

# 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



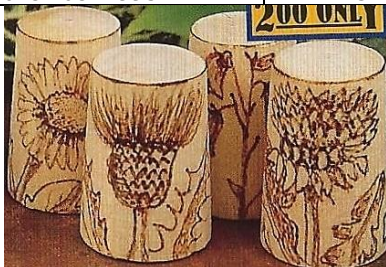
Book of Kells  
limited to **95**  
TTG December 1995



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 <b>250</b></p>	 <p>wren</p>	



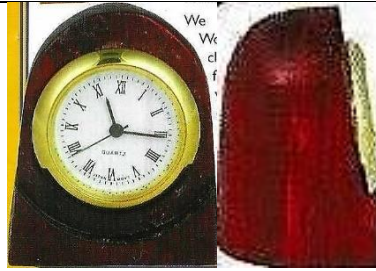
**Andrew Langford – Langford Woodcrafts, Ayrshire 1995-1998, 2006-2009**

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



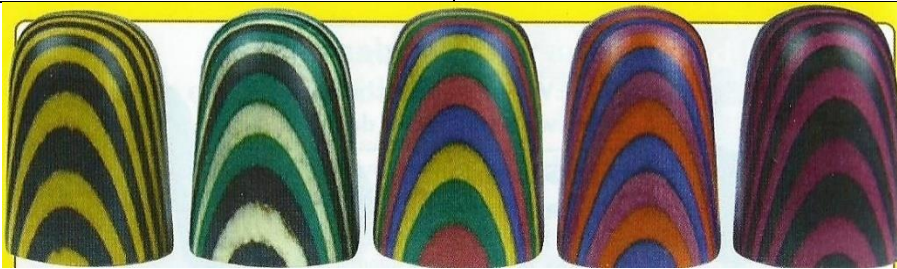
**Glencoe bog oak**  
limited to **10**  
TTG October 2009



**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



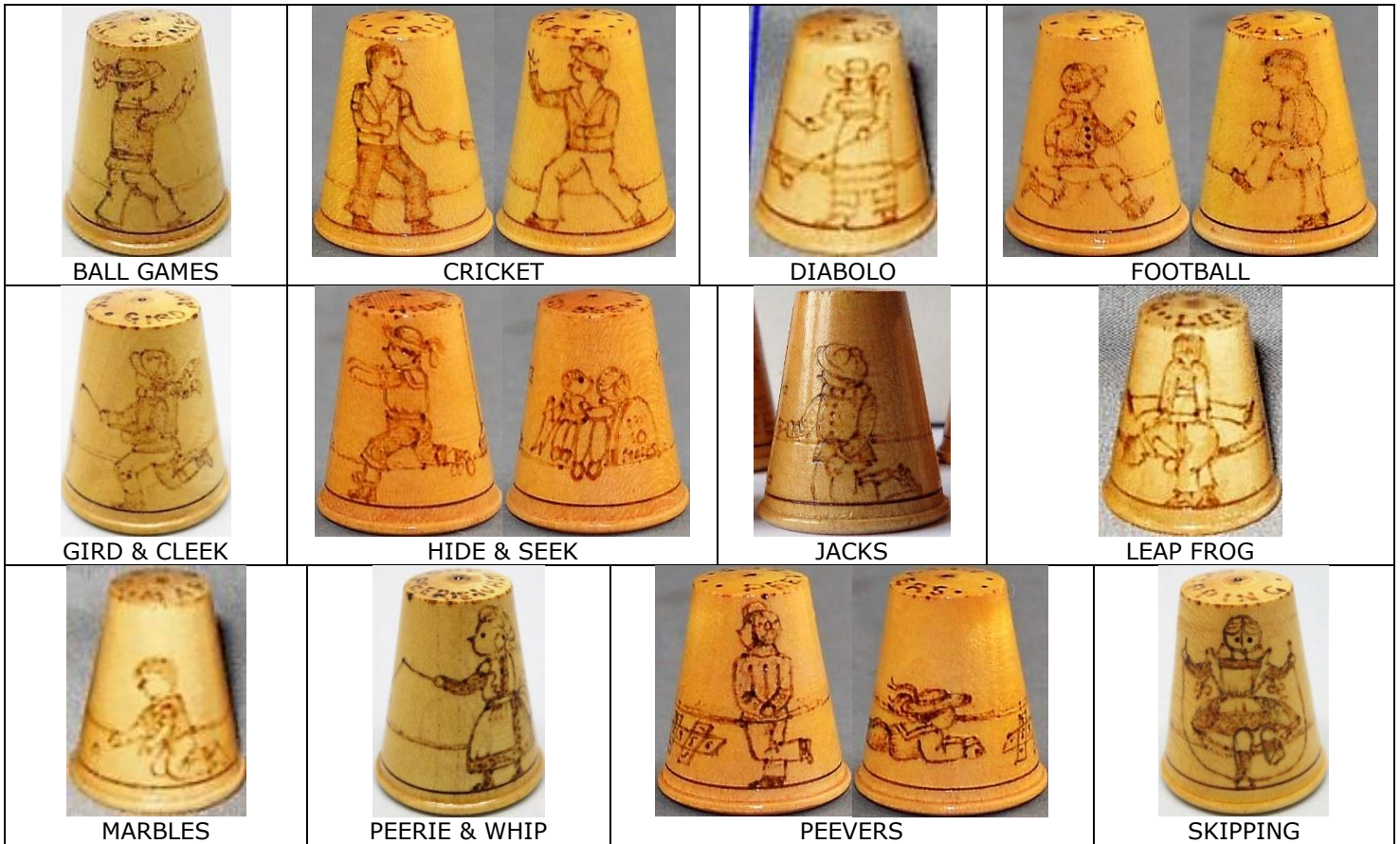
NOVEMBER



DECEMBER

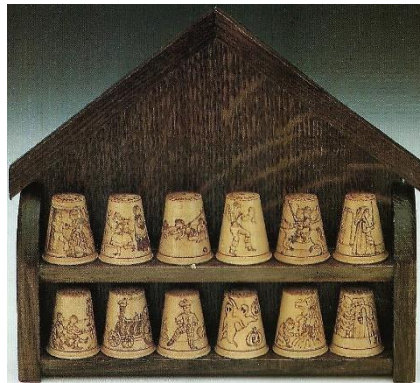


**Victorian children's street games - limited to 300**



**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. Some of the actual lettering on verso is different from catalogue's description. Do yours have different messages?



Acorn  
Health and long life



Ankh  
Lond life and prosperity



Beans  
Protects children & drives away bad influences



Bells  
Protection against all kinds of evil

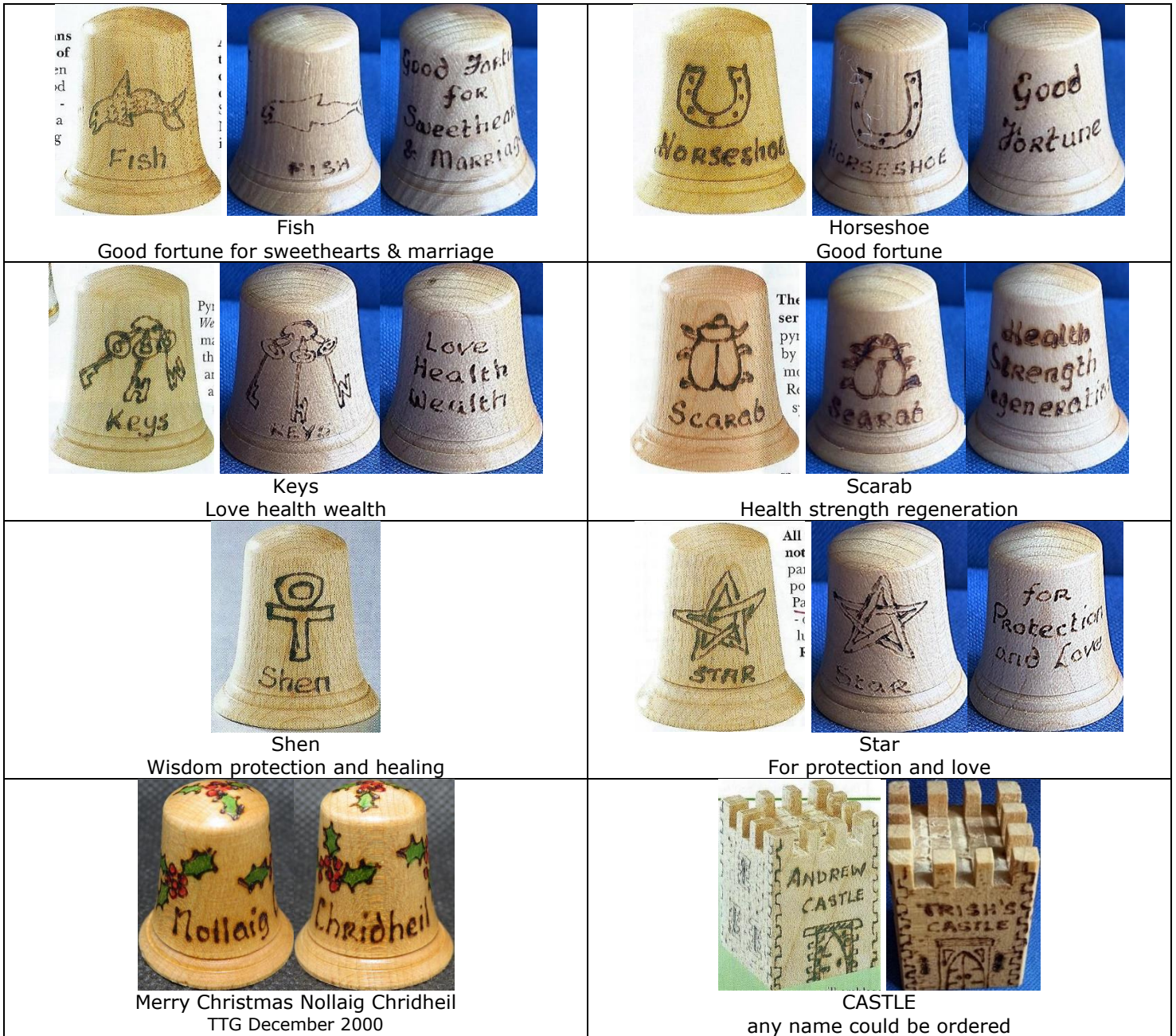


Clover  
Good fortune



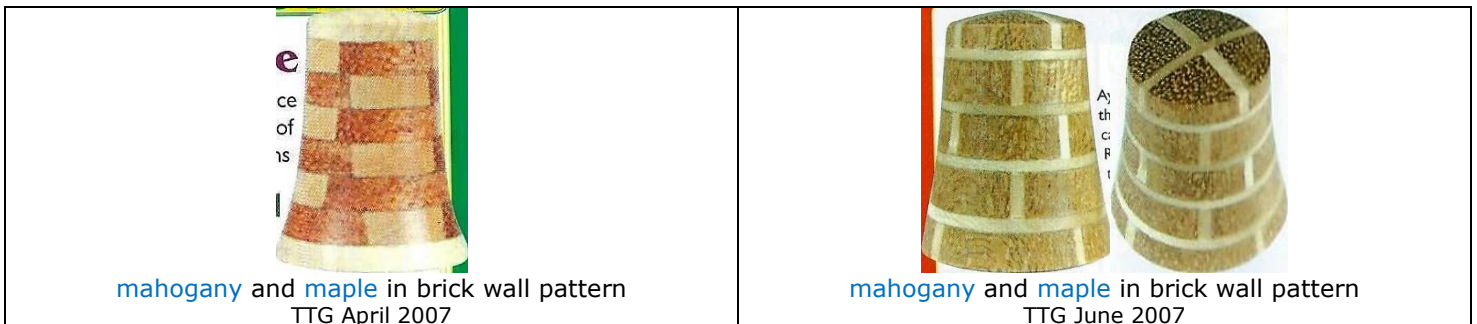
Elephant  
Success remover of obstacles





**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.



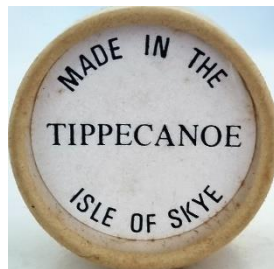


**Christine Philp – Isle of Skye 1986-1988**

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.

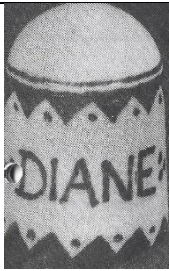
Christie was also a pyrographer – the thimble shape she chose were softly rounded and the thimble was often shaded, giving them a textured look.

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: <a href="#">tippecanoe wood</a></p>	<p>PEACE R: with additional colour TTG March 1987</p>
<p>pond life TTG February 1987 b&amp;w photo</p>	<p>Greek lettering for Aries</p>	<p>WITH LOVE with additional colour</p>

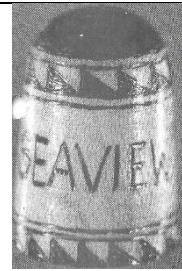




Philp would pyrograph your name  
 Nordic type design on sycamore  
 TTG December 1986  
 b&w photo



Philp would pyrograph your  
 anniversary  
 Celtic design on [sycamore](#)  
 TTG August 1987



Philp would pyrograph your home's  
 name  
 Nordic 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.

 <p>Acorn-shaped oak sterling squirrel TTG March 1989</p>	 <p>Cameo in sterling setting tulip wood maker not named TTG December 1988</p>	 <p>Cottage pyrographed</p>		
 <p>Cottage pyrographed sycamore maker named as Warrington TTG March 1988</p>			 <p>Cottage pyrographed and handpainted</p>	 <p>Cottage pyrographed and handpainted</p>
 <p>Dolphin olive wood maker not named TTG June 1989</p>	 <p>Harvest mouse mahogany mouse also available in 9ct gold maker not named TTG September 1987</p>	 <p>Bonnet pyrographed and handpainted sycamore red rose TTG October 1988</p>	 <p>Bonnet sterling rose fabric blue band TTG August 1988</p>	
 <p>Hummingbird yew maker not named TTG December 1987</p>	 <p>Owl oak TTG February 1989</p>	 <p>Pagoda pyrographed sycamore maker named as Warrington TTG March 1988</p>		





Squirrel  
London plane  
maker not named  
TTG November 1987

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## 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.

EMAIL [thimbleselect@bigpond.com](mailto:thimbleselect@bigpond.com) TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

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**February 2023**