

# Olney, Amsden (OA and OA&S) thimbles

This topic is about thimbles with OA and OA&S marks. The thimbles are a classic example of a wholesaler and haberdasher who never created a thimble. Olney, They were able to choose the best thimble makers for their brand of merchandise that bore these marks.

Thomas Olney employed Frederick William Amsden Jnr (1853-1921) in his retail haberdashery business in 1848. This is when Olney, Amsden turned the retail business into wholesaling. The business closed in 1996.



Thomas Olney – Frederick Willial Amsden Jnr

Olney, Amsden (and Sons) of Falcon Street, London E.C. commissioned thimbles and other haberdashery items from a range of established manufacturing firms. This topic will try to establish who made the thimbles for this well-known haberdashery company.



Olney, Amsden premises 10 Falcon Street London

The mark of **OA** was registered in Birmingham, with the thimbles dating from 1887 to 1917. These sterling silver thimbles were made by James Fenton and occasionally by Henry Griffith & Sons. We are dependent on the thimble size marks to enable us to confirm the maker. For Fenton, the bigger the size number the smaller the thimble – for Griffith it's smallest size to largest (13-20).

Fenton also used the Sheffield assay office and I have found example of an OA marked thimble bearing this assay office mark.

Fenton registered several thimble designs and an OA design bears one of his RD numbers. I understand that Fenton only sold his thimbles thru wholesalers.

There seem to be many more thimbles with OA than OA&S marks.

The mark of **OA&S** was registered in Chester in April 1900. The firm of Henry Griffith & Sons sometimes used the Chester assay for hallmarking its thimbles. Griffith would have made the Chester OA&S thimbles as they were the only British thimblemakers to use the thimble sizing they did.

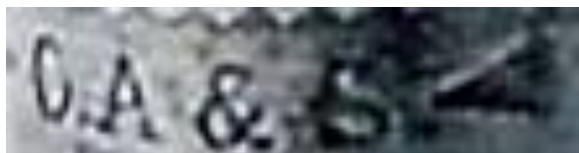
Olney, Amsden are unique in that they not only commissioned sterling silver thimbles with their marks: brass-lined steel and metal thimbles are quite commonly found. These would have been made for them by Charles Iles. Iles produced millions of metal thimbles, some bearing various brand names like: ILES, ABEL MORRALL and OA&S.

To add into this mix, I have included a thimble with a mark for **OA&C<sup>o</sup>**.



sterling silver marks

centre: OA mark seems to have a dash instead of a full stop



L: brass-lined steel – R: metal

both marks have a left-facing arrow after the mark – as does an Iles example at right



OA&C<sup>o</sup> metal mark

There are the cardboard thimble boxes with OA&S markings. Charles Iles produced the greatest range of thimble boxes in the period under discussion, so I assume they were commissioned to make these boxes for OA&S. This haberdashery company often presented their thimbles for sale in quality boxes and cases.

Being haberdashers Olney, Amsden also traded in buttons, needlebooks, needles, pincushions, pins, sewing kits and tape measures.

They owned the Crescent Needle Company of London and Redditch.

**Olney, Amsden (OA)**

The most popular thimble designs (repeat orders) are the most ornate ones



1887/1892/1904/1917 Birmingham



1893 Birmingham #9  
blackberries  
James Fenton



1894/1901 Birmingham #8  
vertical blackberry panels  
James Fenton



1895 Birmingham #9  
stars  
James Fenton



1896 Birmingham #10  
James Fenton  
no rolled rim



1896/1913 Birmingham #9  
blackberries and large leaves  
James Fenton



1898 Birmingham #13  
Henry Griffith & Sons



1899 Birmingham  
Wide band



1899 Birmingham #8  
James Fenton



1899/1907/1911 Birmingham #8 #10  
James Fenton



1899/1900/1901/1902 Birmingham #8 #9 #10 #12  
blackberries with two rows of leaves  
James Fenton



1899/1900/1901/1904/1908/1911 Birmingham #8 #9 #10  
moon and stars  
James Fenton  
R<sup>D</sup>281980 24 August 1896  
lower row: have no RD numbers



1899 Birmingham #9  
James Fenton



1899/1900/1901/1902/1903/1904 /1910 Birmingham #9 #10 #11  
lower: 1923 Sheffield #9  
pillow or cushion effect  
James Fenton



1900/1913 Birmingham #10 #12  
James Fenton



1900/1901/1902 Birmingham #8 #11 #12  
blackberries with single row of leaves  
James Fenton



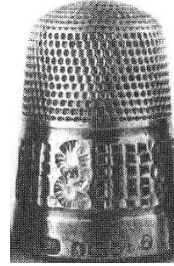
1901 Birmingham #9  
blackberries  
James Fenton



1903 Birmingham #8  
mixed design  
James Fenton



1903 Birmingham #10  
mixed design  
James Fenton



1905 Birmingham #7  
mixed design  
James Fenton



1905 Birmingham #9  
vertical panels  
James Fenton



1908 Birmingham #8  
James Fenton



1911 Birmingham #9  
wobblework band  
James Fenton



1913 Birmingham #8  
James Fenton  
mark looks more like **O-A**

**Olney, Amsden & Sons (OA&S)**



1900/1901/1902 Chester #14 #15 #16  
Henry Griffith & Sons



1900/1901/1903/1904 Chester #13 #15 #16  
blackberries and large leaves  
Henry Griffith & Sons



1900 Chester #15  
Henry Griffith & Sons



1901 Chester #14 #16  
Henry Griffith & Sons



1901 Chester #13 #15  
Henry Griffith & Sons  
no rolled rim



1901 Chester #14  
wiggglework band  
Henry Griffith & Sons



1901/1902 Chester #14 #16  
Henry Griffith & Sons



1901/1914 Chester #14 #16  
Henry Griffith & Sons



1901 Chester #13  
Henry Griffith & Sons



1902 Chester #16  
wiggglework band  
Henry Griffith & Sons



Chester #17  
non-slip rim  
Henry Griffith & Sons  
date letter unclear

**Metal thimbles (OA&S)(OA&C°)**



brass  
Charles Iles



brass-lined steel #2  
1910s  
Charles Iles  
often used in WWI army hussifs



metal with lining  
Charles Iles  
Frederick William Amsden took out a patent  
no 22270 in 1907 for thimbles with a lining



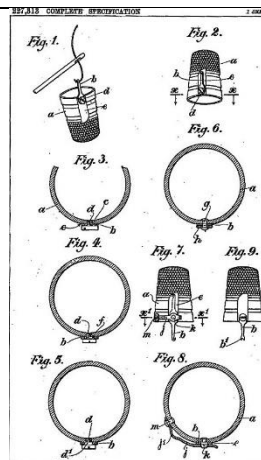
nickel  
Charles Iles



silver-plated #3  
Charles Iles  
**OA&C°**

In 1924, Frederick George Amsden was one of four patentees who applied for a patent (No227313) for "an improvement in. or addition to sewing thimbles. The other patentees were Charles Iles and Thomas Frederick Therlby of Birmingham – and Llewellyn Charles Hoy of London (same address as Amsden).

When the thimbles were produced – by Charles Iles, the only thimble maker amongst the four patentees, the metal gadget thimble did not include any maker's or patentee names. Thousands of these thimbles were made with a threader with a tiny hook screwed into the band. This threader would move when in use for threading a needle.



Patent 227313 application drawings

### Thimble boxes (OA&S)



Standard Silver Thimble  
Hall - Marked

I haven't encountered thimble boxes like these before: they operate like a drawer  
Using the opening at one end, the boxes operate like opening a box of matches

Charles Iles

It's lovely to see the original 1901 OA&S thimbles are still present





red velour thimble case  
Charles Iles



Mauchline ware  
William Smith



tartan ware  
William Smith

### Haberdashery items (OA&S)



Olney Amsden & Co L<sup>td</sup> London E.C.  
Buttons  
approx. 1925



Olney, Amsden & Sons Novelties in haberdashery  
brass tape measure



Crescent quality Olney, Amsden & Sons London  
needles



Crescent Quality best pins  
pin box



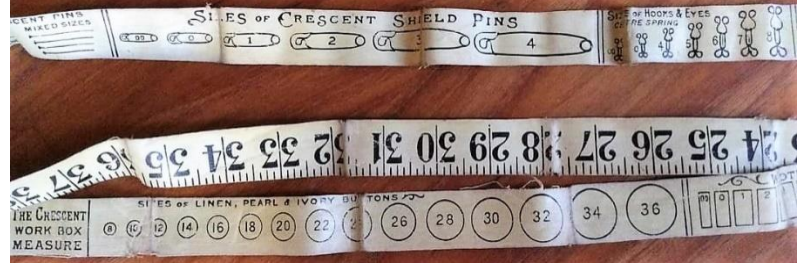
Olney, Amsden & Sons celebrated Haberdashery Cabinets contain a full assortment of best quality haberdashery and are far superior to the old-fashioned workbox Ask your draper for catalogue  
The Crescent needlebook with brass clasp



sewing kit  
velvet needlebook with pincushion around sides, needles in doctor's cloth, OA thimble  
1890s



Olney, Amsden & Sons  
sewing thread



The Crescent Work Box Measure  
showing Sizes of Crescent Shield Pins



1896 Birmingham mint thimble in sewing set

## References

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## Contributors

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This listing of Olney, Amsden 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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September 2023