

Crochet purse



Our new exhibition for 2023

Amelia Ray: A Victorian entrepreneur at the Cutting Edge.

Shopping in the Victorian era

With our new exhibition opening in May, we have been taking a look at other items in our collections that are relevant to the story. This purse, one of two in our collection, fits nicely.

If you went shopping in Amelia Ray's drapery shop in High Street Newtown in the 1870s you might have had one of these to carry your coins to pay for your purchases. Known as a 'miser's purse' – it was a knitted or crocheted tube with metal rings to keep the coins inside. It was often small and light enough to be worn round the neck. As you can see, our purse was crocheted. A second example in our collection, although similar in style is nearly twice as long.

Coins of the time were minted under strict conditions so you could 'count' the amount of cash in your purse by its weight as well as by the

number of coins. Many of the coins had names and values that had disappeared even before decimal currency. A Florin (silver and equal to 2 shillings), a Crown (worth 5 shillings) and its more common form the Half Crown (worth 2 shillings and sixpence). Bank notes were not used for shopping and credit cards were not even dreamt of! Good customers could obtain credit from some shops by having an account, though this carried a degree of risk for the shopkeeper when times were tough.



Two crochet purses for carrying coins

150 years later, some of us still carry a purse for coins, but with cash being used less and less, our purses will no doubt become things of the past, and, like our miser's purse, some will find a home in a museum.

For more information about Victorian shopping, check out this link.

https://logicmgmt.com/1876/overview/victorian_shopping/prices.htm