

# British sterling silver placename thimbles

What do British seaside holiday resorts have to do with thimbles?

There are many British silver thimbles made in the late 1920s by Henry Griffith & Sons, with names of placenames or towns - as keepsakes - which include seaside resorts, that have now become collectable in their own right.

After World War I, tourism became accessible to more people and the English thimble manufacturer, Henry Griffith & Sons, took full advantage of this by producing silver placename thimbles as souvenirs. He produced thimbles with the names of British destinations on the bands of his thimbles and he was the only maker to do so in any quantity. There are hallmark dates for 1928 (D), 1929 (E), 1930 (F), 1931 (G) and very occasionally 1932 (H) hallmark dates; rarely a 1933 (J) date.

The Great Depression saw the end of this lucrative production (very few other English thimble makers produced silver thimbles during the late 1920s, never mind the 1930s). Were the thimbles with 1925 (Felixstowe) and 1926 (Stratford-on Avon) and 1927 (Stratford-on Avon) hallmark dates an early marketing?

The placename is lettered in upper case in relief around the band of the thimble. Occasionally the name is lettered over vertical striations. I have noticed that two placenames are enclosed within inverted commas or quote marks e.g., some of the Stratford-on-Avon and Penrith thimbles. Short placenames like Rhyl, Rugby, Leven, Bude and York have a star or flower or shamrock symbol at either end.

Only Stratford-on-Avon has the lettering in smaller print as well as the standard used.

The placenames commissioned by Henry Griffith & Son are as diverse as the popular Stratford-on-Avon and Blackpool, to small inland towns like Rugby, up to Inverness in Scotland, to the ever-popular Chester, to the capital cities of London, Cardiff and Edinburgh.

There are Griffith thimbles for England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, as well as the Channel Isles - the Isle of Man and the Isle of Wight. It is interesting to note that there is a placename thimble for Oxford but not Cambridge - for Bristol but not for Bath. Dublin nor Belfast have HG&S placename thimbles.

In addition to the size marks, Griffith often used thimbles with 'The Spa' or 'Royal Spa' lettered on the rim. This lettering is on the band below the British placename together with a full set of hallmarks. A small proportion have no assay marks, just additional the lettering 'Made in England' and 'Sterling Silver'



It is apparent just from looking at this cross-section of placenames that Griffith thimbles made for Blackpool, Llandudno and Stratford-on-Avon were the most popular holiday destinations for sterling silver souvenir thimbles. Tho it may seem from such a comprehensive listing that these thimbles are commonplace, they are not.

It will be very worthwhile to search out the placenames that have relevance to your life. My personal favourite is for Halifax.

According to The Thimble Society in their spring 2007 catalogue, the HG&S placename thimble sold for 1/- (one shilling) in 1930.

Tho Henry Griffith is the most prolific he is not the only British thimble maker to produce placename thimbles. Other makers made placename thimbles decades before HG&S.  
The placename thimbles by these other thimblemakers are scarce.

S Blankensee & Son Ld (SB&SLd)  
James Fenton (JF)  
Gomms (G'S) (1930-1931)  
William Griffiths & Son (WG&S)  
Charles Horner (CH)  
Henry Swann (HS)  
James Swann (JS)(JS&S)  
John Thompson & Son (JT&S)

There are a few variations to the single placenames - where a phrase is used.  
From Blackpool (Gomms) | From Brighton (**1830s**) | From Llandudno (Gomms) | From London (Gomms) | A Present from London | A Present from Rhyl (HG&S) etc  
I have filed all these phrases with their single placenames.

Below are the extremely rare placename thimbles from the 1830s - makers unknown.



Brighton – Brighton Gift – Canterbury – Cheltenham – Dover – From Brighton – From Tunbridge  
From Tunbridge Wells – Greenwich

Aldridge mentions 'A Trifle from Hastings'

[For other placename thimbles see](#)

Placename thimbles from around the world

**A PRESENT FROM ... see name of town or city**



**1931**  
**Charles Horner**  
stone apex

**ABERYSTWYTH**

Wales



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

**AYLESBURY**

Buckinghamshire



**1930**

**BABBACOMBE**

Devon



**1931**

## BANGOR

Wales



1930

## BIRMINGHAM

Warwickshire



1929

## BLACKPOOL/BLACKPOOL/FROM BLACKPOOL

Lancashire



1897

William Griffiths & Sons



1897 - 1927

James Swann



1930/1931



1930

Gomms  
From Blackpool  
large lettering

**BOURNEMOUTH/BOURNEMOUTH**  
Hampshire



1930



1931  
Gomms

**BRIDLINGTON**  
Yorkshire



1931

**BRIGHTON/BRIGHTON**  
Sussex

see also: 1830s thimbles Brighton and From Brighton



1930



1931  
Gomms

**BRISTOL**  
Somerset



1930

**BUDE**  
Cornwall



**1931**

**BURSLEM**  
Staffordshire



**1896**

**James Swann**

**CALLANDER**  
Scotland



**Charles Horner**  
stone apex

**CARDIFF/CARDIFF**  
Wales



**1930**



**1928**

**S Blankensee & Son Ld**  
lettering upside down

## CHATHAM

Kent



1930

## CHELTENHAM

Gloucestershire



1897

William Griffiths & Sons

## CHESTER/CHESTER

Cheshire



c.1900

James Swann



1930

## COLCHESTER

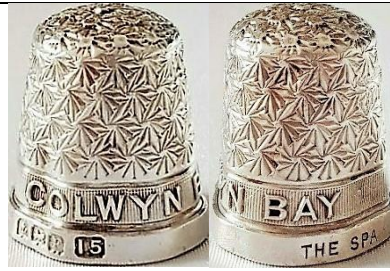
Essex



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

## COLWYN BAY

Wales



1930

## COMBE MARTIN

Devon



1932

## CROYDON

Surrey



1930

## DEWSBURY

Yorkshire



1930

**Dolgelly**  
Wales

no photo

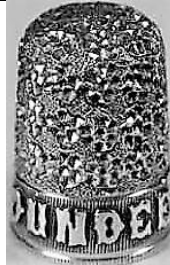
**Henry Swann**

**DUBLIN**  
Ireland



**Charles Horner**  
stone apex

**DUNDEE**  
Scotland



**1898**  
**James Swann**  
blackberry pattern

**EASTBOURNE/EASTBOURNE**  
Sussex



**1929**



**1931**  
**Gomms**

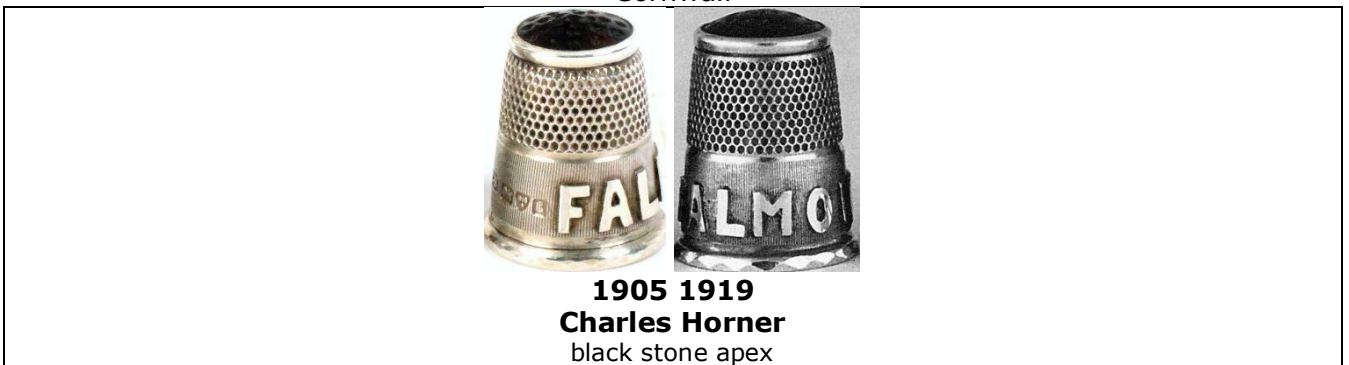
## EDINBURGH / EDINBURGH

Scotland



## FALMOUTH

Cornwall



## FELIXSTOWE/FELIXSTOWE

Norfolk



**FROM** ... see name of town or city

## GLASGOW

Scotland



## GLASTONBURY

Somerset



1930

## GORLESTON

Norfolk



1908

Charles Horner

stone apex

## GRAVESEND

Kent



1929

## GREAT YARMOUTH

Norfolk



1930

# GUERNSEY/GUERNSEY/GUERNESEY

Channel Isle



**1901**  
**Charles Horner**  
name in a banner



**1892**  
**Henry Swann**

no photo

**James Swann**



**1930**



**GUERNESEY** (French spelling)  
**1898**  
**James Swann**

## HALIFAX

Yorkshire



**1930**

**ILFRACOMBE /ILFRACOMBE/ILFRACOMBE**

Devon



**1897**  
**Charles Horner**



**1930**



**1931**  
**Gomms**

**INVERNESS**

Scotland



**1930**

**IPSWICH**

Suffolk



**1930**

## ISLE OF MAN / ISLE OF MAN

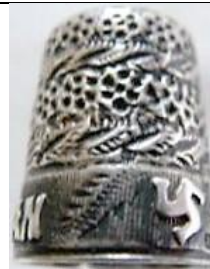
between England and Ireland



1894

**Henry Swann**

striated three-legged triskelion symbol



1893

**James Swann**

three-legged triskelion symbol  
blackberry pattern



1893 - 1906

**James Swann**

triskelion is patterned



1924

Webb's Douglas thimble case



S. Webb Public Lounge Douglas thimble case

## JERSEY / JERSEY

Channel Isle



1887 - 1906

**James Swann**

1887 is earliest dated placename thimble



1930

## KILLARNEY

Ireland



1930

## LEAMINGTON SPA

Warwickshire



1930

## LEEDS

Yorkshire



MADE IN ENGLAND THE SPA STERLING SILVER

## LEIGH ON SEA

Essex



**LEVEN**  
Scotland



**1933**

**LLANDUDNO/LLANDUDNO/FROM LLANDUDNO**  
Wales



**1930**

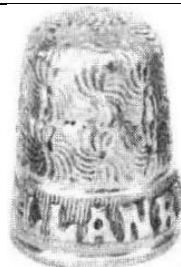


**1930**  
**Gomms**  
From Llandudno  
large lettering



**1931**  
**Gomms**

**LLANRWST**  
Wales



unknown maker

**LONDON**/FROM LONDON/LONDON/A PRESENT FROM LONDON



**1930**



**1930**  
**Gomms**  
From London  
large lettering



copper  
**Charles Iles?**



**1880s (?)**  
A Present from London  
unknown maker

**LOOE**

Cornwall



**1912**  
**Charles Horner**  
stone apex

no photo

## MINEHEAD

Somerset



1930

## MONA

Wales

These thimbles carry the wrong symbol! The triskelion legs symbol is for the Isle of Man. Mona is the Celtic word for the Isle of Anglesey so the triskelion has nothing to do with Mona



1909  
Charles Horner



1897  
John Thompson & Son

## MORECAMBE

Lancashire



1889  
James Swann

## NEWQUAY

Cornwall



1931

**OMAGH**  
Northern Ireland



**1932**

**OXFORD**  
Oxfordshire



**1928**

**PEEBLES**  
Scotland



**1931**



**1902**  
**Charles Horner**  
stone apex

## **PENMAENMAWR**

Wales



**1931**

## **"PENRITH"**

Cumberland



**1930**

## **PENZANCE**

Cornwall



**1930**

## **PLYMOUTH**

Devon



**1929**

## PORTSMOUTH

Hampshire



1930

## READING

Berkshire



1929

## RHYL/RHYL/ A PRESENT FROM RHYL

Wales



1930



1931  
Gomms  
threader gadget



1931  
A Present from Rhyll

**RUGBY**  
Warwickshire



1930

**SANDOWN**  
Isle of Wight



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

**SCARBOROUGH**  
Yorkshire



**SHREWSBURY**  
Shropshire



1930

## SKEGNESS

Lincolnshire



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

no photo

Gomms

## SOUTHEND ON SEA

Essex



1929

## SOUTHPORT

Lancashire



1931

Gomms

## SOUTHSEA

Hampshire



1930

## ST LEONARDS

Sussex



1930

## STOCKPORT

Greater Manchester



1911

James Swann  
blackberry pattern

## STOURBRIDGE

Worcestershire



1896/1911  
James Swann

**"STRATFORD-ON-AVON"/STRATFORD-ON-AVON**  
Warwickshire



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER



**1928**  
small lettering



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

In 2017 an eagle-eyed British collector has discovered this cast example of a Stratford thimble it is heavier than standard placename thimbles squarer and rougher on the inside there are thimble mould lines across the apex and thru the 'V' and 'O' letters the maker's mark has almost worn away Who is making these? Buyer beware!

**TEIGNMOUTH**

Devon



**1930**

**TENBY**

Wales



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

## TORQUAY/TORQUAY

Devon



1910/1911  
James Fenton



1932

## VENTNOR

Isle of Wight



1931

## WALLASEY

Cheshire



1930

## WALSALL

Staffordshire



unknown maker

## WESTCLIFF ON SEA

Lincolnshire



1930

## WESTON SUPER MARE

Somerset



1930

## WHITLEY BAY

Northumberland



THE SPA. MADE IN ENGLAND. H.G. & S. SILVER. 18.

## YORK

Yorkshire



1930

## References

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This listing of British sterling silver placename thimbles does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects.

Rather it invites comment and contribution to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

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**April 2005**