

## Any relic of the dead is precious: Nineteenth-century memorial jewellery at Canterbury Museum

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Canterbury Museum houses a small but varied collection of memorial jewellery from the nineteenth century that provides a window into European relationships and deathways during the period. This article places these objects in the context of far-reaching changes that led to a new social order of the dead. The first section locates our work within historical writing on death, grief and mourning in the late Georgian and Victorian eras. In the second, we attempt to make sense of the material evidence and offer a close analysis of the various mementos. We argue that these keepsakes played a crucial consolatory role in mourning practices at the time and assisted the bereaved to come to terms with their loss.

**Keywords:** death, memorials, memory, migration, mourning jewellery, nineteenth century

### Introduction

Canterbury Museum holds a collection of items that have an intimate connection to people's emotions and memories: items of jewellery that were created as love tokens and memorials to the dead. The collection encompasses jewellery made from jet, metal, semi-precious stones and, most intimate of all, human hair. The construction and use of these pieces took place in the midst of a revolutionary shift in the care of the dead throughout parts of Europe, North America and the British Empire. Many of the key changes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are ones that we take for granted today. In the words of historian Thomas Laqueur, the cemetery became the site of a "new regime of the dead; its promise of liberty, landscaping, and cosmopolitanism helped bring down the old" (Laqueur 2015: 161). Its eventual triumph over the deeply-rooted custom of churchyard burial began in France in 1804 with the opening of the Cimetière du

Père-Lachaise in Paris, shortly after Napoleon was crowned emperor. Designed by architect Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart and modelled on the ancient site of Karameikos in Athens, this modern Elysium set a high international standard for spaces of the dead and gave rise to a new necro-geography. The influence was clear in the late Georgian creations of London's Kensal Green and the Glasgow Necropolis (both 1833), and echoed later in Victorian cemeteries like Rockwood in Sydney (1867) and – on a far smaller scale – Christchurch's Barbadoes Street Cemetery (1851). These commemorative garden landscapes also contained an additional feature – necronominalism – that we expect to find nowadays at places of the dead, whether on graves, or monuments to the absent dead such as the Canterbury Earthquake Memorial. By the Victorian era in Britain, Ireland and far-flung settler colonies, we see a great expansion in the naming of the dead that would have been

unthinkable one century earlier. Like the new cemeteries, the demand to be written in death represented part of a major transformation in ways of thinking about the departed and afterlives that was grounded in memory, history and sentiment. Beneath these momentous changes were other practices that spoke to the place of the dead in this new order, including the emergence of elaborate commercial funerals, funerary undertaking and novel funeral rituals. In this paper we take one such aspect: the role played by keepsakes in late-Georgian and Victorian deathways. Our specific focus is on Canterbury Museum's collection of memorial jewellery. The next two sections provide a context for these poignant objects, exploring how historians have depicted people's experiences of death and grief in nineteenth-century Britain and New Zealand, and highlighting the place of mementos in mourning customs and their value in helping the bereaved to come to terms with loss.

### **Nineteenth-Century Deathways and Historical Writing**

Queen Victoria has enjoyed renewed popularity in recent years with the on-line launch of her private diaries, the publication of new biographies, the release of feature films and a television series that captures the burning passions of her relationship with Prince Albert.<sup>1</sup> Modern readers have been intrigued by her candid writings with the *New Zealand Herald* memorably describing them – with pardonable exaggeration – as “50 Shades of HRH”.<sup>2</sup> The public availability of the archives and the swathe of interpretations in print and visual media have led to a much more nuanced view of Queen Victoria that destroys many of the old stereotypes. There is one myth, however, that remains. She is often said to best exemplify the unhealthy obsession of Victorians with death and has been held up not only as ‘a Crepe Deity’ but also a fairly typical mourner from the period. The image

of Queen Victoria in ‘widow's weeds’ has been firmly etched in popular imagination and the broad details of her story are well known. She lost her mother, the Duchess of Kent, on 16 March 1861, and fell into deep melancholy from which she was only just recovering when her beloved Prince Albert died unexpectedly 9 months later. In a moving letter to King Leopold of Belgium, she lamented how she had now become “the utterly broken-hearted and crushed widow of forty-two! My *life* as a *happy* one is *ended!* the world is gone for *me!*”<sup>3</sup>

Historian Patricia Jalland has convincingly argued that Queen Victoria suffered from a form of chronic grief that was characterised by an “obsessive preoccupation” with her husband and a severe depression, which lasted for many years (Jalland 1996: 320). There was no doubt that she suffered terribly. Her diaries and letters, for example, reveal how she struggled with the sorrow of “losing half of her body and soul, torn forcibly away ... it is like *death* in life”.<sup>4</sup> Albert's room and personal belongings, including fresh clothes, were set out each day as if he would re-enter this world again at any moment. Victoria experienced crippling headaches, disturbed sleeps and dreadful aches and pains. She was haunted by memories of Albert to such a degree that even the smallest prompts, such as the sound of a nightingale, could trigger intense pining and distress. The ‘Widow of Windsor’ withdrew from public life and the length of her seclusion went well beyond the two or three years expected at the time. There were persistent rumours of insanity. The Queen received criticism in the British press and endured a campaign against her absence from public ceremonial duties, even though she continued the work of state behind the palace doors. Victoria's recovery was gradual and erratic. Ten years after Albert's death her physician, Sir William Jenner, would still write that her condition was a “form of madness” (Jalland 1989: 174).

The Queen, it turns out, was certainly neither a typical Victorian mourner nor a

typical widow. She engaged in conventional practices and rituals such as mourning dress and keepsakes, but the kind of “violent” and protracted grief to which she was particularly susceptible was as unusual then as it is today.<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt that her experience has tainted historical writing about the period. Whereas Philippe Ariès (1981) painted a sympathetic portrait of the Victorians in his magisterial study of Western attitudes to death, some British scholars attacked what they saw as the obsessive morbidity of the era. Even John Morley’s *Death, Heaven and the Victorians* (1971), which seems so path-breaking now in terms of its emphasis on material culture and the influence of Romanticism, is not entirely separate from this narrative. Queen Victoria serves an important illustrative function here, especially in relation to dress and etiquette.<sup>6</sup> The most scathing critique, however, was made in an important essay by David Cannadine (1981), for whom “the Victorian celebration of death was not so much a golden age of effective psychological support as a bonanza of commercial exploitation”. The ostentatious funerals, elaborate rituals and mourning paraphernalia were “more an assertion of status than a means of assuaging sorrow, a display of conspicuous consumption rather than an exercise in grief therapy, from which the chief beneficiary was more likely to be the undertaker than the widow” (Cannadine 1981: 191). An excessive focus on loss and sorrow was both unnecessary and damaging to such an extent that it “robbed” the bereaved of “the will to recover”. Queen Victoria, on this reading, was the most spectacular example of a much wider disorder.

The work of historians over the last three decades has refuted this interpretation and given us a deeper understanding of Victorians and death in Britain and throughout the empire. In the first place, it has reminded us not to confuse grief (the experience of sorrow) with its formal expression (mourning rituals) or to assume a causal relationship between the two (as in the case of Queen Victoria).

The available evidence from diaries, letters and other sources show that many Victorians found solace in contemporary mourning customs, which allowed them to express sorrow in ways that made their grieving more bearable. Black crepe, veils and gloves, for example, could be expensive, restrictive and uncomfortable, but they were more a valuable therapeutic aid than a form of sartorial torture when viewed in their wider cultural framework and alongside the literary evidence (Jalland 1996: 300–307). Morley’s depiction of a “congealed” and “morbid romanticism” has not fared well (Morley 1971: 14, 15). Nor have ethnocentric interpretations that view the period’s beliefs and practices as macabre, mawkishly sentimental, “rather absurd” or downright “pathetic” (Curl 1972: xiii, xiv).

The ground has also shifted underneath the taken-for-granted notion that the Victorian period was somehow peculiar in its concern with death. Ruth Richardson (1987), Patricia Jalland (1996), John Wolfe (2000) and others have clearly shown that so many of the features we associate with Victorian deathways are, in fact, the outcome of various influences and precedents, many of them Georgian and some, like the *ars moriendi* (the art of dying well), from a much longer lineage. We have a better appreciation now of the crucial consolatory role played by spiritual resources, including Evangelicalism, in helping Victorians make sense of their loss and sorrow. There are excellent studies in Britain, New Zealand and Australia on a range of topics that include grief and poverty (Strange 2005), colonial mortuary politics (Ballantyne 2014), cemeteries (Trapeznik and Gee 2013; Deed 2015), suicide (Bailey 1998), and dissection (MacDonald 2006). In short, this research reveals continuities as well as the revolutionary changes mapped so brilliantly in Thomas Laqueur’s *The Work of the Dead* (2015).



**Figure 1.** Black enamel locket with lily of the valley decoration and pearl bud inlay. The locket contains a clipping of blonde hair (right). It came to the Museum from the estate of Janet Mabella Shaw (1883–1958) but the story of the locket has been lost. Canterbury Museum EC158.303

### **Making Sense of Nineteenth-Century Mourning Art**

What can the mourning jewellery held by Canterbury Museum tell us about nineteenth-century migrant deathways? To what extent does it match wider patterns from the period? To answer these questions we need to turn to new work that has been influenced by the material turn in historical research and how it adds further depth to our understanding of late Georgian and Victorian practices of remembrance and commemoration (Fraser 2017). Women will-makers in Canterbury, for example, made bequests that suffused everyday material objects with emotive charge in ways that were different to men. The symbolic tokens varied in kind from money to clothing, and from furniture to jewellery, but they shared a capacity to venerate close personal ties. Domestic servant Mary Lukeman, for example, gave “two pairs of long netted curtains”, a “fancy patchwork quilt” and her watch, chain and “fancy work” to friends.<sup>7</sup> Peternell Manaton, who arrived in the province aboard the *Mermaid* in 1862, made many bequests including an unmade black silk dress, a paisley shawl, a set of earrings and

a gold ring to her daughter, Mary Opie, and a dress cap and shawl for her sister, Eliza Keast.<sup>8</sup> Testamentary writing, then, constituted an act of remembrance in which tokens of affection exchanged post-mortem intimately linked the living with the dead, often over long distances (Fraser 2019).

Outside of wills we find other melancholy objects that served as vehicles of memory across the English-speaking world. Flowers and scented plants were used symbolically, for example, on beautifully rendered memorials at Addington Cemetery, Christchurch. The flower, lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*), is associated with loss and was used in mourning jewellery, as in the black enamel locket in Figure 1. Flowers also featured prominently in death portraiture. Posthumous images of children followed, in their composition, nineteenth-century conventions of ‘the last sleep’, and became powerful visual mementos that were kept in albums and bibles, or placed on display in family homes. Death masks, samplers, memorial church windows, portraits and gravestone inscriptions, to name but a few, served as important sources of consolation for the bereaved. Many museums throughout New Zealand and Australia also

hold commissioned pictures of widows in their 'black weeds' of paramatta and crepe. Although the provenance of many of these photographs has been lost, they do reveal the gendered experience of grieving, the social expectations that accompanied their new status, and the different sartorial phases through which they passed. If faith and memory provided solace for widows, dress made mourners visible. It showed respect for the deceased and captured the sombre mood of loss. These images also reveal a close association between mourning attire and memorial jewellery: a variety of brooches, rings and lockets are evident in the photographs, much like those found in Canterbury Museum's collection.

One of the most striking aspects of these intimate artefacts is the use of human hair to commemorate close personal ties and provide physical proximity to the dead. This practice will be familiar to readers of nineteenth-century fiction. In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), for example, Nelly Dean, the amiable housekeeper at Thrushcross Grange, confesses after Catherine Linton's death to being "seldom otherwise than happy while watching in the chamber of death", where, on this occasion, she admits to enclosing two curls of hair in a trinket that hung around the deceased's neck: "I see a repose that neither earth nor hell can break; and I feel an assurance of the endless and shadowless hereafter – the Eternity they have entered – where life is boundless in its duration, and love in its sympathy, and joy in its fullness" (Brontë 2006: 196). When Virginie dies in Flaubert's 'A Simple Heart' (1877), a distraught Félicité does not leave her bedside for two nights. She prays incessantly, sprinkles holy water on the sheets, and gazes "fixedly" at the girl's corpse. After laying out Virginie, wrapping her in a shroud and placing her in a coffin, Félicité arranges her hair. The housemaid cuts off a long lock "and slipped half of it into her bosom, resolving that it would never be separated from her" (Flaubert 2005: 25). The power of hair mementos in binding the living and the

dead is also captured in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem 'Only a Curl' (1862), which speaks to the continuing bonds between a grieving mother and the daughter she has lost:

*You know how one angel smiles there.  
Then weep not. 'Tis easy for you  
To be drawn by a single gold hair  
Of that curl, from earth's storm and despair,  
To the safe place above us. Adieu.*

Outside the realm of fiction and poetry, historians have uncovered numerous examples of the ways in which hair jewellery was used symbolically to represent the dead. Soon after Prince Albert's death, Queen Victoria commissioned a range of keepsakes that included a gold pin with an onyx cameo portrait of her husband with a locket fitting at the back for his hair. At the first post-mortem wedding anniversary, her sister, Princess Feodora of Leiningen, gave her a bracelet set with Albert's hair and that of her family (Bury 1997). When Lord Frederick Cavendish was murdered in Phoenix Park, Dublin, in 1882, a quick-thinking Lord Spencer not only arranged the post-mortem photographs for his wife but also cut off a lock of his hair. Lucy Cavendish took "deep comfort" from the images and treasured the hair which she had



**Figure 2.** Brooch with gold border in flower and leaf design. Swivel centre with glass on both sides for displaying portraits or hair. Donated in 1962 by Janet Storry, the granddaughter of the original owner, Elizabeth White (c.1826–1904). Canterbury Museum EC162.116



**Figure 3.** Elizabeth White (c.1826–1904) wearing the brooch EC162.116 (Fig. 2). Canterbury Museum 1970.163.35

set into a diamond locket (Jalland 1989: 182). Hair mementos also travelled. Historians who have studied the personal correspondence of Irish migrants in nineteenth-century Australasia have noted how symbolic tokens such as locks of hair from deceased relatives formed an important part of the ritual of communication. The exchange of relics of this type carried a great deal of risk. Letters could be lost or delayed, creating anxiety for both the intended recipient and writer (Fitzpatrick 1994; McCarthy 2005; Fraser 2007).

Hair of the living was often used to express love and connections. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, for example, treasured both her sisters' and husband's locks in this way (Ofek 2009: 47). Locks of human hair were important mementos. Swivel brooches were designed to hold photographs of loved ones, but the space on the back (closer to one's body) was often used to keep a lock of hair. Elizabeth White née Wain (c.1826–1904) who arrived in Lyttelton in 1852 wore a gold brooch of this design (Fig. 2) and can be seen wearing it in Figure 3. Unfortunately it is impossible to see what Elizabeth had in the brooch and it was

empty when it was donated to Canterbury Museum in 1962.

Jewellery made from human hair was fashionable in late Georgian and Victorian times and Canterbury Museum has some exquisite examples. The beautifully rendered hair watch cord with fob, pictured in Figure 4 (EC164.19), was made as a token of affection between a wife and husband. The hair in this piece was Arabella Anderson's, who arrived in Canterbury on the *Crusader* in 1872, and the cord was worn by her husband, Charles. It was not only the hair in this piece that was symbolic. One side of the tiny bottle in the fob is made from carnelian, which signifies contentment and friendship, while the other side is made of green agate, signifying health and longevity.

The watch and cord in Figure 5 (EC158.78.2) may have had a similar sentimental connection. It was donated to the Museum by Dr Donald Currie and was described as his grandmother's. Any story behind the personal connection of Christchurch teacher Annie Webb (1867–1960) with the necklace or armlet made from six woven braids of human hair (Fig. 6, EC165.96) has since been lost.

We are in a better position in relation to the stunning bracelet shown in Figure 7 (EC177.211), which was made from three strands of plaited human hair. It features gold, ivory, diamonds and rubies. The back of the clasp has a small oval glass locket for a lock of hair. According to family memory, it was made from the hair of Emma Parkerson (née Mount, 1810–1894) (see Fig. 8), who sailed to Canterbury in 1853 and became prominent in church affairs and charitable work.

While the intricate craft and design of these keepsakes suggests that they were commissioned from jewellers, who most likely left the fine weaving to women hairworkers, it is possible that they were made at home. Shirley Bury (1997) and Maureen DeLorne (2004) have both noted the keen popular interest in this art form during the nineteenth century and how magazine articles and books



**Figure 4.** A watch cord woven from human hair with metal fittings and a tiny bottle included in the 40 mm long fob. The bottle has green agate on one side and red carnelian on the other. Donated in 1964 by the two surviving daughters of Arabella Anderson (c.1845–1930) whose hair was used to make this love token for her husband Charles. Canterbury Museum EC164.19

on the subject fostered hair work as a home craft. An influential text entitled *The Lock of Hair* was written by Alexanna Speight, a London businesswoman and hairworker, and published in 1871. Part II of the book is subtitled *The Art of Working in Hair* and it offered Victorians finely detailed instructions on how to go about this task. First, the hair was to be “cleansed” from impurities with water, soda and borax, before being spread out on a palette and trimmed at the ends (Speight 1871: 87). In the second step, curling-irons and a candle flame were to be used to create the curl that was fixed “by means of a little gum” and pressed under a sugar loaf weight (Speight 1871: 90). Finally, it was completed

by dampening the curl, removing the gum, spreading it out carefully with a knife and leaving it to dry. Speight’s advice extended from basic shapes to far more complex creations such as feathers, ears of barley, pearl bands, sprays and plaits. *The Lock of Hair* gives modern readers a clear idea about how this work was done and the skill required to manage needles, gold wire, naked flame and other aspects of the process.

Mark Campbell’s *Self-Instructor in the Art of Hair Work* published in the United States in 1867 provided similar guidance. Campbell made the point that by doing the weaving themselves (rather than taking hair to a professional), a person had the certainty



**Figure 5.** One pocket watch on a guard chain made from braided human hair. The watch was made by B Petersen & Co of Christchurch, c. 1900. Donated in 1958 by Dr Donald Currie. Canterbury Museum EC158.78.2



**Figure 6.** A love token made from six woven tubes of human hair and finished with gold fittings. Originally described as an armlet, it is now thought to be a short necklace with the connecting chain missing from the back. Donated in 1965 by Esme Hewitt, the niece of the previous owner, teacher Annie Webb (1867–1960). Canterbury Museum EC165.96





**Figure 7.** Bracelet made from three strands of plaited human hair with a gold and ivory clasp, set with 12 small diamonds and four cabochon rubies. Attached to the clasp is a thin gold link chain with two pendants of ivory each set with five cabochon rubies. The back of the clasp has a small oval glass locket for hair. Donated in 1968 by Emma Blackler, the daughter of Emma Parkerson whose hair this bracelet was made from. Canterbury Museum EC177.211



**Figure 8.** Emma and Burrell Parkerson with one of their daughters. Photographed by Alfred Barker, 21 June 1870. Canterbury Museum 1944.78.222



**Figure 9.** Framed carte de visite with hair work decoration. The sitter is unknown but the portrait was taken by photographer Samuel Charles Louis Lawrence, known as Charles Lawrence, who had a studio in Oxford Terrace, Christchurch, c.1866 to 1875. Canterbury Museum 2009.28.69

of “*knowing* [original emphasis] that the material of their own handiwork is the actual hair of the ‘loved and gone’” further indicating the sentimental importance of the hair itself (Campbell 1867: 6).

In New Zealand, hair jewellery was made commercially by jewellery establishments such as W Sandstein of Christchurch who in 1880 exhibited “some beautiful specimens of hair work” including crosses mounted in gold and silver (*Press*, 17 July 1880: 3), but it is clear that this was a craft that was also undertaken at home. In 1891, a writer reminisced that 20 or 30 years ago a popular hobby “was the weaving knitting and plaiting of hair” and that “many a lover was the recipient of a watch guard woven by his fair one’s hands from her own locks” (*Ashburton Guardian*, 12 November 1891: 2).

While not an item of jewellery, Canterbury Museum has one example of hair work made

in the 1870s that has a looser and more variable construction technique, strongly suggesting that it was made at home by a grieving relative (Fig. 9). This piece is also significant because it reveals that the memorial practice of surrounding the visual traces of the dead with flowers and woven locks was present in Canterbury at that time, just as it had been in parts of Europe and the Americas (Batchen 2004: 91).

Tokens of love and affection could, in turn, transition into memento mori. Such was the case for the simple necklace in Figure 10 (EC160.181) donated in 1960 by Annie Isabella (Nancy) Foley. She was a descendant of one of two Scottish-born sisters, Cecilia (1802–1880) and Isabella Pringle (1805–1836), whose hair was combined to craft this keepsake. Although there is significant fading, a close inspection reveals that the hair of these



**Figure 10.** One 815 mm long double-string hair necklace with five joins and a hinged catch. Made from the hair of two sisters, Cecilia (1802–1880) and Isabella Pringle (1805–1836) and donated to the Museum in 1960 by Nancy Foley, Isabella’s granddaughter. Canterbury Museum EC160.181

women had quite different shades. It seems most likely that the necklace was made in the early 1830s, shortly before Isabella set sail for India, perhaps an indication that the sisters felt that it was unlikely that they would meet again. Isabella married in India in 1835 and died one year later, shortly after the birth of her only child. The necklace passed to her son, Robert John Foley, who followed his father into the British Army and was in New Zealand on military service by the 1860s.

Style and differences between love tokens and keepsakes can be very small or even non-existent, which can make them difficult to identify correctly. Once the story of the item has been lost it can be difficult to tell whether a piece was made as a token of affection or as a mourning object. And, as already mentioned, an item may have transitioned from one to the other. We have identified

two pieces at Canterbury Museum that are examples of this. The first, shown in Figure 11 (EC167.50), is a weighty silver chain with an intricately detailed locket. On the back of the locket, the name Maggie Kennedy has been engraved and inside the locket is a small piece of plaited human hair. The hallmark indicates that the locket was made in Birmingham in 1893 and it is likely that it was engraved locally. Was the necklace given to Maggie Kennedy and a piece of her hair added after her death, or did she add the hair of a loved one to her own necklace?

The second is an excellent example of one of the most popular post-1850 forms of curling. Figure 12 (EC169.35) shows a tubular metal brooch featuring a Prince of Wales plume and gold embroidery. The item was donated by Annie Connal Dent (1884–1969) along with a miniature of her grandfather Captain William



**Figure 11.** Silver chain necklace with locket containing a loose plait of human hair (inset), c.1893. The back of the locket has a hallmark indicating that it was made in Birmingham in 1893 and the name Maggie Kennedy engraved on it. Donated in 1967 by Pamela Jekyll Cuddon. Canterbury Museum EC167.50



**Figure 12.** A tubular metal brooch, 60 mm wide, with human hair inset with the hair arranged in the Prince of Wales style with gold embroidery. Donated by the estate of Annie Connal Dent in 1969. Canterbury Museum EC169.35



**Figure 13.** Captain William Roose, miniature on ivory, painted in Barcelona, c.1834. Canterbury Museum EC169.35A

Roose (Fig. 13) and it is possible that both items are memorial objects.

Other items are more clearly associated with mourning and the jewellery in all these cases is beautifully executed. One of the most striking can be dated to the late Georgian era. Figure 14 (EC161.64) takes the form of a braided necklace and pendant in the shape of a cross made from the hair of Ann Ollivier (née Wilby), who died in London in 1819 after the birth of her eighth child. John Ollivier (1812–1893) (Fig. 15) was 6 years old when his mother died and presumably brought this necklace with him as a keepsake when he came to Canterbury on the *John Taylor* in 1853. The necklace passed down a male line to his son, Arthur, and then to a grandson, Cecil. When it was donated to the Museum by Cecil's daughter, Lois, the necklace had not lost its family connection despite being 142 years old.



**Figure 14.** One hair necklace with gold fittings and an 80 mm long hair pendant in the shape of a cross. On the centre reverse of the cross is the engraving “A.O. August 30.1819, aged 49”. “A.O.” was Ann Ollivier née Wilby (1778–1819), wife of London accountant Claude Nicholas Ollivier. Ann died after the birth of her eighth child. The necklace was donated by Ann’s great-great-granddaughter Lois Boyle in 1961. Canterbury Museum EC161.64



**Figure 15.** John Ollivier (1812–1893) who brought a necklace made from his mother’s hair with him when he came to Canterbury in 1853, 34 years after his mother’s death. Canterbury Museum 19XX.2.510

Also especially poignant is the black enamel locket (Fig. 1, EC158.303) with lily of the valley decoration. The flower symbolised a return to happiness and was often associated with mourning. Inside the locket is a lock of blonde hair. The elaborate bracelet made from multiple human hair braids in Figure 16 (EC151.56) also has an attached locket that contains a palette-worked curl, which is still in excellent condition. The piece was associated with Nellie Reeves, the daughter of newspaper editor William Reeves (1825–1891) and his wife Ellen (née Pember, c.1834–1919).

Other varieties of sentimental jewellery are less well represented in the collections. The Museum has only three examples of portraiture. The story behind the gold cameo brooch with a swivel mount and hand-tinted portrait on the reverse side (Fig. 17, EC150.401) is better recorded. It depicts Nelson schoolteacher Thomas Warnock (b.

1842), who died 3 days after the death of his youngest daughter, Florence, in 1891. The well-worn silver locket containing a photograph of Robert Stone Florence as a younger man in Figure 18 (EC158.141) may well have belonged to his wife Matilda, who outlived her husband by nearly a quarter of a century, and transitioned into a mourning object after his death.

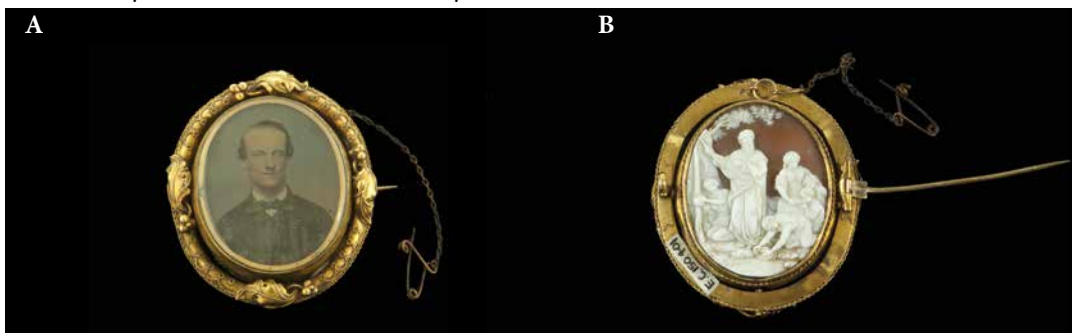
Also connected with the Florence family is the wonderful collection of memorial objects in Figure 19 (EC160.154). The locket is clearly a mourning item. Confusingly, it contains a photograph of Matilda Sophia Henrietta Florence née Bamford (1862–1952) as a young woman. As Matilda died only 8 years before the locket was donated (aged 90), it is likely that the photo was added to this locket after her death, perhaps from another locket. The other two objects both contain human hair. In one it is clearly on display while in the other a fancy curl is hidden under a hinged cover.

Mourning rings were popular but Canterbury Museum has only one example. The gold signet ring with an uncut cameo in Figure 20 (EC174.448) is dated to 1861. The cameo is hinged and underneath is a small lock of fair hair.

There are a small number of objects in the collection that feature jet-working. Jet has been worked for centuries, but the industry expanded rapidly in England from the mid-nineteenth century due to technological advances (the lathe) and growing consumer demand after its central role in court mourning for William IV (1765–1837) and its display at the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, London, in 1851 (Morley 1971: 66). The best jet mourning jewellery, and certainly the most desirable for modern collectors, was fashioned from English Whitby. There were also important imitations of this type of coal, with French jet (glass), England’s Vauxhall glass, and Irish bog oak providing viable alternatives (DeLorne 2004: 110–115). The matching set of necklace, earrings and brooch in Figure 21 (19XX.3.372) is a striking example of jet



**Figure 16.** Bracelet made from multiple human hair braids twisted together. The attached gold locket with cross contains a lock of hair (right). Donated in 1951 by Elizabeth Hope O’Rorke from the estate of her aunt Ellen Mary Reeves (1866–1951). Canterbury Museum EC151.56



**Figure 17.** Gold brooch with swivel mount. **A**, the hand-tinted portrait on one side is of Thomas Warnock (1842–1891). **B**, the cameo on the other side is of a biblical scene. The brooch was donated in 1950 by Thomas Warnock’s daughter, Maude Warnock, on behalf of her sister Sarah. Canterbury Museum EC150.401



**Figure 18.** Engraved silver locket, shown closed (left) and open (right) with a photograph of lawyer Robert Stone Florance (1856–1928). The 40 mm long locket was donated in 1958 by Florance’s daughter Ethel Moffat. Canterbury Museum EC158.141





**Figure 19.** This group of memorial objects was donated by Ethel Moffat in 1960. **A**, the small (20 mm) gold “in memory of” locket contains a photograph of Ethel’s mother, Matilda Sophia Henrietta Florance née Bamford (1862–1952), the wife of Robert Stone Florance (see Fig. 18). **B**, the small clear container has a lock of hair in it. **C**, the gold coloured round locket with the hinged cover contains a piece of curled hair and a pearl. Canterbury Museum EC160.154

manufacture. It was originally donated to the Pilgrims’ Association by Gertrude Lovell-Smith and came to Canterbury Museum as part of the Pilgrims’ Association transfer in the late 1940s.

Items made from jet tended to be less personal than jewellery containing hair and photographs and women may well have had a number of pieces that could be worn whenever the occasion warranted it. In terms of Canterbury Museum’s collection,

none of the jewellery made from jet have any association with a particular bereavement, for example Figures 22 and 23. The two beautiful sets of black earrings (Figure 24, EC1990.866 and EC1990.867) worn by Nina Fox (c.1872–1950) of Christchurch suggest that these kinds of pieces were worn during mourning into the twentieth century in New Zealand.



**Figure 20.** A gold signet ring with an uncut cameo which is hinged, underneath is a small lock of fair hair, c.1861. This ring was donated anonymously in 1974. Canterbury Museum EC174.448

## Conclusion

The mourning jewellery housed in Canterbury

Museum was made, used and treasured at a time of momentous changes in European deathways, which would become world historical in their impact. The shift to a new regime of the dead and views of the departed and afterlives that was grounded in memory and sentiment was vividly expressed on the edge of empire in spaces like the Barbadoes Street Cemetery. It is also evident in industries that fed a growing demand for keepsakes such as those we have showcased in this article. Yet capitalism's move into "the market for memory" is only part of the story (Laqueur 2015: 293). Hair bracelets, for example, brought mourners into intimate association with the body of the deceased and provided solace at a time of grief. In some cases these objects transitioned from love to death or, put differently, from tokens of affection to



**Figure 21.** Matching necklace, earrings and brooch carved in jet. The necklace's larger central pendant has been lost. Originally given to the Pilgrims' Association by Gertrude Lovell-Smith née Hicks, the set came to Canterbury Museum as part of the Pilgrims' Association transfer in the late 1940s. It is not known whether they were a family heirloom or had been given to Gertrude to pass on to the Pilgrims' Association. Canterbury Museum 19XX.3.372



**Figure 22.** Donated by Janet Storry in 1962, this delicate mourning bracelet is made of small and medium size jet beads. Canterbury Museum EC162.130

momento mori. Some were made locally but most had travelled to New Zealand and many had been commissioned in Britain. Perhaps the best explanation for the power of these pieces in nineteenth century practices of mourning and commemoration was given by Emily Brontë's fictional Nelly Dean when she reads an old letter she had kept from Isabella Linton. "Any relic of the dead is precious," she tells a convalescing Mr Lockwood, "if they were valued living" (Brontë 2006: 159). Yet objects which came into museums could lose this contemporary value as connections within families were lost or forgotten. Such objects often transitioned, as we have shown, to become curios and collector's items, as families donated them to a place where they could be kept safely, enjoyed, and valued by a much wider range of people.

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### **Endnote**

- 1 See, for example, Julia Baird (2016); *Victoria* (ITV Series, 26 August 2016 – 12 May 2019); *Victoria and Abdul* (dir. Stephen Frears, 2017).



**Figure 23.** Donated by Dorothy Isobell Oliver in 1958, the history of this three string necklace of jet beads has been lost. Canterbury Museum EC158.366



**Figure 24.** Two pairs of mourning earrings worn by Nina Fox (c.1872–1950) of Christchurch. The pair at the left are made of jet and have a drop of 35 mm while the pair on the right are black glass with a drop of 75 mm. The earrings were presented to the Museum in 1990 by Sylvia Sibbald Fox, the daughter of Nina and Dr Walter Fox. Canterbury Museum EC1990.866 (left) and EC1990.867

- 2 Danilea Elser, Queen Victoria's Wild Royal Sex Diaries Revealed, *New Zealand Herald*, 26 May 2019. Available from: [https://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=6&objectid=12234408](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/lifestyle/news/article.cfm?c_id=6&objectid=12234408)
- 3 Queen Victoria to King of the Belgians, 20 December 1861, in Benson and Esher (1908).
- 4 Queen Victoria to Earl Canning, 10 January 1862, in Benson and Esher (1908).
- 5 The italicized '*violent*' is from Queen Victoria to Lady Waterpark, Osborne, 10 February 1867, British Library Manuscripts, Add. 60750, Extract 60750, Lady Waterpark, 1:271. Quoted in Baird (2016: 349).
- 6 See, for example, Taylor (1983).
- 7 Will of Mary Lukeman, Archives New Zealand, Christchurch, CH A95/1874.
- 8 Will of Peternell Manaton, Archives New Zealand, Christchurch, CH A18/1875.

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