

THE PATINA QUESTION AND VALUE – a frequently asked question

The Patina question has different answers depending on where you are. A leading expert in the UK only keeps for himself those very good pieces with a naturally very darkened patina (but not pitted or damaged). Others in the UK and AUS prefer them slightly (but only a little) polished - ie the grey/dark grey - glows.

In the USA many seem to like them absolutely clean to an almost burnished aluminum or a silvery look.

To see what I mean first find www.hiltpewter.com/ and enjoy their USA pewter website.

Then compare that with a UK based site such as www.pewtersellers.com . Even in the UK I have one contact who likes his pewter to resemble silver and goes to extreme lengths to clean it like that both inside and out! He says correctly - that is what it was originally made to look like.

So I can give no definitive answer on taste or value. If you are thinking of selling; then to see what the market you might sell in pays better for, is always a somewhat simple answer – otherwise just please yourself, and enjoy your pewter the way you prefer it!

Buyers should note that excessive cleaning and polishing could unintentionally or otherwise conceal recent repairs.

An Acknowledged pewter authority writes to comment on the paragraph above

Regarding excessive cleaning (whatever that means!) can mask recent repairs. - The most difficult part of a repair is to get the composition of the alloy right. If it isn't right, the repair will still show when polished. (Repairs to high lead alloy pewter like tappit hens will still show even if you use the metal from the piece itself!). If you cannot see a repair, you have nothing to worry about. A lot of the pewter that was repaired 100 years ago may now have oxide covering the repaired region. So someone selling an oxidized piece as completely original, may unwittingly not be telling the truth! Furniture dealers will say the same thing with regard to wood. I think the bottom line is that if a piece is repaired and you cannot see it, it makes no difference whether it was repaired 100 years ago, or last year. Collectors should not be warned off polished pewter because they worry that it has been restored. Nearly all my pewter has been polished, and it looks the better for it. The other thing to remember is that if you look at the pewter in Cotterell, most of it was polished. The uniform grey that some people think is the real patina to aim for, is only that colour because it was polished last century and has been left to tarnish ever since