

# Crummles enamelled thimbles and other needlework tools

Poole England

English enamelled thimbles - over copper or brass - seem to be the 20th century's antiques of the future. Crummles - who were based in Poole in Dorset - have been incorporated into Staffordshire Enamels, in Lye, tho they still bear the Crummles backstamp. They are known mostly for their enamelled boxes. They also produced needlecases, pincushions with the occasional tape measure - in matching designs.

The owner, John Aris, founded Crummles & Co in 1974 and he chose the name of Crummles, after Vincent Crummles, a character in Charles Dickens' novel *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Strangely, Crummles don't often mark their thimbles with a backstamp and one has to rely on the accompanying thimble box for identification. Once the thimble is separated from its box, the thimble becomes unidentifiable as a Crummles thimble.

From observation, all the thimbles by Crummles as featured below have one thing in common - their brass or copper apexes seem to sit over the apex, rather than being inset or having a tighter fit.

Examples of other enamelled thimbles have either a Staffordshire Enamels or a Halcyon Days maker's mark.



L: Staffordshire Enamels - C: Halcyon Days - R: Crummles

The Thimble Society of London and the Dorset Thimble Society commissioned enamelled thimbles from Crummles - the latter's do not have the regular brass apex and all of their examples contain the tiny Crummles backstamp.

I have encountered few Crummles thimbles - collectors, especially those who live in England, may be able to add to a more complete range of these little beauties?

Some are handpainted, some will have a decal or transfer - this will be reflected in the backstamp, if one is present.

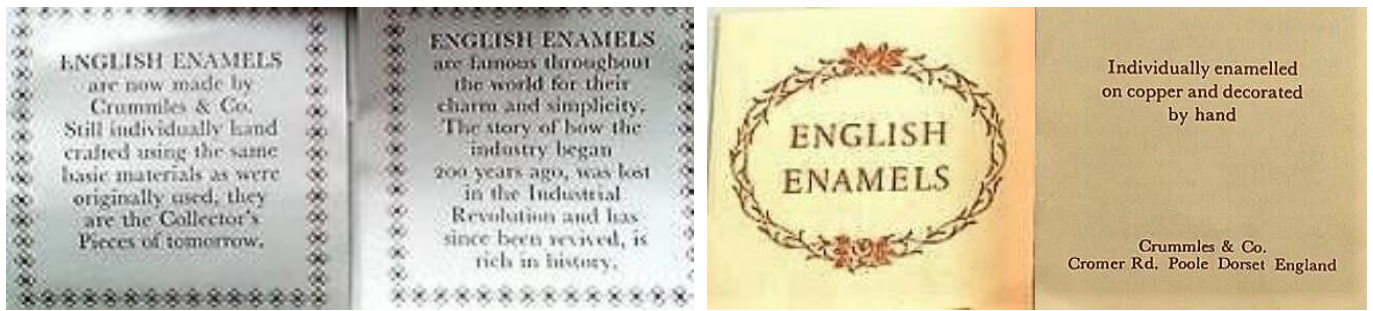
Some incomplete examples have recently come up for sale on ebay - they are missing their brass or copper rims and therefore are incomplete or seconds - can I presume that they have a Crummles backstamp to identify them as such? These could have come out of the workshop in Poole, in their incomplete state after Crummles closed.

I have noticed that many of the later Crummles designs have no brass apex. This seems deliberate as there are so few. Not incomplete as those described above.

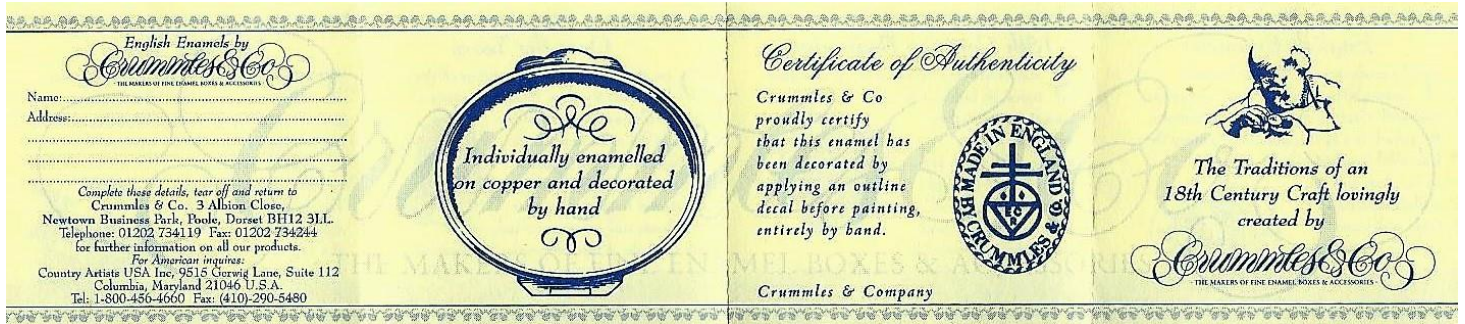
In 2022 black and white outlined designs - with no colour have appeared for sale of ebay



Crummles & Co backstamps  
backstamp at left is the older of the two



accompanying leaflets



Crummles & Co thimble boxes



display of Crummles thimbles from John Sinclair (shop) England 1980s

for other enamelled thimble topics see:

- British modern enamelled thimbles
- Cornish Enamels thimbles
- Graham Payne handpainted thimbles
- Peter Swingler handpainted thimbles

# Crummles Thimbles

English painted enamels were first made over 200 years ago. Crummles enamels are well known to collectors already carrying on that tradition, reviving the 18th century methods of fine enamel, and hand painting within the transfer design taken from an engraved copper plate. There are also needle cases, pin cushions and a large range of boxes, small and medium to be found at 'The Bees'.

Cat. No.		£		
88.	Fishing scene	10.00	93.	Windmill
89.	Roses and Harebells	10.00	94.	Butterfly
90.	Pink and Yellow Roses	10.00	95.	Cornfield
91.	Yellow Pansy	10.00	96.	Blue Bird Chinoiserie
92.	Heraldic Yellow and Red	10.00		



this ad appeared in the 1st issue 1981  
of The Thimble Society of London  
the accompanying nine line-drawings has been useful  
in finding and identifying Crummles thimbles  
I have used the same terminology and numbering, until something else comes to light



fishing scene  
corresponds to drawing #88  
man on bridge – fisherfolk with yacht



roses and harebells  
corresponds to drawing #89  
C: incomplete version missing brass trims  
R: no brass trims – with only first outlines in black and white



pink and yellow roses  
corresponds to drawing #90  
two C: colourways  
R: incomplete from the workshop in Poole



pink flower - called yellow pansy?

corresponds to drawing #91

L: copper trims

C: incomplete version missing copper/brass trims

R: no brass trims - and only first outlines in black and white



heraldic harp yellow and red

corresponds to drawing #92

R: incomplete version missing brass trims



Dutch windmill

corresponds to drawing #93

C: unbranded with copper trims showing red sails of yacht

R: incomplete version missing brass trims



butterfly

corresponds to drawing #94



cornfield

corresponds to drawing #95

R: incomplete version missing brass trims



cornfield set

with matching needlecase, pincushion and tape measure



blue bird Chinoiserie  
corresponds to drawing #96

R: incomplete from the workshop in Poole  
lower: thimble and matching pincushion  
initials PS

### Commemoratives



**1981**

**Prince Charles & Diana**

royal wedding

some examples have no Crummles backstamp

R: no brass trims – and only first outlines in black and white



**1981**

**Prince Charles & Diana**

royal wedding

some examples have no Crummles backstamp



**1981**

**Prince Charles & Diana**

royal wedding

some examples have no Crummles backstamp



**1985**

commissioned by  
**The Thimble Society of London**  
handpainted

there is an accompanying tape measure & enamel  
box



**1986**

**Prince Andrew & Sarah**  
royal wedding

R: incomplete version missing brass trims



**1997**

**Dorset Thimble Society**

no brass apex



**1997**

**100,000 8th April 1997 Shire Publications**

Eleanor Johnson's booklet *Thimbles and thimble cases* –  
sold more than 100,000 copies in its 1st edition – this  
thimble was commissioned by her publishers (Shire  
Publications) and appeared in her 2nd edition on page 3.

The photo was also included in the last reprints of 1st  
edition 1997 on last page but only in black and white with  
no mention of the thimble maker

limited to 2

no brass apex



**1999**

**Dorset Thimble Society**  
**6th International Conference**

no brass apex



**2001**

**Dorset Thimble Society**  
**7th International Conference**

handpainted

no brass apex

## Others



apple tree  
on two sides



"The Beech brings Prosperity"  
with a verse

R: incomplete from the workshop in Poole



blue birds  
no brass apex

R: incomplete version missing its brass rim



blue floral band  
incomplete version missing brass rim



blue flowers  
no brass apex  
unmarked



blue rose

with matching needlecase and pincushion

R: incomplete from the workshop in Poole



carnations



doves - yellow  
in a tree  
this decal also used by Halcyon  
Days



eagle and heart  
this decal also used by Halcyon  
Days



embroidery stitches  
in mauve



garlanded female figures or fairies  
pale blue ground  
no brass apex  
showing Crummles box with royal cipher



"The honey suckle round the porch has wov'n it's wavy bowers"  
Tennyson



iris  
no brass apex



lilies & daffodils  
no brass apex



**The Mary Rose**  
R: unbranded with copper trims





owls  
no brass apex



primroses  
no brass apex



robin



**Royal School of Needlework**  
showing 'RSN' logo on side of needlecase  
school is housed in Hampton Court Palace England  
is there a matching thimble?



rural Dutch scenes  
boxed needlecase - pincushion  
is there a matching thimble?



squirrels



"Sweet daisy ... sentiments"  
with a verse



**Sydney Opera House Australia**



**Tailor of Gloucester**  
 © F.W & Co 1985 lettered inside  
 with matching needlecase and pincushion  
 unbranded

Frederick Warne was the publisher of Beatrix Potter's children's books



**Three Bad Mice**  
 © F.W & Co (Frederick Warne) lettered inside  
 unbranded  
 Warne was the publisher of Beatrix Potter's  
 children's books



willow pattern  
 with matching pincushion

**Crummles enamelled non-sewing tools**



**Statue of Liberty 1886-1996**  
 commemorative pill box



**Colchester Castle**  
 pill box

## References

Denis Barber *Report on Janet Harper's talk 'History and manufacture of enamel thimbles* [At Your Fingertips](#) May 1997  
Roz Belford *The Crummles & Co story* [Collector Circle Gazette](#) summer 1981

## Contributors

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this listing of Crummles enamelled 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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