TOP TREASURE

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MUSEUM of ISLAND HISTORY

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Questions

- What do you think it is? Can you describe it?
- What do you think it is made from?
- How big do you think it is?
- Does it look like anything you've seen before?
- What do you think it was used for?

FACT FILE

Tribrach

What is it?

A mysterious flint artefact. It has three arms or branches, which is what tribrach means. You might have noticed that one is slightly longer than the other?

This artefact is fascinating because we have no idea what it was used for. Some archaeologists think it might be a tool that was attached to a wooden shaft by one of its arms. Some think it might have been used in a ceremony of some sort and could have belonged to an important person. Your idea is as good as ours!

Basic facts

Size: 203mm diameter. 63mm thick at its centre. Weight: 740g.

What is it made from?

A type of stone called flint.

How old is it?

It's possibly from the Neolithic or early Bronze Age. They have all been found by accident and not part of an archaeological excavation, so it is very hard to date them.

Significance

It is extremely rare. Only three similar sized tribrachs have been found in the British Isles. One miniature tribrach has also been found which was only 7mm diameter.

Other facts

It was found on a beach near Ventnor at some point after 1850 by Dr Martin. Some similar items have been found in New Zealand, Yucatan, Honduras and Russia.

Why don't you?

- Can you make an exciting display label for the tribrach using the information from the fact file?
- Imagine what the tribrach was used for. Can you draw a picture to show your idea?
- Watch a video that shows how flint is knapped or shaped into a tool.
- Can you make a tribrach out of modelling clay or out of soap? Search online: "Barnsley Museum Soap-knapping activity").
- Design your own flint tool and explain what it was used for.
- Make a list of other words that begin with 'tri' (meaning three). Can you make up some new words of your own using the pre-fix 'tri'.

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