

COLLECTING PEWTER - a few thoughts after receiving an email

A website reader emails to say –

Many thanks for your web site which I stumbled across a short time ago and now use as essential reference. I am a complete novice where pewter is concerned and Ebay has been by only source for collecting. Thanks to your information I became aware that a small measure listed as c1820 with a touchmark for Gaskell and Chambers was not all that it seemed. The items are not usually expensive but I would like to think they are authentic.

I am particularly looking to start a collection of antique inn memorabilia, around middle 19thC and earlier. I thought if I could watch for anything suitable being sold by yourself I would at least stand a chance of it being genuine. I would appreciate your advice.

Reply -

Collecting Pewter is not an easy or profitable interest for me. I have not sold any since October 09 – this is because I did collect a huge number of pieces and then sold off what I didn't want to keep. This 'work' completed in October 09. I lost a lot of money on the pieces I did not want.

For advice I would suggest you watch Ebay for a good while and make notes of the prices they get on pieces that interest you. You will know that you can have Ebay do searches for you that send you a number of emails each day to your criteria. Example – Pewter - Mugs - 19th centuryanother might be - Pewter – Pub Mugs (but likely you know this).

Collectors look largely, though not always for, - none faulty pieces – ie no cracks splits or holes. Pieces with pub names or the landlord's name (often to the front) are collected. A patina slightly darkened but still with some sheen is popular. Very dark and corroded is usually not. Collectors like marks to the right or left of the handle (often verification marks or volume or sometimes the maker), they like a mark in the base (usually the maker), they like a pub name under the base.

So decide what you like and collect nice quality with marks. Ebay tells you only what the buyers on that day thought – not what something is worth – buyers are looking on Ebay for bargains - but will sometimes pay too highly for something they want. Bids usually evolve on anything sought after - only in the last few seconds. So my advice is take a month or two and record what you find of interest, you can copy and paste to a word doc most finished eBay sales which would give you a record of sorts.

It is also good to keep watching Bonhams Auctions at Chester as once or twice a year they auction pewter as a stand alone sale or as part of an Oak furniture sale.

Right now a very good collection is being offered by Woolley and Wallis at Shrewsbury in October 2010. I think the estimates are intended to draw buyers and will exceed their guide. But these are the more expensive end of pewter collecting.

This is the www address guide –

<http://www.woolleyandwallis.co.uk/Search/?q=Pewter&sale=AF210910>

The Antiques Trade Gazette has a service where they notify you of forthcoming sales including any word that interests you.

It can be a fascinating and rewarding interest (though I do not necessarily mean financially). I always advise folk interested to join the Pewter Society – especially as the data base there, which membership gives you access to, does contain the only available and recently recorded and updated detail of some 14000 recorded pewterers (generally 1600-1900). H H Cotterell's book is very good but was completed in 1929 and much more evidence not available to him has come to light since then - and he recorded some 9000 pewterers. There are other advantages to membership as well but for that resource alone membership is worthwhile.

I do hope that these thoughts are useful to you and do not deter you from a fascinating interest. You are correct in thinking that there is a lot about that is not authentic, thus it is better to proceed with access to some knowledge.

My website under "links" does give some websites that also are reputable and show interesting pewter from time to time.

Enjoy