

George Goodman (GG) and Gomme (G'S) sterling silver thimbles Birmingham England

Ever since I began collecting thimbles in 1984, I have been fascinated by the maker's marks found with the assay marks on British sterling silver thimbles. Thimbles by these two men who both worked in Birmingham, the Gomme thimbles appeared in the late 1920s, Goodman from the mid-1880s, they have another link in common: both have thimbles still in existence from 100 years ago.

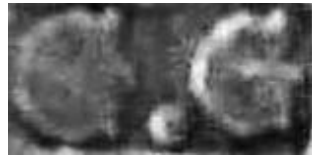
According to Holmes, there would have been over one hundred names associated with thimble making in Britain during the nineteenth century: the most of those weren't engaged in thimble making: their maker's marks are recorded.

I always try to find as many examples of thimble maker's thimbles to form a repository – to give me a yardstick to make my observations, which I will share here with you.

George Goodman

George Goodman who operated at 22 Carolyn Street in Birmingham was not a thimble maker. He operated as a factor or wholesaler. Goodman was a pin-maker and a jewellery and hair curler manufacturer. His business was in the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter, so he was surrounded by thimble makers.

A small collection of thimbles have his 'maker's' initials of GG: the he never made a thimble. His mark was registered at the Birmingham assay office in 1885.



Henry Griffith & Sons (HG&S), James Fenton (JF) and Henry Fowler (HF) are the GG Birmingham thimble makers. Their thimble patterns are well established and recognisable.

I find it a bit surprising that Goodman sought out Charles Horner to create thimbles with his GG marks as Horner was based in Halifax. CH registered Goodman's mark in Chester in 1894. In the 1992 Holmes article he does include GG as one of the Chester maker's names.

The only thing that unifies this small output of thimble patterns is the thimble size numbering on the bands of his thimbles. He has chosen to have his own sizing applied to most of his thimbles – the sizing doesn't match those found on CH, HG&S or JF thimbles.

The GG size numbers are stamped separately: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and more often than not to the left of the assay marks. The only diameter I have is for size 4, which is 15mm.

My son was a teenager when he bought me my first Goodman thimble. It's still a firm favourite thirty years later.



Birmingham 1885/1891



Birmingham 1887



Birmingham 1887/1888/1897
C: #2 - lettered on verso - R: #3



Birmingham 1892/1897/1898 1901/1902
R: #2



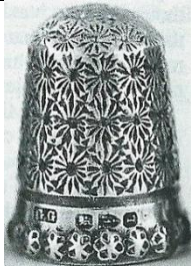
Chester 1893 #5



Chester 1894 #1



Chester 1894
panelled



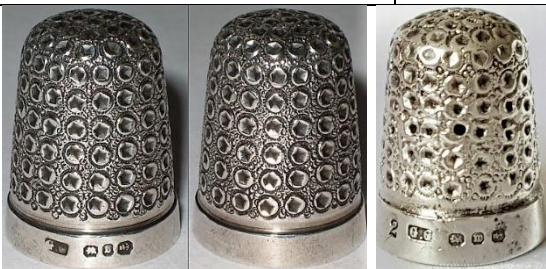
Chester 1894



Chester 1895 #4
panelled



Chester 1895 #6



Birmingham 1895/1896 R: #2
blackberry



Chester 1896 #4



Chester 1896 #2, 6
gold heart & ivy leaves



Birmingham 1897
Greek key band



Birmingham 1897



Birmingham 1897 #3
blackberry



Birmingham 1898



Birmingham 1899 #4
blackberry



Birmingham 1899 #5



Birmingham 1900
celluloid lining



Birmingham 1900
blackberry panel



Birmingham 1901 #4 (15mm)



Birmingham 1901 #4
blackberry & Greek key



Birmingham 1901



Birmingham 1903/1912



Birmingham 1904 #3



Birmingham 1904 #4
with Henry Fowler's RD297020
mark



Birmingham 1905
Greek key band



Birmingham 1915



Birmingham 1916 #3 (lettered on verso)



Chester #3
no assay marks

Gomms

Many thimble collectors will be familiar with the name of Birmingham thimble makers Charles Iles. This company lasted from 1851 to 1990 making base metal thimbles. They never produced silver thimbles.

In 1927 Charles Iles acquired Gomms. According to Holmes (1985) they were in the electroplate and souvenir business, which would add diversity to the company's activities. Their thimble business name was changed to Charles Iles & Gomms Ltd (known in the thimble world as Iles & Gomms) in 1947, which was in use until they ceased making thimbles in 1990.

I was made aware of a maker's mark for Gomms just before attending the TCI Convention in 2012 where I was very fortunate to recognise this new mark and purchase a Gomms sterling silver thimble. It was a thimble pattern that I was familiar with as it reminded me of the base metal thimbles designs used by Charles Iles.

The maker's mark is distinctive for those familiar with British makers' marks: the upper comma or apostrophe that is part of the Gomms mark makes it distinctive. I haven't encountered any other marks like this to date on thimbles.



In April 2005 I created a topic British sterling silver placename thimbles. Imagine my delight to discover a previously unidentified G'S mark on several of the placename thimbles in the existing topic.

The thimbles are distinctive enough from the Henry Griffith & Sons placename thimbles.

The Gomms placename is lettered in a smaller font. They are all plainly indented thimbles. There are two dates of 1930 and 1931 found on the Gomms placename thimbles, which was largely later than the HG&S placenames. Gomms would have continued making their sterling thimbles during the transition to the merger or takeover by Iles.

Gomms workshop was located at 138 Highgate Street in Birmingham. They registered their maker's mark at the Birmingham assay office in 1927. I have found his thimbles for 1928-1931. A much shorter period than Goodman.



1928



1929



1930
'FROM BLACKPOOL' in large letters



1930
'FROM LLANDUDNO' in large letters



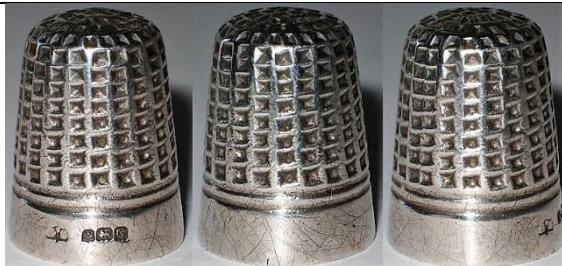
1930
'FROM LONDON' in large letters



1930
'FROM LLANDUDNO' in smaller letters



1930
plain
housed in an Iles handpainted celluloid thimble box



1931
diamond



1931
'BOURNEMOUTH'



1931 'BRIGHTON'



1931
'EASTBOURNE'



1931
'ILFRACOMBE'

no photo

1931
'SKEGNESS'



1931
'SOUTHPORT'



1939 #5



'RHYL'
gadget thimble with an attached threader

References

Edwin Holmes *A history of thimbles*. 1985
Edwin Holmes *Makers' marks found in Chester hallmarked silver thimbles* Thimble Notes and Queries no.14, 1992

Contributors

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This listing of George Goodman and Gomms 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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