

# Australian handpainted thimbles and sewing tools

1973-2014

*Thimbles of Australia* was published in 1998. In the succeeding twenty years many new handpainters have come to light. I have no way of sharing these new finds, other than creating a new Learn More About ... Thimbles topic.

This topic will broaden out from traditional handpainted china and porcelain – by adding handpainted wood – and exchanging a paintbrush for a stylus or a poker or pyrography tool, all handpainted thimbles are included together, no matter what the artist has used to hand decorate the thimbles, nor the medium on which the artwork is created: wood china, papier-mâché, ivory etc.

Porcelain painting has a large following in Australia and miniature painting on thimbles requires great skill: that surface is small. Australian fauna is a difficult subject to capture accurately in miniature (rarely are kangaroos painted and just a few koalas), so one tends to find floral handpainted thimbles in the main. Artists have been encouraged to sign their works and signed handpainted thimbles are eagerly sought after.

The blank thimbles first used in china painting tend to be squat in shape with a matt finish and were imported from Japan and Czechoslovakia.

With the regular scarcity of blank thimbles to paint, artists turned their hand to making their own blank thimbles – or used wooden thimbles until the supply became plentiful.

Is there a preference for blank porcelain/wooden thimbles to have a gloss or matt finish?  
Both surfaces are seen throughout this topic.

Many of these artists began as hobbyists.

Australia's Bicentenary in 1988 was the catalyst for a growing interest in Australiana. Those that became passionate about their hobby turned it into a small business (Lynn Richards and Val de Vries etc). This necessitated marketing and sales. Thimble mail order catalogues or small shops and wholesalers flourished in Australia to get these handpainted thimbles from the artist to thimble collector. They would also commission thimbles.

Beryl Warne (her shop *Thimble Collections* in Melbourne 1983-1986)

Margaret and Jihl Berry (*Thimble Collections* Mt Eliza Victoria 1986-1990)

Yvonne Varey (*Gallery One* wholesaler Perth/Melbourne 1985-2014)

Barbara Kelly (*The Thimble Collector* Hamilton in Newcastle 1986-1993)

Sue Gowan (*Thimbleselect* 1988-2020 The Gap Queensland)

Dorothy Andrews (*Thimbella* Meadows near Adelaide 1985-2012)

Helen Burgin (*Addaline Miniatures* Sydney 1980s-1994)

Ann and Dick Wallace (*Pan Arts* Sydney thimble wholesalers 1980s-2010s – who had contacts with *Thimble Collectors Guild* in Scotland, which saw Australian thimbles disseminated worldwide).

Handpainted thimbles were as popular in the USA, as here. Collectors should be aware that US handpainted thimbles are identical in shape to those used by Australian thimble handpainters in the 1980s. Unless the subject is Australian or has a local place marking, it may not be an Australian handpainted thimble. And some may inadvertently have slipped in here

The global financial crisis of 2008 saw the beginning of the end for Australian thimble handpainters – markets disappeared as collectors slowed their quest for all thimbles.

Most of these artists no longer paint thimbles, but there will be a whole new crop to chase from these pages ...

I will combine all known artists who handpainted thimbles in one alphabetical sequence (by surname or by the first initial if those are the only marks): no matter on which medium they painted or decorated.

Where a date is lettered in the thimble, this is included. The earliest found is 1973, 2014 is the latest dated thimble.

This topic does **not** include overseas artists who painted thimbles with Australian themes (some of whom were included in *Thimbles of Australia*) – Gail Boekel - Dunheved – Heirloom Editions – Anya Kooiwind Klima – Heather McLean - Julie Menzies - Graham Payne – Royal Worcester - Russell and Creed White Heron – Virginia Wellman (Ginnie).

If you are a thimble painter, please share any further details – thimble collectors please share your photos of Australian handpainted thimbles or makers that have been omitted.

**130** Australian handpainters are listed, captured over 1180 photos.

When only the initials are shown they are filed by the last initial i.e. BLS is shown at the beginning of the S sequence.

I have been made aware of the following 49 Australian china thimble painters (with as many additional that I've been given) – I just don't have a photo  
If you have one – please share

J B Andrews Sydney | M Bate 1997 sold in Georges Melbourne | Jo Bedingfield Sydney 1987  
Helen Brown Newcastle 1992 (roses) | N Carriage Canberra (birds) | Ruth Cartledge (wren)  
Helen Davies | Donna Driver | Kitty Drok | N Faris | Margaret Faulks | L Forster Newcastle NSW 1992  
J Fraser | N Freeman | Jay Gabb | W Gavan | Alva Gooden Perth 1980s | Olive Gumley  
Althea Hammich Nambucca Heads NSW | Roma Holland | Marilyn Hulbert | Beryl Job 1977  
Melva Keeley 1977 | Lyn Larkin | D Lee Canberra 1985 | N Main 1981 | I Matthews | Carol McCormack  
B Neylon 1984 1986 | D Mitchell | Lorna Mitchell | J Moyle | J Newton NSW  
Joy Noel Brisbane (wattle 1996) | Roma Patterson | C Pearce | L Pearson | Grace Phillips | S Rains  
Gillem (Edna) Reid New Norfolk Tasmania | Jan Schubert Adelaide 1980s | C Simpson | I Stephens  
Heather Taylor Perth | Elva Tesdarieo | P Tuck | Jill Vargo | M Welch Gunnedah NSW | D Young 1978

Before around 2000, a grass trees were known as a blackboy. If this term was used on the thimble, I have shown it but the correct name is a grass tree (xanthorrhoea).

I have used inverted commas to show any lettering on the thimbles – the rest are my own descriptions for collectors who are not familiar with Australian flora and fauna.

There are very few handpainted Australian sewing tools so it makes sense to include with the painter's thimbles.

[For other handpainted thimble topics see](#)

British modern handpainted thimbles  
Gerald Delaney handpainted thimbles  
Graham Payne handpainted thimbles  
Jasper's of Yorkshire handpainted thimbles  
Royal Worcester thimble painters

## Handpainted thimbles

**Pat Adam**  
CHINA/PORCELAIN  
Adelaide

Pat Adam is a china painter of some renown. Her fine brushwork of mini flowers and native animals is often found on thimbles. Pat was a member of South Australian Digitabulists Society



**Jessie Adams**  
PORCELAIN



**Jo Allen**  
PORCELAIN  
Mackay, Queensland  
her thimble is signed on the outside



**Dot Andrews**

PORCELAIN

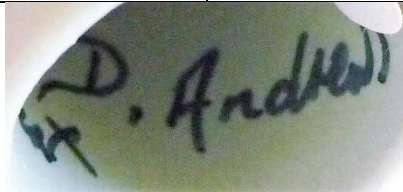
Meadows, South Australia

Dot sold thimbles thru her mail order thimble catalogue, *Thimbella*. She was a potter and created unglazed porcelain blank thimbles for sale to handpainters, at her Paris Creek Pottery. She made them in green, blue, apricot, pink, lilac, off-white and white

You may notice how many of Australian thimble artists originated in South Australia. And for this, there is only one person to acknowledge. Dot worked tirelessly, encouraging every handpainter she met to try thimble painting: with great success



'Bottlebrush Australia'



**Jo Armstrong**

PORCELAIN



blue wren

**A Arnold**

PORCELAIN

Western Australia



'Kangaroo Paw'  
1983



'Leschenaultia'  
1983





**H.B.**  
PORCELAIN



Kingfisher



Rainbow lorikeet



**Diane Baker**  
PORCELAIN



'Blackboy'

**Irene Barnett**

**STONEWARE**

North Nowra, New South Wales

Irene Barnett is the originator of Chelsea Girl Stoneware. Irene started pottery in 1979 after being unsuccessful in finding a potter to make cream dishes or pots for the Tearooms she and her husband ran at the Cambewarra Lookout NSW.

This led to creating their own souvenirs of stoneware and her fine white matt stoneware thimbles resulted. They all have 'Cambewarra Lookout NSW' printed on the thimbles. Irene made between 75 and 100 of these thimbles. From 1990, no further thimbles were produced

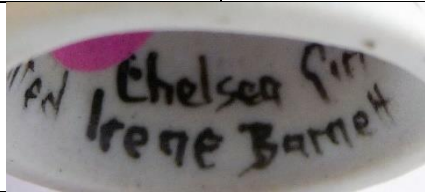
Other designs she painted were blue wren, waratah, Kangaroo Valley Bridge, map of Australia and a few kangaroo



'Cambewarra Lookout N.S.W'  
with kookaburra



koalas



**Jocelyn Bayliss**

**PORCELAIN**

Queensland



Christmas Bells  
1982



'Cooktown Orchid  
(Dendrobium Bigibbum)'  
1982



'Donkey Orchid (Diurnis)'



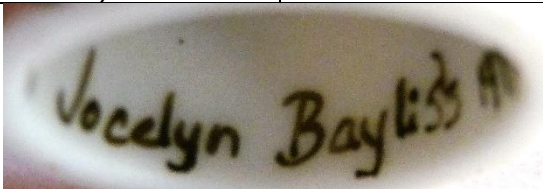
'Pink Boronia'  
1979



'Pink Boronia (Boronia Muelleri)'



'B...'



**Beate's  
PORCELAIN**

North Queensland

Beate trained as a master painter at Royal Berlin Porcelain. She arrived from Germany to settle in Sydney. Beate Wickert imported porcelain blanks from Limoges. Dot Andrews asked her if she would paint thimbles. These thimbles were all stock items built up over the years. Her apices are painted gold. She also undertook commissions.



Beate was no longer able to procure quality blank porcelain thimbles to paint. Ceased 2006.







Black Rose



Blue Wren



Green Rose



commission - M



Musical



Pansie Blue Stripe



early unsigned



early unsigned



Pansie Blue Stripe button



Bow button



Forget-me-not button



button



Pansie Blue Stripe needleholder



Pansie Blue Stripe thimble holder



Blue Diamond needlecase



Forget-Me-Not thimble holder



**Jamie Bell (JB)**

IVORY

Albany, Western Australia

This whale ivory artist's work is as fine as that of James Cumberland-Brown, who was a master scrimshander  
Ships are his theme and he adds a name on the verso



'RUNNING HOME'



**Shirley Bennett**

PAPIER-MACHÉ

Apollo Bay, Victoria

The late Hal Bennett created a papier-mâché thimble in 1979, which led to a cottage industry. Hal, an instrument maker. They traded under the name Haley, a combination of both their names. Approximately 800 thimbles were produced by the Bennetts. Shirley, a talented artist, did all the artwork and handpainted the thimbles. A feature of Shirley's artwork is that the apex is hand decorated. They all have a sticky label inside. Rarely do the thimbles bear Shirley's initials. A novel idea on a many of the thimbles was an Australian opal set into the apex

Over 800 Haley thimbles were made over a period of six years - till 1985







koala  
'1985  
AUSTRALIA'  
opal in apex

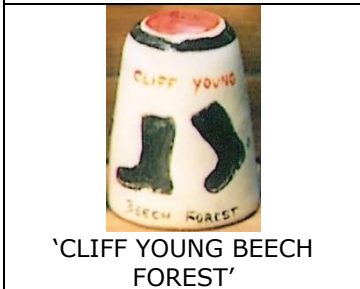
Aboriginal design  
b&w photo



opal in apex



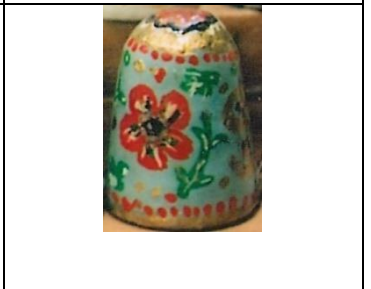
mine shaft - spades  
opal in apex



'CLIFF YOUNG BEECH  
FOREST'



yacht



**Marylyn Berrington**  
PORCELAIN



'Spider Orchid'



**L Betts (LB)  
PORCELAIN**



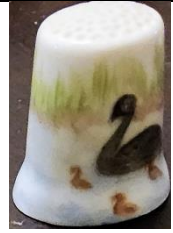
emu with chicks, kangaroo  
and gumtree  
1982



Uluru (Ayer's Rock)  
1983



bird



black swan and cygnets



Budgies  
signed L Betts



cherries



grass tree  
signed L Betts



kangaroo



kangaroo



kangaroos



koala



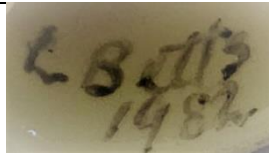
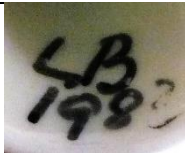
owl



flower



flower



L; used more frequently 1982-1984

**Doug Birrell**

WOOD

Victoria

Doug Birrell may be familiar to thimble collectors in Australia as the past editor of the *Needlework Tool Collectors Society of Australia Newsletter*. Doug came to needlework tools through his interest in wood turning and carving. He was aware that wooden thimbles must not be crudely proportioned, poorly sanded or coated in heavy gloss finish - to catch the eye of the collector or tourist



Hindenloopen style



Hindenloopen style



pyrography  
Theo Thimble



**Blaskett**

CHINA



kookaburra



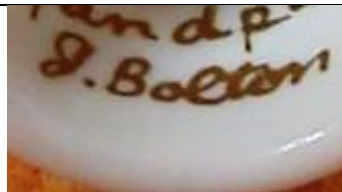
**Jean Bolton**

PORCELAIN

her apexes are handpainted gold



'Japanese GARDEN COWRA Australia'



**Elaine Boyd**

WOOD

Perth

woodturner – using pyrography



koala

**Marjorie Brook (MB)**

PORCELAIN

South Australia

Marjorie matched her rims in matching colours



'Port Elliot'



'Port Elliot'  
1986



'Port Elliot'  
1988



'Victor Harbour'



seagulls



**Pat Brown**

CHINA/PORCELAIN

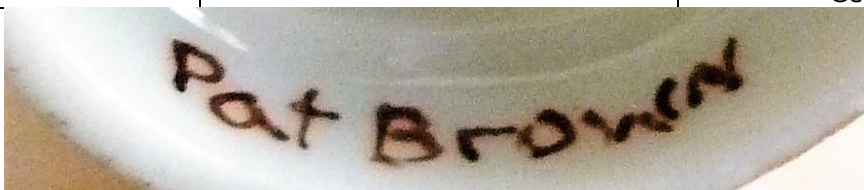
Adelaide

Pat was a thimble collector. Her apices are painted gold

1980s



Geraldton wax



**H Brunton**  
PORCELAIN  
Adelaide  
1980s



kookaburra



**Pamela Buchanan**  
PORCELAIN



parrot  
gold apex

**Pam Buck**  
PORCELAIN

Hahndorf, South Australia  
signed on thimble's outer side



violet  
b&w photo

**T Bulley**  
PORCELAIN



kangaroo paw



**Joy Cakebush**

PORCELAIN

Broken Hill, New South Wales



'Broken Hill'

**Helen L Callander (H.L.C.)**

PORCELAIN

South Australia

most of her apexes are painted gold  
1980s



'KOOKABURRA GUM LEAVES'



'MOONTA S.A.'  
miner



'MOONTA S.A.'  
1991  
miner



miner's cottage



'KADINA S.A.'



'LITTLE CORNWALL SA'



**Megan A Campbell**

PORCELAIN

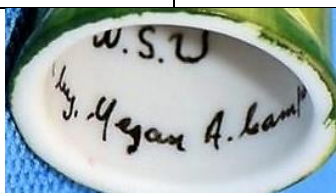
Sydney



flannel flower

no photo

Bottlebrush  
1981



**Gwennyth Campbell-Stewart**

PORCELAIN

Brisbane



'Leschenaultia'



'Forget me nots'  
October 1994



**Peg Christie**

PORCELAIN

Brisbane

This artist paints matching rims. The rim is also gold painted at the open edge of the thimble



'Sunflower  
Queensland'



'Poinsettia  
Queensland'



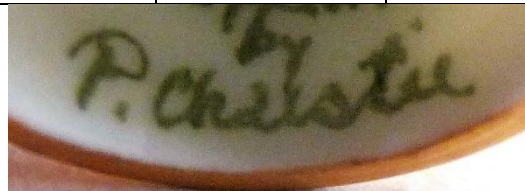
'Viola  
Hederacea'



'Koala Australia'



'Vanilla Lily'



**Lisa Clarke**

WOOD

In her Thimbella catalogue of 1994, Dorothy Andrews offered for sale handpainted wooden Herron thimbles by Lisa Clarke. The topics are named along the outer rim, in lower case lettering .



'Bilby'



'Brushtail Possum'



'Koala'



'Koala'



'Tasmanian Devil'



'Wombat'



'Rosella Parrot'



'Tasmanian Echidna'



**P Coldbeck**  
PORCELAIN

this artist uses gold paint for the indentations on apex



leschenaultia



bottlebrush

**Mary Covill**  
PORCELAIN



gum blossom  
1988



**A Craigie**  
PORCELAIN



gold painted apex



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

IVORY

Western Australia

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 exquisitely scrimshawed thimbles. The scenes are carved with a probe or sharpened nail and then black oil paint is rubbed into the carvings, to bring them to life. The thimbles 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

	acorns			lighthouse
sailing ship & lighthouse		ENDEAVOUR		
			koala	
York W.A. 1991				
<b>Certificate of Authenticity</b>		THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THIS TOOTH WAS TAKEN OFF THE WEST AUSTRALIAN COAST PRIOR TO		
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THIS SCRIMSHAW WAS CREATED BY		1972		
<b>JAMES CUMBERLAND-BROWN</b> IN HIS STUDIO AT "HILLSIDE", YORK, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.		SIGNED: <u>J.F.C.</u>		
SIGNED: <u>James Cumberland-Brown</u>		DESCRIPTION OF PIECE <u>Thimble with ship and lighthouse</u>		

**Fiona Curry (FC)**  
 WOOD  
 Melbourne  
 The Deepings Woodturner  
 Tasmania  
 who made the huon pine blanks  
 see also: Jill Roberts

 <p>'CORROBOREE 90'        Huon pine        limited to 150        R: b&amp;w photo</p>	 <p>gumnuts        pyrography        mini size</p>	 <p>gumnuts        pyrography</p>
		

**Cynthia**  
 PORCELAIN  
 Toowoomba, Queensland

<p>no photo</p> <p>'Barn owl'</p>	<p>no photo</p> <p>'Blue wren'</p>	<p>no photo</p> <p>'Eastern spinebill'</p>	 <p>'Stilt'</p>
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**Rita Daniel (RD) / Rachel Dettmann (rd)**  
 CHINA

Kyneton, Victoria

Originally from Worcestershire in England, Rita and Peter Daniel settled in Australia in 1983. There they founded the Kyneton Fine China Studio in 1987. Peter made thimble moulds and Rita is an artist of exceptional talent having started in the Royal Worcester training school at the age of 17

In 1995 Kyneton Fine China launched a bone china range of thimbles. Using clay imported from England, the thimbles are made in Kyneton. Rita's earlier thimbles have a painted dark cobalt blue background, by Rita Daniel and more recently by Rachel Dettmann. Each design is limited to 100 thimbles and the thimble is numbered and boxed, with a certificate of authenticity that in turn bears the artist's signature and the number in the series. These were all stock items built up over the years

Thimbles signed on the outside

Rita Daniels retired in 2009 when Kyneton Fine China was sold

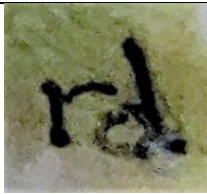
 <p>blue wren RD</p>	 <p>blue wren RD</p>	 <p>blue wren</p>	 <p>blue wren RD</p>	 <p>blue wren RD</p>
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 <p>yellow pansy RD</p>	 <p>pink pansy RD</p>	 <p>white pansy RD</p>	 <p>wattle RD</p>	
 <p>red robin</p>	 <p>yellow eye RD</p>	 <p>kookaburra RD</p>	 <p>kookaburra RD</p>	
 <p>koala</p>	 <p>'1996' gumnuts RD</p>	 <p>daffodil</p>	 <p>daffodils RD</p>	
 <p>'2003' :Celebrating the International Year of Freshwater'</p>	 <p>'2004' 'Celebrating Daffodils DownUnder'</p>	 <p>'2005' 'Celebrating Australian Wildflowers' RD</p>		
 <p>'2006' 'Hanging Rock Central Victoria' RD</p>	 <p>'2007' 'International Year of the Dolphin' RD</p>	 <p>'2008' 'Celebrating Beautiful Banksias' RD</p>		
 <p>blue wren rd</p>			 <p>kookaburra rd</p>	



Rita Daniel (upper case)



Rachel Dettmann (lower case)



Rita Daniel

**Dante**  
PORCELAIN  
gold painted apex



'Australian wattle'

no photo

Forget-me-nots



violet



**M Day**  
WOOD  
signed



'Emu'  
pyrography  
produced in 1986  
limited edition of 99



**Val de Vries**

CHINA – METAL - WOOD

Clare, South Australia








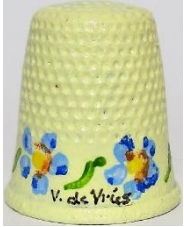
























Val de Vries has been a china painter for forty years. This includes teaching china painting. Val began painting thimbles in earnest when she was commissioned by The Thimble Guild in Scotland in 1999 to produce her handpainted range of china thimbles

Some of her apexes are handpainted gold. Many thimbles are dated + ©. Some have a lustre finish. She also undertook thimble commissions




Val turned to painting china thimbles when there was a scarcity. Some of Val's earliest works are painted on wood

 <p>lattice 2002</p>	 <p>pansies</p>	 <p>agate – rhodonite 2004</p>	 <p>2003</p>		
	 <p>agate 2004</p>	 <p>agate - bloodstone 2004</p>	 <p>agate – spider web turquoise 2004</p>	 <p>agate – lazulite 2004</p>	
 <p>Cornelli work</p>	 <p>Delft</p>	 <p>amaryllis 2005</p>	 <p>apples 2002</p>	 <p>poppies 2006</p>	 <p>candle wood</p>
 <p>Christmas 2001</p>	 <p>'... Christmas' 2001</p>	 <p>Christmas 2002</p>	 <p>'Christmas 2003'</p>	 <p>Christmas 2005</p>	
 <p>Christmas</p>	 <p>santa wood</p>	 <p>Easter</p>	 <p>Easter</p>	 <p>2002</p>	 <p>Edward and Edwina Bear 2001</p>



					
	2003 wood	kangaroo 2002 wood	rose wood		2001
					
forget-me-nots 2001	forget-me-nots 2003	forget-me-nots 2008	forget-me-nots metal	roses 2008 wood	roses and lace wood 2003
					
fuchsia 2005	gladiolus 2005		hibiscus 2006	nasturtium 2005	koala 2001
					
'Mother' 2004	New Year '2002' - '2002 Karl'		'Happy New Year 2004'	pansies	pansies
					
pears 2002	'Joyce 80 16-2-1922' 2002 commission		pimpernel 2004	poppies	poppies 2005
					
strawberries 2003 wood	remembrance poppies 2003	trellis 2004	rose	Quilt 'Friendship Star' 2002	



 <p>roses</p>	 <p>roses</p>	 <p>patchwork quilt designs – set of 12 2002-2003 name of quilt pattern lettered on verso</p>	 <p>spot the dots 2004 wood</p>		
 <p>violets and robbons 2005</p>	 <p>Uluru 2003</p>	 <p>Valentine 2004</p>	 <p>tulip</p>	 <p>violets</p>	 <p>2008 wood</p>
 <p>2008 wood</p>		 <p>'Joy' wood</p>	 <p>Serenade for St Patrick 2004</p>	 <p>apples 2002</p>	
 <p>Art deco 2006</p>	 <p>Blue Delft 2006</p>	 <p>Christmas 2006 church</p>	 <p>Christmas 2006 snowman</p>		
 <p>daisies 2006</p>	 <p>grapes 2002</p>	 <p>peaches 2002</p>	 <p>Scottie dogs 2000</p>		
 <p>'Be my Valentine'</p>		 <p>pansies</p>	 <p>orchid wood</p>		 <p>flowers wood</p>



snowman  
2003



roses  
wood



orchid  
wood



'Variable Star'  
2002  
wood



'Whistle while you work'



thimble holder and needleholder  
wood



thimble holder





**Gerald Delaney**

CHINA  
Adelaide

Gerald E. Delaney was one of the foremost ceramic artists in the United Kingdom. He spent long spells in Australia in the 1980s and the early 1990s and painted many thimbles during his stay. Gerald was born in 1933. He studied art at the Worcester Victoria Institute and served a seven-year apprenticeship with the Royal Worcester Porcelain Company between 1948 and 1954 and he returned to Royal Worcester in 1971 until 1973

He specialised initially in fruit designs. Only his thimbles painted whilst he lived in Australia are featured here His apexes are painted gold. The rim is also gold painted at the open edge of the thimble



kookaburra



lyre bird



robin



maker's mark

**R Dland**

PORCELAIN

Fremantle, Western Australia

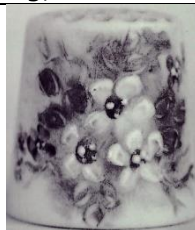


'Kangaroo Paw'

**A Duerden**

PORCELAIN

Mittagong, New South Wales



forget-me-nots  
1988  
b&w photo

**Judy Dyer**

PORCELAIN

Melbourne

Judy's thimbles are signed and dated inside in gold she was most prolific in the 1970s



'Spider Flower Nodding Greenhood Bottlebrush'  
1977

no photo

'Bottlebrush Nodding Greenhood Boronia Spider Flower'  
1978



'Christmas Bells Nodding Greenhood Pincushion'  
1979



**Elizabeth Endisch (E)**

PORCELAIN

Bridgetown, Western Australia

Elizabeth Endisch is well known for her porcelain work. She makes porcelain collectors plates and to hand decorate.

Her most well-known design is based on the Aboriginal dot design

With some persuasion by Sue Gowan in 1989, Endisch made porcelain thimbles for the first time. These were an experiment using her dot design. It proved too time consuming so only four were ever made. Her porcelain thimbles now have a swirled pattern to them. The shape is distinctive with markedly sloping sides and a raised rim. Initially signed with large painted 'E'. Her later thimbles have no maker's marks. The rim is painted green at the open edge of the thimble



b&w photo



This unique porcelain work of art was designed, hand made, hand painted and inscribed by Elizabeth Endisch of Manjimup, Western Australia.  
Elizabeth hand mixes each colour which she applies using brushes made of hair from her dog 'Kaz'.  
Firing to 1260°C, the decoration fuses to the clay and becomes virtually impossible to erase.  
The high degree of skill and unusual 'Australiana' artwork combine to give a work of great beauty and durability.

**Eva Field**  
PORCELAIN  
Sydney



'Kangaroo & Joey Australia'



**Jan Finch**  
PORCELAIN  
signed



'150th Anniversary of the BUSH family 1835-1985'

**Perry Fletcher**  
CHINA



emu

**Flora**  
PORCELAIN



flannel flower - wattle





**Ruth Floth**

WOOD

Ruth Floth from Central New South Wales coast, has used finely turned wooden thimbles and hand decorated them in a folk-art style. She is known for her handpainted teddy bears on thimbles. Signed



teddy bear  
b&w photo

**E Formenti**

PORCELAIN



**Rosalyn Forster**

WOOD

Greater Melbourne

Ros is a thimble collector. She painted on thimbles made by Doug Birrell. Unsigned



Sturt's desert pea



violets



lace bobbins

**Lyn Foster**

WOOD

Newcastle, New South Wales

Lyn Foster is an internationally recognised folk artist. She runs the Foster Folk Art Studio teaching her craft and she has classes in Sydney and lectures and teaches overseas. She handpaints thimbles with her distinctive folk-art painting. This includes decorating both the body of the thimbles and the apex.

The Huon pine thimbles were made by Robert Herron of Tasmania. Unsigned



some were dated '93'  
**signed**

no photo

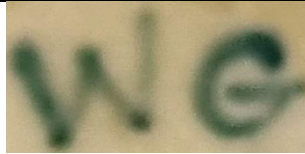
pink rose and ribbons and lace on black ground  
unsigned

**WG**

EARTHENWARE

see also: EDK

paint yourself earthenware kit thimbles



signed in apex with 01 for 2001

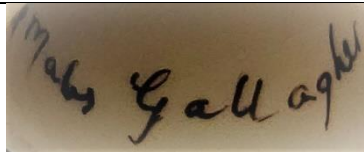
**Mabs Gallagher**

PORCELAIN

Canberra



waratahs  
gold painted apex  
1993



**J Gamble**  
 PORCELAIN  
 Sydney

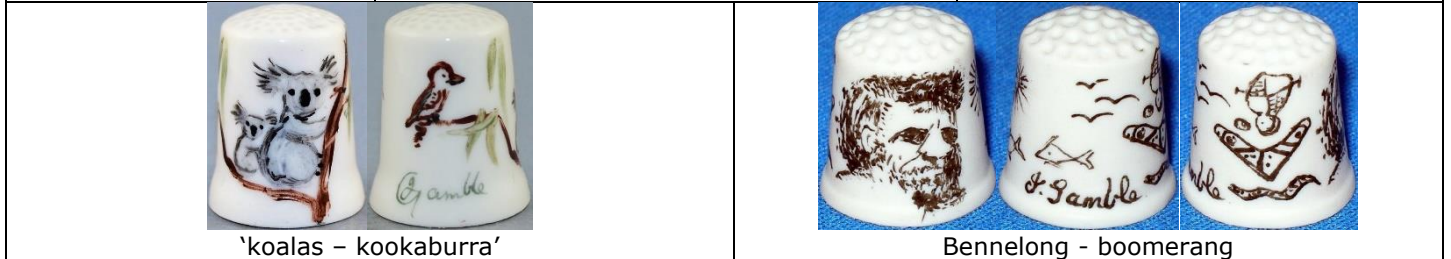
some of her thimbles are dated inside and some signed inside – some on the outside



1988

'Koala'

'Australia Parrots'



'koalas - kookaburra'

Bennelong - boomerang

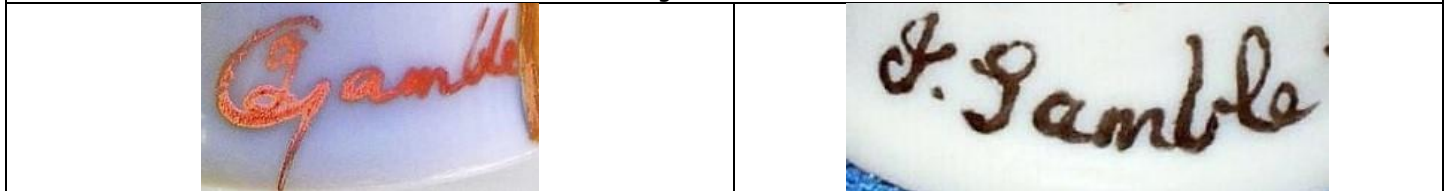


'Koalas'  
1988

'Koala' - Sydney Harbour Bridge  
1988



grass trees



**Gellie**  
 PORCELAIN



wattle





**Fay Gosling**  
PORCELAIN



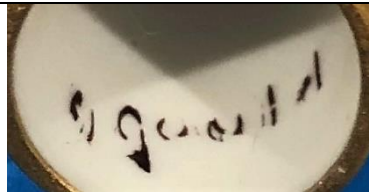
'Gum Blossom'  
lustre finish



**Georgina Gould**  
PORCELAIN



bottlebrush



**Jen Greeneklee (Jen G)**  
CERAMICS

South Australia

Jen creates her own thimbles and handpaints them



cottage



Gum blossom  
'Australia'



koala



ladybirds - two versions



owl



in various colour grounds







**J Gregory**  
PORCELAIN



crocodile  
1987

**Margaret Greschke (MG)**  
WOOD

Bob and Margaret Greschke produce fine quality handpainted thimbles. Born in Germany, Bob settled in Australia. Bob is a woodturner, Margaret has handpainted wooden thimbles featuring a range of different designs to *The Thimble Guild* (erroneously named as Greschke, November 1993)



Santa with kangaroo sleigh  
1993



possum



Aborigines playing didgeridoo scene  
all round



'Kangaroo Paw WA'



possum



'Scarlet Robin'



'Superb Blue Wren'



koala



'ASHES 93'  
'Australia'  
'Willow'



bush cottage



bird



Platypus  
b&w photo



**Fay Griffiths**  
**PORCELAIN**

Eleebana, New South Wales

Fay is a thimble collector herself and an accomplished miniature painter. Some of her apexes are painted gold some have a lustre finish



1992



**BLH**  
**CHINA**



'World Expo 88 BRISBANE AUSTRALIA APRIL-OCTOBER 1988'

**RH**  
**PORCELAIN**



'Christmas Bells Australia'  
 pink porcelain

'Kookaburra Australia'  
 1987

parrot  
 b&w photo



initials slopes slightly backwards

**Margaret Handley**

WOOD

Margaret Handley commissioned some finely turned thimbles that were good enough for her to use her skill as a doll artist, to handpaint. Her finely executed roses on an all over painted background will do any thimble collection proud. The apex and the inside of the thimbles are gold painted. Unsigned



b&w photo

**C Harris**

PORCELAIN



**B Haysman**

PORCELAIN

South Australia



'Burra'



'St Peter's Cathedral Adelaide Sth Aust'





**B Hermel**

PORCELAIN

South Australia

Hermel paint flowers. The names of the flowers are lettered in gold along the front rims. The apex and signature is gold painted. The sets of Australian state flowers must have been painted at different times – as shape of thimble changes

1980s



**Robert Herron**









WOOD

Riverside, Tasmania

Herron has been turning thimbles from Tasmanian timbers since 1980 and he was still actively creating thimbles in November 2018. His thimbles for Australia's Bicentenary are some of the thimbles painted by Herron. Unsigned. His woodturning skills are far better than his handpainting!

see: Lisa Clarke – Joanna Wigzell – Dianne Williams – Thea Peschar for his other handpainted thimbles



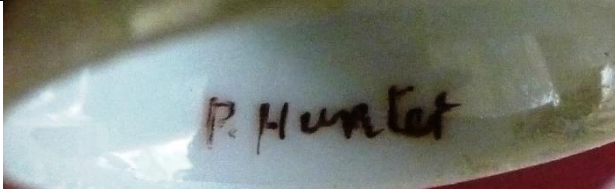
 <p>'POSSUM'</p>	 <p>kookaburra</p>			 <p>'KANGAROO'</p>
<p>no photo</p> <p>paddleboat for Patina Craft Gallery Echuca</p>		 <p>'WARATAH'</p>	 <p>waratah</p>	
				

**P Hunter**

CHINA

Tanunda, South Australia

 <p>'Tanunda' '96 Barossa</p>
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--

**Jean**

PORCELAIN


---

**EDK**  
EARTHENWARE  
South Australia



paint yourself earthenware kit thimble

**MvK**  
PORCELAIN



'Hawker'  
1990



**G Kedzierska (GK)**

CHINA  
Sydney

These fine quality thimbles are made by Kedzierska and the delicate pastel colours enhance the all over floral painting. The apex indentations are highlighted with fine dots of paint





**Margareta Kristensen**

WOOD

Hawthorn, Melbourne

Born in Scandinavia, Margareta moved to live in Victoria. From 2003, these very finely turned thimbles are handpainted. The design is all round with naïve painting. Her husband Jorgen made these thimbles



bride



needlecase



**Robyn Langford-Brown**

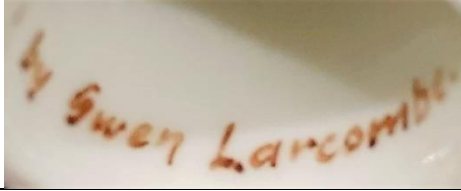
PORCELAIN

Sydney

Robyn is a member of the Castle Hill Art Society and the Botanical Art Society of Australia



**Gwen Larcombe**  
PORCELAIN



**Maureen Laverty**  
PORCELAIN  
Brisbane

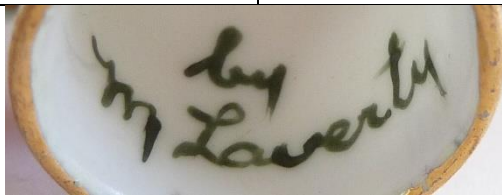
Maureen is a miniature painter. The rim is gold painted at the open edge of the thimble. Maureen also painted Waratahs, gumnuts and gum blossoms



'BANKSIA'



'WATTLE'



1995

**Betty Little**  
PORCELAIN

signature is painted on the outside



gold-painted apex

**Lorraine Lucey**

PORCELAIN

Mt Lonarch, Victoria

Lorraine Lucey of Mt Lonarch Gallery handpaints thimbles made by her studio. Signed on the outside



gumnuts



Lonarch mark 1998

**Pat Lyndon**

PORCELAIN

Manly, Sydney

the rim is gold painted at the open edge of the thimble



waratahs



**Deirdre Marlborough**

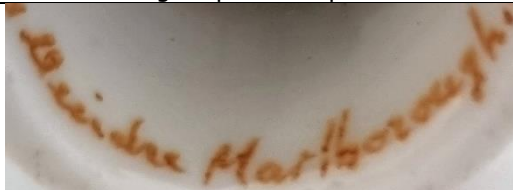
CHINA



'I love a sunburnt country ...'

1986

gold painted apex





**H Martin**  
PORCELAIN

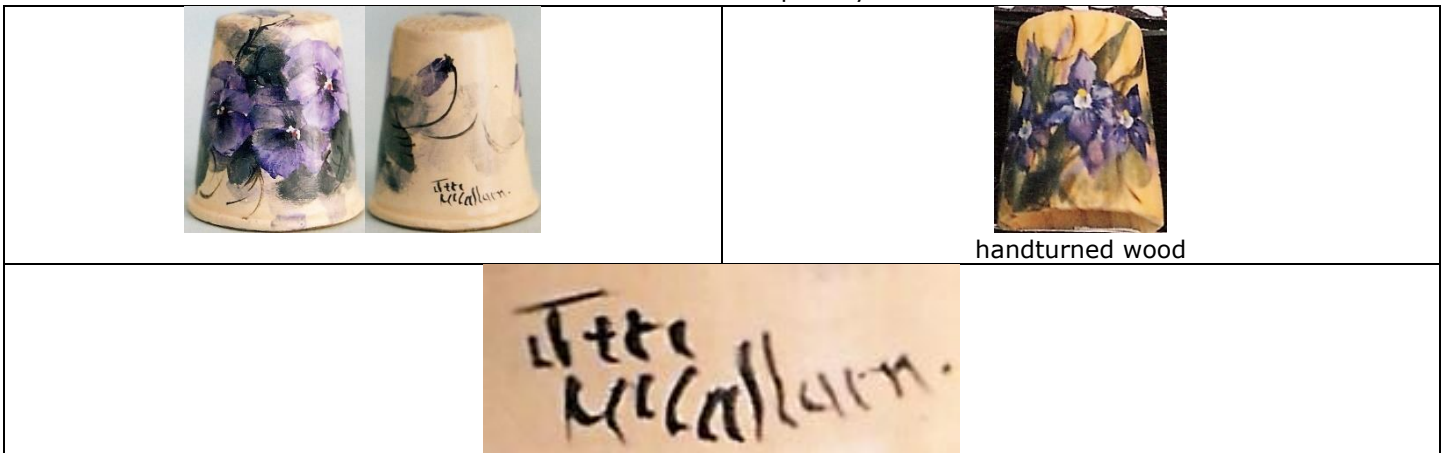


**Jen McCallum**

POTTERY - WOOD

Strathalbyn, South Australia

this artist makes her own pottery thimbles



**Sandra Menger**

WOOD

Brisbane

Sandra has been practising pyrography (poker work) for OVER 25 years.

Since 1996, she has used her skills to burn the tiniest floral designs on Brisbane's Col Ward's plain thimbles etc.

Sandra also creates sets of thimbles and mounts them on a cut-out map of Australia





'The Australian Institution usually known as 'The Dunny''



different gum nuts with border of Australian flowers  
b&w photo



sewing kit



tape measure



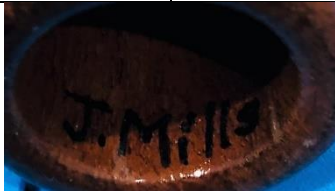
**J Mills  
WOOD**



Geraldton wax



Leschenaultia



**Jan Milton**  
**PORCELAIN**

Rookwood, Adelaide

This talented miniaturist has captured several typically Australian themes or icons on thimbles. Other than her distinctive style, one can usually recognise Jan Milton's thimbles as the apex is painted gold. Jan's country and rural scenes usually include a gum tree with designs handpainted all around the thimble. Most of the apexes are gold painted

 <p>'Bennelong'</p>	 <p>gum tree</p>	 <p>gum tree</p>	 <p>gum tree</p>	
 <p>gum tree</p>	 <p>gum tree</p>	 <p>crocodile</p>		
 <p>'TOMAGO HOUSE'          Barbara Kelly          commissioned this thimble          in 1998</p>	 <p>'Parliament House Canberra          Opened May 9<sup>th</sup> 1927'</p>	 <p>'Parliament House Canberra Opened 9<sup>th</sup> May 1988'</p>		
	 <p>'Cuddlepie' 'Snugglepot' pair          unsigned</p>		 <p>'Blinky Bill'          unsigned</p>	 <p>grass tree</p>
 <p>gum flowers</p>	 <p>bush scene</p>			
 <p>'Beryl'          unsigned</p>	 <p>'Edwina'          unsigned</p>			





**Mona**  
PORCELAIN



blue wren



**F Mutking**  
PORCELAIN



**J Newman**  
PORCELAIN  
W.A.  
blue wash on apex



'KIMBERLEYS W.A.'



grey kangaroo  
'KUNUNURRA W.A.'



signed on outside

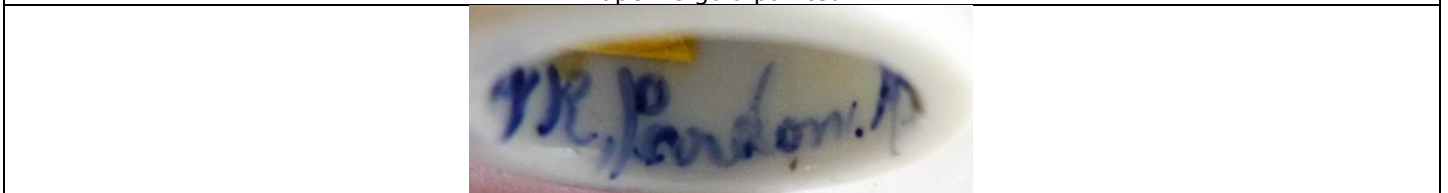
**Joan Nock**  
PORCELAIN

Perth

Joan's rims are gold painted at the open edge of the thimble. Her other themes include Sturt Desert Peas and Blue Wren



**H Pardon**  
PORCELAIN  
Sydney



### Myrtle Parker

PORCELAIN

Sutherland, New South Wales

Parker's apexes are gold-painted. She died in 2020s



### Frea Peschar

WOOD

Robert Herron commissioned Frea, as an artist, to embellish his thimbles but not many of these sets were produced. The plain wood is a fine backdrop for the Aussie fauna Peschar has intricately 'drawn' in pokerwork or pyrography. Some are signed





**Perch**  
 PORCELAIN  
 Western Australia



Geraldton wax



**Joy Plos**  
 PORCELAIN  
 Griffith, NSW



rose



**Roma Prentice**  
 CHINA/PORCELAIN  
 Rostrevor, Adelaide

Roma teaches china painting. The paintings form scenes all round. The rim is gold painted at the open edge of the thimble. Most of her apexes are painted gold. Roma also undertook thimble commissions



blue wren  
 2008

frog

'Galah'

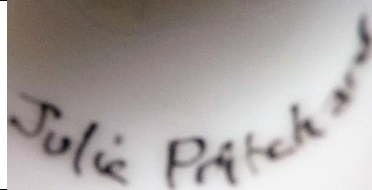


**Julie Pritchard**  
PORCELAIN  
Western Australia



1984

similar farmhouse painted in black



**H Pursche**  
PORCELAIN

Barossa, South Australia



1988



1988

**M.R.**  
PORCELAIN



grass tree

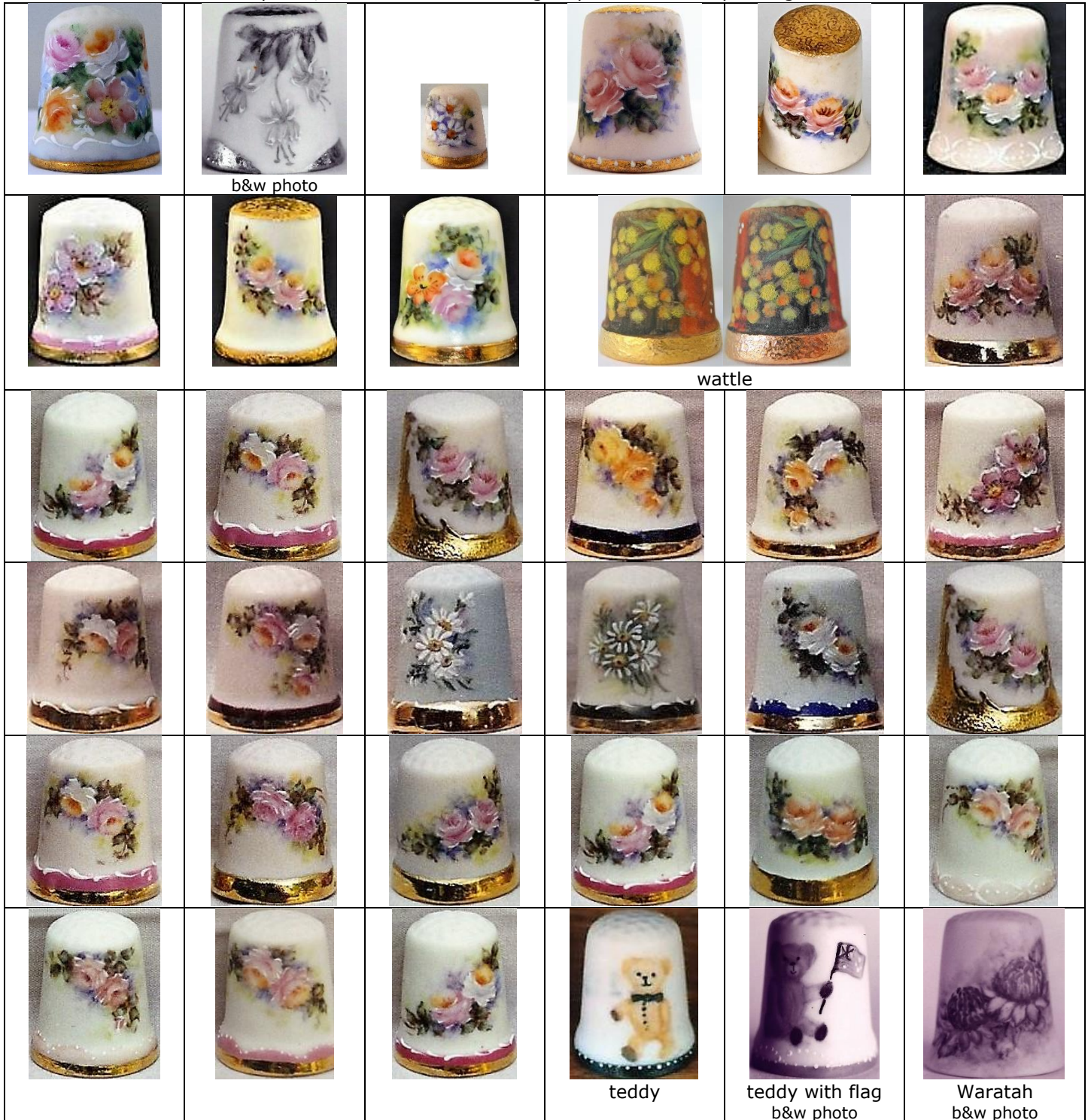




**Lynn Richards**  
**PORCELAIN**

Coomera, Queensland

Lynn Richards was born in Hobart, Tasmania, and she moved to New South Wales in 1965 where she commenced porcelain art lessons in 1979. She has had no formal training in art. Unhappy with the limited shapes of porcelain to paint, Richards started making her own porcelain. After producing and selling small quantities of porcelain bisque she began experimenting with making her own moulds, concentrating on small items. She sold these blanks to other porcelain artists. A love of detailed miniatures was emerging, and Lynn turned her hand to thimbles. In 1983 she moved to Queensland. From 1990 onwards she stopped supplying blanks to other artists. Meeting Lynn Richards as Thimbleselect at a Collectables fair in Ipswich in 1994 led to Thimbleselect becoming a supplier/outlet to the collectables market for Lynn. This stimulated Lynn to extend her range to include matching sewing tools to complement her range of delicate thimble range. The thimbles are embellished with 24 carat gold paint, including some of her apexes, with some of her rims gold painted at the open edge of the thimble





ballet shoe pincushion



pincushion



pincushion with pintray



sewing kit with tape measure and thimble



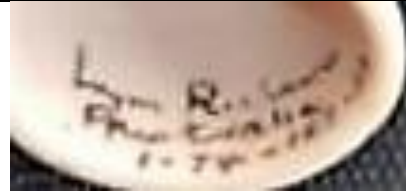
thimble holder



thimble holder



shoe pincushion



**Geoff Riley**

WOOD

Melbourne

1940s-1960s - died 1986



needlecases  
'Blue Wren'



**Jill Roberts**

WOOD

The Deepings Woodturner

Nicholls Rivulet, Tasmania

see also: Fiona Curry



sassafras clown darning-  
needlecase  
1992



embroiderer darning-  
needlecase



darning-needlecase



happy birthday darning-  
needlecase



violinist darning-needlecase





**Illa Roseworld**  
 PORCELAIN  
 Cleveland, Brisbane



geraniums  
 b&w photo

**HJS**  
 PORCELAIN



kookaburra with gum blossoms  
 gold painted apex



**Lee Sanders**  
 CHINA  
 Adelaide

This talented porcelain artist has used Pan Arts as her distributor and they in turn supplied Lee's thimbles to The Thimble Guild in Scotland over many years. Lee battled to acquire good quality porcelain blanks so turned to using Taiwan blanks. Her work is so fine that she is able to replicate her designs along the rim: there is as much detail in those rims as the rest of the thimbles. Lee often has a contrasting subject painted on the reverse. Most of her thimbles have handpainted gold apices. The rim is gold painted at the open edge of the thimble. © lettered in many thimbles. Some have a lustre finish.

Early examples dated 1989 are emerging – handpainted on the smaller porcelain blanks favoured by china painting groups around Australia (the only type available for painting at that time). These were all stock items built up over the years

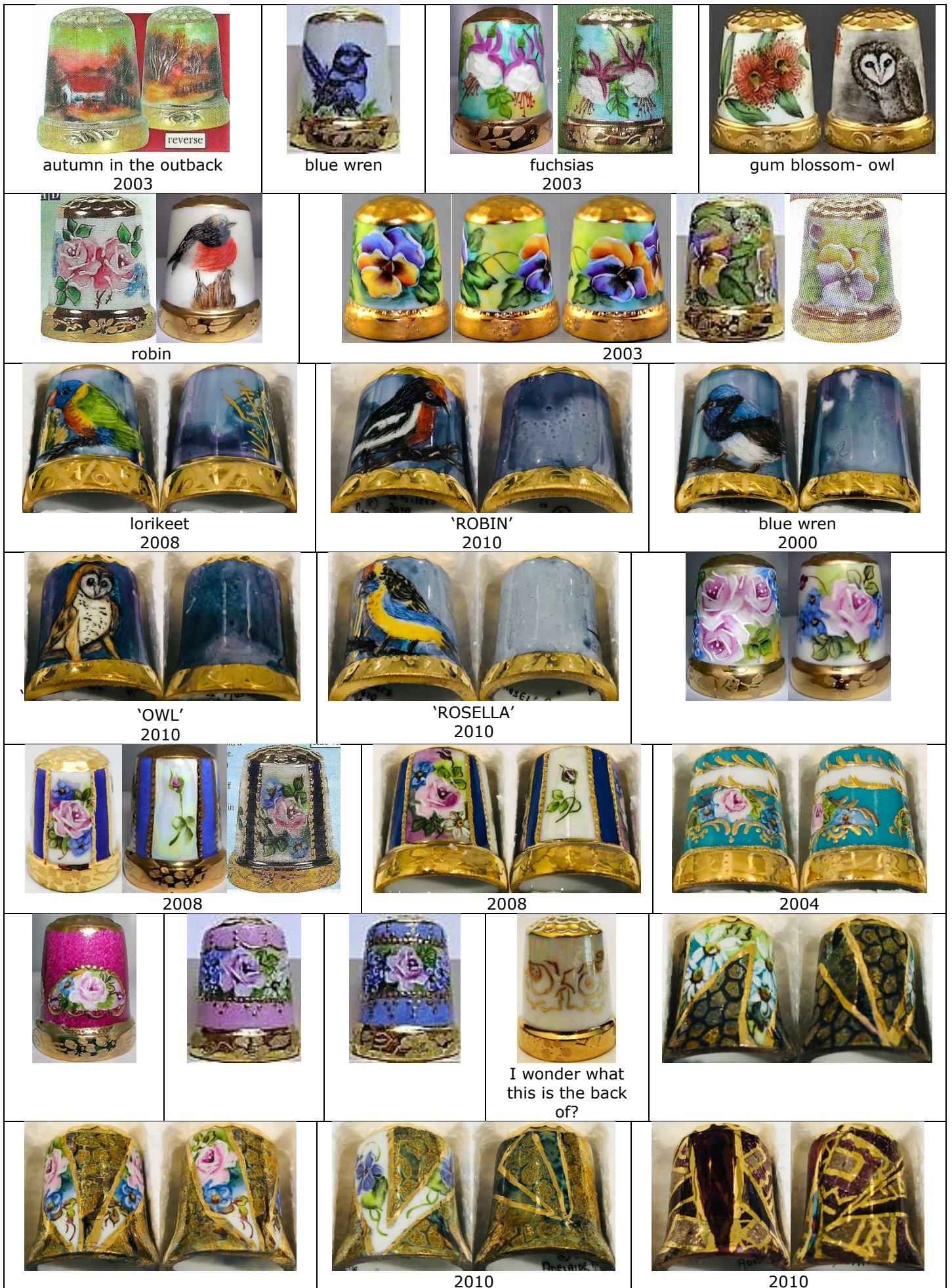
Lee Sanders died in March 2023



















'Kadina SA'  
b&w photo



1991



shortened signature



**E Saunders**

PORCELAIN

Sydney

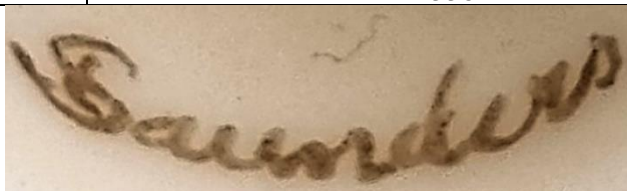
signature on either the outside or inside



gum blossom



1998



**Viv Schipp**

PORCELAIN



1990

**M P Seaforth**  
POTTERY



'KA-6'  
'Australia II 1983'



**Georgia Seitz**  
WOOD  
Brisbane



tating shuttle  
'Miss Norma Benporath, OAM 1900-1998'

**L R Sherwood**  
PORCELAIN  
Perth



1988  
lustre finish





**Olga Stack**

WOOD

Perth

Olga Stack was enterprising enough to place an advertisement for her folk art thimbles in the Kalgoorlie Airport, Western Australia, nearly 600km away. Her floral thimbles are all designed over a painted background and dated



**Margaret Towler**

PORCELAIN

Bluff Point, New South Wales

Margaret Towler is a well-known porcelain artist and respected teacher of porcelain art at [Studio Towler Porcelain](#). She is a graduate of the Teaching Institute of Porcelain Art NSW and a member of the Australian Porcelain Decorators Association. Thimbles are a small part of Margaret's handpainted work.

The porcelain bisque thimbles are made by her husband, Bill. The thimbles also have raised or incised decorative designs. She began working on thimbles with handpainted lace in the tradition of Irish Dresden thimbles: I haven't seen an example to date

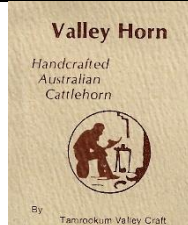
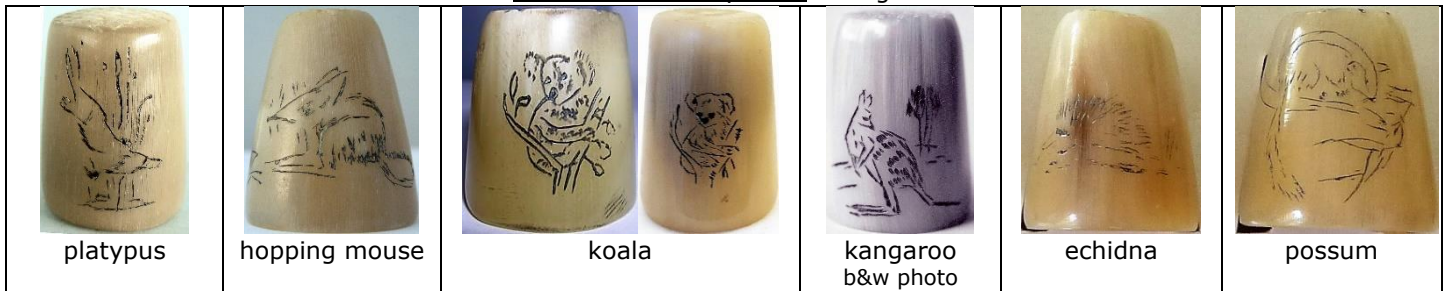
Her thimbles are supplied with an explanatory card. Margaret supplied *Pan Arts of Sydney*



**John Trier**  
CATTLE HORN

Tamrookum, Queensland

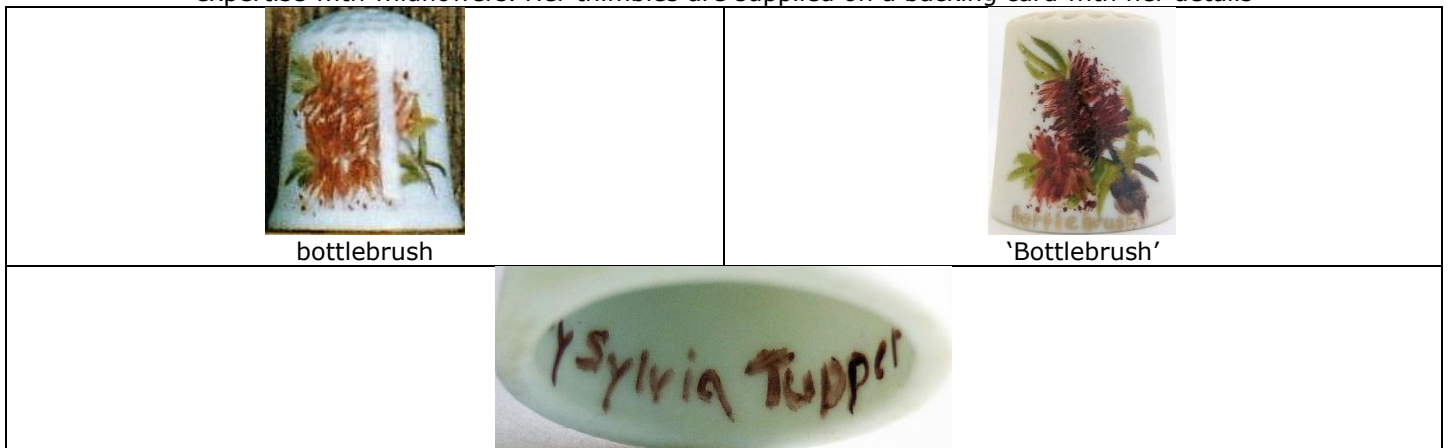
John Trier was born in 1932 in England and in 1948 he came to Australia with his family. Having worked with cattle and sheep all his adult life, he started working with cattle horn in 1977. John is a self-taught artist. In 1979 Joyce Nixon-Smith, a Brisbane thimble collector, asked John if he would make thimbles. In 1980 he added scrimshaw of Australian animals. The thimbles had a small sticky label inside. John's trading name is Tamrookum Valley Craft. Unsigned



**Sylvia Tupper**  
PORCELAIN

Rosanna, Melbourne

Sylvia Tupper was commissioned by Beryl Warne of *Thimble Collections* Toorak, Melbourne, to handpaint thimbles with roses and forget-me-nots for the opening of her shop in 1983. Tupper's fine handpainting also reveals her expertise with wildflowers. Her thimbles are supplied on a backing card with her details







**Merle Turner**

PORCELAIN

Adelaide

Encouraged by her thimble-collector husband, Jack Turner, Merle produced a range of handpainted thimbles – some commemoratives for the South Australian Digitabulists Society, founded by Jack



**Jan Underwood**

EARTHENWARE

South Australia



paint yourself earthenware kit thimble

**Christian Vocke & Ahmed Ptak (APCV) / Christian Vocke & Graham Pike (CVGP)**

**EARTHENWARE**

South Australia

Christian Vocke is originally from The Netherlands, and he settled in Australia and together with Ahmed Ptak of Auburn, SA made moulded earthenware. In the 1980s Vocke slip cast ceramic thimbles and then handpainted Australian farmyard, Aboriginal and many varied South Australian scenes with low fluid glaze, in a naive style. The background colours are earthy, concentrating on the ochres, greens and browns, with the drawings in black contrast. They have a gloss finish and the inside are ochre-coloured. What a range of shapes and sizes Vocke created: maybe he was also assessing what blanks were available

Vocke was commissioned by Dorothy Andrews to make handpainted souvenir thimbles and these were distributed to various areas in South Australia with the names of the towns on them. Some of their thimbles are marked 'Paris Creek SA'

In 2023 new information has been found by Kissane. Vocke joined with Graham Pike. Their thimble venture has a new signature and the inside is white, not ochre (on examples sighted)



kangaroo on apex



signed CVGP  
'ADELAIDE' inside  
kangaroo on apex



kangaroo on apex



b&w photo



'MOONTA'  
miner





A farm scene showing every aspect of the design



'HMS BUFFALO'



'PARIS CREEK SA'



mine headgear  
b&w photo



kangaroo



'PARIS CREEK SA'



'GLENELG S.A.'



'SEVEN HILLS SA'



'KAPUNDA SA'  
signed CVGP



signed CVGP  
blue apex



'GALAH'  
signed CVGP  
pale blue apex



'STH. AUS GALAH'  
signed CVGP





Koalas  
signed CVGP  
pink apex



signed CVGP  
pink apex



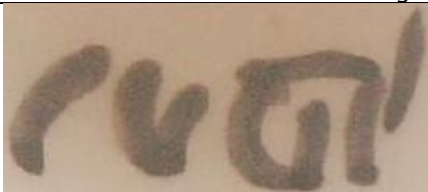
Gouldian finch – cockatoo  
signed CVGP  
pale blue apex



signed CVGP



APCV on ochre – CVGP on white



some have AUSTRALIA lettered as well

**B.W.**  
PORCELAIN  
Western Australia



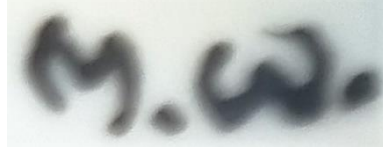
'Blackboy'



**M.W.**  
PORCELAIN



1987



**R.W.**  
PORCELAIN  
Victoria



rose  
'Barwon Park'  
yellow wash on apex



**SW**  
CHINA



Geraldton wax

**Beryl Ward (BJW)**

WOOD

Brisbane

With her husband Col, a well-known Brisbane woodturner, Beryl turned her hand to handpainting his turned thimbles. Using a folk-art style, these thimbles are delicately painted – in the early 1990s. Her other handpainted thimbles include gum blossoms, mushrooms, gumnuts and flannel flowers



**I Watson**

PORCELAIN

Sydney



**Joanna Wigzell**

WOOD

Some of Tasmania's Robert Herron's thimbles were handpainted by his daughter Joanna Wigzell. The handpainted thimbles depict native Australian fauna. Her portrayal of the blue wren is especially popular. Each thimble has the name of the subject in upper case lettering along the outer rim. Some have J Wigzell lettered on Herron's gold sticky labels inside. Occasional thimbles signed





 <p>'WOMBAT'</p>	 <p>'PLATYPUS AUSTRALIA'</p>	 <p>'CLARENDON HOUSE' (Tasmania)</p>
 <p>'KOOKABURRA' b&amp;w photo</p>	 <p>'POSSUM' b&amp;w photo</p>	
		 <p>Hand Painted in Tasmania on HUON PINE by J. Wigzell Tel 03 6327 1377</p>

**Dianne Williams**

**WOOD**

Robert Herron of Tasmania's thimbles are so finely turned that many artists have embellished them with their own designs. Handpainting was done until 1990 by former Tasmanian, Dianne Williams. Her expertise is painting wildflowers. Robert Herron gold sticker is sometimes inside – only identifying the wood used. Williams did not letter the name of the flower on the outer rim. Unsigned

	 <p>wattle</p>	 <p>wattle</p>	 <p>wattle</p>	 <p>wattle</p>
	 <p>Christmas bells</p>			
		 <p>waratah</p>	 <p>waratah</p>	
				



**Yvonne Winspear (YW)**

WOOD

Sydney

Yvonne Winspear created her bark thimbles in 1986. They are of a cork-like substance taken from the Ti-Tree Melaleuca in New South Wales. This paperbark is moulded over wooden thimbles of Tasmanian Leatherwood from a woodturner in West Gosford, NSW. Aboriginal stick people were handpainted by Yvonne. About 600 of these thimbles were handmade. Another thimble made by Winspear are wooden thimbles with a chamois covering and they were handpainted to celebrate the Bicentenary of Australia in 1988. The flat apex is covered in tiny black beads.

120 thimbles of this design were made



'1788-1988'







## THIMBLE COLLECTOR



*Yvonne Winspear*  
40 Mackenzie St., Revesby 2212  
N.S.W. Australia (02) 773 3698

1980s

### Vicky Winters

WOOD

Sydney

Vicky Winters won an art competition when she handpainted a shoe with the traditional painting of her ancestors. She was commissioned by Barbara Kelly and Vicky used Tasmanian Robert Herron's thimbles for her rich Aboriginal designs that are handpainted and completely cover the thimble. These traditional designs feature those handed down from the Dreamtime and incorporate figures animals in the dot style of painting of her ancestors.

No two thimbles are alike. They are the only thimbles handpainted by an Aboriginal artist. Approximately 30-40 of each of these designs were painted by Winters. Unsigned



needlecase

### V Wyatt

PORCELAIN

Western Australia



'Blackboy'





## Handpainted thimbles – unsigned

I am including this batch of unknown Australian painters' thimbles – hoping that your similar thimble is signed – or you recognise the painter. I have added any lettering or my clues that are associated with these thimbles. They may, of course have not been painted in Australia?

			
promoting The Old Umbrella Shop Launceston Tasmania	orchid	wallaby	'BROOME'
			
'BROOME'	'CHRISTMAS BELLS AUSTRALIA'	Christmas bells	Christmas bells b&w photo
			
Geraldton wax	paint yourself earthenware kit thimble see also WG	kookaburra	leschenaultia from Fremantle WA
			
paint yourself earthenware kit thimbles. see also EDK/WG			'Mt Isa'
			
'SPIDER ORCHID PEMBERTON W.A.'		'PERTH W.A.'	illegible signature - TAS
			
	waratah		
			
'AYERS ROCK' wood	wood	wood	wood



Geraldton wax wood



Kangaroo paw



indecipherable initials - koala - wood



grass tree



'Warana 81'

handpainted gold indentations on apex  
this Brisbane festival was first held in 1961. Forerunner of  
Brisbane Writers' Festival



rims left unpainted - too accomplished to have left unsigned - possibly M Searle Western Australia



'White winged fairy wren'  
1987



needlecase

'Greetings from Castlemaine'  
Is this painted by Geoff Riley?

## References

- Joy Earles *Thimbles by Jen G* TCI Bulletin winter 2022  
Susan Jean Gowan *Thimbles of Australia*. 1998  
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Norma Shattock *Australia's Kyneton handpainted china*. Needlework Tool Collectors Society of Australia Newsletter Oct  
2006

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This listing of Australian handpainted thimbles and sewing tools 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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