

Bronze Neptune or Poseidon

Romano-British

1st - 2nd A.D.

Bronze

H: 10.8cm

An incomplete leaded copper alloy statue of the Roman god Neptune. The statue depicts Neptune in motion, with the right leg in front of the left, torso slightly twisted, left arm forward and bent at the elbow, and the right arm slightly behind the body bent slightly at the elbow. The head is facing forward and is slightly raised, a long, flowing forked beard coming to rest on the chest. The cury haor is raised above the scalp, and two ponytails extend from the back of the head coming to rest behind the right shoulder. Neptune is mostly naked, with a sash draped over the left hip and the groin and extending between the buttocks down to the base. The base is sub-rectangular in plan and plano-convex in section. The underside is roughly cast. A separate fragment of the statue consists of the right hand, which grips the neck of an open-mouthed dolphin. The left hand is missing from an old break. Towards the base, attached to the sash near the left ankle is a cylindrical element, possibly a section of the dolphin's body. Post-depositional damage is evident at this point. The statue does not stand of its own accord; presumably the missing arm elements would have counter-balanced the statue. The statue has a mottled dark green and brown patina. The God stands holding a dolphin with a crest and possibly holding a trident in the other hand. The figure with its wind or wave swept beard is unusual for Neptune; the expressive face and livelier swing of the body is far superior to other examples. Martin Henig (University of Oxford) mentions examples found close to the site of the present statuette’s discovery, the head of Neptune in stone from Cirencester, the Bodiccan tombstone depicting the head of Oceanus, and a Neptune with mask conflated with a Medusa from Bath.