

# Horner and hearts

## Charles Horner sterling thimbles which feature hearts

I am not suggesting that Charles Horner thimbles make your heart beat any faster, though I know if any one of the thimbles featured here ended up in my own collection, my heart would beat so much faster!

CH-hallmarked sterling silver thimbles have a deep attraction for me, especially when the patterning is very different from his usual run-of-the mill thimbles. Some of these are high-end thimbles all featuring **hearts**.

The spring 1990 issue of *The Thimble Society of London* was entirely devoted to their selling the collection of 100 Charles Horner silver thimbles, from the larger selection on offer. These were acquired at the Chester auction - on 16 January 1990 - held by Sotheby's.

The auction introduction reads as follows "A charming collection comes from Halifax, the home of prolific silversmith Charles Horner Ltd. The firm which closed in 1982 was probably known for the manufacture of silver thimbles and the sale contains 500 of them dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Previously, they were housed in two-glass-fronted cabinets ... in the stock room to facilitate re-orders ... They were sent for sale by the former managing director of the company who bought them when the factory closed".

What an amazing record TSL left us by recording a hundred pristine Horner thimbles!



front cover photo from *The Thimble Society of London*, spring 1990 with their catalogue descriptions

L-R: #6 JT&S 1906 faceted rim, wide border with gold flowers and heart, dimpling (plain)

##6 CH Chester 1898 faceted rim, wide border with gold flowers and heart, dimpling (plain)

#5 CH Chester 1902 rolled rim, wide border with gold flowers and heart gold leaves, dimpling (plain)

#10 CH 1901 Chester faceted rim, wide border with gold flowers and gold three legs for Isle of Man, dimpling (plain)

---

### Other Charles Horner thimble topics

Charles Horner Ltd sterling silver thimbles with other sponsor's marks

Charles Horner's early Dorcas "PAT." thimbles

Dorcas thimble boxes

## Horner thimbles featuring a band with a gold heart

arranged in hallmark date order

The basic design has a wide striated band featuring a plain smooth gold heart that has a narrow border and four (?) small gold detailed raised flowers around the band. This is over fine leaf and stylised blackberry flower patterning, which completes the design. The heart is sometimes used as a cartouche for a monogram, as this was probably part of the original intent.

The rest of the body of the thimble has typical CH patterning, some of which he named when registering the design. It's interesting that the majority have plain upper halves, which shows off the prettiest of bands.

There is a variation to these gold heart thimbles where a trailing ivy replaces the individual gold flowers. The earliest CH thimble with ivy I have encountered, was made in 1900.

These fine thimbles were only produced in a very short period, from approximately 1894-1911, of the Horner thimbles era (his hallmarked sterling thimbles date between 1892-1948). I have included all examples I can find and you may be amazed as I am to see how rare they are.

We have examples of the 1900 Horner catalogue and none of these gorgeous thimbles appear there. The other descriptive terms I have used are also from the Horner catalogue pages.

You will notice that some of these thimbles don't have the CH maker's mark, rather those with other "maker's marks". It is on record that Horner produced thimbles for wholesalers, factors etc., using others' marks. If there was any doubt before that Horner made thimbles with other than his CH maker's marks, the thimbles with heart designs confirm that this did happen. The thimbles as illustrated with non-CH marks are identical in design to those with the Horner marks.



**1890s**  
**CH**  
plain  
faceted rim  
with 'MB' monogram



**1894**  
**GWH&Co** (for George Hatton & Co)  
plain  
faceted rim



**1895**  
**T&S** (for WH Tandy & Sons)  
Princess May  
embossed Louise rim  
b&w photo



**1895**  
**JT&S** (for John Thompson & Sons)  
Princess May  
embossed Louise rim



**1896**

**GG** (for George Goodman) #6 & 2  
plain  
patterned flat rim

a spray of raised gold **ivy** leaves replaces the gold roses and stylised background flowers



**1898**

**CH #8**

plain

embossed Louise rim



**1898**

**CH**

plain

(the gold ring has nothing to do with the thimble)



**1898**

**CH #6**

Princess May (+ R<sup>D</sup>210800)  
embossed Louise rim



**1898**

**CH #10**

plain

faceted rim



**1898**

**JT&S** (for John Thompson & Sons)  
Princess May (+ Horner's R<sup>D</sup>210800)  
embossed Louise rim

with no stylised flowers in the background, just stems



**1899**

**CH #7**

Princess May  
embossed Louise rim  
lovely photos show the band details



**1899**

**CH #11**

Princess May (+ R<sup>D</sup>210800)  
embossed Louise rim  
vertical leaf design



**1899**

**CH**

plain  
faceted rim



**1900**

**CH #7**

daisy  
faceted rim  
a spray of raised gold **ivy** leaves replaces the gold roses



**1900**

**CH #6**

plain  
rolled rim

a spray of raised gold **ivy** leaves replaces the gold roses and stylised background flowers



**1900**

**CH**

Princess May  
embossed Louise rim



**1900**  
**CH #7**  
plain  
beaded rim



**1901**  
**CH**  
plain  
rolled rim  
well used and not as ornate



**1901**  
**CH #9**  
plain  
faceted rim



**1901**  
**CH #10**  
plain  
faceted rim  
instead of a gold heart, this example has the Isle of Man triskelion (three-legged symbol)



**1902**  
**CH #6**  
plain  
a spray of raised gold **ivy** leaves replaces the gold roses and stylised background flowers



**1902**  
**CH #8**  
Princess May  
embossed Louise rim



**1903**  
**C&Co** (for Carrington & Co) #8  
plain  
faceted rim



**1906**

**JT&S** (for John Thompson & Son)

as well as a gold heart, this example has the Isle of Man triskelion (three-legged symbol)  
faceted rim



**1907**

**CH**

plain  
faceted rim

top: the leaf patterning around the band is more detailed with no stylised flowers #6  
bottom: includes stylised flowers + rubbed faceted rim #9



**1911**

**CH #.6.**

Princess May  
embossed Louise rim



**CH #7**

not assayed Louise  
embossed Louise rim  
a spray of raised gold **ivy** leaves replaces the gold roses  
and background stylised flowers



**GG** (for George Goodman) #3

plain

gold heart with a spray of raised gold ivy leaves and leaf patterning over striations  
replaces the gold roses and background stylised flowers  
flat rim with fine patterning

## Horner thimbles featuring a band with a stone heart

arranged in hallmark date order

The basic design has a very wide striated band featuring an affixed raised stone heart. This is over fine leaf and - sometimes has the stylised blackberry flower patterning - and rarely with two **swallows**. It would appear that the stone heart is affixed between the two swallows, when they are present on these thimbles. The stone heart has a silver heart-shaped mount.

The rest of the body of the thimble has typical CH patterning, some of which he named when registering the design. It's interesting that the majority have patterned upper halves to enhance the plainer heart. Where the size is known, there are quite a few examples of size 10 thimbles, which in Horner sizing, is a small size.

These thimbles were produced towards the end of the gold heart thimbles production - from 1904-1919. We have examples of the 1900 Horner catalogue and as these thimbles post-date the catalogue, we have no record of them. There is an article in *TCI Bulletin*, winter 2009, by Magdalena and William Isbister entitled "Hybrid thimbles", which deals with 'doctored' thimbles. They have the opinion that these hearts were not applied by the Horner Company - rather that they were added later by someone unknown. I have included all examples I can find and it seems that these thimbles were produced in the Horner factory, tho the hearts findings made have been made elsewhere, for Horner. In contrast to the thimbles featured above, many of which were made by CH using other sponsor marks, all the examples below only carry Horner marks. There are a range of his typical thimble patterns too.

I am sure you would agree that these are the stepchildren of the CH heart thimbles? There don't seem to be as many made and none of this type of thimble was offered for sale by the TSL in their Horner edition in 1990. The rims aren't as ornate as the gold heart thimbles. The addition of the etched/engraved swallows is certainly different.



two gleaming glass hearts

There is room for debate - are these real semi-precious stones or just coloured glass? I would welcome your opinion. I don't know anything about the type of stones, so I have used the dominant colour as description, unless described elsewhere as such.



**1904**  
**CH #8**  
purple stone  
shell  
showing two swallows  
rolled rim



**1904**  
**CH #6**  
green stone  
shell  
rolled rim



**1904**  
**CH #9**  
 pinky-purple stone – possibly carnelian  
 diamond  
 showing swallows  
 some type of patterning on rim



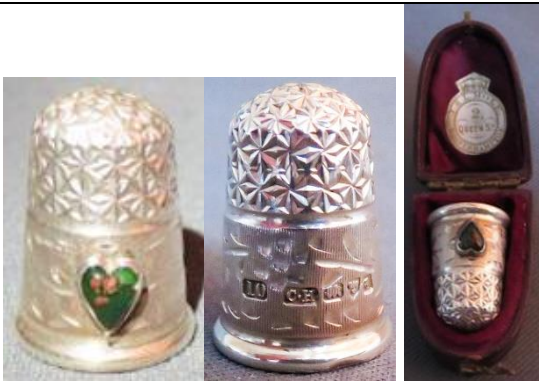
**1905**  
**CH**  
 amethyst stone  
 daisy  
 rolled rim



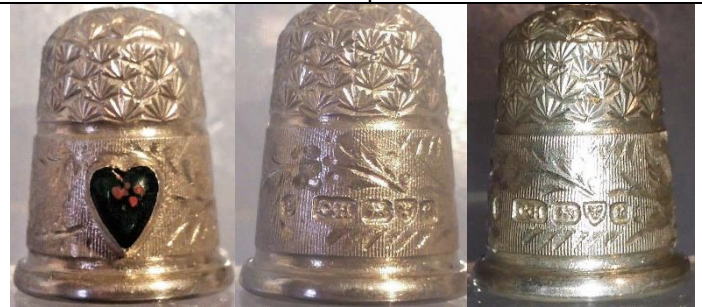
**1905**  
**CH #10**  
 amethyst stone  
 daisy  
 rolled rim



**1905**  
**CH**  
 purple/amethyst stone  
 shell  
 rolled rim  
 R: b&w photo



**1905**  
**CH #10**  
 bloodstone  
 Louise  
 rolled rim



**1905**  
**CH #9**  
 bloodstone  
 shell  
 rolled rim



**1906**  
**CH**  
 opaque red stone  
 diamond  
 rolled rim



**1906**  
**CH**  
 this thimble is missing its stone heart  
 I have wondered what is below the heart  
 is too indistinct to really know  
 patterning around the band does seem slightly different?  
 shell  
 rolled rim





**1919**  
**CH**  
blue stone  
shell  
rolled rim



**CH**  
opaque green stone  
diamond  
rolled rim



**CH**  
brown-red stone  
diamond  
there are daisies on the band  
rolled rim



**CH**  
turquoise  
Princess May  
rolled rim



**CH**  
purple stone  
daisy  
showing one of the swallows  
rolled rim



**CH**  
pink - citrine - turquoise  
Louise - diamond - shell  
rolled rims

## Other Horner thimbles with bands featuring hearts



**9ct gold**  
**CH #10**  
 hearts with dots in border engraved around band  
 Louise  
 + R<sup>D</sup>127211

## Other Horner thimbles - featuring cupids

I can't end this Horner thematic topic without sharing these thimbles – call them cupids or cherubs they do belong with hearts ... two cupids with garlands of flowers around the band



**9ct gold**  
**CH #6**  
 plain



**1901**  
**CH**  
 diamond



**1906**  
**CH**  
 diamond  
 blackberry apex



**1906**  
**CH #11**  
 daisy



**1906**  
**CH**  
Princess May



**1906**  
**HWLtd** (Henry Williamson Ltd) #10  
Louise

### Other British thimble makers' thimbles with bands featuring gold hearts etc

I would have sworn I'd never seen similar heart thimbles by other English thimble makers, other than Horner. How wrong could I be? During Victorian times thimble makers copied designs from their rivals.



**1896**  
**Henry Griffith & Sons Chester #14**  
plain  
gold heart with a spray of raised gold ivy leaves  
flat rim with patterning

Finally this is James Swann's take on applied gold band decoration – the bands just don't feature any hearts. The hallmark date approximates to the other British thimble makers, using gold applied decoration to their thimble bands.



**1900**

**James Swann**

applied gold flowers with the Isle of Man triskelion symbol around band  
daisies



**James Swann**

date unknown

applied gold shield on striated band with "berries"



**James Swann**

date unknown

applied gold leaves on striated band

## References

- Magdalena & William Isbister *Hybrid thimbles*. TCI Bulletin winter 2009  
Di Pelham Burn *A Valentine for thimble collectors*. TCI Bulletin winter 1999  
Bridget McConnell *The story of the thimble*. 1997  
Norma Spicer *Charles Horner thimbles*. in: Tom J Lawson *Charles Horner of Halifax*. 2002  
*The Thimble Society of London* spring 1990

## Contributors

Clarice Birch | Jenny Bockel | Sue Christensen | Micky Garvey | Caroline Meacham-Elegant Arts | Ray Nimmo  
Di Pelham Burn | Wendy Ritchie | Jean Taylor | Cathy Wood

This listing of these Charles Horner thimbles with hearts 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.

EMAIL [thimbleselect@bigpond.com](mailto:thimbleselect@bigpond.com) TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

© **Sue Gowan**  
**January 2017**