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.

I have included as many catalogue references as I can find to help with the year they were made, using the following abbreviations:

CC - Collectors Circle (New York)
Fel - Feldman (Germany)
Gim - Gimbels (Maine)
KS - De vingerhoed (Netherlands)
PJW - PJ Walter (Germany)
TCI - Thimble Collectors International Bulletin (USA)
TTG - The Thimble Guild (Scotland)
TO - Thimbles Only (Jean Shoup USA)
TSL - Thimble Society of London
VH - John von Hoelle
VN - Vingerhoednieuws (Netherlands)

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

abalone see also: paua shell



in acrylic

last update: 3 December 2025

acetate



France mother of pearl style

agate



over brass

alabaster

see also: lavender alabaster - pink alabaster - strawberry alabaster



Italy <u>MR</u> handpainted



Philadelphia USA John von Hoelle L: gold bands ЙН 13-14 b&w photo



Argentina











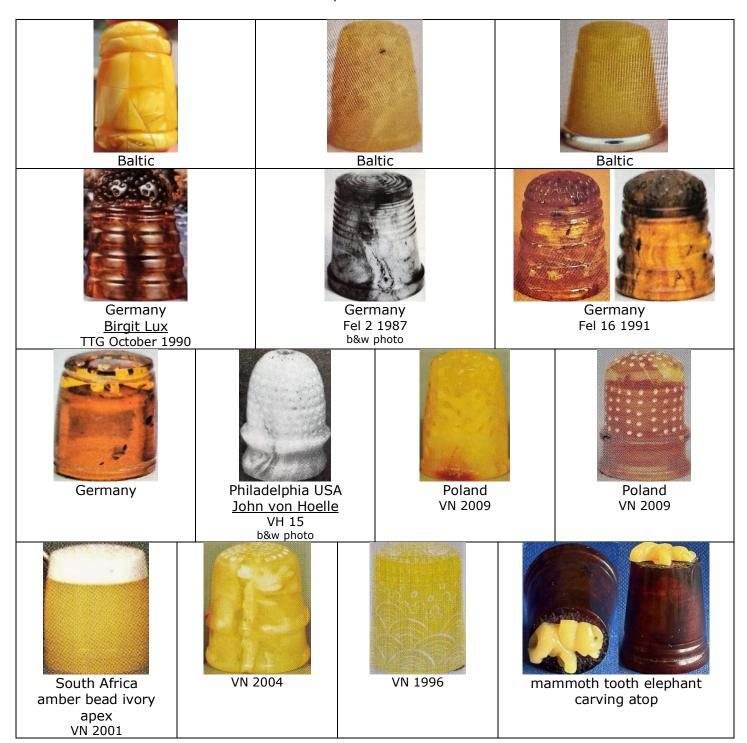




Italy



amber fossilised pine resin from Russia



amethyst



India carved lotus limited to **50** TTG March 1990



aventurine





India L: blue – R: green carved lotus limited to **50** TTG March 1990

Bamboo see also: wicker



China TTG March 1991



India VH 1178, 1180 b&w photo



Philippines

bark



Healesville Australia <u>Michael Morris</u> 1989



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
salmon gum bark with
paperbark apex
over metal thimble
1990



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
handpainted paperbark
over leatherwood
TTG January 1987

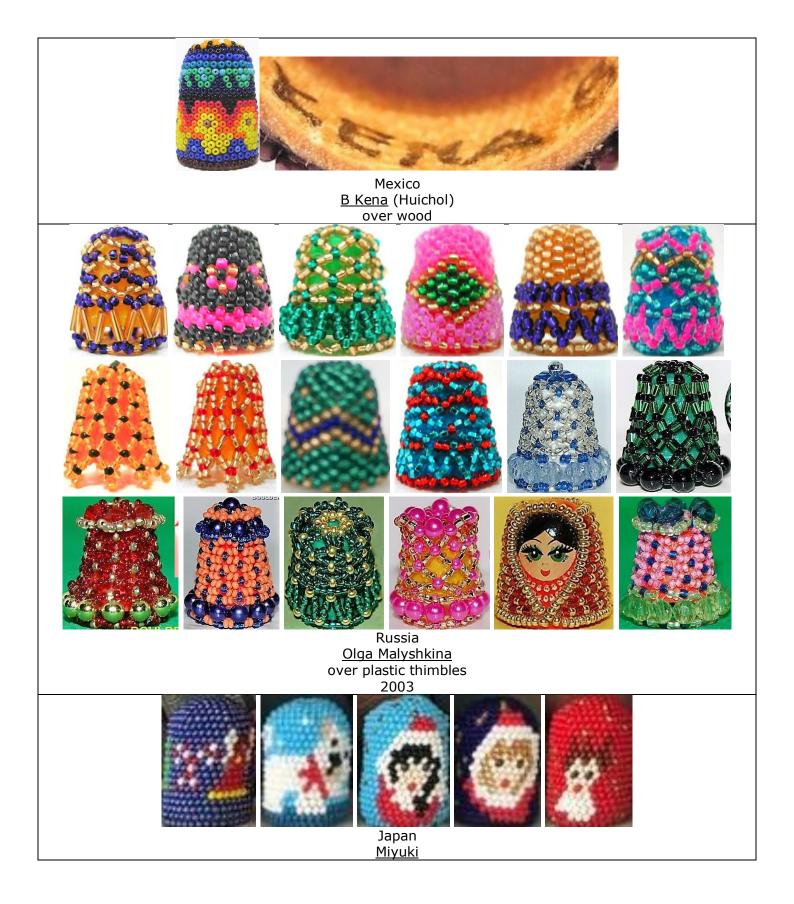


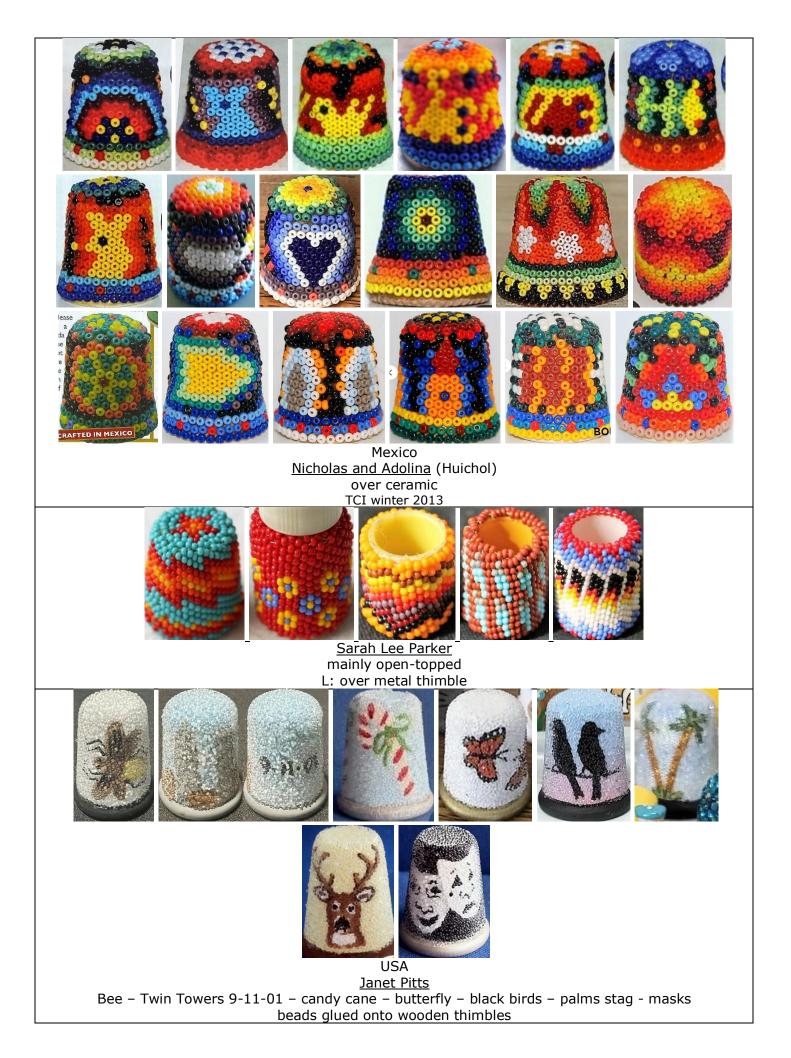
Australia plaited

beads





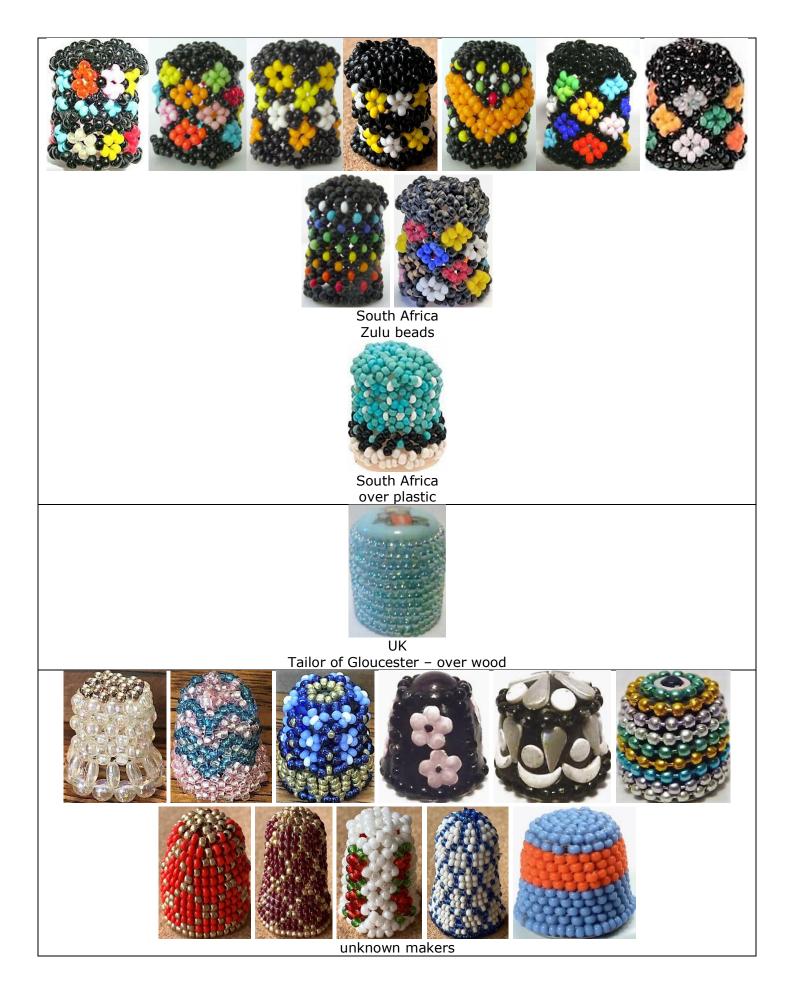






Kenya TTG September 2005





bear claw quartz



Argentina Sewing Corner 1978

birch bark









Urals, Russia Alex and Alfiya Guriny

black marble



UK
Caroline and John Smith
marble from Belgium
TTG June 1988



Taiwan Sewing Corner 1978



VN 2001

black onyx



India carved lotus limited to **50** TTG March 1990

blue onyx



Argentina <u>Juan Arrieta Quiroga</u>

Blu Tack commercial putty-like adhesive, Leicester UK 1969-



Brisbane Australia
<u>Sandra Menger</u>
'Thimbles of Australia Sue Gowan 1998'

brick



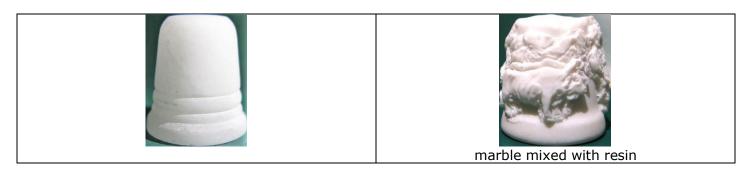
UK house brick limited to **750** TTG August 1991

calabash



Argentina

Carrara marble



carrot



chalk



coal





Wales <u>Kingmaker</u> 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 <u>EJ</u> for Eddie and Janet TTG March 1985



Wellsburg West Virginia USA compressed TO 1980-1983 - VH174

coconut shell



Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil

<u>AP</u>
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 TTG March 1996

concrete



UK Christine and John Smith created from old pavement TTG September 1989

coral



France carved 19th century Christies 1995 117











Philippines etched TO 1984 - VH



Thailand TTG June 1988



pink coral Great Barrier Reef over metal TTG April 1988



blue coral Indian Ocean over metal TTG April 1988



over meta

cork



Bridge of Weir Scotland Carina Down



corn plaited after the style of corn dollies



UK Betty Blackwood TTG June 1985



UK

Mrs Horsfall
butterfly
limited to 250
TTG October 1998



UK flowers

corncob



USA brass apex VH 1177 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





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 TTG May 1986 b&w photo







Kilcoy Australia Margaret Hickling tatting



Perth Australia Barbara Martin sewing







Brisbane Australia Sandra Menger crochet



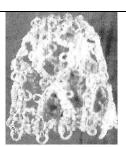
Melbourne Australia Ann Shuttleworth crochet



Mexico
Nicholas and Adolina
over moulded plastic
TCI winter 2013



USA
<u>Florence Regan</u>
crochet, some with crossstitch
Gim 1996



UK
Christine Ross
tatting
limited to 200
TTG May 1987
b&w photo



North Carolina USA <u>Jane Sapone</u> crochet b&w photo



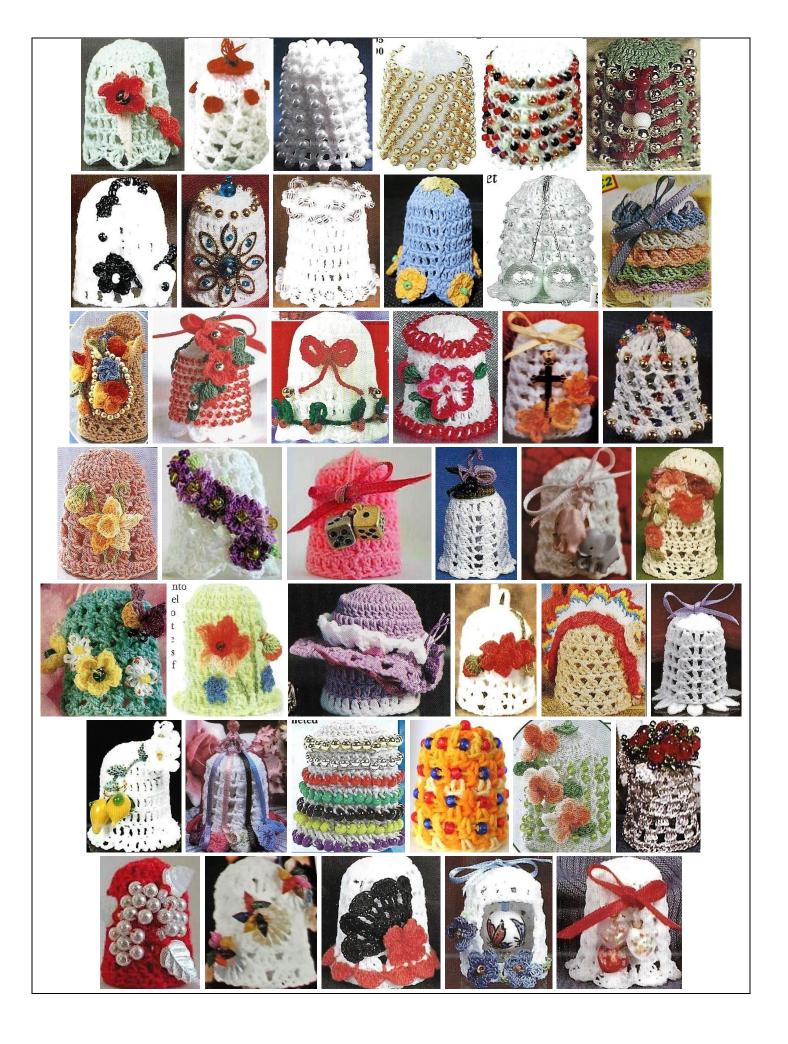
Connecticutt USA <u>Doris E Shaw</u> crochet



Melbourne Australia Ann Shuttleworth crochet



Netherlands <u>Miep van Eijk</u> crochet TTG November 1983 b&w photo





Coventry UK

<u>Jacqui</u> (Jacqueline) <u>Walker</u>

crochet

find those commeorating Armistice, Olympics and a chair shape mostly no limited numbers available but the limited editions range from 75 to 300 TTG from March 1985-2005



California USA
<u>Chris Weber</u>
crochet
TO 2007 - 2007 - 1984



USA <u>Helen Werner</u> for Hawkeye Thimblers 1991











USA R: created for Hawkeye Thimblers



Finland needle lace















unknown makers

Deliciosa Monstera



Perth Australia <u>Barbara Martin</u> stitched dried calyx

fabric











USA
<u>Status Thimble</u>
kit to create this stitched fabric





Argentina made from woven cloth

feathers



handpainted feathers over plastic

<u>Marina Nestorova</u>

VN 67 2001



handpainted feathers over brass <u>Marina Nestorova</u>

FIMO commercial modelling clay



Benoni South Africa Tessa Browne



Empangeni South Africa <u>Wendy Seymour</u>



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 TCI September 1989 – TTG July 1990



Scotland dyed fish scale over wood



fossils



UK <u>Pinpoint Design</u> (later name used by Christine and John Smith) limestone TTG May 1993

granite







UK

<u>Caroline and John Smith</u>

Berlin Wall - Italian granorosada - Russian pink
yemel
C - R : TTG February 1988 - TTG October 1991

grass see also: raffia, straw



Robyn basketry

green marble



UK
Christine and John Smith
marble from Portugal
limited to 200
TTG December 1988



Taiwan Sewing Corner 1978

gumnut



Kalbarri Western Australia

gutta perchaRubber-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 <u>Donna Mendoz</u> TCI spring 2001 b&w photo



Arizona USA <u>Leona Antone</u> TCI spring 2001 b&w photo



Arizona USA <u>Linda Hendricks</u> TCI spring 2001 b&w photo

jadealso known as nephrite many jade thimbles are made with toppers – they are not included







India
lower R: chang san crystal jade
limited to **50**TTG March 1990 – CC 1978 – PJW 85-6 - VN 74 2000



Portugal VN 92 2007





Turkey handpainted TTG April 1989









Taiwan



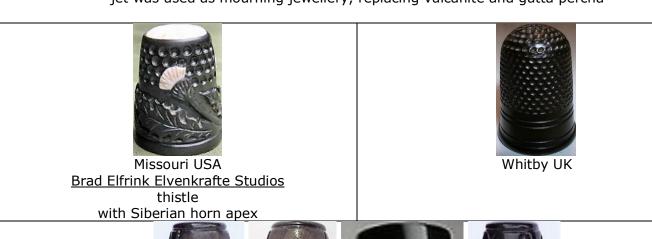
jadite



Jersey cabbage stalk



 $\begin{tabular}{ll} \textbf{jet} \\ \textbf{jet} \\ \textbf{was} \\ \textbf{used} \\ \textbf{as} \\ \textbf{mourning} \\ \textbf{jewellery}, \\ \textbf{replacing} \\ \textbf{vulcanite} \\ \textbf{and} \\ \textbf{gutta} \\ \textbf{percha} \\ \end{tabular}$





Whitby UK carved carved cottage -cathedral - toadstools

kangaroo skin







Sydney Australia
<u>Yvonne Winspear</u>
brass kangaroo on boomerang pin
1983
TTG May 1984

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 TTG 1991 - 1994

lapis lazuli



lavender alabaster



leather see also: Canadian leather thimbles topic



1990





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 TTG July 1988



India VH 648 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



linen



LuciteGimbels used the term acrylic





Gim 1990 – Sewing Corner 1976



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



Gim 1990



marble

see also: black marble - Carrara - green marble - pink marble







UK

<u>Christine and John Smith</u>

L>R: marble of chips from around the world –

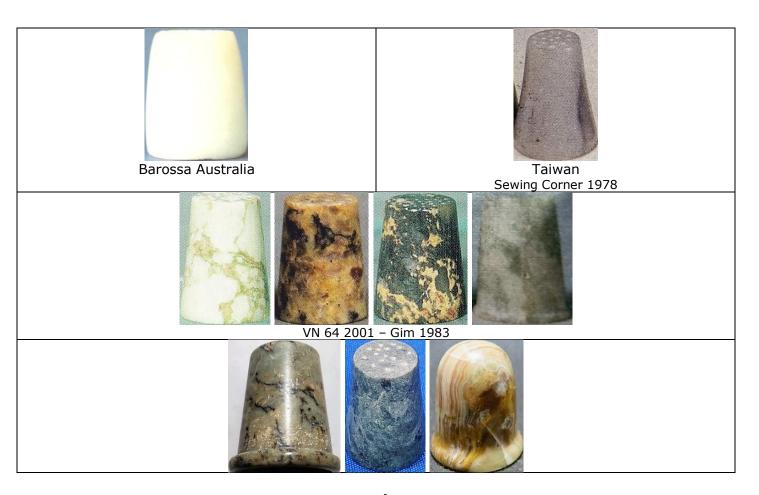
Carrara Italy – creamy

two at R limited to **250**TTG May 1989 – January 1989 – December 1988



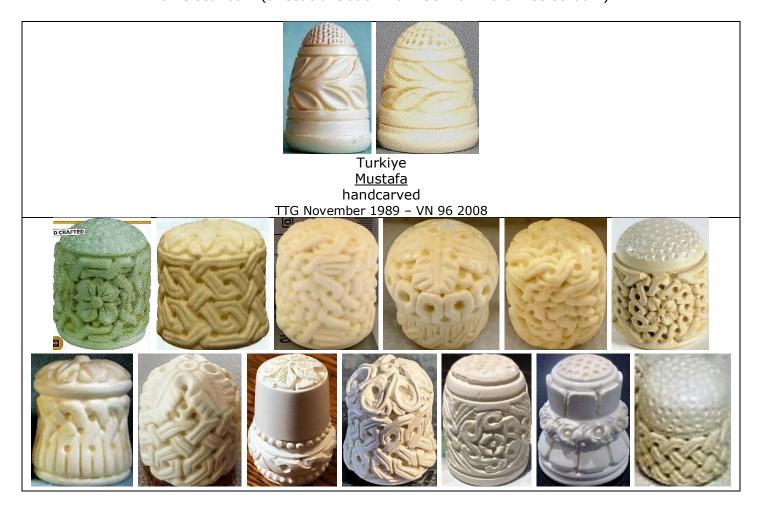


Philadelphia USA John von Hoelle VH 1088-89 b&w photos



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)







Istanbul Turkiye
<u>Sinan Atilla</u>
handcarved
two L: TTG August, October 2009



San Marcos CA USA Royal Meerschaum









South Africa baked Tanzanian meerschaum Fel 20 1992



Tanzania VN 46 1998









Turkiye handcarved top L: gold band 3rd L: brass apex bottom R: 'Türkey' four R: VN, 1996, 1998, 2007 – Gim 1997 – VH665



foxglove

nundoorite



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

onyx see also: black onyx - blue onyx



paper



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











paua shell see also: abalone





Philippines

peacock feathers



peat



UK handpainted The Lindow man bonded in resin TTG July 1997

picture jasper



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

pink marble



Italy <u>MR</u> handpainted



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



Turkey handpainted



handpainted







plum slate



Llanberis North Wales UK

<u>Christine and John Smith</u> (Guild members)

limited to **250**TTG January 1988

pumpkin skin



Argentina carved by Toba peoples TCI spring 2013

pyrophyllite



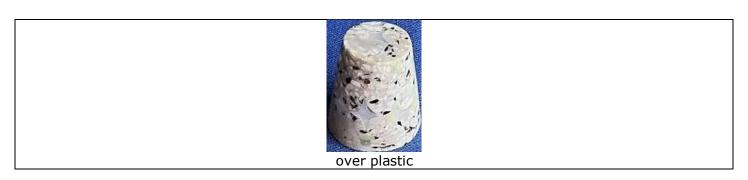
raffia see also: grass, straw



red agate



resin stone



rhodochrosite





Argentina L: Sewing Corner 1976

rhodonite







commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

rice paper



limited to **350**TTG September 1987

rice stalks





Philippines R: Fel 13 1990

rose quartz



Pakistan VN 99 2009

rosso Alicante



UK Pinpoint Design (name used by Christine and John Smith) stone sourced from Spain limited to 300 TTG September 1988

rosso Bilbao



UK Christine and John Smith stone sourced from Spain by these Guild members limited to 250 TTG April 1989

rubber



California USA **Good Stuf** needle grabber



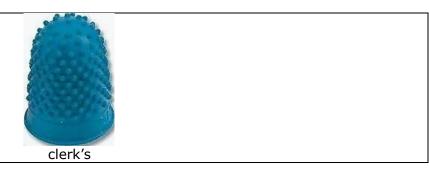
USA The Bionic Finger



clerk's



clerk's



salmon stone



Philippines brass band Gim April 1984

sand



Ryedale UK <u>Tony Barnes</u> sand from Gulf War TTG April 1991



sand from Gulf War TTG April 1992



seal skin





Alaska USA handmade by indigenous peoples

serpentine



UK
<u>Christine and Dave Smith</u>
Cornish serpentine
limited to **500**TTG April 1988



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





shell in form of chips or slices TTG 1988-2001 - TO 1983-1993 - VH995-997



shingle

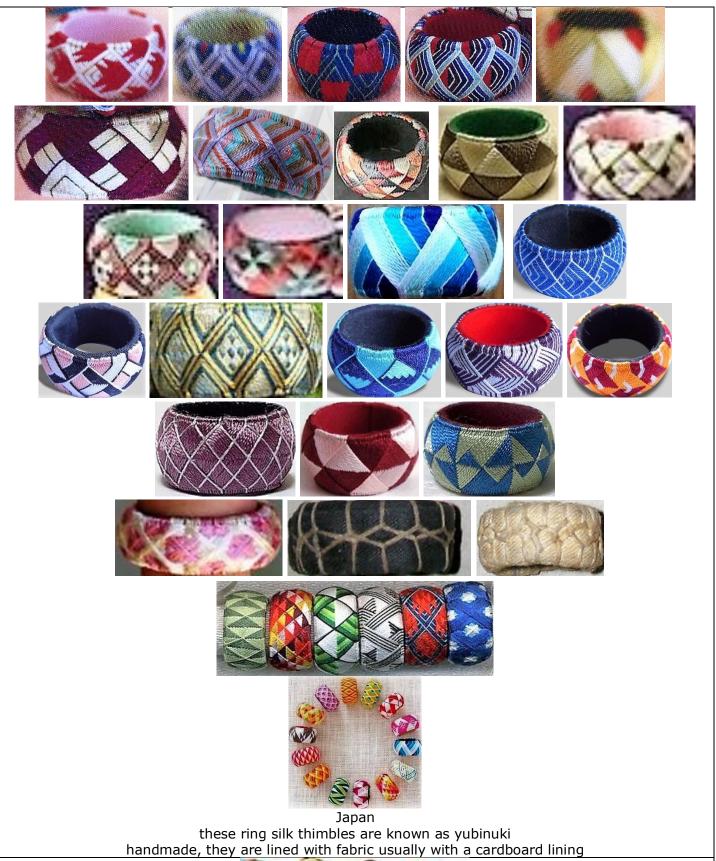


silicone



silk see also: cotton - fabric







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

KS 9 1987 - Sewing Corner 1978 - TTG July 2004 - TO 1984 - VH 1000-1002 - Fel 10 1989

slate see also: plum slate



Wales
<u>Kingmaker</u>
handpainted 'Snowdon'
bonded with resin
TTG February 1986



Wales
Pinpoint Precision
limited to **350**TTG March 1993



Wales Christine and Dave Smith TTG August 1987



Westmoreland UK
Christine and Dave Smith
limited to **500**TTG November 1987

snake skin



USA Boulder Bay (BB) Asian ratsnake filigree cap







USA
Texas rattlesnake
over wood
TTG June 1991 – Fel 18 1991

soapstone





Scotland Gem Rock Museum



USA
<u>Parson Hayes</u>
Sewing Corner 1978



South Africa etched zebra











India TTG October 1989 – Gim 1997 – TTG March 1994



stone

see also: named stones ie jade

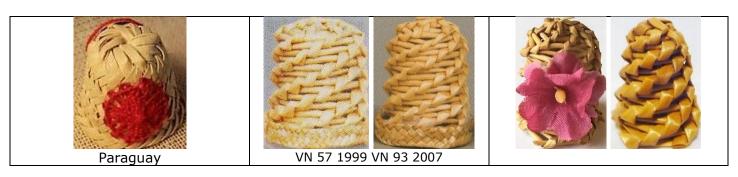






R: commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

straw see also: grass, raffia



strawberry alabaster



string see also: Jacqui and David Parker of Olivia thimbles topic



synthetics



Ray Brittain



Scotland
Penelope Burgess
tartan under resin



Deborah Hull



Cirencester UK

<u>History Craft</u>

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

<u>Woodsetton</u>

peep: Visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip to China

TTG November 1986











Argentina epoxy resin made by Toba indigenous people



China TTG June 2004 polyresin



UK 'Thimble Collectors Guild' – 'A stitch in time' TTG July 1987 August 1987



resin



resin



synthetic ruby







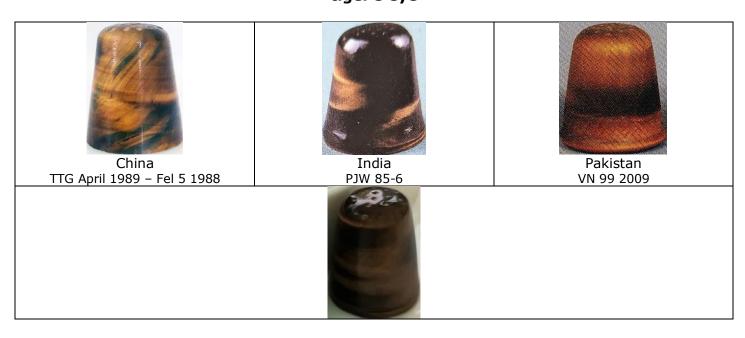
telephone wire



tiger iron



tiger's eye



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 Christies 1995 114-115



China



Germany or Austria



UK carved 18th century Christies 1995 110



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 Gim 1991



velvet



plush with beads and brocade over wood
TTG October - December 2003

verdite



Phalaborwa South Africa John van der Westhuizen



South Africa Tswana Products



carved VN 95 2008



VN 46 1998

volcanic ash



Washington USA Mt St Helen's ash



'Etna'

volcanic rock



Scotland
Christine and John Smith
sourced from rock of Edinburgh Castle Mount
TTG September 1992

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
<u>Carina Down</u>
candle with lace inset



Mind Your Own Beeswax



candle in shape of quilter's thimble

wicker

see also: bamboo







UK basket weave TTG January 2001

wire











USA <u>Yael Falk</u> (YoolaDesign) stone apex

wool



Perth Australia Barbara Martin knitted





Sydney Australia <u>Yvonne Winspear</u> brass pin of map of Australia b&w photo

zebra stone



Kununurra Australia John Read

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This listing of Thimbles made from unusual materials 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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