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 over 100 different and unusual materials. 1% of them were created in the late 1800s and during the 19th 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.

For similar topics see
Bog oak thimbles
Glass thimbles
Horn and bone thimbles
Ivory thimbles
Jenny Blair Designs' thimbles

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abalone
see also: paua shell



in acrylic

acetate



France
mother of pearl style

agate



over brass

alabaster

see also: lavender alabaster - pink alabaster – strawberry alabaster – white alabaster



Italy
MR
handpainted



Philadelphia USA
John von Hoelle
L: gold bands
b&w photo



Argentina



Italy



Italy
decals



Penzance UK

amber

fossilised pine resin from Russia



Baltic



Baltic



Baltic



Germany
Birgit Lux



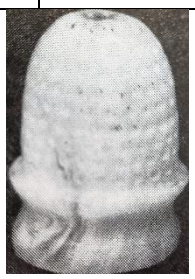
Germany
Fel 2 1987
b&w photo



Germany
Fel 16 1991



Germany



Philadelphia USA
John von Hoelle
b&w photo



Poland



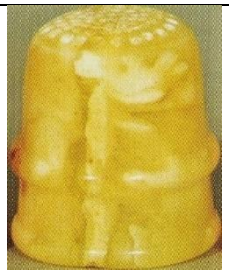
Poland



Russia
Kolletsky
FdF
limited to **150**



South Africa
amber bead ivory apex







mammoth tooth elephant carving atop

amethyst



India
carved lotus
limited to **50**



aventurine



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

bamboo

see also: wicker



China



India
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



Australia
plaited

beads



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Washington USA
Olga Bushkova
over Prym metal thimble
2010-



Mexico
B Kena (Huichol)
over wood



Russia
Olga Malyshkina
over plastic thimbles
2003



Japan
Miyuki



Mexico
Nicholas and Adolina (Huichol)
over ceramic



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




cotton



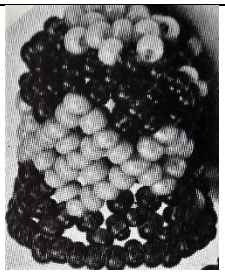
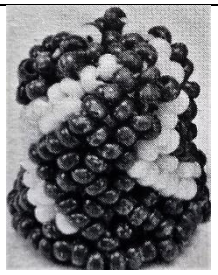



USA
Janet Pitts
Bee – Twin Towers 9-11-01 – candy cane – butterfly – black birds – palms stag - masks
beads glued onto wooden thimbles

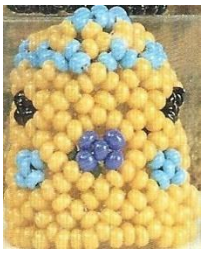


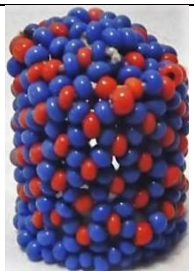



Coventry UK
Jacqui Walker
L: limited to **195**

Denmark
b&w photos





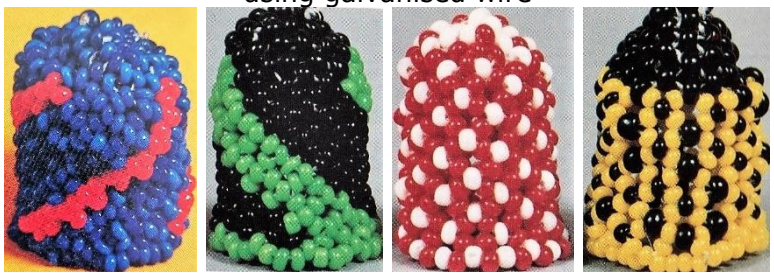
Kenya



Russia
over wood (except bottom row R)
bottom R: rainbow colours limited to **250**
some Matruschka-shaped



South Africa
using galvanised wire



South Africa





South Africa
Zulu beads



South Africa
over plastic



UK
Tailor of Gloucester, Ribby - over wood

bear claw quartz



Argentina



birch bark



Urals, Russia
Alex and Alfiya Guriny

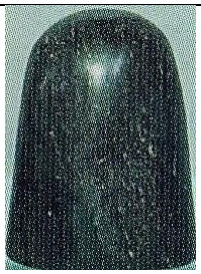
black marble



UK
Caroline and John Smith
marble from Belgium



Taiwan



black onyx



India
carved lotus
limited to **50**

blue onyx



Argentina
Juan Arrieta Quiroga

Blu Tack

commercial putty-like adhesive, Leicester UK 1969-



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

brick



UK
house brick
limited to **750**

calabash



Argentina

Carrara marble

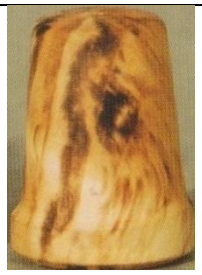




marble mixed with resin

carrot


Finland


Finland


USA

chalk


UK
Kingmaker
bonded resin

coal


Wales
Kingmaker
bonded resin
miner's face (plain and handpainted) – miner - pithead - miner's lamp and tools
all commemorating the end of the 1985 miner's strike
(plain and handpainted limited to **3500**)
some miner's face thimbles are signed EJ for Eddie and Janet


Wellsburg West Virginia USA
compressed

coconut shell



Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil
AP
late 19th 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 19th century
18ct gold apex and clouté studs in two rings



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Philippines
over metal thimble

concrete



UK
Christine and John Smith
created from old pavement

coral



France
carved
19th century

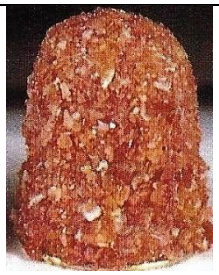




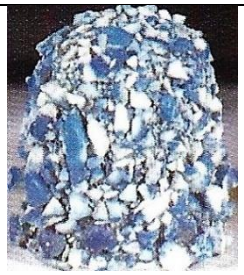
Philippines
etched



Thailand



pink coral Great Barrier Reef
over metal



blue coral Indian Ocean
over metal



over metal

cork



Bridge of Weir Scotland
Carina Down

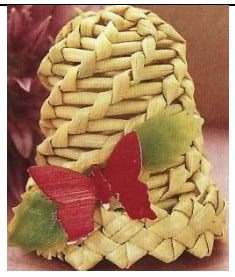


corn

plaited after the style of corn dollies



UK
Betty Blackwood

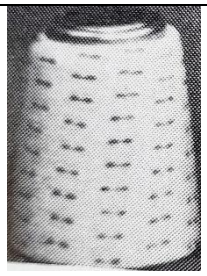


UK
Mrs Horsfall
butterfly
limited to **250**



UK
flowers

corncob



USA
brass apex
b&w photo

cotton

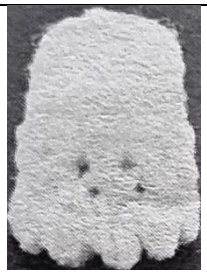
thimbles are created of crochet, tatting, knitting or lacemaking. They were usually stiffened with sugar water or starch. Many are embellished with beads and ribbon
see also: silk, linen







Valledolid Spain
Rosa Aragon
crochet
2025



Connecticut USA
Edith Archibald
crochet



Toowoomba Australia
Beryl
crochet



Melbourne Australia
Joan Blaney
crochet



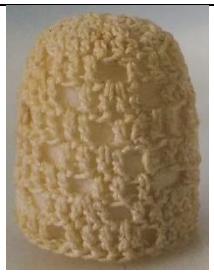
Shropshire UK
Vilma Buck
crochet



Brisbane Australia
Kay Collins
tatting




Illinois USA
Lurene Connor
crochet



Gauteng South Africa
Gili Davis
crochet



Queensland Australia
Elena Dickson
knotted lace over stiffened board





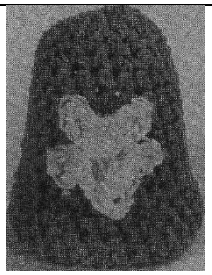

Conwy Wales
Pat Durrant
crochet



Perth Australia
Betty Dutschke
crochet



Helsinki Finland
Irja Helsila
tatting



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






Kilcoy Australia
Margaret Hickling
tatting



Perth Australia
Barbara Martin
sewing





Brisbane Australia
Sandra Menger
crochet



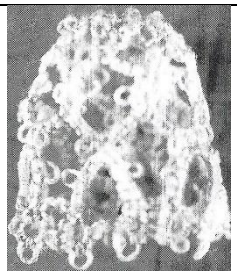
Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
crochet



Mexico
Nicholas and Adolina (Huichol)
yarn over moulded plastic



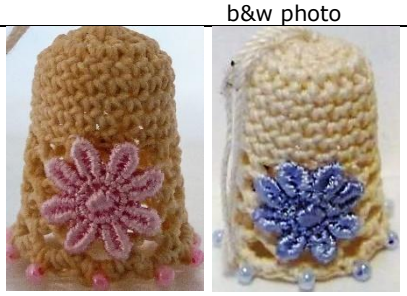
USA
Florence Regan
crochet, some with crossstitch



UK
Christine Ross
tatting
limited to **200**
b&w photo



North Carolina USA
Jane Sapone
crochet
b&w photo



Connecticutt USA
Doris E Shaw
crochet



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
crochet



Netherlands
Miep van Eijk
crochet
b&w photo





Coventry UK
Jacqui (Jacqueline) Walker
crochet
find those commeorating Armistice, Olympics and a chair shape
mostly no limited numbers available but the limited editions range from **75** to **300**



California USA
Chris Weber
crochet



USA
Helen Werner
for Hawkeye Thimblers 1991



UK
Cathy Whithead
crochet
limited to **250**



USA
R: created for Hawkeye Thimblers



Finland
needle lace



unknown makers

dark rose onyx



Mexico 1975

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



handpainted feathers over brass
Marina Nestorova

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	 USA Boulder Bay carp with filigree cap	 Scotland salmon over brass or metal



Scotland
dyed fish scale over wood

fossils



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

granite





UK
Caroline and John Smith
Berlin Wall - Italian granorosada - Russian pink yemel



grass

see also: raffia, straw



Robyn
basketry

green marble



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



Taiwan

gumnut



Kalbarri Western Australia

gutta percha

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



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
b&w photo



Arizona USA
Leona Antone
b&w photo



Arizona USA
Linda Hendricks
b&w photo

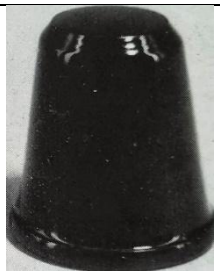
jade

also known as nephrite

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



Pilbara Australia



Bergenland Austria
b&w photo



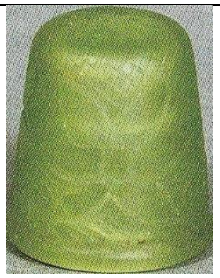
Austria
mini size



Canada
with a maple leaf etched



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



Portugal



Turkey
handpainted



Taiwan



jadite



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
smooth

kangaroo skin



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
brass kangaroo on boomerang pin
1983

Kingman turquoise



Arizona USA

Kisii stone

mined by the Kenyan tribe of the same name



Kenya
L>R: handpainted figure - handpainted giraffe - leather rim - representing cheetah, giraffe, python

lapis lazuli



Argentina
Juan Arrieta Quiroga
R: with rhodochrosite



Pakistan



Portugal



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia
1990



lavender alabaster



Italy
handpainted violet

leather

see also: Hinterland leather thimbles topic





Birch





Clover
L: tailor's



Japan
Olympus



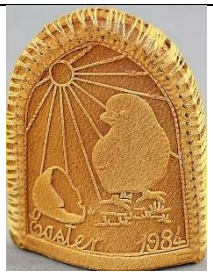




Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design
L: over plastic



R Reidler



New Lanark Scotland
Ronnie Parker
'Easter 1984



Brisbane Australia
Sandra Menger



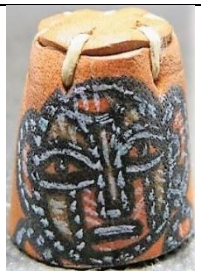
Sydney Australia
Yvonne Wisnpear
handpainted chamois
over wood
beads on apex
'1788-1988'
limited to **100**



India
b&w photo



Ireland
sewing rind



Kenya



Korea



Mexico



South Africa



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



UK
gold-tooled streted over metal



UK
gold-tooled streted over wood



USA
Alaskan sewing kit with thimble and bone awl







unknown country of origin







sailor’s palms
with various metal pushers

linen







USA
Cael Chappell
waxed thread
R: b& w photo

Lucite

Gimbels used the term acrylic





USA
Davy Jones Locker
imbedded starfish and seahorse and seashells
limited to **250**



USA
shredded US currency



malachite



Argentina



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design

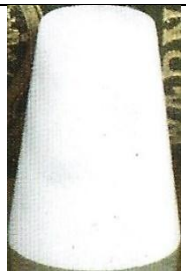
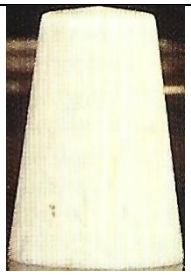


Phalaborwa South Africa
John van der Westhuizen

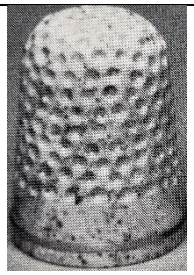
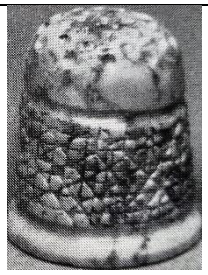



marble

see also: black marble – Carrara - 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**

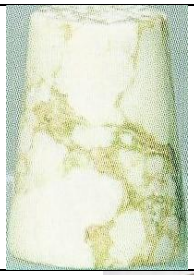
Philadelphia USA
John von Hoelle
b&w photos

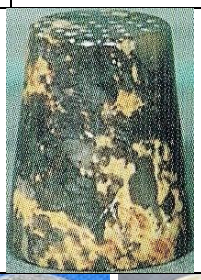


Barossa Australia



Taiwan







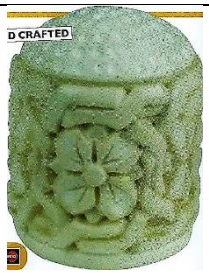


meerschaum

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)

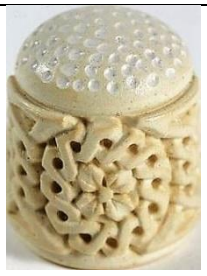



Turkiye
Mustafa
handcarved






















Istanbul Turkiye
Sinan Atilla
handcarved



San Marcos CA USA
Royal Meerschaum



Tanzania



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



foxglove

nundoorite



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

onyx

see also: black onyx – blue onyx – dark rose onyx



Argentina
Juan Arrieta Quiroga
with rhodochrosite



Argentina
Onyx-Mar
septagonal



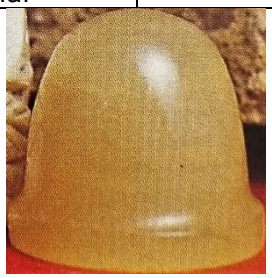
Mendoza Argentina



India
carved lotus
limited to **50**



Karachi Pakistan



Scotland
Gem Rock Museum



paper





Argentina

papier mâché

flour, salt and water are added to rice paper pulp
often mistakenly described as wooden in second-hand market – a dead giveaway is Kashmir papier mâché thimbles are black inside



Apollo Bay Australia
Shirley Bennett – Haley
handpainted and lacquered
last five have opal on apex
1979-1985







Kashmir India
handpainted and lacquered in small batches by small family businesses
all black-lacquered inside



Japan



Japan



Russia
signed in cyrillic



Russia
limited to **60**



Thailand



USA

paua shell

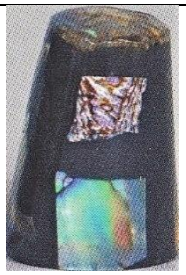
see also: abalone




Mooloolaba Australia
Shell Museum
over plastic thimble








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




Philippines

peacock feathers



peat



UK
handpainted The Lindow man
bonded in resin

picture jasper



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

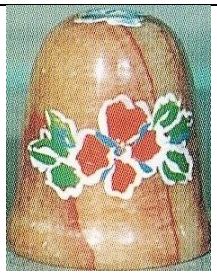
pink marble



Italy
MR
handpainted



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



Turkey
handpainted



handpainted







pipestone



USA
Pipestone Craft



USA
PT

plum slate



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

potato skins



USA
Lucerne Wulf
2005

pumpkin skin



Argentina
carved by Toba peoples

pyrophyllite



Swakopmund Namibia
L: 'Swakopmund'

raffia

see also: grass, straw



Coventry UK
Jacqui Walker
b&w photo

red agate



India
limited to **50**

resin



Newcastle-under-Lyne UK
Atlas tailors
available in five colours

resin stone



over plastic

rhodochrosite




Argentina

rhodonite





commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

rice paper



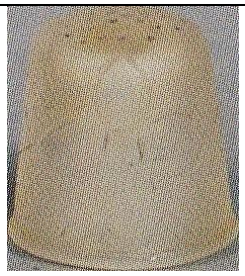
Japan
limited to **350**

rice stalks




Philippines

rose quartz



Pakistan

rosso Alicante



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

rosso Bilbao



UK
Christine and John Smith
stone sourced from Spain by these Guild members
limited to **250**

rubber



California USA
Good Stuf
needle grabber



USA
The Bionic Finger



'Fasta'



clerk's

 clerk's	 clerk's

salmon stone

 Philippines brass band

sand

 Ryedale UK Tony Barnes sand from Gulf War	 sand from Gulf War	

seal skin



Alaska USA
handmade by indigenous peoples

serpentine



UK
Christine and Dave Smith
Cornish serpentine
limited to **500**



South Africa
Tswana Products
etched giraffe



South Africa

shell

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



Kidwelly Wales
Andrea Griffiths
seashells over plaster of Paris



Mooloolaba Australia
mother-of-pearl over plastic thimble



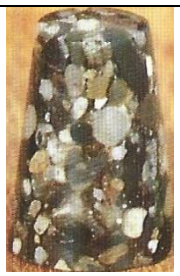


Philippines
shell applied over metal thimbles or moulded plaster-of-Paris
shell in form of chips or slices



Thailand

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



Brisbane Australia

Tricia Smout



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



Korea
Younmin Lee

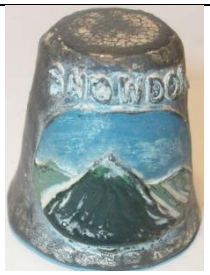




Chuncheon Korea
handmade, with silk stitches on padded silk or felt (some are quite crudely stitched)
known as kolmi
small opening at tip for fingernail

slate

see also: plum slate



Wales
Kingmaker
handpainted 'Snowdon'
bonded with resin



Wales
Pinpoint Precision
limited to **350**

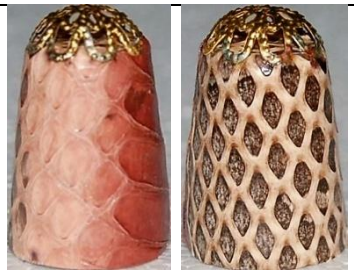


Wales
Christine and Dave Smith



Westmoreland UK
Christine and Dave Smith
limited to **500**

snakeskin

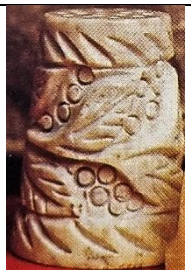


USA
Boulder Bay (BB)
Asian ratsnake
filigree cap



USA
Wynneth Mullins
Texas rattlesnake
over wood

soapstone



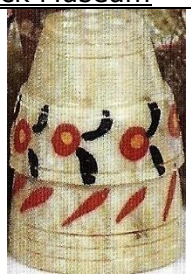

Scotland
Gem Rock Museum



USA
Parson Hayes



South Africa
etched zebra







India



sponge



USA
Lucerne Wulf
over metal

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**



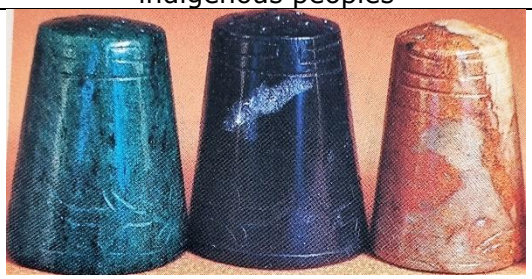
UK
Christine and John Smith
stone sourced from The Thistle Mill Biggar Scotland



Argentina



Canada
indigenous peoples



China



India



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

straw

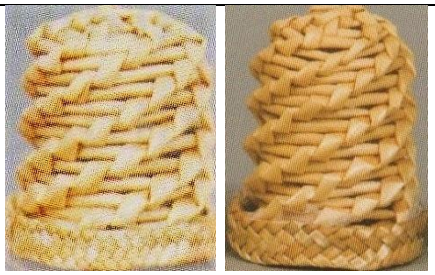
see also: grass, raffia



Hungary



Paraguay





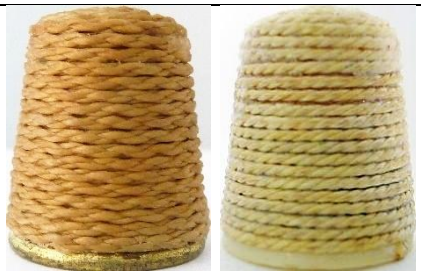
strawberry alabaster



Colorado USA

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



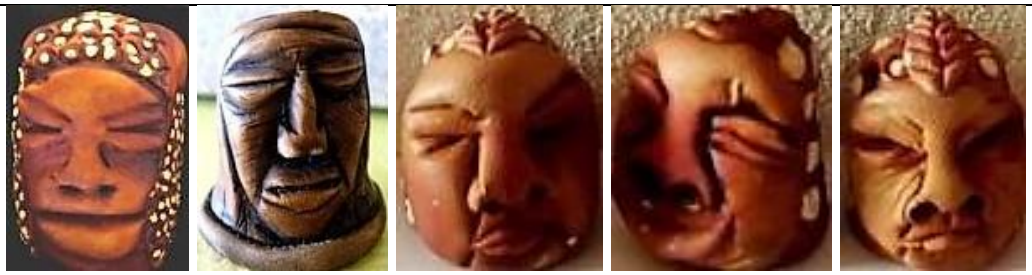
Cirencester UK
History Craft
inset brass apex
described as polymer ivory from ivory dust or sweepings or rosin
a few have metal 'compass' in apex



UK
Melissa Hookway



Dudley UK
Woodsetton
peep: Visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip to China



Argentina
epoxy resin
made by Toba indigenous people



China
TTG June 2004
polyresin



UK
'Thimble Collectors Guild' – 'A stitch in time'



resin



resin



synthetic ruby



telephone wire



Johannesburg South Africa
Thabang Moloi

tiger iron

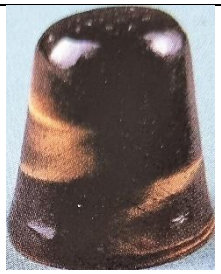


commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

tiger's eye



China

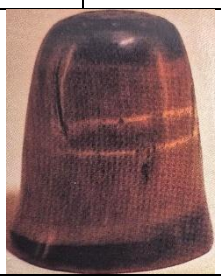


India



Pakistan





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 sounded by fine flowers 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



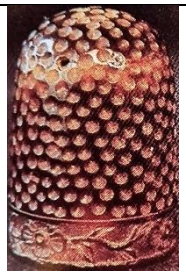
steel-top with cartouche sounded by fine flowers and leaves with ‘Piercy’s Patent’ on a ribbon in pinchbeck



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



China



Germany 1985



Germany or Austria



Netherlands
band of silver



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



UK
wide band of silver

travertine



turquoise



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design



pierced, with Chinese lettering



velvet



Moscow Russia
plush with beads and brocade over wood

verdite



Phalaborwa South Africa
John van der Westhuizen



South Africa
Tswana Products



carved



volcanic ash


Washington USA
Mt St Helen's ash


Washington USA
Mt St Helen's ash



'Etna'

volcanic rock


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

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


Bridge of Weir Scotland
Carina Down
candle with lace inset


Mind Your Own Beeswax


candle in shape of quilter's thimble

white alabaster



Italy

wicker

see also: bamboo





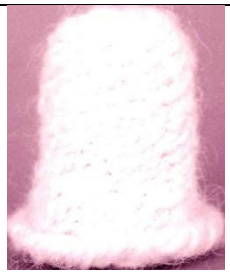
UK
basket weave

wire



USA
Yael Falk (YoolaDesign)
stone apex

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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Krystyna Zagajewska

This listing of Thimbles made from unusual materials does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects. Rather it invites comments and contributions to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

EMAIL thimbleselect@bigpond.com TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

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