

Glass and crystal thimble makers

In May 2020, I received a most interesting email from Norbert Ullmann, the current CEO of Ullmann glass of Bavaria, in Germany. I know that surname will ring a bell with thimble collectors, as it did with me.

The reason for him in contacting me was that he is planning to write a book on Ullmann glass and crystal thimbles. We corresponded over the next few months, which ended with my undertaking a thimble topic on glass thimbles. Ullmann offered to provide me with photos of the over 1000 different thimbles that Ullmann glass have created since 1973. That felt too much like a promotional topic for me, as Ullmann glass are still in business, creating thimbles.

I decided that when the time for a new thimble topic arose, I would cover all makers of glass and crystal thimbles, which he quite accepted.

This isn't going to be a technical treatise. We don't need to understand the difference between glass and crystal, as it doesn't affect who made the thimbles. I do want to highlight tho, the huge role that Ullmann glass has played in keeping the interest in glass thimble afloat, since they began to produce glass thimble in 1973.

The family crest that features on the cover of their thimble catalogue, has a date of 1635. Generations of Ullmann have been involved in the glass and crystal business and the next generation is currently involved. Producing glass thimbles under their own brand (thimbles marked with a sticker 'Made in West Germany'), Ullmann glass were commissioned by other glass manufacturers to create thimbles for them, to their specifications. These thimbles would then be marketed with their own brand names. Some of these glass companies had attempted to make their own thimbles, but it would have been costly.

I can't think of any thimble manufacturer of any medium of thimble that has been producing collectables thimbles for over 45 years. Ullmann glass certainly dominated their field.

This is nothing new in the thimble collectors' world – sterling silver thimbles in Victorian England were largely created by makers like Charles Horner and Henry Griffiths & Sons – they were just marked with other maker's assay marks, by Horner and Griffiths.

The same occurred in the 1980s when Sutherland China branded many of their thimbles with other china brand names.
It's just a matter of business and economics.

Mr Ullmann provided me with this non-technical information:

Glass is a mixture of chemicals without any heavy oxides in it e.g. windows and bottles are made out of glass; but thousands of other products too.

Crystal glass is "glass with the addition of at least 10 % heavy oxides" to make it softer and clearer.

Lead Crystal is "glass with 24 % of lead oxide" added into the batch, which makes the glass heavier, sparklier, softer and allows for chemical polishing; (vs. hand polishing); mostly used in continental Europe.

High Lead Crystal is "glass with 33 % of lead oxide" added into the batch to make the glass even heavier, sparklier, softer than "Lead Crystal"; (mostly used in the UK and Ireland)."

The following mail order thimble businesses ordered and sold Ullmann glass thimbles from the 1970s-2020s: Lilian Vernon Inc (New York) – Heirloom Editions (Barbara Ringer California) – Gimbel's & Sons (Maine USA) – The Thimble Society of London – The Thimble Collectors Guild/The Thimble Guild (Scotland) - Vingerhoednieuws (Friedy Kamp Netherlands) – Pan Arts (Australia) – Thimbles Only (Jean Shoup California) – Die Fingerhut Post (Feldman) - P J Walter Thimbles (Germany).

All glass thimbles were made for the collectables thimble market, which flourished in the 1980s and 1990s. This includes Ullmann glass thimbles which were "made to be used" by their thimble shape. I defy anyone to use these beautifully created thimbles to sew with. Their rigid sides and weight, never mind being created in one size only, wouldn't work as a sewing tool! Nor would thimbles that were created in the glass art market be used with items placed on top of thimbles.

Few glass thimbles have been marked with the name of the glass maker, so as collectors, we are dependent on applied paper 'makers' stickers and the paper thimble mail order catalogues from 1970s-2000s for this information. Unless this information is passed on when the thimble is sold, the maker's name is lost. The database hopes to remedy this.

For those of you who have ever tried to photograph glass thimbles, never mind a maker's mark, you will know that this is even trickier if the glass is clear!

There is another category that I will include after the alphabetical listing, where only the country of the maker is known. The thimbles are grouped by country (**15** countries to date). There are many famous glassworks/makers in Italy and Czechoslovakia/Czechia or Czech Republic (previously known as Bohemian glass). If one of these is your country, please get in touch so that this database can be updated with makers' names. Additionally I have photos for 70 glass thimbles where no country nor maker is currently known. I plan on working to get this to zero!

How are glass thimbles decorated?

de Smet lists the following headings (each with a brief description of the techniques):

- Painting
- Enamel painting
- Gold powder
- Decorating glass with glass
- Engraving
- Stipple engraving (in dots)
- Grinding and relief engraving
- Etching
- Millefiori technique

All these forms of decoration will be seen in the examples in the table below.

In the table, I have listed the known glass and crystal thimble makers alphabetically. This includes glass craftsmen – handpainters etc. I trust you will be able to find the thimble you are looking for here, to identify the maker. There are **91** 'makers' or decorators listed here. Please share your favourite glass thimble maker if not featured.

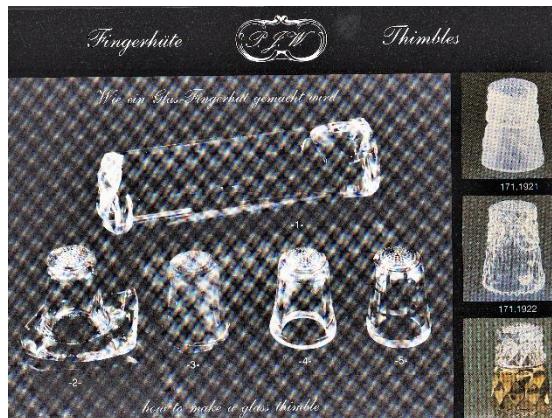
Many of these makers have created mouthblown glass thimbles, and I understand that they are known as art glass. I have also encountered the term lampwork (Ullmann describes them "uses borosilicate glass tubes, made for the laboratory industry and heats them up "over the lamp" and shapes it into the form of a thimble"). These are the handcrafted thimbles, part of the craft industry from all over the world. In the 2010s lampwork thimbles have become the most sought after form of glass thimble.

A term not heard much anymore is 'cut glass thimbles' or 'frosted glass thimbles' (used in Von Hoelle's *Thimbles collector's encyclopedia*. 1986).



If any of these thimbles listed below were made by [Ullmannglass](#) and “rebranded” – you will find this information under “Notes”. Often, we only know who the artist is if the thimbles are handpainted. In this case you will find the thimbles listed below by the **first** name of the artist. Otherwise the studio name is used.

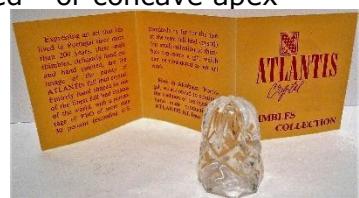
If you own one of these maker’s or artist’s thimbles – please let me have a photo of the maker’s mark or a new photo to include or replace these from the catalogues. Maybe you have had a thimble handblown for you? Share if you know who made it for you – and where.



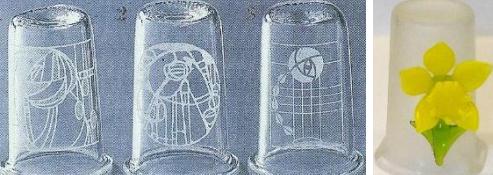
P J Walter catalogue 1985/86
showing the process of how Ullmannglass thimbles are made

Thank you, Norbert Ullmann – this topic would not have been possible without your invaluable input.

Glass thimble makers

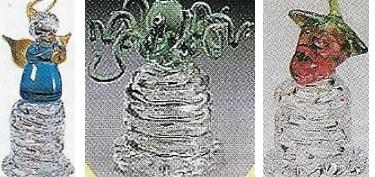
thimble	maker	marks/catalogue dates	notes
	Artglass Australia East Bundaberg Queensland Australia (Wolfgang Engel)		
	Atlantis Alcobaça Portugal		clear glass – handcut and handpainted – full lead crystal – domed - or concave apex 
	Aura Borealis Czechia		Lamp glass or wound glass technique
 bee - hummingbird in flowers	Avon		
 millefiori inserts	B&B Murano Italy		

		Baccarat Le Clairupt Bertrichamps France (Cristallerie d'Art R. Gross)		
		Barrie Reginald Thompson Stockbridge Hants UK		
		Blackford Aberdeenshire Scotland UK		
		Bob Scott UK	1988	individually blown – clear – scalloped rims
		Bruno Sutto Enedi Murano Italy		

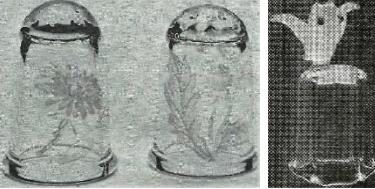
 <p>anchor – heart – thistle</p>  <p>petalled flowers with millefiori centres</p>  <p>clear base is fluted</p>	<p>Caithness Perth Scotland UK</p> <p>www.caithnessglass.co.uk</p>	 <p>anchor maker's mark</p>  <p>... handmade in Scotland</p>	<p>Ullmannsglass blanks – glass colours: blue – amber – clear – green – pink – mauve – ruby – mauve – turquoise – Caithness specialty is making paperweights – thimbles' apex are mini millefiori domed paperweights – these are made and applied by Caithness – I visited the Caithness works in 1996 and purchased several blanks in various colours – was informed at the time they were made in 'Holland'</p> 
 <p>Mackintosh designs - daffodil</p>	<p>Caledonian Crystal Scotland UK</p>	<p>2001-2002</p>	<p>some clear with etchings – others: series of twelve flowers of the month – either as colourful toppers or affixed in colour – clear or frosted</p>
	<p>Campanella Murano Italy</p>		

		Carol Toevs USA	1979	signed and handpainted
		Colleen Schroll Lampwork (CMS) Chesapeake Bay Maryland USA crab - compendium	2012 	lampwork with raised colourful designs – signed CMS limited editions
		Connemara Celtic Crystal Co Moycullen County Galway Ireland	Connemara Celtic Crystal Ltd. Moycullen Co. Galway, Ireland. Tel: Intl. 353 91 555172 Fax: Intl. 353 91 555157	
		Corning Glass Works Inc Corning New York USA see also: Pyrex	1940-1945	non-lead glass made during World War II - because of scarcity of metals – never progressed past the prototype stage – not sold commercially – some have appeared in thimble collections – in clear or light blue – some marked 'Corning Glass' or 'Pyrex Brand' (information Holmes in his chapter on Glass thimbles)
		D Costeo		name lettered in white
		Crystalex Nový Bor Czechia	Factory still exists in 2025 but no longer produce thimbles	enamelled handpainted flowers

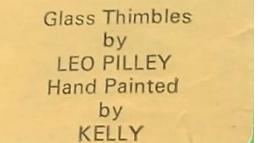
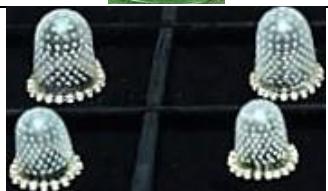
	Dan Jacobson USA	2012	began as a glassblower in 1972 – he adds his own colour to clear glass – freehand work – fluted rims – various heights
 Charles and Diana's wedding thimble	David Gulland Kirkcudbright Scotland UK	1981  	born in Edinburgh – studied glass design and engraving under Helen Munro-Turner at Edinburgh College of Art – own studio – his maker's symbol incorporates medieval glassmakers' sign and the initials of the artist surmounted by castle of Edinburgh
 iris – anemones – privet – pansies	David Smith UK (Valda Peacock) handpainter		Smith is the glass blower - set of twelve thimbles with Scottish handpainted flowers – gold painted rims – domed glass thimbles – with defined indentations in apex - limited to 500 <u>signed</u> and numbered
	Derwent UK		English crystal hand made lead crystal
	Dieter Schrade Berlin then: Wertheim Germany	1992 2005	mouthblown – coloured metal oxides fused into the glass
	Eliza M Wright Pompano Beach Florida USA		lampwork – with defined indentations in apex

 <p>hearts</p>  <p>flowers</p>	Emilio Santini Murano Venice Italy	1987-1988	mouth blown with handpainted details – glass colours come from chemicals (like copper) added to molten glass – the apexes are concave – see also: Lucie Santini
 <p>cherries</p>	Enesco Designer Giftware Taiwan	1985	
 <p>gondolier</p>	Eola Venice Italy		handpainted - <u>signed</u>
 <p>b&w photo</p>	Ernest F Damron USA	1979	handblown clear crystal glass – hand engraved - <u>signed</u>
 <p>Angel – octopus - strawberry</p>	Eugenie Arrowsic Maine USA	1986 1997	handcrafted glass – clear – glass base of spun coloured glass - characters atop

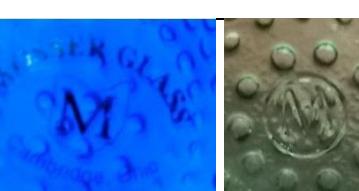
	Ferenc USA	1988 1997	handmade – etched on clear glass – some are spun glass – applied 22ct gold - scalloped rims
	Frank Horvath Lakeland Glass Shop Florida USA	1996-1998	scalloped rims – handmade – blown by moth - edged with gold – in 1963 Horvath completed apprenticeship in Hungary – master glass blower
	GBS Cheshire UK		lustreware with characters atop
	George Davidson & Co UK	1890s	thimblefuls
	Gigi Branch Devon UK		Gigi trained at Limoges in France her handpainted thimbles are signed <u>Gigi</u> see also: British modern handpainted thimbles for her work on china thimbles
	Graham Payne Grimley Worcester UK		his thimble range is mainly handpainted china and enamel
reverse painting: bird in cage – handpainted bird			

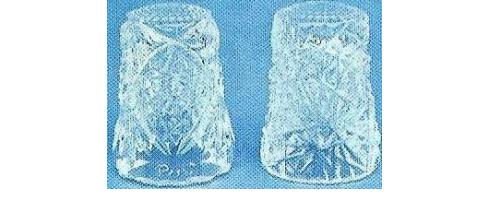
	Giuliano Donaggio Murano Italy		
	Haegar Schultz South Africa		
	Holly Tree Miniatures UK pewter blue tit on glass milk bottle	1994	combination of pewter on glass
 dandelion flower – bud – owl b&w photos	Hourglass UK	1983-1984	illustrated on clear glass – domed apex – or on apex
 apple trees – guac & sour cream – pumpkin spice – purple pink dichroic	Humming Line Creative Works Colorado Springs USA (Maxine Grossman 1957-2021)	2011 	lampwork glass
	Jacqui and David Parker Birmingham UK	1986-1987	handpainted by <u>Olivia</u>

apple - Happy New Year b&w photos					
	Jenny Blair Designs York UK	1984-1992	handpainted designs - gilt or silver applied designs see separate topic on Jenny Blair Designs		
	John C Spray Leicester UK	1993 1996 2003	scalloped rims - mainly clear glass		
	John Squeo Windy City Glass USA	1997	items atop (toppers)		
	Johnny Boschoff Pretoria South Africa (Gili Davis)		Gili is known for her handpainted porcelain - died 2015		
	Karen USA		lampwork		
	KB Italy		opaque glass - with sticky label see also Westmoreland		

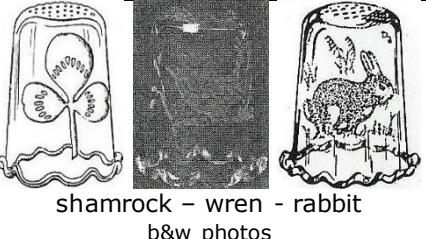
	<p>Kilkenny Irish Crystal Tinnamona Callan Co Kilkenny Ireland www.kilkennycrystal.com</p>		<p>green sticky label</p>
	<p>La Serenissima Murano Venice Italy</p>		<p>thimble sticky label</p>
	<p>The Laffing Glass (LGL) 125 Mason Street Saugatuck Missouri USA (Lynn Nurge) https://laffingglass.com</p>	<p>2012</p>  <p>L Nurge signature</p> <p>Handmade for you by Bead Artist Lynn Nurge at LaffingGull (LGL) Designer Sets, Spacers, Speciality and Pandora Lg Hole Style Beads www.LaffingGull.com + eBay, Etsy</p>	<p>lampwork</p> 
	<p>Leo Pilley (handpainted by Kelly)</p>		
	<p>Libertine</p>	<p>2018</p> 	<p>used as glass nails – that's what's out there</p>

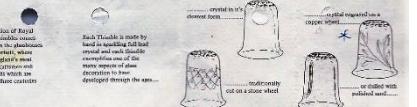
		Lucie Santini Murano Venice Italy	1988	'tre fuochi' process (three times fired) – handpainted – concave apex - see also: Emilio Santini
		Lynn Rogue River Oregon USA	1983 1987	handblown – handpainted – thick 24ct gold rims
		Mae Robinson USA	1990	hand engraved on handmade crystal – master engraver
		Malcolm Walter South Australia		clear or frosted Ullmann glass blanks - thimbles imported by Pan Arts – Walter has added six of his sterling silver Australian motifs as crowns around crystal – silver is marked MW
		Mariekuniek Amsterdam Netherlands http://mariekuniek.nl		glass bead maker – using soft glass - with defined indentations in apex
		Mario Ramos <u>Vitreus Ignis</u> Madrid Spain with <u>Mariana Grande</u> (2002-)		workshop began in Buenos Aires Argentina (1988-) mouthblown

	Mary Gregory USA gondola – sewing machine – girl - Fragonard	1978-1980	American handpainter on glass [1856-1908] – her style has been copied on thimbles – on a palette of white enamel – thimbles made in Italy – see also Westmoreland
	Mavis Smith Studio Solebury Pennsylvania USA		lampwork – glass bead maker – smooth apex
	Mayfair UK bases are made by Tudor Crystal Stourbridge UK Disney's Aladdin – rose fairy		pewter characters
	Mayfair Edition UK styled in tribute to Tiffany Glass		not to be confused with these opaque cloisonne thimbles from China plique a jour method
	Morgan Indiana USA		coloured berry glass thimblefuls
	Moser Ohio USA		coloured berry glass thimblefuls

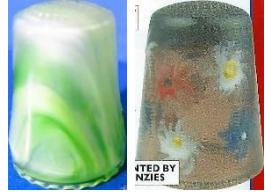
 1776-1976 – windjammer - koala b&w photos	Nico (Nick) Ferro USA (Michos) handcutter	1976 1979	handblown – free hand cut leaded crystal – carved into clear glass – born in Greece
	Nikki Shaw Glass Attic Somerset UK	2004	decorated with gold and diamante
 bees	Nj Czechia		mouth blown identical maker's mark from their ceramic design
 bees	Paul Ticknor Osceola MI USA		
	Pepi Herrmann USA	1983 	born in Austria – master craftsman – handcut and <u>signed</u> lead crystal
	Pinpoint Design UK	1993	dried flowers applied over most of clear surface first thermochromism (temperature sensitive) thimbles which change colour

 <p>moon - sun (night and day)</p>	<p>Poppie Gifts UK</p>		<p>crystal – fused platinum or gold into glass</p>
 <p>blue - green</p>	<p>Pyrex Brand USA see also: Corning Glass Works Inc</p>	<p>1942</p>	
 <p>gold tortoise – forget-me-nots – winter tree b&w photos</p>	<p>Quorn Glass UK (Eddie Hughes) glassblower</p>	<p>1983-1986</p>	<p>example of glass blower's art – mainly scalloped rims – gold rims fused into glass by a unique technique</p>
 <p>berries - tulip</p>	<p>R & T Decorative Glass UK (Tamar Altman) designer and handpainter</p>	<p>1994-1995</p>	<p>drawing inspiration from Tiffany – large size handpainted thimbles</p>
 <p>etched church</p>	<p>Rj</p>	<p>1978</p>	
	<p>R Corbett Cape Town South Africa</p>	<p>1985 1988</p>	<p>glass blowing firm – handblown – handpainted in black afterwards to give swirls</p>

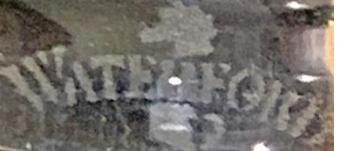
 <p>fishes - poppy - fish</p>	<p>Rachel Pugh UK</p>	<p>2001-2002</p>	<p>handpainter</p>
 <p>Tutankhamun - Christmas</p>	<p>Raimundas Lapsys USA</p>	<p>1978</p>	<p><u>signed</u> and dated – handcut by master cutter – Tutankhamun designs limited to 7500 – apex 22ct gold painted</p>
 <p>shamrock – wren – rabbit b&w photos</p>	<p>Riverside Works UK (Jeff Jeffries) engraver</p>	<p>1983-1984</p>	<p>engraved designs on clear glass – scalloped rim</p>
 <p>'Merry Xmas'</p>	<p>Robert Hands Edinburgh</p>	<p>1989</p>	<p>handmade & engraved</p>
 <p>wedding of Charles and Diana</p>	<p>Royal Brierley UK</p>	<p>1981</p>	<p>Ullmannsglass blanks – etching by Royal Brierley – boxed as such</p>

 <p>Thumbelina – embroidery stitches</p>	<p>Royal Doulton Stoke-on-Trent UK</p>	<p>1980s</p>  <p>Webb Corbett named as maker -by hand - on Thumbelina set of five's certificate</p>	<p>Royal Doulton are china manufacturers – producing two sets of crystal thimbles – five Thumbelina set - Webb Corbett did engraving – four Embroidery stitches set made by Thomas Webb & Sons Stourbridge</p> 
 <p>starfish</p>	<p>Sandra Breedt Schenk Bella Murano Glass Creations Cape Town South Africa</p>		<p>lampwork – using glass from Murano</p>
	<p>Saunders & Shepherd UK</p>	<p>1894</p>	<p>thimblefuls - RD 230818</p>
 <p>cat - heart - horse</p>	<p>Sklozam Czechia</p>		<p>blown glass – clear glass used</p>
 <p>Father Time - Hongluo – Confucius Disciples - Butterfly Rose</p>	<p>Mr Song Jim-Ming Hebel Province China</p>		<p>reverse glass painting ('in painting')</p>

		Sowerby UK		frosted thimblefuls
	Sterling Classic UK bases are made by Tudor Crystal Stourbridge			Connoisseur Collection – incorporating pewter – some using Ullmann glass blanks (dolphins)
	Studio Glass UK			
	Suffolk Glass Works/Studios UK www.suffolkglass.co.uk	1994 2003		clear glass – some with coloured figurals atop
	Susan Stokes Canada			lampwork
	Svetlana Chernova Russia			handpainted on Ullmann glass blank thimbles

 <p>sulphur-crested cockatoo – different bases – set of five</p>	<p>Swarovski Crystal Vienna Austria www.swarovski.com</p>		<p>set of five crystal frosted birds atop crystal thimbles – two different bases (fish scale / fireball)</p>
 	<p>Techniglass West Bay Bridport Devon UK</p>		
	<p>Tipperary Crystal Ireland</p>		<p>mouth blown – handcut – UllmannGlass blank thimbles – boxed in Irish-marked thimble boxes</p>
 <p>black – blue – green – red</p>  <p>black with gold – handpainted – fluted =</p>  <p>opaque – handpainted by Julie Menzies (2009)</p>	<p>UllmannGlass GmbH Siegstatt 2-4 Osterhofen Bavaria Germany www.ullmannglass.de</p>	<p>1973-</p>  	<p>crystal colours: topaz – clear – blue – aqua – red – amethyst – ruby – many of these have a lustre finish - they use ten different thimble moulds for blank thimbles for their customers with customised orders – their most current catalogue lists over 160 different popular designs/colourway thimbles in stock which includes a 'novelties' section – some designs are etched – many <u>handpainted</u> - apex pleasantly slightly domed on all their range – not "well" hollowed out inside</p>

 	<p>Unique Design Egypt (Randa Ahmed)</p>	<p>designs made 2010</p>
 <p>R: moonlit clouds</p>	<p>Village Glass Bridge of Allan Stirlingshire Scotland UK (Tom Young)</p>	<p>1993-1994 1998</p> <p>scalloped rims – fused with 22ct gold – from clear to heathery shades – handblown thimbles – some lustre</p>
 <p>mushroom - snowman</p>	<p>Walter Hasenfus Boothbay Harbor Maine USA</p>	<p>1997-1998</p>  <p>spun glass with toppers</p>

 <p>three different shapes</p>	<p>Waterford Crystal Waterford Ireland waterford.com</p>	 <p>green seahorse logo sticker inside</p>	<p><u>signed</u> on outer rim with seahorse logo lead crystal</p> 
 <p>lead crystal</p>	<p>Welsh Royal Crystal Wales</p>		
 <p>girl painting – Coca Cola – ballerina – Shirley Temple</p>	<p>Westmoreland USA</p>	 <p>boxes: Bubble Glass thimble/ M.S.R. Imports Inc, Taiwan</p>	<p>Ullmann glass blanks but branded as Westmoreland – some using Mary Gregory style designs using white enamel paint see also KB</p>
 <p>flowers – Jemima Puddleduck</p>	<p>William B. Shane USA</p>		<p>scalloped rim – on 10th February 1981 Shane took out a US patent no. 258,174 for a patented rim with eight scallops – the patent was valid for 14 years</p>

Country Glass thimble makers

This is where I am out of my depth – I believe I have the country of origin correct – please HELP if these are your country's thimbles. They are arranged in NO order.

Argentina thimbles



Australia thimbles



Lismore NSW

Czechia thimbles (Bohemian glass)



black paper inserted for photographic purposes



metal wire filigree cage over various colour glass
pink - topaz - green - blue



'častolovice' - tourist



'Pardubice' - tourist



Egypt thimbles



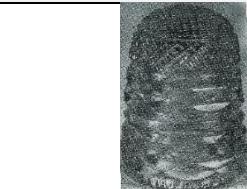
Germany thimbles



Great Britain thimbles



hand etched



19th century
cut glass with glass cross-
hatchings



Georgian
held in British Museum



Tudor rose



Stourbridge in 1993



G G for Girl Guides

Greece thimbles



Zakynthos

Hungary thimbles



lettered 'Hungary' in gold



'Héviz' coat-of-arms

Italy thimbles
mainly from Murano, Venice

				
<p>handpainted black paper inserted for photographic purposes</p>	<p>Murano cobalt - black cat</p>	<p>Murano stripes</p>	<p>Murano knobbed ("hobnailed")</p>	<p>Murano metal apex</p>
				
<p>Murano handpainted - cobalt</p>	<p>Murano green dots - red dots</p>	<p>Murano handpainted</p>	<p>Murano handpainted</p>	<p>Murano handpainted</p>
				
<p>Murano opaque</p>		<p>Murano opaque - red - black - yellow - handblown - 1982</p>	<p>Murano handpainted - turquoise</p>	<p>Murano handpainted</p>
				
<p>Murano handpainted - royal blue showing distinctive white painted dots on apex</p>	<p>'1885' spun glass with glass flowers</p>	<p>from Roman times</p>	<p>Murano handpainted</p>	<p>Murano handpainted</p>

Japan thimbles



handpainted - concave apex - gold rims

Scotland thimbles



handcrafted decorative stained glass

South Africa thimbles



etched 'Sue 14 June 1986' with flowers – scalloped rim
red paper inserted for photographic purposes

Spain thimbles



'Poblet' with handpainted city scene



bullfighting
white lettering behind the scenes



Flamenco dancer
white lettering behind the scene

Thailand thimbles



spun - 1992



1993

USA thimbles



four leaf clover like windmill shape -
1986



penguin inside clear plain thimble

no photo



antique

Wales thimbles



handblown – scalloped rim - heart - dogwood



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Contributors

Renda Ahmed | Eva B | Sally Bailey | Jeanne Millsap Beas | Sue Bryan | Pawel Brzyski | Linda Clark | Joy Carlsen Earles | Elaine Gaußen | Elsa Haydee Giampaoli
Linda Heggs | William Isbister | Jane Jackson | Dagmar Nemeth | Maurice O'Reilly | Irina Pasternak | Paddy Puntis | Wanda Ralston-Boulder Bay | Mabel Rogers
Jina Samulka | Mer Saucedo | Wolf-Dieter Scholz | Norma Shattock | Jean Taylor | Norbert Ullmann | Miep van Eijk | Lucerne Wulf | Krystyna Zagajewska

This listing of Glass thimble makers 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.

EMAIL thimbleselect@bigpond.com TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

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September 2021