

# Jenny Blair Designs' thimbles

## thimbles of cased frosted glass

Jenny had studied designs in silver in Birmingham for three years. That was where she learnt from a silversmith and combined with her natural talent, she went on to experiment with fusing thru electrolysis of metal on all kinds of material. For her graduation project she presented two pieces of handblown glass with an electrolysis deposited decoration.

Blair opened her own studio. It wasn't long after this that thimble collectors persuaded Jenny to experiment with thimbles.

The hand/mouth blown glass thimble is formed. Ground silver is suspended in lacquer and a design is handpainted and electroformed with nickel. After resting for 12-15 hours, the thimble is hand filed and polished. Finally a thick coat of PURE silver is applied over the pattern and the result is pure elegance to last a lifetime.

It was as long ago as 1984 that Jenny Blair Designs thimbles were created.

Thimbles appeared for sale in *The Thimble Collectors Guild* catalogues from July 1986. The last design they offered for sale was September 1993.

In June 1988 Thimble Collectors Guild featured a frosted pink glass scent bottle for sale. The translucent scent bottle was handblown and sandblasted to give the frosted look - by Jenny's husband Robert. This was in their small craft workshop in York, United Kingdom. By 2001 their studio was based in West Haddon Northamptonshire.

He mixed lustre paint into the glass to create this stunning effect. So, we now know that it was more than Jenny who was at work.

Jenny's work began with perfume bottles, and this is what she is most well-known for. Her maker's mark of JBD is only found on her perfume bottles, vases etc.



*De Vingerhoed* 1987 catalogue description for these two thimbles "Fantasy in gold and Fantasy in silver": semi-precious stones set into the apex (amethyst on silver and topaz on the gold version) – the nickel design is then cased in silver or gold which is fused to the glass underneath.

This commission has the only known inserted stones, so are easily identified.

C b&w photo: A de Smet

After these initial thimbles with stones, Jenny concentrated on silver- or gold-plate fused onto the frosted glass thimbles handblown by Robert: with no stones.

I don't know if Jenny named her thimble creations or whether they were supplied by the marketing department of The Thimble Guild. I have used the names they used, where available.

Now collectors are dependent on the second-hand market for these unique thimble creations.

None of Jenny's thimbles are signed.

I am recording their initial prices so that these details don't vanish in the mists of time- watch how the climbed between August 1986 and 1993.

With your help, my aim is to complement these old photos from catalogues with all round photos.

Like with all silver materials, care should be taken with these thimbles as they will tarnish as they age. They are also prone to damage by tiny pieces of the metal "peeling" or denting. Treat them with care.

### Gold-plated cased frosted glass



**1991 bells, dove of peace**

limited to 150

TTG January 1991



**Cobwebs**

without the stone atop like the 1987 Dutch commission  
design is bound by a band at rim and apex  
also available in silver



**Garlands**

R: seems invented?

TTG December 1989



**flower**

design is bound by a band at rim and apex  
also available in silver





### **gazebo**

patterning continues over apex  
TTG December 1989



### **holly and ivy**

initially I matched this thimble at R with Flower, but that design is bound by a circle at apex  
TTG January 1990



### **ivy with dragonfly**

patterning continues over apex  
TCG April 1986  
L: original b&w photo



### **lady ferns**

also available in silver



### **Queen Mother 90<sup>th</sup> birthday**

Rose of York  
E.A.M.B-L 90 (her initials) lettered around apex  
TTG September 1990  
L: b&w



**tree**

is this the same design as the cedars – under Silver?



**Tudor lattice**

lattice continues over apex  
design is bound by a band at rim and apex



unknown

none of her cased thimbles have the solid gilt apex  
like on this thimble



unknown

## Handpainted in colour on frosted glass

Jenny employed handpainters. Once they have been decorated the lustre designs are fused to the glass – the glass takes only a smokier hue with the handpainted designs.



**Christmas roses**  
with holly and berries  
limited to 450  
TTG December 1990



**Country Garden**  
handpainted lustre set of 5  
daffodils – primroses – cherry blossom – periwinkle



clematis – pyrethrum - cranesbill  
poppies – scabious – leopards bane



roses - irises - flax



chrysanthemum – montbretia – michaelmas daisies  
TTG April 1991  
limited to 450 sets





**Four seasons**  
garden in spring  
TTG February 1992



**Mother's pride**

Mother lettered in gold at rim  
floral garlands  
TTG February 1993



**Victorian nursery toys**

set of six thimbles  
china dolls - rocking horses - teddy bears - doll's prams - toy soldiers - clowns  
TTG April 1990



toy soldiers





**winter berries – ivy and holly berries**

hp by Julie Boat

which continues over the apex

TTG December 1991



**set of six**

TTG May 1989

top: marigold

centre: rosebuds - iris

bottom: rose - Ikat - paisley



iris



Ikat (a Japanese weave)



paisley



rosebuds



rose



marigold

## Handpainted in gold on frosted glass



### **Bethlehem**

glass is a smoky blue colour  
TTG November 1992



### **Princely Kashmir**

L: lavender – R: heather pinks  
limited to 125  
TTG September 1993



## Signs of the Zodiac

each has all signs of the zodiac around the thimbles and the frosted glass seems smokier  
the specific zodiac sign is painted on the apex  
thimbles could be personalised with a name and date on the apex  
TTG 1992



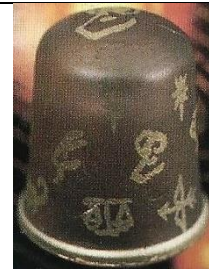
lettered J.E.N 15.1.38 – with inner view



**Aquarius**



**Pisces**



**Aries**



**Taurus**



**Gemini**



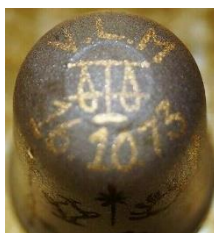
**Cancer**



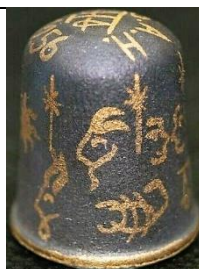
**Leo**



**Virgo**



**Libra**



**Scorpio**



**Sagittarius**

plum coloured glass



**Capricorn**

## Silver-plated cased frosted glass



**1991 Christmas bells**

date is on the apex where the design continues

TTG January 1991



**arabesque**

design continues over apex

TTG May 1992



**brocade**

design continues over apex

TTG March 1993



**Camargue**

design continues over apex to a disc

TTG September 1992



**cedars**

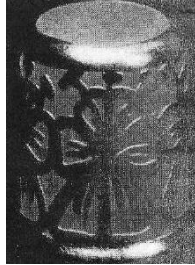
TCG March 1987





### Chelsea

TTG January 1990



### Cobwebs

TCG May 1986



### Easter

four abalone eggs

April 1993

limited to 175



### fairy glade

set of six each depicting a woodland scene

includes: fairy gazing into still waters of a pond - fairies talking with woodland wildlife - dragonfly and a rabbit - two flower fairies collecting wildflowers - musical fairy playing a flute

design continues over apex on some designs

TTG June 1991



L: fairy gazing into still waters of a pond - R: two flower fairies collecting wildflowers



**Japanese willow**

TCG October 1986



**lace**

design continues over apex  
TCG August 1986 / Thimbles Only spring 1987



**lady ferns**

TCG July 1986  
also available in gold



**love birds**

smooth silver covers most of the apex  
TTG January 1990



**lucky clover or shamrocks**

design continues over apex  
TCG December 1986





### **mistletoe**

design continues over apex

limited to 450

TTG December 1990



### **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

E.A.M.B-L 90 (her initials) lettered around thimble

strings of pearls – thistles

small amount of design over the apex rim

TTG September 1990

limited to 450



### **regent**

small amount of design goes over the apex rim

TTG January 1990



### **silver cage**

with tropical birds

design continues over the apex culminating in a solid central disc

TTG March 1992



### **silver fern**

design continues over the apex

TTG July 1992

limited to 195



**silver ribbons**

design is bound by a band at rim and apex  
TCG February 1987



**silver tree**



**silvery moon**

with moon trees and sea  
TCG September 1986



**Tudor lace or Tudor lattice**

design continues over the apex  
design is bound by a band at rim and apex  
TCG June 1987

lower: the lattice on apex is more regular

[L photos: Bleasdales 2020](#)





**violets**

design is bound by a band at rim and apex

also available in gold

TCG June 1986



unknown

maybe there is an iris in the design at R?

## References

Frosted glass, silvered thimble. *TCI Bulletin* summer 2019

The Thimble Collectors Guild/Thimble Collectors Guild/The Thimble Guild *catalogues* 1986-1993

De Vingerhoed *catalogues*

## Contributors

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This listing of Jenny Blair Designs 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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