

# Sydney Opera House thimbles

When you think of Sydney in terms of its landmarks, does the Sydney Opera House spring to mind? With its iconic shape, designed by the Danish architect Jørn Utzon, it has become the most recognised Australian "building".

From 24th March 2014 the Sydney Opera House shape will be a registered trademark. This has been taken out by the Opera House Trust and its shape will be trademarked - its logo and image are already trademarks. It will be the first building fully trademarked in Australia. It will no longer be appropriate to use the image for commercial purposes or part of a brand. According to an article in *The Australian* on 25 January 2014, it's "souvenir shops beware". The only outlet for souvenirs featuring the Sydney Opera House will be merchandise made for the Opera House Trust.

How does this affect thimble collectors? There were thimbles with the image of the Sydney Opera House produced during the 1980s, which was the decade when the most collectable thimbles appeared in Australia. It may be the sort of thematic thimble collection that could appeal and there would now be a finite number to look for. Who would now produce thimbles using a trademarked image?

Having produced the book *Thimbles of Australia* in 1998 I am familiar with these SOH image thimbles and I thought it worthwhile reproducing them here. There may be dozens more but these would only be of the type on Taiwanese blanks (none seen to date) or firehydrants of which I have only included a few, more as an example of the type.

Of the under thirty examples of SOH thimbles, only two were commissioned for the Sydney Opera House shop. You may notice that these thimbles also feature the other Sydney icon: the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Some were produced after the publication of *Thimbles of Australia*.

I have grouped the thimbles in the order that they appear in my book (ie by what they are made of). As I don't own all of these thimbles, if you have better or clearer photos, please share.



Sydney Opera House – *Songlines 2016* | Sailing into Sydney Harbour at dawn March 2020

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

[For other Australian thimble topics see](#)

Australian advertising thimbles

Australian modern sterling silver thimble and sewing tools makers 1973-2014

Australian modern sterling silver thimble and sewing tool makers 1950-2019

Australia's Elfin thimbles



**Zygmunt Libucha**  
Brisbane  
sterling silver  
1980s



**Birchcroft**  
fine bone china  
Pan Arts of Sydney commissioned these  
thimbles for Sydney's Sesquicentenary  
(1847-1992)  
late 1990s  
part of Pan Arts Collectables Australia  
Series No. 28  
1992



**Birchcroft**  
fine bone china



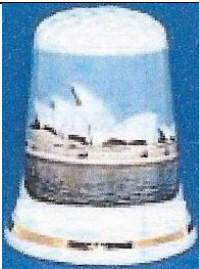
**Birchcroft**  
fine bone china  
'Sydney' travel poster



**Caverswall**  
England  
china  
from Capital cities of Australia set  
features NSW's waratah on the verso  
1980s



**Connoisseur Sterling Classic**  
china  
Worcester  
handpainted pewter on fine bone  
china  
limited to **5000** pieces  
designed by Neil Davis



**Cottage Thimbles**  
fine bone china  
part of their 'Landmarks' series



**Pan Arts Collectables**  
bone china  
Australia Series No. 35  
produced when Sydney won Olympics,  
using the Olympic colours  
1990s



**Pan Arts Collectables**  
bone china  
Australia Series No. 20  
1980s



**Pan Arts Collectables**  
bone china  
Australia Series No. 40-41 (not lettered  
on thimbles)  
pair of similar thimbles  
Left: Australia celebrates the Millennium  
Right: Sydney celebrates 2000  
2000



**Pan Arts Collectables**  
bone china  
Special Series No. 1 (not lettered on  
thimbles)  
commissioned by the Opera House shop  
mid 1980s



**Ken Parry**  
bone china  
part of Pan Arts Collectables Australia  
Series No. 5  
mid 1980s



**Sutherland China**

England  
china

To commemorate the Australian Bicentenary and the Visit of the Prince & Princess of Wales  
commissioned by Scotland Direct/The Thimble Guild  
1988



**Wedgwood**

England  
jasperware  
2000s



England  
china



Sydney Opera House 40th anniversary (2013)  
unmarked china



unmarked china



Taiwanese blank



Taiwanese blank



metal badge on china  
The new millennium 2000  
limited edition of 2000



various firehydrants



**Crummles Enamels**

England  
enamel and brass  
commissioned by the Opera House shop  
1980s?



cloisonné (enamel and brass)

Chinese  
2000s



**Exquisite Creations**

England  
pewter  
the lettering is on the body of the  
thimbles  
1980s



**Stephen Frost of Warwick**

**Models**  
England  
pewter  
1980s



**Pan Arts Pewter**

Sydney  
pewter  
1989-1990s



**Riccardo's Pewter**

Sydney  
pewter  
some examples show cross-hatching to show the roof tiles  
1980s



**Wales Association of Pewter Works (WAPW)**

handpainted and plain pewter  
the lettering is under the icon



**Robert Herron**

Tasmania  
handpainted blackwood  
Joanna Wigzell  
2000



**Robert Herron**

Tasmania  
handpainted Joanna Wigzell  
sold thru Gimbel's in Maine USA  
2001



**Keith Adams & Peter Grossman**

Port Macquarie and Sydney  
commissioned by Pan Arts, Sydney  
handpainted wooden top hats  
three-dimensional silver with opal atop  
1980s?



**Indonesian**

handpainted in dot-painting  
2000s



**Malcolm Walter**

South Australia  
German crystal with sterling  
silver  
1990s



aluminium?

## **References**

Susan Jean Gowan *Thimbles of Australia*. 1998

## **Contributors**

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This listing of Sydney Opera House 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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