

Samuel Foscett (SF) sterling silver thimbles

1887-1908

Samuel Foscett was a London-based thimble maker in Victorian England.

Von Hoelle mentions him and his brother Henry as "English silversmiths known to have made thimbles in London 1865-1912".

Samuel Foscett was born in Limehouse, London, in 1848, the son of John Foscett and Sarah Scott.

He married Elizabeth in 1871. In 1881 he lived with his family, including his three children, at 45 Essex Street, Islington. He still resided there in 1901. His eldest son, Samuel William Foscett, was a silversmith and his second son, Henry James Foscett, following in his father's footsteps, was a thimble maker.

Samuel Foscett succeeded his uncle Henry in the business in 1886 and he registered his mark in September of that year at the London Assay Office.

Samuel has a Registered design RD265923 for a thimble, which he registered on 19 November 1895. His design was listed as 'panelled faceted diamond shapes with a daisy at each intersection'.

Samuel Foscett & Co were last listed as thimble makers in 1909 and the last thimble I have encountered is for 1909.

Foscett thimbles' maker's marks were registered in London, Birmingham and Chester assay offices. The most commonly found assay office mark is for London.

Like many of his contemporary thimble makers in Birmingham, SF began to mark the size mark on his thimbles – earliest probably from 1893. This may help you decipher a badly stamped hallmark date when there is a size mark present.

His thimble sizes range from 2 to 10 (largest diameter to smallest).

A very recent find is his Windsor Castle design and other scenic bands. Victorian silversmiths had been using Windsor Castle as a theme since the 1840s and this is a rare find - to find a hallmarked example, beginning with 1890. This makes a collection of the entire range of his output a wonderful niche collection.



SAMUEL FOSKETT

Trueform thimbles

Samuel was also involved in the Trueform finger-shaped thimble that was patented by Horace Bourne in 1904. The patent number is PAT.19157. The patent wanted to improve the comfort for the wearer – which would improve the health of the user.

Thimbles with this pat. number bear Samuel's maker's mark with the hallmark dates for 1905-1906. Each thimble shown has a different pattern.

This venture was not successful, and they were not made after these dates.



Trueform Thimble Bourne's Patent box + 1906 thimble in box

THE

Trueform Thimble.

(Bourne's Patent)

Something New and Interesting about Thimbles.

PROBABLY few people who use thimbles regard them of as much importance as they really are, or are aware of their great antiquity. We learn from the excavations that have been made from time to time, and also from writings, that both the Egyptians and Babylonians were magnificent embroiderers, and to enable them to produce such excellent results they must have used the thimble. Examples 2,000 years old have been found at Herculaneum of the same conical form as the thimbles of the present day.

Roman thimbles of the conical shape have also been found in England, and they are practically of the same design as those now in use.

One cannot but consider it remarkable that less inventive effort should have been spent over this most necessary and usual article, than over the other thousand-and-one things that are required in everyday life, and that it should have been left to the 20th century to make any real improvement in this line.



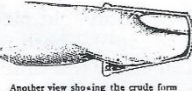

The ordinary thimble pinching up the nail. The dotted line shows natural shape of finger.

Roman Thimbles from the Thames, now in the Cuming Museum at the Walworth Road Library, Southwark. Photographed by kind permission of the Southwark Public Libraries and Museum Committee.

More especially is this so, when it is considered that medical testimony proves, that the present conical form is most injurious to wear, as by reason of it pinching up the nail and pressing on the flesh unequally, it is a very frequent source of whitlows and other troubles such as cramp, chilblains, etc., due to the restriction of the free circulation of the blood.

The pressure also effects the nerves of the whole hand, causing a feeling of fatigue and lassitude.

Moreover, thimbles of the usual pattern in no way conform to the finger, and are most uncomfortable to wear, and also are very apt to come off, when the finger end has to be moistened so as to make them keep on for a time.

Another view showing the conical form of the present shape of thimble.

The Trueform Thimble.

on the contrary, closely following, as it does, the shape of that part of the finger on which it is required to fit, is most comfortable and innocuous to wear, being held on by surface contact instead of pressure.

A Comfortable Fit.

This Thimble is the only one which has obtained a certificate for **Hygienic Merit** from the Institute of Hygiene, 34, Devonshire Street, Harley Street, London, W.

Advertisement for the Trueform Thimble (Bourne's patent), circa 1905. Private collection



1905
combination pattern with vertical
patterns of daisy and diamond



1905 1906



1905
combination pattern with vertical
patterns of daisy and blackberry
sizes 6/7/8



1905
9.375
plain
size 4



1905 1906
band of diamond-within-diamonds and daisies
cartouche has well-defined wavy edges
size 5



1906
plain
size 3



1906
blackberry pattern



1906
combination pattern of daisy and dot diamonds



1905
band of single daisies
size 4



Tho this thimble is not made of sterling silver it needs to be recorded here
Silver-plated with the Trueform Pat.1915 (size 7)

it is similar to the sterling all-over daisy patterning
we will never know if they were made by Samuel Foscett
the odds are high that he was the maker, as he would have had access to the dies used for the original sterling
silver thimbles



others just bear the lettering PATENT with sizes 2/3/9
aluminium?



and now in 2020 a brass example with 1915 lettered on the band
there are no other marks



PATENT 2

The more one studies the patterns used by Samuel Foscett, the clearer the picture becomes. There are a limited number of patterns he used - large roses, diamonds-within-diamond patterns, large distinctive daisies etc.

He seems to have more decorated rims than most other British thimble makers.

I have grouped similar patterns so that this may be more evident.

Foscett seems to have used distinctive wavy-edged cartouches – almost exclusively on his thimbles with a decorative band and plainly indented upper half. The hallmarks have occasionally been stamped inadvertently into the cartouche.

Samuel even used the popular blackberry design for some of his thimbles: using this design which is usually associated with the Birmingham silversmiths.

He also produced 9ct gold thimbles.

There are several examples of his fingerguards, which are usually unmarked/unhallmarked.

Decorative bands



1889

when we encounter a mint example, we can appreciate
these engraved bands
patterned rim
large cartouche with defined wavy edges



1889

Chester
wriggle work
cartouche inscribed with owner's initials of A M



1889 1891 1901 1903 1904 1909
diamonds-within-diamond pattern

1909 is the last date SF made thimbles



1890

wriggle-work
faceted rim



1890

Chester

'Victoria Fountain Brighton' lettered around the rim



1890

Chester

'Windsor Castle' lettered around the rim



1892

wriggle-work
patterned rim



1892
wriggle-work
large cartouche with wavy edges now carries assay
marks



1892
9ct gold
coral stones set around rim, giving a pointed edge to the
rim



1893
wriggle-work
rim has several lines



1893
finger guard
wriggle-work



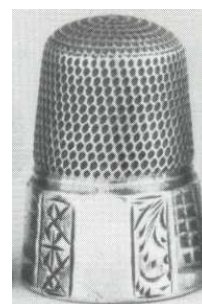
1893
large roses band
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges
patterned rim



1893
birds
patterned rim



1893
'**Balmoral the Queen's Highland Home**' lettered
around rim



1893
panels with alternating patterns



1893
roses
bloodstone apex
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges
patterned rim



1894
'Windsor Castle' lettered around the rim



1894
red stone
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges
patterned rim



1895
stylised leaves band
patterned rim
child's



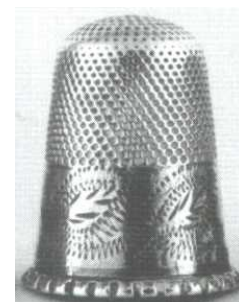
1895 1899 #10
wide well-defined cartouche
(not a gold thimble)



1896
nine "stones" set into trefoils over striations
(some stones missing)



1897
blackberry
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges



1897
wriggle-work
beaded rim



1897
inscribed with 'Dorothy' in
large cartouche with wavy edges



1897 #9
wriggle-work large cartouche with wavy edges that
carries assay marks
patterned rim



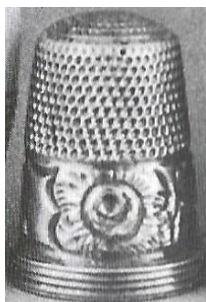
1898 #8
roses
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges that carries
assay marks
patterned rim



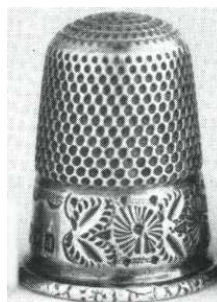
1898 #6
heavy long narrow cartouche with faceted wavy edges
that carries assay marks
patterned rim



1898
'Windsor Castle' lettered around the rim



1899
ringed rim



1899
patterned rim



1899 #7
patterned rim



1899
wriggle-work
patterned rim



1899
ferns patterned rim



1900
wriggle-work
faceted rim



1900 #4
distinctive daisies with leaves
large cartouche with faceted wavy
edges that carries assay marks



1901
'Osborne House Isle of Wight'
lettered around the rim



1901 #9
patterned rim
large cartouche with faceted wavy
edges that carries assay marks



1901 #7
diamond pattern band below heavily indented top



1901
green stone apex
wriggle-work
faceted rim



1902



1902
roses



1902
blackberry



1903
roses



1904 #8
roses and dots
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges that carries
assay marks



1904 #7
leaves and heavy dots at edge
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges



1908
unusual patterned panelled band

Decorative double bands



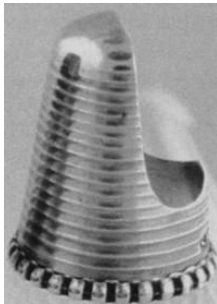
1891
large cartouche with defined wavy edges that carries assay marks



1892 1893 1894 1895 (#7) 1897
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges that carries assay marks

Plainly-indented

just the various rims distinguish them

 1888 1892 beaded rim	 1891 assay marks are within the indentations, which go down to the rim	 1892 finger guard beaded rim	 1893 ornate
 1893 1897 #9 floral rim	 1893 1894 1895 double row of blackberries	 1894 1897 #7 rolled rim	 1894 1897 1900 two rings
 1894 ornate with diamond patterning with diamond shapes	 1895 engraved 'E.M. BLUNT 61 SOHO RD'		 1897 1901 1907 #9 two rings
 1898 #7 ornate using wriggle work		 1908 flat rim	

All over patterning

 1887 1893 1894 1897 #8	 1887 1892 1899	 1889
 1890	 1891 beaten surface	 1891 worn to holes thru use
 1892	 1893	 1893 #7 unusual leaf patterning all over with blackberry patterning on apex
 1894 rows of paired leaves with blackberry patterning on apex	 1894 1895 scalloped rim with fleur de lis	



1895 #9
RD 265923



1895
tho the patterning used is that of the registered design,
it is not marked as such
scalloped rim with fleur de lis



1895



1895



1896



1896



1896 #7
Rd 265923



1897 #9



1897 #7
beaten surface



1897 #5



1897
RD 265923
with starred daisy band



1897
blackberry



1897
blackberry



1898 #10



1899 #9
squared beaten surface



1899/1900



1901 #6
blackberry



1902 #7
patterned rim



1902



1902
Rd 265923
with starred daisy band and blackberries on apex



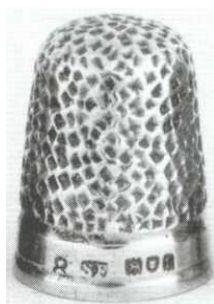
1904 #9
squared beaten surface



1905 #7



1905 #7



1906 #8
squared beaten surface



1907 #6
finely beaten surface



1907
huge daisies all over

References

Edwin F Holmes *Thimble Notes and Queries* spring 1991
Gay Ann Rogers *An illustrated history of needlework tools*. 1983
Norma Spicer and Diane Pelham Burn *British registered design thimbles*. 2003
Thimble Society (of London) *catalogues*

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This listing of Samuel Foscett silver thimbles does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects.
Rather it invites comment and contribution to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

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