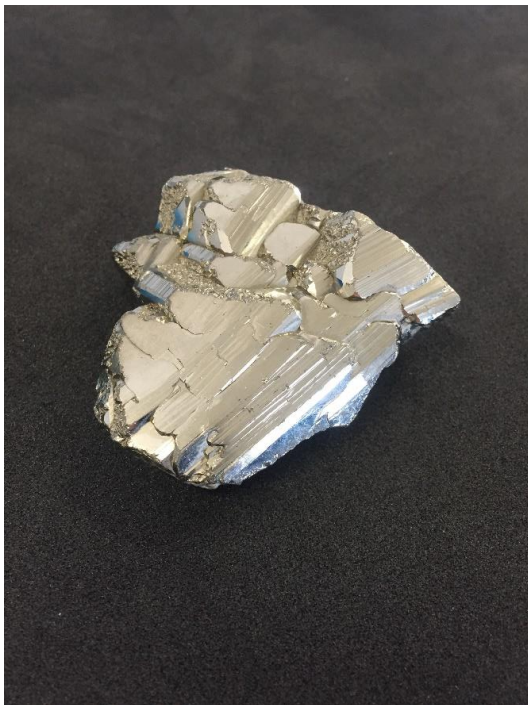


Museum Object: Item Number *EDU_Fool's gold*

This is a mineral called Pyrite. It is often known as 'Fools Gold'. Why do you think this might be?



Pyrite was often mistaken for Gold because of its shiny metallic appearance. It was also sometimes called 'fairy balls' when found in clumps in quarries. Fool's Gold is much sharper than gold and made up of lots of little crystals. Pyrite also has a more consistent tone of colour.

Pyrite played a role in the '**Scottish Gold Rush**'. In 1852 there were sightings of 'gold' in Strathmiglo in Fife (near Kircaldy).

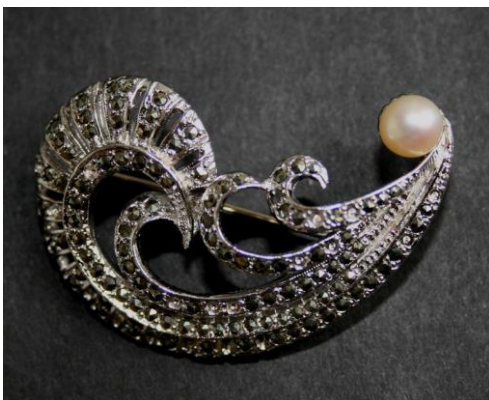


Sometimes Pyrite has pieces of Gold in it, but the Scottish Pyrite did not.

In 1991 a survey showed that there was visible gold in stream sediments in the area where the Pyrite was found in the 1850's. This suggests that if they had looked harder, they may have found more real gold!

Pyrite was popular in Victorian times for making marcasite jewellery. This was jewellery made from small pieces of Pyrite usually set in Silver.

Here are examples of a marcasite brooch and a pair of earrings from the Victorian era:



The sparkly parts are the Pyrite.

Here are some images of jewellery made from Pyrite and other materials. Can you point out the Pyrite parts of the jewellery?



In 1852 the miners in Scotland stopped mining when they discovered they were not mining gold. They were disappointed with anything that was not as valuable as Gold. Here are some numbers to tell us difference in value between Gold and Pyrite in 2020.



1 gram of Gold - £41.31
1 gram of Pyrite - £0.02
1 ounce of Gold - £1,287.69
1 ounce of Pyrite - £4.99



Discussion Point

Do you like the look of Pyrite? Does how much you like something always match its value in money? Think about the difference between economic (money) and aesthetic (beauty) value. Although pyrite costs much less to buy than gold, how would you measure its aesthetic value?

Activity:

Try looking up an even more special sample of Pyrite on The Hunterian's online database at <http://collections.gla.ac.uk/> using the item number GLAHM:M16638. Where was it found?

Further Discussion: When you find this one, think about how its value would change if it were broken up to make jewellery. Would it become more valuable or less?