

# Prehistoric drum is top ancient find: British Museum

February 11 2022

---



The 5,000-year-old drum carved from chalk is set to go on display for the first time in a major exhibition about the Neolithic site of Stonehenge.

A carved stone drum unearthed in England is one of the most significant pieces of prehistoric art ever found in the country, the British Museum

said Thursday.

The 5,000-year-old drum carved from chalk is set to go on display for the first time in a major exhibition about the Neolithic site of Stonehenge and its [historical context](#).

Extensive research into the drum, uncovered near a village in Yorkshire in northern England in 2015, has confirmed it is one of the most significant ancient objects ever found in the British Isles, the [museum](#) said.

"This is a truly remarkable discovery, and is the most important piece of prehistoric art to be found in Britain in the last 100 years," said Neil Wilkin, curator of the exhibition "The World of Stonehenge", which opens February 17.

The drum is "one of the most elaborately decorated objects of this period found anywhere in Britain and Ireland", and its style echoes that of objects from Stonehenge and related sites, the museum said.

Seemingly created as a sculpture or talisman rather than a functional musical instrument, the drum is one of only four known examples.

It was found alongside the grave of three children who were buried close together, touching or holding hands. The drum was placed just above the head of the eldest child, accompanied by a chalk ball and a polished bone pin.

The drum was found around 240 miles (380 kilometers) from Stonehenge near the village of Burton Agnes.

A similar ball and pins have been found in and near Stonehenge.

This suggests that communities across Britain and Ireland shared "[artistic styles](#), and probably beliefs, over remarkable distances", the British Museum said.

"Analysis of its carvings will help to decipher the symbolism and beliefs of the era in which Stonehenge was constructed," said Wilkin.

The British Museum's collection includes a group of three similar drums found in 1889 at the burial site of a single child around 15 miles (24 kilometers) away from the latest find.

The museum describes these three, known as the Folkton Drums, as "some of the most famous and enigmatic ancient objects ever unearthed in Britain".

Radiocarbon dating has revealed they were created at the same time as the first phase of construction of Stonehenge, between 3005 and 2890 BC.

© 2022 AFP

Citation: Prehistoric drum is top ancient find: British Museum (2022, February 11) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-02-prehistoric-ancient-british-museum.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.