

# Thimbles made from unusual materials

These thimbles were created for the collectables market – created mainly in 1980s and 1990s. There must have been a big demand for thimbles made of different materials for such a huge number created. There are still thimble collectors today who specialise in the unusual materials range.

I knew of the popular types of material like stone thimbles or those crocheted from cotton – the papier mâché from the Philippines. Once I started to find photos for this topic, I was stunned – there are thimbles from close to 100 different and unusual materials. 1% of them were created in the late 1800s and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century: gutta percha, tortoiseshell (no apologies for including John Piercy's thimbles here) and vulcanite.

Some of the materials used were quite fragile, so unable to retain their thimble shape. In this instance they were placed over metal, wood or plastic thimbles (like beaded thimbles). Some were made to be used for the purpose created – like leather thimbles. I have made it clear under the specific materials, the thimbles that are not included within the scope of this topic.

Clever craftsmen created some of these thimbles to be able to exchange their thimbles with other collectors  
(Yvonne Winspear of Australia)

I have attempted to list the materials in the following order within each group: maker, then country of origin and then the rest where neither of the above is known.

I have included as many catalogue references as I can find to help with the year they were made, using the following abbreviations:

CC – Collectors Circle (New York)  
Fel – Feldman (Germany)  
Gim – Gimbels (Maine)  
KS – De vingerhoed (Netherlands)  
PJW – PJ Walter (Germany)  
TCI – Thimble Collectors International Bulletin (USA)  
TTG – The Thimble Guild (Scotland)  
TO – Thimbles Only (Jean Shoup USA)  
TSL – Thimble Society of London  
VH – John von Hoelle  
VN – Vingerhoednieuws (Netherlands)

For similar topics see

Bog oak thimbles  
Glass thimbles  
Horn and bone thimbles  
Ivory thimbles  
Jenny Blair Designs' thimbles

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## abalone



## acetate



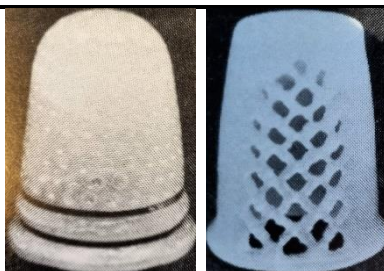
France  
mother of pearl style

## alabaster

see also: lavender alabaster - pink alabaster – strawberry alabaster



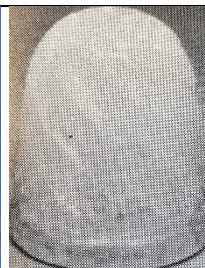
MR  
handpainted



Philadelphia USA  
John von Hoelle  
L: gold bands  
VH 13-14  
b&w photo



Argentina



Italy



Italy  
decals  
TTG July 1991



Penzance UK

**amber**  
fossilised pine resin from Russia

			
Germany Birgit Lux TTG October 1990	Germany Fel 2 1987 b&w photo	Germany Fel 16 1991	
			
Germany	Philadelphia USA <u>John von Hoelle</u> VH 15 b&w photo	Poland VN 2009	Poland VN 2009
			
South Africa amber bead ivory apex VN 2001	VN 2004	VN 1996	mammoth tooth elephant carving atop

**amethyst**

 <p>India carved lotus limited to <b>50</b> TTG March 1990</p>
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## aventurine



India  
L: blue – R: green  
carved lotus  
limited to **50**  
TTG March 1990

## bamboo



China  
TTG March 1991



India  
VH 1178, 1180  
b&w photo



Philippines

## bark



Healesville Australia  
Michael Morris  
1989



Melbourne Australia  
Ann Shuttleworth  
salmon gum bark with  
paperbark apex  
over metal thimble  
1990



Sydney Australia  
Yvonne Winspear  
handpainted paperbark  
over leatherwood  
TTG January 1987



Australia  
plaited



## beads



Egypt  
Randa Ahmet Unique Design





Bellevue WA USA  
Bead Loom Gallery  
 includes Swarovski crystals  
 several made as British royal commemoratives



Canada  
Olga Bushkova  
 over metal thimble  
 2010-





Russia  
Olga Malyshkina  
 over plastic thimbles  
 2003



Japan  
Miyuki





Mexico  
Nicholas and Adolina  
 over ceramic  
 TCI winter 2013



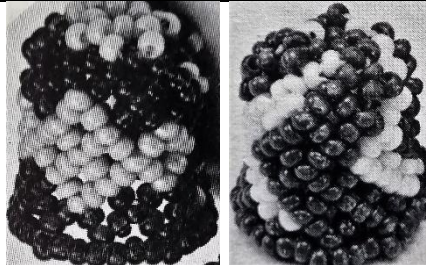
Sarah Lee Parker  
 mainly open-topped  
 L: over metal thimble



USA  
Janet Pitts  
 Bee – Twin Towers 9-11-01 – candy cane – butterfly – black birds – palms stag - masks  
 beads glued onto wooden thimbles



Coventry UK  
Jacqui Walker  
 L: limited to **195**  
 L: TTG January 1989



Denmark  
 KS June 1985  
 b&w photos



Kenya  
 TTG September 2005





Russia

over wood

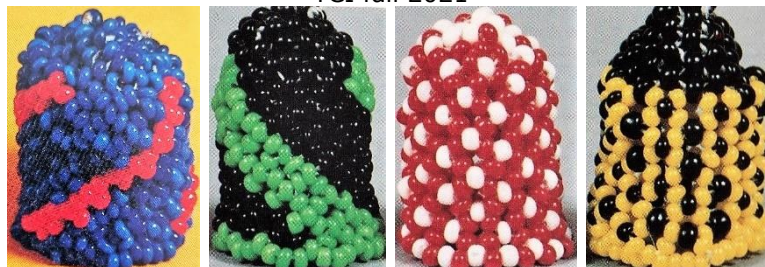
bottom R: rainbow colours limited to **250**  
some Matruschka-shaped  
TTG 1998-2001 – VN 2006-2009



South Africa

using galvanised wire

TCI fall 2021



South Africa

Fel 12 1990 - VN 1994





South Africa  
Zulu beads



unknown makers

### bear claw quartz



Argentina  
Sewing Corner 1978

### black marble



UK  
Caroline and John Smith  
marble from Belgium  
TTG June 1988



Taiwan  
Sewing Corner 1978



VN 2001

### black onyx



India  
carved lotus  
limited to **50**  
TTG March 1990

### blue onyx



Argentina  
Juan Arrieta Quiroga

### Blu Tack

commercial putty-like adhesive



Brisbane Australia  
Sandra Menger  
'Thimbles of Australia Sue Gowan 1998'

### brick



UK  
house brick  
limited to **750**  
TTG August 1991

### calabash



Argentina

## carrot



Finland  
VN 67 2001



Finland  
VN 77 2003

## chalk



UK  
Kingmaker  
bonded resin  
TTG September 1986

## coal



Wales  
Kingmaker  
bonded resin

L: miner (plain and handpainted) – pithead commemorating the end of the 1985 miner's strike  
(plain and handpainted limited to **3500**)  
TTG 1985



West Virginia USA  
compressed  
TO 1980-1983 – VH174



## coconut shell



Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil

AP

late 19<sup>th</sup> century

maker's initials on apex

18ct gold apex and clouté studs in a ring

R: carved simple fleur de lis pattern by local women



Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil

late 19<sup>th</sup> century

18ct gold apex and clouté studs in two rings



Egypt

Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Philippines  
over metal thimble  
TTG March 1996

## concrete



UK  
Christine and John Smith  
 created from old pavement  
 TTG September 1989

## coral



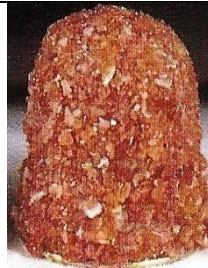
France  
 carved  
 19<sup>th</sup> century  
 Christies 1995 117



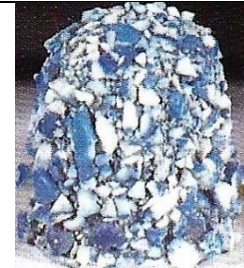
Philippines  
 etched  
 TO 1984 - VH



Thailand  
 TTG June 1988



pink coral Great Barrier Reef  
 over metal  
 TTG April 1988



blue coral Indian Ocean  
 over metal  
 TTG April 1988



over metal

## cork

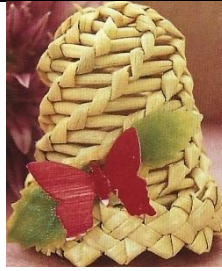


## corn

plaited after the style of corn dollies



UK  
Betty Blackwood  
TTG June 1985

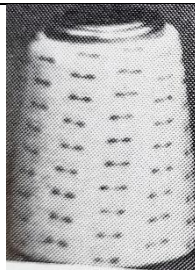


UK  
Mrs Horsfall  
butterfly  
limited to **250**  
TTG October 1998



UK  
flowers

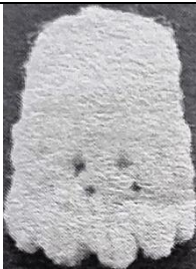
## corncob



USA  
brass apex  
VH 1177  
b&w photo

## cotton

thimbles are created of crochet, tatting, knitting or lacemaking. They were usually stiffened with sugar water or starch. Many are embellished with beads and ribbon  
see also: silk



Connecticut USA  
Edith Archibald  
crochet  
TO 1984



Toowoomba Australia  
Beryl  
crochet



Melbourne Australia  
Joan Blaney  
crochet



UK  
Vilma Buck  
crochet



Brisbane Australia  
Kay Collins  
tatting



South Africa  
Gili Davis  
crochet





Elena Dickson  
lace over wood



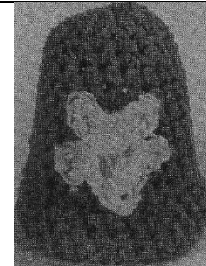
Perth Australia  
Betty Dutschke  
crochet



Finland  
Irja Helsila  
tatting



Kilcoy Australia  
Margaret Hickling  
tatting



UK  
Lynne Hutchings  
crochet  
limited to **250**  
TTG May 1986  
b&w photo



Perth Australia  
Barbara Martin  
sewing



Brisbane Australia  
Sandra Menger  
crochet

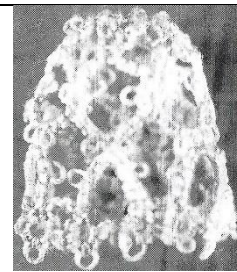


Mexico  
Nicholas and Adolina  
over moulded plastic  
TCI winter 2013





USA  
Florence Regan  
crochet, some with crossstitch  
Gim 1996



UK  
Christine Ross  
tattling  
limited to **200**  
TTG May 1987  
b&w photo



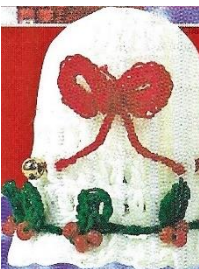
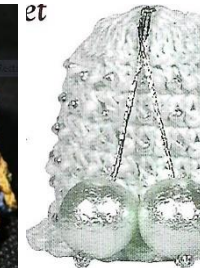
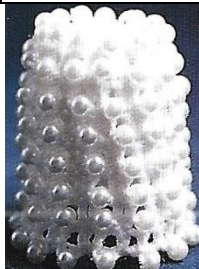
USA  
Doris E Shaw  
crochet



Melbourne Australia  
Ann Shuttleworth  
crochet



Netherlands  
Miep van Eijk  
crochet  
TTG November 1983  
b&w photo







Coventry UK  
Jacqui (Jacqueline) Walker  
 crochet

find those commemorating Armistice, Olympics and a chair shape  
 mostly no limited numbers available but the limited editions range from **75** to **300**



TTG from March 1985-2005



California USA

Chris Weber

crochet

TO 2007 - 2007 - 1984



UK

Cathy Whithead

crochet

limited to **250**

TTG May 1991



USA



unknown makers

## Deliciosa Monstera



Perth Australia

Barbara Martin

stitched dried calyx

## fabric



USA  
Status Thimble  
 kit to create this stitched fabric



Argentina  
 made from woven cloth

## feathers



handpainted feathers over plastic  
Marina Nestorova  
 VN 67 2001



handpainted feathers over brass  
Marina Nestorova

## felt



Brisbane Australia  
Tricia Smout



**FIMO**  
commercial modelling clay



Benoni South Africa  
Tessa Browne



Empangeni South Africa  
Wendy Seymour



South Africa  
metal thimble

**fish skin**



Quebec Canada  
Les Cuirs Fins de la Mer



Scotland  
dyed fish scale over wood



Scotland  
salmon  
over brass or metal  
TCI September 1989 – TTG July  
1990

**fossils**



UK  
Pinpoint Design  
(later name used by Christine and John Smith)  
limestone  
TTG May 1993

**granite**



UK  
Caroline and John Smith  
Berlin Wall - Italian granorosa - Russian pink yemel  
C - R : TTG February 1988 - TTG October 1991

### grass

see also: raffia, straw



Robyn  
basketry

### green marble



UK  
Christine and John Smith  
marble from Portugal  
limited to **200**  
TTG December 1988



Taiwan  
Sewing Corner 1978

### gumnut



Australia

### gutta percha

Rubber-like material discovered in 1843. Palaquium trees from Malaysia and Borneo  
It is brittle and lightweight. It was used as mourning jewellery as well as jet



TCI winter 2021



## haematite



## heather

the roots are picked, dried, dyed, blocked, compressed, glued, turned and lacquered. First made into thimbles in 1980. Thimbles ceased by 2004



Pitlochry Scotland  
Hugh Kerr of Heathergems  
no two alike



Pitlochry Scotland  
Hugh Kerr of Heathergems  
metal rims



Pitlochry Scotland  
Hugh Kerr of Heathergems  
thistle-shaped

## Helsinkiitti



Helsinki Finland  
Pekka Kiviluoto  
1990

## horse hair



Arizona USA  
Donna Mendoz  
TCI spring 2001  
b&w photo



Arizona USA  
Leona Antone  
TCI spring 2001  
b&w photo



Arizona USA  
Linda Hendricks  
TCI spring 2001  
b&w photo



## jade

many jade thimbles are made with toppers – they are not included



Pilbara Australia



Bergenland Austria  
Fel 7 1988  
b&w photo



Austria  
mini size



Canada  
with a maple leaf etched



China  
Handpainted  
TTG 2003 set of six animals – TTG 2002 cats





China  
carved  
TO 1983



India  
lower R: chang san crystal jade  
limited to **50**

TTG March 1990 - CC 1978 - PJW 85-6 - VN 74 2000



Portugal  
VN 92 2007



Taiwan



Turkey  
handpainted  
TTG April 1989



## Jersey cabbage stalk



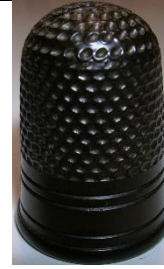
UK

## jet

jet was used as mourning jewellery, replacing vulcanite and gutta percha



Missouri USA  
Brad Elfrink Elvenkrafte Studios  
thistle  
with Siberian horn apex



Whitby UK



Whitby UK  
carved  
carved cottage -cathedral – toadstools

## kangaroo skin



Sydney Australia  
Yvonne Winspear  
brass kangaroo on boomerang pin  
1983  
TTG May 1984

## Kisii stone

mined by the Kenyan tribe of the same name



Kenya

L>R: handpainted figure - handpainted giraffe - leather rim - representing cheetah, giraffe, python  
TTG 1991 - 1994

## lapis lazuli



Argentina

Juan Arrieta Quiroga

R: with rhodochrosite



Pakistan

VN 92 1999



Portugal

CC 1978



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

## lavender alabaster



Italy

handpainted violet



## leather

see also: Canadian leather thimbles topic



Birch



Clover  
L: tailor's



Egypt  
Randa Ahmet Unique Design  
L: over plastic



R Reidler



New Lanark Scotland  
Ronnie Parker  
'Easter 1984



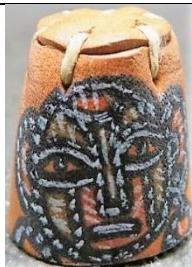
Brisbane Australia  
Sandra Menger



Sydney Australia  
Yvonne Wisnpear  
handpainted chamois over wood  
beads on apex  
'1788-1988'  
limited to **100**  
TTG July 1988



India  
VH 648  
b&w photo



Kenya



South Africa



UK  
over wood



Thailand  
L: tailor's – R: tall for use with long fingernails





unknown country of origin



sailor's palms  
with various metal pushers

### Lucite

Gimbels used the term acrylic



USA

Davy Jones Locker

imbedded starfish and seahorse and seashells

limited to **250**

Gim 1990 – Sewing Corner 1976



## malachite



Argentina



Egypt

Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Phalaborwa South Africa  
John van der Westhuizen



Gim 1990

## marble

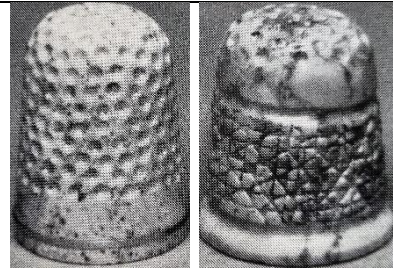
see also: black marble – green marble – pink marble



UK

Christine and John Smith

L>R: marble of chips from around the world –  
Carrara Italy – creamy  
two at R limited to **250**  
TTG May 1989 – January 1989 – December 1988



Philadelphia USA

John von Hoelle

VH 1088-89

b&w photos



Barossa Australia



Taiwan

Sewing Corner 1978



VN 64 2001 – Gim 1983

## meerschaum

This lightweight mineral, sepiolite, is a lightweight claylike material. It floats on water and this gives its name sea foam (direct translation from German word meerschaum)



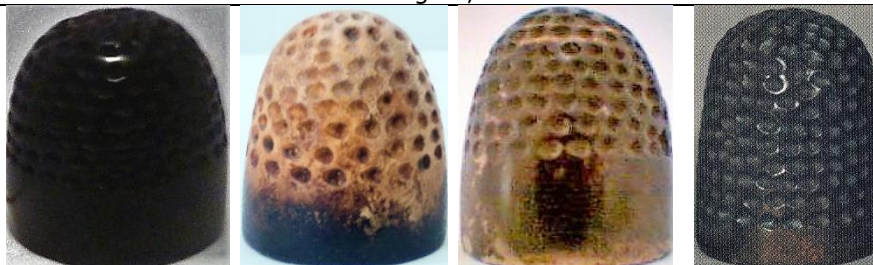
Turkiye  
Mustafa  
handcarved

TTG November 1989 - VN 96 2008



Istanbul Turkiye  
Sinan Atilla  
handcarved

two L: TTG August, October 2009



South Africa  
baked Tanzanian meerschaum  
Fel 20 1992





Tanzania  
VN 46 1998



Turkiye  
handcarved  
top L: gold band  
3rd L: brass apex  
bottom R: 'Türkiye'

four R: VN, 1996, 1998, 2007 – Gim 1997 – VH665

### nundoorite



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

## onyx

see also: black onyx – blue onyx



Argentina  
Juan Arrieta Quiroga  
with rhodochrosite



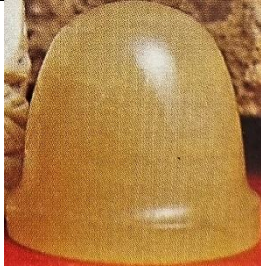
Mendoza Argentina  
Sewing Corner 1976



India  
carved lotus  
limited to **50**  
TTG March 1990



Karachi Pakistan



Scotland  
Gem Rock Museum  
TO 1993



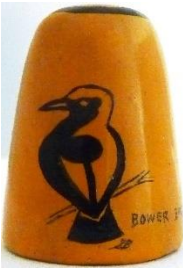
## paper



Argentina

## papier mâché

flour, salt and water are added to rice paper pulp







A collection of 18 hand-painted ceramic thimbles arranged in three rows. The designs include various animals like birds, owls, butterflies, cats, and deer, as well as floral and abstract patterns. The thimbles are made of different colored ceramic, including green, yellow, blue, and dark brown.









Kashmir India  
handpainted and lacquered in small batches by small family businesses  
all black-lacquered inside  
TTG 1988-2001 - TO 1983-2007 - Gim 1980-1082 - PJW 85-6 - VH714



Japan  
TO 1983



Japan



Russia  
signed in cyrillic



Thailand



USA

## paua shell



Mooloolaba Australia  
over plastic thimble



New Zealand  
set mainly in Perspex or resin  
L: silver kiwi – bottom R: over wood



Philippines

## peat



UK  
handpainted The Lindow man  
bonded in resin  
TTG July 1997



## picture jasper



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

## pink marble



MR  
handpainted



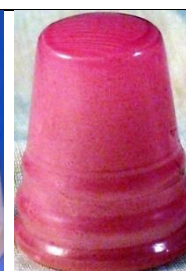
UK  
Christine and John Smith  
limited to **200**  
marble sourced from Portugal



Turkey  
handpainted



handpainted



## plastic



Ecuador  
carved L: Andes and train  
TTG February 2002

### plum slate



Llanberis North Wales UK  
Christine and John Smith (Guild members)  
limited to **250**  
TTG January 1988

### pumpkin skin



Argentina  
carved by Toba peoples  
TCI spring 2013

### pyrophyllite



Swakopmund Namibia  
L: 'Swakopmund'

### raffia

see also: grass, straw



Coventry UK  
Jacqui Walker  
TGG April 1984  
b&w photo



### red agate



India  
limited to **50**  
TTG March 1990

### resin stone



over plastic

### rhodochrosite



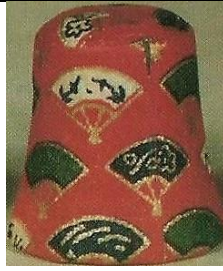
Argentina  
L: Sewing Corner 1976

### rhodonite



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia  
1990

### rice paper



Japan  
limited to **350**  
TTG September 1987

### rice stalks



Philippines  
R: Fel 13 1990

### rose quartz



Pakistan  
VN 99 2009

### rosso Alicante



UK  
Pinpoint Design  
(name used by Christine and John Smith)  
stone sourced from Spain  
limited to **300**  
TTG September 1988



## rosso Bilbao



UK

Christine and John Smith

stone sourced from Spain by these Guild members  
limited to **250**  
TTG April 1989

## rubber



California USA  
Good Stuf  
needle grabber



USA  
The Bionic Finger



clerk's



clerk's

## salmon stone



Philippines  
brass band  
Gim April 1984

## sand

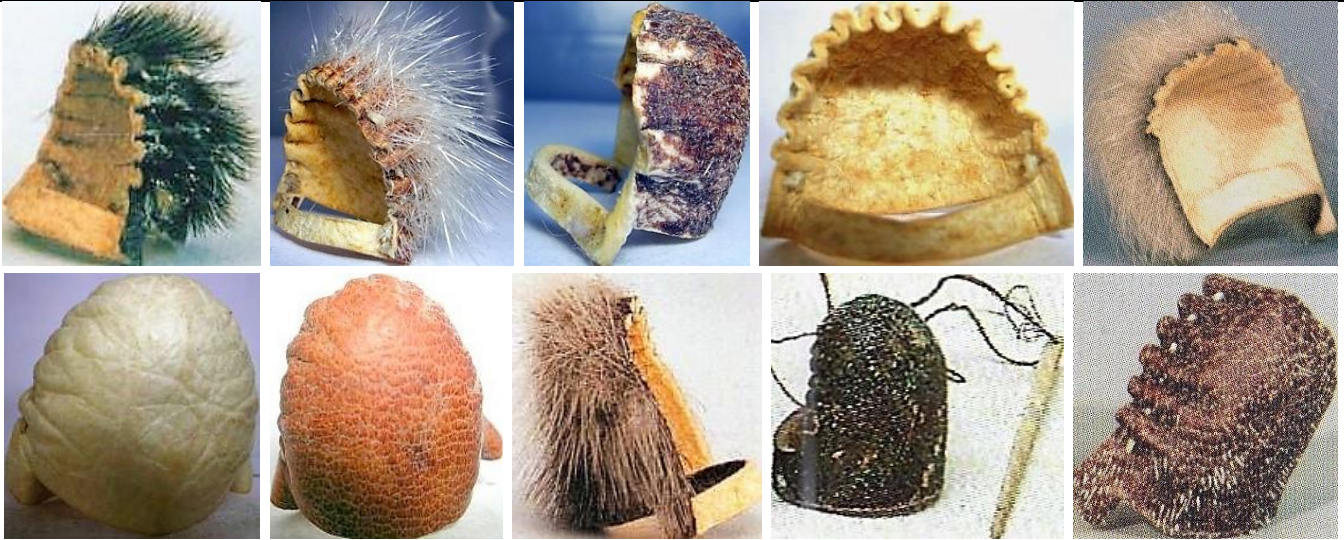


Ryedale UK  
Tony Barnes  
sand from Gulf War  
TTG April 1991



sand from Gulf War  
TTG April 1992

## seal skin



Alaska USA  
handmade by indigenous peoples

## serpentine



UK  
Christine and Dave Smith  
Cornish serpentine  
limited to **500**  
TTG April 1988



South Africa  
Tswana Products  
etched giraffe



South Africa

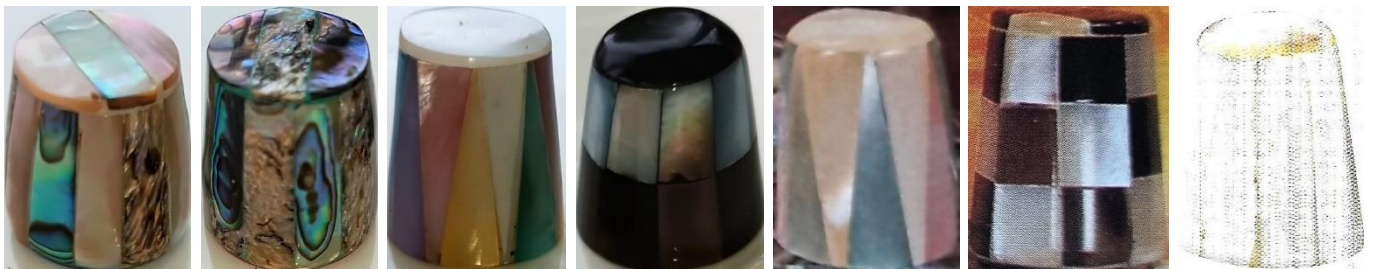


## shell

Mexican shell over alpaca thimbles are outside the scope of this study  
see also: named shell ie coral



Mooloolaba Australia  
over plastic thimble





Philippines  
shell applied over metal thimbles or moulded plaster-of-Paris  
shell in form of chips or slices  
TTG 1988-2001 – TO 1983-1993 – VH995-997



Thailand  
TTG August 2001

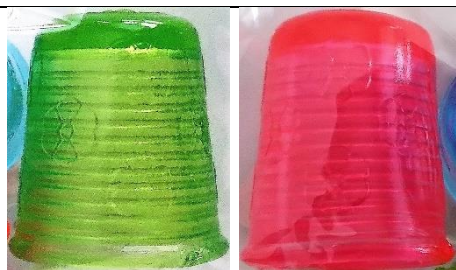
## shingle



UK  
shingle collected from Criccieth beach North Wales



## silicone



China  
SewSweet  
daisy shapes pressed into thimble



Sonic  
nail-shaped



China  
daisy shapes



## silk

see also: cotton - fabric



Japan  
Syuku Otsu



Japan  
Quilt-Yui



Melbourne Australia  
Ann Shuttleworth  
weaving



Sydney Australia  
Yvonne Winspear  
wattle



Victoria Australia





Japan

these ring silk thimbles are known as yubinuki  
handmade, they are lined with fabric usually with a cardboard lining







Chuncheon Korea

handmade, with silk stitches on silk or felt (some are quite crudely stitched)

known as kolmi

small opening at tip for fingernail

KS 9 1987 - Sewing Corner 1978 - TTG July 2004 - TO 1984 - VH 1000-1002 - Fel 10 1989



## slate

see also: plum slate



Wales  
Kingmaker  
handpainted 'Snowdon'  
bonded with resin  
TTG February 1986



Wales  
Christine and Dave Smith  
TTG August 1987



Westmoreland UK  
Christine and Dave Smith  
limited to **500**  
TTG November 1987

## snake skin



Texas rattlesnake  
over wood  
TTG June 1991 – Feb 18 1991

## soapstone



Scotland  
Gem Rock Museum



USA  
Parson Hayes  
Sewing Corner 1978



South Africa  
etched zebra



India  
TTG October 1989 – Gim 1997 – TTG March 1994

## stone

see also: named stones ie jade



Egypt

Randa Ahmet – Unique Design



Argentina

Juan Arrieta Quiroga



Argentina

Martin Arrieta Quiroga



South Africa  
Susanne Rens



UK

Christine and John Smith  
stone sourced from EuroDisney  
limited to **475**  
TTG September 1992



UK

Christine and John Smith  
stone sourced from The Thistle  
Mill Biggar Scotland  
TTG September 1991





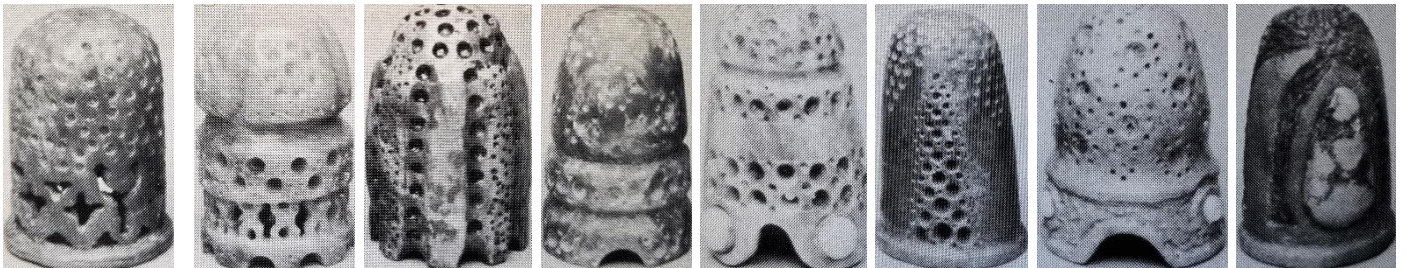
Argentina



Canada  
indigenous peoples  
VH 325-6



China  
Fel 17 1991



India



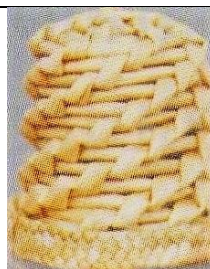
unknown country of origin  
R: commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

### **straw**

see also: grass, raffia



Paraguay



VN 57 1999 VN 93 2007



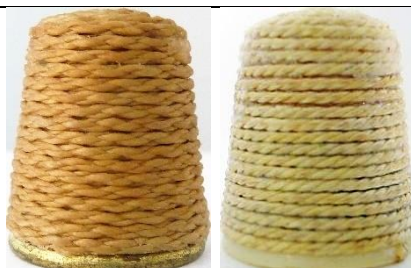
### **strawberry alabaster**



Colorado USA  
TTG July 1991

### **string**

see also: Jacqui and David Parker of Olivia thimbles topic



Sydney Australia  
Yvonne Winspear  
L: wound over brass – R: over plastic



## synthetics



Brisbane Australia  
Ray Brittain



Scotland  
Penelope Burgess  
tartan under resin



Deborah Hull



Cirencester UK  
History Craft  
inset brass apex

described as polymer ivory from ivory dust or sweepings or rosin  
a few have metal 'compass' in apex



UK  
Melissa Hookway



Dudley UK  
Woodsetton

peep: Visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip to China  
TTG November 1986



Argentina  
epoxy resin  
made by Toba indigenous people



China  
TTG June 2004  
polyresin



UK  
'Thimble Collectors Guild' – 'A  
stitch in time'  
TTG July 1987 August 1987



resin



resin



synthetic ruby





## telephone wire



Johannesburg South Africa  
Thabang Moloi

## tiger iron



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

## tiger's eye



China  
 TTG April 1989 – Fel 5 1988



India  
 PJW 85-6



Pakistan  
 VN 99 2009



## tortoiseshell

plastic fingerguards were created in tortoiseshell colour in 1910s



Birmingham UK

John Piercy

in November 1816 Piercy took out a patent, 4077, to combine tortoiseshell with gold, sterling silver, steel

British coat-of-arms on the slant with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon underneath is impressed into the shell. There is a gold rim and the width of tortoiseshell varies



another design has a large crown in gold with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon underneath dainty flowers and leaves surround a blank cartouche on the verso



another design has pinchbeck cartouche surrounded by fine flowers and leaves, with 'Piercy's Patent' underneath



another design has 'Piercy's Patent' over two lines with rectangular cartouche surrounded by flowers and leaves on the verso





steel-top with cartouche surrounded by fine flowers and leaves with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon in pinchbeck

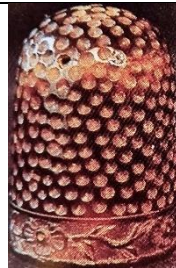


very rare example with Queen Charlotte surrounded by laurel wreath  
'Piercy's Patent' over two lines on verso

b&w photo



'Piercy's Patent' pierced pinchbeck thimbles over tortoiseshell  
Christies 1995 114-115



China



UK  
carved  
18<sup>th</sup> century  
Christies 1995 110



UK  
various gold pique designs – stars, flowers, leaves and crosses  
9ct gold apex

## travertine



## turquoise



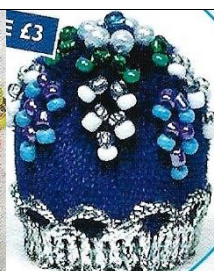
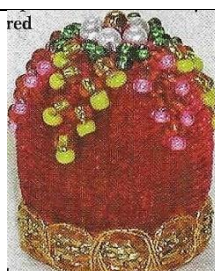
Egypt  
Randa Ahmet Unique Design



pierced, with Chinese lettering  
Gim 1991



## velvet



Moscow Russia  
plush with beads and brocade over wood  
TTG October - December 2003

## verdite



South Africa  
Tswana Products



carved  
VN 95 2008



VN 46 1998



### **volcanic rock**



Scotland  
Christine and John Smith  
sourced from rock of Edinburgh Castle Mount  
TTG September 1992

### **vulcanite**

hardened rubber, which was used as mourning jewellery. It was replaced by gutta percha and jet



USA  
band of 14ct gold  
size lettered on apex

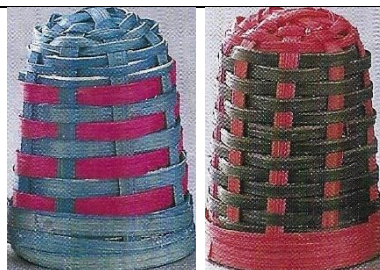
### **wax**



Mind Your Own Beeswax

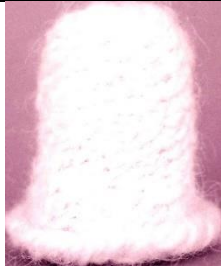
### **wicker**

see also: bamboo

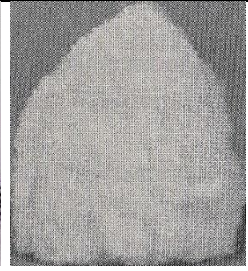


UK  
basket weave  
TTG January 2001

## wool



Perth Australia  
Barbara Martin  
knitted



Sydney Australia  
Yvonne Winspear  
brass pin of map of Australia  
b&w photo

## zebra stone



Kununurra Australia  
John Read

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This listing of Thimbles made from unusual materials 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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