Modern British handpainted china thimbles

At the start of the modern thimble collecting era of the late 1970s, some of Great Britain's china houses produced handpainted thimbles. This was a time consuming and costly exercise. The demand avalanche for instant and cheaper thimbles swamped thimble manufacturers as we entered 1980.

The porcelain houses realised that creating their own decals or transfers using a skilled artist would speed up production and an unlimited number could be churned out.

Initially, companies like Caverswall had their artists hand-touch their designs with spots of paint and you will find artists' names like William Tipton, John Ball, C Nunn, Holmes Gray or Mary Grant named on the thimbles. These are not handpainted thimbles: just hand-touched.

Sutherland, who produced china thimbles the longest, made thimbles in the same way – but didn't even follow the hand-touched route. Some of their thimbles are labelled hand enamelled. Rather a few spots of enamel enhances the design – this is known as champleve. JB, ME and PH Pauline Haughton are initials found on Sutherland thimbles enhanced in this manner.

Royal Worcester, the doyenne of handpainted thimbles from the 1870s, faced the same problem. They did not want to employ more artists and thimbles are time-consuming to paint freehand with at least three firings. In the 1970s, the foreman of the painters' division, Edward Townsend, came up with a solution. He designed a number of outline prints - which were printed onto the blank thimbles. The artists did not have to create an individual painting but merely coloured in the blank design. This speeded up the process noticeably. Even that didn't help as by 1986, the last handpainted RW thimble was painted. They turned to decaled thimbles to keep up with demand.

The pendulum did begin to swing back in the 1990s and handpainted thimbles came back into their own in the small numbers as before.

The artists had access to blank thimbles from any source. This would give them creative freedom and some commercial success.

Handpainted thimbles take a while to paint, so they are created in a limited supply.

Many of the artists didn't only paint thimbles – they formed a minute part of their output. They painted vases, plates, brooches, lidded jars, figurines of fauna, paintings, coffee pots, miniatures and handpainted enamel boxes etc.

A few of these artists have painted on wood, glass and silver thimbles and on enamel. They are outside the scope of this topic. Thimbles with handpainted flowers affixed will also not feature here.

See my topics on specific British painters of china thimbles:

Graham Payne (1981) who employed at least six freelance painters Gerald Delaney Jasper's of Yorkshire (Margaret and Mandy Palmer) Francesca employed at least 16 thimble artists and other character head thimbles makers number 20 Royal Worcester thimble painters

I have featured **32** British thimble handpainters.

When I have fewer than five thimble examples from specific painters – they will follow at the end of the section of thimbles - both in alphabetical order by painter's surname.

Along the way I have learnt heaps – and I can now recognise thimbles painted by these artists. It takes sheer talent to paint accurately on such a small area of china. I hope you will enjoy the journey as much as I have.

For other handpainted thimble topics see

Australian handpainted thimbles Francesca and other character head thimbles Gerald Delaney handpainted thimbles Graham Payne handpainted thimbles Jasper's of Yorkshire handpainted thimbles Royal Worcester thimble painters





David Bowkett

Bowkett was a Royal Worcester trained artist and worked there between 1948-1962 he moved to Cornwall and bought a pub in the 1970s David opened his own studio in Devon

he began to paint thimbles in 2002 this is where his RW training came to the fore – using birds and fruit themes painted on bone china these included the signature on the outside and the traditional sprig on the verso thimbles have the <u>David Bowkett</u> backstamp and his signature is <u>D Bowkett</u>

Bowkett died in 2009

if there is a small china hook on the back of the item – it is a tiny candlesnuffer – they can be mistaken for thimbles. His figurals have indentations on the head



candlesnuffer



R: his mark for character-shaped thimbles









Gigi Branch Gigi trained at Limoges in France then settled in Devon her thimbles only painted in 1983-1984 thimbles signed inside <u>Gigi</u> <u>see also topic</u> Glass and crystal thimbles <u>for her painting on glass thimbles</u>





Christopher Burns

Chris Burns is a Royal Worcester trained artist

in 1987 when RW were no longer producing handpainted thimbles, Burns opened his own studio in the Malvern Hills, Worcestershire

here he established Harcourt China

before the use of this mark, the thimbles were marked Malvern England

he provided thimbles to The Thimble Guild (1987-1994, and again in 2005). I have used the catalogue dates

his thimbles are not dated (with one exception in **1994**)

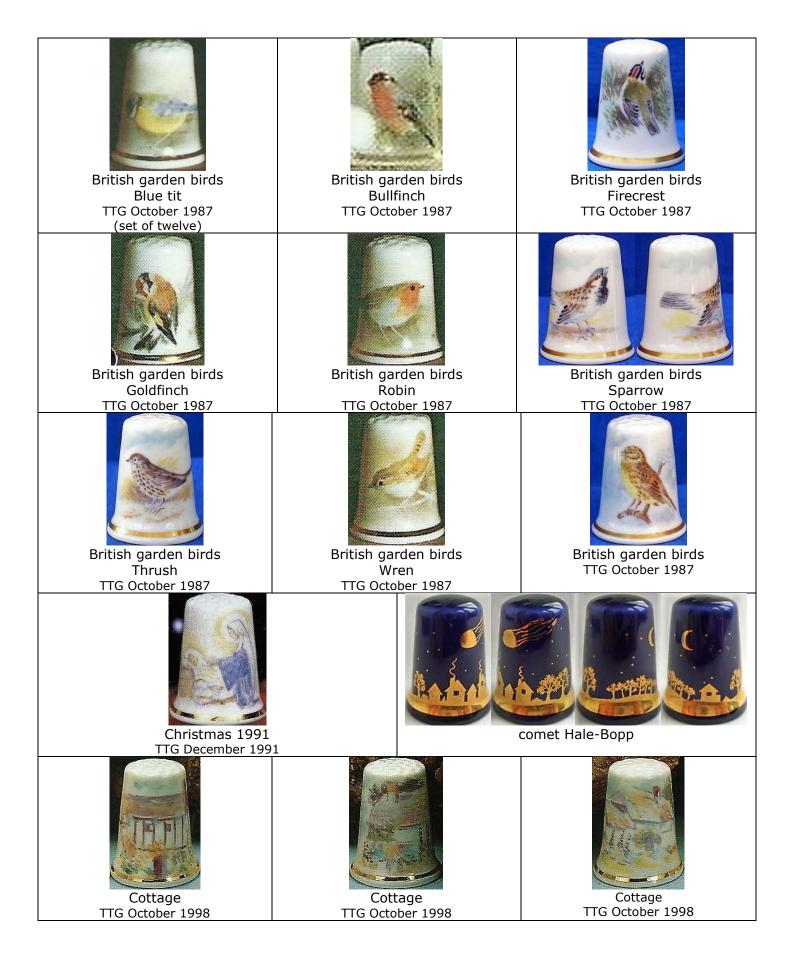
there is a lovely range of designs capturing the surrounding English countryside. His thimbles evolved to sculpt thimbles in relief giving a three dimensional aspect

thimbles have the Harcourt China backstamp and his signature <u>C Burns</u> is located on the inside thimbles are not named – I have used names from the TTG catalogues etc



L: early blue Malvern mark (Type 1) - C: no brand name Handpainted in England (Type 2)







Cottage TTG October 1998



English cathedral TTG December 1993



English cathedral limited to 450 TTG April 1992













English countryside set of six on pink ground with cameo scenes TTG July 1989 - TSL summer 1989



English countryside blue ground with cameo scene with tree TSL summer 1989



English countryside blue ground with cameo scene



English countryside pink ground with cameo scene TSL summer 1989



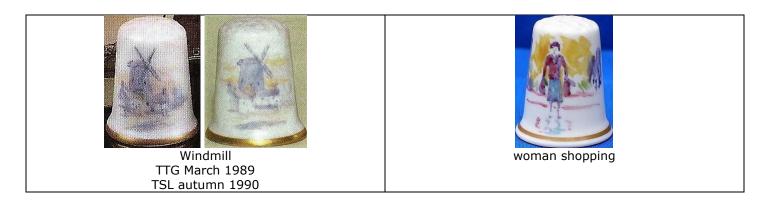
English countryside pink ground with cameo scene Type 2 backstamp



Holly pink ground with champleved holly Thimble Society of London winter 1989 limited to 450 TTG December 1992







Peter Carver

I first came into contact with Peter Carver from Solihull in West Midlands in 2013 thru a Canadian thimble collector

she encouraged Peter to try painting thimbles

Carver's specialty is painting birds – see for yourself his quirky, almost humorous style

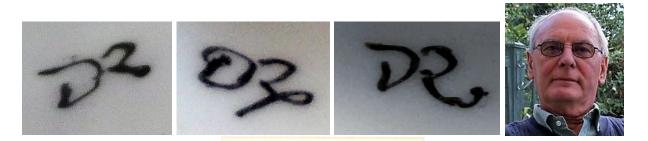
on his retirement, with interests in professional watercolour painting, furniture restoration and painting enamel boxes amongst many others, with typography and graphic design in his working life, he accepted the challenge

having a kiln, Peter was able to make his own china thimbles – he gilded some of his apexes and these are distinctive as the gold only covers the immediate indentations

he experimented with poly clay, which enabled him to try sculpted thimbles Carver's thimbles are signed <u>PC</u> (but look like DR): you can see for yourself with three examples

the thimble names are those of the painter but not lettered within thimble

(2013-2014) but thimbles are not dated



Certificate of Authentication Hand painted thimbles by Peter Carver



Peter also painted on enamel







Nigel Creed - Ken Russell

Creed is a Master Painter and worked at Royal Worcester in 1963

Russell (1934-2010) was Royal Worcester's last Master Gilder

Thimble Society of London commissioned Nigel and Ken to produce handpainted thimbles for sale thru their thimble catalogues (1987-1999)

Nigel signed his thimbles with his initials <u>NC</u> on the outside near the painted part Ken was the gilder and used 24ct gold. Sometimes the apex is gilded. <u>Russell</u> is signed inside Ken had retired by 2004. He gilded thimbles for other thimble painters

names used are purely descriptive, not being named by the painters – thimbles are not dated Royal Worcester collectors will recognise many of these designs as those that came from the factory, given a modern look



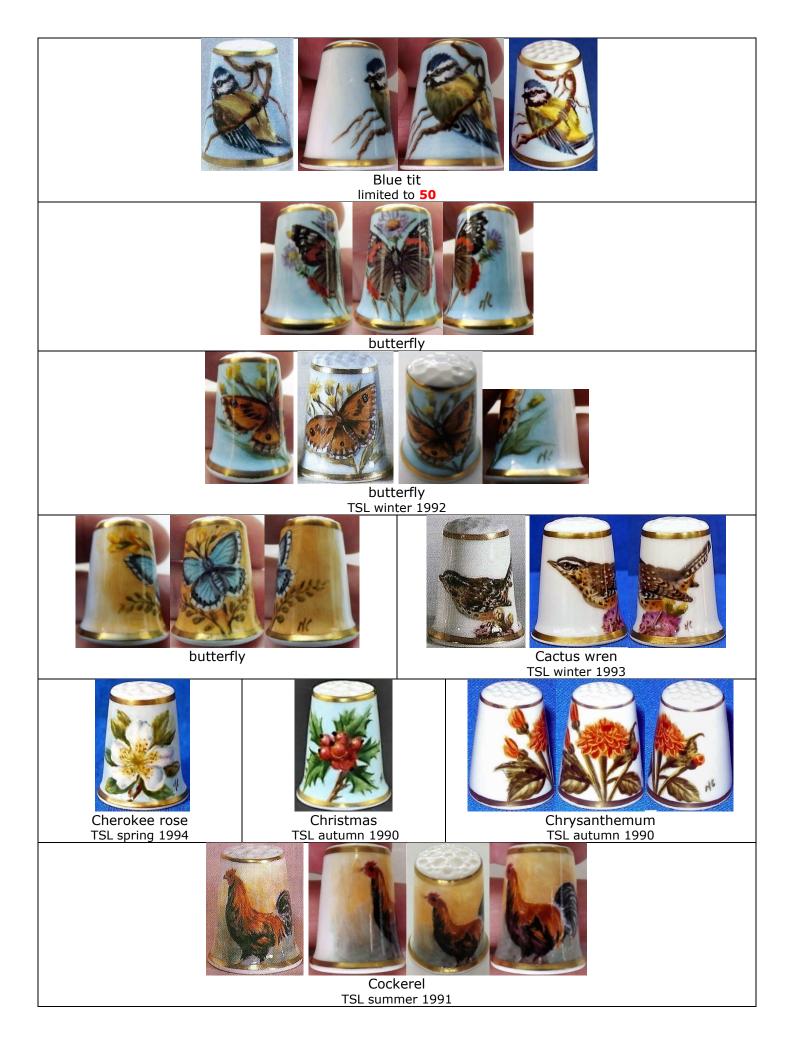


Ken Russell 2010



Creed also painted on enamel















Janice Daughters

Daughters is an artist in Leyburn, Wensleydale North Yorkshire

trained in graphic design, Janice moved from London to set up her studio in 1986, where she was able to freelance in graphic design

she had developed a love for the countryside, with its flora and fauna as an added interest, she began to paint on porcelain and china, including thimbles her signature details are on the inside rim and the date is included (1991-1997)









Robert Earwicker China Cottage, Cornwall his characters are made of Cornish clay – quirky



Raymond Everill

Everill works out of <u>Lime House Studio</u> in Staffordshire, since he retired from Spode his trade mark is <u>Raymond Everill & Sons England</u> you can't mistake his bright pink signature <u>R.Everill</u> thimbles are not named – some are dated (1988-1989) the apex is painted with 22ct gold





Vivienne J Evison

Evison runs Lyme Studio in Cheshire with her husband Paul (she was first identified by TTG as Christine) her thimbles are of fine bone china finished in 22-24ct gold many of her thimbles are painted using precious metals – no two are ever the same signed <u>Vivienne J Everill</u> or <u>V.J.E</u> (1992-1997)





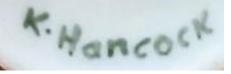
Helen Halloran Halloran worked for <u>Royal Worcester</u>, <u>Halcyon Days</u> and <u>Elliot Hall Enamels</u> her bone china thimbles are one-off pieces apexes are painted with 24ct gold these six flower thimbles are from 2022 not signed



Keith Hancock

Hancock worked for <u>Sutherland</u> in Stoke-on-Trent and <u>Caverswall</u>, handpainting thimbles for their brand these are not decaled as the bulk of the Sutherland and Caverswall thimbles were they are all signed – and numbered inside when they are limited in number
The Thimble Guild commissioned two sets of thimbles from Hancock in 1983 signature is <u>K.Hancock</u> or <u>Keith Hancock</u>. The black signature is signed inside











Agneta Hickley Rimpton Yeovil

Rimpton Yeovil her thimbles all have a scalloped gold-painted rim Hickley's thimbles have painting all round – except her bird thimbles



Neil Higgins

Higgins first came to my attention as the handpainter of the Robin Hood set of six character head thimbles, with the brand name of <u>Healacraft</u>, using the initials of <u>NH</u> inside the thimbles his name has also been associated with Sutherland. I speculate that's where he learnt his skills as a handpainter of thimbles?

Neil's signature of <u>N.Higgins</u> is always lettered in brown in his thimbles and may be found lettered on either the inside or outside

thimbles are not dated - earliest date I have found is 1983 (mail order thimble catalogues). He painted thimbles for a short period 1983-1985, Higgins often uses a blue wash as the ground for his painting Higgins undertook commissions thru The Thimble Guild – including a few of pets he subsequently painted for Staffordshire Enamels (1995)









 $\label{eq:Bruce Higham} Bruce \ Higham \ (BH)$ Higham is a ex-Coalport and Staffordshire Enamels (1995) painter Worcester-based heavily painted gold apexes and thick gold painted rims some seem to have pale lettering on the cream ground

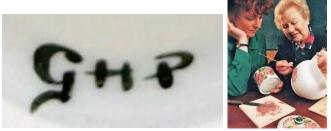




Griselda Hill

Wemyss Ware was founded in 1882 in Fife Scotland. It took its name from a nearby Castle in the 1920s the studio moved to Devon – it closed in 1957 in 1985 Griselda revived the <u>Wemyss Ware</u>® style handpainting to their style at her <u>The Griselda Hill Pottery Ltd</u>® in Kirkcaldy, Fife the most recognisable style has a rim of painted blue scallop - signed inside <u>GHP https://wemyssware.co.uk</u>

thimbles are still produced but currently out of stock. They may be ordered



Hill at L



flower	flower	flower	flower
flower	flower		flower
lemon	orange		plums
violet			

Milwyn Holloway

Holloway (b.1940) is a Royal Worcester trained artist (1954-1971) there he specialised in painting birds most of Milwyn's thimbles since then have no inner markings some examples have a generic backstamp the thimble backstamp used is for <u>Claymore Ceramics</u> Milwyn's bird thimbles are always signed <u>MH</u> near the bird thimbles are not dated, nor are the birds named





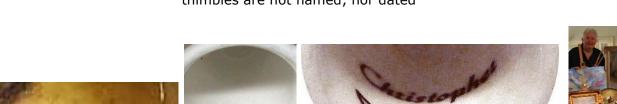


Highland cow

Christopher Hughes

Hughes (born 1948) began his apprenticeship with Royal Worcester in 1960 and branched out on his own in January 1980

he has a studio in Holly Green Worcestershire where he painted thimbles from 1987 the backstamp inside the thimble is <u>The Christopher Hughes Collection</u> or <u>Christopher Hughes</u> (later) his thimbles are signed <u>Christopher Hughes</u> on the outer rim thimble apexes are completely gilded, and sometimes they join the upper gilt line – he uses a thicker rim of gilding than other British painters. All are painted on fine bone china thimbles are painted all round even if the verso is just a pale matching wash thimbles are not named, nor dated









Julie Menzies

Menzies grew up the Biggar area in the lowlands of Scotland

she was never formally trained in art tho painting was a passionate hobby

Julie worked in the despatch section of The Thimble Guild (TTG) in Biggar until the owner, Arthur Bell, discovered her artistic abilities

in 1993 she began to handpaint thimbles commissioned and personalised by thimble collectors thru TTG – painting their pets, homes, gardens etc

she specialises in portraits and for five years Menzies was the TGG's chief thimble artist she became their chief designer of art in 1998-2005, which required her to create thimble designs these were translated into lithographs or transfers/decals

tho her thimbles seem to be handpainted, all Menzies thimbles after 1998 are decaled thimbles handpainted portraits fill the entire front of thimble – her decal thimble portraits are more cameo sized her handpainted thimbles bear the signatures J.M., Julie. M. or Julie Menzies on fine bone china with 22ct gold rims

Menzies can handpaint three thimbles a day – no wonder they were offered in limited editions some thimbles will have the backstamp <u>The Thimble Guild</u>

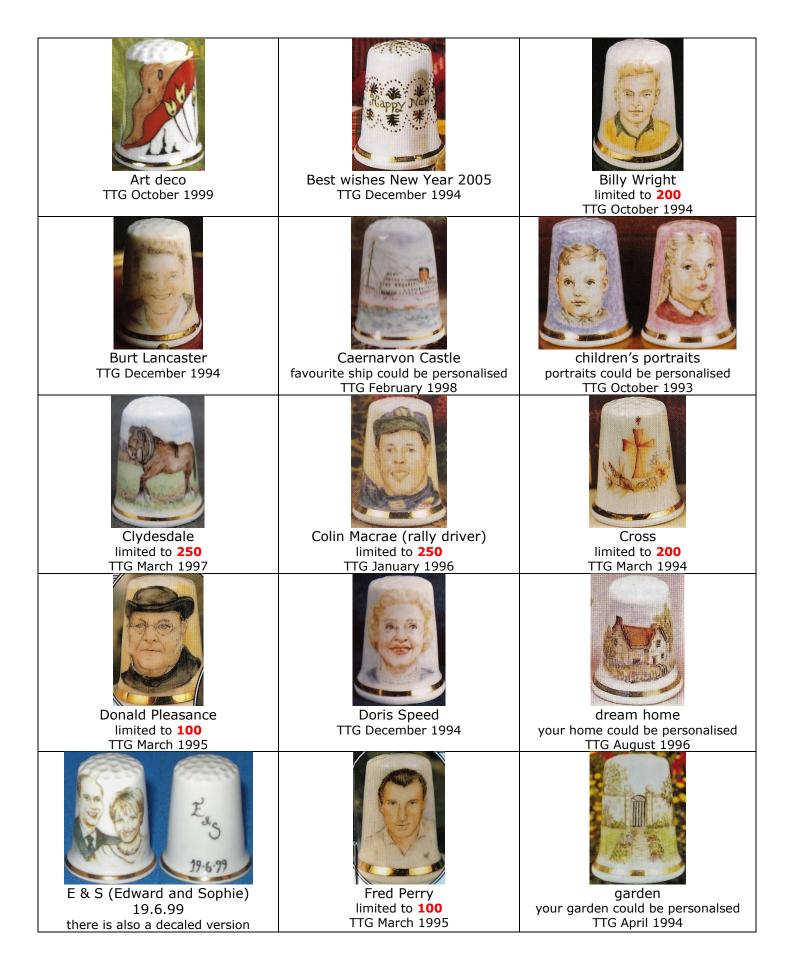
Julie was also a designer for Sutherland China



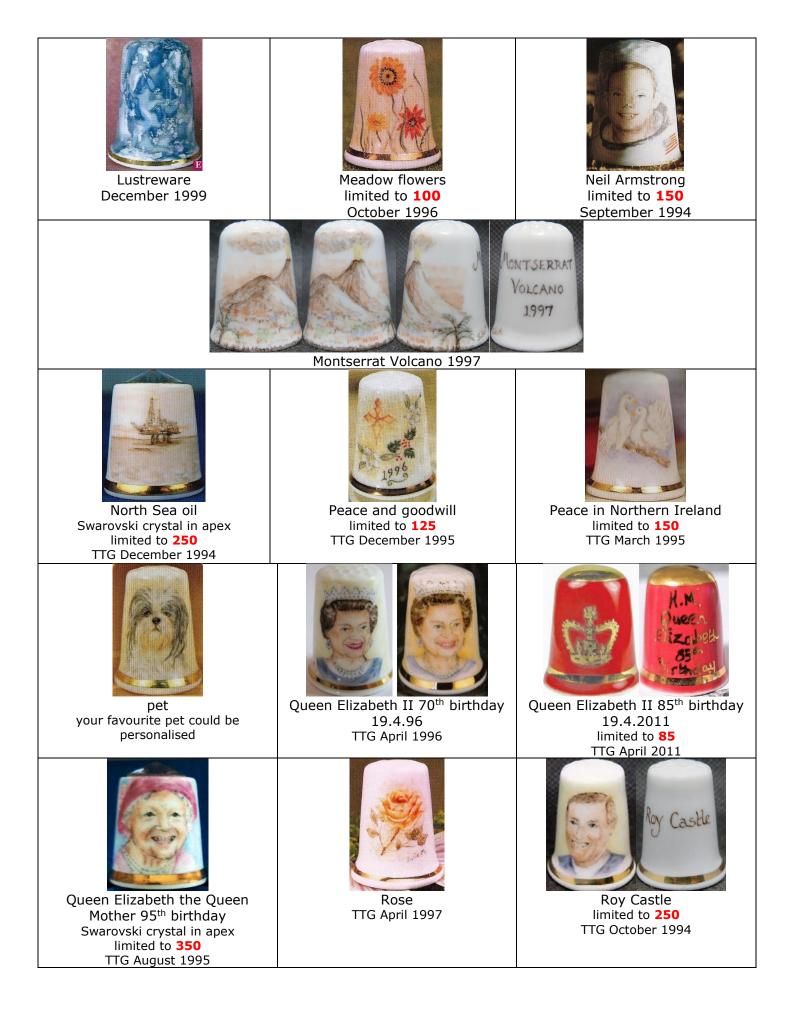


Menzies January 1991 and 1999













Dorothy Mortimer-Coy (DML-C)

Flowercraft Sponden Derby

former Royal Crown Derby artist

her thimbles are signed inside – further information is on a sticker on base of thimble box





Peter Platt

Platt (born 1935) was commissioned by The Thimble Society of London to paint thimbles in 1990s for sale thru their catalogues

he is Royal Worcester trained (from 1951)

Peter's thimbles, once he left RW, are uniquely his own: plenty of gilding and the subjects are set in an ornate cameo

signature is <u>P Platt</u> which can usually be found in the lowest part of the cameo





Ryoko Ottignon

Ryoko's studio - Ottignons of Norfolk – is in Starston where she is the hand decorator and ceramist Ottignon's thimbles are based on copies of Georgian designs from 1780s – designs found on cups and saucers of Lowestoft (1757-1802) and New Hall (1781-1835) porcelain factories maker's mark in the form of a sandglass ii burnished gold is painted on the inside (it may look like the Roman numeral for ten when the dot isn't clear) her thimbles require five firings to fix the colours and glaze on the cream porcelain

thimbles are presented in thimble boxes handturned in mahogony and waxed to give an antique patina accompanied by a signed, dated and numbered certificate – the list of what else Ottignons retails is listed on the verso of each certificat

the glaze has crazed with age on her white thimbles

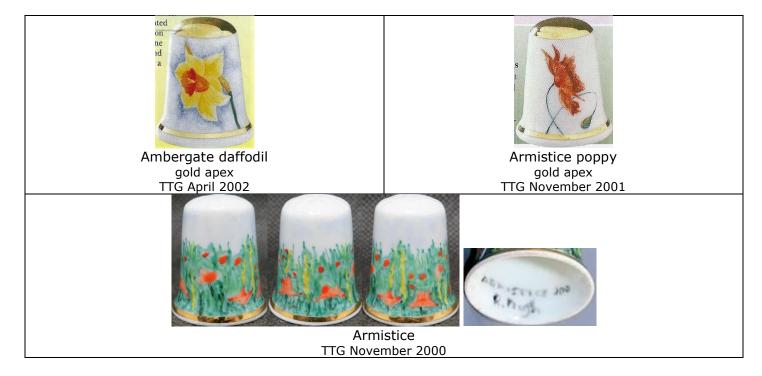




Rachel Pugh

Pugh handpainted bone china thimbles for The Thimble Guild from September 2000 she was also a designer at TTG from 2000-2005 where her art was translated into decals Pugh was born in Cumbria. She lives in Cyprus where she still designed thimbles for TTG Rachel's signature <u>R.Pugh</u> is on the inside of the thimble, often using gold paint if the thimble is named, it is lettered inside











Roger Shufflebotham (R.A.S.) Shufflebotham was an early painter for Caverswall he is known as a marine artist his thimbles are signed R.A.S. fruit Thames barges limited to 40 H.M.S Victory limited to 40 TTG April 1983 b&w photo TTG June 1983

b&w photo

James Skerrett (JS)

Skerrett trained at Royal Worcester

in 2012 he was the artist-in-residence at the Worcester Porcelain Museum James's <u>J Skerrett</u> signature is found on the outside. Earlier thimbles signed <u>JS</u> there are several varities of decaled marks inside Skerret thimbles





Autumn fruits TTG September 2012





Christmas roses with hedgerow berries TTG December 2012



Remembrance poppy with cornflowers and marguerites TTG October 2012



bird



signed 'JS'



roses

Ann Taylor Scotland signed <u>A Taylor</u>





Trude Crafts

Penmaenmaer, Wales

I have seen some of her thimbles that are decaled





Bryn Weightman Gwahaniaeth Crafts, Wales Weightman, wife his wife Doris paints his bone china thimbles mainly as figures – some of his thimbles have caps or hats of polymer clay – they are outside this study signed Bryn





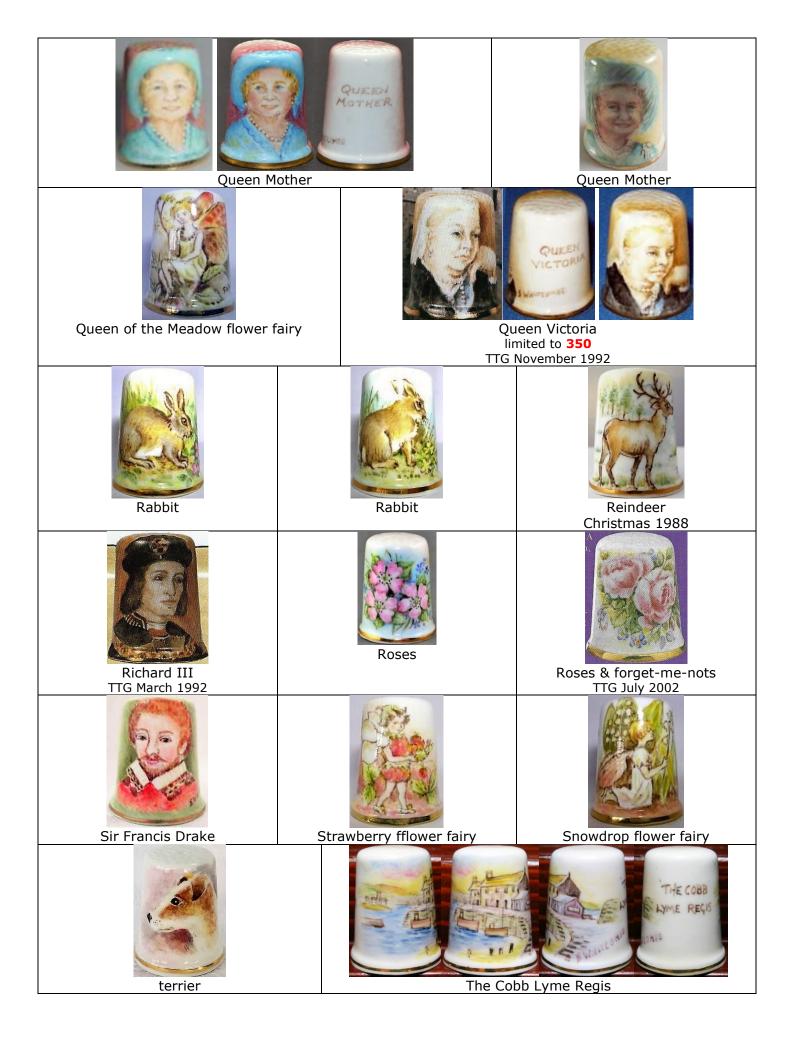
Sheila Whitcombe

Whitcombe (nee Watson) began painting portraits at 16 she became a modeller for Royal Worcester, so never painted thimbles for them Sheila paints under the name of <u>Dunheved</u> from Cornwall signed <u>S Whitcombe</u> on the front of bone china thimbles – sometimes inside, in lower case Dunheved thimbles are unusually large measuring 30-35cm in height this gives the artist a larger surface to paint she needed specialised knowledge of ceramic oxides to paint her historical figures with their jewel colours the name is lettered on the outside verso Sheila's painting may creep onto the apex to complete the picture her artwork is quite pale – the colours here are stronger for clearer pictures last thimble seen 2005 mail order catalogues









Thrift flower fairy	Unicorn	Weston Super Mare	
United the second super Mare			

Derek Wilson

Wilson is a Royal Worcester trained artist, 1930-1954 he paints under the name of <u>Dunheved</u> from Cornwall, in his studio near Launceston signed <u>D Wilson</u>, often cleverly camouflaged, on the outside of the bone china thimble Dunheved thimbles are unusually large measuring 30-35cm in height ('generously sized') this gives the artist a larger surface to paint

being a birdwatcher and a wildlife artist, Derek's thimbles are painted around British birds, wildflowers and animals, and some of the Cornish countryside also feature. The latter may have been sold all over Cornwall?

bird name is lettered on inside rim – places on the outside verso when the number painted is limited, the number is printed on the inside Derek works on two sizes of Dunheved thimbles – the smaller size thimblette is used in the catalogues. These were used more frequently towards the end of his career last thimble seen thru TTG was July 2011



green Dunheved mark is from late 1970s when smaller sized thimbles were used - not signed



Anne Hathaway's cottage limited to 250 TTG May 1992	AvocetTTG June 2005	Fadger	Badger and robin limited to 195 TTG January 1998
Badgers	Badgers	Barn owl	Barred owl
TTG July 1998	TTG June 2009	TTG June 2004	TTG July 2004
Bearded tit	Black grouse	Black grouse	AVE 44
TTG May 2005	TTG October 2005	TTG January 2007	Black redstart
Black tailed godwit	Blackbird TTG December 2002	Figure Blackbirds TTG January 2007	Blackbirds
Blackcap	Blue tit	Blue tit	Bluethroats
TTG February 2006	TTG December 2002	TTG June 2010	TTG October 2006
Brambling TTG September 2003	Bramblings TTG May 2006	Budgerigars TTG August 2004	Bullfinch limited to 150 TTG June 1994

Learn more about Modern British handpainted china thimbles

TTG June 1994 Page | **65** of 97

Bullfinch limited to 200 TTG June 1998	Bullfinch TTG July 2004	bunny	Chaffinch limited to 125 TTG September 1999
Chaffinch TTG May 2005	Chaffinch	Chaffinch	Chaffinches TTG July 2007
Cheddar Gorge	Chiffchaff TTG January 2013	Choughs TTG September 2005	Christmas rose Christmas 1990
Church with sheep	Cirl bunting	Cockerel and hen TTG June 2004	Collered (sic) doves
Some butterfly TTG February 2011	Corky the Cock limited to 200 TTG October 1993	Cornish cottage	TTG August 2007 Fornish Tin Mine – Levant 1983

rested tit TTG March 2005	Curlew TTG June 2007	Dabchicks TTG August 2007	Dartford warbler limited to 200 TTG August 2000
Devon estuary – Polperro limited to 150 TTG April 1993	bipper TTG August 2006	Dormouse TTG March 2004	Ducks
Eagle owl TTG September 2002	English cottage TTG June 1991	Field fare	Firecrest TTG September 2003
Fox and robin limited to 150 TTG February 1999	Frenchman's Creek	Fruit TTG March 2004	Geese limited to 150 TTG November 1997
Gloucester Old Spot pig TTG April 1995	Goldcrests	Golden eagle TTG October 2008	Golden Hind

Golden oriole TTG November 2004	Golden plover TTG March 2006	Goldfinch TTG February 2005	Goldfinch TTG March 2009
Goldfinch	Goosanders TTG January 2008	Goose	Great crested grebe TTG June 2005
Great spotted woodpecker limited to 100 TTG December 1995	Great tit TTG August 2001	Green woodpecker	Greenfinch TTG April 2004
Greenland falcon TTG January 2007	Grey seals	Grey thrush TTG July 2002	Grey Wagtail TTG April 2006
Grey wagtail	TTG April 1998	Hare TTG July 2011	Hare and robin Christmas 1996
Harvest mouse	Hedgehog limited to 150 TTG April 1993	Hedgehog TTG November 1996	Hedgehog and robin
Learn more about Modern British			Page 68 of 97

Learn more about Modern British handpainted china thimbles

Heron TTG June 2005	Highland cattle limited to 150 TTG February 1996	Image: A state of the state	Fouse Christmas 1998
Four and the second sec	House-sparrows TTG May 2008	Jack Russell TTG April 1994	Jamaica Inn TTG April 2002
Jay TTG January 2005	Kestrels TTG November 2007	Kingfisher	Kingfisher limited to 200 TTG June 1993
Kittiwakes nesting TTG July 2005	Knot TTG June 2008	Lapwing	Eesser spotted woodpecker
Linnets	Long eared owl	Long tailed tit TTG February 2009	Looe
ed s s Lovebirds TTG June 2006	With the second seco	the t a wrd n, d a m Mandarin ducks	Meadow pipit TTG September 2010

Learn more about Modern British handpainted china thimbles



Partridge & rabbit Christmas 2006	Partridges Christmas 2006	Feacock	Penguin Christmas 1991
Peregrine falcon TTG October 2004	Pheasant TTG December 2001	Pheasant and partridges Christmas 1989	Pheasant and partridges TTG December 2005
Pheasants limited to 195 TTG December 1992	Pheasants TTG December 2007	Pied flycatchers TTG October 2006	Pink cockatoo TTG July 2003
Polar bears Christmas 1992	Polperro	Ptarmigan TTG October 2005	PuffinTTG February 1994
Puffin TTG October 2003	de de de de de de de de de de	R.M.S Titanic sank 2.20am April 15 1912	Red fox TTG October 1994
Red grouse limited to 175 TTG August 1993	Red grouse TTG July 2006	Red squirrel TTG July 2009	Red starts

Redwing	Redwings	Redwings	Reed buntings
TTG February 1994	TTG February 1994	TTG February 2008	TTG April 2008
Ringed plovers	Robin	Robin	Robin
TTG January 2008	1986	Christmas 1987	TTG November 1995
Robin	Robin	Robin	Robin
TTG November 1997	TTG November 2000	TTG January 2003	TTG January 2005
Robin	Robin	Robin	Robin
TTG November 2005	TTG November 2006	Christmas 2007	TTG December 2007
Robin	Robin	Robins	robins
with house	with blue tit	TTG November 2005	
Rose-coloured starling TTG April 2007	nd hy vn es us a Rock-Pipit	Ruby throated hummingbird TTG May 2003	Ruff TTG September 2007

Sanderling TTG June 2008	Sand-martins TTG May 2008	Scops owl TTG June 2003	Sheep limited to 145 TTG September 1996
Shepherds	Shore-lark	Sidmouth	Skylark
Christmas 2000	TTG September 2007		TTG May 2007
Snipe	Snow bunting	Snow goose	Snowman
TTG April 2008	TTG January 2001	TTG November 2003	
Snowman	Snowman	Snowman	Snowman toboganning
Christmas 1990	Christmas 1997	TTG November 2000	TTG November 1994
Snowy owl TTG November 2003	Snowy owl	Somerset cottage	Song thrush TTG May 1994
Song thrush Christmas 2006	Sparrowhawk	ed ds ed is et s d s d s d s d s d s d s d s d s d s	Squirrel TTG November 2001







Georgina Winkley (GMW) Wales





Anne Young

Young's barge or canal ware painting is uniquely British she certainly mastered this folk art form in the miniature size required to paint on thimbles most of her thimbles are signed and some are dated – they range from 1980s-1990s Anne's thimbles are signed on the inner rim <u>Anne Young</u> – lettered upside down dates when included are also inside there are traditional background colours and the lovely gloss adds to their appeal it's the trim around the rim where one sees the details the main design is replicated on the verso Young also paints wooden thimbles



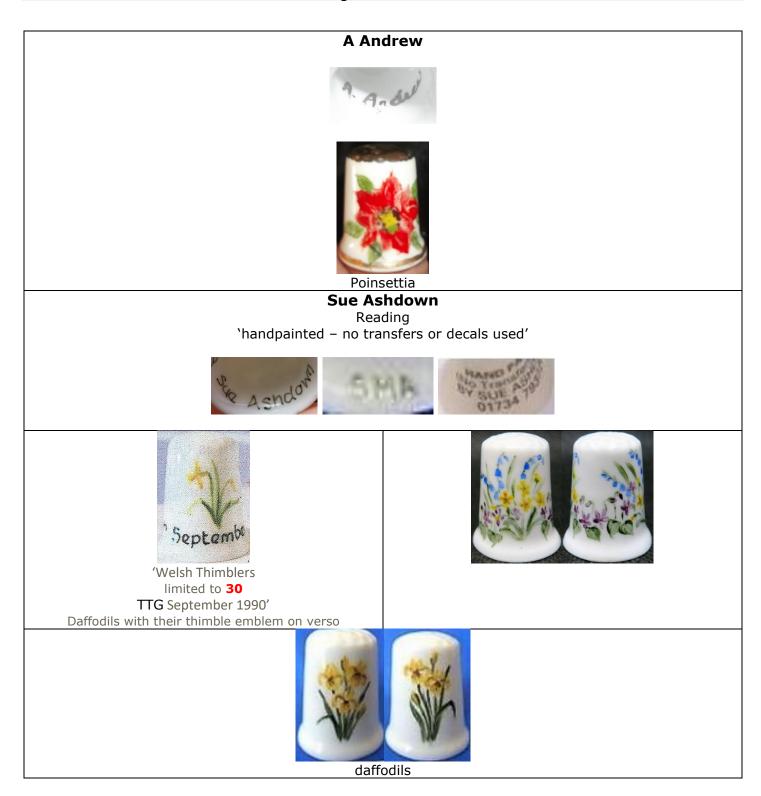
L: 1998 – her book – sticky label

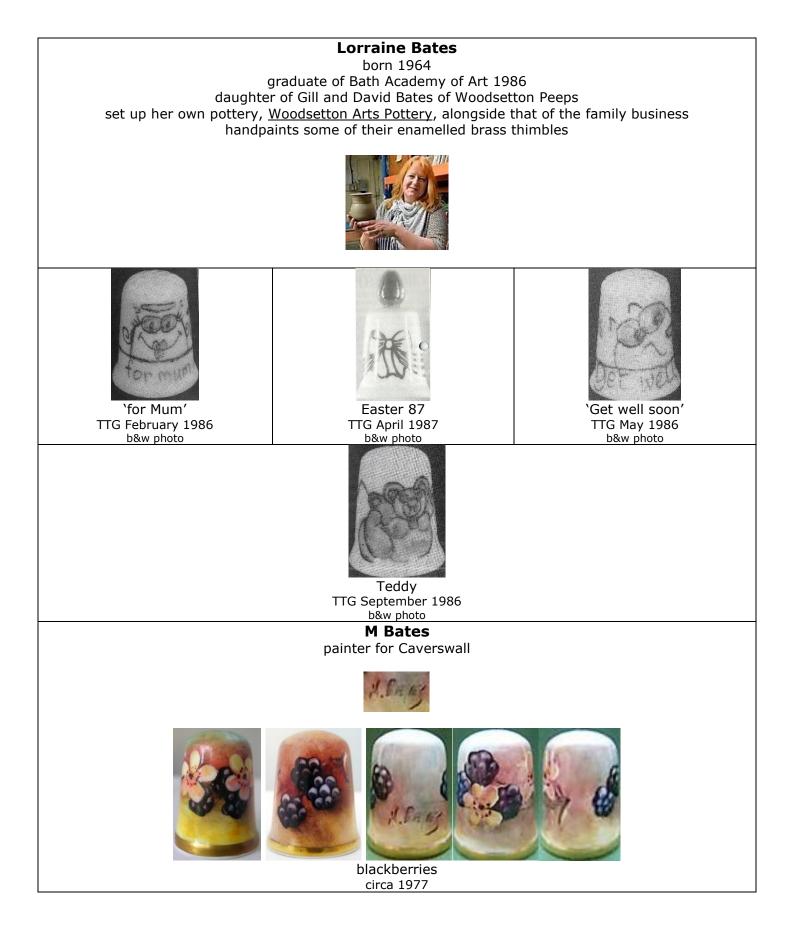


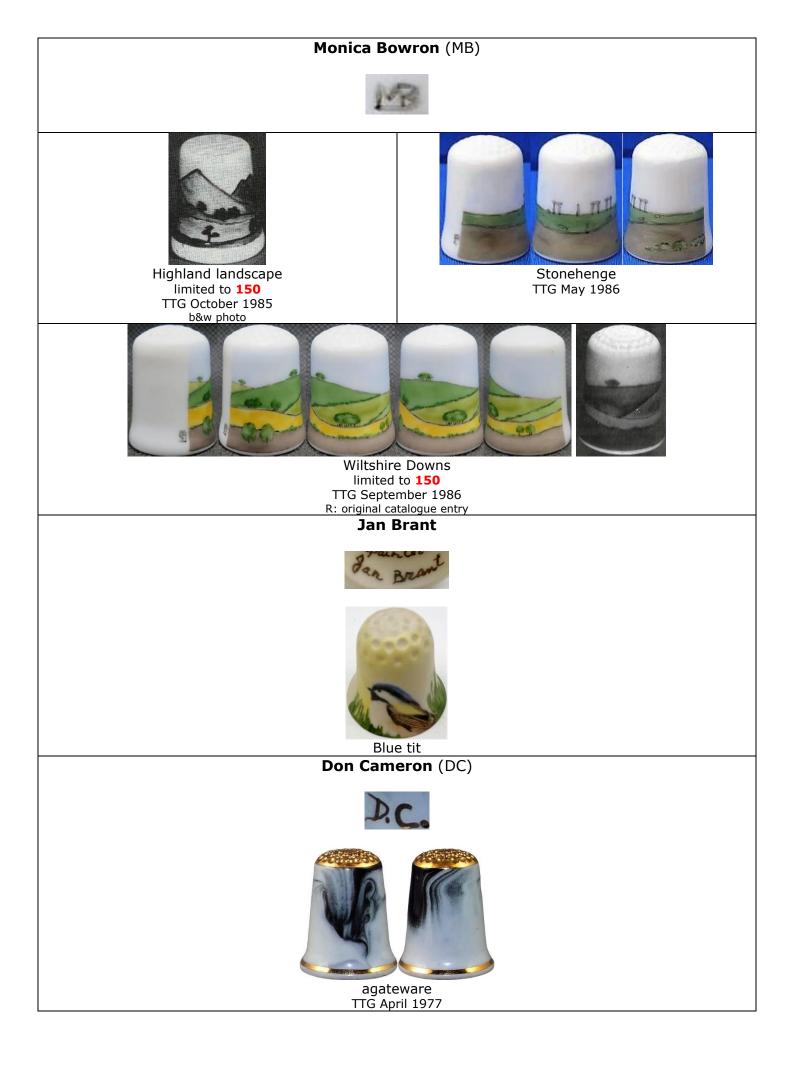
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green	green	red 1998
red	distinctive yellow rim	white

Other painters - named

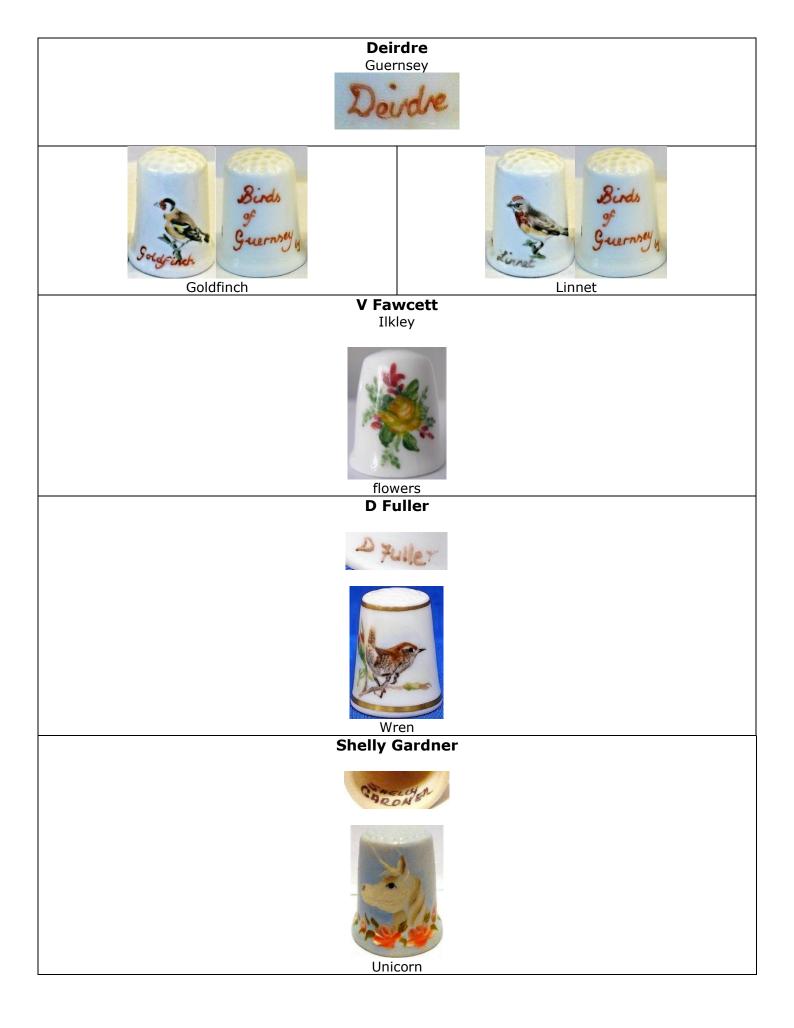


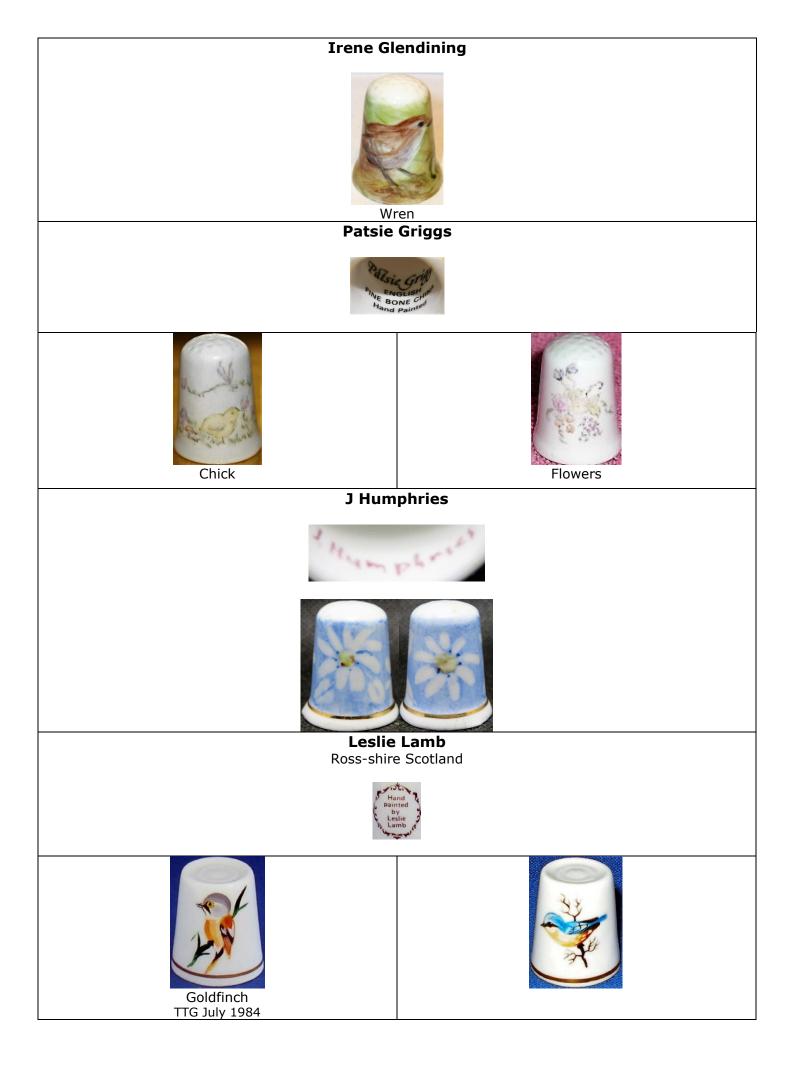


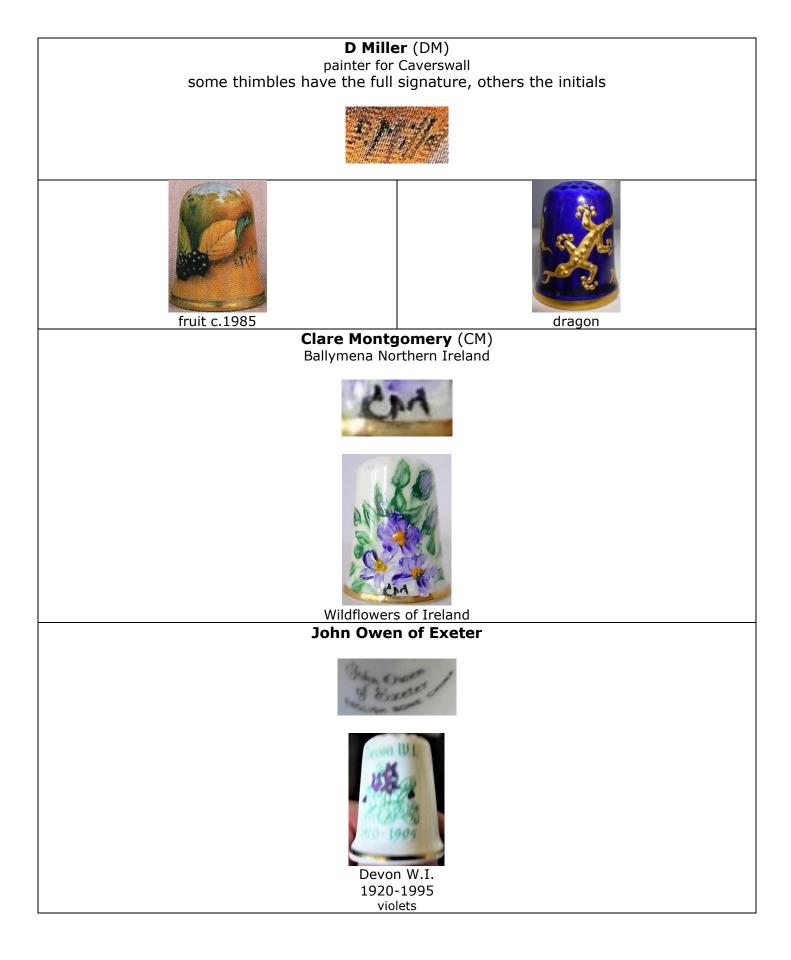


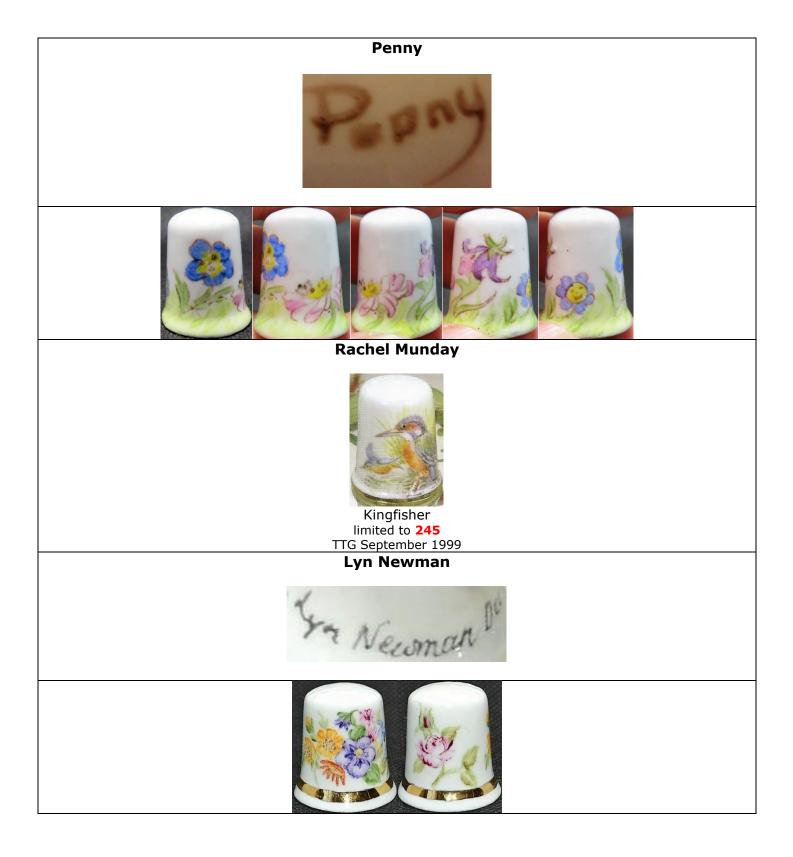


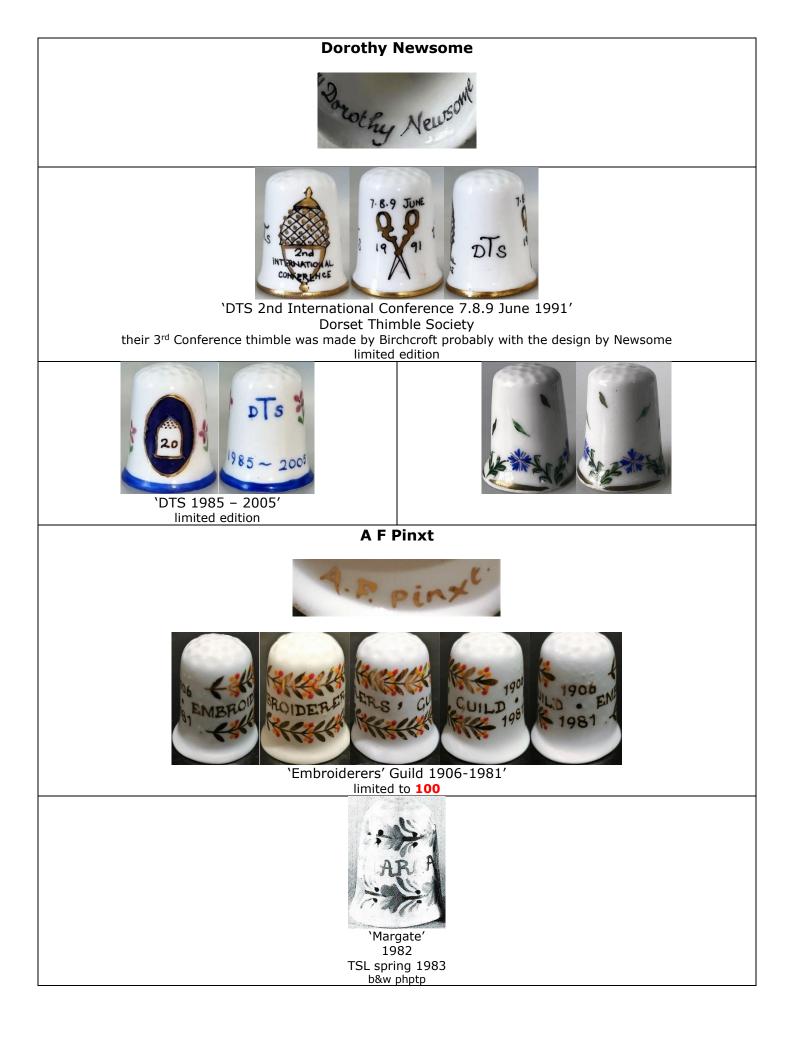


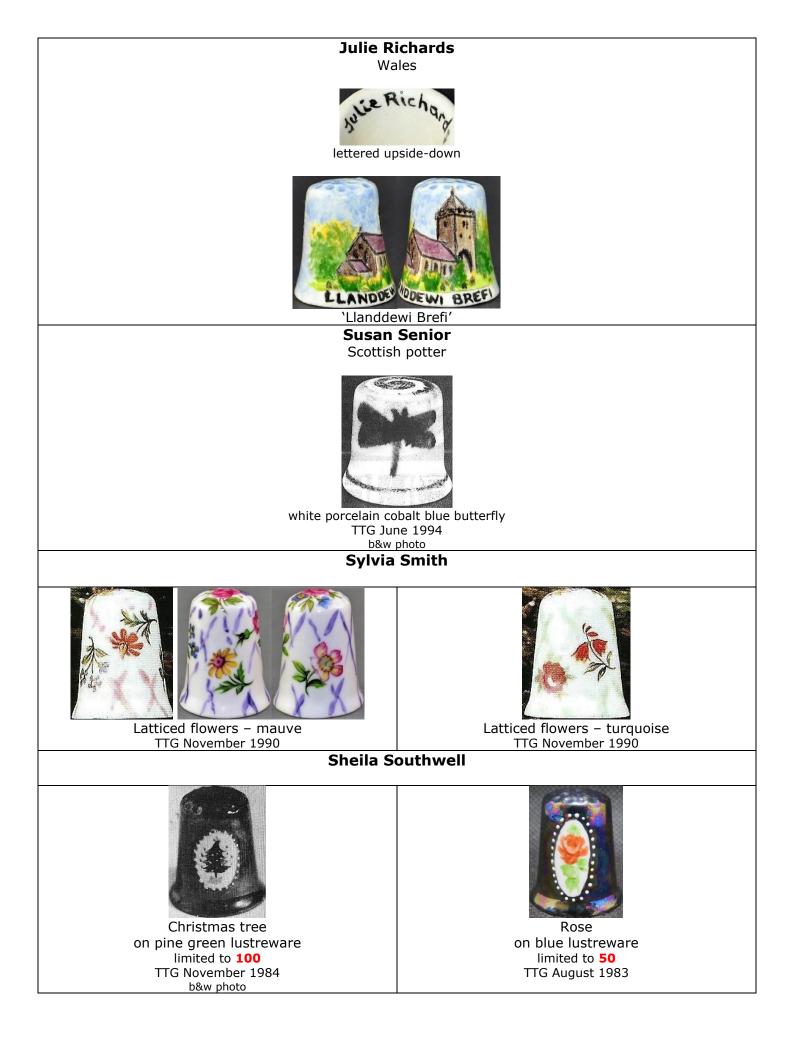








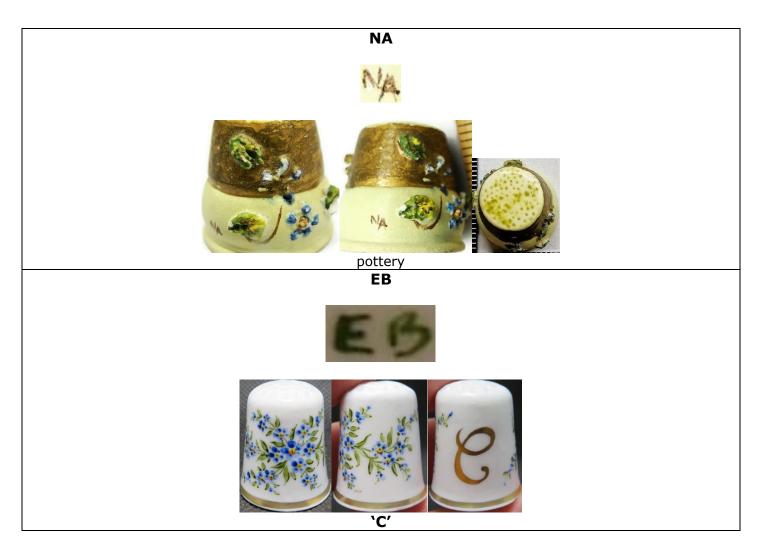


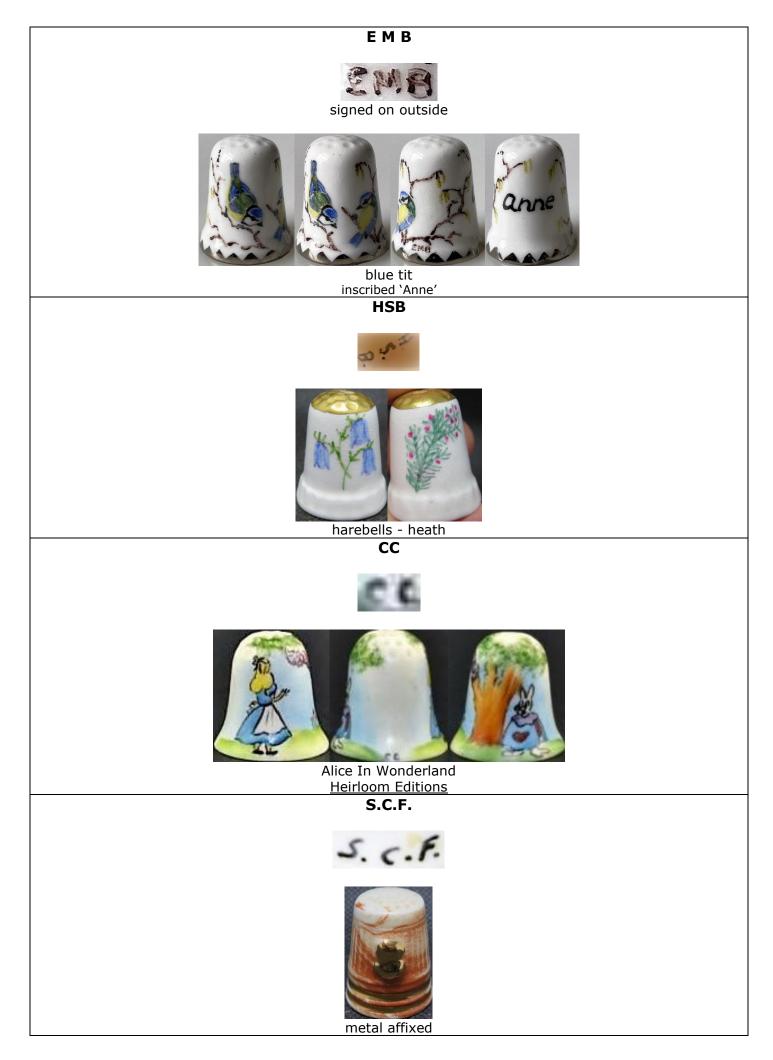


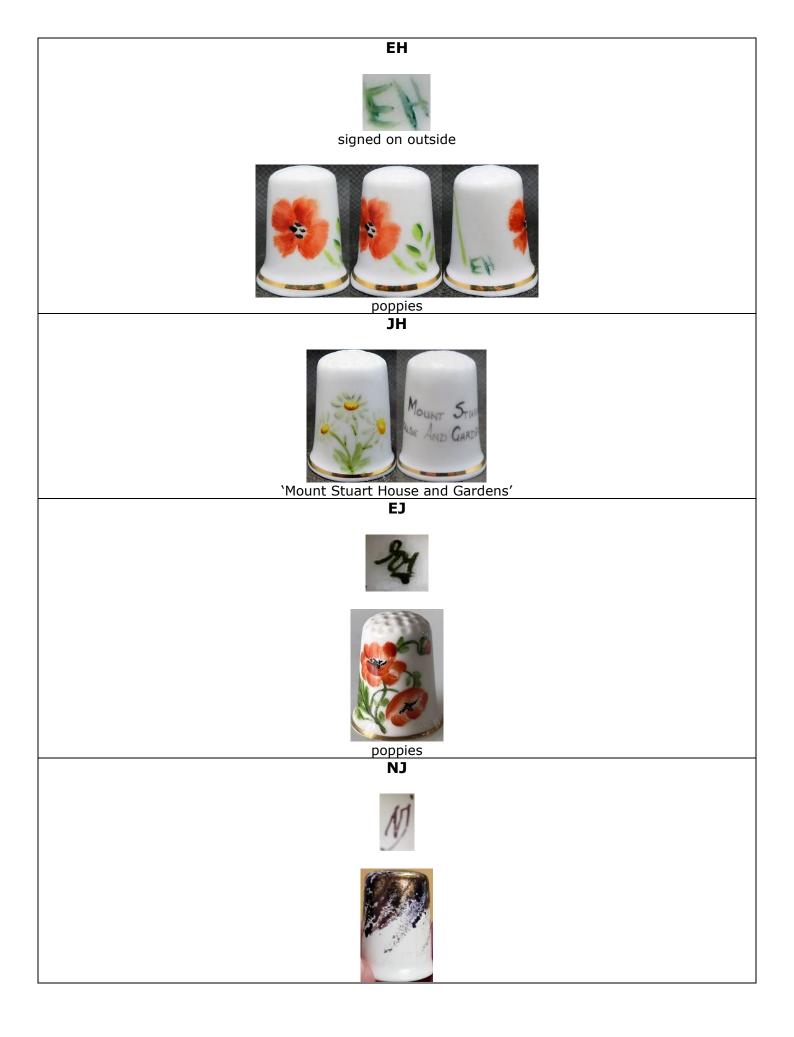


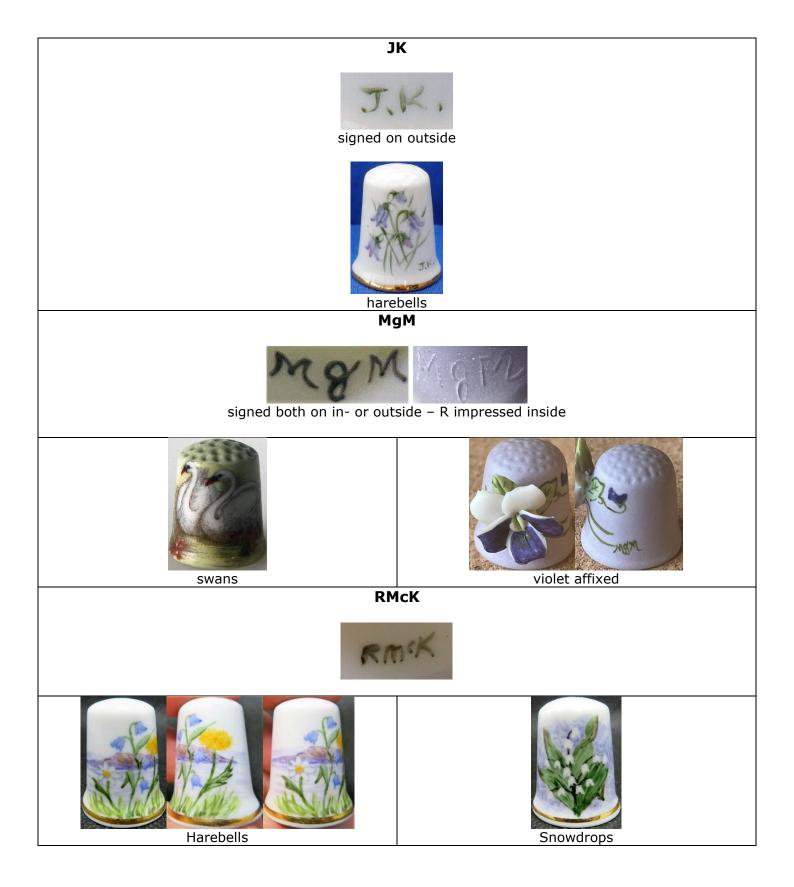


Other painters – initials only (arranged in order by last initial)

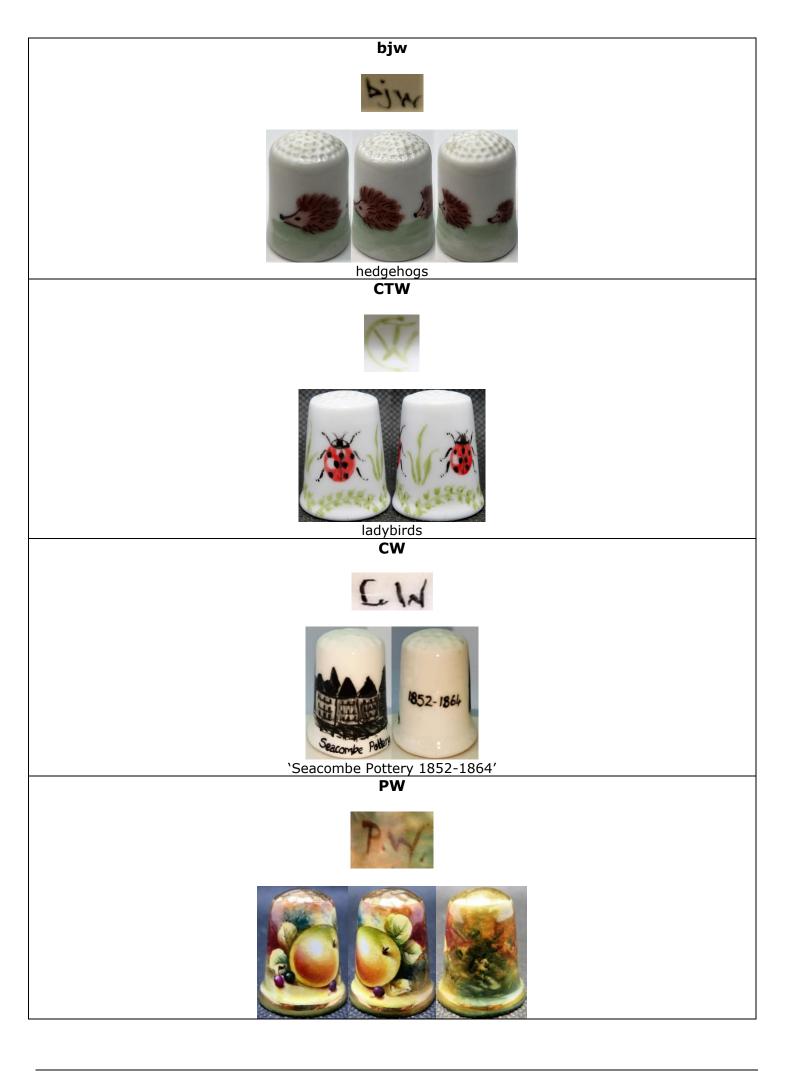








RSM				
RSM				
violets 1984				
JMN				
signed on outside				
pansy For the second se	primrose			
RS				



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This listing of Modern British handpainted china 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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