

# SPOONS

Sources - various articles have been plagiarised and borrowed from including – Pewter Society Journals - Autumn 1998 Volume 11 page 2 David Moulson ‘The Development of The Modern Spoon Shape’, Volume 19 2003 ‘Mr Gibsons Physic Spoon’ by Ronald F Homer page 49, Autumn 2007 Page 35 ‘Tea Spoons’ by David Hall, Five centuries of base metal Spoons by Ronald F Homer, Volume 8 number 3 Spring 1992 page 114 David Moulson, The Little Collection Tuesday 1 May 2007 Christie’s.



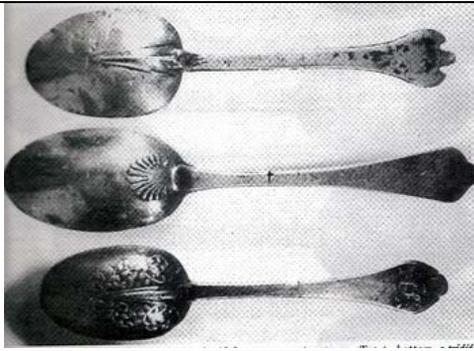
c1400-1640

A Slip Top spoon predates the Puritan as being of the early 1600s. From the end of the 1300s until about 1640 spoons were fig shaped (whereas the Puritan is ovoid and has rounder shoulders). The end of the stem of a slip top is cut off at a slight angle from front to back (the puritan simply chopped off). The Slip Top likely had six sides to the stem whereas the Puritan had four parallel sides and was flatter



c1660 –

A Puritan Spoon c 1660, embellished by hammering out the end of the stem so that it was wider than where it joins the bowl (is it really? - see below) and the end was adorned by two small nicks. About this time a rats tail was added to strengthen the back of the bowl (not here). About 1664 the nicks became accentuated and hammered further out for a spoon referred to as a New Fashion Spoon or French Spoon. Relating to French influence at the time of the restoration of the monarchy. This style also became known as ‘pied de biche’ or renamed as Trifids in pewter (trifid in silver) usually in three sizes 4” (condiments?) 6” (chocolate – just to confuse it was sometimes 4” so generally smaller than the usual) 7 1/2” standard size. Initially trifids were plain but later vines, flower sprays and lacework were cast into the stems and backs of the bowls



The backs of three pewter spoons.  
From the top a pewter trifid of c 1670  
(note the broad rat tail)

A dog nose or wavy end with shell decoration c 1700. A trifid variety of c 1700 with ornate lace work decoration.



Left a trifid pewter 4 5/8” spoon c 1690, smaller spoon next to it a variety of trifid handle 4” chocolate spoon c 1680

Separate to the right an English pewter trifid 7 5/8” spoon c 1690 cast with busts of William and Mary.



c1700 – onwards

The Dog Nose Spoon – the clefts and ears of the trifold spoon are eliminated there is a gentler curving to the handle edges and shank and a longer narrower bowl. Thought of as a graceful spoon.



c1710

Round Ended or Old English Spoon with an upturned end and a single drop. Firmly established when George 1 came to the throne in 1714. Rounded end and no embellishments. A single or double drop strengthened the junction of bowl to stem. Upturned ends were earlier but downturned ends followed.



c1720

Hanoverian style of Round Ended Spoon. This flares towards the top of the arc shaped stem on which there is a central raised rib running from half way down terminating at the upturned top in a small triangular shape.



c1780

A variation of the Trifold Spoon with the three lobes. Made by Vaughan of London and seen on a George III portrait spoon.



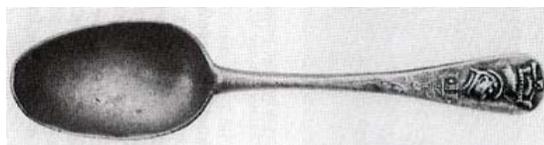
c1790

Round ended spoon by Thomas Yates reinforced with a steel wire, scallop shell drop.



c1800

Round Ended Spoon by Peter Davies of Aberdeen, with upturned end.



163 7/4in round-end spoon with a caricature of 'Farmer' George III. No maker's mark but cast initials IH. c. 1810.

You will see below the one I was sold by really reputable sellers – 'as a Farmer George' – it is absolutely nothing like it – perhaps they had never ever seen one - so who does the spoon below celebrate? (see page 6)



c1820

Fiddle End Spoon by James Dixon and Sons of Sheffield. A common place Sheffield production from about 1820 onwards.



**A spoon rack – find a good simple early one**

## Dating of Knops on Pewter Spoons

analysis leads to the following suggested dates for the equivalent pewter spoons.

Type	Suggested date range
Apostle	Before 1670
Seal Top	Before 1670
Slip Top	Before 1670
Puritan	1645-1665
Trifid	1675-1720
Dog Nose	1700-1715

### MARKS TO BE FOUND –

Trifid spoons have a maker's mark in the bowl and sometimes hallmarks to the backs of the stem. Initials on the backs of Queen Anne portrait spoons are neither maker nor owner – oft found is SS and a mold still exists for these.

Up to and including Puritan Spoons owners initials are found stamped in the bowls – with trifids they start to be stamped on the front or back of the stem.

**DECORATION** – The Monarchs head may be found on the front top of the stem. William and Mary in 1689 being the earliest. William on his own from 1694- 1702. Queen Anne 1702 – 1714 sometimes with sentimental mottoes.

Round ended spoons were decorated with cast portraits of George III and Queen Charlotte and an elderly George III caricatured alone as 'Farmer George'.

### A FEW OTHER SPOONS SHOWING THE STYLES OF SOME MENTIONED ABOVE

#### Rare Late Medieval NW European Latten or bronze Spoon 15<sup>th</sup> C or earlier.

An extraordinary rare survival this spoon displays all the features typically dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> or even 14<sup>th</sup> C including –

A fig shaped bowl – a diamond section stem – a 'cut and filed' knop (look further and say what this figure might be?)

Patination gives the appearance of bronze more likely to be early brass and might have been tinned originally. Weighs about ¾ of an ounce and is nearly 6" long.

Exceptionally rare is the early maker's mark struck to the back of the bowl immediately adjacent to the drop. Unfortunately too early for good records of early makers in any location.

The bowl shows some bias of shape due to wear, however file marks to the drop indicates but little ever usage. A very rare excavated spoon in very fine condition.



**A 16<sup>th</sup> Century Slip top spoon.**

Maker's mark clearly AB within beaded circle possibly with remains of a date beneath it, to fig shaped bowl stamped H length 16.5 cm. Weight 38 gms. Perhaps 1550-1590 English.



**A 17 th Century Slip top spoon.**

Maker's mark clearly TH within a circle featuring a dagger crossed with a key. Possible owners initials perhaps of WS with this maker's mark between them. A very typical spoon maker's mark from the late 1600s.

This spoon is 16.3 cms long and weighs 60 gms.



**A very early form of the Trifid spoon the gilding showing through indicates a latten** spoon rather than natures gilding. The remains of the touchmark appear to be from the left a letter T the a rack holding three spoons, two bowl upwards middle downwards a lovely little spoon makers mark. Dating this is not easy but possibly 1680-1700. 17.7cms long and weighs about 50 gms.



**Pewter Royal Portrait Spoon c 1770. George III and Queen Charlotte**

Made by John Vaughan OP 4863 struck touch 1759. This spoon bears not only his lamb and flag device over London but also his name label to back of the stem. Typical elongated bowl combined with the rattail drop. A scraped rather than burnished bowl. Weighs about 2 ozs.

An excavated spoon leaving typical gilding colourings arising from soil burial of pewter. Stem scraped in one place probably during excavation in Holland.

Only known maker of such spoons at this time.

Later type showed farmer George caricature. Such spoons had been popular late 17<sup>th</sup> c and early 18<sup>th</sup> c.



**'FARMER GEORGE' (GEORGE III)**

An alleged Royal Portrait Spoon of George III with cast decoration but the face bears little resemblance to known images the head has a different headdress on it and the readable first three letters from the left are COL so difficult to be sure whose portrait but that it should be worth casting implies a monarch, and the head maybe intended humorously – colonial? (It may have read COL(ONI)ES and G(E)O III - but this is just guesswork) Length of nearly 19cms weighs about 72 gms

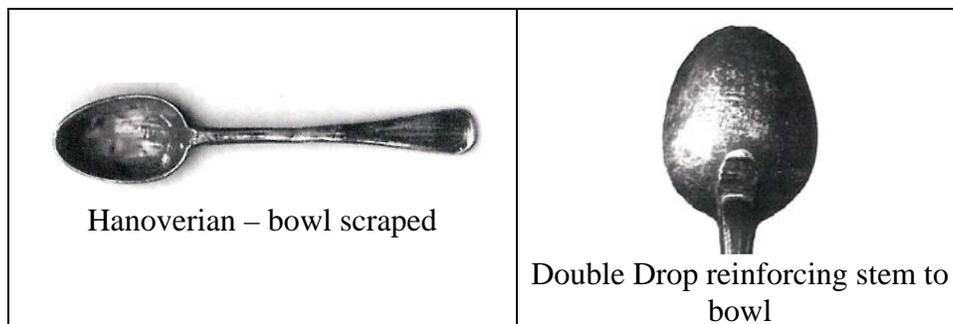


The usual Farmer George

**DOGNOSE SPOONS** – these succeeded Trifids in style but whilst Trifids in silver were made for perhaps 50 years the Dognose was apparently made for less time and are hence rarer.

However from the above evidence we have Trifids starting in 1664 and going on even after 1780 and we have Dognose appearing in 1690 and still there in 1770 (if the above spoon is a Farmer George!)

**Hanoverian Spoons** – characterised by the upturned top to the stem (end to the handle) there follows an illustration of what is meant by the double drop, a reinforcing measure where the stem meets the bowl. Insides of bowls the London Guild thought should be hammered but when they thought it their powers had diminished – those with decoration could not be hammered, production methods and competition scarce allowed for it the spoon illustrated here like lots had its bowl inside finished by scraping.



**The Yates family of Birmingham** – it seems accepted that a John Yates made spoons from 1800 onwards and that a T(homas) Yates made spoons from 1849-1900 so a Thomas Yates making spoons in 1790 as accepted by the Pewter Society Database must have been a Grandparent (if related.)

**Chocolate , tea and coffee** – all appeared in London in the 1650s. Punitive import duty was levied until 1784 (when reduced to 12 ½%) – tea then especially became popular with the words ‘tea spoon’ being used then. Prior to this it was a drink of the better off and likely they used silver spoons. Spoons for Chocolate were often smaller as it was served in smaller cups or beakers (especially in Paris delightfully engraved) and served with sugar.

**Scale of Spoon Making** – Given the low survival rate it could be difficult to think that at the beginning of the 1800s Ingram and Hunt of Bewdley were making over 100,000 spoons a year.

**The shape of Condiment Spoons** (size about 4” and a different bowl shape).



**LATTEN – is an alloy of copper with some 20 or 30% by weight of zinc.** In composition identical to brass - the term brass being used for the metal in bulk and latten for product or sheets of metal. In the 1600s analysed product often has around 2% of Iron which is likely present as an impurity and would cause some brittleness. Latten spoons were usually ‘tinned’ a fine dipped silver looking coating – as brass/latten taints food. Most early spoons of latten or pewter have often been recovered from where they were dumped, many buried in the ground for years. Latten was never known as a tightly controlled trade (whereas for a while the guilds had a grip on pewter.) Latten spoons are rarely marked, such maker’s marks as are found are puzzling and often use an arrangement of spoons in a small mark. Some were marked ‘Double Tinned’

**Pewter as found in Pewter Spoons** is likely approx 95% tin, 3-4% lead, some copper (1% approx) and traces of Bismuth, Arsenic and Zinc. Bismuth (tin glass) was known from early times to make casting easier. (Arsenic was simply an impurity sometimes found in tin ores – note there was no antimony which was later used for the Hard Metal and improved ‘French – Taudin’ pewter qualities)

**Earliest Recorded Spoons** – the very earliest found and recorded English spoons have round or leaf shaped bowls. From the very end of the 1300s for the next 250 years had a fig shaped bowl set on a slender stem often adorned with a decorative knop, likely human, animal, or a conventional ornament in shape. Early stems might have been of diamond section and then hexagonal, sometimes round. Recorded Roman Spoons may have rounded or leaf shaped bowls, early Arabic bowls in Mandolin shape have been found. Some of the earliest spoons widely found had a small animal head at the bowl end of the stem as though it is from that that the bowl emerges.

**Touch Marks** – found after 1500, well struck, front on the bowl near the junction with the stem

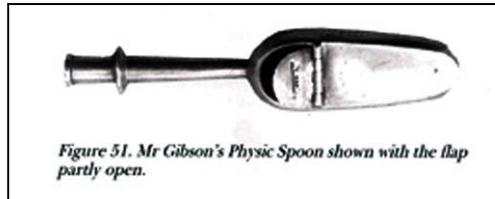
**Stems** – in the 1400s likely to be diamond shape, flattening later into hexagonal, and in the 1600s pewter stems might be round and latten flat with bevelled edges and sometimes with a reinforcing drop underneath as stem meets bowl, as early spoons from the 1400s might have an iron reinforcement wire (magnetic!) in the stem. Latten stems often stronger than pewter needed not be as deep from front to back.

**Scarcity** – silver spoons being more precious and cared for are often easier to find than their base metal (pewter or latten) equivalents. The more charming designs of knops were produced from 1400 – 1650. Variation in knop detail is endless whereas stem and fig shaped bowl detail is likely uniform.

### An unusual spoon – MR GIBSON’S PHYSIC SPOON

1828 Charles Gibson a London Goldsmith demonstrates at the Society for the Encouragement of Arts manufacture and Commerce his – novel medicine spoon.

The hinged flap allows the bowl to be sealed and closed forms an airtight seal. A finger over the end of the hollow stem prevents contents escaping – until the spoon is thrust into the patient’s mouth when the finger is removed the contents eject into the patients mouth through a slot in the tip of the bowl. Both silver and pewter spoons were made. Pewter by J & S Maw of Aldersgate Street (London) and Dixons of Sheffield (their 1839 catalogue). Just another area of spoons for the collector to consider!



*Figure 51. Mr Gibson's Physic Spoon shown with the flap partly open.*

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## CONSIDERATION OF THE KNOP ENDS IS A PRIME REASON FOR THE INTEREST IN COLLECTING SPOONS

### KNOP ENDS ON PEWTER OR LATTEN SPOONS

The following list suggests dates when styles are know to have existed.

BEFORE 1400 – Ball, Diamond, Acorn, - Maidenhead (perhaps only silver)

AROUND 1450 – Wrythen Ball, Strawberry,

BEFORE 1500 – Apostle, slip, melon, Horned Head-dress, Lion Sejant, Hexagon,

AROUND 1550 – Seal, Baluster

Below I attempt to show some of these styles that can be collected - I refer you especially to Five Centuries of Base metal Spoons by Ronal F Homer as quoted at the beginning for more information – some are rare.



This shows from the left – Knops of - a Seal c1600, an Apostle c 1570, a Cone c 1400, and a Horse's Hoof c 1550



This shows from the left – Knops of – Acorn c 1540, Horned headdress c mid 1400s, A Gilded Wrythen Ball late 15<sup>th</sup> C, and a Diamond Point 15<sup>th</sup> Century.



This shows from the left – Knops of – Alderman, Wrythen, Ball, Maidenhead all circa 1500

This shows from the left – Knops of – Flattened Acorn, (no Knop) Round Bowl, Acorn Style all c1300-1400



This shows from the left – Knops of – Crown and Seal Top, Monkshead, Lion Sejant all circa 1500



This shows from the left – Knops of – gadrooned Baluster, Hexagonal Knop, fluted Baluster, Horse Hoof – all circa 1600



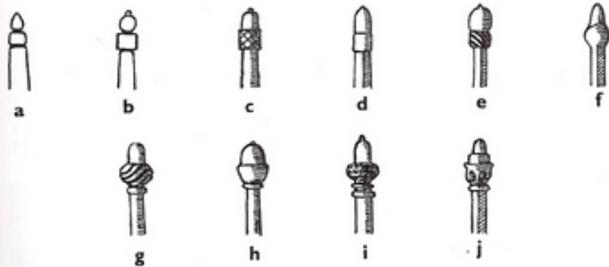
This shows from the left – Knops of - Strawberry, A slip top spoon, a slip top with wrigglework to the bowl, a Pewter Spoon - all from the middle 1600s

The ball knob assumes a variety of variant forms which may be divided into the following classes.

- a) A plain sphere as found on the earliest pewter spoons and also on late 15th/16th century examples.
- b) A vertically finely ridged ball with an equatorial "seam" or ridge resembling a terrella.
- c) A ball with fine horizontal and vertical ridges giving a chequered effect like a golf ball.
- d) A rather coarsely diagonally chequered ball with an equatorial ridge which has been called a "peach-stone" ball.



THE BALL KNOP

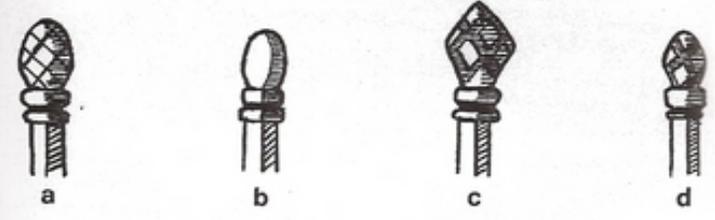


- a) Latten, 13th century, cut and filed (French, round bowl).
- b) Latten, 13th century, cut and filed (French, round bowl).
- c) Latten, 13th century, cast (French, round bowl).
- d) Latten, 13th century, (Mandolin bowl, continental?).
- e) Latten, 15th century, fig-shaped bowl.
- f) Pewter, 14th century, leaf bowl.
- g) Latten, 15th/16th century, fig-shaped bowl.
- h) Pewter, 16th century, fig-shaped bowl.
- i) Pewter, early 17th century, fig-shaped bowl.
- j) Pewter, vase and acorn, 15th/16th century, fig-shaped bowl.

**THE ACORN KNOP**

**CONE KNOP (P.L)**

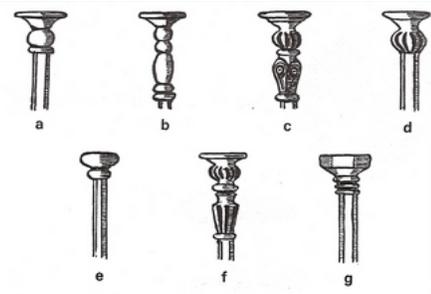
The cone knop is perhaps derived from the pine cone and is found on spoons of about 1400, some with rather oval bowls, and having diamond set stems. Usually they are unmarked, though Hilton Price records two examples which are marked on the back of the bowl. Medieval cone knops occur in a variety of forms, some of which are illustrated below. Most are decorated with an incised cast diamond lattice pattern, though some are smooth.



**THE CONE KNOP**

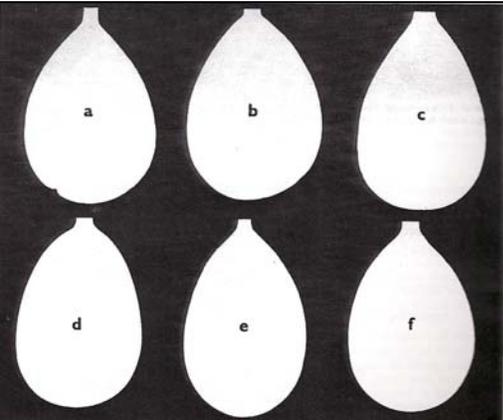
Type	Pewter	Latten
Acorn	17	1
Maidenhead	10	0
Lion Sejant	3	2
Wrythen	2	0
Melon	1	0
Hexagon	14	0
Apostle	3	11
Stump	1	0
Baluster	14	2
Seal	8	26
Strawberry	0	3
Slip Top	92	21

A Table of Knop types found by F G Hilton Price author of Old Base Metal Spoons in 1908 – although this actual table refers to the number of makers marks he found on spoons but might also be a guide as to the scarcity of different knops albeit that the Maidenhead Knop on Pewter spoons is very scarce indeed.



- a) Simple ball seal, latten, 16th century.
- b) Baluster seal, latten, 16th century.
- c) Scrolled baluster seal, latten, 17th century.
- d) Fluted ball seal, pewter, 16th century.
- e) Crude seal, pewter, 17th century.
- f) Fluted baluster seal, pewter, 17th century.
- g) Hexagon seal, pewter, 16th century.

**THE SEAL TOP KNOP**



Six 15th and 16th century bowl shapes: a) pewter diamond knop late 15th century; b) pewter slip top c. 1580; c) pewter slip top c. 1500; d) latten seal top c. 1570; e) pewter melon knop . 1500; f) pewter slip top c. 1600.

Bowl shapes have been relied on very heavily by some writers as a precise aid to dating in this period. However, although the shape may be taken as indicative of the forms adopted at particular periods, there are many exceptions. Similarly the side view of the bowl varies between the two extremes shown, but with little apparent chronological significance.

(Stem tops see above and before)

**PEWTER SPOON MARKS**

ACORN	
ALDERMAN	
APOSTLE	
BALUSTER	
CHANTICLEER	
HEXAGON	
HORNED HEAD-DRESS	
HORSE HOOF	
LION SEJANT	

Further interest with spoons can be the maker's marks that can often be found. Above is a small sample of marks found on spoons with the knop type detailed to the left. There are many such marks.

# APOSTLE SPOONS

The very wealthy might give a complete set of thirteen spoons comprising the twelve apostles and Christ, the Master spoon. In silver most of the apostles are crowned with a halo or nimbus, but this is rarely found in base metal: indeed it appears always to be lacking in latten.

The apostles, and the few saints who on occasion are found as replacements or supplements in sets, may be identified by their traditional attributes which are as follows.

St. Simon Zealots	Saw
St. Bartholemew	Flaying knife
St. James the Less	Fuller's bat
St. James the Greater	Pilgrim's staff and bottle
St. Peter	Keys (or Fish)
St. Matthew	Money wallet (or Carpenter's Square or axe or spear)
St. Jude	Cross
St. Philip	Long staff or Cross (or Basket of Fish)
St. John	Cup
St. Thomas	Spear (or Builders Rule)
St. Matthias	Axe or Halberd
St. Andrew	Cross Saltire

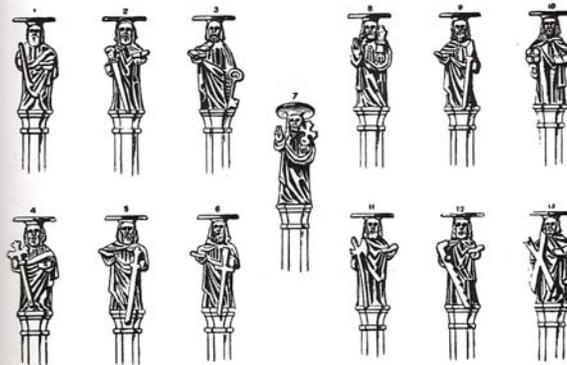
Also found are

St. Paul	Sword
St. Mark	Lion (or Pen and Scroll)
St. Luke	Ox (or Picture of the Virgin)

Christ, where found, carried in his hands the Orb and Cross.

In base metal the figures are frequently so worn, or originally so poorly delineated as to make identification uncertain, however a particularly well cast and well preserved latten knob of St. Jude is seen on page 26 which shows that the quality can equal that found in silver.

The following illustration taken from Cripps' Old English Plate (Ref 14) shows clearly the detail and identifying attributes of the various figures.



*Apostle spoon knobs. 1, St. James the Less; 2, St. Bartholemew; 3, St. Peter; 4, St. Jude; 5, St. James the Greater; 6, St. Philip; 7, Christ; 8, St. John; 9, St. Thomas; 10, St. Matthew; 11, St. Matthias; 12, St. Simon Zealots; 13, St. Andrew.*

## A WORD OF CAUTION

Ease of making led to many fake pewter spoons being made especially in the early 1900s.

Any quite clean spoon with no trace of hard black or brown oxide or of nature's gilding (a golden or bronze patina) should be carefully examined.

Any spoon which shows casting flaws might be a lot younger than it would appear.

Corrosion of buried spoons which might be thick or thin smooth or rough cannot be convincingly faked. Neither can the dark hard black oxide film which forms on unburied spoons after they have been exposed to the air, uncleaned, for a hundred years or more.

Any spoon which is obviously leady is suspect. Pewter spoons were made to polish to a silver colour.

Touchmarks on genuine spoons usually have been well struck. Any such marks that appear cast into the spoon in making rather than punched on is good evidence of forgery.

Latten spoons because of the different stronger high melting point alloy have rarely been faked. However sometimes a scarce latten knob has been attached to say a slip top pewter spoon and that is a very difficult deceit to detect.

From the above it is possible to see that it is best not to over clean any collectable spoons. If a shiny appearance is a priority then clean only the front so that the back remains the evidence of the age.

It is interesting to read that Ronald Homer says repairing pewter spoons is possible for those familiar with a soldering iron. He recommends using only scrap fine pewter or Britannia Metal (no solder, no flux). Clean the split to be repaired, use sufficient metal excess can be removed by filing and scraping remembering that the convex back of the bowl is easier to work than the concave inner surface. Darkening new metal can be achieved by etching and darkening with nitric acid (take instruction if not experienced!). Repairing latten spoons is more difficult.