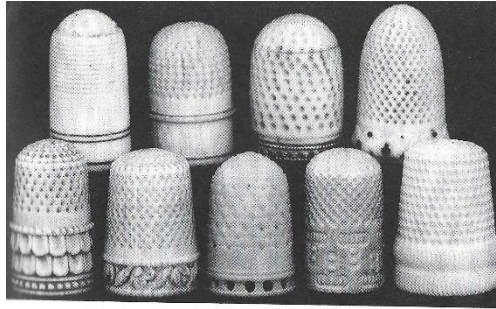


Ivory thimbles

elephant – hippo – mammoth – walrus – whale
including some sewing tools

This is one of my broadest thimble topics where the thimbles described cover the longest era: thimbles from 1800 thru to 1990s. It brings together the countries where each of the types of ivory thimbles were created, across nearly two centuries.

Very few of the makers are known but where they are, they are listed at the start of each country. Most 19th century thimbles were carved by unknown hands.



1. Decorated ivory thimbles: Top Row (from left): green painted circles, red painted circles, patterned gilt metal band, steel studs (missing its cut steel band), Made from 2 pieces of ivory. Bottom Row: 5 examples of carved and incised designs.

range of antique ivory thimbles
b&w photo – Di Pelham Burn

Ivory comes from the tusk or tooth of the five mammals listed above and is the same dentine as that of human teeth – dense material wrapped in a covering of enamel. Unlike bone, ivory is a solid material so it became an attractive material for carvers.

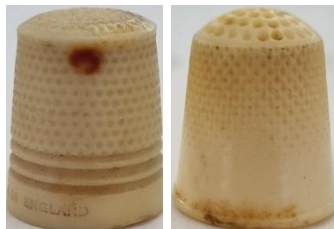
We are familiar with the whaling tradition where whales' teeth were a means of carving and decorating, to while away the long periods at sea. Whaling in Australia and the US provided vital whale oil for lighting in the nineteenth century. In 1971 whaling was banned in the US and 1972 in Australia.

Thimbles made of ivory form a very small output from any type of ivory.

eBay banned the international sale of elephant ivory in 2005 which led to a total ban in 2007. It's amazing how many 'faux' ivory thimbles have made their way onto the market since then: even those described as made in 1800! Bovine is another common term used by eBay sellers.

Mammoth ivory is not included in the eBay ivory ban, so this too may be a loophole?

Towards the end of the 19th century, elephant ivory became prohibitively expensive for making luxury thimbles. The discovery of celluloid, xylonite and then early plastic for thimbles in the late 19th century gave a cheap creamy alternative for thimbles. Charles Iles created thimbles of ivorine in 1913. It was close enough to ivory for collectors to test them for ivory. Ivory doesn't burn but plastic does.



examples showing the small burn testing marks on plastic thimbles



this type of synthetic material thimble became an ivory alternative for the collector's market in 1980s with faux scrimshaw sailing ships

Another cheaper alternative to animal ivory thimbles is vegetable ivory. This is the nut of the *Phytelephas macrocarpa* palm which are known as tagua nuts.



Tagua nut (vegetable ivory)

There are also carved meerschaum thimbles from Turkiye, that could be mistaken for carved ivory. Meerschaum is a fine chalklike white clay.



meerschaum

I have included as many catalogue references as I can find and used the following abbreviations:

KS - Kay Sullivan (Holland)

PJW - P J Walter (Germany)

TO - Thimbles Only (Jean Shoup USA)

TSL - Thimble Society of London

VN - Vingerhoednieuws (Netherlands)

[For other animal products thimble topics see](#)

[Horn and bone thimbles](#)

Elephant ivory

Elephant ivory is the most valuable ivory.

The nineteenth century was the era of big game hunting in Africa, which continued into the twentieth century. Elephant ivory tusks were highly prized trophies by big game hunters. This practice of shooting elephant for 'sport' was banned in 1973.

In 1989 CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endemic Species) banned the international trade in ivory. Poachers then became a massive problem for countries of southern Africa where elephants are endemic: slaughtered for their ivory to sell to the ivory hungry Chinese market.

In 1989, to deter the illegal sale of ivory Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi rocked the world when his adviser advised that the Kenyan stockpile of ivory be incinerated. It took accelerants days to burn twelve tons of ivory tusks.

In New York tons of elephant ivory tusks were crushed in Times Square in the 2010s.

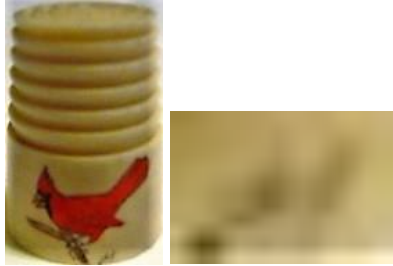
Sub-Saharan African governments realised that there is more revenue to be had from tourist dollars of safari tours, than the sale of ivory: their herds are protected in the national game parks.

American

Where in the USA were these ivory thimbles made? I have entered any relevant details from the catalogues: New England or The North-West Territories?



M Carey
scrimshaw sailing ship



DD
scrimshaw, handpainted cardinal



DF
scrimshaw of lizzard-like animal



WF William Feeney New England
scrimshaw sailing ship with lighthouse
1980



JP
scrimshaw, handpainted flower



H for von Hoelle



John von Hoelle Philadelphia PA

some of the range of his pierced ivory thimbles with semi-precious stones
these stones include coral, seed pearls, aquamarine, amethyst, emerald, onyx and turquoise

bottom R: 18ct gold birds

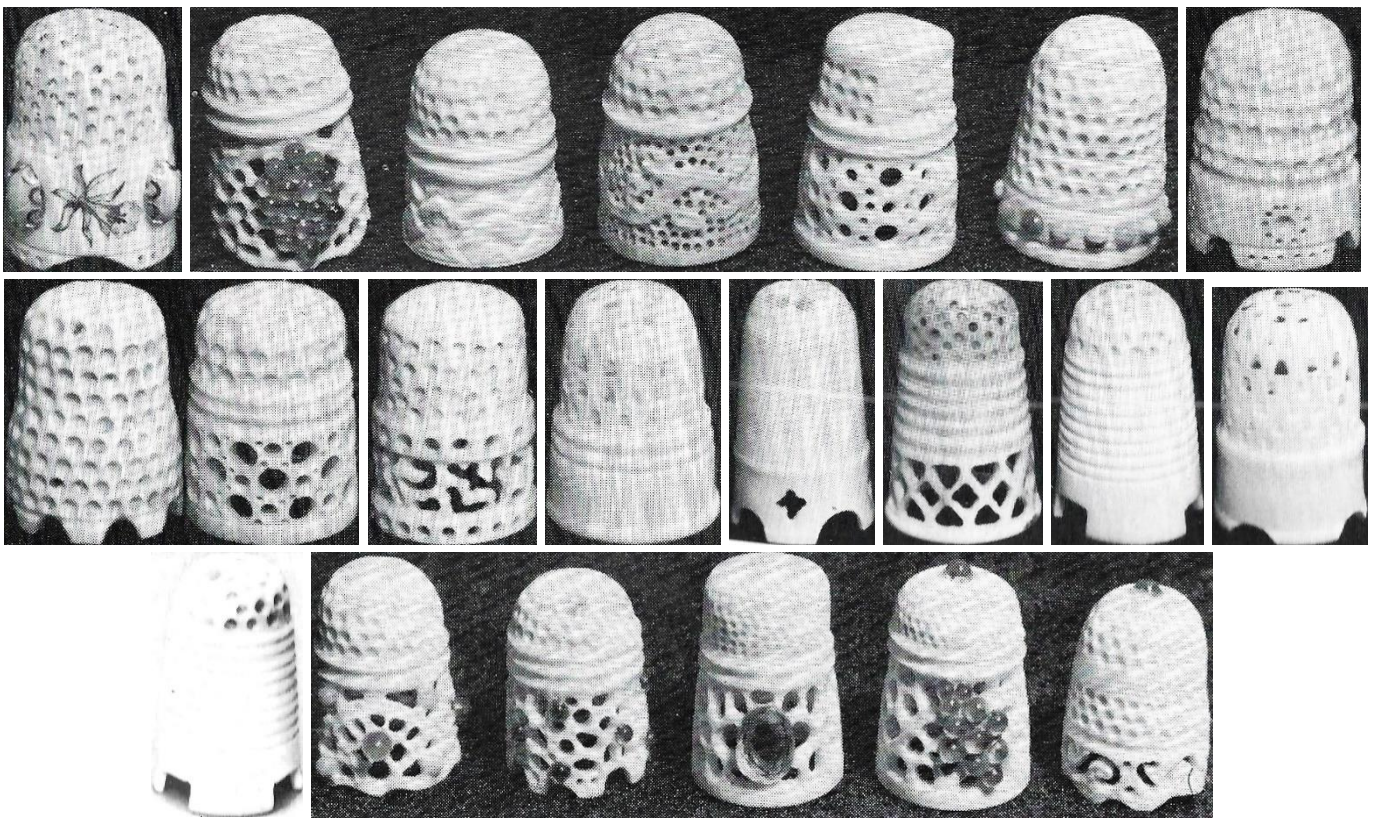
some have scalloped rims

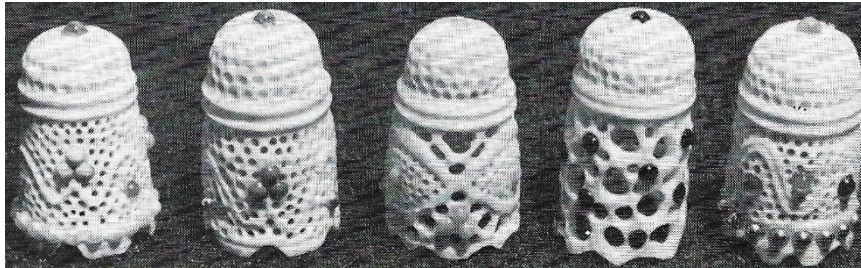
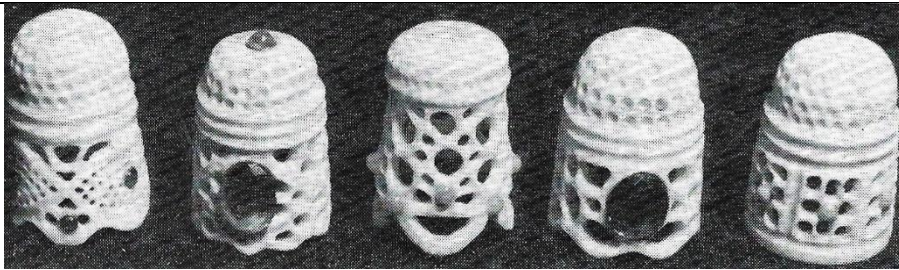
others have gold bands at rims

von Hoelle turned these thimbles for family and friends

1980s

he had learnt to carve ivory in China in 1960s





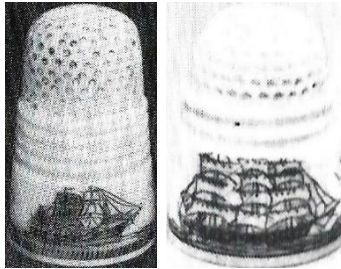
b&w photos from his book



thimble holder with matching thimble



three pierced thimbles – offered for sale on eBay as 1800s thimbles!



indented first third, four or two concentric rings, scrimshaw sailing ships by **ARA**
b&w photos



John in his workshop

The following batch of thimbles are machine-turned and they have the unifying design of six concentric circles turned into the upper half of the thimble. The apex too has concentric circles.

Scrimshaw sailing ships, with additional whaling symbols such as seabirds, clouds and waves which may be found on the verso, form the theme of this type of thimble.

No two sailing ships are created the same.

There are other designs as well and some of these have handpainted scrimshaw.

Signed examples are featured at the start of the American thimbles section. This batch have no maker's marks.

I am still trying to figure out why these US scrimshanders used elephant ivory to highlight their whaling industry?



apex with concentric circles – inside - accompanying leaflet

 <p>'Alaska' with state flower Forget-me-nots in colour slightly different apex</p>	 <p>'Alaska' with state flower Forget-me-nots in colour</p>	 <p>forget-me-nots in colour VN 96 2008</p>
 <p>blue red and yellow handpainted flowers "consigned by Native American Inuit Artisans"</p>	 <p>plain with no scrimshaw</p>	 <p>plain with carved rose</p>
 <p>handpainted rose pre-1989</p>	 <p>sailing ship birds little other scrimshaw</p>	 <p>sailing ship heavy clouds birds</p>



sailing ship
with flags
birds



sailing ship
harpoon on verso



sailing ship
"New England artists"
Gim 1978



sailing ship
striped clouds and seas



sailing ship



sailing ship



sailing ship
whale
birds



sailing ship
whale



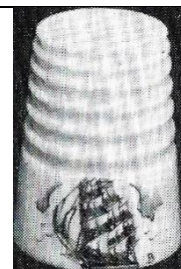
sailing ship
whale
Gim 1987



sailing ship
birds



sailing ship



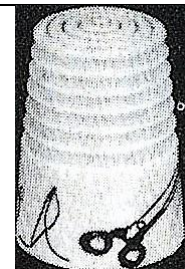
sailing ship



sailing ship
whale



scissors thread threaded needle
handpainted
"75"



scissors thread threaded needle
Gim 1981



scissors thread threaded needle
Gim 1987



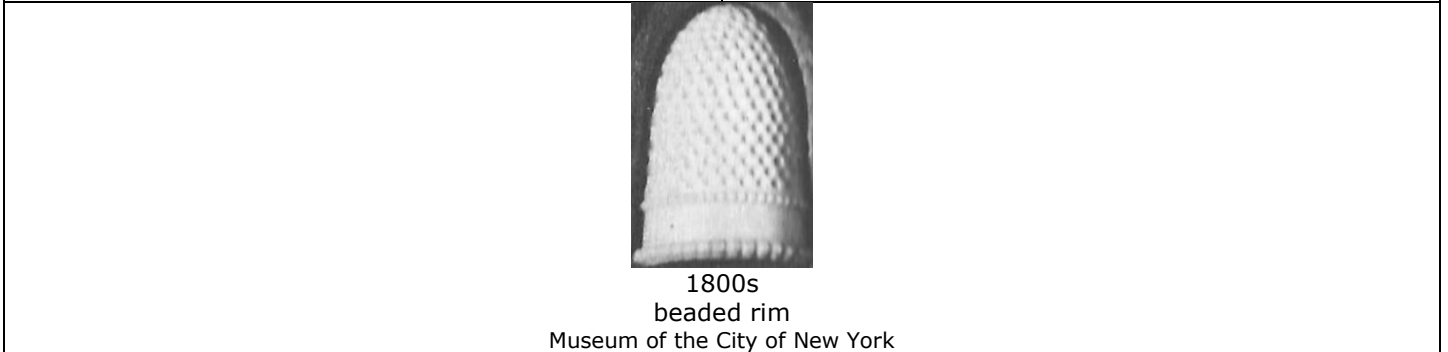
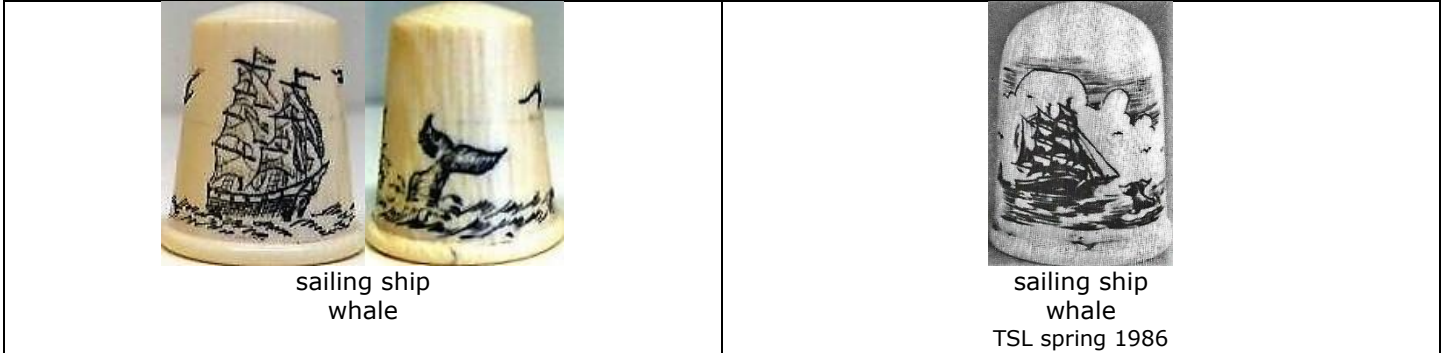
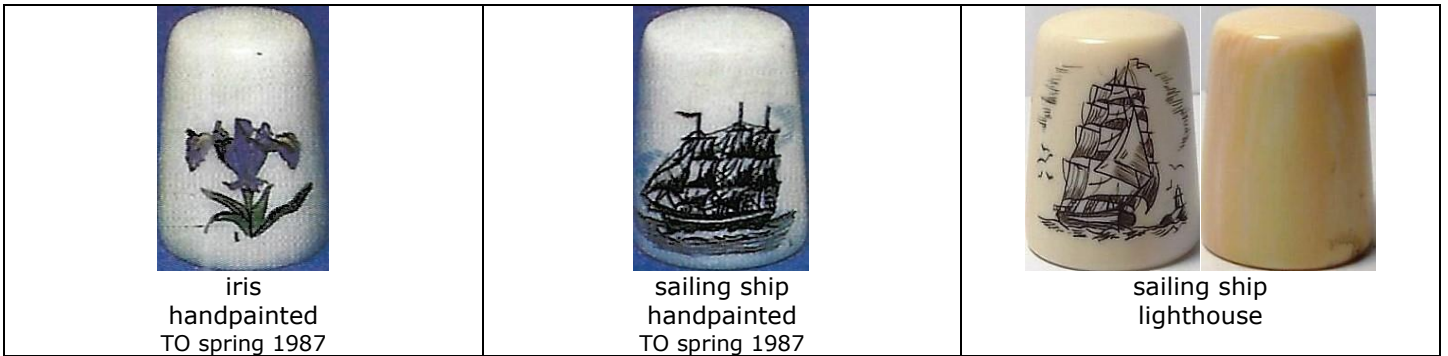
scissors thread threaded needle



scissors buttons thread threaded needle

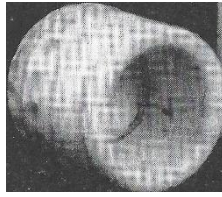
village wooden houses

These thimbles are different from those above: they have no concentric circles, leaving the thimble and apex smooth. Scrimshaw is similar to those above.



Chinese

Estelle Zalkin gives the most comprehensive description of the early Chinese (Oriental) ivory thimbles: "thimbles were to form part of fitted workboxes which were then exported to Europe and America. Tho they looked like thimbles, many were not usable working tools because they were bulky and not tapered inside to fit the finger. Some had indentations on the side and cap, while others were smooth and plain."

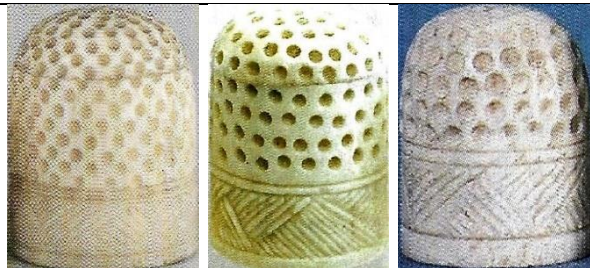


thick walled, not deep enough for use in sewing



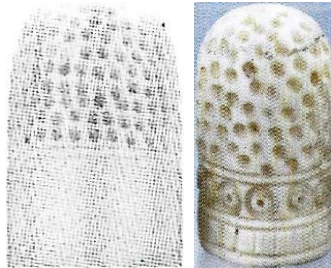
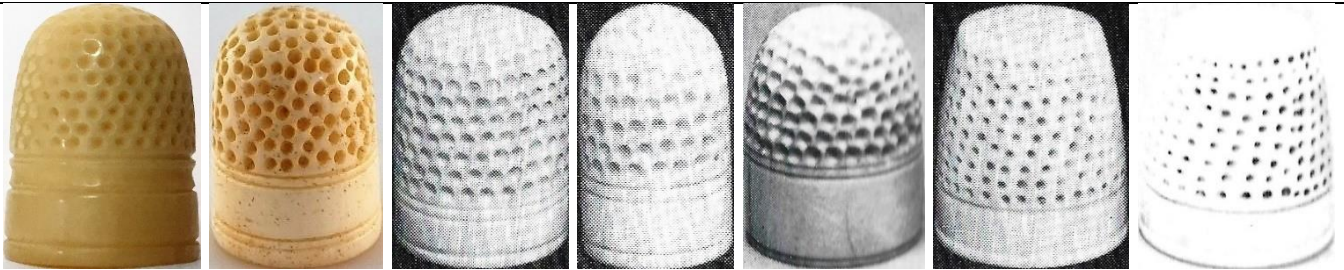
19th century
made in two pieces

there may be one to five rows of indentations on the bottom half – the ones with four rows are identified as from 1840s-1860s



19th century
rim of 'basket weave' patterning
made in two pieces

L: TSL winter 2000 – C: TSL summer 2007 – R: TSL spring 1994



19th century
 made in one piece
 bottom L: 1830s
 KS December 1984
 bottom R: carved roundels on narrow band
 TSL spring 2004



modern
 etched and painted bird and chrysanthemum
 Chinese signature on verso



20th century
 carved dragons
 R: TSL winter 1989



carved dragon



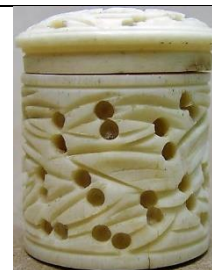
carved alternating indentations and striations



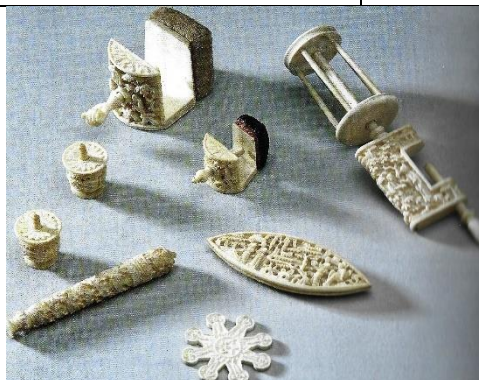
carved sewing tools from a workbox



thimble holder
etched Chinese scene of mountains and valleys all round



thimble holder
pierced with carved moths and birds design all over



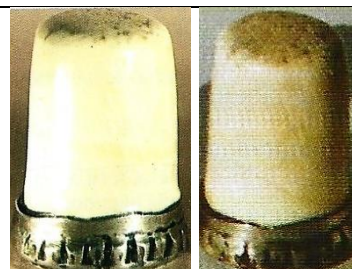
late 19th century carved sewing tools - Canton

Dutch

The only examples for Dutch ivory thimbles are those identified as from convents. These were the personal possessions of women entering a convent.



19th century
tortoiseshell rim
apex is of silver with a Gabler star
from a Brabant Monastery belonging to a novice








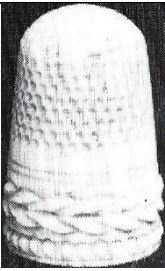






convent thimble with silver band
L: TSL autumn 1993


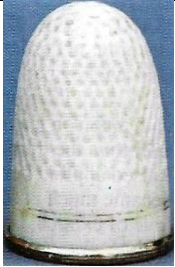
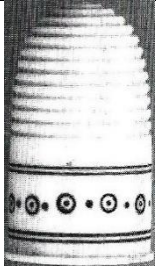


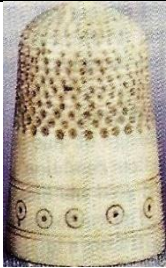



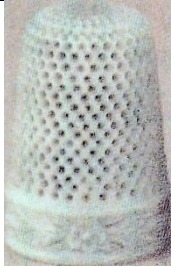




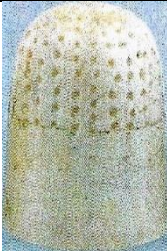





English

Unless mentioned as from somewhere else, I assume all TSL ivory thimbles are English.

I have noticed that thimbles listed in the TSL catalogues in the 1980s, had their details changed by the time McConnel published her *The story of the thimble* in 1997. These later descriptions are what I have used. An example is the inconsistencies when describing 'basket weave carved rim' attributed to Chinese, Indian and English carvers.

 <p>Geoffrey Manley Lyme Regis Devon 1980s smooth all over</p>
 <p>sticky label inside identifies the maker</p>

 <p>18th century child's TSL spring 1991</p>	 <p>18th century child's</p>	 <p>19th century carved band of flowers</p>	 <p>19th century beaded rim</p>
 <p>19th century two beaded rims TSL autumn 2000</p>	 <p>19th century carved band of leaves beaded rim</p>	 <p>19th century smooth sides with indented apex TSL spring 2002</p>	 <p>19th century tall, carved roundels band with reeded rim TSL spring 1991</p>
 <p>19th century</p>	 <p>1800s gilt rim TSL autumn 1988</p>	 <p>1810s steel and gilt inserts above gilt metal rim TSL autumn 1999</p>	 <p>1820s double carved petals band and row of fine beading</p>

 <p>1820s child's narrow band of basket weave</p>	 <p>1820s finely dimpled beehive shape with gilt metal band TSL summer 1992</p>	 <p>1820s Madras work or hot needle decoration around band</p>	 <p>1830s carved band of sloping leaves TSL spring 2007</p>
 <p>1830s gilt metal rim TSL winter 1987</p>	 <p>1830s carved roundels on wide band TSL autumn 1995</p>	 <p>1830s turned TSL summer 1993</p>	 <p>1830s carved band of diagonal leaves TSL winter 1997</p>
 <p>1840s carved band of flowers TSL summer 1993</p>	 <p>1840s narrow carved band of fruit flowers and leaves TSL autumn 1988</p>	 <p>1840s carved band of stylised leaves beaded rim TSL autumn 1988</p>	 <p>1840s carved band of leaves on wide band TSL autumn 2004</p>
 <p>1840s child's TSL summer 1985</p>	 <p>1840s narrow carved band of flowers TSL spring 1992</p>	 <p>1840s TSL winter 2005</p>	 <p>1840s carved band of leaves beaded rim</p>
 <p>1840s TSL summer 2004</p>	 <p>1840s-1860s carved narrow band of roundels TSL spring 1992</p>	 <p>1840s-1860s double carved petals band and two rows of fine beading TSL winter 2001</p>	 <p>1840s-1860s double carved petals band row of beading TSL autumn 2003</p>



1840s-1850s
wide row of carved leaves
hand indented
hole in apex which would be
a nerve hole
TSL summer 1988, winter 1998



1850s
plain raised narrow band
TSL autumn 1992



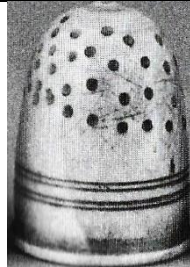
1850s
TSL winter 2005



1860s
tall elegant shape
TSL winter 1984



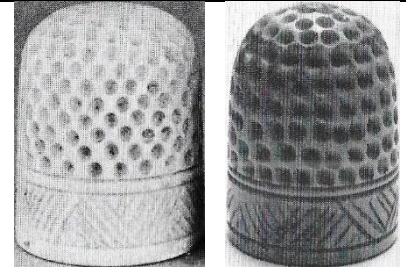
1860s
child's
TSL autumn 1986



1860s
turned bands
handmade indentations
TSL spring 1986



1860s-1870s
elegantly carved band
TSL spring 1989



1860s-1870s
rim of 'basket weave' patterning
L: TSL spring 1986 - R: KS
September 1988



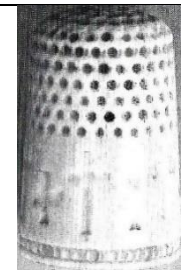
1870s
bands of carved flowers
TSL spring 1994



1870s
carved band of flowers
crack
TSL spring 2000



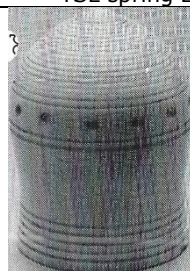
1880s



1880s-1900s
carved crosses band



1986
turned in Cornwall
by a hobby woodturner
limited to **50**
KS December 1984



1988
turned in Cornwall
by a hobby woodturner
based on Hungarian
thimble design
limited to **50**
KS July 1988



beehive shape
crack
TSL summer 1992



carved band of flowers



handpunched indentations
gold band rim



handpunched indentations
wide plain band



narrow band of carved
roundels



'maid's' size
carved leaves on wide
band with ornate pattern
on apex
TSL winter 1986

 <p>wider gilt band on rim</p>	 <p>thick gold band around rim</p>	 <p>carved band of leaves</p>	 <p>narrow row of roundels TSL winter 2007</p>
	 <p>modern smooth with carved lines black spot on apex would have been nerve</p>	 <p>child's smooth all over</p>	
 <p>narrow band of carved roses</p>	 <p>Madras work hot needle decoration</p>		
 <p>acorn shaped thimble holder with thimble TSL autumn 2001</p>	 <p>acorn shaped thimble holder with thimble</p>		
 <p>barrel-shaped thimble holder TSL spring 1986</p>	 <p>urn-shaped thimble holder carved fruit on lid TSL autumn 1992</p>	 <p>egg-cup-shaped thimble holder TSL autumn 1996</p>	 <p>panelled thimble holder with thimble TSL spring 1996</p>



early 19th century carved sewing tools



Madras work or hot needle decoration needlecase


















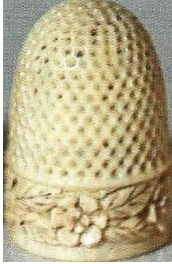



Madras work or hot needle decoration sewing tools



wide variety of Madras work or hot needle decoration sewing tools

French

The French ivory thimbles of the 19th century tend to follow the form of the Palais Royale mother-of-pearl thimbles.

 <p>9ct gold rim</p>	 <p>18th century carved band TSL spring 1999</p>	 <p>19th century clouté studded decoration within fine carving</p>	 <p>19th century roundels around rim</p>
 <p>19th century beaded gold rim b&w photo</p>	 <p>19th century gold rim</p>	 <p>19th century beaded gold rim</p>	 <p>1800s beaded wide gold rim TSL winter 2000</p>
 <p>1820s beaded gold rim</p>	 <p>1820s gold rim</p>	 <p>1820s gold rim VN 60 2000</p>	 <p>1820s gold rim</p>
 <p>1820s clouté studded steel decoration and rim within fine carving</p>	 <p>1820s Dieppe carvers carved band of a duck shoot: band of birds in trees, reeds, man with gun TSL summer 1988</p>	 <p>1820s-1830s wide band of carving</p>	 <p>1820s-1830s Dieppe carvers carved band of flowers and leaves TSL summer 1993</p>
 <p>1840s Dieppe carvers carved band of flowers gilt metal rim TSL summer 1986</p>	 <p>1900s carved temple building with sunflower on verso narrow band of basket weave R: apex Stanhope showing eleven turbaned men made for M.M.Shah & Co for Indian market</p>		 <p>gilt metal rim L: showing deep crack</p>



gilt metal rim



carved band of flowers and leaves
TSL autumn 2000



scrimshaw band 'Souvenir de Dieppe'
carved by Dieppe carvers on Normandy coast – flourished in 17th century
in 14th C they imported ivory from west coast of Africa (TSL spring 1989)
Chateau Museum in Dieppe has largest collection of ivory in Europe
TSL winter 2001



18th century
thimble holder with fretwork
thimble: plain wide band



1840s
thimble holder and needlecase
banded in gold and steel studs



1800s
thimble as part of etui
gilt metal studs



scent bottle with ivory thimble and ivory base
with metal studs
TSL winter 1989



thimble holder with carved fretwork
thimble: plain wide band



Dieppe pinwheel
carved flowers and fruit



sewing kit with clouté studded decoration



needlecases with clouté studded decoration



selection of Dieppe carved sewing tools
late 18th – early 19th century



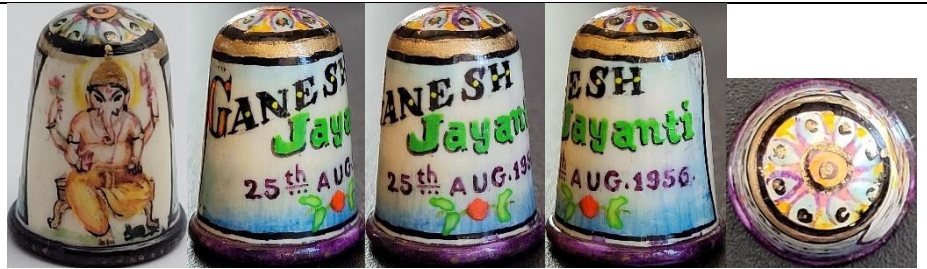
Dieppe carved needlecases
in the shape of fisher folk

Indian

Only male Indian elephants have tusks – and then not each male elephant.



1952
handpierced with stars shapes
26 pearls set around rim



1956
handpainted 'Ganesh Jayanti 25th August 1956' on verso



1957
carved bearded male figural



1957
Baby Jesus with Mary
'Happy New Year 1957'
only thimble Motiwala ever signed



handpainted Tah Mahal
apex has floral touches of gold highlights
gilt painted band

L: woman's portrait on verso R set: portrait is missing in the blank oval



carved flowers and leaves
lower band has carvings of a lion, water buffalo and rhino
apex has a carved lion's head
silver rim with fourteen rubies



blue foil
sapphire set into apex which is carved with flower
using an Iles' & Gomms plastic thimble 'Made in England
Non-flam' he covered it in blue foil which shines thru the
piercings
the black bands are scrimshaw



handpainted Taj Mahal with Mumtaz
richly floral apex

Bhagwandas Motiwala



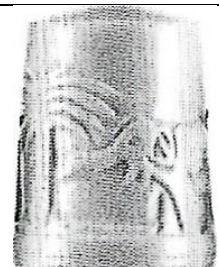
these thimbles were all sourced from Alta Thompson's collection 1950s



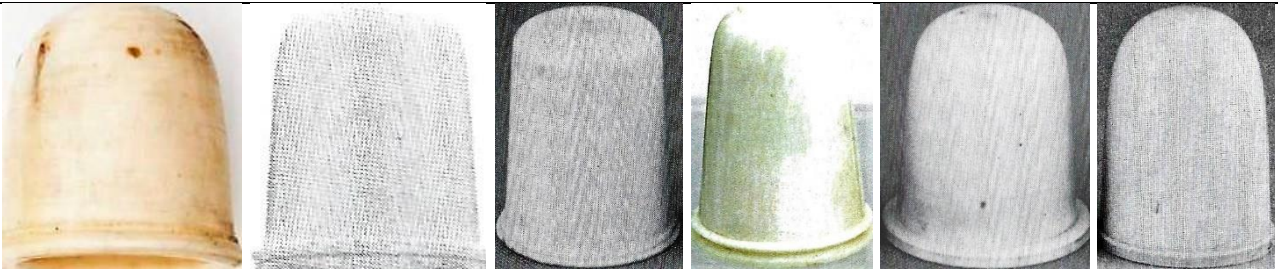
carved elephant



carved elephant



carved elephant and stylised tree



1860s
 smooth all over
 for sewing pure silk
 as there is no sharp surface to snag the silk
 for inclusion in Sadeli workboxes for India's European local market
 photos 3-6: TSL winter 1986, summer 2007



handpainted with domed brass apex



handpainted with flat brass apex



Sadeli work
 fine steel insets



19th century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox with brass feet
 teak and steel laid down in fine strips
 ivory tools also showing tape measure



19th century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox
 teak and steel laid down in fine strips
 ivory tools also showing thimble



19th century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox
Ivory, teak and steel laid down in fine shapes
L: 1840s



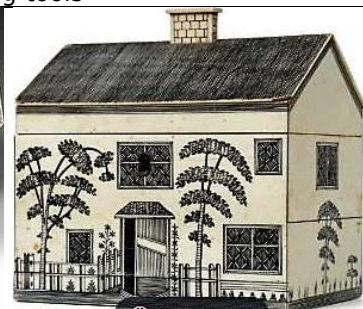
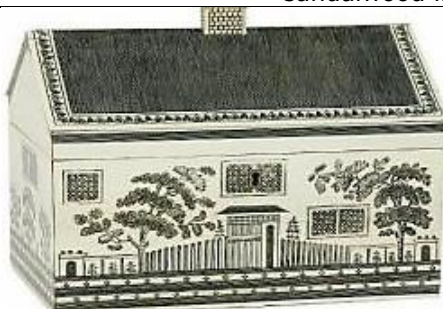
horn and ivory workbox
Vizagapatam, east India
late 18th century
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



ivory workbox decorated with Lac
contains ivory sewing tools
ivory lids also decorated with lac



horn and ivory workbox
Vizagapatam, east India
late 18th century
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



ivory and sandalwood workboxes
Vizagapatam, east India
late 18th century
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools

Italian or Portuguese



1830s
thimble holder in shape of flower bud
thimble inscribed on apex in black 'MJ'
on base letter 'd 28 Februa'
TSL winter 1998

Japanese



19th century
Shibayama inlay
insects on pea pods

Kenyan

Amboseli National Park is known as the home of the African elephant in Kenya



carved elephant
it had a certificate of export 1980 from a Kenyan game reserve
TSL winter 1997

Namibian

Etosha National Park is the home of elephants in northern Namibia.



carved elephant



carved elephant



carved leaves



carved rhino

New Zealand



1970



lace bobbin
handpainted New Zealand native bird and flower

Russian



scrimshaw with figures
does the presence of a reindeer indicate that this is bone not ivory?
'Sep 18'

South African

Kruger National Park is the largest game reserve in South Africa.

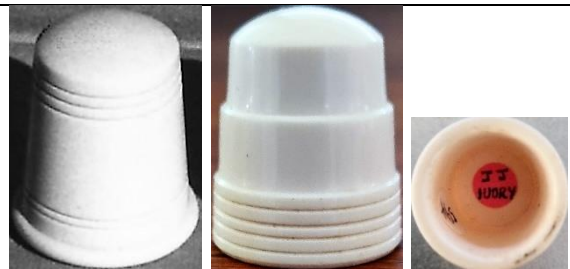
The elephant ivory for these thimbles would have been sourced thru game parks from either culled or elephants who died of natural causes – never from poached ivory.

African elephants are far larger than their Indian counterparts. Both male and female African elephants have tusks.

If you haven't read it already – Lawrence Anthony's *The elephant whisperer* is a sublime read.



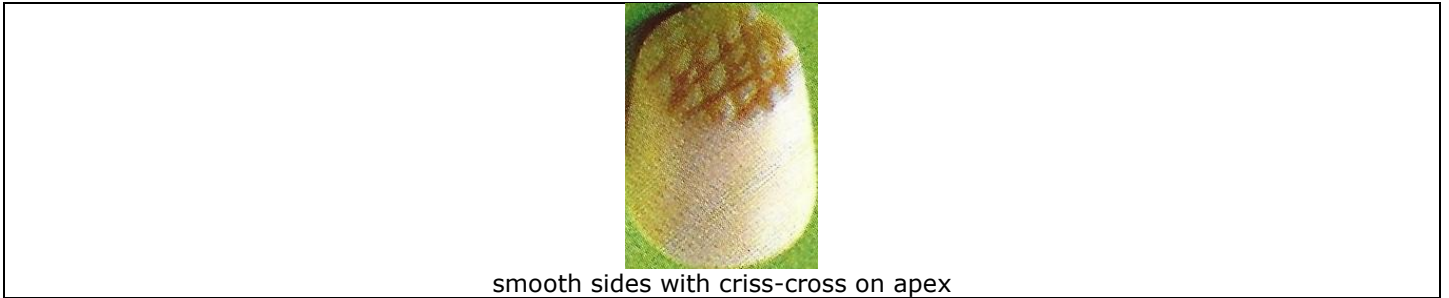
Tswana Products Bophuthatswana



John van der Westhuizen Phalaborwa
close to Kruger Park
smooth
sticker with 'JJ Ivory' in apex



Zairean



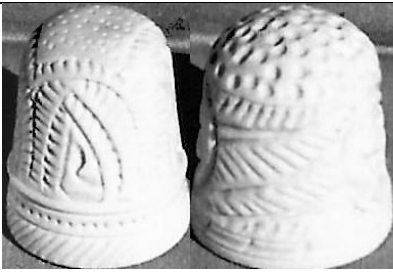
Zimbabwean

Hwange National Park (previously Wankie Game Reserve in Rhodesia) is the home of their elephants. The ivory carvers were from families with a carving tradition, "showing the finest workmanship, and a high degree of excellence" (TSL). Thimble sales provided much needed income.

Many thimbles are straight sided, which would make them difficult to use for sewing. Being hand-carved no two thimbles are ever the same: even when they seem identical, the rim will be carved differently. The scenes continue around the thimbles. They are all hand carved including creating the thimble itself.

TSL sourced their ivory thimbles thru game reserves or protected 'nature parks'.





carved abstract design



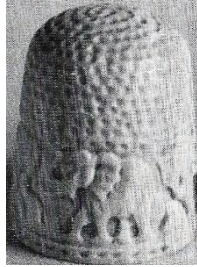
carved Great Zimbabwe Bird (Hungwe)
The national symbol of Zimbabwe



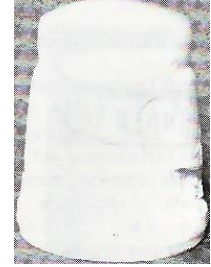
scrimshaw buffalo and elephants
TSL spring 1989



carved elephants and trees
black band may be of many strands
of elephant hair
TSL winter 1989



carved elephants and trees
TSL spring 1984



carved elephants
VN 15 1990



carved elephants
TSL summer 1985



carved elephants
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver



carved elephant
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver



carved elephants
reeded rim



carved elephants
single strand of elephant hair (top) and
one of silver
this example shows how difficult it is to
neatly join both hair and silver



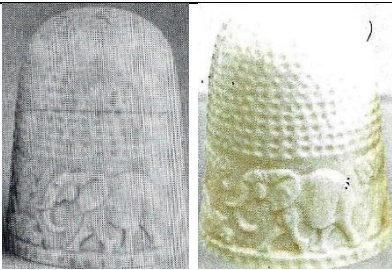
carved elephants with trees



carved elephants with trees



carved elephants



carved elephant
TSL summer 1989 and summer 2007



carved elephants
TSL



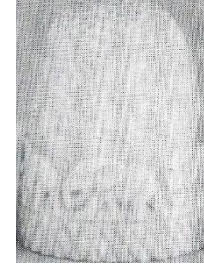
carved elephants
TSL



carved elephants
TSL spring 1986



carved elephants



carved elephants
TSL spring 1989



scrimshaw elephant



scrimshaw gemsbuk and trees



scrimshaw giraffes and trees



scrimshaw zebras and trees
unknown extra mark 'FO4D'



scrimshaw zebras and trees



carved fern pattern



carved flowers



carved flowers
different shape



carved flowers



carved giraffes



carved 'Harari' and elephants and trees



carved hippos
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver



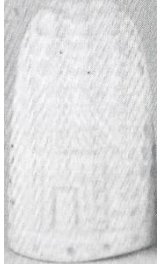
carved hippos and trees
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver



carved hippos and trees



carved horizontal ridges – smooth
and tactile



carved African hut (rare subject)
TSL spring 1989



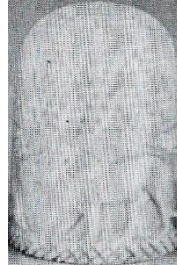
carved leaves



carved leaves



carved leaves



carved lions
TSL summer 1989



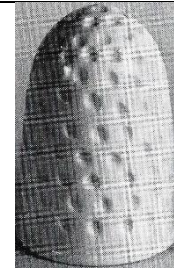
handpainted woman stamping corn



handpainted woman drumming



handpainted woman stamping corn



plainly indented
TSL spring 1984



plainly indented
TSL spring 1986



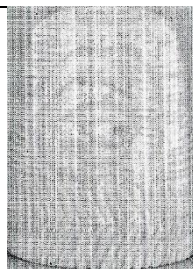
carved rhinos



carved rhinos and trees



carved rhinos and trees



carved rose
TSL autumn 1986



carved roses



five-sided smooth



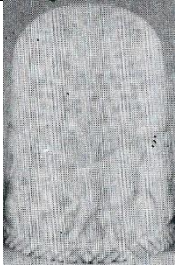
carved roses



shorter, smooth



with bands of elephant hair and silver



carved water buffalo
TSL summer 1989



carved vertical ridges



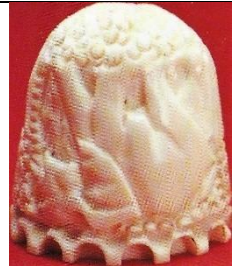
carved vertical ridges - smooth



carved ostriches



carved elephants



carved elephants
ellies are upsidedown
scalloped rim



carved roses and leaves



thimble holder with carved elephants



thimble holder with carved elephants
the base is not centred so it can never stand erect

Hippo ivory

German

Hippo teeth were sourced from South African game reserves by the ivory carvers in Odenwald, Germany. They are handpainted. There is a Museum of Ivory in the Odenwald.



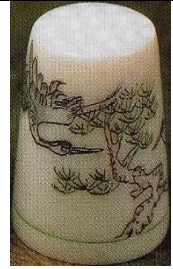
house
VN 96 2008



rose
TTG December 1995



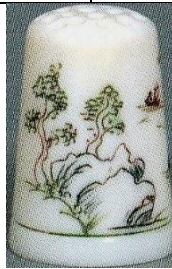
flowers
VN 96 2008



crane
TTG December 1995



Lily
VN 80 2004



trees and rocks scene
VN 91 2007



trees scene
VN 91 2007

Mammoth ivory

Fossilised woolly mammoth tusks are sourced from the frozen tundra in Siberia.

See the Horn and bone thimbles topic for examples of mammoth bone thimbles created by Brad Elfrink.

American



Fish Creek Company Ketchikan Alaska
smooth

Chinese



scrimshaw painted fish
Het vingerhoedje 4-1



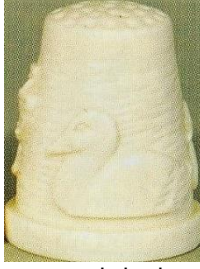


scrimshaw cat
Het vingerhoedje 4-1



scrimshaw scene
VN 80 2004

German

The mammoth carvers are based in Odenwald. There is a Museum of Ivory in the city.

 <p>carved abstract design</p>	 <p>carved vertical leaves VN 82 2004</p>	 <p>carved giraffe VN 96 2008</p>	 <p>limited to 500 PJW 85-86</p>
 <p>carved bird Het vingerhoedje 4-1</p>	 <p>carved rings limited to 500 PJW 85-86</p>	 <p>carved ducks VN 31 1994, 81 2004</p>	 <p>carved hippo VN 81 2004</p>
 <p>carved rings Het vingerhoedje 4-1</p>	 <p>plain</p>	 <p>carved leaved VN 82 2004</p>	 <p>carved rose band scalloped rim VN 79 2004</p>
 <p>carved rose band four concentric rings VN 96 2008</p>	 <p>carved rose fine rings on upper body Gim 1979</p>	 <p>carved rose band scalloped rim limited to 500 PJW 85-86</p>	 <p>carved rose band scalloped rim Het vingerhoedje 4-1</p>
 <p>VN 38 1996</p>	 <p>abstract design carving VN 82 2004</p>	 <p>carved all over leaf pattern VN 82 2004</p>	 <p>carved elephant VN 82 2004</p>



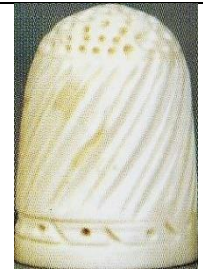
carved acanthis swirls
VN 86 2005



carved diagonal diagonal
dots
VN 86 2005



carved hanging leaves
grooves
VN 86 2005



carved swirled diagonals
VN 86 2005



carved band with
indentations



scrimshaw church



carved band of flowers



carved head



carved rings



carved flower on apex
scalloped rim



carved flower on apex
scalloped pierced rim



carved flower on apex



carved lily-of-the-valley



handpainted scene
scalloped rim



Carved mammoth



carved vertical wide
grooves
VN 86 2005



tall shape with very wide band
VN 91 2007

Russian

The mammoth carvers were based in the Tobolsk factory in Siberia.



scrimshaw capercaillie



scrimshaw elephant

Walrus ivory

American

These teeth are sourced by Native Alaskans as part of their hunting traditions. I have chosen the term Native Alaskan, rather than the term of Eskimo that I grew up using.

These pewter thimbles that appeared from the 1980s onwards contain a very small disc of scrimshaw ivory in the apex.



L: maker's mark AS – R: Nicholas Gish



Cheri Ables
fossilised



Herminia Anslinger Alaska
'Alaska 49' with star
commemorating Alaska as 49th State 1959
maker's details from Alta Thompson's catalogue



Arnold Kayutak

bird in nest

Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
 distinctive maker's mark
 from Alta Thompson's collection
 1950s



Arnold Kayutak

walrus head

Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
 distinctive maker's mark
 from Alta Thompson's collection
 1950s



face

Native Alaskan carving
 maker's marks of two straight lines and one diagonal line
 from Alta Thompson's collection
 1950s



seal scene

Native Alaskan scrimshaw
 maker's mark of two straight lines and
 one diagonal line
 from Alta Thompson's collection
 1950s



totem bird

Native Alaskan scrimshaw
 maker's mark of two straight lines and one diagonal line



Arctic fox with trees and midnight sun
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
maker's mark of two straight lines and one diagonal line



Native Alaskan face
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



walrus
Native Alaskan carving
finely carved lines from centre of apex
not well carved on inside



ring shape
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
figure is known as a Billiken doll – a good luck charm
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



plain



scrimshaw Native Alaskan dogsled



scrimshaw Native Alaskan sailing ship, whale
and harpooner



Native Alaskan
large indentations on shorter
thimble



1920s
Stanhope peep with
'Niagara Falls'



1930s
smooth all over
Ketchikan Alaska



2000



horse's head shape
Native Alaskan carving
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



owl shape
Native Alaskan carving
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



peacocks atop
Native Alaskan carving
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



7 IVORY WALRUS TEETH BUTTONS
buttons

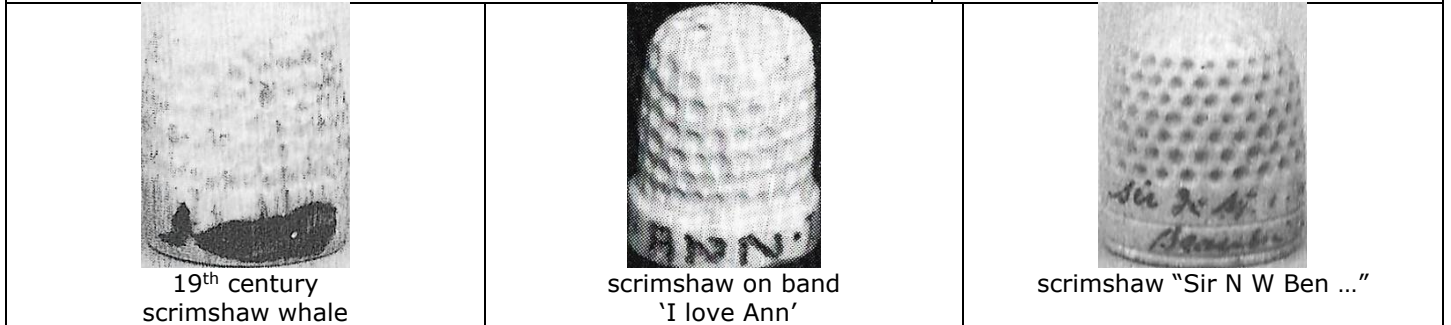
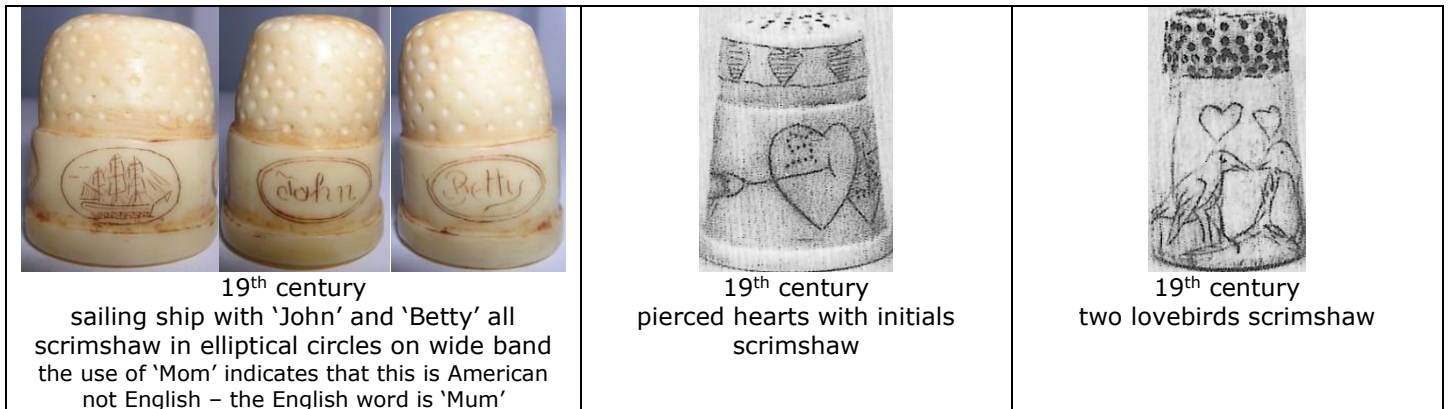
Whale ivory Sperm and Orca whales

Whales have 23 teeth and these can be carved.

American

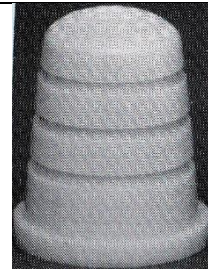
The heart of the US whale oil industry was Nantucket MA, from 17th century until 1971 when it was banned.

The thimble is whale tooth-shaped. There is scope for greater scrimshaw detail in the harpooning scenes.





carved flowers and leaves



sperm whale
VH 19 1991

Australian

Albany in Western Australia



Jamie Bell (JB) Albany WAS
scrimshaw sailing ships
'Running Home'



flowers and leaves



acorns



band of flowers



sailing ship



sailing ship and lighthouse



sailing ship
'Endeavour'



band of flowers and leaves



lighthouse



posy of flowers and leaves



koala

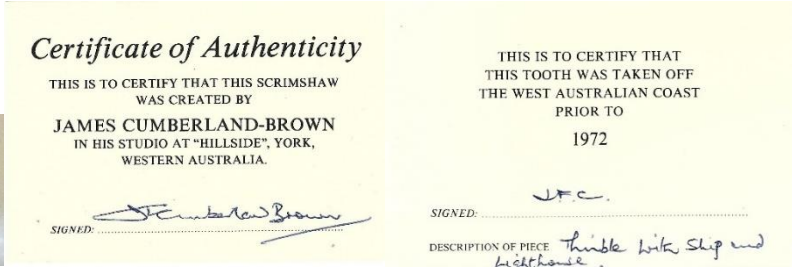
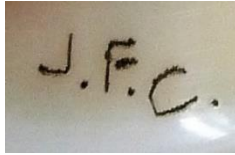


flowers

James Cumberland-Brown (J.F.C.) WA

James is renowned for his scrimshaw. He acquired a great quantity of Sperm Whale teeth before the sale of whale ivory was banned in 1972. This miniaturist, from the Royal School of Fine Arts, has created exquisite scrimshaw thimbles. The scenes are carved with a probe or sharpened nail and then black oil paint is rubbed into the carving, to bring them to life. The thimbles were supplied with a certificate proclaiming 'This is to certify that this tooth was taken off the West Australian Coast prior to 1972'.

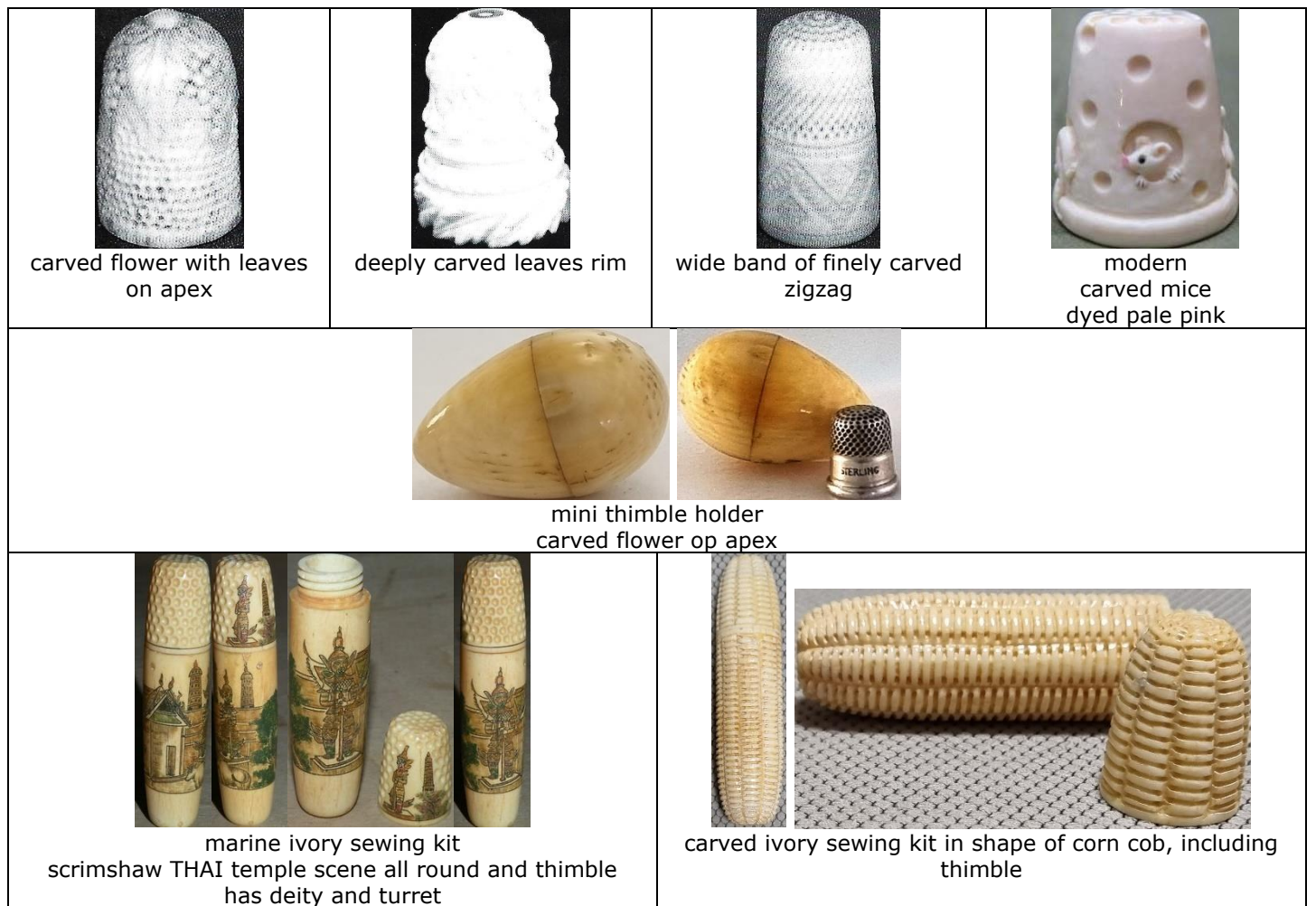
James turns the thimbles himself and the shape varies from thimble to thimble. Originally residing in York, Western Australia, where visitors to 'Hillside' could watch this artist at work, he then moved to East Fremantle. James died in 2003.



JCB York W.A. 1991

No other details

 <p>1950s 12 tiny elephants carved around the rim dyed pink</p>	 <p>carved roses</p>	 <p>1870s European fine horizontal lines with gold collar TSL autumn 2003</p>	 <p>narrow carved band VN 60 2000</p>
 <p>carved vertical ferns</p>	 <p>carved flower</p>	 <p>carved flowers with leaves</p>	 <p>narrow leaves band VN 43 1997</p>
 <p>carved vertical leaves band</p>	 <p>smooth sides</p>	 <p>smooth</p>	 <p>carved leaves on wide band VN 50 1998</p>



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Contributors

Wendi Aguiar | Yolanta Bogdziewicz | Irja & Martii Helsila | Lynda Herrod | William Isbister
 Bev McDonald | Clare Muzzatti | Caroline Meacham-Elegant Arts | Wanda Ralston-Boulder Bay | Mabel Rogers

This listing of Ivory 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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