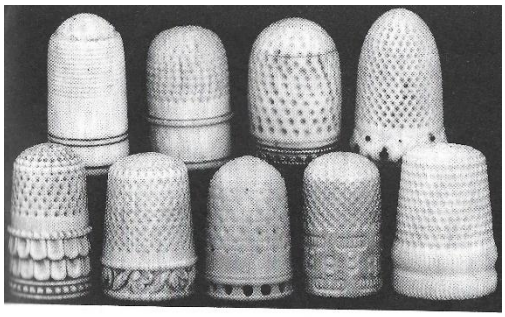
Ivory thimbles

elephant – hippo – mammoth – walrus – whale

including some sewing tools

This is one of my broadest thimble topics where the thimbles described cover the longest era: thimbles from 1800 thru to 1990s. It brings together the countries where each of the types of ivory thimbles were created, across nearly two centuries.
Very few of the makers are known but where they are, they are listed at the start of each country. Most 19th century thimbles were carved by unknown hands.



1. Decorated ivory thimbles: *Top Row (from left):* green painted circles*, red painted circles, patterned gilt metal band*, steel studs (missing its cut steel band). *Made from 2 pieces of ivory. *Bottom Row:* 5 examples of carved and incised designs.

range of antique ivory thimbles
b&w photo – Di Pelham Burn

Ivory comes from the tusk or tooth of the five mammals listed above and is the same dentine as that of human teeth – dense material wrapped in a covering of enamel. Unlike bone, ivory is a solid material so it became an attractive material for carvers.
We are familiar with the whaling tradition where whales' teeth were a means of carving and decorating, to while away the long periods at sea. Whaling in Australia and the US provided vital whale oil for lighting in the nineteenth century. In 1971 whaling was banned in the US and 1972 in Australia.

Thimbles made of ivory form a very small output from any type of ivory.
eBay banned the international sale of elephant ivory in 2005 which led to a total ban in 2007. It's amazing how many 'faux' ivory thimbles have made their way onto the market since then: even those described as made in 1800! Bovine is another common term used by eBay sellers.
Mammoth ivory is not included in the eBay ivory ban, so this too may be a loophole?

Towards the end of the 19th century, elephant ivory became prohibitively expensive for making luxury thimbles. The discovery of celluloid, xylonite and then early plastic for thimbles in the late 19th century gave a cheap creamy alternative for thimbles. Charles Iles created thimbles of ivorine in 1913. It was close enough to ivory for collectors to test them for ivory. Ivory doesn't burn but plastic does.



examples showing the small burn testing marks on plastic thimbles



this type of synthetic material thimble became an ivory alternative for the collector's market in 1980s with faux scrimshaw sailing ships

Another cheaper alternative to animal ivory thimbles is vegetable ivory. This is the nut of the Phytelephas macrocarpa palm which are known as tagua nuts.



Tagua nut (vegetable ivory)

There are also carved meerschaum thimbles from Turkiye, that could be mistaken for carved ivory. Meerschaum is a fine chalklike white clay.



meerschaum

As a librarian who is passionate about reading, I'd love to share theses title that relate to this topic
Lawrene Anthony *The elephant whisperer*
Sara Gruen *Water for elephants*
Sally Henderson *Silent footsteps*
Mark & Delia Owens *The eye of the elephant*
Mark & Delia Owens *Survivor's song*
Sharon Pincot *Elephant dawn*
Joanne Quinn *The whalebone theatre*
Daphne Sheldrinck *An African love story*

for other topics made of natural materials see
Bog oak sewing tools
Horn and bone thimbles
Vegetable ivory sewing tools

Elephant ivory

Elephant ivory is the most valuable ivory.

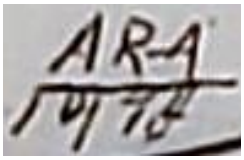
The nineteenth century was the era of big game hunting in Africa, which continued into the twentieth century. Elephant ivory tusks were highly prized trophies by big game hunters. This practice of shooting elephant for 'sport' was banned in 1973.

In 1989 CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endemic Species) banned the international trade in ivory. Poachers then became a massive problem for countries of southern Africa where elephants are endemic: slaughtered for their ivory to sell to the ivory hungry Chinese market.
In 1989, to deter the illegal sale of ivory Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi rocked the world when his adviser advised that the Kenyan stockpile of ivory be incinerated. It took accelerants days to burn twelve tons of ivory tusks.
In New York tons of elephant ivory tusks were crushed in Times Square in the 2010s.

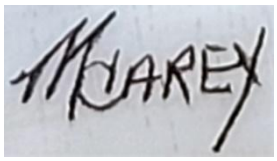
Sub-Saharan African governments realised that there is more revenue to be had from tourist dollars of safari tours, than the sale of ivory: their herds are protected in the national game parks.

American

Where in the USA were these ivory thimbles made? I have entered any relevant details from the catalogues: New England or The North-West Territories?

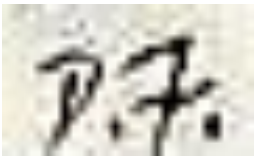
AR-4
scrimshaw whale
1978

M Carey
scrimshaw sailing ship




DD
scrimshaw, handpainted cardinal

DF
scrimshaw of lizard-like animal




WF William Feeney New England
scrimshaw sailing ship with lighthouse
1980



J.F.G.
1970




JP
scrimshaw, handpainted flower



H for von Hoelle

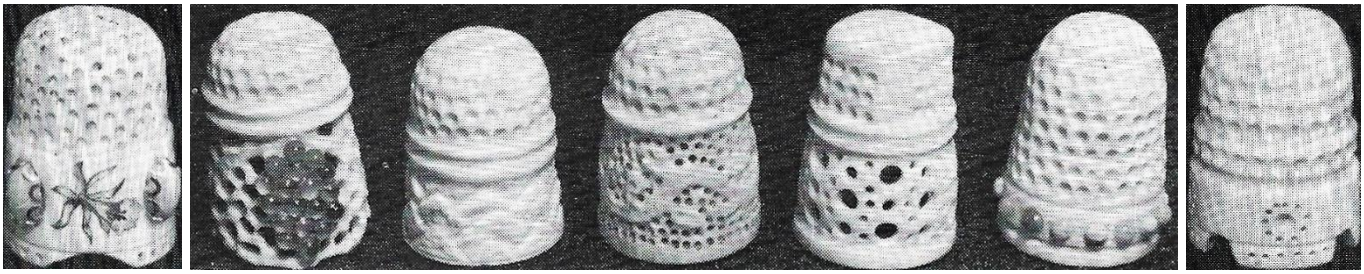


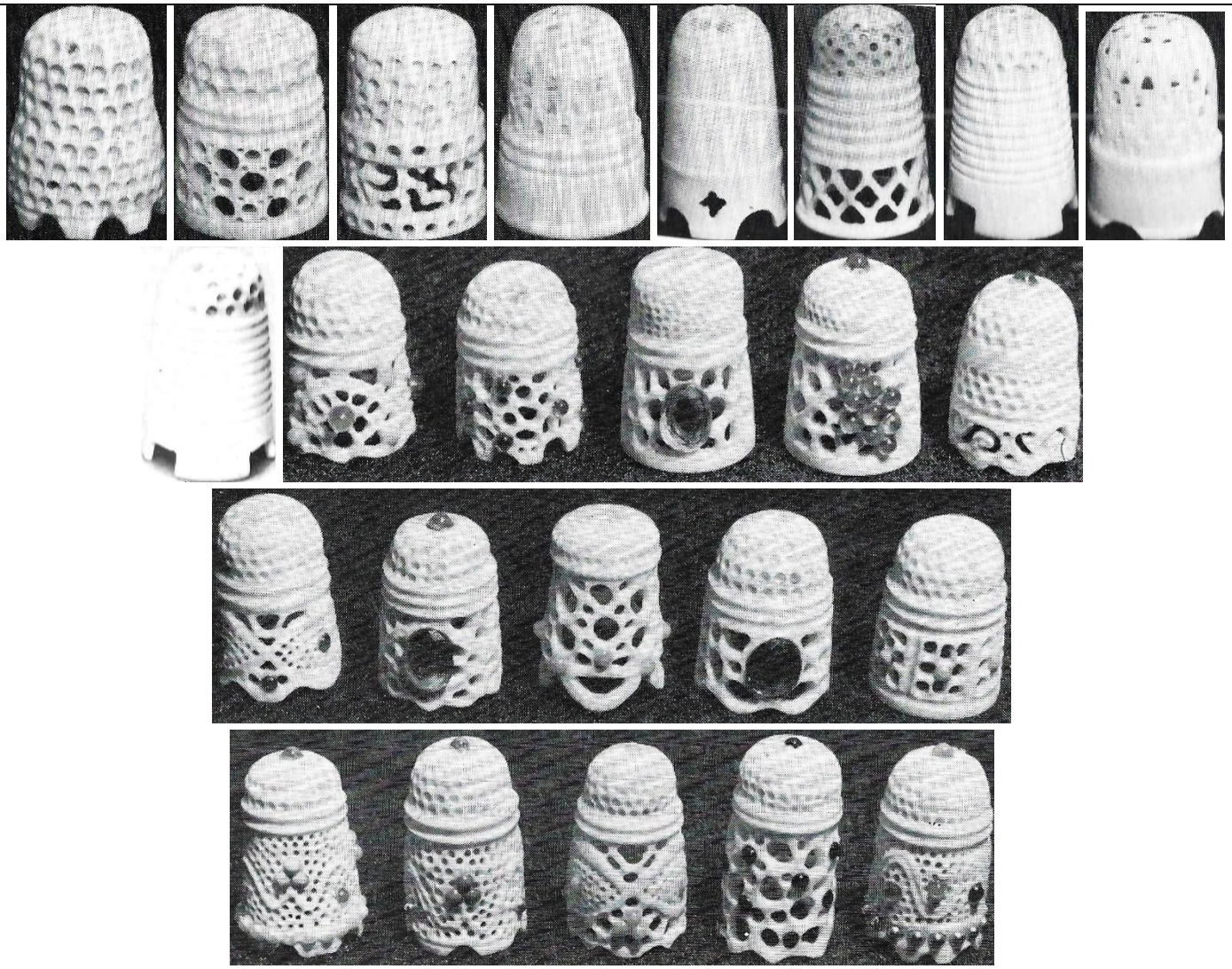




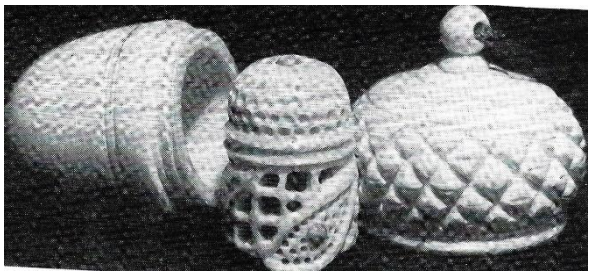


John von Hoelle Philadelphia PA
some of the range of his pierced ivory thimbles with semi-precious stones
these stones include coral, seed pearls, aquamarine, amethyst, emerald, onyx and turquoise
bottom R: 18ct gold birds
some have scalloped rims
others have gold bands at rims
von Hoelle turned these thimbles for family and friends
1980s
he had learnt to carve ivory in China in 1960s

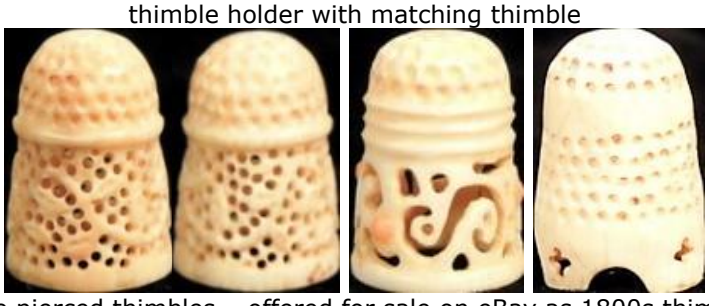




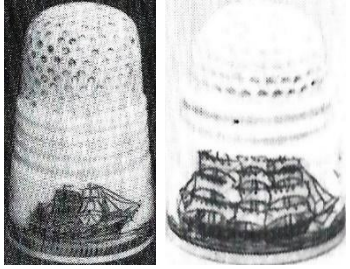
b&w photos from his book



thimble holder with matching thimble



three pierced thimbles – offered for sale on eBay as 1800s thimbles



indented first third, four or two concentric rings, scrimshaw sailing ships by **ARA**
b&w photos



John in his workshop

The following batch of thimbles are machine-turned, and they have the unifying design of six concentric circles turned into the upper half of the thimble. The apex too has concentric circles.

Scrimshaw sailing ships, with additional whaling symbols such as seabirds, clouds and waves which may be found on the verso, form the theme of this type of thimble.
No two sailing ships are created the same.
There are other designs as well and some of these have handpainted scrimshaw.
Signed examples are featured at the start of the American thimbles section. This batch have no maker's marks.

I am still trying to figure out why these US scrimshanders used elephant ivory to highlight their whaling industry?





apex with concentric circles – inside - accompanying leaflet



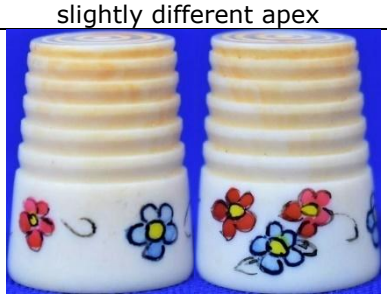
'Alaska' with state flower
Forget-me-nots in colour
slightly different apex



'Alaska' with state flower
Forget-me-nots in colour



forget-me-nots in colour



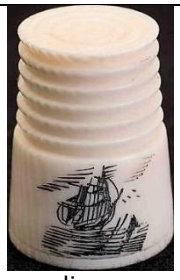
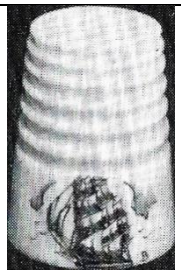
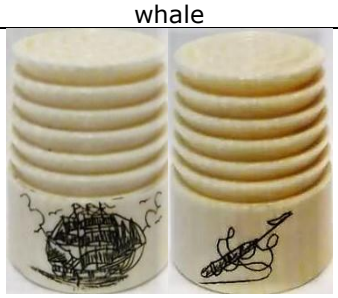

blue red and yellow handpainted flowers
"consigned by Native American
Inuit Artisans"



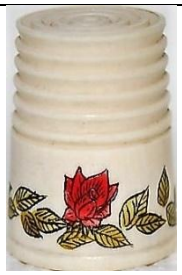
clipper
birds
little other scrimshaw



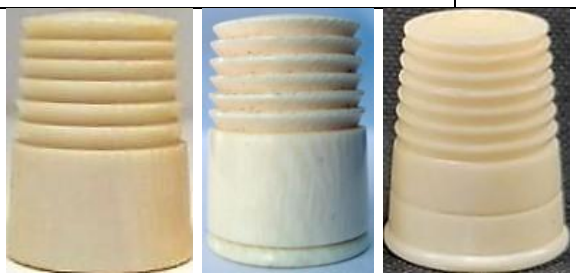
clipper
heavy clouds
birds

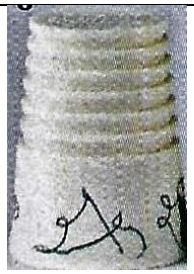
 clipper with flags birds	 clipper harpoon on verso	 clipper “New England artists”
 clipper striped clouds and seas	 clipper	 clipper
 clipper whale birds	 clipper whale	 clipper whale
 clipper birds	 clipper	 clipper
 clipper whale	 clipper whale	 clipper birds clouds
 clipper harpoon on verso	 clipper	 clipper with clouds and birds

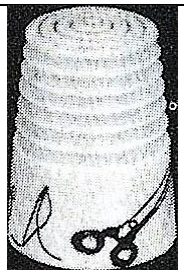

clipper and clouds


handpainted rose
pre-1989


plain with carved rose


plain with no scrimshaw


scissors thread threaded needle


scissors thread threaded needle


scissors thread threaded needle
handpainted
"75"


scissors buttons thread threaded needle


scissors thread threaded needle

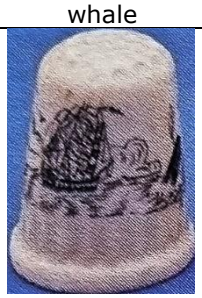
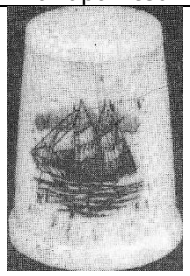

village wooden houses


posy of flowers
handpainted


bird
handpainted

These thimbles are different from those above: they have no concentric circles, leaving the thimble and apex smooth. Scrimshaw is similar to those above.



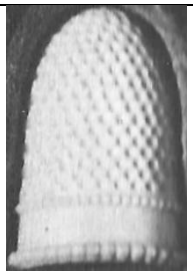
 iris handpainted	 iris handpainted	 clipper lighthouse
 clipper whale's tail	 clipper whale	 schooner handpainted
 school handpainted	 clipper whale handpainted	 clipper handpainted
 clipper whale handpainted	 clipper	 lighthouse handpainted
 clipper with clouds	 clipper with clouds	 clipper with whale;s tail



narwhal and trawler



'Alaska' with handpainted state flower
Forget-me-nots in colour



1800s
beaded rim
Museum of the City of New York



wolf



pheasant



schooner with clouds



carved



carved face
fingernail-shaped



fingernail-shaped



button



crochet hook
Nome Alaska eskimos



thimble holder in shape of flower – thimble in flower



egg thread container
advertising Pepys & Co 22 Poultry

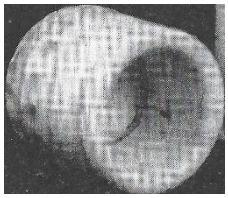
Canadian



Grenfell
Newfoundland and Labrador
tooth-shaped

Chinese

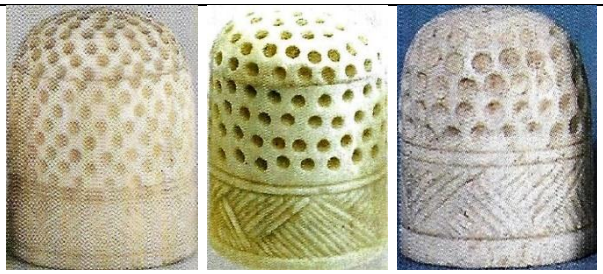
Estelle Zalkin gives the most comprehensive description of the early Chinese (Oriental) ivory thimbles: "thimbles were to form part of fitted workboxes which were then exported to Europe and America. Tho they looked like thimbles, many were not usable working tools because they were bulky and not tapered inside to fit the finger. Some had indentations on the side and cap, while others were smooth and plain." It seems that some of the craftsmen worked from drawings sent out from Europe, without having any knowledge of the function of these tools.



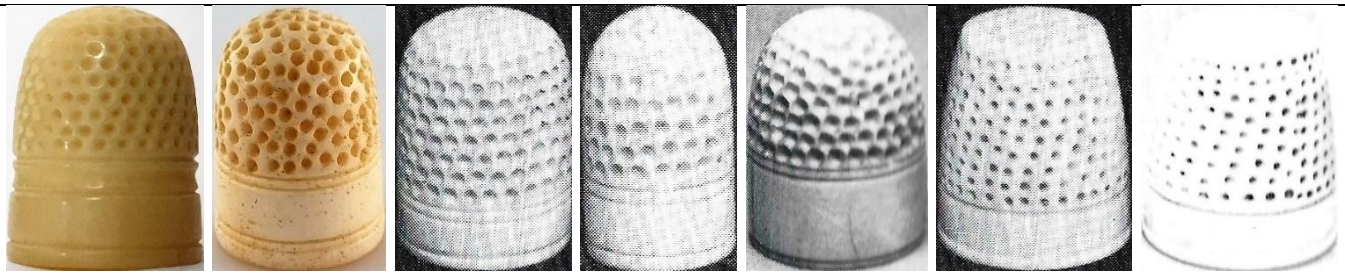
thick walled, not deep enough for use in sewing



19th century
made in two pieces
there may be one to five rows of indentations on the bottom half – the ones with four rows are identified as from 1840s-1860s



19th century
rim of 'basket weave' patterning
made in two parts



19th century
made in one piece
bottom L: 1830s
KS December 1984
bottom R: carved roundels on narrow band



1910s
etched elephant



handpainted crane on nest
painted upsidedown



Chinese scene
signed



modern
etched and painted bird and chrysanthemum
Chinese signature on verso



20th century
carved dragons



carved dragon



1970s



carved alternating indentations and striations



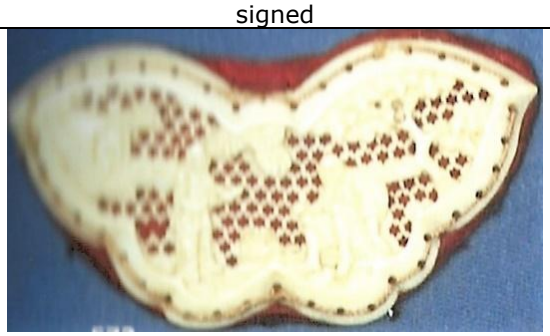
carved sewing tools from a workbox



thimble holder
etched Chinese scene of mountains and valleys all round
signed



thimble holder
pierced with carved moths and birds design all over

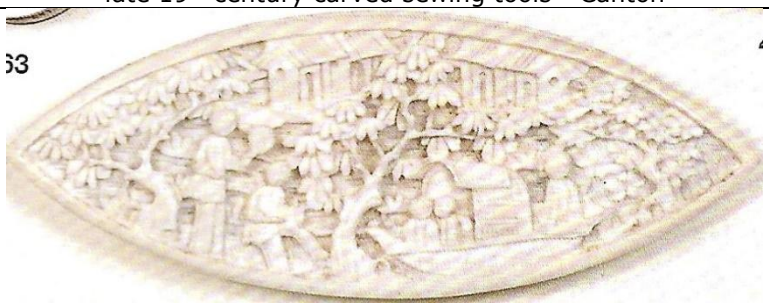


butterfly pinwheel - Canton



late 19th century carved sewing tools - Canton





knotting shuttle




cotton barrels on plinth



clamp



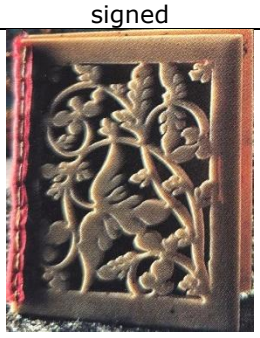
tape measure - missing tape



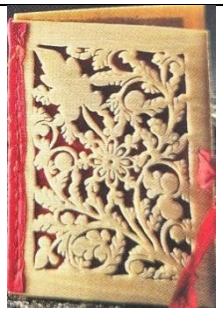
etched needlecase
signed



etched tatting shuttle
signed



carved needlebook



carved needlebook



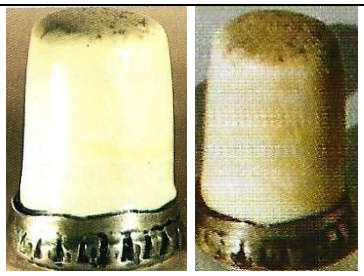
pincushion

Dutch

The only examples for Dutch ivory thimbles are those identified as from convents. These were the personal possessions of women entering a convent.



19th century
tortoiseshell rim
apex is of silver with a Gabler star
from a Brabant Monastery belonging to a novice



convent thimble with silver band



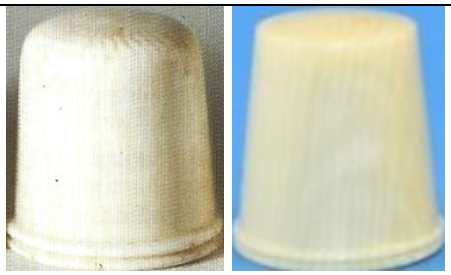
knitting knave



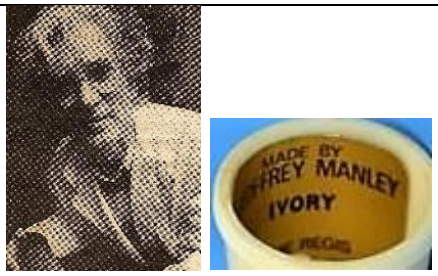
knitting knave

English

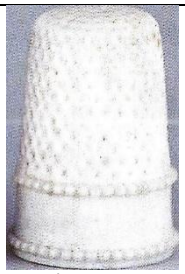
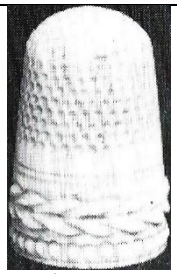
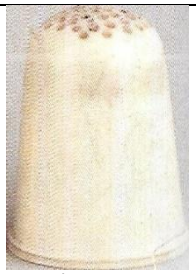
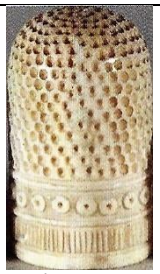
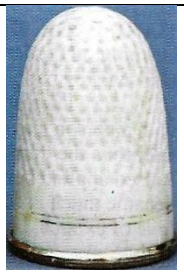
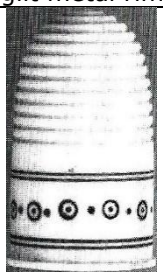
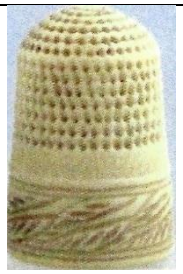
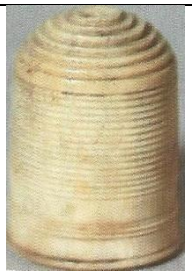
Unless mentioned as from somewhere else, I assume all TSL ivory thimbles are English.
I have noticed that thimbles listed in the TSL catalogues in the 1980s, had their details changed by the time McConnel published her *The story of the thimble* in 1997. These later descriptions are what I have used. An example is the inconsistencies when describing 'basket weave carved rim' attributed to Chinese, Indian and English carvers.

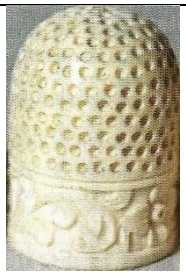


Geoffrey Manley Lyme Regis Devon
1980s
smooth all over

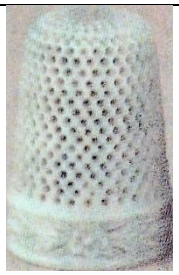


sticky label inside identifies the maker

 18th century child's	 18th century child's	 19th century carved band of flowers	 19th century beaded rim
 19th century two beaded rims	 19th century carved band of leaves beaded rim	 19th century smooth sides with indented apex	 19th century tall, carved roundels band with reeded rim
 19th century	 1800s gilt rim	 1810s steel and gilt inserts above gilt metal rim	 1820s double carved petals band and row of fine beading
 1820s child's narrow band of basket weave	 1820s finely dimpled beehive shape with gilt metal band	 1820s Madras work or hot needle decoration around band	 1830s carved band of sloping leaves
 1830s gilt metal rim	 1830s carved roundels on wide band	 1830s turned	 1830s carved band of diagonal leaves



1840s
carved band of flowers



1840s
narrow carved band of fruit flowers and leaves



1840s
carved band of stylised leaves
beaded rim



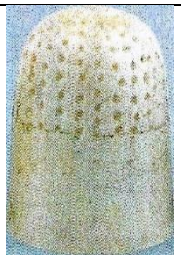
1840s
carved band of leaves on wide band



1840s
child's



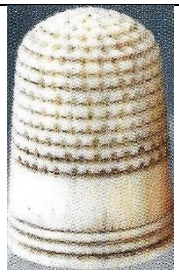
1840s
narrow carved band of flowers



1840s
TSL winter 2005



1840s
carved band of leaves
beaded rim



1840s



1840s-1860s
carved narrow band of roundels



1840s-1860s
double carved petals band and two rows of fine beading



1840s-1860s
double carved petals band
row of beading



1840s-1850s
wide row of carved leaves
hand indented
hole in apex which would be a nerve hole



1850s
plain raised narrow band



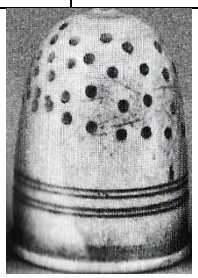
1850s



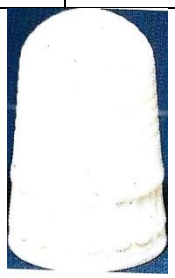
1860s
tall elegant shape



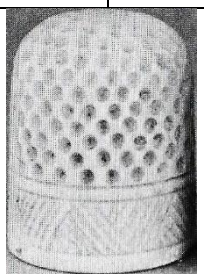
1860s
child's



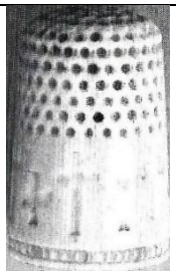
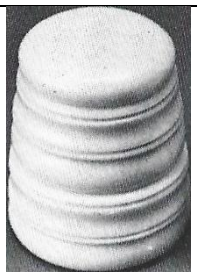
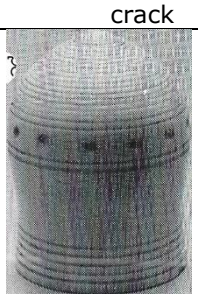
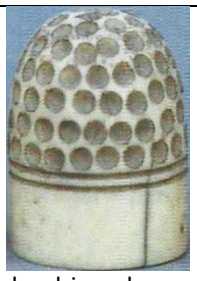
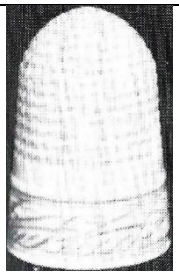
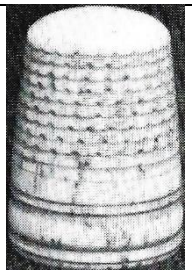
1860s
turned bands
handmade indentations

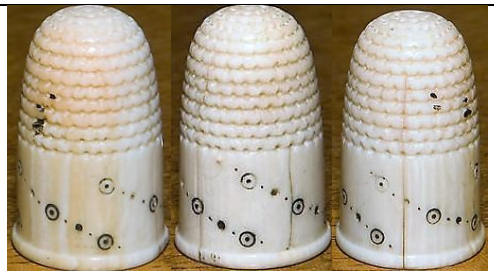


1860s-1870s
elegantly carved band



1860s-1870s
rim of 'basket weave' patterning

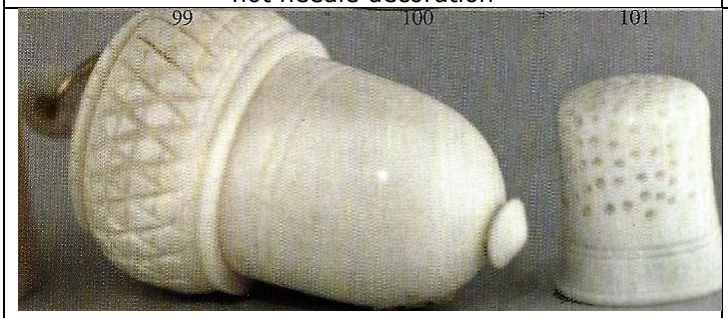
 1870s bands of carved flowers	 1870s carved band of flowers crack	 1880s	 1880s-1900s carved crosses band
 1986 turned in Cornwall by a hobby woodturner limited to **50**	 1988 turned in Cornwall by a hobby woodturner based on Hungarian thimble design limited to **50**	 beehive shape crack	 carved band of flowers
 handpunched indentations gold band rim	 handpunched indentations wide plain bamd	 narrow band of carved roundels	 'maid's' size carved leaves on wide band with ornate pattern on apex
 wider gilt band on rim	 thick gold band around rim	 carved band of leaves	 narrow row of roundels
	 modern smooth with carved lines black spot on apex would have been nerve	 child's smooth all over	



Madras work
hot needle decoration



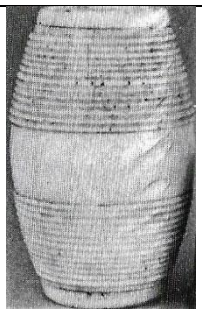
Stanhope peep



acorn shaped thimble holder
with thimble
TSL autumn 2001



acorn shaped thimble holder
with thimble



barrel-shaped thimble holder



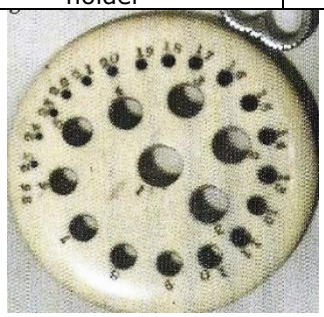
urn-shaped thimble holder
carved fruit on lid



egg-cup-shaped thimble holder



panelled thimble holder
with thimble



knitting needle gauge 1840s



thimble holder



thimble holder



tape measure in shape of
handpainted chess castle



needlecase in shape of
parasol



needlecase in shape of
handpainted parasol



stiletto
1860s



clamp
viewed from front



pinwheel



thimble holder
bakelite thimble



waxer



needlecase in shape of spaniel
1800s



thread winder



thread winders



Madras work or hot needle
decoration needlecase



pique thimble case



Madras work or hot needle
decoration needlebook with felt
leaves



sewing clamp with pincushion
ornately carved thumb screw
1840s



thimble holder
dyed red
1870s



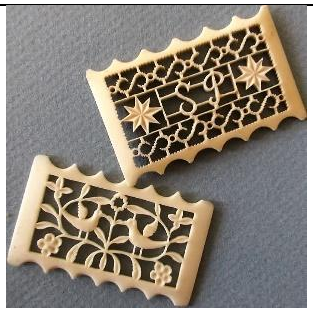
pincushion and emery
1860s



needlebook
1810s-1830s



needlebooks carved
1810s-1830s



thread winders
1810s-1830s



pincushions
1810s-1830s



knitting needle end protectors
boots



knitting needle end protectors
fretwork



pinwheels
Madras work
1810s-1830s



knitting needle end protectors
Indian gentleman



pincushion
wheelbarrow



thread winder
'C'
1810s-1830s



pinwheel
etched flower 'A Present from Scarborough'



early 19th century carved sewing tools



Madras work or hot needle decoration sewing tools



emery, tape measure and pincushion
1860s



necessaire in ivory and pold pique



Cartier workbox



Stevenson's rocket with needlecase in chimney and other tools in carriage



pincushion
'Esteem the giver'



wide variety of Madras work or hot needle decoration sewing tools

French

The French ivory thimbles of the 19th century tend to follow the form of the Palais Royale mother-of-pearl thimbles.

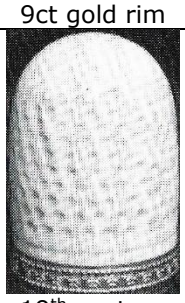


9ct gold rim


18th century
carved band


19th century
clouté studded decoration
within fine carving


19th century
roundels around rim


19th century
beaded gold rim
b&w photo

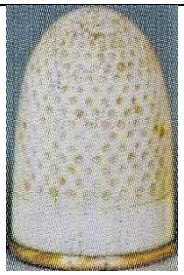

19th century
gold rim


19th century
beaded gold rim


1800s
beaded wide gold rim


1820s
beaded gold rim


1820s
gold rim

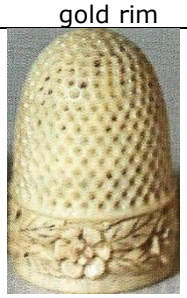

1820s
gold rim


1820s
gold rim


1820s
clouté studded steel
decoration and rim
within fine carving


1820s
Dieppe carvers
carved band of a duck
shoot: band of birds in
trees, reeds, man with gun


1820s-1830s
wide band of carving


1820s-1830s
Dieppe carvers
carved band of flowers and
leaves



1840s
Dieppe carvers
carved band of flowers
gilt metal rim



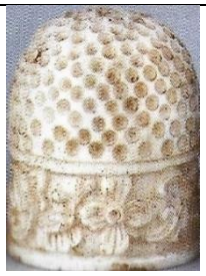
1900s
carved temple building with sunflower on verso
narrow band of basket weave
R: apex Stanhope showing eleven turbaned men
made for M.M.Shah & Co for Indian market



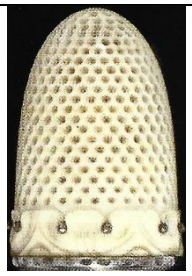
gilt metal rim
L: showing deep crack



gilt metal rim



carved band of flowers and leaves



cut steel on scallops with steel rim



Dieppe carvers
carved band of flowers and leaves



smooth
height 25mm



handpainted



scrimshaw band 'Souvenir de Dieppe'
carved by Dieppe carvers on Normandy coast – flourished in 17th century
in 14th C they imported ivory from west coast of Africa (TSL spring 1989)
Chateau Museum in Dieppe has largest collection of ivory in Europe



carved rose band



thimble holder
fretwork
thimble: plain wide band
18th century



thimble holder and needlecase
banded in gold and steel studs
1840s



thimble as part of etui
gilt metal studs
1800s



scent bottle
ivory thimble and ivory base
with metal studs



thimble holder
carved fretwork
thimble: plain wide band



pinwheel
Dieppe carved flowers and fruit



sewing kit
clouté studded decoration



needlecases
clouté studded decoration – including a harp shape



sewing tools
selection of Dieppe carved
late 18th – early 19th century





needlecases
Dieppe carved figural
in the shape of mainly of fisher folk some all holding a fish



needlecase
flute



needlecases
Shibayama inlay insects on pea pod
19th century



sewing kit
carved in shape of pinecone



sewing case
insects Shibayama inlay
19th century



sewing clamp
pincushion and thimble



needlebook
pierced Dieppe



needlecase
blue enamelled heart and red stones



needlecase
eglomise painting 1780s



needlecases
Dieppe in shape of pea pod



needlecase reel stand



pinwheel
butterfly



pinwheel



pinwheel



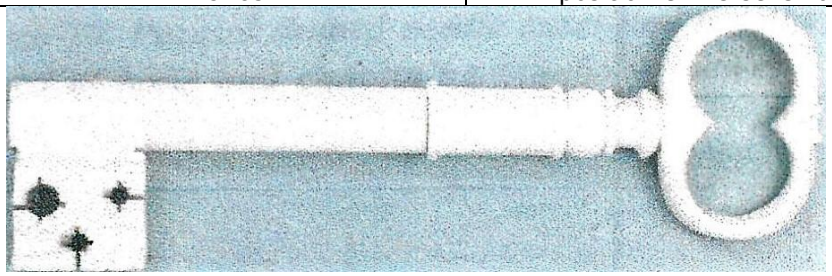
pinwheel
Dieppe
1840s



combination pincushion needlecase
Stanhope 'Palais du Trocadero
Exposition Universelle Paris'



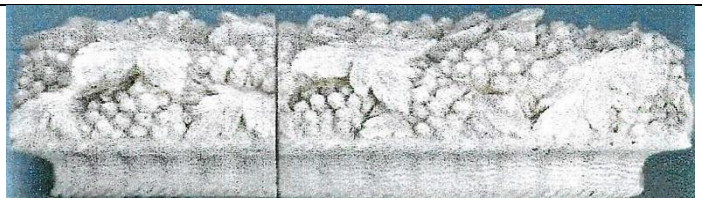
pinwheel
Dieppe



needlecase
Dieppe key
1820s



Dieppe sewing clamp with pincushion



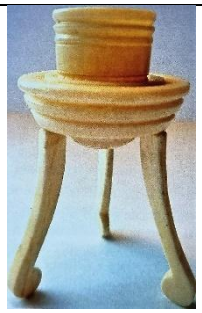
Dieppe needlecase
basket of grapes



Dieppe figural needlecase
1790s



Dieppe needlecase
flowers and leaves
sliding lid
1780s



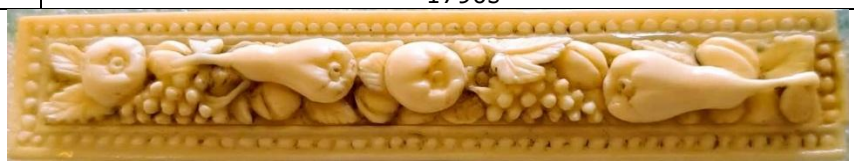
thimble holder stand



etui with cut steel
1790s



pinwheels
Dieppe carved flowers
1810s-1830s



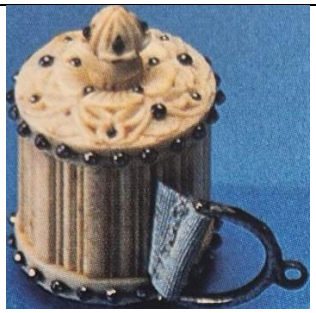
Dieppe needlecase
fruit



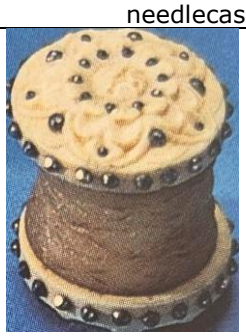
pinwheels
Dieppe carved fruit and flowers
1810s-1830s



needlecase



tape measure
clouté



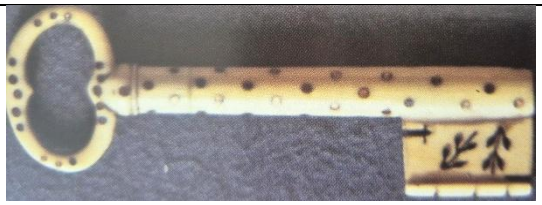
waxer
clouté



needlecase
Dieppe



stiletto and sheath
Dieppe Offenbach shape



needlecase
clouté key



thimble with its holder with Stanhope peep
1880s

German



Schaefer
made for Freunde des Fingerhuts 1989
limited to **150**





needlecase

Indian

Only male Indian elephants have tusks – and then not each male elephant.



1952
handpierced with stars shapes
26 pearls set around rim



1956
handpainted 'Ganesh Jayanti 25th August 1956' on verso



1957
carved bearded male figural



1957
Baby Jesus with Mary
'Happy New Year 1957'
only thimble Motiwala ever signed



handpainted Tah Mahal
apex has floral touches of gold highlights
gilt painted band
L: woman's portrait on verso R set: portrait is missing in the blank oval



carved flowers and leaves
lower band has carvings of a lion, water buffalo and rhino
apex has a carved lion's head
silver rim with fourteen rubies



blue foil
sapphire set into apex which is carved with flower using an Iles' & Gomms plastic thimble 'Made in England Non-flam' he covered it in blue foil which shines thru the piercings
the black bands are scrimshaw



handpainted Taj Mahal with Mumtaz
richly floral apex

Bhagwandas Motiwala



these thimbles were all sourced from Alta Thompson's collection 1950s

 carved elephant	 carved elephant	 carved elephant and stylised tree



1850s
made in two parts



1890s
made in two parts



1890s



1900s



handpainted with domed brass apex



handpainted with flat brass apex



Sadeli work
fine steel insets

Anglo-Indian - all made for European market









19th century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox with brass feet
teak and steel laid down in fine strips - ivory tools also showing tape measure



19th century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox
teak and steel laid down in fine strips
ivory tools also showing thimble



19th century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox
ivory, teak and steel laid down in fine shapes
L: 1840s



horn and ivory workbox
Vizagapatam, east India
late 18th century
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



ivory workbox decorated with Lac
contains ivory sewing tools
ivory lids also decorated with lac





horn and ivory workbox
Vizagapatam, east India
late 18th century
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



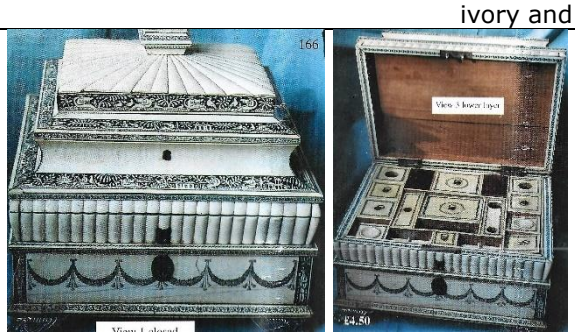
ivory and sandalwood workbox
Vizagapatam, east India
late 18th century
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



ivory and steel workbox



ivory and sandalwood workbox



sewing casket
with ink work Vizagapatam, east India
1790-1810



workbox
Georgian



display of Indian workboxes



stiletto combined with pincushion

Italian or **Portuguese**



thimble holder in shape of flower bud
thimble inscribed on apex in black 'MJ'
on base letter 'd 28 Februa'
1830s

Japanese

Shibayama work 1870s



etui



needlecase



needlecase in shape of peapod

Kenyan

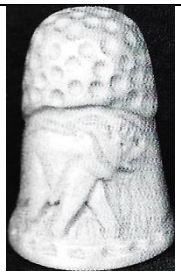
Amboseli National Park is known as the home of the African elephant in Kenya



carved elephant
it had a certificate of export 1980 from a Kenyan game reserve

Namibian

Etosha National Park is the home of elephants in northern Namibia.



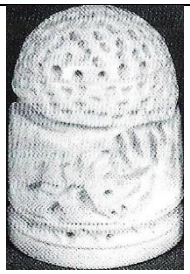
carved elephant



carved elephant



carved leaves



carved rhino

New Zealand



1970



lace bobbin
handpainted New Zealand native bird and flower

Russian





scrimshaw with figures
does the presence of a reindeer indicate that this is bone not ivory?
'Sep 18'

South African

Kruger National Park is the largest game reserve in South Africa.

The elephant ivory for these thimbles would have been sourced thru game parks from either culled or elephants who died of natural causes – never from poached ivory.

African elephants are far larger than their Indian counterparts. Both male and female African elephants have tusks.



Tswana Products Bophuthatswana



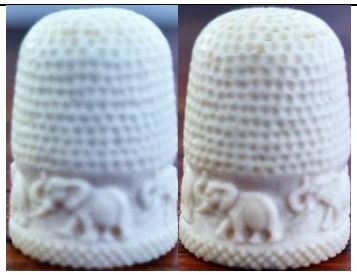




John van der Westhuizen Phalaborwa
close to Kruger Park
smooth
sticker with 'JJ Ivory' in apex

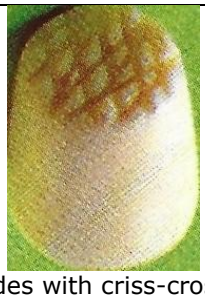

carved elephant and trees


carved elephant and trees


carved elephant



Zairean

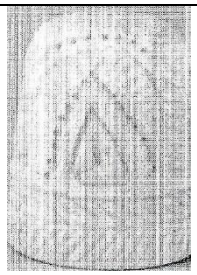

smooth sides with criss-cross on apex

Zimbabwean

Hwange National Park (previously Wankie Game Reserve in Rhodesia) is the home of their elephants. The ivory carvers were from families with a carving tradition, "showing the finest workmanship, and a high degree of excellence" (TSL). Thimble sales provided much needed income.

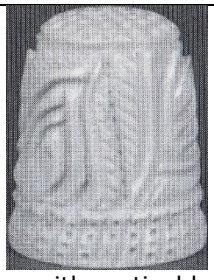
Many thimbles are straight sided, which would make them difficult to use for sewing. Being hand-carved no two thimbles are ever the same: even when they seem identical, the rim will be carved differently. The scenes continue around the thimbles. They are all hand carved including creating the thimble itself.

TSL sourced their ivory thimbles thru game reserves or protected 'nature parks'.


abstract design
TSL autumn 1986

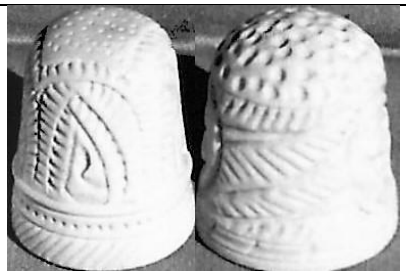

abstract design
bands of thick elephant hair


abstract design

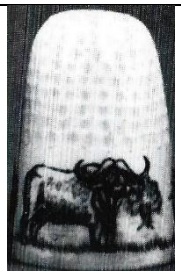

design with vertical leaves

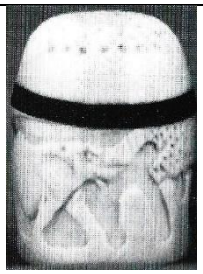

abstract design

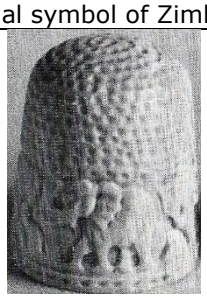

abstract design

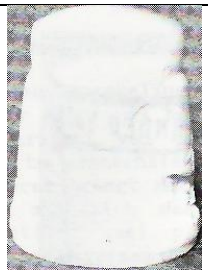

abstract design


Great Zimbabwe Bird (Hungwe)
national symbol of Zimbabwe


scrimshaw buffalo and elephants

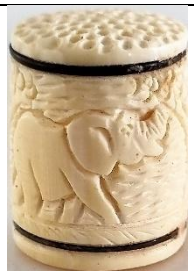

elephants and trees
black band may be of many strands
of elephant hair


elephants and trees


elephants


elephants


elephants
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver


elephant
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver

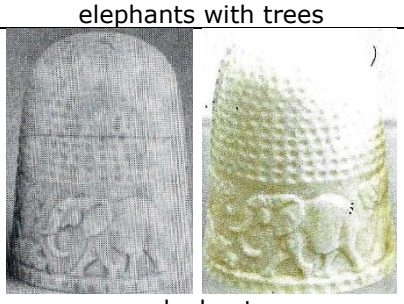

elephants
reeded rim


elephants
single strand of elephant hair (top) and
one of silver
this example shows how difficult it is to
neatly join both hair and silver


elephants with trees

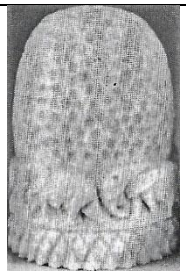

elephants with trees


elephants


elephant

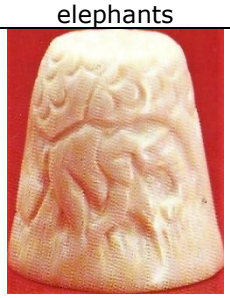

elephants

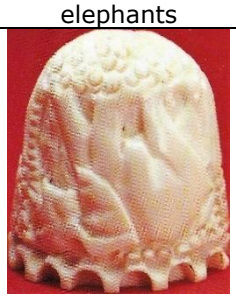

elephants


elephants


elephants


elephants


elephants


elephants
ellies are upsidedown
scalloped rim


scrimshaw elephant


scrimshaw elephant


scrimshaw elephant


scrimshaw elephant and large tree


elephants
carved in bulbous shape
upsidedown


elephant


elephant

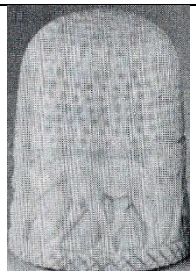

elephants
narrow band showing five of six carvings


elephants


elephant


scrimshaw gemsbuck and trees

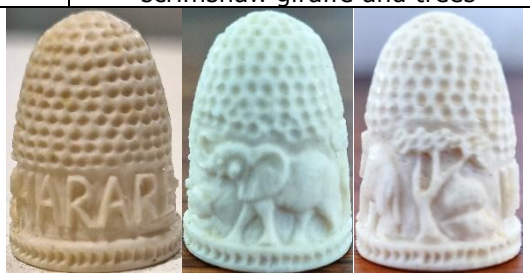

scrimshaw giraffe with hills


giraffe


scrimshaw giraffe and trees


scrimshaw giraffe and trees


guinea fowl



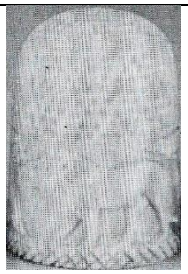
'Harari' and elephants and trees


hippos and trees
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver


hippos and trees


hippos
single strand of elephant hair (top)
and one of silver


African hut (rare subject)


lions


ostriches

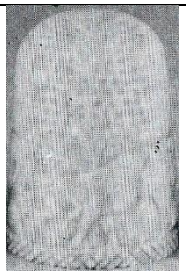

rhinos and trees

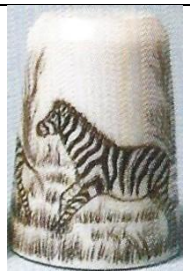
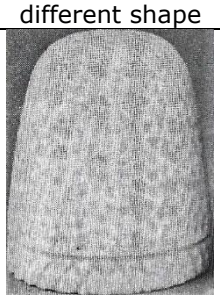
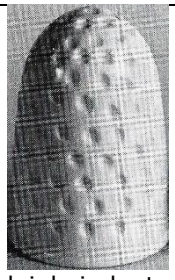
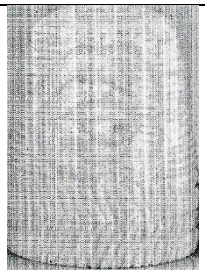

rhino


rhinos and trees


rhinos


rhino


water buffalo

 scrimshaw zebras and trees	 scrimshaw zebras and trees unknown extra mark 'FO4D'	 'Zimbabwe' and Great Zimbabwe Bird (Hungwe)
 leaves	 leaves	 leaves
 flowers different shape	 flowers	 horizontal ridges – smooth and tactile
 plainly indented TSL spring 1986	 handpainted woman stamping corn	 handpainted woman drumming
 handpainted woman stamping corn	 flower with elaborate band	 plainly indented TSL spring 1984
 flowers	 rose	 carved roses


vertical ridges


five-sided smooth


roses


fern pattern


roses and leaves




shorter, smooth with bands of elephant hair and silver


flower


stylised hearts


vertical ridges - smooth

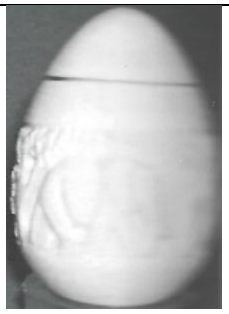

leaves


rose


rings



thimble holder with carved elephants
the base is not centred so it can never stand erect


thimble holder with carved elephants

Hippo ivory

German

Hippo teeth were sourced from South African game reserves by the ivory carvers in Odenwald, Germany. They are handpainted. There is a Museum of Ivory in the Odenwald.


house


rose


flowers


crane


lily


lilies with Greek key rim


trees and rocks scene


trees scene

Mammoth ivory

Fossilised woolly mammoth tusks are sourced from the frozen tundra in Siberia.

See the Horn and bone thimbles topic for examples of mammoth bone thimbles created by Brad Elfrink.

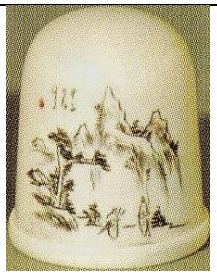
American


Fish Creek Company Ketchikan Alaska
smooth

Chinese


scrimshaw painted fish


scrimshaw cat


scrimshaw scene

German

The mammoth carvers are based in Odenwald. There is a Museum of Ivory in the city.



Schott
made for Freunde des Fingerhuts 1992
limited to **150**

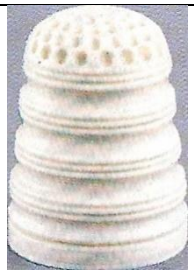

carved abstract design

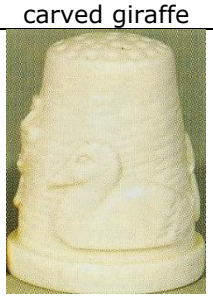

carved vertical leaves

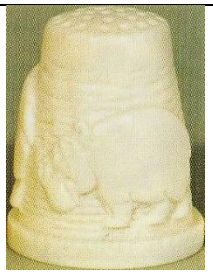

carved giraffe


limited to **500**


carved bird


carved rings
limited to **500**


carved ducks


carved hippo


carved rings


plain


carved leaved


carved rose band
scalloped rim


carved rose band
four concentric rings

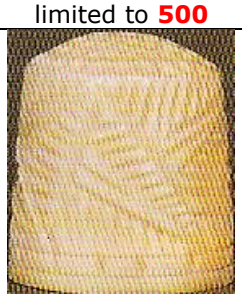

carved rose
fine rings on upper body

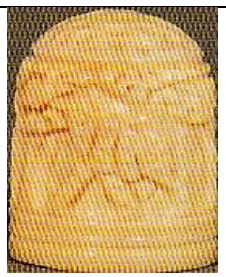

carved rose band
scalloped rim
limited to **500**


carved rose band
scalloped rim




abstract design carving

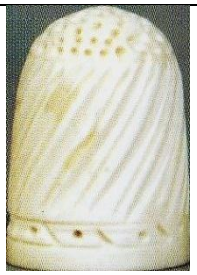

carved all over leaf pattern


carved elephant


carved acanthis swirls


carved diagonal diagonal dots


carved hanging leaves grooves


carved swirled diagonals


carved band with indentations


scrimshaw church


carved band of flowers


carved head


carved rings


carved flower on apex scalloped rim


carved flower on apex scalloped pierced rim


carved flower on apex


carved lily-of-the-valley


handpainted scene scalloped rim


carved mammoth


carved vertical wide grooves


tall shape with very wide band


carved rose

Russian

The mammoth carvers were based in the Tobolsk factory in Siberia.


scrimshaw capercaillie


scrimshaw elephant

Walrus ivory

American

These teeth are sourced by Native Alaskans as part of their hunting traditions. I have chosen the term Native Alaskan, rather than the term of Eskimo that I grew up using.

These pewter thimbles that appeared from the 1980s onwards contain a very small piece of scrimshaw ivory in the apex.



L: maker's mark AS – R: Nicholas Gish



Cheri Ables
fossilised



Herminia Anslinger Alaska
'Alaska 49' with star
commemorating Alaska as 49th State 1959
maker's details from Alta Thompson's catalogue



Arnold Kayutak
bird in nest
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
distinctive maker's mark
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



Arnold Kayutak
walrus head
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
distinctive maker's mark
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



Simon Pasruk
sewing set in shape of seal
1978



Jerome Saclamana
baleen seal needlecase with thimble
2010s



face
Native Alaskan carving
maker's marks of two straight lines and one diagonal line
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



seal scene
Native Alaskan scrimshaw
maker's mark of two straight lines and one diagonal line
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



totem bird
Native Alaskan scrimshaw
maker's mark of two straight lines and one diagonal line



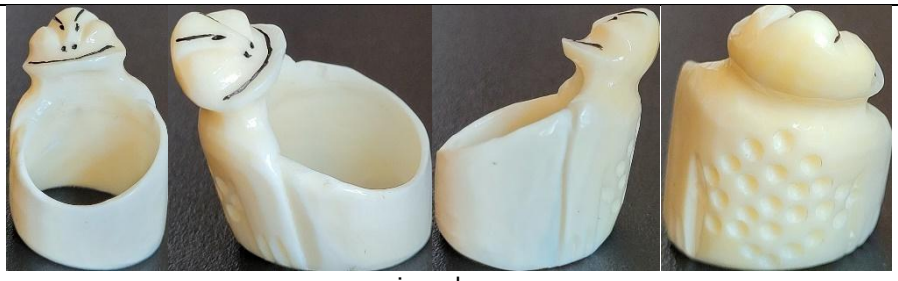
Arctic fox with trees and midnight sun
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
maker's mark of two straight lines and one diagonal line



Native Alaskan face
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



walrus
Native Alaskan carving
finely carved lines from centre of apex
not well carved on inside



ring shape
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details
figure is known as a Billiken doll – a good luck charm
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



plain



scrimshaw Native Alaskan dogsled



scrimshaw Native Alaskan sailing ship, whale and harpooner



Native Alaskan
large indentations on shorter thimle



1920s
Stanhope peep with
'Niagara Falls'



1930s
smooth all over
Ketchikan Alaska



2000



horse's head shape
Native Alaskan carving
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



owl shape
Native Alaskan carving
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



peacocks atop
Native Alaskan carving
from Alta Thompson's collection
1950s



buttons



needlecase
Alaska



scissors
early 20th century

Whale ivory Sperm and Orca whales

Whales have 23 teeth and these can be carved.

American

The heart of the US whale oil industry was Nantucket MA, from 17th century until 1971 when it was banned.

The thimble is whale tooth-shaped. There is scope for greater scrimshaw detail in the harpooning scenes.



sailing ship
harpooners flung out by whale tail



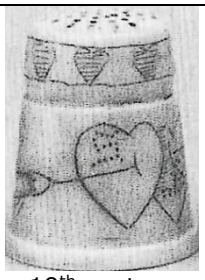
sailing ship
harpooners with whale



sailing ship



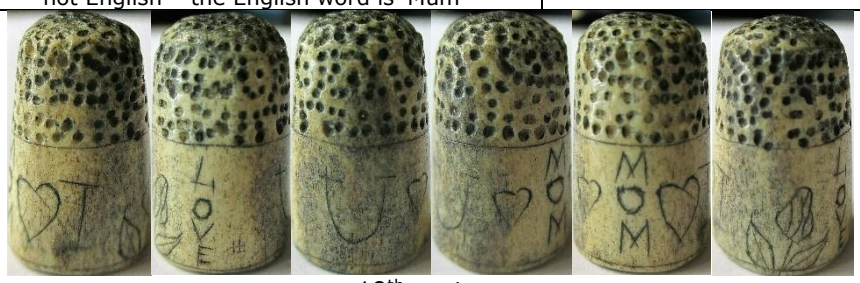
19th century
sailing ship with 'John' and 'Betty' all scrimshaw in elliptical circles on wide band
the use of 'Mom' indicates that this is American not English – the English word is 'Mum'



19th century
pierced hearts with initials scrimshaw



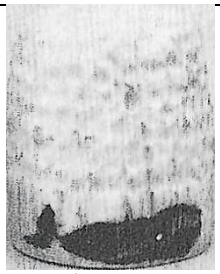
19th century
two lovebirds scrimshaw



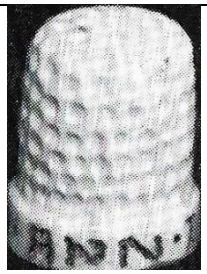
19th century
'I love you Mom' with hearts and roses scrimshaw on wide band
hand indented



paillettes (some missing)
metal rim
Nantucket MA



19th century
scrimshaw whale



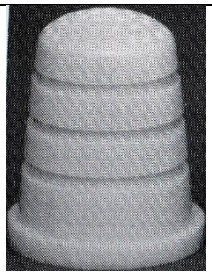
scrimshaw on band
'I love Ann'



scrimshaw "Sir N W Ben …"



carved flowers and leaves



sperm whale



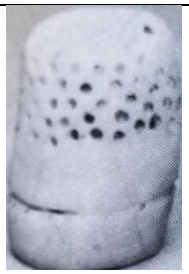
'Mother'
1800s



handcarved in Alaska



handcarved in Alaska



narwhale
New England



Alaska
carved ring
1800s

Australian

Albany in Western Australia



Jamie Bell (JB) Albany WA
scrimshaw sailing ships
'Running Home'





Ralph Bennet Albany WA

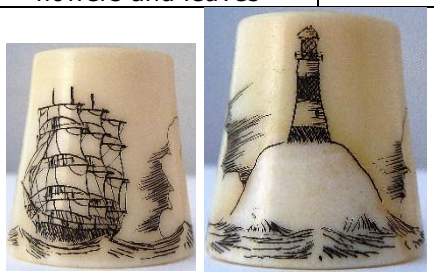
Hand-turned dainty small ivory thimbles are made of Sperm Whale ivory. They are completely unadorned, with a flat or slightly concave apex. There are rings incised in the apex and there is a rim to the thimbles. The beauty of the ivory is shown as these thimbles have been polished to a fine sheen. There are no maker's marks but a card accompanying the thimbles gives the maker's name and address. The thimbles were made in the 1980s.

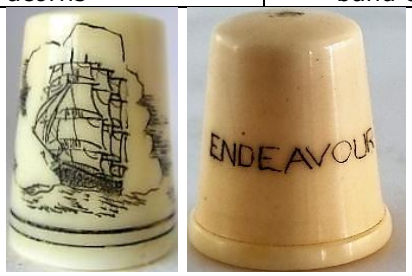

flowers and leaves


acorns


band of flowers


sailing ship


sailing ship and lighthouse



sailing ship 'Endeavour'


band of flowers and leaves


lighthouse


posy of flowers and leaves


koala


flowers


posy of flowers and leaves


flowers

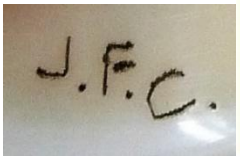
James Cumberland-Brown (J.F.C.) WA

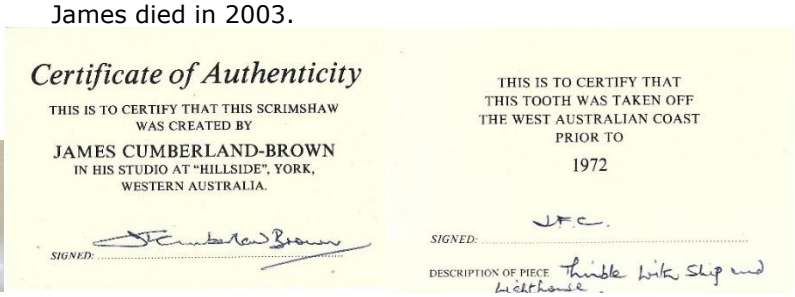
James is renowned for his scrimshaw. He acquired a great quantity of Sperm Whale teeth before the sale of whale ivory was banned in 1972. This miniaturist, from the Royal School of Fine Arts, has created exquisite scrimshaw thimbles. The scenes are carved with a probe or sharpened nail and then black oil paint is rubbed into the carving, to bring them to life. The thimbles were supplied with a certificate proclaiming 'This is to certify that this tooth was taken off the West Australian Coast prior to 1972'.

James turns the thimbles himself and the shape varies from thimble to thimble. Originally residing in York, Western Australia, where visitors to 'Hillside' could watch this artist at work, he then moved to East Fremantle.

James died in 2003.






Certificate of Authenticity

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THIS SCRIMSHAW WAS CREATED BY

JAMES CUMBERLAND-BROWN

IN HIS STUDIO AT "HILLSIDE", YORK, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

SIGNED:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THIS TOOTH WAS TAKEN OFF THE WEST AUSTRALIAN COAST PRIOR TO

1972

SIGNED: J.F.C.

DESCRIPTION OF PIECE Thimble with Ship and Lighthouse

JCB York W.A. 1991

English



Stanhope peep
1920s

No other details



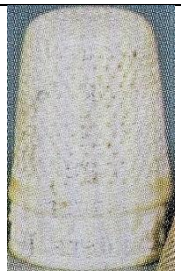
1950s
12 tiny elephants carved around the rim
dyed pink



carved roses



1870s
European fine horizontal lines
with gold collar



narrow carved band



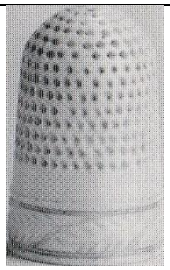
carved vertical ferns



carved flower



carved flowers with leaves



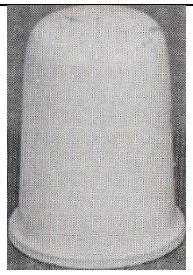
narrow leaves band



carved vertical leaves band



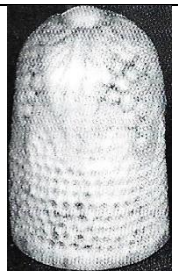
smooth sides



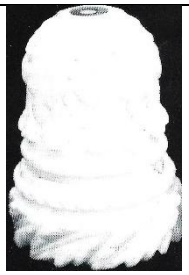
smooth



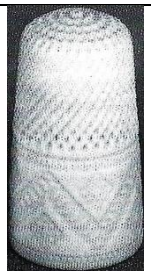
carved leaves on wide band



carved flower with leaves on apex



deeply carved leaves rim



wide band of finely carved zigzag



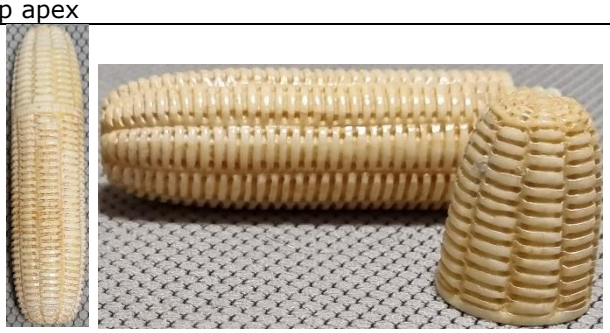
modern
carved mice
dyed pale pink




mini thimble holder
carved flower op apex



marine ivory sewing kit
scrimshaw THAI temple scene all round and thimble has deity and turret



carved ivory sewing kit in shape of corn cob, including thimble

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This listing of Ivory thimbles does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects.
Rather it invites comments and contributions to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

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