

Scottish wooden thimbles

Catriona Bell – Fiona Danby – Leslie Lamb – Andrew Langford – Heather McLean
Eileen Palmer – Ron Palmer - Christine Philp – Norley Swanson – Trevor Warrington

Scotland's thimbles are dear to my heart so this is my contribution for ensuring these wooden thimbles do not disappear from collectors' memories.

Having compiled an earlier topic on Scotland's Innes Mitchell's thimbles, I am aware that rarely are these thimbles signed (for sale thru The Thimble Guild in the 1980s) – with the exception of Heather McLean.

You may now be able to recognise the artist by the shape of thimble they used – even when there is no signature.

For other Scottish thimble topics see:

Carol Edwards of Coll Pottery and Horizon China thimbles

Highland China thimbles 1977-1986

Innes Mitchell's pyrographed wooden thimbles

Nenthorn Studios thimbles (Scotland) 1985-1986

Catriona Bell – Edinburgh 1995

Whilst Catriona was studying at Art College in Edinburgh in 1995, she found time to practice what she was being taught and created these sycamore thimbles for The Thimble Guild. She pyrographed them, then handpainted her thimbles, where required. The apices are flat and sometimes handpainted.

These eight designs were the only ones she created for the Guild, which were produced between July and December 1995.

Catriona went on to become a Scottish artist

I don't know if these thimbles were marked or signed.



birds
limited to **100**
TTG November 1995



Book of Kells
limited to **95**
TTG December 1995



Book of Kells
limited to **95**
TTG December 1995



Book of Kells
limited to **95**
TTG December 1995



wildflowers on sycamore
daisy – meadow thistle – bluebell – dandelion
pyrographed
limited to **200**
TTG July 1995



personalised
TTG January 1996

Fiona Danby – Rowancraft 1984-1985

Fiona's hand-enamelled discs are set into the apex of rosewood thimbles. The wooden thimbles have four incised rings and there is a defined rim.

Fiona's thimbles were available thru The Thimble Guild catalogues in 1984-1985. Her thimbles are unsigned.

Each flower thimble was limited to **500** pieces.

Danby only works in enamel, so these are two examples of her hand-enamelled or handpainted brooches, (one being boxed with her label inside). Once the brooches are separated from the box or card, there are no other marks to identify them as Danby's.



Leslie Lamb – Ross-shire (Scottish Highlands) **1984-1986**

Once you have seen one of Lamb's handpainted bird thimbles, you will recognise them instantly. The birds are playful and quirky, even seemingly foreshortened, with a dominant eye. They are usually painted on sycamore thimbles. They were limited to **1000** copies of each. No signature or name of the bird.

His thimbles were available through The Thimble Guild catalogues between 1984-1986.

I have seen examples of his handpainted birds on china thimbles.



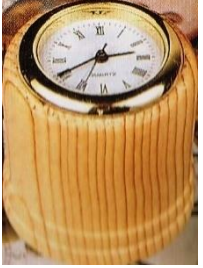
goldfinch

 <p>dipper applewood</p>	 <p>firecrest</p>	 <p>goldfinch</p>	 <p>kingfisher L: wild gean</p>
 <p>stonechat</p>	 <p>stag limited to 250</p>	 <p>wren</p>	

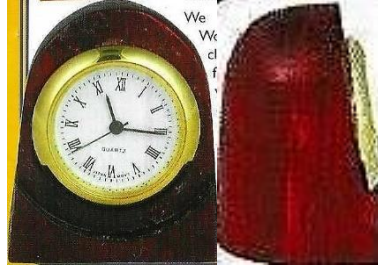
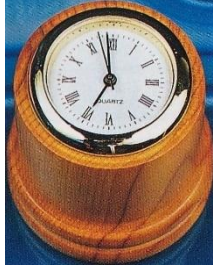
Andrew Langford – Langford Woodcrafts, Ayrshire 1995-1998, 2006-2009

Initially Langford, a woodworker, created thimble racks for TTG for a long period. He then tried his hand at turning thimbles - he made a very small output. He also created polyester, acrylic and resin thimbles.

see also: Eileen Palmer as Langford made thimble blanks for her use



miniature analogue clock (1in across)
set into apex
yew
TTG February 1995, September 1996



thimble clock
padauk
TTG August 2006



"Crushed velvet"
several polishings and burnishing
cream
TTG May 1997



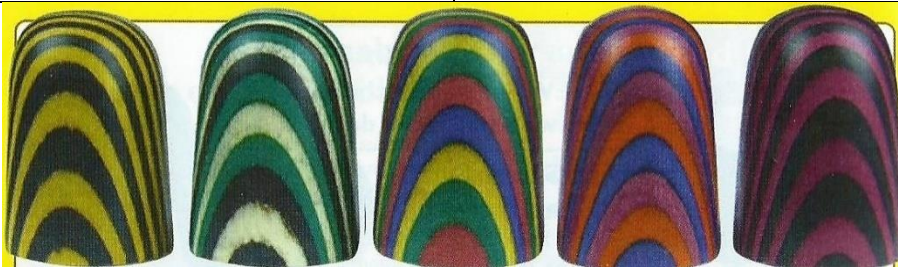
Glencoe bog oak
limited to **10**
TTG October 2009



Mediterranean cork oak
oak centre apex
TTG November 2009



Portuguese cork
fashioned around a wood apex
TTG September 1997



harlequin colours set of five
laminated veneer
TTG April 2008



Tunbridge ware style
Timbers: maple – cherry – bubinga –
padauk
limited to **100**
TTG March 1998



signs of zodiac set
thimbles of padauk with handcut affixed brass symbols
pine wooden rack
TTG June 1995



Heather McLean – Balandra Crafts 1984-1988

McLean is the most prolific of this batch of Scottish artists, working in pyrography (or pokerwork) on pale sycamore wood. The miniature images wrapped around the thimbles are executed in wonderful detail – imagine the effort of creating each scene around the thimble, adding the lettering, the signature and the limited number – all with a hot poker stylus. Being handpainted no two thimbles will be identical.

She produced sets of numbered thimbles issued by The Thimble Guild between 1984-1988. The apex is flat and the majority of her sets have marked sloping sides. They are lettered on the apex.

Her thimbles are signed in pyrography with the thimble set number alongside.





The thimbles are in the alphabetic order of the lettering on the apex.

Language of flowers - limited to 175

This set is different: by 1988 she had added colour to her pyrography. Each thimble is placed on a lettered plinth, with the meaning lettered on the bed of the plinth in a mini glass dome.



<p>no photo</p> <p>BRAMBLE REMORSE PLEASE FORGIVE ME - I WAS TOO HASTY</p>	<p>no photo</p> <p>BUTTERCUP RADIANCE YOUR SPLENDOUR IS LIKE THE SUN</p>	 <p>CANTERBURY BELLS FAITHFULNESS I TRULY LOVE YOU</p>	 <p>CLARKIA PLEASURE YOUR COMPANY DELIGHTS ME</p>
<p>no photo</p> <p>DAISY INNOCENCE THE PURITY OF CHILDHOOD</p>	<p>no photo</p> <p>FORGET-ME-NOT EVERLASTING MEMORY NEVER FORGET ME</p>	 <p>NASTURTIUM PATRIOTISM I LOVE MY PLACE OF BIRTH</p>	<p>no photo</p> <p>PANSY THOUGHT YOU ARE EVER ON MY MIND</p>
<p>no photo</p> <p>PETUNIA HOPE NEVER DESPAIR. HOLD ON</p>	<p>no photo</p> <p>POPPY EXTRAVAGANCE SPOIL YOURSELF - ENJOY LIFE</p>	<p>no photo</p> <p>ROSE AND TWO BUDS SECRET LOVE WE SHARE A SECRET LOVE</p>	<p>no photo</p> <p>VERVAIN ENCHANTMENT YOU HAVE BEWITCHED ME</p>

Sunset Song - limited to **250**



The set name was chosen for the scenes of farming throughout the year thimbles: from the Victorian novel of that name by Lewis Grassic Gibbon. The month is lettered on the apex

The accompanying box (if the whole set was purchased) is signed on the front. The thimbles are arranged on the stepped channel set in the lower section of the box Sunset Song.

The box measures 130mm by 55mm.



JANUARY



FEBRUARY



MARCH



APRIL



MAY



JUNE



JULY



AUGUST



SEPTEMBER



OCTOBER

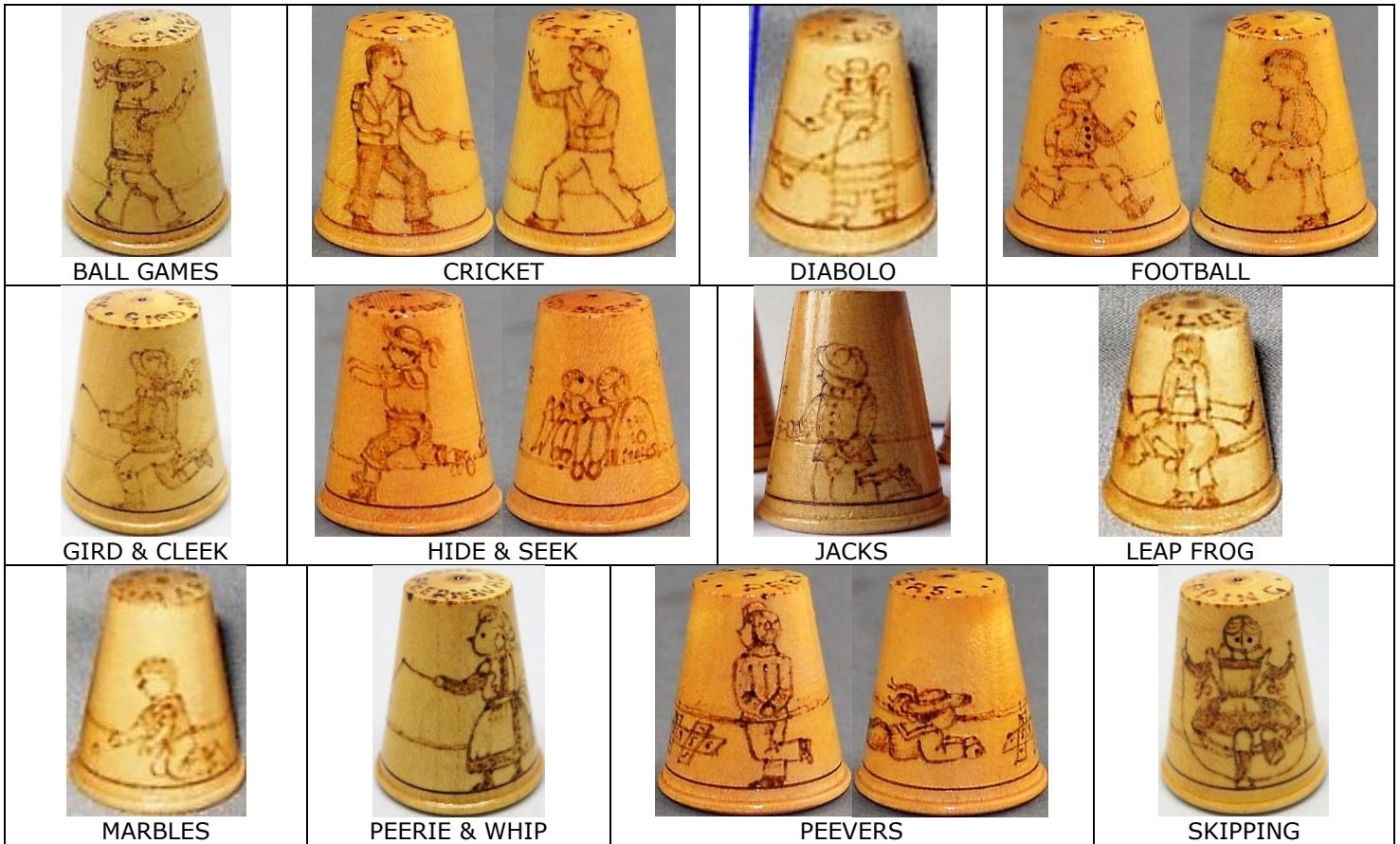


NOVEMBER



DECEMBER

Victorian children's street games - limited to 300



Village customs - limited to 300

This set has additional lettering to the activity described on the apex: lettered inside is the full name of the month in which that custom takes place.





BONFIRE NIGHT
NOVEMBER



CAROL SINGING
DECEMBER



COMMON RIDING
MAY



EGG ROLLING
MARCH
R: EASTER EGGS
incorrectly lettered?



FIRST FOOTING
JANUARY



HALLOWEEN PARTY
OCTOBER



HIGHLAND DANCING
SEPTEMBER



MIDSUMMER
JUNE



MORRIS DANCING
APRIL



PANCAKE RACE
FEBRUARY



TUG O' WAR
JULY

Others



BIGGAR
CADGERS BRIG
THE CORN EXCHANGE
limited to **200**
b&w photo



JUNE
this thimble doesn't fit any of the sets above



BOUND FOR BOTANY BAY

Only one set created for Barbara Kelly to celebrate Australia's bicentenary 1988. Each of the thimbles is housed in a glass domed plinth with the same lettering as the thimbles

Eileen Palmer – Ronaleen Crafts, Lenkalfoot, Ayrshire

Eileen's thimble creations were offered for sale thru The Thimble Guild in 2001.

Palmer's thimbles are pyrographed on maple – pale enough to show off her simple symbols.

Andrew Langford, her neighbour, is the probable woodturner.

Her theme for her only set of thimbles is lucky charms, mascots, talismans from around the world.

There is an accompanying motto lettered on the verso.

 <p>Acorn Health and long life</p>	 <p>Ankh Life and strength</p>	 <p>Beans Protection happiness for children</p>	 <p>Bells Protects from all kinds of evil</p>
 <p>Clover Health, wealth happiness and safety</p>	 <p>Elephant Success – remover of obstacles</p>	 <p>Fish Good fortune for lovers</p>	 <p>Horseshoe Good fortune</p>
 <p>Keys Good fortune for lovers</p>	 <p>Scarab Health, strength, regeneration</p>	 <p>Shen Wisdom, protection, and healing</p>	 <p>STAR Safety and happiness</p>



Merry Christmas Nollaig Chridheil
TTG December 2000



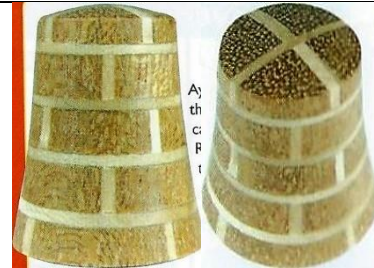
CASTLE
any name could be ordered

Ron Palmer – Ayrshire 2007

I presume that Ron is related to Eileen Palmer? I have only found two of his thimbles offered for sale by TTG.



mahogany and maple in brick wall pattern
TTG April 2007



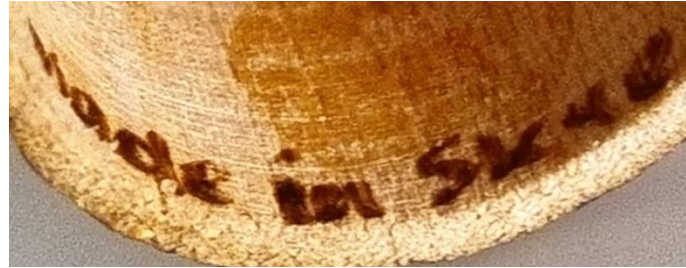
mahogany and maple in brick wall pattern
TTG June 2007

Christine Philp – Isle of Skye 1986-1988

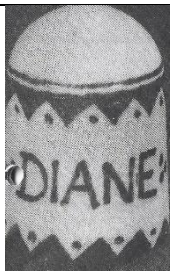
This was the first Scottish artist that I added to my collection. Not only were Philp’s thimbles available for purchase thru The Thimble Guild in 1986-1988, they could also be found in tourist shops on Skye.

Christie was also a pyrographer – the thimble shape she chose were softly rounded and the thimble was often shaded, giving them a textured look.

The only marking in some of her thimbles is ‘Made in Skye’ pyrographed on the inner rim.



<p>Chinese lettering for signs of the zodiac TTG March 1987</p>	<p>fishing boat TTG January 1987</p>	<p>Skye cottage</p>
<p>Celtic symbol with additional colour</p>	<p>ISLE OF SKYE with Celtic symbols L: tippecanoe wood</p>	<p>PEACE R: with additional colour TTG March 1987</p>
<p>pond life TTG February 1987 b&w photo</p>	<p>Greek lettering for Aries</p>	<p>WITH LOVE with additional colour</p>



Philp would pyrograph your name
Nordick type design on sycamore
TTG December 1986
b&w photo



Philp would pyrograph your
anniversary
Celtic design on sycamore
TTG August 1987



Philp would pyrograph your home's
name
Nordick type design on sycamore
TTG June 1987
b&w photo

Norley Swanson (Highlands) 1987-1988

Norley's small output of handturned thimbles using different timbers, shows some of the Highlands' animals on his smooth, straight-sided thimbles. There are no maker's marks – we are dependent on The Thimble Guild's catalogues for the details below.



Badger
beech
TTG January 1988



Blue tit



Bullfinch
TTG August 1987



Fawn
beech
TTG December 1987



Harvest mice
beech
TTG February 1988



Kingfisher
TTG July 1987



Otter
sycamore
TTG June 1988



Rabbit
beech
TTG May 1988



Red squirrel
beech
TTG April 1988



Robin
elm
TTG November 1987

Trevor Warrington 1987-1989

Warrington shows his turning skills – initially with smooth sided thimbles, with affixed small sterling silver objects. He also created shaped thimbles, which he pyrographed or handpainted. His thimbles are not marked and we are dependent on The Thimble Guild for the names of the timbers used.

The wood looks very tactile.

In two issues TTG named this craftsman as Warrington. In some issues he is not always named as the maker.

His thimbles should not be confused with the thimbles by John Unwin, who also places small objects onto his wooden thimbles – those are silver-plated made by Roger Harrison, placed atop the apex.



Acorn-shaped oak
sterling squirrel
TTG March 1989



Cameo in sterling setting
tulip wood
maker not named
TTG December 1988



Cottage
pyrographed



Cottage
pyrographed sycamore
maker named as Warrington
TTG March 1988



Cottage
pyrographed and
handpainted



Cottage
pyrographed and
handpainted



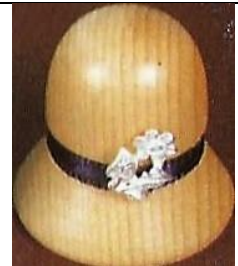
Dolphin
olive wood
maker not named
TTG June 1989



Harvest mouse
mahogany
mouse also available in 9ct
gold
maker not named
TTG September 1987



Bonnet
pyrographed and
handpainted sycamore
red rose
TTG October 1988



Bonnet
sterling rose
fabric blue band
TTG August 1988



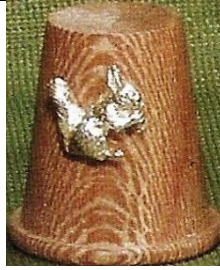
Hummingbird
yew
maker not named
TTG December 1987



Owl
oak
TTG February 1989



Pagoda
pyrographed sycamore
maker named as Warrington
TTG March 1988



Squirrel
London plane
maker not named
TTG November 1987

Contributors

Pawel Brzyski | Linda Heggs | Jean Taylor | Krystyna Zagajewska

This listing of Scottish wooden thimbles does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects. Rather it invites comment and contribution to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

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