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Helen Muller

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Helen Muller : Whitby Jet (Shire Library) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Whitby Jet (Shire Library):

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Is it really "jet" jewelry? By Jan Odegaard You need resources like this book to know.... I've collected mourning memorabilia and jewelry for 20 years and in all but a few cases dealers sell pieces as "jet" simply because they are black. This small book gives the history of true jet, found in Yorkshire, England, from ancient times to its almost complete decline. Rules for mourning etiquette, attire, and jewelry have been around for centuries but it wasn't until Queen Victoria went into deepest mourning after the death of her husband, Prince Albert, in 1861 that the specific and complicated rules of proper mourning exploded into a way of life that

created entire industries, one being the manufacture of jet jewelry, buttons, and trim for dresses and bonnets. While jet jewelry had been made for centuries as well, its association with mourning grew as women followed Victoria's lead and the industry reached its peak in the 1860's and 1870's when more than a thousand men were employed in shops along the English coast in Yorkshire, primarily the town of Whitby. Not everyone could afford true jet and by the mid-nineteenth century other natural (bog oak, horn, vulcanite) and manmade materials such as gutta percha and other resin-like substances, black glass (called "French jet"---the name had a cachet to it), and early plastics like Bakelite were used. These less expensive substitutes, as well as the softening and simplification of the once rigid mourning customs that began to take place in the early 20th Century, had a serious impact on the Whitby jet industry, and the reserves of jet to be mined grew smaller. By 1881, only 20 years after a time when the industry could barely keep up with worldwide demand, there were less than half as many jet carvers working in the trade; by 1921 only 40, and by 1946 there were only five jet carvers left, making souvenirs and trinkets for tourists. In 1958 the last trained jet craftsman died, signalling the end of the art of jet carving. In all my years of searching I've found only a handful of antique dealers who know what true jet is, most of what is sold as jet is most often black glass. It is possible to purchase new jet pieces---beachcombing is one source for the material, and occasionally a new vein is found in the earth. It can be faceted and highly polished but during its peak of production, when mourning customs were most strict, all jewelry was to have a dull or matte finish, nothing was to sparkle or shine. So, how do you tell? The first and simplest way is to hold a piece to your cheek: glass will feel cool, while jet will always "feel" room temperature. In its natural state it is much like coal and extremely lightweight, even a chunk the size of a brick will feel almost weightless in your hand. For anyone interested in the practice of mourning in the 19th Century this book gives a complete history and shows examples of the incredibly detailed carvings that were done with one of the most important accessories associated with the practice of proper grief.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Whitby Jet (Shire Library) By Dennis BA very interesting and informative book on the history of Whitby Jet jewellery. Having collected and cut and polished Jet from this area in the 1960's, I had always wondered about the origins of the material and why the jewellery made from the product became so popular in the Victorian era. The book gives an excellent insight into the formation and mining of this material and also the history of the early beginnings of the manufacturers and styles of jewellery. The illustrations show a good cross section of all the items made during the early years and demonstrates the skill attained by the Artisans in the Whitby area in the early days.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. LOVE THE BOOK! By mamalou Great book, fantastic delivery time. I'm pleased with everything. I've been to Whitby and enjoyed my stay. This book brings back memories of that wonderful, old town.

Jet, a hard, black, shiny gem closely related to coal, has been fashioned into jewelry and trinkets for generations. During the Victorian period, when the ritual surrounding death and the long mourning of Queen Victoria made black fashionable, jet became hugely popular. Although jet is found elsewhere in the world, it is the jet from Whitby that excites collectors to such an extent that even jet jewelry manufactured elsewhere is often called Whitby Jet. This book traces the history of jet and the Whitby jet industry, examining different types and styles of jet jewelry, and pictures the work of some of the best-known Whitby craftsmen.

About the Author Helen Muller has studied the Whitby jet industry and its products for much of her life, and she is one of the best known and respected figures in the field. She was awarded the Tully Medal of the Gemmological Association of Great Britain. Katey Scrace is Helen Muller's daughter, and she has inherited a great love for an knowledge of Whitby jet from her mother.