TOP TREASURE

Find this at

NEWPORT ROMAN VILLA

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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?
- What do you think it was used for?

FACT FILE

Mended Piece of Roman Pottery

What is it?

These are two pieces of pottery joined together by a piece of lead wire.

Basic facts

Size: 4.5cm by 4cm

What is it made from?

It is made out of clay that has been baked or fired in a special oven called a kiln. Archaeologists call this red polished type of pottery Samian Ware or terra sigilatta.

How old is it?

It is from Roman times between 110 to 130 AD (about 1900 years old).

Significance

It is special for three main reasons;

1. This would have been part of a pot that was expensive in Roman times. It shows that the people living at the villa were wealthy. It came from France and would have been the sort of item you would get out at a dinner party to impress your friends. This might be why the person who broke it tried to fix it back together with a piece of lead wire. There was no super glue in Roman times!

2. The smaller piece has some writing on it. We think it might be the name Vitalis. This is the potter's mark and is fantastic to find as we can work out where it came from and even who made it! Vitalis III was a potter that worked on Les Martres-de-Veyre in France from 110 – 130 AD. This information is really useful for working out how old the pot is.

3. The pot was found at Newport Roman Villa which was built around 270 AD. Finding this piece of pot there raises lots of questions. Was this from an earlier house on the site? Or was it a treasured antique pot that was about 150 years old when it was broken and mended? Or was it broken when it was new? What do you think?

Other facts

Vitalis was a common name in Celtic speaking areas.
In Roman times Les Martres-de-Veyre was part of a region called Gaul. It includes present day France, Belgium, Luxenberg, Switzerland and part of Northern Italy.

Other facts

Terra sigillata means clay pressed with images. Decorated pots were put in a mould. Plain pots were made on a potters wheel. They often had scenes of gods, goddesses, gladiators, animals and plants on them.

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Why don't you?

- Have you ever repaired something that was really important to you? Why was it so important?
- Does your family have plates and bowls that they only use for special occasions? How are they different to the ones you normally use?
- Find Les Martres-de-Veyre on a map.
- Write a story about the pot and how it came to be broken.
- This is a small patterned piece in our museum collection and a plate on display at Newport Roman Villa. Can you find designs from other Samian pots found in England to inspire you to design your own Samian style plate or bowl? Search online: Vindolanda samian

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