

Ivory from the fossilised tusks of mammoths found in Alaska and the Yukon is marketed freely in Canada and the USA. Complete tusks, when found, are not cut for jewellery but sent to museums.



Carved tagua nut. (Photo: MS)

Ancient fossil walrus ivory was excavated and used by the Yupik Eskimo of Alaska for tools and sled runners for more than 5,000 years.

A curiosity related to ivory is the 'elephant pearl'. This is a non-nacreous object found in the tusk of the animal. The 'pearl' is a rounded calcified mass of dentine (ivory) formed in the soft tissue pulps of growing tusks.

Coming in many differing shapes and colours, from white to brown, they are highly prized by Buddhists for bringing good luck. Sizes vary but can be as large as a hen's egg. They are sourced mainly from India.

The import and sale of ivory is illegal in the UK and several other countries. The only ivory allowed in is 'antique' (pre-1947) or fossil ivory carrying an authenticating document.

(Note: Guidance notes on importing and use of ivory and other materials taken from animals are given on the following website – www.defra.gov.uk/animalhealth/CITES/guidance/GN7.htm. Antique Collectors' Club has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.)



Examples of carving on fossil walrus ivory. (Photo: ATG)

