

Thimbles made from unusual materials

These thimbles were created for the collectables market – created mainly in 1980s and 1990s. There must have been a big demand for thimbles made of different materials for such a huge number created. There are still thimble collectors today who specialise in the unusual materials range.

I knew of the popular types of material like stone thimbles or those crocheted from cotton – the papier mâché from the Philippines. Once I started to find photos for this topic, I was stunned – there are thimbles from over 100 different and unusual materials. 1% of them were created in the late 1800s and during the 19th century: gutta percha, tortoiseshell (no apologies for including John Piercy's thimbles here) and vulcanite.

Some of the materials used were quite fragile, so unable to retain their thimble shape. In this instance they were placed over metal, wood or plastic thimbles (like beaded thimbles). Some were made to be used for the purpose created – like leather thimbles. I have made it clear under the specific materials, the thimbles that are not included within the scope of this topic.

Clever craftsmen created some of these thimbles to be able to exchange their thimbles with other collectors
(Yvonne Winspear of Australia)

I have attempted to list the materials in the following order within each group: maker, then country of origin and then the rest where neither of the above is known.

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

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

For similar topics see

Bog oak thimbles
Glass thimbles
Horn and bone thimbles
Ivory thimbles
Jenny Blair Designs' thimbles

abalone

see also: paua shell



in acrylic

acetate



France
mother of pearl style

agate



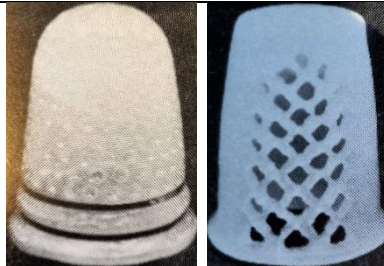
over brass

alabaster

see also: lavender alabaster - pink alabaster – strawberry alabaster – white alabaster



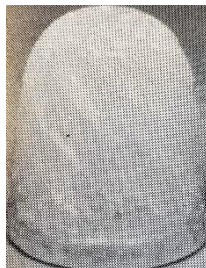
Italy
MR
handpainted



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



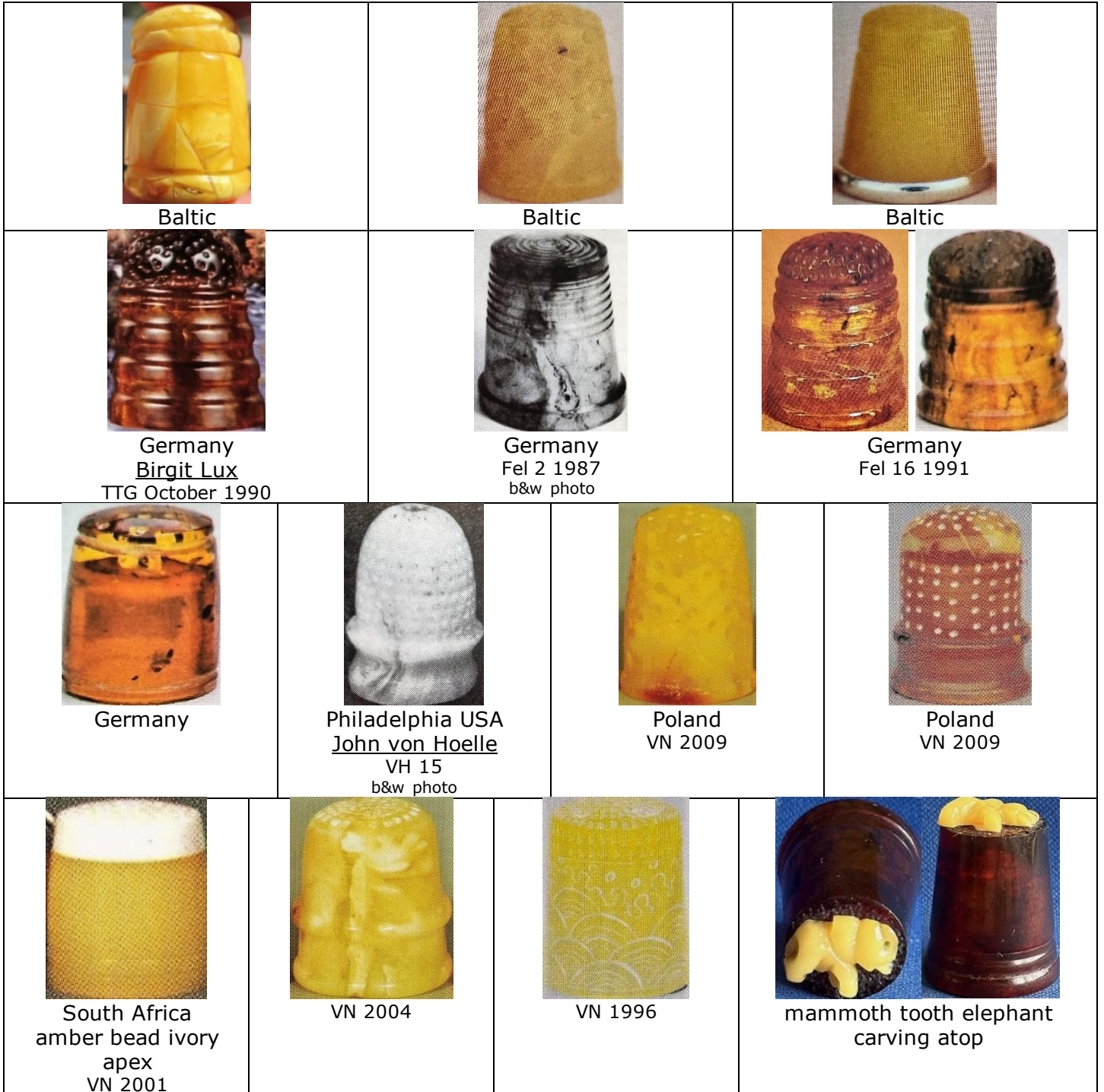
Argentina



Italy



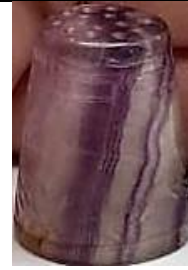
amber
fossilised pine resin from Russia



amethyst



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



aventurine



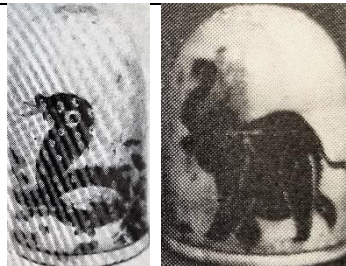
India
L: blue – R: green
carved lotus
limited to **50**
TTG March 1990

Bamboo

see also: wicker



China
TTG March 1991



India
VH 1178, 1180
b&w photo



Philippines

bark



Healesville Australia
Michael Morris
1989



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



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
handpainted paperbark
over leatherwood
TTG January 1987



Australia
plaited

beads



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Bellevue WA USA
Bead Loom Gallery
 includes Swarovski crystals
 several made as British royal commemoratives



Canada
Olga Bushkova
 over metal thimble
 2010-



Mexico
B Kena (Huichol)
 over wood



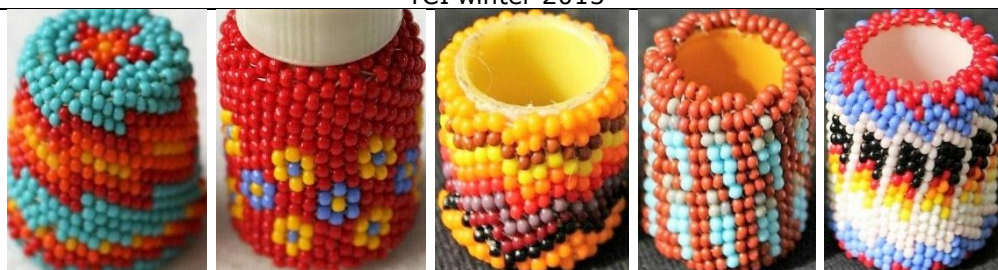
Russia
Olga Malyshkina
 over plastic thimbles
 2003



Japan
Miyuki



Mexico
Nicholas and Adolina (Huichol)
 over ceramic
 TCI winter 2013



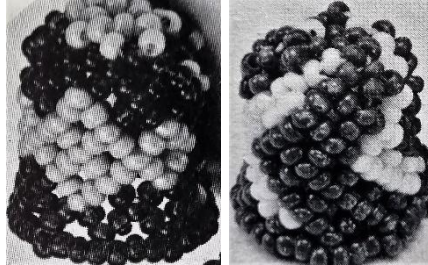
Sarah Lee Parker
 mainly open-topped
 L: over metal thimble



USA
Janet Pitts
 Bee - Twin Towers 9-11-01 - candy cane - butterfly - black birds - palms stag - masks
 beads glued onto wooden thimbles



Coventry UK
Jacqui Walker
L: limited to **195**
L: TTG January 1989



Denmark
KS June 1985
b&w photos



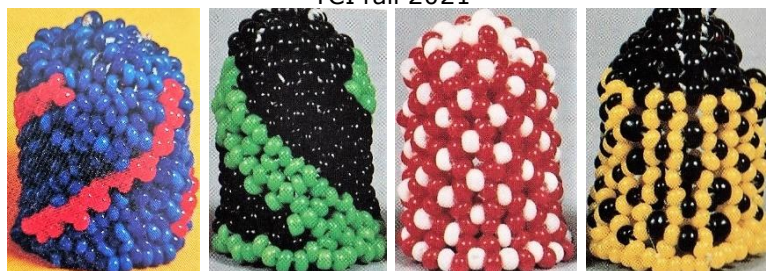
Kenya
TTG September 2005



Russia
 over wood (except bottom R)
 bottom R: rainbow colours limited to **250**
 some Matruschka-shaped
 TTG 1998-2001 - VN 2006-2009



South Africa
 using galvanised wire
 TCI fall 2021



South Africa
 Fel 12 1990 - VN 1994



South Africa
Zulu beads

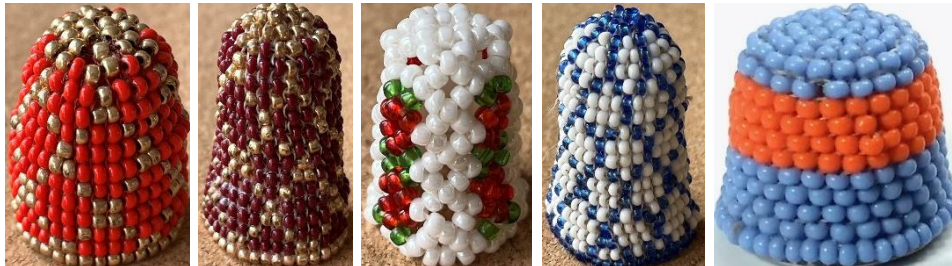


South Africa
over plastic



UK

Tailor of Gloucester - over wood



unknown makers

bear claw quartz



Argentina
Sewing Corner 1978

birch bark



Urals, Russia
Alex and Alfiya Guriny

black marble



UK
Caroline and John Smith
marble from Belgium
TTG June 1988



Taiwan
Sewing Corner 1978



VN 2001

black onyx



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

blue onyx



Argentina
Juan Arrieta Quiroga

Blu Tack

commercial putty-like adhesive, Leicester UK 1969-



Brisbane Australia
Sandra Menger
'Thimbles of Australia Sue Gowan 1998'

brick



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

calabash



Argentina

Carrara marble



marble mixed with resin

carrot



Finland
VN 67 2001



Finland
VN 77 2003



USA

chalk



UK
Kingmaker
bonded resin
TTG September 1986

coal



Wales

Kingmaker

bonded resin

miner's face (plain and handpainted) – miner - pithead - miner's lamp and tools
all commemorating the end of the 1985 miner's strike

(plain and handpainted limited to **3500**)

some miner's face thimbles are signed EJ for Eddie and Janet

TTG March 1985



Wellsburg West Virginia USA

compressed

TO 1980-1983 - VH174

coconut shell



Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil

AP

late 19th century

maker's initials on apex

18ct gold apex and clouté studs in a ring

R: carved simple fleur de lis pattern by local women



Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil
late 19th century
18ct gold apex and clouté studs in two rings



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Philippines
over metal thimble
TTG March 1996

concrete



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

coral



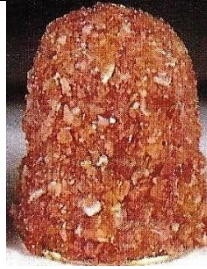
France
carved
19th century
Christies 1995 117



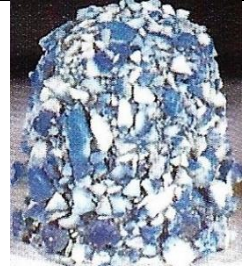
Philippines
etched
TO 1984 - VH



Thailand
TTG June 1988



pink coral Great Barrier Reef
over metal
TTG April 1988



blue coral Indian Ocean
over metal
TTG April 1988



over metal

cork



Bridge of Weir Scotland
Carina Down



corn

plaited after the style of corn dollies



UK
Betty Blackwood
TTG June 1985

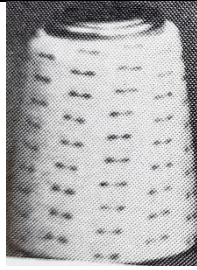


UK
Mrs Horsfall
butterfly
limited to **250**
TTG October 1998



UK
flowers

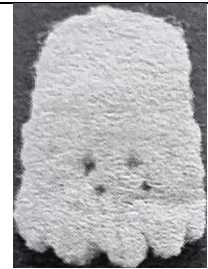
corncob



USA
brass apex
VH 1177
b&w photo

cotton

thimbles are created of crochet, tatting, knitting or lacemaking. They were usually stiffened with sugar water or starch. Many are embellished with beads and ribbon
see also: silk, linen



Valledolid Spain
Rosa Aragon
crochet
2025

Connecticut USA
Edith Archibald
crochet
TO 1984



Toowoomba Australia
Beryl
crochet

Melbourne Australia
Joan Blaney
crochet

Shropshire UK
Vilma Buck
crochet



Brisbane Australia
Kay Collins
tatting

Illinois USA
Lurene Connor
crochet

Gauteng South Africa
Gili Davis
crochet



Queensland Australia
Elena Dickson
knotted lace over
stiffened board



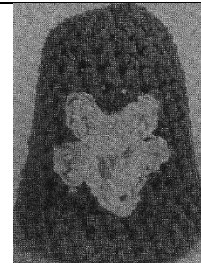
Conwy Wales
Pat Durrant
crochet



Perth Australia
Betty Dutschke
crochet



Helsinki Finland
Irja Helsila
tatting



UK
Lynne Hutchings
crochet
limited to **250**
TTG May 1986
b&w photo



Kilcoy Australia
Margaret Hickling
tatting



Perth Australia
Barbara Martin
sewing



Brisbane Australia
Sandra Menger
crochet



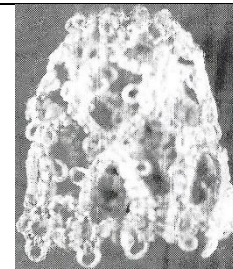
Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
crochet



Mexico
Nicholas and Adolina
 over moulded plastic
 TCI winter 2013



USA
Florence Regan
 crochet, some with crossstitch
 Gim 1996



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



North Carolina USA
Jane Sapone
 crochet
 b&w photo



Connecticut USA
Doris E Shaw
 crochet



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
 crochet



Netherlands
Miep van Eijk
 crochet
 TTG November 1983
 b&w photo





Coventry UK
Jacqui (Jacqueline) Walker
 crochet

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



California USA
Chris Weber
 crochet
 TO 2007 - 2007 - 1984



USA
Helen Werner
 for Hawkeye Thimblers 1991



UK
Cathy Whithead
crochet
limited to **250**
TTG May 1991



USA
R: created for Hawkeye Thimblers



Finland
needle lace



unknown makers

Deliciosa Monstera



Perth Australia
Barbara Martin
stitched dried calyx

fabric



USA
Status Thimble
kit to create this stitched fabric



Argentina
made from woven cloth

feathers



handpainted feathers over plastic
Marina Nestorova
VN 67 2001



handpainted feathers over brass
Marina Nestorova

FIMO
commercial modelling clay



Benoni South Africa
Tessa Browne



Empangeni South Africa
Wendy Seymour



South Africa
metal thimble

fish skin



Quebec Canada
Les Cuirs Fins de la Mer



USA
Boulder Bay
carp with filigree cap



Scotland
salmon
over brass or metal
TCI September 1989 - TTG July
1990



Scotland
dyed fish scale over wood

fossils



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

granite



UK

Caroline and John Smith

Berlin Wall - Italian granorosada - Russian pink yemel

C - R : TTG February 1988 - TTG October 1991



grass

see also: raffia, straw



Robyn
basketry

green marble



UK

Christine and John Smith

marble from Portugal

limited to **200**

TTG December 1988



Taiwan

Sewing Corner 1978

gumnut



Kalbarri Western Australia

gutta percha

Rubber-like material discovered in 1843. Palaquium trees from Malaysia and Borneo
It is brittle and lightweight. It was used as mourning jewellery as well as jet



TCI winter 2021

haematite



heather

the roots are picked, dried, dyed, blocked, compressed, glued, turned and lacquered. First made into thimbles in 1980. Thimbles ceased by 2004





Pitlochry Scotland
Hugh Kerr of Heathergems
 no two alike



Pitlochry Scotland
Hugh Kerr of Heathergems
 metal rims



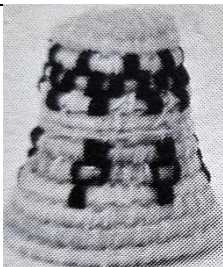
Pitlochry Scotland
Hugh Kerr of Heathergems
 thistle-shaped

Helsinkiitti



Helsinki Finland
Pekka Kiviluoto
 1990

horse hair



Arizona USA
Donna Mendoz
 TCI spring 2001
 b&w photo



Arizona USA
Leona Antone
 TCI spring 2001
 b&w photo



Arizona USA
Linda Hendricks
 TCI spring 2001
 b&w photo

jade

also known as nephrite

many jade thimbles are made with toppers – they are not included



Pilbara Australia



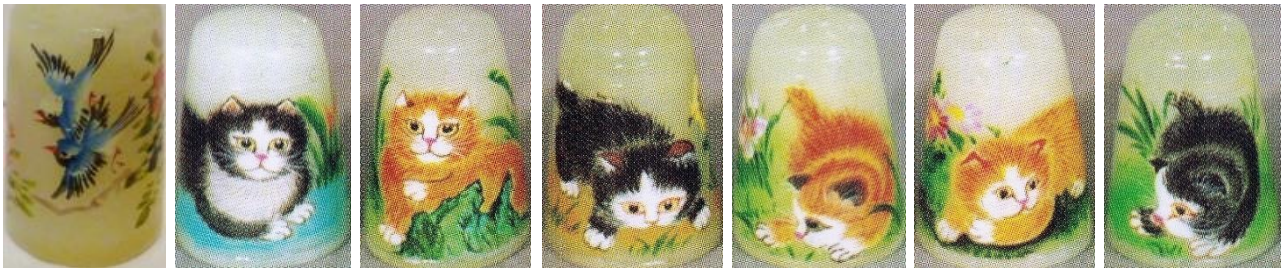
Bergenland Austria
Fel 7 1988
b&w photo



Austria
mini size



Canada
with a maple leaf etched



China
handpainted
TTG 2003 set of six animals – TTG 2002 cats

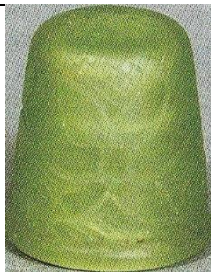


China
carved
TO 1983



India
lower R: chang san crystal jade
limited to **50**

TTG March 1990 – CC 1978 – PJW 85-6 - VN 74 2000



Portugal
VN 92 2007



Turkey
handpainted
TTG April 1989



Taiwan



jadite



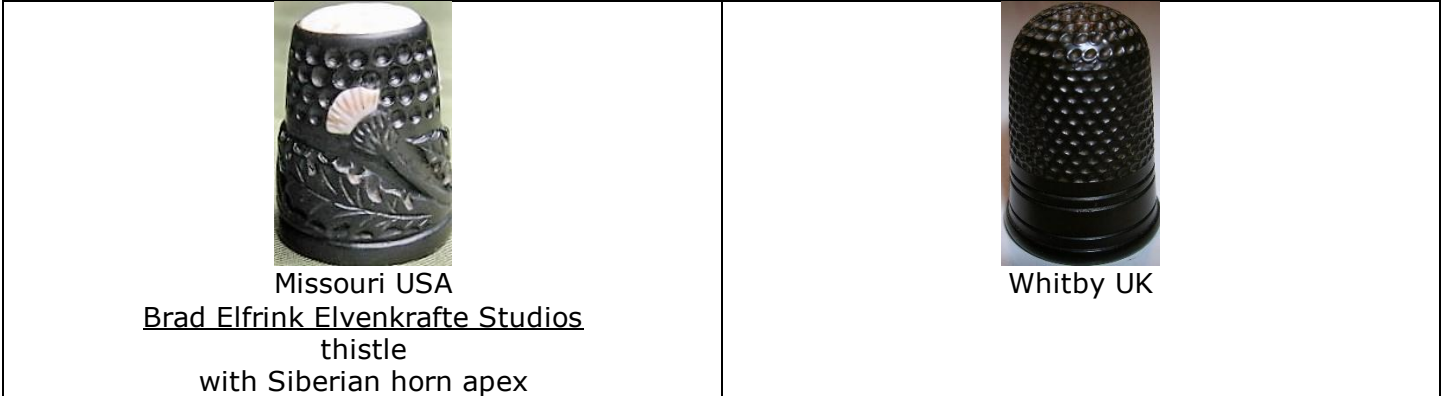
Jersey cabbage stalk



UK

jet

jet was used as mourning jewellery, replacing vulcanite and gutta percha



Missouri USA
Brad Elfrink Elvenkrafte Studios
 thistle
 with Siberian horn apex

Whitby UK



Whitby UK
 carved
 carved cottage - cathedral - toadstools
 smooth

smooth

kangaroo skin



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
brass kangaroo on boomerang pin
1983
TTG May 1984

Kingman turquoise



Arizona USA

Kisii stone


mined by the Kenyan tribe of the same name



Kenya

L>R: handpainted figure - handpainted giraffe - leather rim - representing cheetah, giraffe, python
TTG 1991 - 1994

lapis lazuli





 <p>Argentina <u>Juan Arrieta Quiroga</u> R: with rhodochrosite</p>	 <p>Pakistan VN 92 1999</p>	 <p>Portugal CC 1978</p>
 <p>commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990</p>		

lavender alabaster

 <p>Italy handpainted violet</p>
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leather

see also: Canadian leather thimbles topic

 <p><u>Birch</u></p>	 <p><u>Clover</u> L: tailor's</p>
 <p>Japan <u>Olympus</u></p>	 <p>Egypt <u>Randa Ahmet Unique Design</u> L: over plastic</p>



R Reidler



New Lanark Scotland
Ronnie Parker
'Easter 1984



Brisbane Australia
Sandra Menger



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Wisnpear
handpainted chamois
over wood
beads on apex
'1788-1988'
limited to **100**
TTG July 1988



India
VH 648
b&w photo



Ireland
sewing rind



Kenya



Korea



Mexico



South Africa



Thailand
L: tailor's - R: tall for use with long fingernails



UK
gold-tooled streted over metal



UK
gold-tooled streted over wood



unknown country of origin



sailor's palms
with various metal pushers

linen



USA
Cael Chappell
 waxed thread
 R: b& w photo

Lucite

Gimbels used the term acrylic



USA
Davy Jones Locker
 imbedded starfish and seahorse and seashells
 limited to **250**
 Gim 1990 - Sewing Corner 1976



USA
 shredded US currency



malachite



Argentina



Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Phalaborwa South Africa
John van der Westhuizen

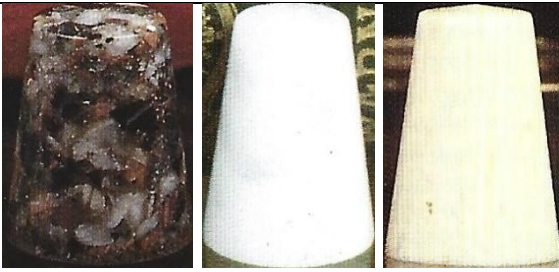


Gim 1990



marble

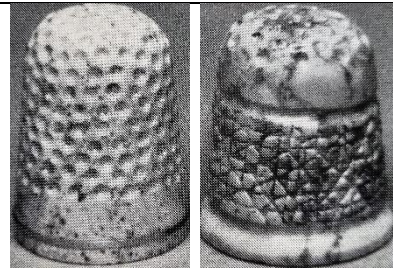
see also: black marble – Carrara - green marble – pink marble



UK

Christine and John Smith

L>R: marble of chips from around the world –
Carrara Italy – creamy
two at R limited to **250**
TTG May 1989 – January 1989 – December 1988



Philadelphia USA

John von Hoelle

VH 1088-89
b&w photos



Barossa Australia



Taiwan

Sewing Corner 1978



VN 64 2001 – Gim 1983



meerschaum

This lightweight mineral, sepiolite, is a lightweight claylike material. It floats on water and this gives its name sea foam (direct translation from German word meerschaum)



Turkiye

Mustafa

handcarved

TTG November 1989 – VN 96 2008



Istanbul Turkiye
Sinan Atilla
 handcarved
 two L: TTG August, October 2009



San Marcos CA USA
Royal Meerschaum



South Africa
 baked Tanzanian meerschaum
 Fel 20 1992



Tanzania
 VN 46 1998



foxglove

nundoorite



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

onyx

see also: black onyx – blue onyx

 <p>Argentina <u>Juan Arrieta Quiroga</u> with rhodochrosite</p>	 <p>Argentina <u>Onyx-Mar</u></p>	 <p>Mendoza Argentina Sewing Corner 1976</p>	 <p>India carved lotus limited to 50 TTG March 1990</p>
 <p>Karachi Pakistan</p>	 <p>Scotland <u>Gem Rock Museum</u> TO 1993</p>		

paper



papier mâché

flour, salt and water are added to rice paper pulp

often mistakenly described as wooden in second-hand market – a dead giveaway is Kashmir papier mâché thimbles are black inside





Apollo Bay Australia
 Shirley Bennett – Haley
 handpainted and lacquered
 last five have opal on apex
 1979-1985







Kashmir India
 handpainted and lacquered in small batches by small family businesses
 all black-lacquered inside
 TTG 1988-2001 - TO 1983-2007 - Gim 1980-1082 - PJW 85-6 - VH714



Japan
TO 1983



Japan



Russia
signed in cyrillic



Thailand



USA

paua shell

see also: abalone



Mooloolaba Australia
Shell Museum
over plastic thimble



New Zealand
set mainly in Perspex or resin
L: silver kiwi – bottom R: over wood



Philippines

peacock feathers



peat



UK
handpainted The Lindow man
bonded in resin
TTG July 1997

picture jasper



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

pink marble



Italy
MR
handpainted



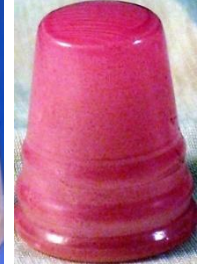
UK
Christine and John Smith
limited to **200**
marble sourced from Portugal



Turkey
handpainted



handpainted



plum slate



Llanberis North Wales UK
Christine and John Smith (Guild members)
limited to **250**
TTG January 1988

potato skins



USA
Lucerne Wulf
2005

pumpkin skin



Argentina
carved by Toba peoples
TCI spring 2013

pyrophyllite



Swakopmund Namibia
L: 'Swakopmund'

raffia

see also: grass, straw



Coventry UK
Jacqui Walker
TGG April 1984
b&w photo

red agate



India
limited to **50**
TTG March 1990

resin stone



over plastic

rhodochrosite



Argentina
L: Sewing Corner 1976

rhodonite



commissioned by The Rock Shop
Perth from Asia 1990

rice paper



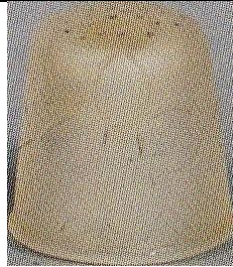
Japan
limited to **350**
TTG September 1987

rice stalks



Philippines
R: Fel 13 1990

rose quartz



Pakistan
VN 99 2009

rosso Alicante









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

rosso Bilbao




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

rubber

			
<p>California USA <u>Good Stuff</u> needle grabber</p>	<p>USA <u>The Bionic Finger</u></p>	<p>'Fasta'</p>	<p>clerk's</p>
			
<p>clerk's</p>	<p>clerk's</p>		

salmon stone


<p>Philippines brass band Gim April 1984</p>

sand

		
<p>Ryedale UK <u>Tony Barnes</u> sand from Gulf War TTG April 1991</p>	<p>sand from Gulf War TTG April 1992</p>	

seal skin



Alaska USA
handmade by indigenous peoples

serpentine



shell

Mexican shell over alpaca thimbles are outside the scope of this study
see also: named shell ie coral







Philippines
 shell applied over metal thimbles or moulded plaster-of-Paris
 shell in form of chips or slices
 TTG 1988-2001 - TO 1983-1993 - VH995-997



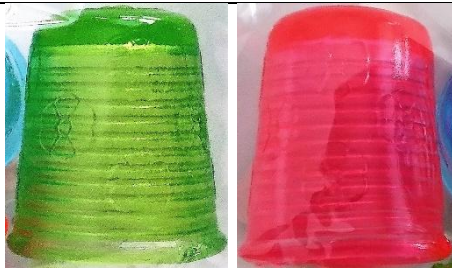
Thailand
 TTG August 2001

shingle



UK
 shingle collected from Criccieth beach North Wales

silicone



China
SewSweet
daisy shapes pressed into thimble



Sonic
nail-shaped



China
daisy shapes



silk

see also: cotton - fabric



Japan
Syuku Otsu



Japan
Quilt-Yui



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
weaving



Brisbane Australia
Tricia Smout



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
wattle



Victoria Australia



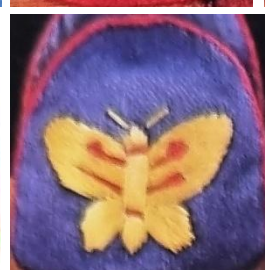
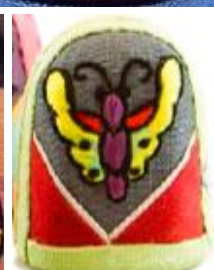
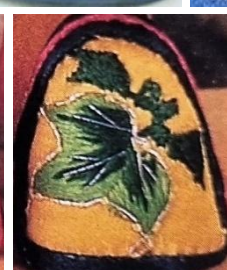


Japan

these ring silk thimbles are known as yubinuki
handmade, they are lined with fabric usually with a cardboard lining



Korea
Younmin Lee





Chuncheon Korea

handmade, with silk stitches on padded silk or felt (some are quite crudely stitched)
known as kolmi

small opening at tip for fingernail

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

slate

see also: plum slate



Wales

Kingmaker

handpainted 'Snowdon'
bonded with resin
TTG February 1986



Wales

Pinpoint Precision

limited to **350**
TTG March 1993



Wales

Christine and Dave Smith

TTG August 1987



Westmoreland UK

Christine and Dave Smith

limited to **500**
TTG November 1987

snakeskin



USA
Boulder Bay (BB)
 Asian ratsnake
 filigree cap



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

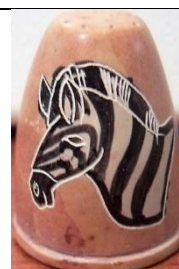
soapstone



Scotland
Gem Rock Museum



USA
Parson Hayes
 Sewing Corner 1978



South Africa
 etched zebra



India
 TTG October 1989 - Gim 1997 - TTG March 1994



sponge



USA
Lucerne Wulf
over metal

stone

see also: named stones ie jade



Egypt
Randa Ahmet - Unique Design



Argentina
Juan Arrieta Quiroga



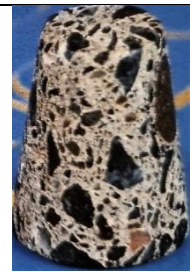
Argentina
Martin Arrieta Quiroga



South Africa
Susanne Rens



UK
Christine and John Smith
stone sourced from EuroDisney
limited to **475**
TTG September 1992



UK
Christine and John Smith
stone sourced from The Thistle
Mill Biggar Scotland
TTG September 1991



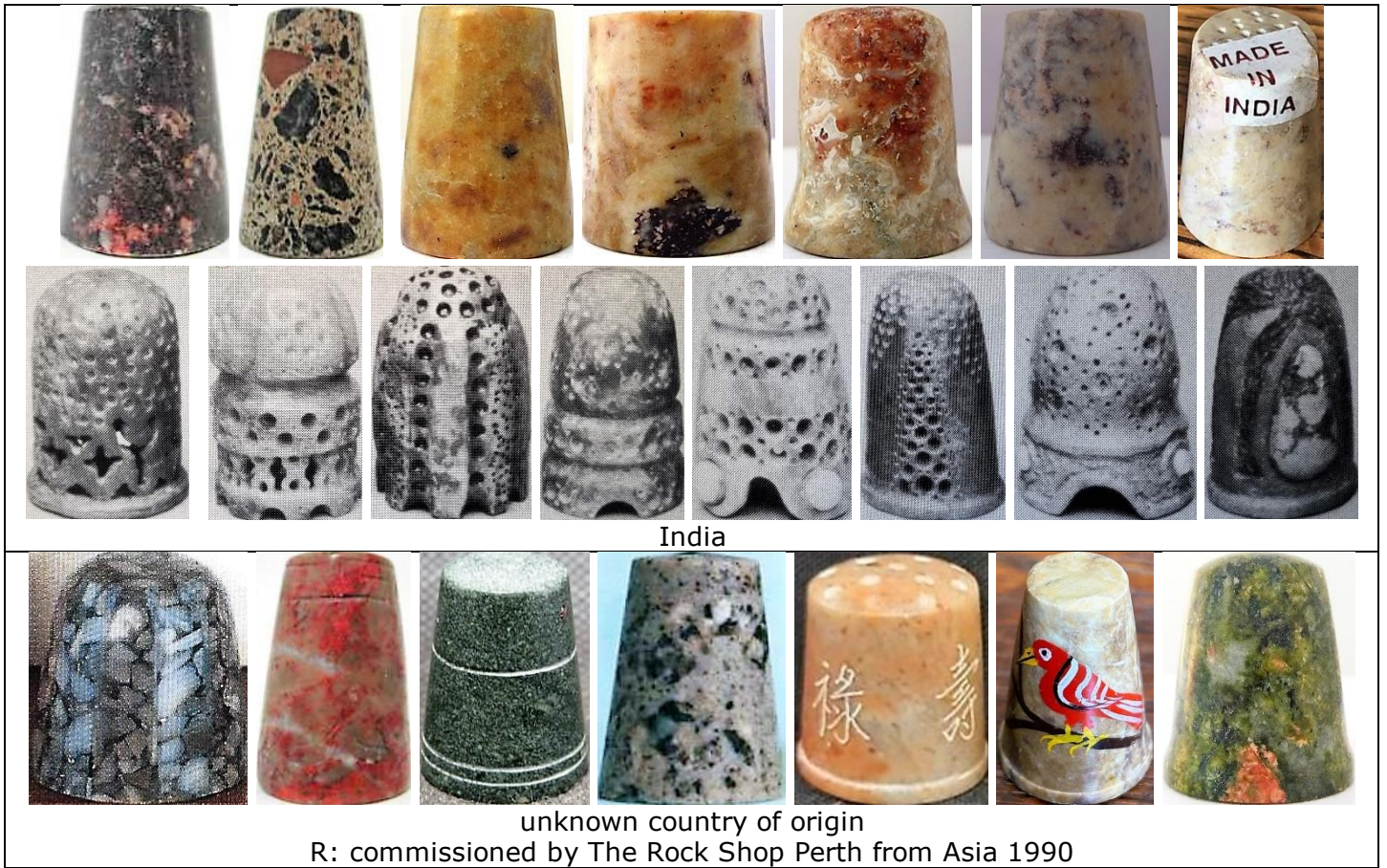
Argentina



Canada
indigenous peoples
VH 325-6



China
Fel 17 1991



India

unknown country of origin

R: commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

straw

see also: grass, raffia



Hungary

Paraguay

VN 57 1999 VN 93 2007

strawberry alabaster



Colorado USA
TTG July 1991

string

see also: Jacqui and David Parker of Olivia thimbles topic



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear

L: wound over brass – R: over plastic

synthetics



Brisbane Australia
Ray Brittain



Scotland
Penelope Burgess
tartan under resin



Deborah Hull



Cirencester UK
History Craft
 inset brass apex

described as polymer ivory from ivory dust or sweepings or rosin
 a few have metal 'compass' in apex



UK
Melissa Hookway



Dudley UK
Woodsetton

peep: Visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip to China
 TTG November 1986



Argentina
epoxy resin
made by Toba indigenous people



China
TTG June 2004
polyresin



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



resin



resin



synthetic ruby



telephone wire



Johannesburg South Africa
Thabang Moloji

tiger iron



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

tiger's eye



China

TTG April 1989 - Feb 5 1988



India

PJW 85-6



Pakistan

VN 99 2009



tortoiseshell

plastic fingerguards were created in tortoiseshell colour in 1910s



Birmingham UK

John Piercy

in November 1816 Piercy took out a patent, 4077, to combine tortoiseshell with gold, sterling silver, steel

British coat-of-arms on the slant with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon underneath is impressed into the shell. There is a gold rim and the width of tortoiseshell varies



another design has a large crown in gold with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon underneath dainty flowers and leaves surround a blank cartouche on the verso



another design has pinchbeck cartouche surrounded by fine flowers and leaves, with 'Piercy's Patent' underneath



another design has 'Piercy's Patent' over two lines with rectangular cartouche surrounded by flowers and leaves on the verso



steel-top with cartouche surrounded by fine flowers and leaves with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon in pinchbeck

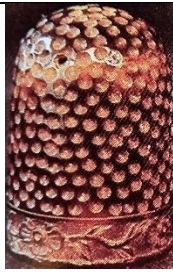


very rare example with Queen Charlotte surrounded by laurel wreath
'Piercy's Patent' over two lines on verso

b&w photo



'Piercy's Patent' pierced pinchbeck thimbles over tortoiseshell
Christies 1995 114-115



China



Germany or Austria



UK
carved
18th century
Christies 1995 110



UK
various gold pique designs – stars, flowers, leaves and crosses
9ct gold apex



UK
wide band of silver

travertine



turquoise



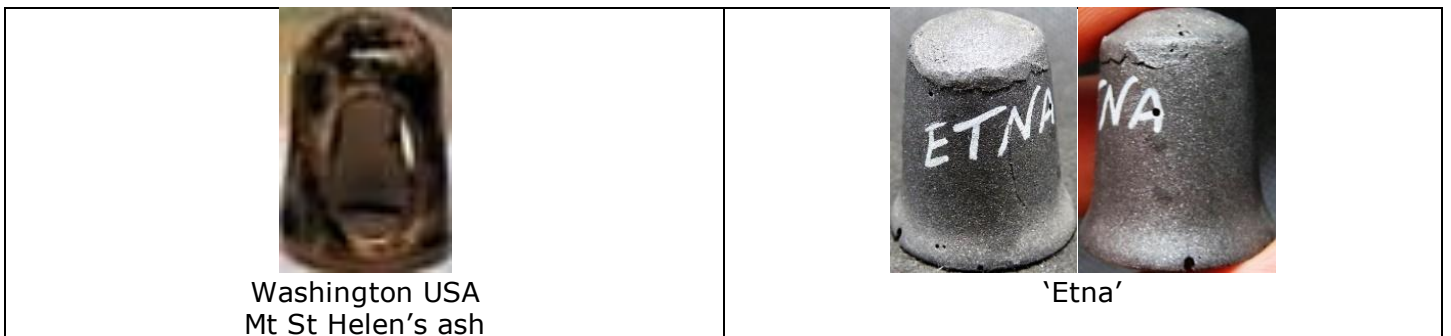
velvet



verdite



volcanic ash



volcanic rock



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

vulcanite

hardened rubber, which was used as mourning jewellery. It was replaced by gutta percha and jet



USA
band of 14ct gold
size lettered on apex

wax



Bridge of Weir Scotland
Carina Down
candle with lace inset



Mind Your Own Beeswax



candle in shape of quilter's
thimble

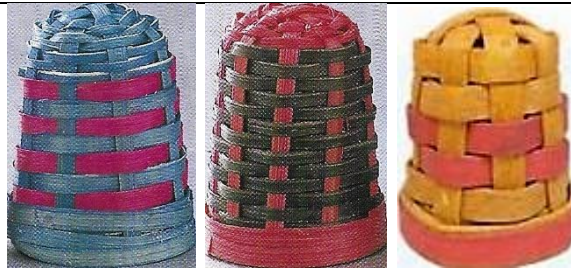
white alabaster



Italy

wicker

see also: bamboo



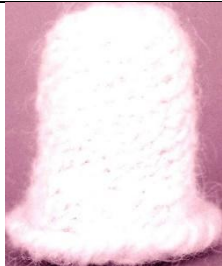
UK
basket weave
TTG January 2001

wire



USA
Yael Falk (YoolaDesign)
stone apex

wool



Perth Australia
Barbara Martin
knitted



Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
brass pin of map of Australia
b&w photo

zebra stone



Kununurra Australia
John Read

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

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