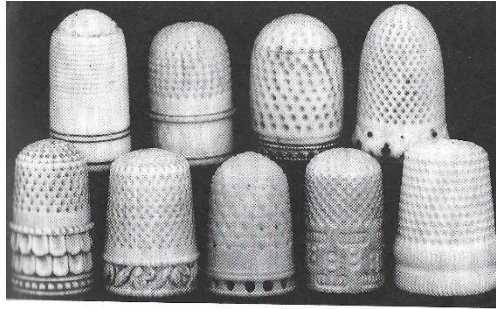


Ivory thimbles

elephant – hippo – mammoth – walrus – whale
including some sewing tools

This is one of my broadest thimble topics where the thimbles described cover the longest era: thimbles from 1800 thru to 1990s. It brings together the countries where each of the types of ivory thimbles were created, across nearly two centuries.

Very few of the makers are known but where they are, they are listed at the start of each country. Most 19th century thimbles were carved by unknown hands.



1. Decorated ivory thimbles: *Top Row (from left):* green painted circles, red painted circles, patterned gilt metal band, steel studs (missing its cut steel band), *Made from 2 pieces of ivory.
Bottom Row: 5 examples of carved and incised designs.

range of antique ivory thimbles
b&w photo – Di Pelham Burn

Ivory comes from the tusk or tooth of the five mammals listed above and is the same dentine as that of human teeth – dense material wrapped in a covering of enamel. Unlike bone, ivory is a solid material so it became an attractive material for carvers.

We are familiar with the whaling tradition where whales' teeth were a means of carving and decorating, to while away the long periods at sea. Whaling in Australia and the US provided vital whale oil for lighting in the nineteenth century. In 1971 whaling was banned in the US and 1972 in Australia.

Thimbles made of ivory form a very small output from any type of ivory.

eBay banned the international sale of elephant ivory in 2005 which led to a total ban in 2007. It's amazing how many 'faux' ivory thimbles have made their way onto the market since then: even those described as made in 1800! Bovine is another common term used by eBay sellers.

Mammoth ivory is not included in the eBay ivory ban, so this too may be a loophole?

Towards the end of the 19th century, elephant ivory became prohibitively expensive for making luxury thimbles. The discovery of celluloid, xylonite and then early plastic for thimbles in the late 19th century gave a cheap creamy alternative for thimbles. Charles Iles created thimbles of ivorine in 1913. It was close enough to ivory for collectors to test them for ivory. Ivory doesn't burn but plastic does.



examples showing the small burn testing marks on plastic thimbles



this type of synthetic material thimble became an ivory alternative for the collector's market in 1980s with faux scrimshaw sailing ships

Another cheaper alternative to animal ivory thimbles is vegetable ivory. This is the nut of the *Phytelephas macrocarpa* palm which are known as tagua nuts.



Tagua nut (vegetable ivory)

There are also carved meerschaum thimbles from Turkiye, that could be mistaken for carved ivory. Meerschaum is a fine chalklike white clay.



meerschaum

I have included as many catalogue references as I can find and used the following abbreviations:

KS – Kay Sullivan (Holland)
PJW - P J Walter (Germany)
TO – Thimbles Only (Jean Shoup USA)
TSL – Thimble Society of London
VN – Vingerhoednieuws (Netherlands)

As a librarian who is passionate about reading, I'd love to share these titles that relate to this topic

Lawrene Anthony *The elephant whisperer*
Sara Gruen *Water for elephants*
Sally Henderson *Silent footsteps*
Mark & Delia Owens *The eye of the elephant*
Mark & Delia Owens *Survivor's song*
Sharon Pincot *Elephant dawn*
Joanne Quinn *The whalebone theatre*
Daphne Sheldrinck *An African love story*

[For other animal products thimble topics see](#)
Horn and bone thimbles

Elephant ivory

Elephant ivory is the most valuable ivory.

The nineteenth century was the era of big game hunting in Africa, which continued into the twentieth century. Elephant ivory tusks were highly prized trophies by big game hunters. This practice of shooting elephant for 'sport' was banned in 1973.

In 1989 CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endemic Species) banned the international trade in ivory. Poachers then became a massive problem for countries of southern Africa where elephants are endemic: slaughtered for their ivory to sell to the ivory hungry Chinese market.

In 1989, to deter the illegal sale of ivory Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi rocked the world when his adviser advised that the Kenyan stockpile of ivory be incinerated. It took accelerants days to burn twelve tons of ivory tusks.

In New York tons of elephant ivory tusks were crushed in Times Square in the 2010s.

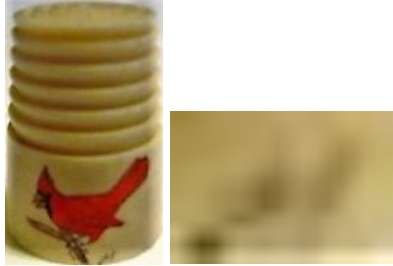
Sub-Saharan African governments realised that there is more revenue to be had from tourist dollars of safari tours, than the sale of ivory: their herds are protected in the national game parks.

American

Where in the USA were these ivory thimbles made? I have entered any relevant details from the catalogues: New England or The North-West Territories?



M Carey
scrimshaw sailing ship



DD
scrimshaw, handpainted cardinal



DF
scrimshaw of lizard-like animal



WF William Feeney New England
scrimshaw sailing ship with lighthouse
1980



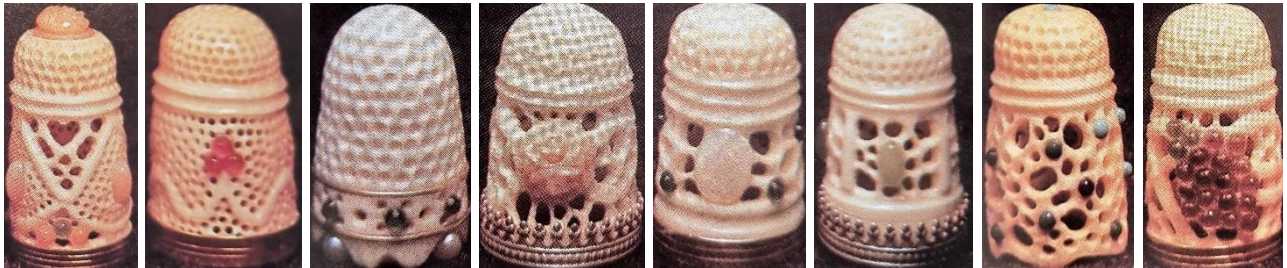
J.F.G.
1970



JP
scrimshaw, handpainted flower



H for von Hoelle



John von Hoelle Philadelphia PA

some of the range of his pierced ivory thimbles with semi-precious stones
these stones include coral, seed pearls, aquamarine, amethyst, emerald, onyx and turquoise

bottom R: 18ct gold birds

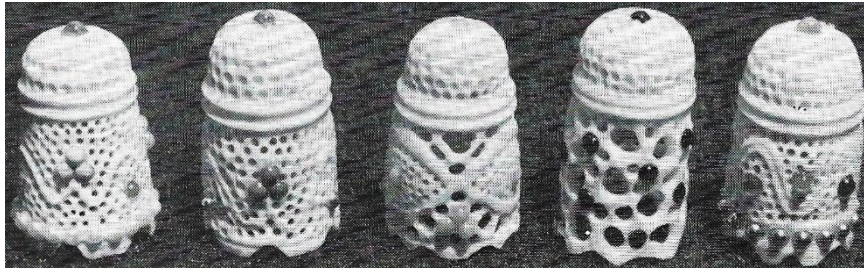
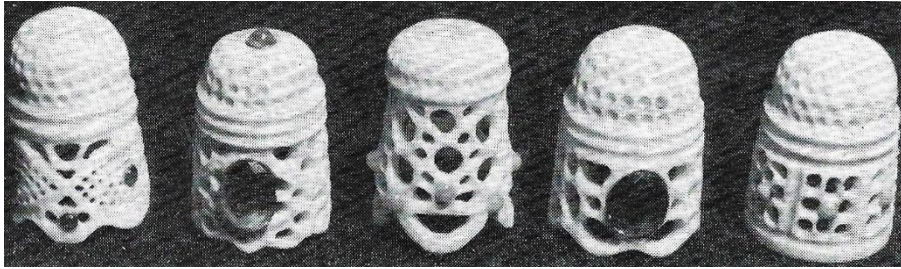
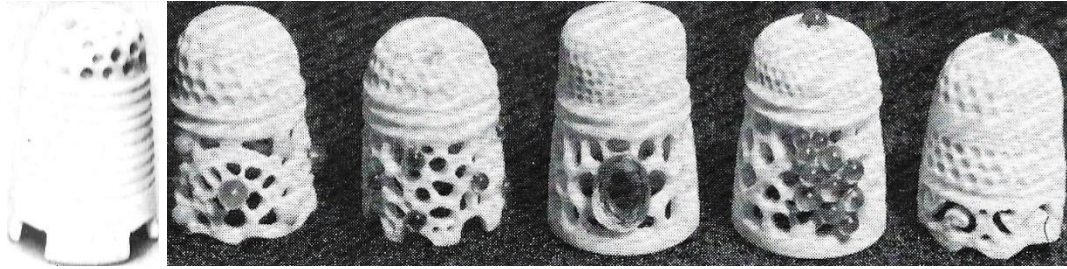
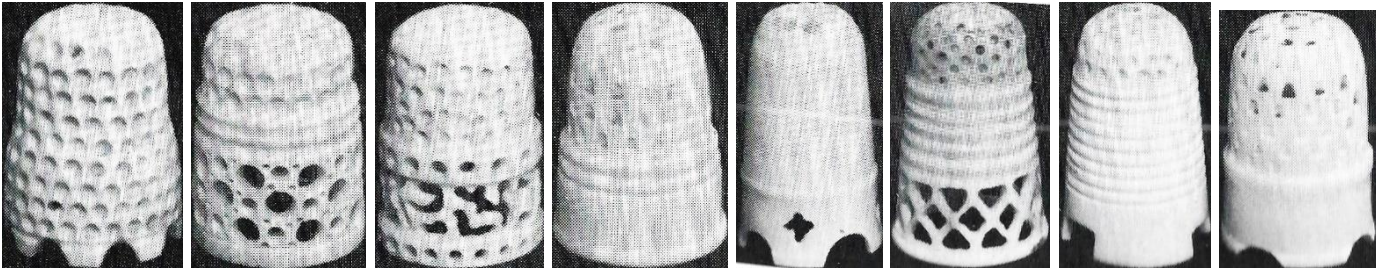
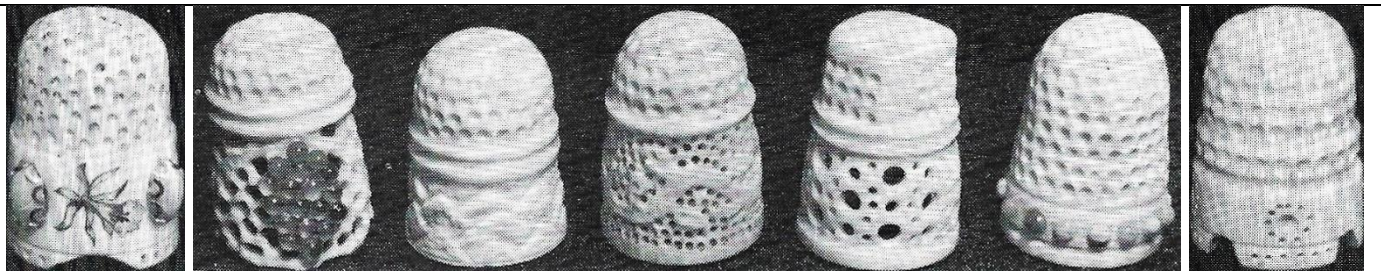
some have scalloped rims

others have gold bands at rims

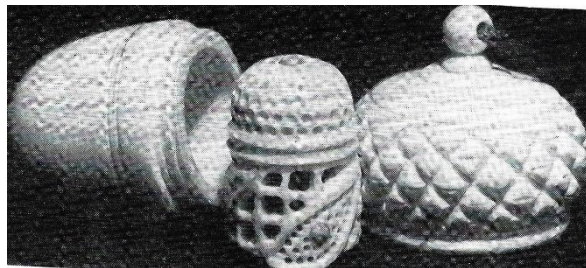
von Hoelle turned these thimbles for family and friends

1980s

he had learnt to carve ivory in China in 1960s



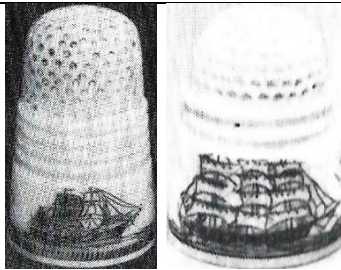
b&w photos from his book



thimble holder with matching thimble



three pierced thimbles – offered for sale on eBay as 1800s thimbles



indented first third, four or two concentric rings, scrimshaw sailing ships by **ARA**
b&w photos



John in his workshop

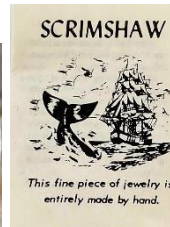
The following batch of thimbles are machine-turned and they have the unifying design of six concentric circles turned into the upper half of the thimble. The apex too has concentric circles.

Scrimshaw sailing ships, with additional whaling symbols such as seabirds, clouds and waves which may be found on the verso, form the theme of this type of thimble.

No two sailing ships are created the same.

There are other designs as well and some of these have handpainted scrimshaw. Signed examples are featured at the start of the American thimbles section. This batch have no maker's marks.

I am still trying to figure out why these US scrimshanders used elephant ivory to highlight their whaling industry?



apex with concentric circles – inside - accompanying leaflet



'Alaska' with state flower
Forget-me-nots in colour
slightly different apex



'Alaska' with state flower
Forget-me-nots in colour



forget-me-nots in colour
VN 96 2008



blue red and yellow handpainted flowers
"consigned by Native American
Inuit Artisans"



clipper
birds
little other scrimshaw



clipper
heavy clouds
birds



clipper
with flags
birds



clipper
harpoon on verso



clipper
"New England artists"
Gim 1978



clipper
striped clouds and seas



clipper



clipper



clipper
whale
birds



clipper
whale



clipper
whale
Gim 1987



clipper
birds



clipper



clipper



clipper
whale



clipper
whale



clipper
birds clouds
Sewing Corner 1978



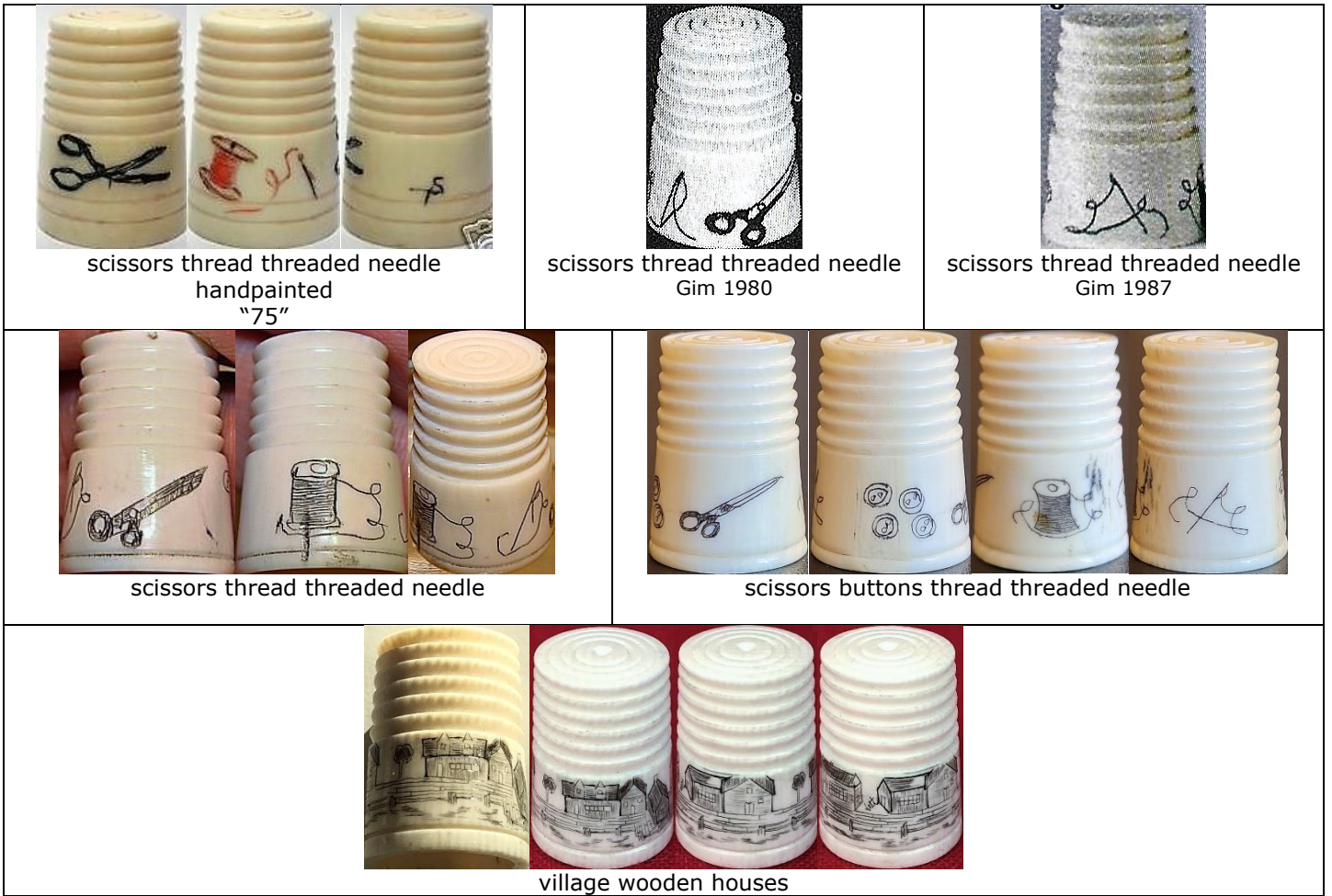
handpainted rose
pre-1989



plain with no scrimshaw



plain with carved rose



These thimbles are different from those above: they have no concentric circles, leaving the thimble and apex smooth. Scrimshaw is similar to those above.





sailing ship
handpainted
TO spring 1987



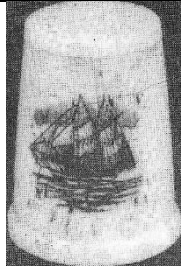
sailing ship
whale
handpainted
TO winter 1984



sailing ship
handpainted
TO winter 1984



sailing ship
whale
handpainted
TO winter 1984



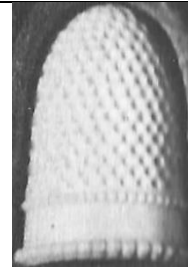
sailing ship
TTG March 1986



lighthouse
handpainted
TO winter 1984



'Alaska' with handpainted state flower
Forget-me-nots in colour



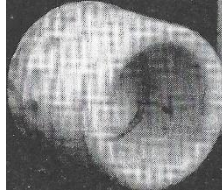
1800s
beaded rim
Museum of the City of New York



button

Chinese

Estelle Zalkin gives the most comprehensive description of the early Chinese (Oriental) ivory thimbles: "thimbles were to form part of fitted workboxes which were then exported to Europe and America. Tho they looked like thimbles, many were not usable working tools because they were bulky and not tapered inside to fit the finger. Some had indentations on the side and cap, while others were smooth and plain." It seems that some of the craftsmen worked from drawings sent out from Europe, without having any knowledge of the function of these tools.

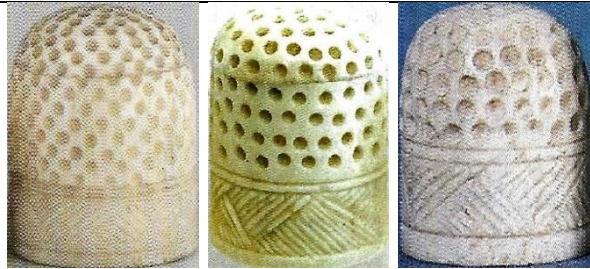


thick walled, not deep enough for use in sewing



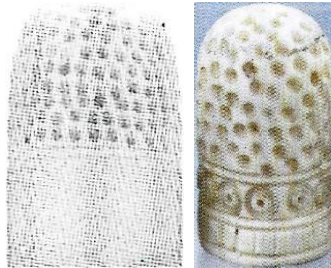
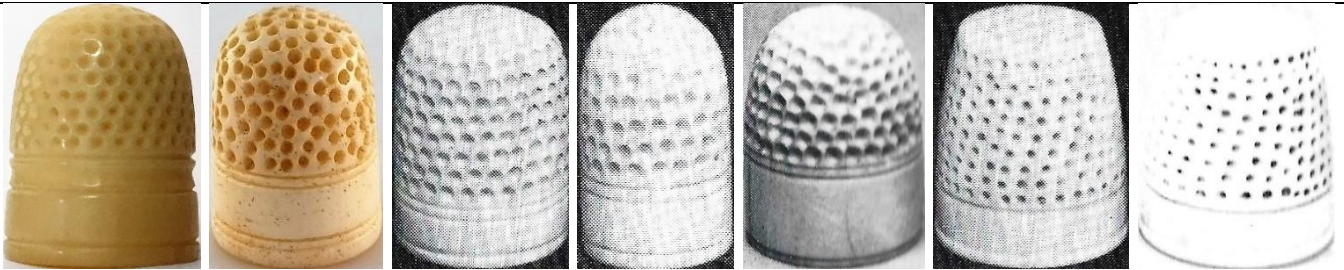
19th century
made in two pieces

there may be one to five rows of indentations on the bottom half – the ones with four rows are identified as from 1840s-1860s



19th century
rim of 'basket weave' patterning
made in two parts

L: TSL winter 2000 – C: TSL summer 2007 – R: TSL spring 1994



19th century
 made in one piece
 bottom L: 1830s
 KS December 1984
 bottom R: carved roundels on narrow band
 TSL spring 2004



1910s
 etched elephant



modern
 etched and painted bird and chrysanthemum
 Chinese signature on verso



20th century
 carved dragons
 R: TSL winter 1989



carved dragon



1970s



carved alternating indentations and striations



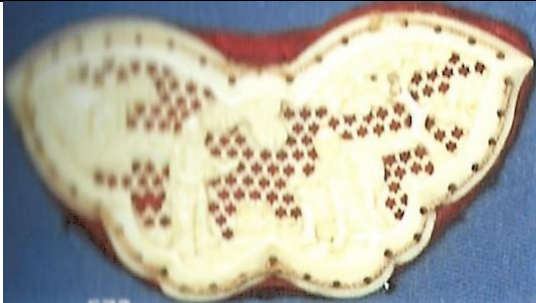
carved sewing tools from a workbox



thimble holder
etched Chinese scene of mountains and valleys all round



thimble holder
pierced with carved moths and birds design all over



butterfly pinwheel - Canton



late 19th century carved sewing tools - Canton



knotting shuttle



cotton barrels on plinth



clamp



tape measure - missing tape



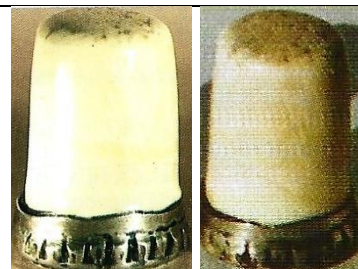
pincushion

Dutch

The only examples for Dutch ivory thimbles are those identified as from convents. These were the personal possessions of women entering a convent.



19th century
tortoiseshell rim
apex is of silver with a Gabler star
from a Brabant Monastery belonging to a novice








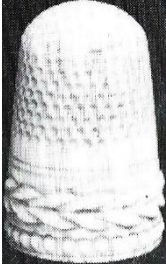

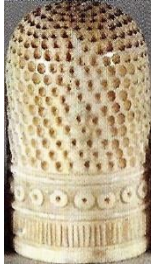




convent thimble with silver band
L: TSL autumn 1993


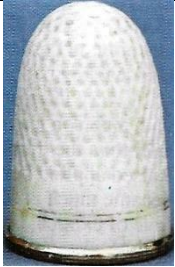
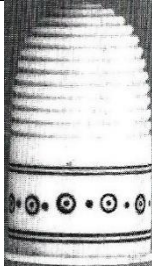


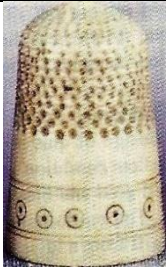



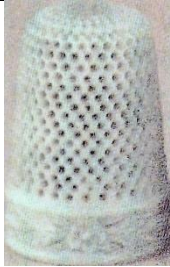




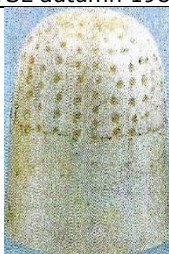

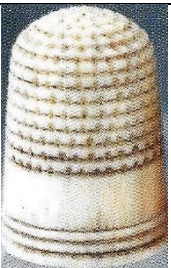



English






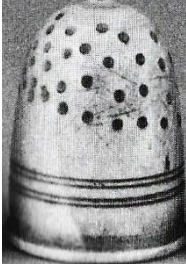
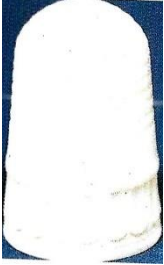
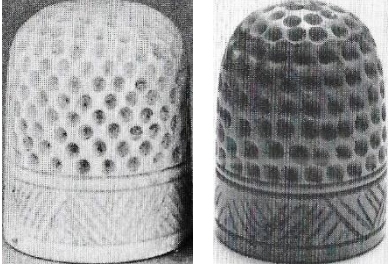



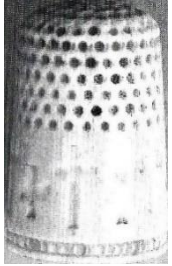

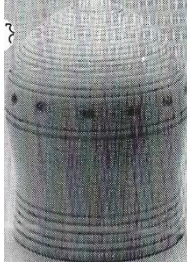






Unless mentioned as from somewhere else, I assume all TSL ivory thimbles are English.

I have noticed that thimbles listed in the TSL catalogues in the 1980s, had their details changed by the time McConnel published her *The story of the thimble* in 1997. These later descriptions are what I have used. An example is the inconsistencies when describing 'basket weave carved rim' attributed to Chinese, Indian and English carvers.

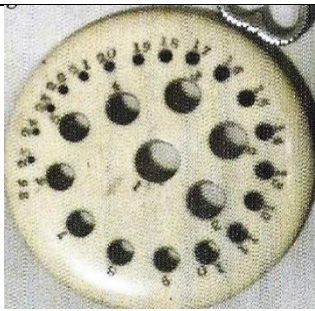
		<p>Geoffrey Manley Lyme Regis Devon 1980s smooth all over</p>
		<p>sticky label inside identifies the maker</p>

 <p>18th century child's TSL spring 1991</p>	 <p>18th century child's</p>	 <p>19th century carved band of flowers</p>	 <p>19th century beaded rim</p>
 <p>19th century two beaded rims TSL autumn 2000</p>	 <p>19th century carved band of leaves beaded rim</p>	 <p>19th century smooth sides with indented apex TSL spring 2002</p>	 <p>19th century tall, carved roundels band with reeded rim TSL spring 1991</p>
 <p>19th century</p>	 <p>1800s gilt rim TSL autumn 1988</p>	 <p>1810s steel and gilt inserts above gilt metal rim TSL autumn 1999</p>	 <p>1820s double carved petals band and row of fine beading</p>

 <p>1820s child's narrow band of basket weave</p>	 <p>1820s finely dimpled beehive shape with gilt metal band TSL summer 1992</p>	 <p>1820s Madras work or hot needle decoration around band</p>	 <p>1830s carved band of sloping leaves TSL spring 2007</p>
 <p>1830s gilt metal rim TSL winter 1987</p>	 <p>1830s carved roundels on wide band TSL autumn 1995</p>	 <p>1830s turned TSL summer 1993</p>	 <p>1830s carved band of diagonal leaves TSL winter 1997</p>
 <p>1840s carved band of flowers TSL summer 1993</p>	 <p>1840s narrow carved band of fruit flowers and leaves TSL autumn 1988</p>	 <p>1840s carved band of stylised leaves beaded rim TSL autumn 1988</p>	 <p>1840s carved band of leaves on wide band TSL autumn 2004</p>
 <p>1840s child's TSL summer 1985</p>	 <p>1840s narrow carved band of flowers TSL spring 1992</p>	 <p>1840s TSL winter 2005</p>	 <p>1840s carved band of leaves beaded rim</p>
 <p>1840s TSL summer 2004</p>	 <p>1840s-1860s carved narrow band of roundels TSL spring 1992</p>	 <p>1840s-1860s double carved petals band and two rows of fine beading TSL winter 2001</p>	 <p>1840s-1860s double carved petals band row of beading TSL autumn 2003</p>

 <p>1840s-1850s wide row of carved leaves hand indented hole in apex which would be a nerve hole TSL summer 1988, winter 1998</p>	 <p>1850s plain raised narrow band TSL autumn 1992</p>	 <p>1850s TSL winter 2005</p>	 <p>1860s tall elegant shape TSL winter 1984</p>
 <p>1860s child's TSL autumn 1986</p>	 <p>1860s turned bands handmade indentations TSL spring 1986</p>	 <p>1860s-1870s elegantly carved band TSL spring 1989</p>	 <p>1860s-1870s rim of 'basket weave' patterning L: TSL spring 1986 – R: KS September 1988</p>
 <p>1870s bands of carved flowers TSL spring 1994</p>	 <p>1870s carved band of flowers crack TSL spring 2000</p>	 <p>1880s</p>	 <p>1880s-1900s carved crosses band</p>
 <p>1986 turned in Cornwall by a hobby woodturner limited to 50 KS December 1984</p>	 <p>1988 turned in Cornwall by a hobby woodturner based on Hungarian thimble design limited to 50 KS July 1988</p>	 <p>beehive shape crack TSL summer 1992</p>	 <p>carved band of flowers</p>
 <p>handpunched indentations gold band rim</p>	 <p>handpunched indentations wide plain band</p>	 <p>narrow band of carved roundels</p>	 <p>'maid's' size carved leaves on wide band with ornate pattern on apex TSL winter 1986</p>

 <p>wider gilt band on rim</p>	 <p>thick gold band around rim</p>	 <p>carved band of leaves</p>	 <p>narrow row of roundels TSL winter 2007</p>
	 <p>modern smooth with carved lines black spot on apex would have been nerve</p>	 <p>child's smooth all over</p>	
 <p>narrow band of carved roses</p>	 <p>Madras work hot needle decoration</p>		
 <p>acorn shaped thimble holder with thimble TSL autumn 2001</p>	 <p>acorn shaped thimble holder with thimble</p>		
 <p>barrel-shaped thimble holder TSL spring 1986</p>	 <p>urn-shaped thimble holder carved fruit on lid TSL autumn 1992</p>	 <p>egg-cup-shaped thimble holder TSL autumn 1996</p>	 <p>panelled thimble holder with thimble TSL spring 1996</p>



knitting needle gauge 1840s



thimble holder



thimble holder



tape measure in shape of handpainted chess castle



needlecase in shape of parasol



needlecase in shape of handpainted parasol



stiletto 1860s



needlecase in shape of spaniel 1800s



thread winder



thread winders



Madras work or hot needle decoration needlecase



pique thimble case



Madras work or hot needle decoration needlebook with felt leaves



sewing clamp with pincushion ornately carved thumb screw 1840s



thimble holder dyed red 1870s



pincushion and emery 1860s



pinwheel

etched flower 'A Present from Scarborough'



early 19th century carved sewing tools



Madras work or hot needle decoration sewing tools



wide variety of Madras work or hot needle decoration sewing tools

French

The French ivory thimbles of the 19th century tend to follow the form of the Palais Royale mother-of-pearl thimbles.



9ct gold rim



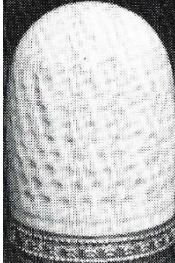






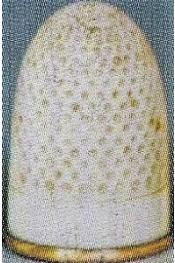




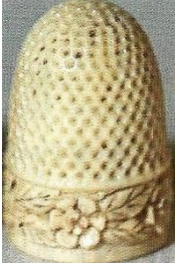








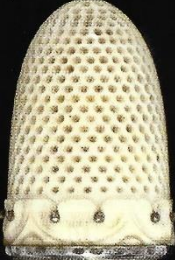
18th century carved band
TSL spring 1999



19th century clouté studded decoration
within fine carving



19th century roundels around rim

 <p>19th century beaded gold rim b&w photo</p>	 <p>19th century gold rim</p>	 <p>19th century beaded gold rim</p>	 <p>1800s beaded wide gold rim TSL winter 2000</p>
  <p>1820s beaded gold rim</p>	 <p>1820s gold rim</p>	 <p>1820s gold rim VN 60 2000</p>	 <p>1820s gold rim</p>
 <p>1820s clouté studded steel decoration and rim within fine carving</p>	 <p>1820s Dieppe carvers carved band of a duck shoot: band of birds in trees, reeds, man with gun TSL summer 1988</p>	 <p>1820s-1830s wide band of carving</p>	 <p>1820s-1830s Dieppe carvers carved band of flowers and leaves TSL summer 1993</p>
 <p>1840s Dieppe carvers carved band of flowers gilt metal rim TSL summer 1986</p>	   <p>1900s carved temple building with sunflower on verso narrow band of basket weave R: apex Stanhope showing eleven turbaned men made for M.M.Shah & Co for Indian market</p>	  <p>gilt metal rim L: showing deep crack</p>	
 <p>gilt metal rim</p>	 <p>carved band of flowers and leaves TSL autumn 2000</p>	 <p>cut steel on scallops with steel rim</p>	



smooth
height 25mm



handpainted



scrimshaw band 'Souvenir de Dieppe'
carved by Dieppe carvers on Normandy coast – flourished in 17th century
in 14th C they imported ivory from west coast of Africa (TSL spring 1989)
Chateau Museum in Dieppe has largest collection of ivory in Europe
TSL winter 2001



18th century
thimble holder with fretwork
thimble: plain wide band



1840s
thimble holder and needlecase
banded in gold and steel studs



1800s
thimble as part of etui
gilt metal studs



scent bottle with ivory thimble and ivory base
with metal studs
TSL winter 1989



thimble holder with carved fretwork
thimble: plain wide band



Dieppe pinwheel
carved flowers and fruit



sewing kit with clouté studded decoration



needlecases with clouté studded decoration



selection of Dieppe carved sewing tools
late 18th – early 19th century



Dieppe carved needlecases
in the shape of fisher folk all holding a fish



19th century
Shibayama inlay
insects on pea pod
needlecases



sewing kit carved in shape of pinecone



19th century
Shibayama inlay
insects on sewing case



sewing clamp with pincushion and
thimble



Dieppe pierced needlebook



needlecase with blue enameled
heart and red stones



needlecase with eglomise painting
1780s



Dieppe needlecases in shape of pea
pod



needlecase reel stand



butterfly pinwheel



pinwheel



pinwheel



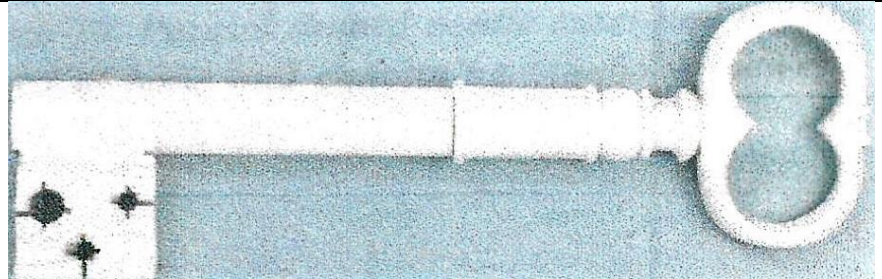
Dieppe pinwheel
1840s



combination pincushion needlecase
Stanhope 'Palais du Trocadero
Exposition Universelle Paris'



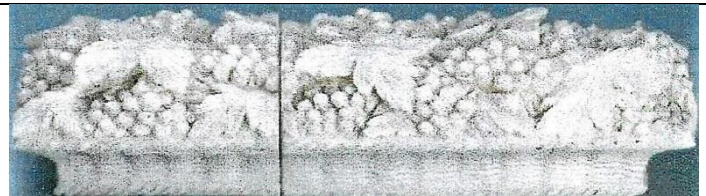
Dieppe pinwheel



Dieppe key needlecase
1820s



Dieppe sewing clamp with pincushion



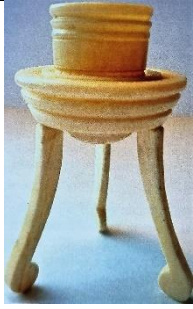
Dieppe needlecase
basket of grapes



Dieppe figural needlecase
1790s



Dieppe needlecase
flowers and leaves
sliding lid
1780s



thimble holder stand

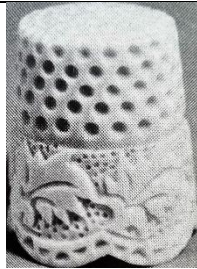


etui with cut steel
1790s



needlecase

German



Feld 5 1988 – PJW 85-6

Indian

Only male Indian elephants have tusks – and then not each male elephant.



1952
handpierced with stars shapes
26 pearls set around rim



1956
handpainted 'Ganesh Jayanti 25th August 1956' on verso



1957
carved bearded male figural



1957
Baby Jesus with Mary
'Happy New Year 1957'
only thimble Motiwala ever signed



handpainted Taj Mahal
apex has floral touches of gold highlights
gilt painted band

L: woman's portrait on verso R set: portrait is missing in the blank oval



carved flowers and leaves
lower band has carvings of a lion, water buffalo and rhino
apex has a carved lion's head
silver rim with fourteen rubies



blue foil
sapphire set into apex which is carved with flower
using an Iles' & Gomms plastic thimble 'Made in England
Non-flam' he covered it in blue foil which shines thru the
piercings
the black bands are scrimshaw



handpainted Taj Mahal with Mumtaz
richly floral apex

Bhagwandas Motiwala



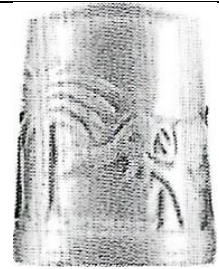
these thimbles were all sourced from Alta Thompson's collection 1950s



carved elephant



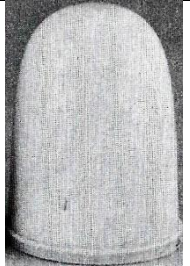
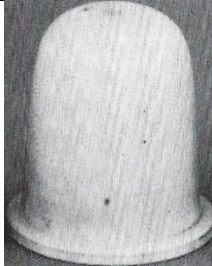
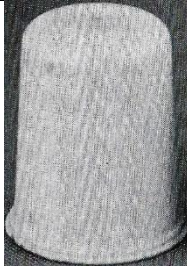
carved elephant



carved elephant and stylised tree



1850s
made in two parts



1860s
smooth all over
for sewing pure silk
as there is no sharp surface to snag the silk
for inclusion in Sadeli workboxes for India's European local market
photos 3-6: TSL winter 1986, summer 2007



1890s
Made in two parts



1890s



1900s



handpainted with domed brass apex



handpainted with flat brass apex



Sadeli work
fine steel insets

Anglo-Indian - all made for European market



19th century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox with brass feet
teak and steel laid down in fine strips - ivory tools also showing tape measure



19th century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox
teak and steel laid down in fine strips
ivory tools also showing thimble



19th century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox
ivory, teak and steel laid down in fine shapes
L: 1840s



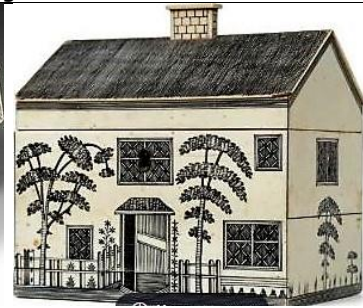
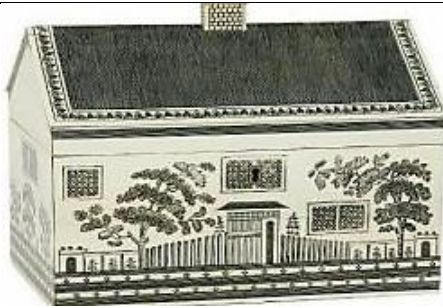
horn and ivory workbox
Vizagapatam, east India
late 18th century
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



ivory workbox decorated with Lac
contains ivory sewing tools
ivory lids also decorated with lac



horn and ivory workbox
Vizagapatam, east India
late 18th century
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



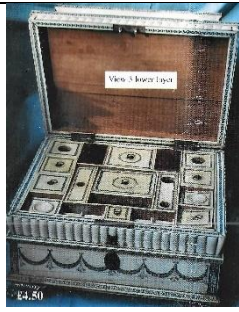
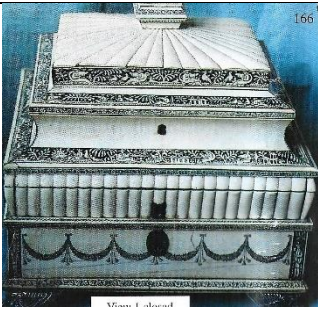
ivory and sandalwood workbox
Vizagapatam, east India
late 18th century
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



ivory and steel workbox



ivory and sandalwood workbox



sewing casket
with ink work Vizagapatam, east India
1790-1810



workbox
Georgian



display of Indian workboxes



stiletto combined with pincushion

Italian or Portuguese



thimble holder in shape of flower bud
thimble inscribed on apex in black 'MJ'
on base letter 'd 28 Februa'
1830s
TSL winter 1998

Japanese

Shibayama work 1870s



etui



needlecase



needlecase in shape of peapod

Kenyan

Amboseli National Park is known as the home of the African elephant in Kenya



carved elephant
it had a certificate of export 1980 from a Kenyan game reserve
TSL winter 1997

Namibian

Etosha National Park is the home of elephants in northern Namibia.



carved elephant



carved elephant



carved leaves



carved rhino

New Zealand



1970



lace bobbin
handpainted New Zealand native bird and flower

Russian



scrimshaw with figures
does the presence of a reindeer indicate that this is bone not ivory?
'Sep 18'

South African

Kruger National Park is the largest game reserve in South Africa.

The elephant ivory for these thimbles would have been sourced thru game parks from either culled or elephants who died of natural causes – never from poached ivory.

African elephants are far larger than their Indian counterparts. Both male and female African elephants have tusks.



Tswana Products Bophuthatswana



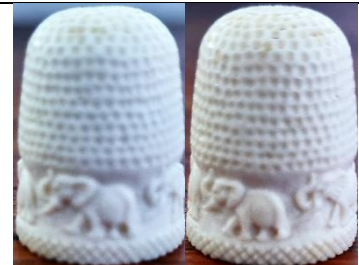
John van der Westhuizen Phalaborwa
close to Kruger Park
smooth
sticker with 'JJ Ivory' in apex



carved elephant and trees



carved elephant and trees



carved elephant

Zairean



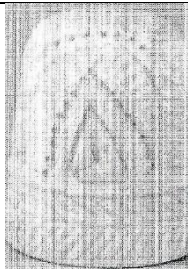
smooth sides with criss-cross on apex

Zimbabwean

Hwange National Park (previously Wankie Game Reserve in Rhodesia) is the home of their elephants. The ivory carvers were from families with a carving tradition, "showing the finest workmanship, and a high degree of excellence" (TSL). Thimble sales provided much needed income.

Many thimbles are straight sided, which would make them difficult to use for sewing. Being hand-carved no two thimbles are ever the same: even when they seem identical, the rim will be carved differently. The scenes continue around the thimbles. They are all hand carved including creating the thimble itself.

TSL sourced their ivory thimbles thru game reserves or protected 'nature parks'.



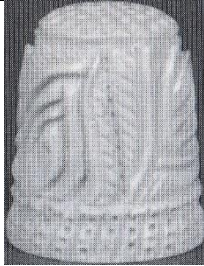
abstract design
TSL autumn 1986



abstract design
bands of thick elephant hair



abstract design



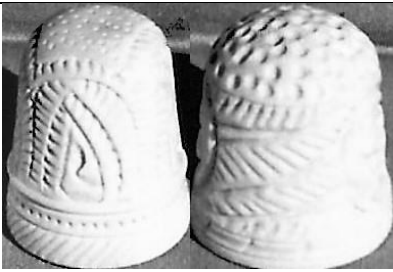
design with vertical leaves
VN 31 1994



abstract design
TSL spring 1989



abstract design



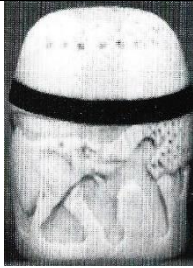
abstract design



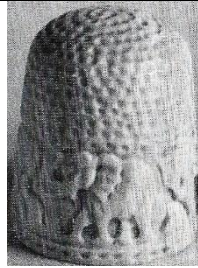
Great Zimbabwe Bird (Hungwe)
national symbol of Zimbabwe



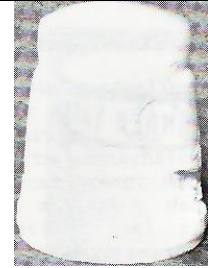
scrimshaw buffalo and elephants
TSL spring 1989



elephants and trees
black band may be of many strands
of elephant hair
TSL winter 1989



elephants and trees
TSL spring 1984



elephants
VN 15 1990



elephants
TSL summer 1985



elephants
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver



elephant
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver



elephants
reeded rim



elephants
single strand of elephant hair (top) and
one of silver
this example shows how difficult it is to
neatly join both hair and silver



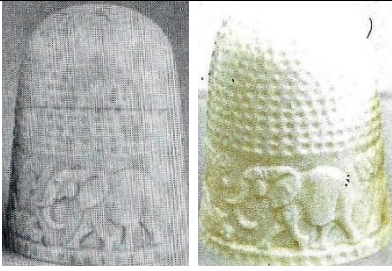
elephants with trees



elephants with trees



elephants



elephant
TSL summer 1989 and summer 2007



elephants
TSL



elephants
TSL



elephants
TSL spring 1986



elephants



elephants
TSL spring 1989



scrimshaw elephant



scrimshaw gemsbuk and trees



scrimshaw giraffes and trees



scrimshaw zebras and trees
unknown extra mark 'FO4D'



scrimshaw zebras and trees



fern pattern



flowers



flowers
different shape



flowers



giraffes



'Harari' and elephants and trees



hippos
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver



hippos and trees
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver



hippos and trees



horizontal ridges – smooth and
tactile



African hut (rare subject)
TSL spring 1989



leaves



leaves



leaves



lions
TSL summer 1989



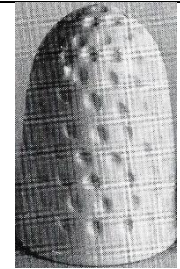
handpainted woman stamping corn



handpainted woman drumming



handpainted woman stamping corn



plainly indented
TSL spring 1984



plainly indented
TSL spring 1986



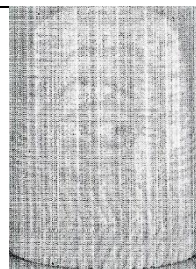
carved rhinos



rhinos and trees



rhinos and trees



rose
TSL autumn 1986



carved roses

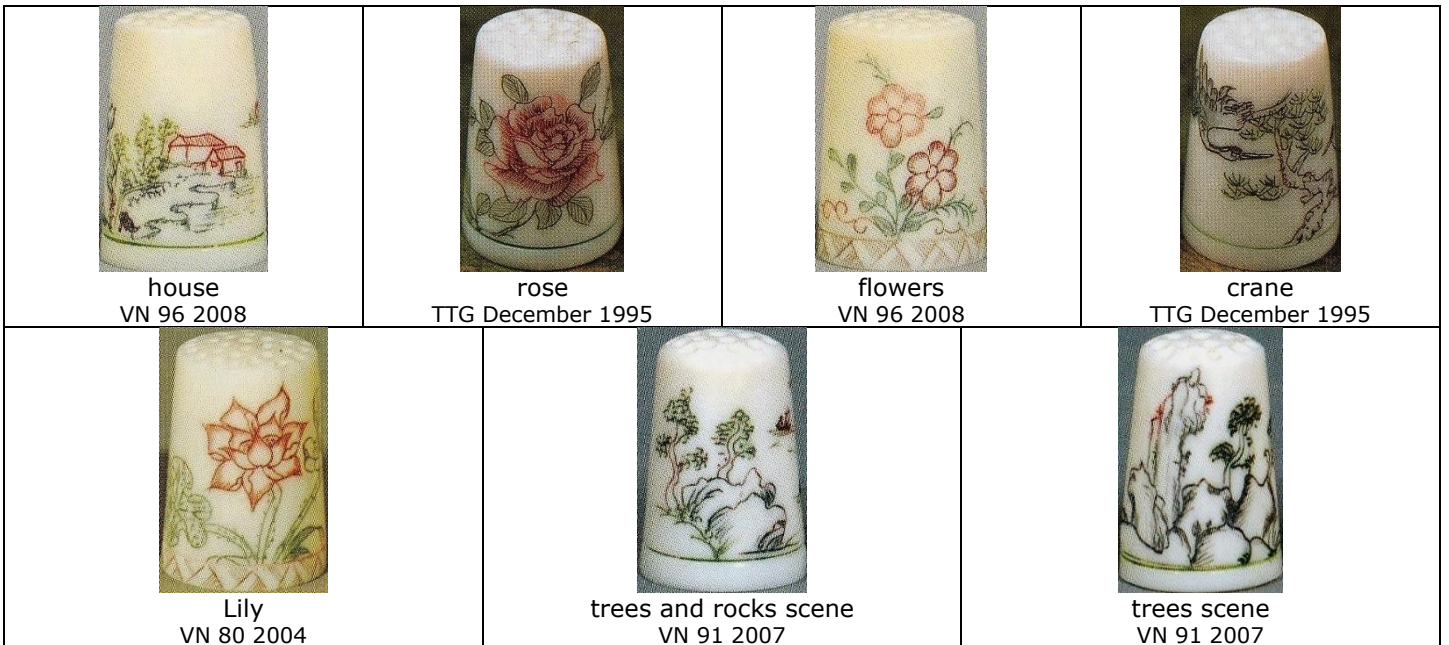
 <p>five-sided smooth</p>	 <p>roses</p>	 <p>shorter, smooth with bands of elephant hair and silver</p>	
 <p>water buffalo TSL summer 1989</p>	 <p>vertical ridges</p>	 <p>vertical ridges - smooth</p>	
 <p>ostriches</p>	 <p>elephants</p>	 <p>elephants ellies are upsidedown scalloped rim</p>	
 <p>roses and leaves</p>	 <p>stylised hearts</p>	 <p>elephant</p>	
 <p>leaves</p>	 <p>rose</p>	 <p>flower with elaborate band</p>	
 <p>flower</p>	 <p>rings</p>		



Hippo ivory

German

Hippo teeth were sourced from South African game reserves by the ivory carvers in Odenwald, Germany. They are handpainted. There is a Museum of Ivory in the Odenwald.



Mammoth ivory

Fossilised woolly mammoth tusks are sourced from the frozen tundra in Siberia.

See the Horn and bone thimbles topic for examples of mammoth bone thimbles created by Brad Elfrink.

American



Chinese



scrimshaw painted fish
Het vingerhoedje 4-1



scrimshaw cat
Het vingerhoedje 4-1



scrimshaw scene
VN 80 2004

German

The mammoth carvers are based in Odenwald. There is a Museum of Ivory in the city.



carved abstract design



carved vertical leaves
VN 82 2004



carved giraffe
VN 96 2008



limited to **500**
P JW 85-86



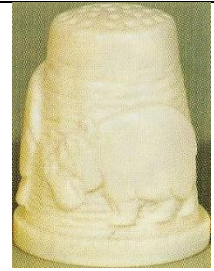
carved bird
Het vingerhoedje 4-1



carved rings
limited to **500**
P JW 85-86



carved ducks
VN 31 1994, 81 2004



carved hippo
VN 81 2004



carved rings
Het vingerhoedje 4-1



plain
Fel 13 1990



carved leaved
VN 82 2004



carved rose band
scalloped rim
VN 79 2004



carved rose band
four concentric rings
VN 96 2008



carved rose
fine rings on upper body
Gim 1979



carved rose band
scalloped rim
limited to **500**
P JW 85-86



carved rose band
scalloped rim
Het vingerhoedje 4-1

 <p>VN 38 1996</p>	 <p>abstract design carving VN 82 2004</p>	 <p>carved all over leaf pattern VN 82 2004</p>	 <p>carved elephant VN 82 2004</p>
 <p>carved acanthus swirls VN 86 2005</p>	 <p>carved diagonal diagonal dots VN 86 2005</p>	 <p>carved hanging leaves grooves VN 86 2005</p>	 <p>carved swirled diagonals VN 86 2005</p>
 <p>carved band with indentations</p>	 <p>scrimshaw church</p>	 <p>carved band of flowers</p>	 <p>carved head</p>
 <p>carved rings</p>	 <p>carved flower on apex scalloped rim</p>	 <p>carved flower on apex scalloped pierced rim</p>	 <p>carved flower on apex</p>
 <p>carved lily-of-the-valley</p>	 <p>handpainted scene scalloped rim</p>	 <p>carved mammoth</p>	 <p>carved vertical wide grooves VN 86 2005</p>
 <p>tall shape with very wide band VN 91 2007</p>		 <p>carved rose Collectors Corner 1977</p>	

Russian

The mammoth carvers were based in the Tobolsk factory in Siberia.



scrimshaw capercaillie



scrimshaw elephant

Walrus ivory

American

These teeth are sourced by Native Alaskans as part of their hunting traditions. I have chosen the term Native Alaskan, rather than the term of Eskimo that I grew up using.

These pewter thimbles that appeared from the 1980s onwards contain a very small piece of scrimshaw ivory in the apex.



L: maker's mark AS – R: Nicholas Gish



Cheri Ables
fossilised



Herminia Anslinger Alaska
'Alaska 49' with star
commemorating Alaska as 49th State 1959
maker's details from Alta Thompson's catalogue



Arnold Kayutak

bird in nest

Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
 distinctive maker's mark
 from Alta Thompson's collection
 1950s



Arnold Kayutak

walrus head

Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
 distinctive maker's mark
 from Alta Thompson's collection
 1950s



face

Native Alaskan carving
 maker's marks of two straight lines and one diagonal line
 from Alta Thompson's collection
 1950s



seal scene

Native Alaskan scrimshaw
 maker's mark of two straight lines and
 one diagonal line
 from Alta Thompson's collection
 1950s



totem bird

Native Alaskan scrimshaw
 maker's mark of two straight lines and one diagonal line



Arctic fox with trees and midnight sun
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
maker's mark of two straight lines and one diagonal line



Native Alaskan face
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



walrus
Native Alaskan carving
finely carved lines from centre of apex
not well carved on inside



ring shape
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
figure is known as a Billiken doll – a good luck charm
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



plain



scrimshaw Native Alaskan dogsled



scrimshaw Native Alaskan sailing ship, whale
and harpooner



Native Alaskan
large indentations on shorter
thimble



1920s
Stanhope peep with
'Niagara Falls'



1930s
smooth all over
Ketchikan Alaska



2000



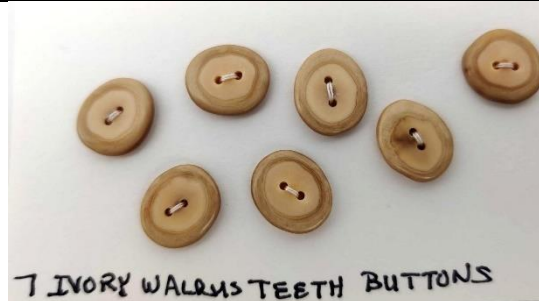
horse's head shape
Native Alaskan carving
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



owl shape
Native Alaskan carving
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



peacocks atop
Native Alaskan carving
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



7 IVORY WALRUS TEETH BUTTONS
buttons

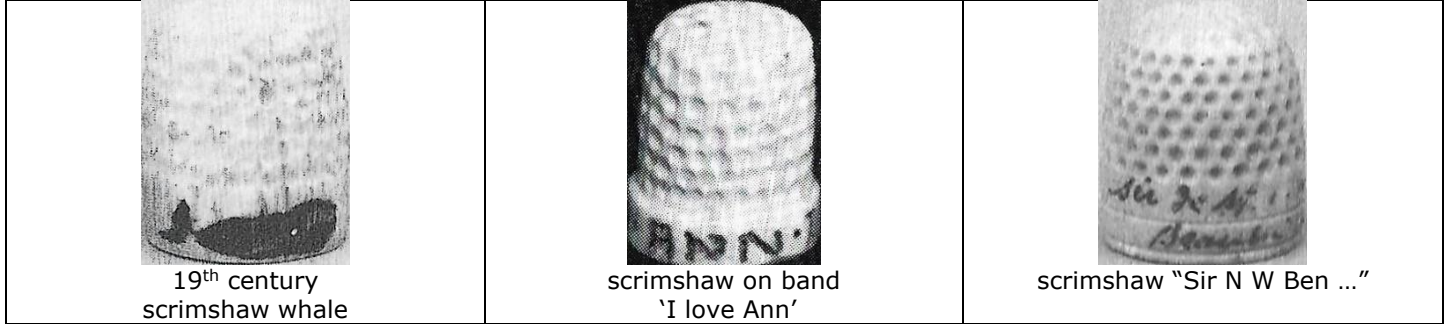
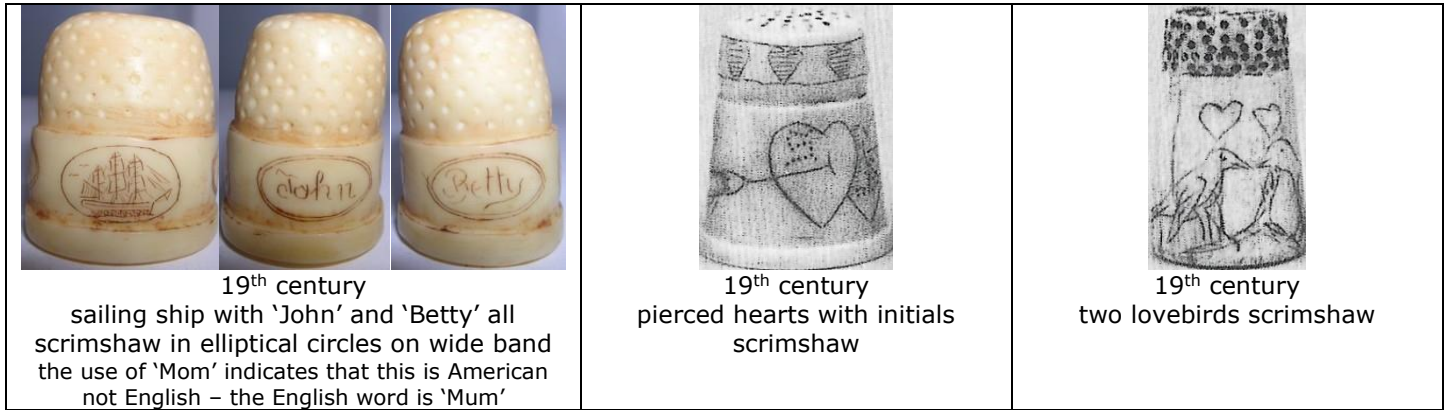
Whale ivory Sperm and Orca whales

Whales have 23 teeth and these can be carved.

American

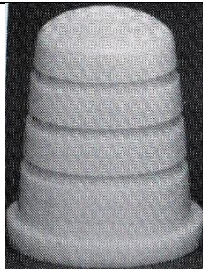
The heart of the US whale oil industry was Nantucket MA, from 17th century until 1971 when it was banned.

The thimble is whale tooth-shaped. There is scope for greater scrimshaw detail in the harpooning scenes.





carved flowers and leaves



sperm whale
VN 19 1991



'Mother'
1800s



handcarved in Alaska



handcarved in Alaska



narwhale
New England
VH 73

Australian

Albany in Western Australia



Jamie Bell (JB) Albany WA
scrimshaw sailing ships
'Running Home'



Ralph Bennet Albany WA

Hand-turned dainty small ivory thimbles are made of Sperm Whale ivory. They are completely unadorned, with a flat or slightly concave apex. There are rings incised in the apex and there is a rim to the thimbles. The beauty of the ivory is shown as these thimbles have been polished to a fine sheen. There are no maker's marks but a card accompanying the thimbles gives the maker's name and address. The thimbles were made in the 1980s.



flowers and leaves



acorns



band of flowers



sailing ship



sailing ship and lighthouse



sailing ship
'Endeavour'



band of flowers and leaves



lighthouse



posy of flowers and leaves



koala



flowers



posy of flowers and leaves



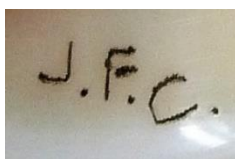
flowers

James Cumberland-Brown (J.F.C.) WA

James is renowned for his scrimshaw. He acquired a great quantity of Sperm Whale teeth before the sale of whale ivory was banned in 1972. This miniaturist, from the Royal School of Fine Arts, has created exquisite scrimshaw thimbles. The scenes are carved with a probe or sharpened nail and then black oil paint is rubbed into the carving, to bring them to life. The thimbles were supplied with a certificate proclaiming 'This is to certify that this tooth was taken off the West Australian Coast prior to 1972'.

James turns the thimbles himself and the shape varies from thimble to thimble. Originally residing in York, Western Australia, where visitors to 'Hillside' could watch this artist at work, he then moved to East Fremantle.

James died in 2003.



Certificate of Authenticity

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THIS SCRIMSHAW WAS CREATED BY

JAMES CUMBERLAND-BROWN
IN HIS STUDIO AT "HILLSIDE", YORK,
WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

SIGNED: *James Cumberland-Brown*

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THIS TOOTH WAS TAKEN OFF THE WEST AUSTRALIAN COAST PRIOR TO

1972

SIGNED: *J.F.C.*
DESCRIPTION OF PIECE: *Thimble with Ship and Lighthouse*

JCB York W.A. 1991

English



Stanhope peep
1920s

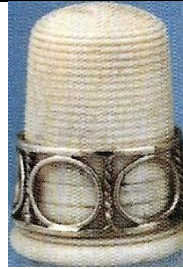
No other details



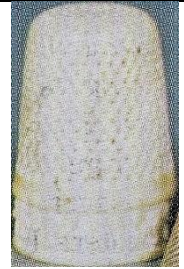
1950s
12 tiny elephants carved
around the rim
dyed pink



carved roses



1870s
European fine horizontal
lines
with gold collar
TSL autumn 2003



narrow carved band
VN 60 2000



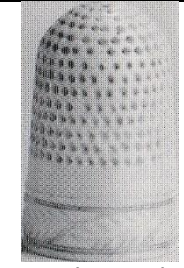
carved vertical ferns



carved flower



carved flowers with leaves



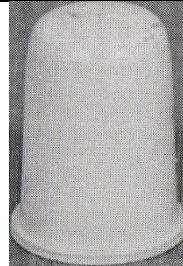
narrow leaves band
VN 43 1997



carved vertical leaves
band



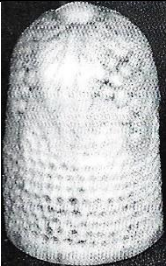
smooth sides



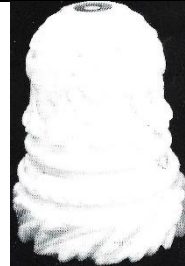
smooth



carved leaves on wide
band
VN 50 1998



carved flower with leaves
on apex



deeply carved leaves rim



wide band of finely carved
zigzag



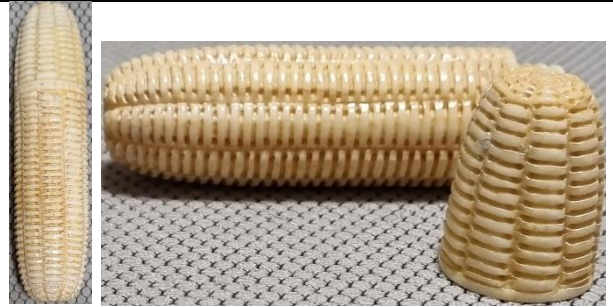
modern
carved mice
dyed pale pink



mini thimble holder
carved flower op apex



marine ivory sewing kit
scrimshaw THAI temple scene all round and thimble
has deity and turret



carved ivory sewing kit in shape of corn cob, including
thimble

References

- Elizabeth Aldridge *Thoughts on thimbles. Part VII Other Materials*. 1984
 Alta D. Beymer/Thompson (1887-1984). TCI member profile
 John von Hoelle. TCI member profile
 Jenny Bockel *Thimbles of Southern Africa*. 2004
 Susan Jean Gowan *Thimbles of Australia*. 1997
 Magdalena and William Isbister *Ivory thimbles*. May 2007, 2011
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This listing of Ivory 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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