

Thimbles made from unusual materials

These thimbles were created for the collectables market – created mainly in 1980s and 1990s. There must have been a big demand for thimbles made of different materials for such a huge number created. There are still thimble collectors today who specialise in the unusual materials range.

I knew of the popular types of material like stone thimbles or those crocheted from cotton – the papier mâché from the Philippines. Once I started to find photos for this topic, I was stunned – there are thimbles from close to 100 different and unusual materials. 1% of them were created in the late 1800s and during the 19th century: gutta percha, tortoiseshell (no apologies for including John Piercy's thimbles here) and vulcanite.

Some of the materials used were quite fragile, so unable to retain their thimble shape. In this instance they were placed over metal, wood or plastic thimbles (like beaded thimbles). Some were made to be used for the purpose created – like leather thimbles. I have made it clear under the specific materials, the thimbles that are not included within the scope of this topic.

Clever craftsmen created some of these thimbles to be able to exchange their thimbles with other collectors
(Yvonne Winspear of Australia)

I have attempted to list the materials in the following order within each group: maker, then country of origin and then the rest where neither of the above is known.

I have included as many catalogue references as I can find to help with the year they were made, using the following abbreviations:

CC – Collectors Circle (New York)
Fel – Feldman (Germany)
Gim – Gimbels (Maine)
KS – De vingerhoed (Netherlands)
PJW – PJ Walter (Germany)
TCI – Thimble Collectors International Bulletin (USA)
TTG – The Thimble Guild (Scotland)
TO – Thimbles Only (Jean Shoup USA)
TSL – Thimble Society of London
VH - John von Hoelle
VN – Vingerhoednieuws (Netherlands)

For similar topics see

Bog oak thimbles
Glass thimbles
Horn and bone thimbles
Ivory thimbles
Jenny Blair Designs' thimbles

abalone



acetate



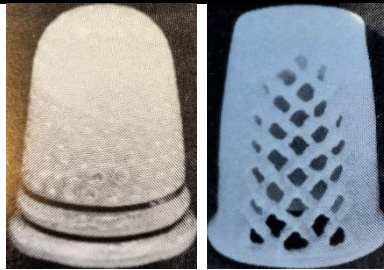
France
mother of pearl style

alabaster

see also: lavender alabaster - pink alabaster - strawberry alabaster



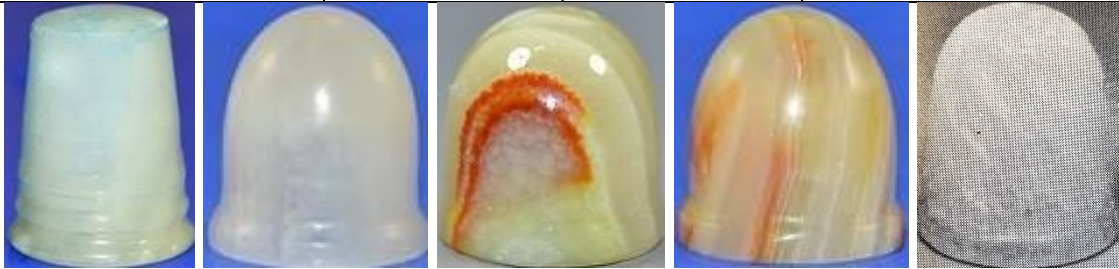
MR
handpainted



Philadelphia USA
John von Hoelle
L: gold bands
VH 13-14
b&w photo



Argentina



Italy



Italy
decals
TTG July 1991

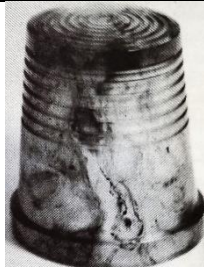


Penzance UK

amber
fossilised pine resin from Russia



Germany
Birgit Lux
TTG October 1990



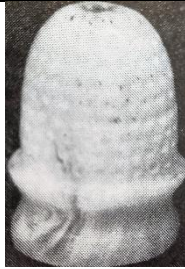
Germany
Fel 2 1987
b&w photo



Germany
Fel 16 1991



Germany



Philadelphia USA
John von Hoelle
VH 15
b&w photo



Poland
VN 2009



Poland
VN 2009



South Africa
amber bead ivory apex
VN 2001



VN 2004



VN 1996

amethyst



India
carved lotus
limited to **50**
TTG March 1990

aventurine



India
L: blue – R: green
carved lotus
limited to **50**
TTG March 1990

bamboo



China
TTG March 1991



India
VH 1178, 1180
b&w photo



Philippines

bark



Healesville Australia
Michael Morris
1989



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
salmon gum bark with
paperbark apex
over metal thimble
1990



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
handpainted paperbark
over leatherwood
TTG January 1987



Australia
plaited

beads



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Bellevue WA USA
Bead Loom Gallery
 includes Swarovski crystals
 several made as British royal commemoratives



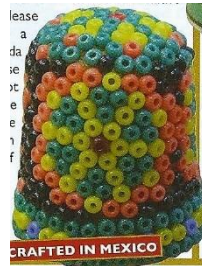
Canada
Olga Bushkova
 over metal thimble
 2010-



Russia
Olga Malyshkina
 over plastic thimbles
 2003



Japan
Miyuki



Mexico
Nicholas and Adolina
 over ceramic
 TCI winter 2013



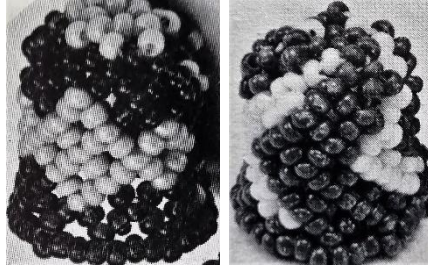
Sarah Lee Parker
 mainly open-topped
 L: over metal thimble



USA
Janet Pitts
 Bee - Twin Towers 9-11-01 - candy cane
 glued onto wooden thimbles



Coventry UK
Jacqui Walker
L: limited to **195**
L: TTG January 1989



Denmark
KS June 1985
s&w photos



Kenya
TTG September 2005

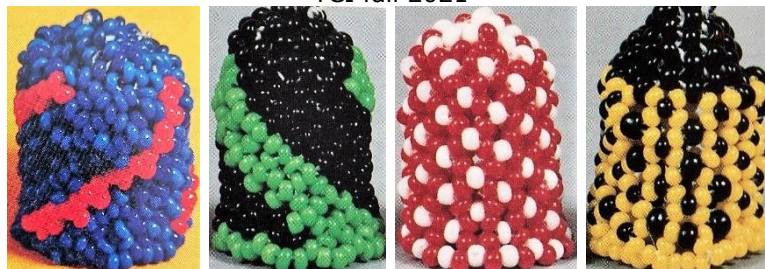


Russia
over wood

bottom R: rainbow colours limited to **250**
some Matruschka-shaped
TTG 1998-2001 - VN 2006-2009



South Africa
using galvanised wire
TCI fall 2021



South Africa
Fel 12 1990 - VN 1994



South Africa
Zulu beads



unknown makers

bear claw quartz



Argentina
Sewing Corner 1978

black marble



UK
Caroline and John Smith
marble from Belgium
TTG June 1988



Taiwan
Sewing Corner 1978



VN 2001

black onyx



India
carved lotus
limited to **50**
TTG March 1990

blue onyx



Argentina
Juan Arrieta Quiroga

Blu Tack

commercial putty-like adhesive



Brisbane Australia
Sandra Menger
'Thimbles of Australia Sue Gowan 1998'

brick



UK
house brick
limited to **750**
TTG August 1991

calabash



Argentina

carrot



Finland
VN 67 2001



Finland
VN 77 2003

chalk



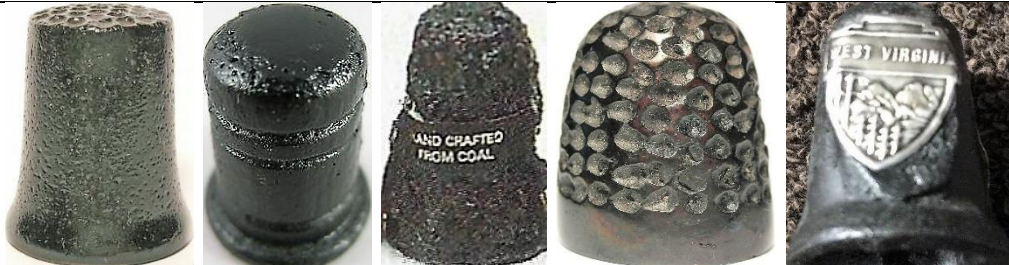
UK
Kingmaker
bonded resin
TTG September 1986

coal



Wales
Kingmaker
bonded resin

L: miner (plain and handpainted) – pithead commemorating the end of the 1985 miner's strike
(plain and handpainted limited to **3500**)
TTG 1985



West Virginia USA
compressed
TO 1980-1983 - VH174

coconut shell



Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil

AP

late 19th century

maker's initials on apex

18ct gold apex and clouté studs in a ring

R: carved simple fleur de lis pattern by local women



Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil

late 19th century

18ct gold apex and clouté studs in two rings



Egypt

Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Philippines
over metal thimble

TTG March 1996

concrete



UK
Christine and John Smith
created from old pavement
TTG September 1989

coral



France
carved
19th century
Christies 1995 117



Philippines
etched
TO 1984 - VH



Thailand
TTG June 1988



pink coral Great Barrier Reef
over metal
TTG April 1988



blue coral Indian Ocean
over metal
TTG April 1988



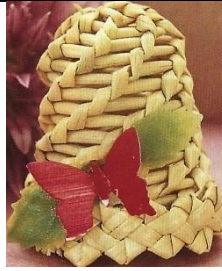
over metal

corn

plaited after the style of corn dollies



UK
Betty Blackwood
TTG June 1985

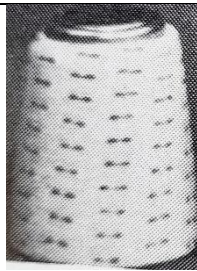


UK
Mrs Horsfall
butterfly
limited to **250**
TTG October 1998



UK
flowers

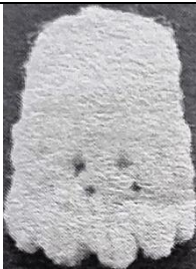
corncob



USA
brass apex
VH 1177
b&w photo

cotton

thimbles are created of crochet, tatting, knitting or lacemaking. They were usually stiffened with sugar water or starch. Many are embellished with beads and ribbon
see also: silk



Connecticut USA
Edith Archibald
crochet
TO 1984



Toowoomba Australia
Beryl
crochet



Melbourne Australia
Joan Blaney
crochet



UK
Vilma Buck
crochet



Brisbane Australia
Kay Collins
tatting



South Africa
Gili Davis
crochet



Elena Dickson
lace over wood



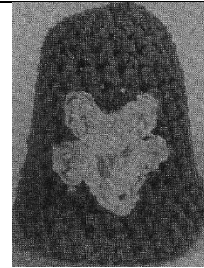
Perth Australia
Betty Dutschke
crochet



Finland
Irja Helsila
tatting



Kilcoy Australia
Margaret Hickling
tatting



UK
Lynne Hutchings
crochet
limited to **250**
TTG May 1986
b&w photo



Perth Australia
Barbara Martin
sewing



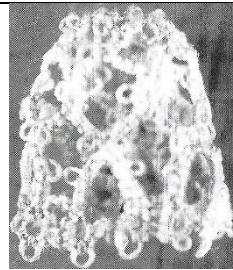
Brisbane Australia
Sandra Menger
crochet



Mexico
Nicholas and Adolina
over moulded plastic
TCI winter 2013



USA
Florence Regan
 crochet, some with crosstitch
 Gim 1996



UK
Christine Ross
 tatting
 limited to **200**
 TTG May 1987
 b&w photo



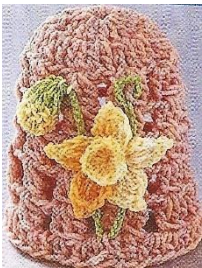
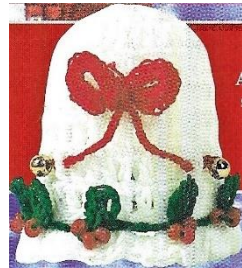
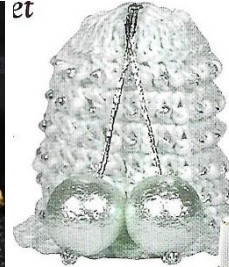
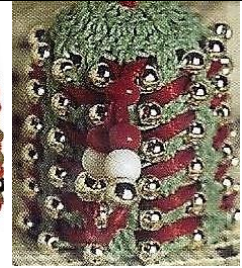
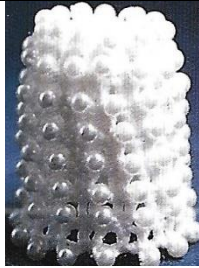
USA
Doris E Shaw
 crochet



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
 crochet



Netherlands
Miep van Eijk
 crochet
 TTG November 1983
 b&w photo





Coventry UK
 Jacqui (Jacqueline) Walker
 crochet

find those commemorating Armistice, Olympics and a chair shape
 mostly no limited numbers available but the limited editions range from **75 to 300**

TTG from March 1985-2005



California USA

Chris Weber

crochet

TO 2007 - 2007 - 1984



UK

Cathy Whithead

crochet

limited to **250**

TTG May 1991



USA



unknown makers

Deliciosa Monstera



Perth Australia

Barbara Martin

stitched dried calyx

fabric



USA
Status Thimble
kit to create this stitched fabric



Argentina
made from woven cloth

feathers



handpainted feathers over plastic
Marina Nestorova
VN 67 2001



handpainted feathers over brass
Marina Nestorova

felt



Brisbane Australia
Tricia Smout

FIMO
commercial modelling clay



Benoni South Africa
Tessa Browne



Empangeni South Africa
Wendy Seymour



South Africa
metal thimble

fish skin



Quebec Canada
Les Cuirs Fins de la Mer



Scotland
dyed fish scale over wood



Scotland
salmon
over brass or metal
TCI September 1989 - TTG July
1990

fossils



UK
Pinpoint Design
(later name used by Christine and John Smith)
limestone
TTG May 1993

granite



UK
Caroline and John Smith
Berlin Wall - Italian granorosada - Russian pink yemel
C - R : TTG February 1988 - TTG October 1991

grass



Robyn
basketry

green marble



UK
Christine and John Smith
marble from Portugal
limited to **200**
TTG December 1988



Taiwan
Sewing Corner 1978

gumnut



Australia

gutta percha

Rubber-like material discovered in 1843. Palaquiium trees from Malaysia and Borneo
It is brittle and lightweight. It was used as mourning jewellery as well as jet



TCI winter 2021

haematite



heather

the roots are picked, dried, dyed, blocked, compressed, glued, turned and lacquered. First made into thimbles in 1980. Thimbles ceased by 2004



Pitlochry Scotland
Hugh Kerr of Heathergems
no two alike

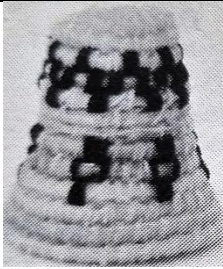


Pitlochry Scotland
Hugh Kerr of Heathergems
 metal rims



Pitlochry Scotland
Hugh Kerr of Heathergems
 thistle-shaped

horse hair



Arizona USA
Donna Mendoz
 TCI spring 2001
 b&w photo



Arizona USA
Leona Antone
 TCI spring 2001
 b&w photo



Arizona USA
Linda Hendricks
 TCI spring 2001
 b&w photo

jade

many jade thimbles are made with toppers – they are not included



Pilbara Australia



Bergenland Austria
 Fel 7 1988
 b&w photo



Austria
 mini size



Canada
 with a maple leaf etched



China
Handpainted
TTG 2003 set of six animals – TTG 2002 cats



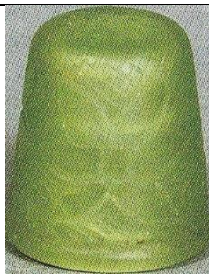
China
carved
TO 1983



India

lower R: chang san crystal jade
limited to **50**

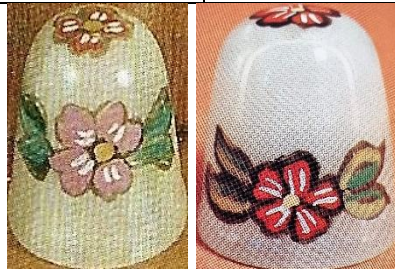
TTG March 1990 - CC 1978 - PJW 85-6 - VN 74 2000



Portugal
VN 92 2007



Taiwan



Turkey
handpainted
TTG April 1989

Jersey cabbage stalk



UK

jet

jet was used as mourning jewellery, replacing vulcanite and gutta percha



Missouri USA
Brad Elfrink Elvenkrafte Studios
thistle
with Siberian horn apex



Whitby UK



Whitby UK
carved
carved cottage -cathedral - toadstools

kangaroo skin



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
brass kangaroo on boomerang pin
1983
TTG May 1984

Kisii stone

mined by the Kenyan tribe of the same name



Kenya

L>R: handpainted figure - handpainted giraffe - leather rim - representing cheetah, giraffe, python
TTG 1991 - 1994

lapis lazuli



Argentina
Juan Arrieta Quiroga
R: with rhodochrosite



Pakistan
VN 92 1999



Portugal
CC 1978



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

lavender alabaster



Italy
handpainted violet

leather

see also: Canadian leather thimbles topic



Birch



Clover
L: tailor's



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design
L: over plastic



R Reidler



New Lanark Scotland
Ronnie Parker
'Easter 1984



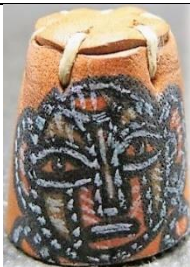
Brisbane Australia
Sandra Menger



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Wisnpear
handpainted chamois over wood
beads on apex
'1788-1988'
limited to **100**
TTG July 1988



India
VH 648
b&w photo



Kenya



South Africa



UK
over wood



Thailand
L: tailor's - R: tall for use with long fingernails



unknown country of origin



sailor's palms
with various metal pushers

Lucite

Gimbels used the term acrylic



USA

Davy Jones Locker

imbedded starfish and seahorse and seashells

limited to **250**

Gim 1990 - Sewing Corner 1976

malachite



Argentina



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Phalaborwa South Africa
John van der Westhuizen



Gim 1990

marble

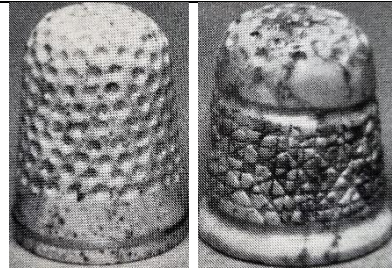
see also: black marble – green marble – pink marble



UK

Christine and John Smith

L>R: marble of chips from around the world –
Carrara Italy – creamy
two at R limited to **250**
TTG May 1989 – January 1989 – December 1988



Philadelphia USA

John von Hoelle

VH 1088-89
b&w photos



Barossa Australia



Taiwan

Sewing Corner 1978



VN 64 2001 – Gim 1983

meerschaum

This lightweight mineral, sepiolite, is a lightweight claylike material. It floats on water and this gives its name sea foam (direct translation from German word meerschaum)



Turkiye
Mustafa
handcarved

TTG November 1989 - VN 96 2008



Istanbul Turkiye
Sinan Atilla
handcarved

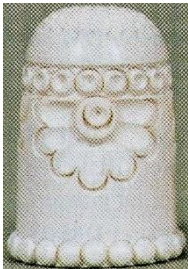
two L: TTG August, October 2009



South Africa
baked Tanzanian meerschaum
Fel 20 1992



Tanzania
VN 46 1998



Turkiye
handcarved
top L: gold band
3rd L: brass apex
bottom R: 'Türkey'

four R: VN, 1996, 1998, 2007 - Gim 1997 - VH665

nundoorite



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

onyx

see also: black onyx – blue onyx

 <p>Argentina <u>Juan Arrieta Quiroga</u> with rhodochrosite</p>	 <p>Mendoza Argentina Sewing Corner 1976</p>	 <p>India carved lotus limited to 50 TTG March 1990</p>	 <p>Karachi Pakistan</p>
 <p>Scotland <u>Gem Rock Museum</u> TO 1993</p>			

paper



papier mâché

flour, salt and water are added to rice paper pulp





Apollo Bay Australia
Shirley Bennett – Haley
 handpainted and lacquered
 last five have opal on apex
 1979-1985







Kashmir India

handpainted and lacquered in small batches by small family businesses
all black-lacquered inside

TTG 1988-2001 - TO 1983-2007 - Gim 1980-1082 - PJW 85-6 - VH714



Japan
TO 1983



Japan



Russia
signed in cyrillic



Thailand



USA

paua shell



Mooloolaba Australia
over plastic thimble



New Zealand
set mainly in Perspex or resin
L: silver kiwi – bottom R: over wood



Philippines

peat



UK
handpainted The Lindow man
bonded in resin
TTG July 1997

picture jasper



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

pink marble



MR
handpainted



UK
Christine and John Smith
limited to **200**
marble sourced from Portugal



Turkey
handpainted



handpainted



plastic



Ecuador
carved L: Andes and train
TTG February 2002

plum slate



Llanberis North Wales UK
Christine and John Smith (Guild members)
limited to **250**
TTG January 1988

pumpkin skin



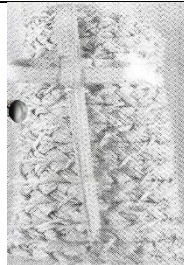
Argentina
carved by Toba peoples
TCI spring 2013

pyrophyllite



Swakopmund Namibia
L: 'Swakopmund'

raffia



Coventry UK
Jacqui Walker
TTG April 1984
b&w photo

red agate



India
limited to **50**
TTG March 1990

resin stone



over plastic

rhodochrosite



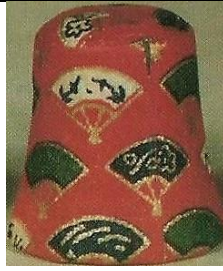
Argentina
L: Sewing Corner 1976

rhodonite



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia
1990

rice paper



Japan
limited to **350**
TTG September 1987

rice stalks



Philippines
R: Fel 13 1990

rose quartz



Pakistan
VN 99 2009

rosso Alicante



UK
Pinpoint Design
(name used by Christine and John Smith)
stone sourced from Spain
limited to **300**
TTG September 1988

rosso Bilbao



UK

Christine and John Smith

stone sourced from Spain by these Guild members
limited to **250**
TTG April 1989

rubber



California USA
Good Stuf
needle grabber



USA
The Bionic Finger



clerk's



clerk's

salmon stone



Philippines
brass band
Gim April 1984

sand



Ryedale UK
Tony Barnes
sand from Gulf War
TTG April 1991



sand from Gulf War
TTG April 1992

seal skin



serpentine



shell

Mexican shell over alpaca thimbles are outside the scope of this study
see also: named shell ie coral



Mooloolaba Australia
over plastic thimble





Philippines
 shell applied over metal thimbles or moulded plaster-of-Paris
 shell in form of chips or slices
 TTG 1988-2001 - TO 1983-1993 - VH995-997



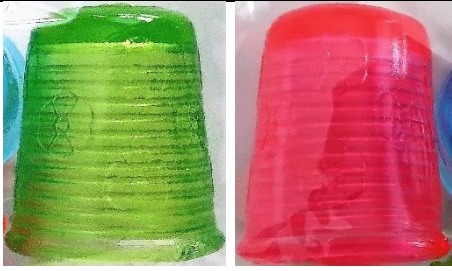
Thailand
 TTG August 2001

shingle



UK
 shingle collected from Criccieth beach North Wales

silicone



China
SewSweet
daisy shapes pressed into thimble



Sonic
nail-shaped



China
daisy shapes



silk

see also: cotton - fabric



Japan
Syuku Otsu



Japan
Quilt-Yui



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
weaving



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
wattle



Victoria Australia



Japan

these ring silk thimbles are known as yubinuki
handmade, they are lined with fabric usually with a cardboard lining





Chuncheon Korea

handmade, with silk stitches on silk or felt (some are quite crudely stitched)

known as kolmi

small opening at tip for fingernail

KS 9 1987 - Sewing Corner 1978 - TTG July 2004 - TO 1984 - VH 1000-1002 - Fel 10 1989

slate

see also: plum slate



Wales
Kingmaker
handpainted 'Snowdon'
bonded with resin
TTG February 1986



Wales
Christine and Dave Smith
TTG August 1987



Westmoreland UK
Christine and Dave Smith
limited to **500**
TTG November 1987

snake skin



Texas rattlesnake
over wood
TTG June 1991 - Feb 18 1991

soapstone



Scotland
Gem Rock Museum



USA
Parson Hayes
Sewing Corner 1978



South Africa
etched zebra



India
TTG October 1989 - Gim 1997 - TTG March 1994

stone

see also: named stones ie jade



Egypt

Randa Ahmet - Unique Design



Argentina

Juan Arrieta Quiroga



Argentina

Martin Arrieta Quiroga

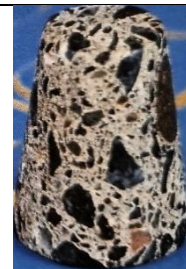


South Africa
Susanne Rens



UK

Christine and John Smith
stone sourced from EuroDisney
limited to **475**
TTG September 1992



UK

Christine and John Smith
stone sourced from The Thistle
Mill Biggar Scotland
TTG September 1991



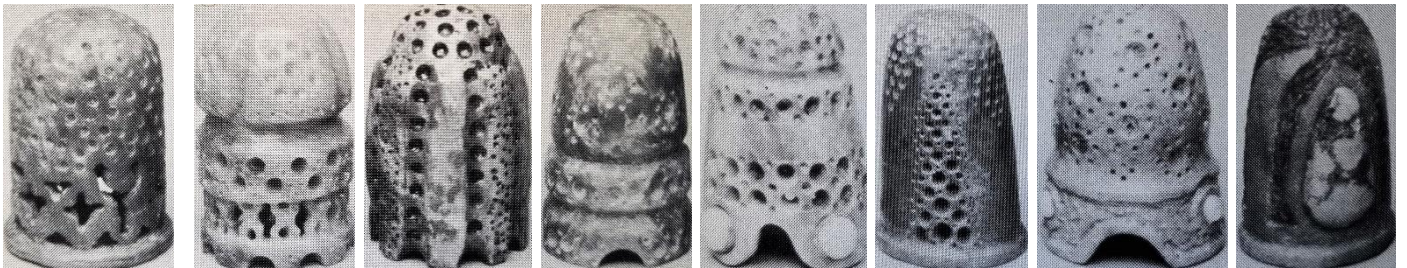
Argentina



Canada
indigenous peoples
VH 325-6



China
Fel 17 1991



India

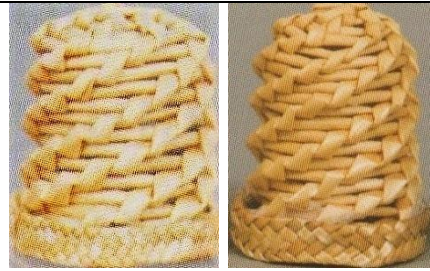


unknown country of origin
 R: commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

straw



Paraguay



VN 57 1999 VN 93 2007

strawberry alabaster



Colorado USA
 TTG July 1991

string

see also: Jacqui and David Parker of Olivia thimbles topic



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
 L: wound over brass – R: over plastic

synthetics



Brisbane Australia
Ray Brittain



Scotland
Penelope Burgess
tartan under resin



Deborah Hull



Cirencester UK
History Craft
inset brass apex
described as polymer ivory from ivory dust or sweepings or rosin
a few have metal 'compass' in apex



UK
Melissa Hookway



Dudley UK
Woodsetton

peep: Visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip to China
TTG November 1986



Argentina
epoxy resin
made by Toba indigenous people



China
TTG June 2004
polyresin



UK
'Thimble Collectors Guild' - 'A
stitch in time'
TTG July 1987 August 1987



resin



resin



synthetic ruby



telephone wire



Johannesburg South Africa
Thabang Moloji

tiger iron



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

tiger's eye



China
TTG April 1989 - Fel 5 1988



India
P JW 85-6



Pakistan
VN 99 2009



tortoiseshell

plastic fingerguards were created in tortoiseshell colour in 1910s



Birmingham UK
John Piercy

in November 1816 Piercy took out a patent, 4077, to combine tortoiseshell with gold, sterling silver, steel

British coat-of-arms on the slant with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon underneath is impressed into the shell. There is a gold rim and the width of tortoiseshell varies



another design has a large crown in gold with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon underneath
dainty flowers and leaves surround a blank cartouche on the verso



another design has pinchbeck cartouche surrounded by fine flowers and leaves, with 'Piercy's Patent' underneath



another design has 'Piercy's Patent' over two lines with rectangular cartouche surrounded by flowers and leaves on the verso



steel-top with cartouche surrounded by fine flowers and leaves with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon in pinchbeck

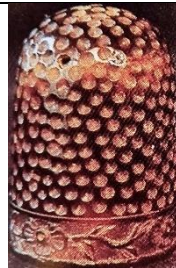


very rare example with Queen Charlotte surrounded by laurel wreath
'Piercy's Patent' over two lines on verso

b&w photo



'Piercy's Patent' pierced pinchbeck thimbles over tortoiseshell
Christies 1995 114-115



China



UK
carved
18th century
Christies 1995 110



UK
various gold pique designs – stars, flowers, leaves and crosses
9ct gold apex

travertine



turquoise



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design



pierced, with Chinese lettering
Gim 1991



velvet



Moscow Russia
plush with beads and brocade over wood
TTG October - December 2003

verdite



South Africa
Tswana Products



carved
VN 95 2008



VN 46 1998

volcanic rock



Scotland
Christine and John Smith
sourced from rock of Edinburgh Castle Mount
TTG September 1992

vulcanite

hardened rubber, which was used as mourning jewellery. It was replaced by gutta percha and jet



USA
band of 14ct gold
size lettered on apex

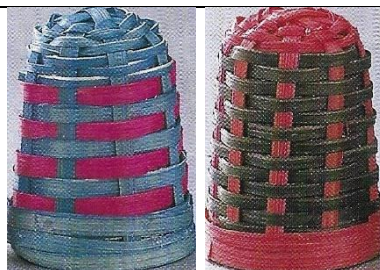
wax



Mind Your Own Beeswax

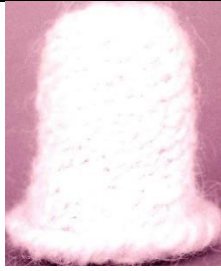
wicker

see also: bamboo



UK
basket weave
TTG January 2001

wool



Perth Australia
Barbara Martin
knitted



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
brass pin of map of Australia
b&w photo

zebra stone



Kununurra Australia
John Read

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This listing of Thimbles made from unusual materials 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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November 2024