

# Scottish wooden thimbles

Catriona Bell - Fiona Danby – Leslie Lamb – Heather McLean – Eileen Palmer – Christine Philp

I am fast running out of new thimble topics. Scotland's thimbles are dear to my heart so this is my contribution for ensuring these wooden thimbles do not disappear from collectors' memories. Having compiled an earlier topic on Scotland's Innes Mitchell's thimbles, I am aware that rarely are these thimbles signed (for sale thru The Thimble Guild in the 1980s) – with the exception of Heather McLean.

I am not interested in who made the wooden thimbles: just that they have additional hand-crafting by talented miniaturists. You may be able to recognise the artist by the shape of thimble they used – even when there is no signature.

Other Scottish thimble topics:

Carol Edwards of Coll Pottery and Horizon China thimbles

Highland China thimbles

Innes Mitchell's pyrographed wooden thimbles

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## Catriona Bell - Edinburgh

Whilst Catriona was studying at Art College in Edinburgh in 1995, she found time to practice what she was being taught and created these sycamore thimbles for The Thimble Guild. She pyrographed them, then handpainted her thimbles, where required. The apexes are flat and sometimes handpainted.

These eight designs were the only ones she created for the Guild, which were produced between July and December 1995.

Catriona went on to become a Scottish artist

I don't know if these thimbles were marked or signed.



birds  
limited to 100  
TTG November 1995



Book of Kells  
limited to 95  
TTG December 1995



Book of Kells  
limited to 95  
TTG December 1995



Book of Kells  
limited to 95  
TTG December 1995



wildflowers  
daisy – meadow thistle – bluebell – dandelion  
pyrographed  
limited to 200  
TTG July 1995

## Fiona Danby – Rowancraft

Fiona’s hand-enamelled discs are set into the apex of rosewood thimbles. The wooden thimbles have four incised rings and there is a defined rim.

Fiona’s thimbles were available thru The Thimble Guild catalogues in 1984-1985. Her thimbles are unsigned.

Each flower thimble was limited to 500 pieces.

Danby only works in enamel, so these are two examples of her hand-enamelled or handpainted brooches, (one being boxed with her label inside). Once the brooches are separated from the box or card, there are no other marks to identify them as Danby’s.



## Leslie Lamb – Ross-shire (Scottish Highlands)








Once you have seen one of Lamb's handpainted bird thimbles, you will recognise them instantly. The birds are playful and quirky, even seemingly foreshortened, with a dominant eye. They are usually painted on sycamore thimbles. They were limited to 1000 copies of each. No signature or name of the bird.

His thimbles were available through The Thimble Guild catalogues between 1984-1986.

I have seen examples of his handpainted birds on china thimbles.



goldfinch

 <p>dipper applewood</p>	 <p>firecrest</p>	 <p>goldfinch</p>	 <p>kingfisher wild gean</p>
 <p>stonechat</p>	 <p>stag limited to 250</p>	 <p>wren</p>	

## Heather McLean – Balandra Crafts

McLean is the most prolific of this batch of Scottish artists, working in pyrography (or pokerwork) on pale sycamore wood. The miniature images wrapped around the thimbles are executed in wonderful detail – imagine the effort of creating each scene around the thimble, adding the lettering, the signature and the limited number – all with a hot poker stylus. Being handpainted no two thimbles will be identical.

She produced sets of numbered thimbles issued by The Thimble Guild between 1984-1988. The apex is flat and the majority of her sets have marked sloping sides. They are lettered on the apex.

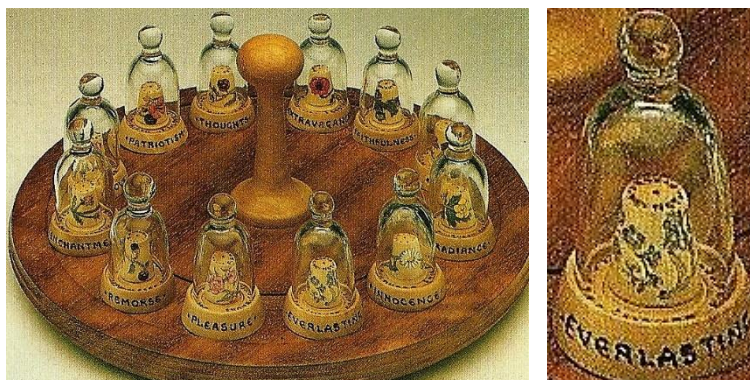
Her thimbles are signed in pyrography with the thimble set number alongside.



The thimbles are in the alphabetic order of the lettering on the apex.

### Language of flowers - limited to 175

This set is different: by 1988 she had added colour to her pyrography. Each thimble is placed on a lettered plinth, with the meaning lettered on the bed of the plinth in a mini glass dome.



no photo	no photo		
BRAMBLE REMORSE PLEASE FORGIVE ME - I WAS TOO HASTY	BUTTERCUP RADIANCE YOUR SPLENDOUR IS LIKE THE SUN	CANTERBURY BELLS FAITHFULNESS I TRULY LOVE YOU	CLARKIA PLEASURE YOUR COMPANY DELIGHTS ME

no photo	no photo		no photo
DAISY INNOCENCE THE PURITY OF CHILDHOOD	FORGET-ME-NOT EVERLASTING MEMORY NEVER FORGET ME	NASTURTIUM PATRIOTISM I LOVE MY PLACE OF BIRTH	PANSY THOUGHT YOU ARE EVER ON MY MIND
no photo	no photo	no photo	no photo
PETUNIA HOPE NEVER DESPAIR. HOLD ON	POPPY EXTRAVAGANCE SPOIL YOURSELF - ENJOY LIFE	ROSE AND TWO BUDS SECRET LOVE WE SHARE A SECRET LOVE	VERVAIN ENCHANTMENT YOU HAVE BEWITCHED ME

**Sunset Song** - limited to 250



The set name was chosen for the scenes of farming throughout the year thimbles: from the Victorian novel of that name by Lewis Grassic Gibbon. The month is lettered on the apex

The accompanying box (if the whole set was purchased) is signed on the front. The thimbles are arranged on the stepped channel set in the lower section of the box Sunset Song.

The box measures 130mm by 55mm.



JANUARY

FEBRUARY



MARCH



APRIL



MAY



JUNE



JULY



AUGUST



SEPTEMBER



OCTOBER



NOVEMBER



DECEMBER

Victorian children's street games - limited to 300



**Village customs - limited to 300**

This set has additional lettering to the activity described on the apex: lettered inside is the full name of the month in which that custom takes place.



AGRICULTURAL SHOW  
AUGUST  
WILLIS & STEEVENS TRACTION ENGINE



BONFIRE NIGHT  
NOVEMBER



CAROL SINGING  
DECEMBER



COMMON RIDING  
MAY



EGG ROLLING  
MARCH  
R: EASTER EGGS  
incorrectly lettered?



FIRST FOOTING  
JANUARY



HALLOWEEN PARTY  
OCTOBER



HIGHLAND DANCING  
SEPTEMBER



MIDSUMMER  
JUNE



MORRIS DANCING  
APRIL





PANCAKE RACE  
FEBRUARY



TUG O' WAR  
JULY

### Others



BIGGAR  
CADGERS BRIG  
THE CORN EXCHANGE  
limited to 200



BOUND FOR BOTANY BAY

Only one set created for Barbara Kelly to celebrate Australia's bicentenary 1988. Each of the thimbles is housed in a glass domed plinth with the same lettering as the thimbles

**Eileen Palmer – Ronaleen Crafts, Lenkalfoot, Ayrshire (South-west Scotland)**

Eileen’s thimble creations are of a much later date than the other artists featured here. They were offered for sale thru The Thimble Guild in 2003.

Palmer’s thimbles are pyrographed on maple – pale enough to show off her simple symbols. Andrew Langford, her neighbour, is the probable woodturner.

Her theme for her only set of thimbles is lucky charms, mascots, talismans from around the world. There is an accompanying motto lettered on the verso.

 <p>Acorn Health and long life</p>	 <p>Ankh Life and strength</p>	 <p>Beans Protection happiness for children</p>	 <p>Bells Protects from all kinds of evil</p>
 <p>Clover Health, wealth happiness and safety</p>	 <p>Elephant Success – remover of obstacles</p>	 <p>Fish Good fortune for lovers</p>	 <p>Horseshoe Good fortune</p>
 <p>Keys Good fortune for lovers</p>	 <p>Scarab Health, strength, regeneration</p>	 <p>Shen Wisdom, protection, and healing</p>	 <p>Star Safety and happiness</p>
 <p>CASTLE any name could be ordered</p>			

**Christine Philp – Isle of Skye (Hebrides)**

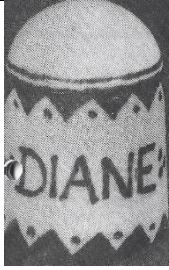
This was the first Scottish artist that I added to my collection. Not only were Philp’s thimbles available for purchase thru The Thimble Guild in 1986-1988, they could also be found in tourist shops on Skye.

Christie was also a pyrographer – the thimble shape she chose were softly rounded and the thimble was often shaded, giving them a textured look.

The only marking is some of her thimbles is ‘Made in Skye’ pyrographed on the inner rim.



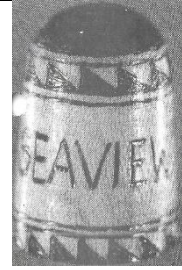
<p>Chinese lettering for signs of the zodiac TTG March 1987</p>	<p>fishing boat TTG January 1987</p>	<p>Skye cottage</p>
<p>Celtic symbol with additional colour</p>	<p>ISLE OF SKYE with Celtic symbols L: tippecanoe wood</p>	<p>PEACE R: with additional colour TTG March 1987</p>
<p>pond life TTG February 1987</p>	<p>Greek lettering for Aries</p>	<p>WITH LOVE with additional colour</p>



Philp would pyrograph your name  
Nordick type design on sycmore  
TTG December 1986



Philp would pyrograph your  
anniversary  
Celtic design on sycmore  
TTG August 1987



Philp would pyrograph your home's  
name  
Nordick type design on sycmore  
TTG June 1987

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## Contributors

Pawel Brzyski | Linda Heggs | Jean Taylor | Krystyna Zagajewska

This listing of Scottish wooden 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.

EMAIL [thimbleselect@bigpond.com](mailto:thimbleselect@bigpond.com) TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

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