

Stratnoid thimbles and other tools

The first thimble recorded in my thimble catalogue is for a thimble marked 'Stratnoid England', with the size 0-12. This is the thimble I use for any hand sewing, tho it is far too big for my finger. It was housed in a flat plastic needlebook, in an opening in the cover. I have no recollection how or when I received this sewing set, but it would have been in the late 1950s.



STRATNOID MARKINGS

The name Stratnoid is pressed into the plain band, within a rectangular lozenge; England is lettered underneath, with the size markings lettered at either end of the brand name. There are examples where the rectangular lozenge has a rounded top edge. Occasional examples exist of Stratnoid thimbles, where the name is stamped directly onto the band and not within a lozenge.

Stratnoids are unique in that they bear two sizes, but nothing to date suggests what these measurements mean. The standard sizes are:



with 0-12 being the largest - the rarer size 6 does exist
the sizing doesn't appear to relate to the internal diameter or height in any way

I have checked a source that gives the equivalent English and American thimble sizes (with the equivalent sizing in millimetres) and this doesn't hold the answer to the Stratnoid sizing.

The height diminishes proportionately as the thimble size gets smaller.



GRADUATING SIZES OF STRATNOIDS

Examples have been noted of single size Stratnoids, where the size numbering is only found lettered on the right side. The sizes are 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. It is interesting to note that the size 9 does not correspond in diameter size to the 3-9 size - rather to the 5-7 size.



UNUSUAL STRATNOID MARKING
NO LOZENGE; SINGLE SIZE



UNUSUAL STRATNOID MARKING
LOZENGE; SINGLE SIZE

Stratnoid thimbles

What are Stratnoid thimbles made of? They are made of an aluminium alloy, named **Duralumin**. Their 90% aluminium makes them light and easy to use for sewing, the alloy (copper 4%, magnesium and manganese) giving them tensile strength and hardness, but principally it is light in weight. Great for sewing. Duralumin was first used during World War I, which was used for washers in the aeroplane industry.

These thimbles were produced in their millions in Birmingham from 1922-1941. According to the book published in 1960, 45,000 Stratnoid thimbles were made in World War II, until 1941 when the factories were bombed. They lost four of their five factories. They did not return to making thimbles after that loss of machinery.

There has been much controversy as to the makers of these thimbles. That should now (in 2013) read, as "who these thimbles were made for" **. Two names stand out above the others - Laughton & Sons and the pin-maker firm of Stratton. In an article in *Thimbletter* Lucile Whiting wrote about her large thimble-shaped card on which were mounted Stratnoid thimbles. The card has the initials L&S Ltd Birmingham. I quote the reply by Edwin Holmes to this information in *Thimbletter*:

"Her 'Stratnoid' card proved to bear the initials L&S Ltd and also the mention of Birmingham. This evidently tied up with the Laughton & Sons name mentioned in my *The history of thimbles* and given further clue of its location. It was then a simple task to trace them. Laughton & Sons are plastics and fancy good manufacturers, and they were originally known as Jarrett, Rainsford & Laughton after the founders. This accounts for the initials J.R. & L. which I saw once on another 'Stratnoid' thimble card. Moreover, they also had an office in London which went under the name of Stratton & Co. This accounts for Stratton & Co. being listed as thimble-makers in the London trade directories from 1922 to 1941 where they were described as the owners of the 'Stratnoid' trademark. The Co. no longer makes thimbles though the 'Stratnoid' trademark is still very much their own". Further information supplied by Edwin Holmes is the address of Stratton & Co: 3 Hamsell Street London EC1.



example of the thimble-shaped merchandising card

**The blanks for Stratnoid thimbles were made by Charles Iles and later by Iles & Gomms of Birmingham.
**

The standard design for Stratnoid thimbles is plain indentations all over, with a smooth band where the lettering is. There is a wide variety in size of the plain band, even in the same-sized Stratnoids.

What makes these thimbles different from most other English thimbles is their size marks. There are two numerals – one at each end of the name of the maker’s mark: ie double sizing. No-one has yet suggested the purpose of this double sizing. The range of sizes makes them very popular with sewers, especially those with larger or very narrow fingers and the sizing is very consistent. The sizing is:

0-12 - 18mm diameter | 1-11 - 17mm diameter | 2-10 - 16mm diameter | 3-9 - 15mm diameter
4-8 - 14mm diameter | 3-9 - 13mm diameter



DIFFERENT BAND WIDTHS ON SAME SIZED STRATNOIDS 0-12 and 3-9

Examples have also been sighted of thimbles that have a completely smooth apex - is that a case of poor-quality control? The apex doesn't appear to have been tampered with or worn smooth with use.



SMOOTH-APEX STRATNOID

The most commonly found Stratnoid colour is silver, but the following colours exist in various shades: green, gold, pink, blue.



GREEN - GOLD - PINK - BLUE - ANODISED STRATNOIDS
R: ILES & GOMMS – MUCH LATER – DOUBLE SIZE 5-7

The rarer Stratnoids have an all-over daisy pattern or a diamond patterning. They are similarly marked with the brand name and sizes.



DIAMOND AND DAISY PATTERNED STRATNOIDS
DOUBLE SIZES

These differently patterned Stratnoids only have single size numbering (5, 6 and 9) to the right of the Stratnoid name. The patterning on all these thimbles reminds me of Charles Iles' patterned thimbles. I have included an example of a thimble with identical patterning to Stratnoids, with Charles Iles marks, for comparison.

Now that we know that Charles Iles manufactured Stratnoid thimbles, it makes sense now that the patterns are similar.



UNUSUAL DAISY PATTERNED STRATNOIDS
MOST WITH SINGLE SIZE NUMBERS



C: PATTERNED CHARLES ILES THIMBLE - L: IDENTICALLY PATTERNED STRATNOID THIMBLE
R: ILES BRASS THIMBLES HAVE SIMILAR DOUBLE SIZE MARKINGS TO STRATNOID THIMBLES

I have encountered a few Stratnoid cardboard thimble boxes. The two earliest boxes are lettered *STRATNOID Hand Engraved THIMBLES* (at L and C). The box at R is lettered *STRATNOID Engraved THIMBLES*. Presumably these boxes were only meant to hold the patterned Stratnoids?



STRATNOID BOXES
32x24mm



THE VARIETIES OF STRATNOIDS - ALL THE SAME SIZE 0-12

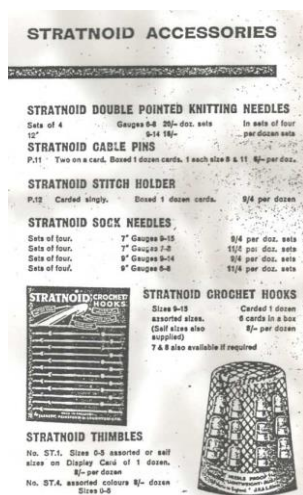
There have been other similar thimbles to Stratnoid in design and made of aluminium alloy. The lettering tho, is KBC with a size number alongside. This stands for Kirby Baird & Co. They were also made in England. Did Stratnoid/Iles make them for KBC?



KIRBY BAIRD & CO SIZE 6

HABERDASHERY STRATNOID ITEMS

From early advertisements it is evident that Stratnoid made more than thimbles. Information is coming to light that broadens the range of haberdashery tools that were made with the brand name of Stratnoid. This includes button hooks, thread winders, knitting needle gauges and stilettoes. Not only were there double-pointed knitting needles but single-point ones as well.



example of these adverts

Button hooks are marked 'Stratnoid' England.



STRATNOID BUTTON HOOK

Aluminium alloy **Crochet hooks** are marked with the Pat No 151307. There are powdered-coated Stratnoid crochet hooks. Some of these hooks don't feature a size number.



(1) STRATNOID CROCHET HOOK with SIZE and PATENT numbers



(2) STRATNOID CROCHET HOOK with PATENT number (no size mark) and a more defined knob



(3) Powder-coated STRATNOID CROCHET HOOK WITH ITS HOOK COVER; size on other side – no Patent number

Glove button hooks are marked 'Stratnoid' England.



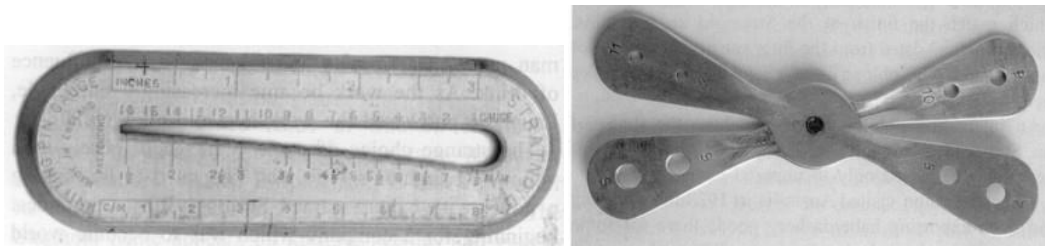
STRATNOID BUTTON HOOK

Laughton & Sons first used duralumin for their **knitting pins** (known as jumper pins then) in 1919, when the company realised there was a peacetime duralumin use. This is a Stratnoid **knitting needles'** advertisement which appeared in *Vogue Knitting Book* 1950s-1960s. According to the book, in the late 1950s, the Stratnoid knitting pins were marked with inch measurements. This turned each pin into a measuring ruler as well as a knitting pin. The slogan used for this was "Measure while you work". Some of their knitting needles were marked **Ladye Jayne**.



STRATNOID KNITTING NEEDLES

There are Stratnoid **knitting needle gauges**, which are quite rare. They are rectangular with rounded edges. Thanks to the book by Sheila Williams, we now have photos of the Stratnoid gauges. The other shape is not unlike their thread winder in the shape of a propeller and it folds flat to close. Both are made of duralumin.



STRATNOID KNITTING PIN GAUGES

This is a Stratnoid combination **pincushion** and **string holder**. The lettering on the front is 'Ask for Stratnoid knitting pins crochet hooks and thimbles'. It is not clear whether the patent No 148021 refers to this item or not.



STRATNOID PINCUSHION and STRING HOLDER

This is the Stratnoid **thread winder**. The winder is 108mm in length and the arms move, so that it folds closed when not in use.



STRATNOID THREAD WINDER

This is a Stratnoid **shoehorn**. This duralumin shoehorn with a suede backing which is used as a buffer for shining shoes, is housed in a leather handsewn leather case. The case is lettered with gold thread T'will ease the shoe and polish it too. The shoehorn folds out.



STRATNOID COMBINED SHOEHORN & BUFFER

This is a Stratnoid duralumin combination **shoehorn** with **buttonhook**. The buttonhook folds away when not in use.



STRATNOID COMBINED SHOEHORN and BUTTONHOOK

FURTHER STRATNOID HISTORY & INFORMATION

More recently I have been approached to identify a Stratnoid **snuffbox** that has the Registered design number RD767198 (for mid-1920s). I can find no trace of this design number. Other non-sewing items include buckles and **powder compacts** and the latter have the same RD767198. Was the snuffbox misnamed?



Stratton England powder compact

There is a link between Stratnoid and Australia. This is thru Rainsford, one of the original partners in England. A Rainsford factory was opened in Sydney in 1928 and they produced single-point knitting needles, knitting needle gauges etc. For more information, see Sheila Williams' book. In 1947 the factory was moved to Kingsgrove, Sydney.

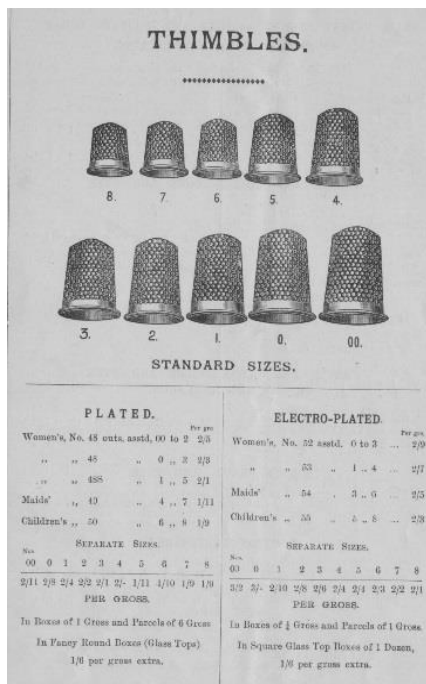
I understand from one of the apprentices in England at Laughton & Sons who was with them between 1972 and 1978 that during his time, there were other brand names produced by this family-owned company - Ladye Jayne and Twinco, which were from the plastic injection moulding section. The press tools section would have produced compacts and **cufflinks**. Factories existed in the USA and Australia, during his time. The company factory closed years ago but the building still stands today in Warstock Road, Warstock, Birmingham. The factory moved to this site in 1947 when their other factories were destroyed in Birmingham in 1941.

Having read the history of Laughton & Sons, written for the centenary of Laughton & Sons (1860-1960), this firm produced millions of items in the fancy goods line - a lot of men's jewellery, **hatpins** - and the haberdashery items, including the Stratnoid thimbles, formed a minute part of their production. During the war millions of **metal buttons** were made by the Laughton & Sons factory, as part of their war-time munitions output.

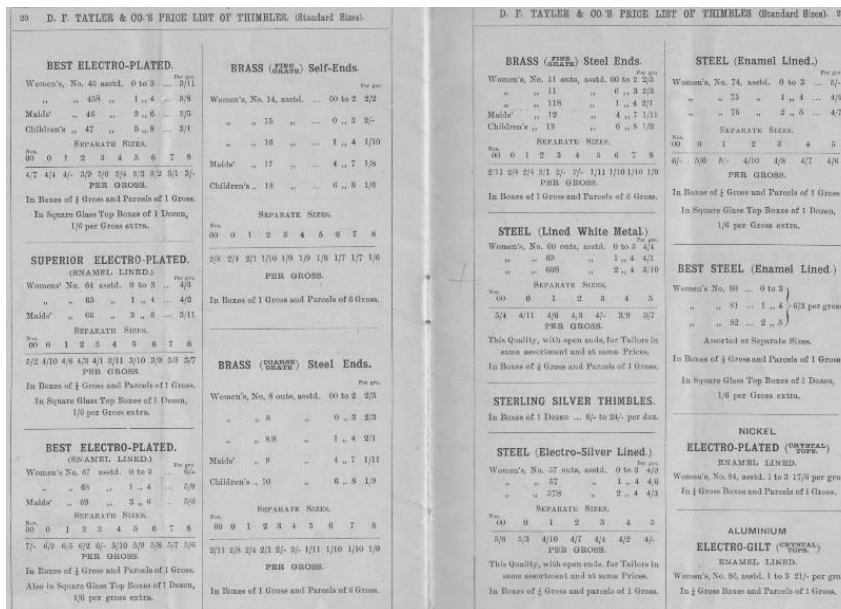
Brian Jowett recently contacted me in relation to Stratnoid and their previous company history. I quote "The original manufactured item of the Laughton Group were pins, provided in 1860 by Stephen Jarrett (40 year old, pin maker, from Mickleton, Gloucestershire) and Charles Rainsford (commercial traveller), with manager William Law (previously pin maker with Edward Holt, Birmingham) in their premises at 7 Broad Street, Birmingham. Hair pins were added in 1904. By 1920, the Company amalgamated with Mr G A Laughton, (Haberdashery, Haircare and Jewellery), to form Jarrett, Rainsford, and Laughton Ltd., with additions of knitting needles, radio receivers, and the men's (Stratton) jewellery range (owned by Mr Laughton). (Stratton never made pins)."

Further I quote from Brian "Perhaps an additional connection to "Stratnoid" is that a company called "Syrolit" (later "Erinoid") who produced a form of plastic material, patented by a Victor Schutz in 1911, to make a material for buttons, combs and electrical equipment, often with the suffix "noid", which were familiar to Mr Laughton, and who also occupied the vacated factory of pin maker D. F. Tayler & Co, at Lightpill, Stroud. Syrolit focused their resources on developing the material whilst others such as Critchley Brothers (knitting needles) and Laughton (thimbles) created the ultimate products".

Brian's interest in the name Stratnoid comes thru being the pin manager at D. F. Tayler & Co., who sold, throughout the world, "DORCAS" dressmaker pins, in the familiar blue and red boxes. Brian has shared the attached copies of the catalogue and price list for thimbles made in Birmingham by **D F Tayler** in 1888. What a lovely find! Wouldn't it be grand to be able to identify one of these thimbles today?



example 1 of these thimble catalogues



example 2 of these thimble catalogues

This is the beauty of hosting these *Learn More About ... Thimbles* topics. Interested people who have nothing to do with thimble collecting, are able to add to our body of knowledge.

References

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Sheila Williams *The history of knitting needle pins.* 2006
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This listing of Stratnoid 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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