

Samian Bowl

no.18



Second-century Samian bowl found during excavations at Silchester, 1890–1909.

Object no. 1995.81.1777

This bowl was found during excavations at the Romano-British town of Silchester. Distinctive red-gloss pottery of this kind, known as Samian ware, was imported to Britain in large quantities from the first to mid-third century AD, where it was regarded as the finest tableware. It developed from an industry in northern Italy established in the late first century BC which produced red slip ware – pottery coated in a fine red clay – known as Arretine ware. Around the beginning of the first century AD, potters with a knowledge of the techniques of the Arretine industry established workshops in southern Gaul. From this period the wares we know as Samian were made at various centres throughout Gaul.

The bowl was made in central Gaul at the kilns near Lezoux, in the upper reaches of the River Loire and its tributaries. It was made between AD125 and 150 and would have been formed in a clay mould. Moulds were reused many times and often carried the name of the mould maker – here the name SACER is stamped into the side of the pot.

Potters of this period used a wide variety of decoration on Samian pottery, including fauna and flora, scenes from classical mythology, and everyday scenes such as hunting. This pot shows a hunting scene: the huntsman wears a tunic and carries a spear, and the animals include boar, stag, lion, goat and hound. Various trees and leaves can be seen, together with a possible vine stump.

Reference

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