

Jasper's of Yorkshire handpainted thimbles 1992-2001

When I first encountered these handpainted thimbles in the mail order thimble catalogues of the 1990s, I thought the name was wrong. The name suggested a grocery store to me!! How wrong could I be about these really beautifully detailed thimbles?

It was the *Thimble Society of London* who first brought these thimbles to my attention. They didn't deal in new modern thimbles, so there had to be something that had caught the eye of Bridget McConnel. Then a big surprise – I noticed recently that Jasper's of Yorkshire thimbles appeared for sale by *The Thimble Guild*. That was certainly a first: two British thimble businesses competing at the same time. Thimbles must have been painted exclusively for each, as there was no duplication between the two sources, for collectors. They arrived unheralded at TSL in their spring 1993 catalogue with no name attributed to the thimbles – TSG in March 1994. It was only at a later date that TSL splurged on Jasper's of Yorkshire (yes that name is correct, despite its omission in some of the catalogue entries, there is an apostrophe in the name) is a mother-daughter collaboration. Margaret Palmer is the artistic genius who handpainted these vibrant, jewel-coloured treasures. Her signature is M.T.P. By creating a unique thimble brand for her special thimbles, Margaret was just following a tradition of other British thimble handpainters.

The daughter 'part' of Jasper's is revealed: Mandy. In TSG's January 2001 issue the last thimble to be produced under the name of Jasper's appeared – "before the company is now changing its name".

If you have access to the catalogues mentioned, you will see examples of pastel thimbles. In reality, once I saw images of the actual thimbles, I was stunned by their strong, rich jewel colours. I was instantly taken back to Paris in 2018 – to the breathtaking splendour of the Église de Saint Germain des Prés, which has had its original mediaeval colours restored.



Église de Saint Germain des Prés

I don't know what inspired all Margaret in her miniature creations on thimbles. She is quoted tho about some of her inspirations in the Guild's catalogues ... and it would seem that she named her own designs!

The Guild felt members were attracted to the diversity of her designs – the Guild were impressed by her "original unusual and interesting work". "Miniature masterpieces" – the superlatives kept coming!

Using fine bone china thimble blanks, Jasper's has filled the entire surface with the finest detail of abstract design.

Each thimble is dated, signed with initials and numbered with the edition number.

They are hand gilded in 24ct gold.

The designs are not named within the thimble.

Curiously collectors of these thimbles have also commented on other strange little marks – like a baby's footprint – a pawmark – a dog-shaped pattern, some of which can look like a cursive 'E'? Some secret marking – it doesn't matter but I am sure if you come across one of these thimbles, you may notice something similar. They have been recorded now!



gilded lettering – “Jasper’s of Yorkshire 1995 No.7 M. T.P.”



individual marks



Margaret Palmer’s initials as signature



some extra prints

Initially the apexes remained blank or were painted in monochrome colours, but gradually the designs crept partially onto the tops and then they filled the tops in glorious bold colours.

I am going to feature the thimbles in the order they appeared in the catalogues to show this amazing artist’s talents and how they progress on painting thimbles. I plan to keep the original catalogue photos (L) and feature all other images alongside (R).

The prices were high for the 1990s so if you do own any of them, you are fortunate – and have excellent taste.

Jasper’s was situated in a village Sutton-in-Craven in North Yorkshire, in the UK.



Sutton-in-Craven in North Yorkshire
photo: Al Partington (Wikipedia)

Come on a journey and discover what drew me to these little beauties. Do you sense the Palmers’ love of all the shades of blue possible in the paint palette? From deep navy to royal blue to a softer blue, often enhanced with trims of 22ct gold?

For other handpainted thimble topics see

Australian handpainted thimbles
British modern handpainted thimbles
Gerald Delaney handpainted thimbles
Graham Payne handpainted thimbles
Royal Worcester thimble painters

Jasper's of Yorkshire

spring 1993



Peony and roses

TSL

brown ground

the two thimbles at L, were sold separately when in fact they are one thimble [summer 1996]

winter 1993



TTG £70 set of 3 (March 1994)

from a new supplier ... Mrs Palmer ... deep colours delicate shades ... all highlighted by 22ct gold -
initialled by the artist (TSL had two of these for sale in winter 1993 pointsettia and holly)

July 1994



Manhattan sunset

TTG set of 2
named by the artist

summer 1994



Manhattan sunrise

TSL (art deco inspired motif of the rising sun)

December 1994



Frosty morning

TTG

she was inspired by the sharp beauty of a frosty morning. The deep, dark blue contrasting with the crisp white and the lavish platinum ... will be personally initialled and numbered by this up and coming artist

numbered edition of 45

winter 1994



Christmas

TSL

gilt bells and holly on a red ground

snow flakes on a blue ground

limited edition of 300 pairs

March 1995



Inspired images

TTG

numbered edition of 45

summer 1995



TSL

a lovely green and gold flower and leaf design – an exciting black, ice blue and silver design

June 1996



The Star of Atum

TTG

in ancient Egyptian mythology the god Tem of Atum was the original "Creator god" of Heliopolis. It incorporates the colours of the night sky as well as the Nile, so important to the Egyptians and many other features representative of the way of life so full of mystery and wonder so many thousands of years later from appearances the rim looks as if it is ridged – just an illusion by the artist with small amounts of white

numbered edition of 45

October 1995



Wassailing design

TTG

numbered edition of 50

December 1995



The merry Mummers

TTG

"Inspired by ancient Christmas beliefs. 'Mummers' were artist who danced and mimed plays. Carrying garlands of evergreens they would move from home to home performing. In return they were rewarded with hot wassailing ale, plum porrage and Christmas pie (which later developed into mince pies. The Mummers were thought to drive out evil spirits of winter and in bringing with them eternal life of mid-winter evergreens they blessed the household for the year to come."

winter 1995



The Christmas Ice King – The Christmas Ice Queen

TSL

in a letter from Jasper’s of Yorkshire to Bees (reproduced in TSL)

“The story goes back to Anglo Saxon folklore and superstition when it was believed that there was a King and Queen of Twelfth Night. The Christmas Ice King was born at sunrise of the twelfth day of Christmas and was the protector and guardian of the past year and of its good harvest. In turn the Christmas Ice Queen was born at sunset on the same day in time for Twelfth Night and was the protector and guardian of the year to come.”

“And just after Christmas there is a really unique and special design to coincide with a special scientific event in March 1996.”

numbered edition of 350 pairs

and a segue to **summer 1996**



Discovery of a new comet

TSL

summer 1996



Leaves

TSL

(similar to Christmas Ice Queen thimble)

June 1996



Serenade

TTG

numbered edition of 75

July 1996



Little Bobby Mack

TTG

"Margaret Palmer has named her thimble in tribute to her friend Mr R McDougal from Texas. Hand enamelled in Marina blue with eyelets of Royal Plum which are highlighted in both gold and silver."

numbered edition of 200

October 1996



Susan's rose

TTG

"Named after a very special rose and the lady who looks after it. Growing in the special walled garden at Coulter and carefully tended by Mrs Susan Bell, there's a delicate pink bloom. To date it has been unidentified but it is thought by experts to be a pre-revolutionary French rose."

numbered edition of 75

December 1996



Christmas gloriana

TTG

the story behind this wonderful design "was inspired and dedicated to the magic and wonder of Christmas itself, and to the excitement we all felt as young children at Christmas Eve in particular grew even closer."

numbered edition of 95

(alternating foil decoration in alternating silver and gold stars at rim)

March 1997



The 'three cornered hat'

TTG

Margaret Palmer gives the exciting names herself. With a lustrous azure blue backdrop, Margaret has arranged the shimmering gold foil pieces in such a way that she was inspired to call it by this unusual name.

summer 1997



TSL

a wonderful sparkly surface has been achieved and the brilliant blue sets off the silver and red to great effect

autumn 1997



Bridget's dandy

TSL

limited edition

the thimble has been kindly named after me [Bridget McConnel]

December 1997



Lucky birds

TTG

"The story behind the wonderful design was inspired by the old tradition of the young children of the North Riding of Yorkshire going from house to house on New Year's morning. They would knock on the doors calling 'I wish you health and strength and a Happy New Year. Please may I be the lucky bird here. Their reward would be a small amount of money."

winter 1997



Angel wings

TSL

1998



thimble is painted gold inside – her only one?

winter 1998



Christmas kisses

TSL

numbered edition of 250

summer 1999



Marriage of Prince Edward to Sophie

TSL

the initials E for Prince Edward and S for Sophie entwine amongst roses and forget-me-nots, symbolic flowers to celebrate their love and marriage

winter 1999



Glad tidings

TSL

beautifully painted with bows, above holly sprigs. Raised dots like snowflakes
numbered edition of 200

January 2001



Floral art nouveau

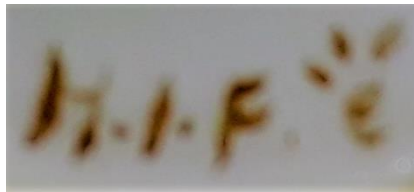
painted by Mandy Palmer

TTG

"A touch of Rennie Macintosh surrounded by a band of silvery-leaved pink roses and defined by a black background with green."

numbered edition of 50

Jasper's of Yorkshire (unknown origins)



highly decorated zigzag top with bold red, gold and blue zigzag around rim

interestingly this thimble is the only Jasper's thimble encountered that has no date but the rest of the rim information is there. There is a different set of initials - **HIF**



very large zigzag with navy and gold with self pattern within each - smaller chevrons in royal blue red and gold



with a **1992** date inside is this vines design an earlier Jasper's?

References

TTG The Thimble Guild catalogues 1994-2001
TSL Thimble Society of London *catalogues* 1993-1999

Contributors

Pawel Brzyski | Linda Heggs | Sue Pickles | Jean Taylor | Michael Wheeler

This listing of Jasper's of Yorkshire 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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