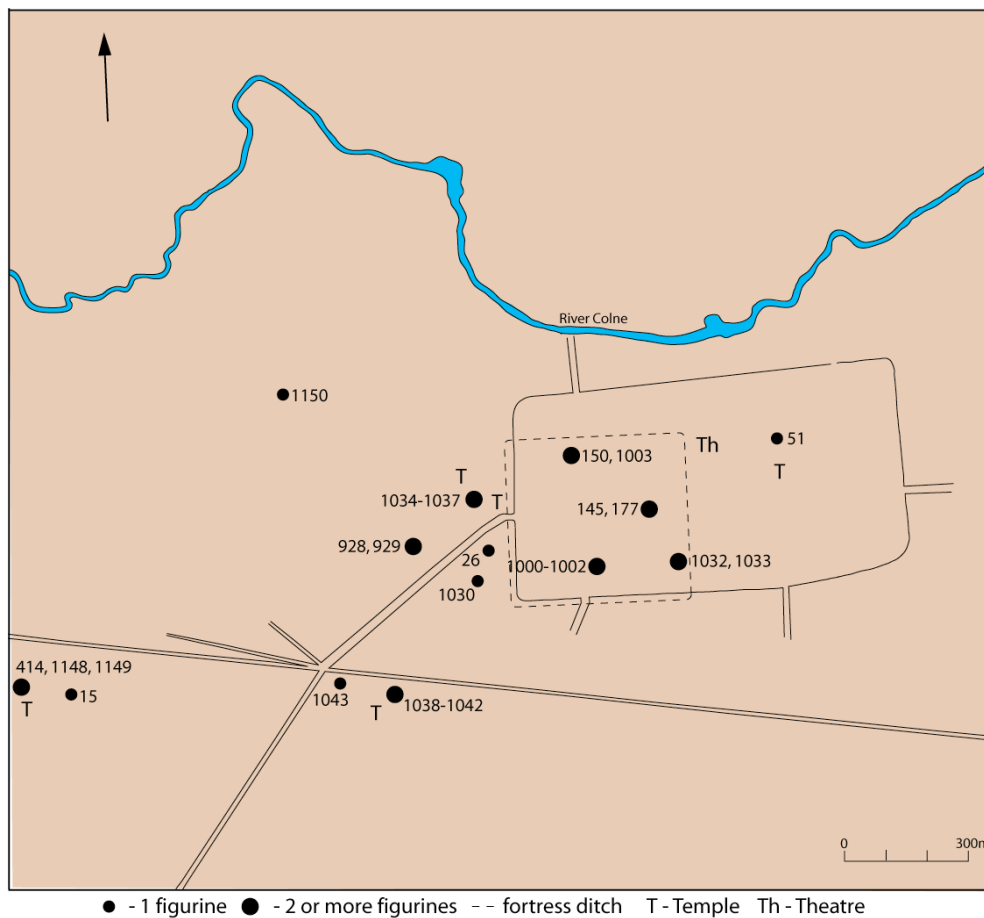


Figure 6. The distribution of figurines in Colchester

### Eastern religions

Moving on from the assemblages as a whole, I will briefly look more closely at figurines associated with eastern religions, in particular those of Cybele and Isis. The fertility goddess Cybele, or *Magna Mater*, and her consort Attis originated in Asia Minor (Henig 1995b, 110). Evidence for the worship of the cult of Cybele is limited in Britain but does include bronze figurines of Attis from London and Retford, Nottinghamshire (Durham 2012, nos 12 and 1156). There are also heads from Mildenhall, Suffolk and Lincoln and an arm holding a pine branch from Hockwold-cum-Wilton, Norfolk may have belonged to an Attis figurine (Green 1976, 212; Durham 2012, nos 441, 499 and 630).



One of the main attributes used to identify Attis is the Phrygian cap, as seen on the head from Mildenhall. The figurine from London also wears this cap, as well as a tunic and trousers which are open at the front from the waist to the knee, thus exposing the genitalia. The figurine from Retford is quite different and depicts a pensive, seated figure with rather feminine breasts whose head rests on his right hand, the elbow of which is on his right knee (Henig, pers. comm.).

Other evidence for the worship of Cybele and Attis in London includes an altar (Tillyard 1917), three steelyard weight busts of Cybele (Green 1976, 222 no. 15), a terracotta figurine from Paul Street (Vermaseren 1986, 168 no. 490, pl. CLXV) and a castration clamp from the Thames, decorated with busts of Cybele and Attis, which may have been used to castrate the priests of Cybele (Henig 1995b, 110–11). Finds associated with these gods from other British sites are limited but include altars from Gloucester (Green 1976, 171; Vermaseren 1986, 169–70 no. 496) and Corbridge (Vermaseren 1986, 170 no. 497; *RIB* 1135), a jet plaque of Attis from Whitton, Suffolk (Green 1976, 218; Toynbee 1962, 184 no. 136), a pipeclay Cybele from Corbridge (Green 1978, 57), and a steelyard weight bust of Cybele from Cirencester (Green 1978, 173). Thus the evidence for this cult is geographically widespread but sparse.

Somewhat more common is worship of the fertility goddess Isis, along with her consort Osiris, or Serapis as he was known in the Roman world, and son Harpocrates. The murdered Serapis was brought back to life by Isis and as such is a god of the Underworld (Alvar 2008, 44–7). Metal figurines of Isis include examples from London; Dorchester, Dorset and Thornborough, Buckinghamshire (Durham 2012, nos 127, 594 and 734). There are no figurines of Serapis in Britain, but Harpocrates is more common than Isis, and there is a silver figurine from the Thames in London and bronze examples from London, Colchester, Chester and St Albans (Durham 2012, nos 147, 148, 1101, 1102, 1043, 210 and 726).

The figurine of Isis from London shows her seated with her head resting against her right hand, while in her left she holds ears of corn or the base of a cornucopia (Fig. 7). She wears a tunic and mantle and a coronet on her head. The presence of the corn or cornucopia led to her initial identification as Ceres (e.g. Toynbee 1964, 85; Wheeler 1930, 46), but there is little doubt that she is in fact Isis. Not only is she wearing a mantle tied at the front with an Isis knot, which replicates the ankh, the hieroglyphic symbol for life (Turcan 1996, 80), but she is seated in a pose that is seen in a number of other figures of Isis which are discussed by Bricault (1992) who suggests a date in the first or second century AD for the London piece. The figurine from the Thames, however, is the only example of this form in copper alloy.



Figure 7. Isis from London. Durham 2012, no. 127 (with kind permission of the Museum of London, accn no. A25383)

Another goddess with whom Isis was frequently associated in the Roman world was Fortuna. A figurine from Crewelthorpe, Yorkshire has also been published as Ceres (Green 1978, 58), but this time the figure is actually Isis-Fortuna (Durham 2012 no. 227). The goddess is standing clothed in a long gown and wears a *modius* and diadem on her head. The *modius* was used as a corn measure in Egypt but was also worn as a cylindrical head-dress by the deities Harpocrates, Serapis and, less commonly, Isis (Clerc 1998, 82). The Crewelthorpe piece is missing both arms, but may have held a rudder and a cornucopia.

Depictions of Harpocrates are slightly more common than those of Isis. A Harpocrates from the River Thames at London Bridge is a high quality piece in silver with a gold body chain and was probably imported while a second figurine wears a *modius* (Durham 2012, nos 147 and 148). Two other London examples from Lower Thames Street and Martin Lane are fairly crude depictions in the same stance in which the right hand is held to the mouth and the left hand is behind the body resting on the buttocks (Durham 2012, nos 1101 and 1102). Both pieces are small and are in the same stance as a Harpocrates amulet with a suspension loop on the back which was also recovered from the Thames in London (British Museum Accession Number 1891, 0418.15). One final Harpocrates from Great Winchester Street, London is in terracotta (Green 1976, 222 no. 12; Harris and Harris 1965, 81). Apart from the figurines from Chester, St Albans and Colchester, there are also amulets from Colchester and possibly Woodeaton, Oxfordshire (Bagnall Smith 1995, 182; Durham 2012, nos 210, 726, 1043, 1152, 536). Finally, an example from Worcester was identified as Angerona (Haverfield 1901, 206, fig. 2; Durham 2012, no. 865), but the stance is the same as many of these Harpocrates figurines with one hand to the lips and the other behind the back.

Gods of the Isis cult are also depicted in other media. Isis is seen on several bone hairpins from London (Hall and Wardle 2005, 174; Johns 1996), bronze steelyard weights from London (Toynbee 1964, 95, pl. XXIIa) and Cirencester (Green 1976, 173), a lead bust from Groundwell Ridge, Wiltshire (Schuster 2011), an intaglio of Isis-Fortuna from London Wall (Henig 2008, 229 no. 30), a cameo of Isis or a Ptolemaic queen from Friday Street, London (ibid. 232 no. 82), an intaglio from Wroxeter (ibid. 119) and a bust from York (Green 1978, 75). There are three stone heads of Serapis — one in marble from the Walbrook mithraeum in London (Toynbee 1986, 13 no. 3, pls 8, 9 and III), one in porphyry from Highworth, Wiltshire (*CSIR* 1.2, 31 no. 113; Passmore 1944, 99–100), and one in oolitic limestone from Silchester, Hampshire (Boon 1973; Toynbee 1964, 94–5) — as well as intaglios from London (Henig 2008, 232 no. 72); Beckford, Gloucestershire; Wroxeter and Stanwix, Cumbria (Henig 1978, 93 nos. 357, 356 and 354), and a lamp depicting Jupiter Serapis and Cerberus from Great Winchester Street, London (Harris and Harris 1965, 79). There are also three lamps depicting Anubis, an Egyptian god of the afterlife who was assimilated with Osiris (Wilkinson 2003, 187), from a burial on the site of a temple on Great Dover Street, London (Mackinder 2000, 12) and one from Caerleon (Bricault 2001, 110).

One animal associated with the Isis cult is the Apis bull from Memphis who is depicted with a sun disc between his horns (Wilkinson 2003, 171). Two examples of Apis bulls have been found in Britain at York and St Just, Cornwall, although the find from St Just may be a modern import (Durham 2012, nos 310 and 752).

Other figurines with Egyptian associations are the Sphinx, ibis and crocodile. Copper alloy examples of the Sphinx have been found in London; Colchester; Watchet, Somerset; Caerwent, Monmouthshire and Epperstone, Nottinghamshire (Durham 2012, nos 1103, 412, 443, 554 and 779) and there is a stone sphinx on a tombstone from Colchester (*RIB* 211). The sphinx from Fenchurch Street, London was excavated from a third- or fourth-century rubbish layer and was found with a copper alloy link chain around its left leg (Kiely 2006, 155). Although the figure is in poor condition, the fine detail depicting the feathers on the wings indicates that this was a good quality, provincial, piece and is of a much higher quality than the simple depictions from Colchester and Watchet.

The ibis, which represented the deity Thoth (a moon god who became associated with writing and knowledge), protected Osiris and is most commonly depicted as an ibis-headed man (Wilkinson 2003, 215–6), has been found on three sites: a possible figurine from Chiddingfold, Surrey and attachments from Caerwent and Rochester, Kent (Durham 2012 nos 582, 545 and 666). Of interest is the figurine of a crocodile from the villa at Fullerton,

Hampshire (Durham 2012, no. 319). This well-modelled piece shows the animal with its head raised and tail curling upwards. The jaws are open to reveal teeth, three ridges along the back are created by cross-hatched grooves and the sides of the body are decorated with circular stamps. The crocodile appears in Egyptian art, both as an animal and as the god Sobek (a fertility deity and god of water), who often appears as either a crocodile or a crocodile-headed man (Wilkinson 2003, 218–20). The crocodile and Sobek are also associated with the Isis cult. Although no parallels for this figurine have been found, there is a mount from Saxton, North Yorkshire in the shape of a crocodile (PAS SWYOR-76B161).

Unlike the cults of Jupiter Dolichenus and Cybele, there is believed to be a temple to Isis in London, although the location is as yet unknown (Henig 1995b, 113), and a serapeum outside the fortress at York (Harris and Harris 1965, 75). A foundation inscription found at the serapeum indicates that it was built by the Legate Claudius Hieronymianus of the Sixth Legion in the second half of the second century (*RIB* 658). The legate's second name suggests he was of Egyptian origin (Ottaway 2004, 114). Finds providing evidence for a temple in the city of London include a late first-century jug from Tooley Street, Southwark which is inscribed with the grafitto *Londini ad Fanum Isidis* or 'At the temple of Isis, London' (*RIB* II 2503.127). An inscription dedicating the restoration of a temple to Isis was also found during excavations at Baynard's Castle on Upper Thames Street where a collapsed section of riverside wall contained a number of re-used blocks from an arch and a screen of gods as well as a relief of four Mother Goddesses and two altars (Hill *et al.* 1980, 2). One of the altars, while broken, is largely complete and contains the inscription 'In honour of the divine (i.e. imperial) house, Marcus Martiannus Pulcher, deputy (?) imperial propraetorian legate of two emperors ordered the temple of Isis... which had fallen down through old age, to be restored' (Hassall 1980, 196-7; *RIB* III 3001). Dendrochronology dates from various sites along the wall suggest a construction date in the late third century (Brigham 1990, 101, 124). Hassall (1980, 198) believes that the location of the altar north of the river and the grafitto in Southwark could point to the presence of two temples to Isis in London, one on each side of the river.

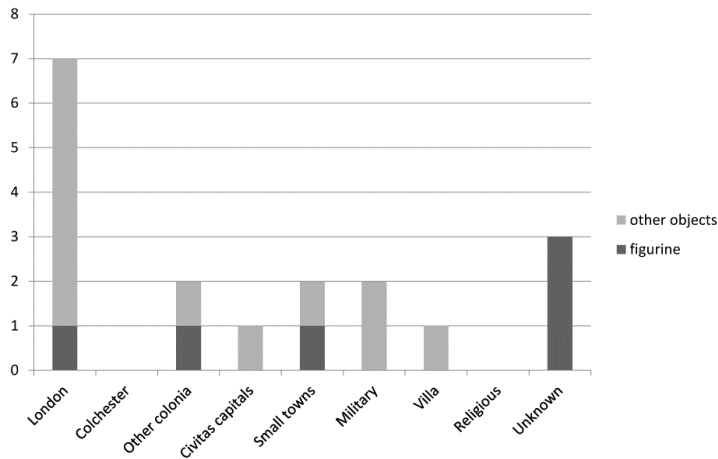


Figure 8. The distribution of all objects associated with Cybele and Attis (17 pieces)

### Distribution of eastern deities

Thus the evidence for Eastern religions in Britain is somewhat sparse, but fairly widespread and varied, especially if one considers the figural evidence in conjunction with other objects such as altars, statues and personal objects. The total number of objects associated with the cult of Cybele and Attis, and the types of sites from which they were recovered, is listed in Figure 8. From this one can see that the number of figurines is very small (all five depict Attis), and that the other objects associated with the cult greatly add to the evidence for its worship in Britain. The figurines are all found towards the eastern side of the country (Fig. 9), but this could just be a result of the small number of figurines since other objects associated with the cult have been found on Hadrian's Wall and further west in Gloucester and Cirencester. However, the distribution does highlight the concentration of material in London and sites associated with the military.

Figure 8 also shows that London dominates the assemblage, but that overall the majority of finds come from major urban centres, with a small number from military sites and their associated settlements. Interestingly, there are no pieces from Colchester or religious sites, but the distribution does suggest that the majority of adherents to this cult were urban and immigrant. Jones and Mattingly (2002, 272, Map 8:8) cite the concentration of dedications along Hadrian's Wall as evidence for the association of this cult with the military, but, as is the case for other deities such as Mars, this largely reflects the military use of dedications, and the scattering of other finds around the country are primarily found south of the Wall.

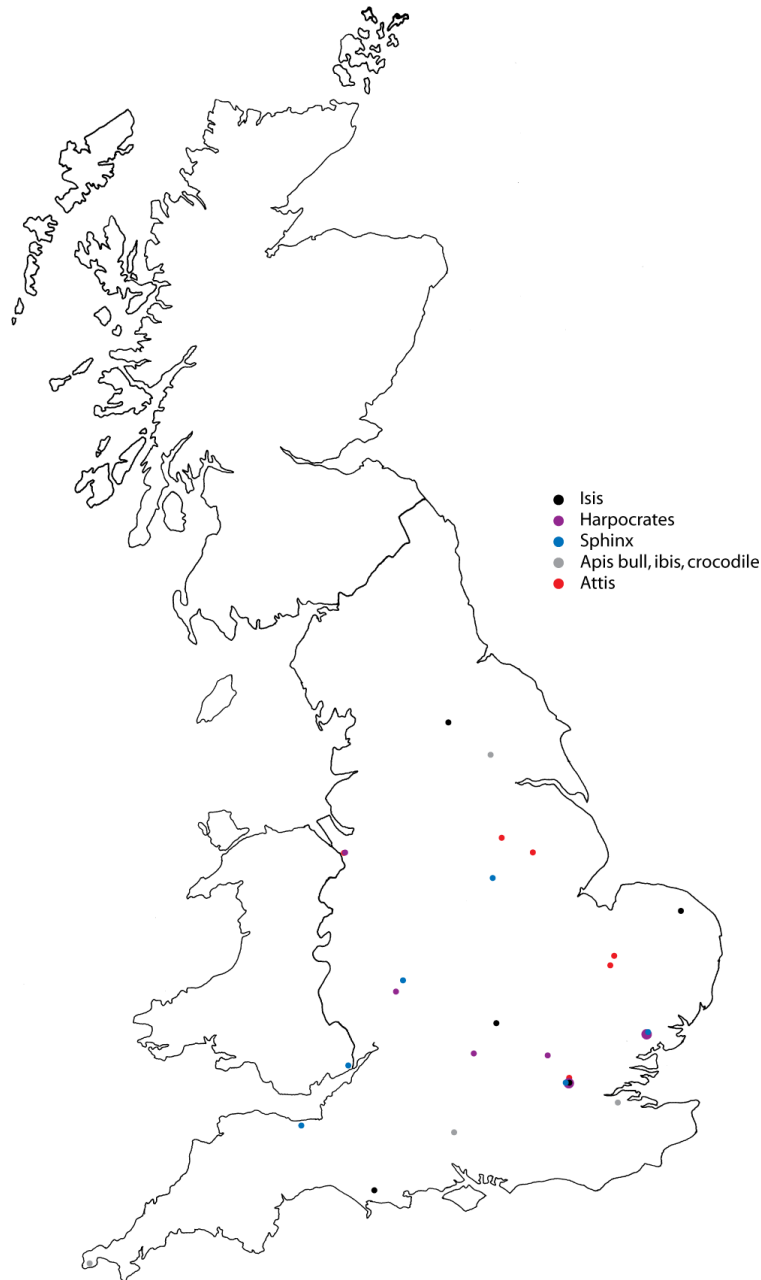


Figure 9. The distribution of figurines associated with Eastern religions

Britain has a similar figural assemblage to other Continental provinces such as Gallia and Germania, although Attis is more often represented in those provinces. Several figurines of Attis with open fronted trousers like the Attis from London have also been found (Menzel 1966, 28 no. 58a from the Moselle at Trier; Vermaseren 1986, 109–10 no. 318 possibly from Marseille; 158 no. 466 from Seine-Maritime and 160 no. 476 from Tournai). Stone altars and statuary are, however, much more common in Gaul (see Vermaseren 1986, 84–94 nos 222–243, 99–101 nos 268–274). Britain is generally considered to have little in the way of stone

sculpture compared to other provinces in the Empire (Stewart 2008, 157) so this is not unexpected.

As London does so dominate the assemblage from Britain (while Colchester conspicuously has no objects associated with Cybele and Attis) it is of interest to see how it compares to other major urban centres in north-west Europe. The four cities of Cologne, Mainz, Bordeaux and Trier were chosen as suitable comparative urban sites with well-published assemblages. All four are also situated on rivers and major road routes (Woolf 1998, 87), and so, as London and Colchester, they are suitable sites for the trade and redistribution of objects. Like London, Cologne was a provincial capital (of *Germania Inferior*) with no evidence for pre-Roman settlement and Mainz the provincial capital of *Germania Superior* (Carroll 2001, 41–2). Bordeaux was particularly well-situated for Atlantic trade and was probably the home of a provincial governor for a time (Woolf 1998, 134), while Trier was a *civitas* capital which became a *colonia* under Claudius (Carroll 2001, 42–3). The objects associated with this cult from Bordeaux, Cologne, Mainz and Trier, which have been published by Vermaseren (1977; 1986; 1989), are listed in Figure 10. Here it can be seen that London has an assemblage which in size is second only to Cologne, and that only Colchester shows no trace of the cult. The single figurines from London, Cologne, Mainz and Trier are all of Attis. The bulk of the other objects from the continental cities are stone altars or reliefs, but there are also terracotta figurines of Cybele from Mainz (one example), Trier (four examples) and Cologne (eight examples). Figurines of this type are rare in Britain, although there are single examples from London (Vermaseren 1986, 168 no. 490) and Corbridge (Green 1978, 173).

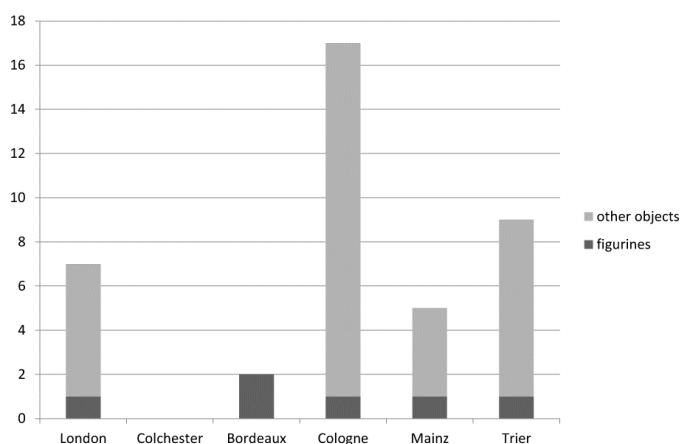


Figure 10. The objects associated with Cybele and Attis from selected cities (40 pieces)

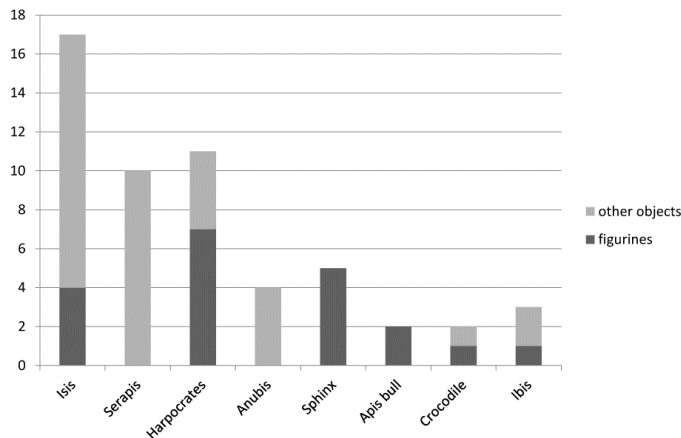


Figure 11. Objects associated with Egyptian deities (54 pieces)

The Egyptian deities are the most commonly represented of the Eastern religions in Britain, especially those associated with Isis. Figure 11 illustrates the various deities and creatures represented, and as with Cybele and Attis the figural assemblage is small in comparison to the other objects. Isis, Serapis and Harpocrates are the largest groups, while Anubis is less popular, and figurines of these deities are found in similar proportions on the Continent (Leclant 2004, 95).

Urban sites which were important ports or on trade routes became centres for the cults of Isis and Serapis in Italy, which then spread further west across the Mediterranean into Spain, France and beyond (Heyob 1975, 14; Turcan 1996, 97–103). In comparison to other parts of the Roman Empire, Isis was more popular in Britain than Germany or Spain, but less so than in Gaul (Leclant 2004, 95). Isis-Fortuna was the patron of traders and sailors, thus the cult was spread around the empire by merchants and officials rather than soldiers and was more prevalent where temples were built (Heyob 1975, 23; Turcan 1996, 104). The serapeum at York could, perhaps, be accounted for by the fact that Serapis was more popular than Isis with the military (Perrissin-Fabert 2004, 450–2). No temples to Isis or Serapis have been found in Gaul, but inscriptions at Arles, Nimes, Grenoble and Lyon indicate that they did exist (Leclant 2004, 97–8). A review of the figurines published in Continental catalogues shows that there are more figurines of Isis in Gaul than Britain, although more often of the Isis-Fortuna type (Bricault and Podvin 2008, 7), and there are similar numbers of Isis in Britain and Germany. It is also of note that figurines of Isis, Osiris and Harpocrates from Gaul and Britain are more often depicted in a Roman provincial style than those from areas such as Austria (Fleischer 1967, Tafn 74 and 75 nos. 137–140 and 142) or Switzerland (Kaufmann-Heinimann 1977, Taf. 44 no. 44, Taf 86 no. 79) which closely follow the



Egyptian style and were probably imported. This indicates that the more widespread worship of these deities in Britain and Gaul encouraged the production of appropriate figurines for the local market.

Figure 9 shows that Egyptian figurines are scattered throughout Britain, while the distribution of figurines and other objects among various site types is illustrated in Figure 12. The most obvious difference between this and the distribution of Cybele and Attis is that figurines are found at all site types, although often in very small numbers, and again the majority of finds come from major urban centres which usually have a military presence, such as London, Exeter, Gloucester, Cirencester, Silchester, Wroxeter, York and Corbridge. However, there are also examples from villas at Fullerton, Chiddingfold, and Whitton and religious sites at the temples at Thornborough and Woodeaton.

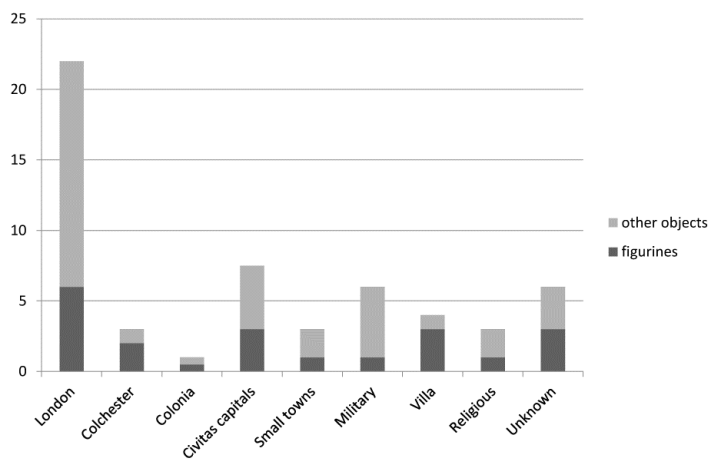


Figure 12. Distribution of objects associated with Egyptian deities (54 pieces)

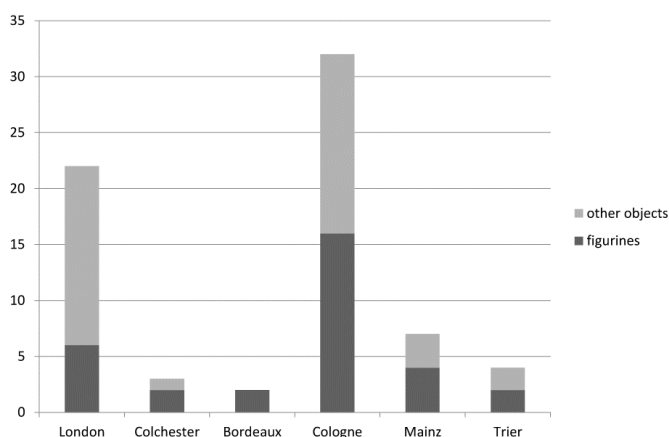


Figure 13. Objects associated with Egyptian deities from selected cities (70 pieces)

As London dominates the British assemblage of objects associated with the Isis cult, in Figure 13 this group is again compared with those from selected continental cities, as

published by Bricault (2001). Once again London is second only to Cologne in the size of its assemblage. However, unlike the assemblage of objects associated with the cult of Cybele and Attis, which on the Continent is dominated by stone inscriptions or altars, the assemblages from both Britain and the Continent are largely comprised of figurines, statues or other small objects such as busts, lamps, and sistra (ibid. 98, 100, 114, 116). Perhaps this reflects the type of worshippers associated with the Isis cult which was popular with traders as well as women, both groups which might be less inclined to set up the stone dedications which were obviously popular with the worshippers of *Magna Mater*, who were more likely to have military connections.



Altar - A; B - bust; C - clamp; F - terracotta figurine; I - inscription; L - lamp; P - hairpin; R - finger ring; S - stone statue; T - temple  
 ● 1 figurine; ○ 1 figurine, uncertain location; ● 2-5 figurines, uncertain location

Figure 14. The distribution of objects associated with Eastern religions in London

In Britain, London would have represented the perfect milieu for the development of the Isis cult, as is indicated by the presence of one, possibly two, temples in the city. Finds associated with the Egyptian religions are found scattered throughout the city (Fig. 14) and so do not help to indicate where these temples might have been situated, except for the fact that the majority come from within the city walls or the river itself. The map shows that a high proportion of finds associated with Eastern religions, in particular the bronze figurines and

castration clamp, have come from the river. Twelve other figurines of classical deities have also been recovered from the river, and it has been suggested that this could indicate the continued deposition of high class material in water. Certainly, given the association of the Isis cult with water, this practice would accord well with the deposition of the figurines of Isis and Harpocrates.

## **Conclusion**

It is difficult to assess how the use of figurines from London and Colchester may have changed over time since the lack of provenance from well-dated, non-residual contexts means that dates often can only be assigned on stylistic grounds. This is not easy to do, and is further complicated by the fact that these objects may have been in use for some time before deposition. In only a very few cases, such as a Hercules from a ditch at Swan Street, Southwark or *caduceus* from a pit at St Mary's Hospital, Colchester, an early date can be assigned due to the context from which they were recovered. The higher quality figurines, which were probably imported, tend to be assigned dates in the first or second century. Many provincial figures are undated, but dates in the second and third centuries are often suggested.

The important role that London played in the administration of the province meant that it would have attracted people from all over the Roman Empire to live and work. Figurines are small, portable objects and no doubt some were brought as part of people's own religious practices; others were probably imported for sale. As well as deities such as Mercury, Minerva or Isis supporting the health and wealth of their supplicants, figurines might also serve to maintain links with families and homelands. The personal nature of figurines meant that they may have been carried with their owners for years, and some do show wear from repeated handling.

These practices could account not only for the presence of interesting genre pieces such as the gladiators from London, but also for the high quality imported pieces of first and second century date, when the city was thriving. The concentration of items associated with Eastern religions in London was no doubt due to the popularity of the Isis cult with merchants and officials (Heyob 1975, 23; Turcan 1996, 104).

Figurines have been recovered from a variety of context types at London and Colchester. Where found at public sites such as the forum or amphitheatre, they have clearly been deposited as votive offerings. Those from domestic contexts are usually found in residual rubbish layers and so would appear to be casual losses rather than deliberate

deposits, and this is common among the figurines from other urban sites in Britain, as is the general absence of figurines in burials (Durham 2012, 4.3). The primary difference between London and Colchester is the lack of figurines at temple sites in London, which may reflect a difference in the people living in the two towns. Stone inscriptions were predominantly dedicated by military men in both towns, but there are also a number set up by foreign officials in London. Inscriptions were far more popular among these groups than civilians in Britain as the distribution of certain figurine types shows (ibid. 4.4.1). This is not to say that soldiers did not carry figurines themselves; a figurine base was recovered from a first-century destruction layer in barracks at Colchester (Crummy 1992, 193, fig. 5.61 no. 1704) and figurines have been found at many military sites. Figurines would make a more personal offering and their presence at the temples in Colchester, reflects this. Indeed Colchester better represents the people of Roman Britain who regularly deposited figurines at temples, and in particular figurines associated with Mercury, as seen at temple sites such as Uley, Lydney and Brigstock.

The possible figurine of Rosmerta from Colchester also illustrates the use of Roman practices in Romano-Celtic religion. There is evidence for the development of figurine types representing non-Roman deities, such as the horse and rider in eastern/central Britain or the hoard group from Southbroom, Wiltshire (Durham 2014) and the lack of these types from London in particular is striking. However, the use of Roman images to depict local deities, such as the Minerva plaques used in the worship of Senuna is also known (Jackson and Burleigh 2007) and it is perhaps this that accounts for the large number of Apollo figurines in London which were actually representing a Romano-British hunter god, Apollo Cunomaglos.

The figurines from London and Colchester form impressive and interesting collections. They are dominated by classical types and although they contain none of the British types such as the horse and rider figurines, there is evidence that Classical deities may have been used to represent Romano-Celtic deities. The range of types and the different deposition patterns in the two towns illustrate the variety of practices in Roman Britain where both Roman and regional deities were represented by metal figurines and used and deposited in a range of ways.

Type	London			Colchester		Total British Assemblage	
	No	Uncertain	%	No	%	No	%
Apollo	4	2	8	0	0	17	2.4
Attis	1		1.3	0	0	7	1
Bacchus and satyrs	4		5.3	1	2.9	24	3.4
Cupid	3		4	2	5.9	32	4.6
Dioscurus	0		0	1	2.9	3	0.4
Genius paterfamilias	1		1.3	0	0	18	2.6
Harpocrates	4		5.3	1	2.9	10	1.4
Hercules	11	2	17.3	5	14.7	59	8.4
Jupiter	2		2.7	0	0	22	3.1
Lar	1		1.3	1	2.9	18	2.6
Mars	3		4	1	2.9	47	6.7
Mercury	8	1	12	8	23.5	116	16.6
Other male deities	0		0	0	0	61	8.7
Diana	1		1.3	0	0	9	1.3
Fortuna	0		0	1	2.9	13	1.8
Isis	1		1.3	0	0	5	0.7
Juno	1		1.3	0	0	2	0.3
Minerva	4	1	6.7	2	5.9	33	4.7
Venus	2		2.7	5	14.7	29	4.1
Victory	1	1	2.7	0	0	6	0.8
Other female deities	0		0	0	0	17	2.4
Human/uncertain i.d.	7	1	10.7	4	11.8	93	13.3
Fragments	8		10.7	2	5.9	58	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>34</b>		<b>699</b>	
Boar	0		0	2	13.3	25	8.6
Cow/boar	1		9.1	0	0	1	0.03
Dog	1		9.1	1	6.7	30	10.3
Goat	2		18.2	2	13.3	25	8.6
Lion	1		9.1	1	6.7	6	2.1
Panther	1		9.1	0	0	8	2.8
Ram	0		0	1	6.7	11	3.8
Snake	1		9.1	1	6.7	9	3.1
Tortoise	0		0	1	6.7	2	0.7
Other animals	0		0	0	0	64	
Cockerel	1		9.1	3	20	44	15.2
Duck	0		0	1	6.7	3	1
Goose	2		18.2	0	0	3	1
Peacock	1		9.1	0	0	2	0.7
Other birds	0		0	0	0	49	
Uncertain animals	0		0	2	13.3	4	1.4
Sphinx	1			1		6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>16</b>		<b>292</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>50</b>		<b>991</b>	

Table 1. Figurines from London and Colchester. Other male deities = 1 Aesculapius, 1 Atlas, 2 Cautopates, 2 Genius cucullatus, 28 horse and rider, 2 Neptune, 13 Priapus, 1 River God, 1 Sucellus, 10 Vulcan. Other female deities = 1 Ceres, 1 Epona, 1 Flora, 11 Mother Goddess, 2 Vesta, 1 Muse. Other animals and birds = 2 Apis bull, 7 three-horned bull, 6 bull, 1 cat, 1 crocodile, 5 dolphin, 1 fish, 2 frog, 3 hare, 19 horse, 2 lizard, 6 mouse, 9 stag, 38 eagle, 1 ibis, 4 owl, 3 pigeon, 3 raven

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