

Mason's ironstone china thimbles

ENGLAND

The very first thimble that I ever purchased was one made by Mason's. This was back in 1983 and there was a treasure trove of collectables china for sale at Wayne's, in Benoni South Africa. It was a sad day for me when this store closed not long after. I had been attracted by the rust and navy colouring of the floral design.

Mason's history of ironstone production goes back a long way, to 1813 when Charles James Mason took out his patent. Interesting the Mason's thimbles backstamp includes the word 'Patent' ie Patent Ironstone, in their backstamp. For most of the nineteenth century Mason's dinnerware was highly prized in their monochrome designs. They were based in Staffordshire, England.

As far as I can find out, Johnson Bros were the only other manufacturers producing ironstone thimbles.

These sturdy thimbles featured in the 1980 the Franklin Mint's "Thimbles of the World's Greatest Porcelain Houses" of 25. Was this Mason's first thimble production as has been evidenced by other makers in the set? Strangely by the time of the "The Hallmarked Thimbles of the World's Great Porcelain Houses" set commissioned by the Thimble Collectors Club [TCC] in 1985, no Mason's thimble was included. TCC issued only one Mason's thimble for their members in 1987 - known as "Brocade". I can find no information on when Mason's finished making thimbles, but it was probably in the 1980s.

I recently found a clipping from a 1980s magazine, which offered a set of 18 Mason's floral or posies ironstone thimbles - I have marked them with an * and the designs were not named in that advert. Most have the decal repeated on the verso.

Mason's produced a few thematic or commemorative thimbles - for Christmas, Easter, where none are dated - and a monochrome pair in brown on the occasion of the marriage of Charles and Diana (not dated either).

Very few of the patterns are named and as most are of a floral nature it is a difficult topic to arrange. First off are the named thimbles in ABC order. After that, the flower names are guessed at - the third section are the totally unknown designs.

There is no consistency as to the application of the gilded lines. The most usual found on Mason's thimbles is a single gold band - on the rim. Some of the designs have two forms of the gilded bands and by coincidence they mainly have the large crown green backstamp?

Like other china thimble manufacturers in the 1980s, there are several examples where the decal has been placed upside down.

Have you noticed that some of your Mason's thimbles from 1980s that the glaze has crazed? This seems to occur with Mason's items made in that era, which includes other items in their range.



Mason's thimble boxes



Mason's thimble backstamps

In my opinion the large crown backstamp is the original. There are far fewer of these recorded two sizes of the crown, includes lettering "Patent Ironstone"

L - small green crown - C large green crown

R - small brown crown

see also: maroon backstamp for the Charles and Diana thimbles



abbreviated green backstamp which omits "Patent Ironstone" and "Made In England"
so these thimbles would have been produced offshore
are they still made of ironstone?

Mason's thimbles



Art Nouveau
on both sides
two gold bands



Brocade
on both sides
Thimble Collectors Club



Charles and Diana

"To celebrate the wedding of H.R.H Prince Charles the Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer"

Undated

maroon lettering and backstamp

[in Queensland we pronounce that marone!!]



Christmas - bells
undated
small crown green backstamp
R: wreath decal upside down



Christmas - Santa
handpainted
undated
L : single gold rim
large crown green backstamp
R: two gold bands



Christmas - stockings
robin
undated



Christmas - tree
undated
small crown green backstamp



Dahlia
on both sides *
L: two gold bands
large crown green backstamp
R: single gold band



Fruit Basket



Happy Easter
undated
small crown green backstamp



Happy Easter
undated



Happy Easter
undated



Mandalay

Blue colourway
navy stems & red flowers
on both sides
the most commonly found
version of Mandalay
small crown green backstamp



Mandalay

Chartreuse
dark green with lighter green
flowers on both sides
I have seen this described as
'Oasis'
small crown green backstamp



Mandalay

Brown Velvet
chocolatey brown stems with
yellow flowers on both sides
R: small crown green backstamp
with fewer yellow flowers



Mandarin

small crown green backstamp



Nabob

on both sides
"Thimbles of the World's Greatest Porcelain Houses"
single gold band
small crown **brown** backstamp

R: no gold band



Monaco *

design all round
two versions – L: two gold bands
large crown green backstamp

R: single gold band
thimble has crazed



Petunia*

two gold bands
L&R: **large** crown green backstamp

R: decal placed upside down
glaze has crazed



Rosette *

creamy brown flowers
on both sides
small crown green backstamp



Summer Bouquet *

two gold bands
L: **large** crown green backstamp

R: the decal is upside down
small crown green backstamp



Tree Flower
Imari-style design
on both sides
small crown green backstamp
L: no upper gold rim



cornflower *
on both sides



daffodil



forget-me-nots *



lily of the valley *
on both sides



morning glory



periwinkle *
on both sides
small crown green backstamp



yellow poppies / Welsh poppy *
on both sides
small crown green backstamp
this also looks a primrose decal



dog or wild rose *
on both sides
small crown green backstamp



yellow rose *
on both sides
small crown green backstamp



yellow rose
on both sides
small crown green backstamp



red rose
on both sides
small crown green backstamp



rose & passion flower
on both sides
small crown green backstamp



rose
upper gold band



rose *
colour variations
R: small crown green backstamp



rose *



rose



sweetpea *



violets *

on both sides – identical decals
used on both versions
L: two gold bands – height 2.5cm
large crown green backstamp
R: single upper gold band, with
knobbly apex – height 2cm
abbreviated green backstamp



*



on both sides *
small crown green backstamp



two gold bands



Contributors

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This listing of Mason's Ironstone 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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