

Spode thimbles 1976-1992

Josiah Spode founded Spode in 1776. His son, also Josiah, was responsible in 1797 for perfecting the process of adding bone ash to china clay to produce fine bone china, which is still used today as the benchmark for good china. This gives strength, whiteness and translucence to Spode china and this includes their thimbles.

Spode underwent several name changes, according to von Hoelle, until William Copeland's son [Josiah's partner] took over the company in 1833 and from 1847 the name of the firm was Copeland. This name reverted to Spode in 1970 and thimbles, amongst other merchandise, were made in Stoke-on-Trent, England of fine bone china, from 1974. Spode became part of Royal Worcester in 1986, but still produced thimbles with the Spode backstamp. Sadly, production of Spode thimbles was discontinued in 1993.

The thimbles have a recognisable shape which only varies when there is a vertical ridging of the body. There are only three of these ridged examples in their range.

Most of the apexes have a self-patterned floral design, with a slight knob at the centre; this apex is gilded on most of their thimbles, which makes Spode thimbles quite distinctive. Some commemorative Spode thimbles have apex colours matching the rest of the thimble, enriching the thimble to signify a special occasion. Some apexes tho are totally smooth.

Many of Spode's thimbles have patterns from their wider range, like their dinner services.

Maroon/magenta and blue are two traditional colours. Magenta is combined with gold and often with green for their commemorative thimbles. Some thimbles are identical except for a handpainted gold rim or the gilded apex. I have never encountered handpainted Spode thimbles - all their patterns are high quality transfers/decals. You will notice that when the design is repeated on the verso of the thimbles that the design is slightly different. When comparing your thimbles with the photos below, make sure you are looking at the matching side.

I have included the three different version of the Buttercups thimbles - same design but differing backstamps or without the gold apex :
thanks to Hans.

It is interesting to note that Spode undertook special thimble commissions. These wouldn't have been big commercial runs and of the English quality china thimble makers, Spode led the way on undertaking small commissions.

It's a real delight to find just how many commemorative thimbles have emerged, mainly from the early 1980s, since I created this topic. The commemorative thimbles commissioned for the Victorian Embroiderers' Guild of Victoria 21st anniversary was a small run of 200 thimbles.

Because the Spode thimble production was relatively limited, I have arranged their output alphabetically by subject. The subject chosen is the predominant theme on the thimble. Spode didn't often name their thimble patterns, so the naming used here is quite arbitrary, but I have used those names first used by the Thimble Society of London in 1981, when the thimbles would have been readily available.

In under 15 years of thimble production, Spode have left us a legacy of highly collectable thimbles which would make a wonderful niche collection.

Dates have been included where possible.

Why in 2018 are we still discovering previously unrecorded Spode thimbles?



apexes



boxes



backstamps

 <p>standard red Spode mark</p>	 <p>heavier red Spode mark used on ridged examples</p>	 <p>red Spode mark + number in 1982 Christmas thimbles</p>
 <p>William of Wales thimbles' gold Spode mark and lettering</p>	 <p>extra mark in Bluebell thimbles</p>	 <p>purple iris thimbles' Spode mark</p>
 <p>Christmas 1983 Spode mark</p>	 <p>Christmas 1984 Spode mark</p>	 <p>black Spode mark found in gold cherub thimbles</p>
 <p>red Spode mark with gold lettering found in gold cherub thimbles</p>		

Birds



English birds
apex 2



Tropical birds
apex 2



bird & nest
on both sides
apex 1

in 2013, a previously unrecorded version exists
where body is **ridged** with a stepped band
similar to the Spode cherubs thimbles



'Mulberry'
blue bird with blue flower on verso
apex 1



colourful bird with pink flower on verso
blue rim
apex 1

Butterflies



Butterfly
1993
apex 4b



'Dandelion Clocks and Butterflies'
or
'Butterflies and Dandelions'
apex 2
issued by Thimble Collectors Club
R: no gold band version



'Trapnell'
blue & yellow butterfly
turquoise band
apex 1



English butterflies
apex 2



tropical butterflies
apex 2

Christmas

1982-1986



1982
apex 2

the thimbles are numbered according to a letter in my possession, the 1982 & 1983 issues were 'specially produced for John Sinclair [of Sheffield] by Spode'



1983
apex 2

numbered limited to **2000**



1983
apex 2



1984
apex 2



1985
apex 2



1986
apex 2



1986
green rim
apex 4a
ironstone



undated
apex 4a
no painted rim



undated
apex 1
no painted rim

Twelve Days of Christmas

different pastel colours, all with 22ct gold decorations, lettering and apex 2
1990, issued by the Thimble Collectors Club (TCC)



lettering for each day on verso



advertised as a gift with the collection a wreath-like frame display unit resembling a holly wreath

			
a partridge in a pear tree	2 turtles doves	3 French hens	4 calling birds
			
5 gold rings	6 geese a-laying	7 swans a-swimming	8 maids a-milking
			
9 drummers drumming	10 pipers piping	11 ladies dancing	12 lords a-leaping

There is more than one version of one of this set – with apex 1 with different images altogether



2 turtles doves

L: apex 1 – R: apex 7

Commemorative

these thimbles are all dated and arranged by date of issue



250th Anniversary of Spode
1976
apex 2



Victoria Embroiderers Guild
(Australia)
1981
apex 1



**H.R.H. Prince Charles to
Lady Diana Spencer...1981
Royal Wedding**
apex 2



Visit of Pope John Paul to England
1982
apex 5



H.R.H Prince William of Wales
4 August 1982 inside
apex 8



250th Anniversary of Spode
1733-1983
apex 2



Montgolfier Brothers
bicentenary of flight
November 21st 1783-1983
special gold trefoil patterned apex
apex 3



30th anniversary of
Queen Elizabeth's Coronation
2nd June 1953-1983
apex 6



**10th Anniversary of
The Royal College of Music
1973-1983**
'Fovet musica omnes'
lettered on coat-of arms
apex 4b



**Prince Andrew to Sarah Ferguson
Royal wedding
July 23 1986**
apex 2

Country scenes

Spode traditional red & blue dinner service patterns
from hand engravings
the design wraps around the thimble
apex 2
no gold rim



'Blue Italian' - blue



'Blue Italian' - red



'Traditional' - blue



'Traditional' - red

Flowers

'The Flower of the Year'

notice the differing images on each side - neither side is dominant
issued by the Thimble Collectors Club (TCC)

1985-1992



Poppy 1985
apex 2



Buttercup 1986
apex 2
see other versions below



Bluebell 1987
apex 2



Wild Rose 1990
apex 2



Iris 1991
apex 1



Foxglove 1992
apex 1

Other flowers



Autumn

also known as **Primroses and Hyacinths**

apex 2

second version has no gold rim



'Balmoral Sprays'

apex 1



'Billingsley Rose'

1993

apex 1



Buttercup

no date

apex 2



Buttercup

no date - no gold rim

apex 1



'Campanula'

harebells

apex 1



'Country Village'

windmill garden scene

apex 2



'Marlborough Sprays'

from dinner service pattern 1915
pink or green rim
1993
apex 1



'Mikado'

red chrysanthemum
apex 1



'Mikado'

purple chrysanthemum
apex 1



'Oriental Bird'

pink peony
apex 1



'Posy' or 'Bowtie'

flowers & ribbon in a band
L: body **ridged** with a stepped band
R: smooth
apex 1



'Spring Clover'

apex 1



'Spring flowers'

tulip with ribbon
apex 2



'Summer Meadow'
 buttercup
 1980
 apex 1

Special commissions

these are not commemorative thimbles as they are not dated



**'Ladies Circle
 Great Britain & Ireland'**
 the Round Table emblem
 limited to **500**
 L: apex 2 – R: no emblem on verso



'Melton Mowbray'
 this scene shows the local church &
 The Anne of Cleves public house
 apex 2



'NALC 50'
 National Association of Ladies Circles
 apex 2
 limited to **1000**



'Skegness'
 The Jolly Fisherman
 this poster figure has become the emblem of the
 town
 bright primary colours
 apex 2



'Merchant Taylors' Company'
 L: apex 8 – R: apex 1 – no upper gold rim
 see the same design (1989) by Halcyon Days in Modern British enamelled thimbles topic

Tradesmen/Craftsmen

the trade or craft depicted has a corresponding symbol for the trade on the verso
apex 2 with monochrome brown designs

How many are in the set? Is this their correct title?

this Spode topic is 12 years old – and in August 2016, this is the first time that I have encountered these thimbles



'Cooper'
barrel



'Farrier'
horse shoe

Treasures of the Orient

design wraps around the thimble
apex 2

thimbles lettered inside in corresponding colour
issued by the Thimble Collectors Club (TCC)
1987



'Arita'



'Bamboo'



'Cairo'



'Chinese garden'



'Dragons'

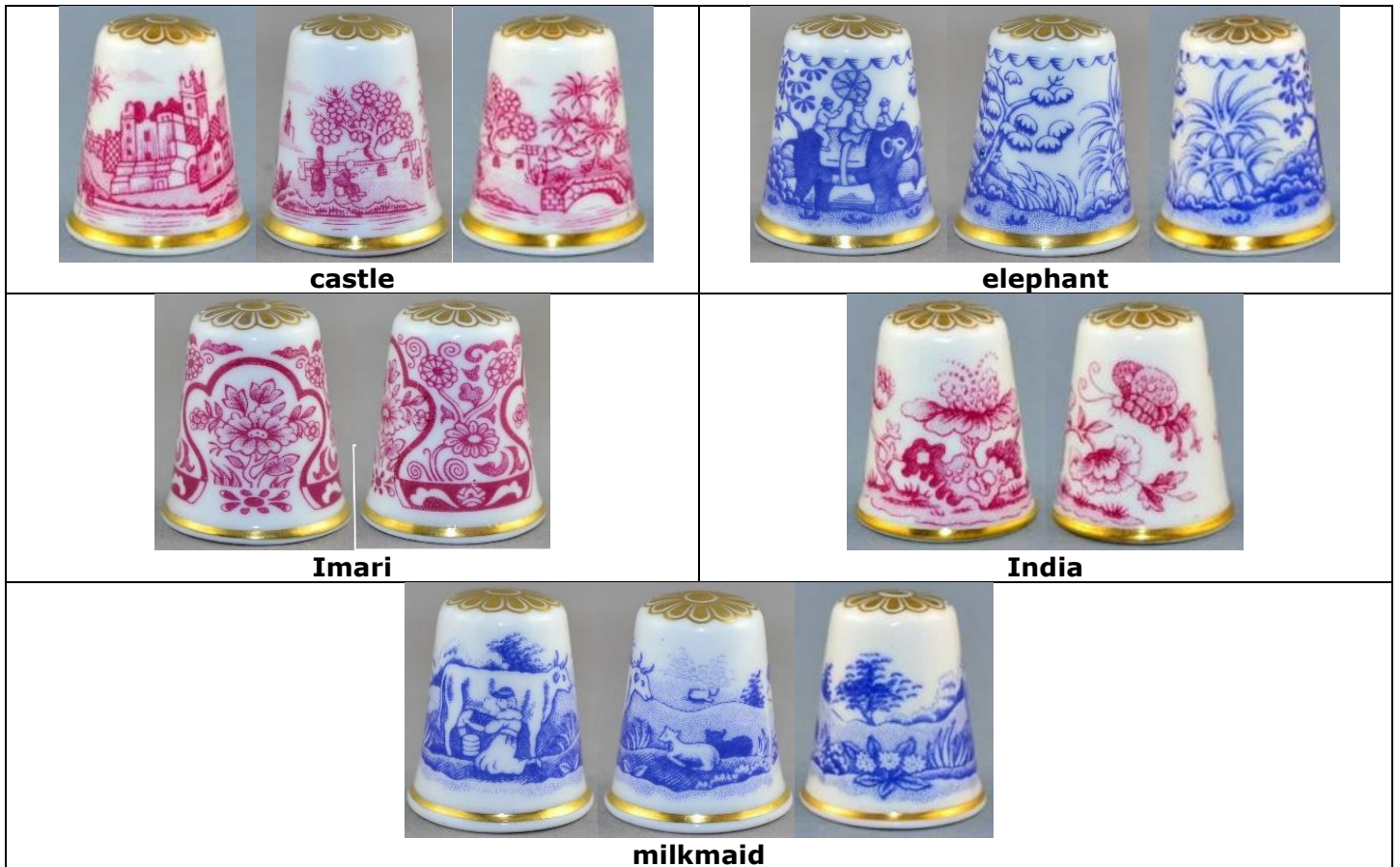


'Flying pennant'



250th anniversary of Spode

the accompanying paperwork states this set was made to celebrate the Spode 250th anniversary
the thimbles aren't marked with this date or a name
limited to **1000** sets
apex 2
1976





willow pattern
with and without gold rim

Other



Couples
in two cameos
apex 2



Cupids or cherubs pair
white and turquoise bands
note that the body is **ridged** with a stepped band
apex 2
1977



Floral girls
four scenes
apex 2



'Girl at Well'
Franklin Mint's Porcelain Houses of the
World
1980
from set of 25
apex 1



**Hallmarked Thimbles of the World's Great
Porcelain Houses**
1985
apex 2
from set of 50



Kite flying
trailing ivy on verso
apex 2



Painting
apex 2



Palms
in two cameos
apex 2



Trade Winds – a Sailing ship
monochrome black with stylised waves
in rows at rim
apex 2



Umbrella girls
four scenes
apex 2



The Woodman
apex 2
no gold rim
does this belong in a series?



Yorkshire rose
apex 2
does this belong in a series?

References

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Contributors

Linda Bennett | Marta Valencia Betran | Joanna Blackie-Sew Many Bits | Pawel Brzyski | Sue Christensen
Val de Vries | Betty Gerrits | Elaine Graveston | Linda Heggs | Margaret Hickling | Sue Hood | Mary Jasso
Doreen Lilley-Pricklepin | Rosie Mladenovic | Pat Morris | Joyce Nixon-Smith | David Pantland | Wanda Ralston
Kellie Schultz | Marina Shcherbatyuk | Sharon Underwood | Hans-Ulrich Vogel | | Rosalie Webb | Mave Wisikin
Jenny Yuhas

This listing of Spode 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 TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

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