

Jenny Blair Designs' thimbles 1984-1993

thimbles of cased frosted glass

Jenny had studied designs in silver in Birmingham for three years. That was where she learnt from a silversmith and combined with her natural talent, she went on to experiment with fusing thru electrolysis of metal on all kinds of material. For her graduation project she presented two pieces of handblown glass with an electrolysis deposited decoration.

Blair opened her own studio. It wasn't long after this that thimble collectors persuaded Jenny to experiment with thimbles.

The hand/mouth blown glass thimble is formed. Ground silver is suspended in lacquer and a design is handpainted and electroformed with nickel. After resting for 12-15 hours, the thimble is hand filed and polished. Finally a thick coat of PURE silver is applied over the pattern and the result is pure elegance to last a lifetime.

It was as long ago as 1984 that Jenny Blair Designs thimbles were created.

Thimbles appeared for sale in *The Thimble Collectors Guild* catalogues from July 1986. The last design they offered for sale was September 1993.

In June 1988 Thimble Collectors Guild featured a frosted pink glass scent bottle for sale. The translucent scent bottle was handblown and sandblasted to give the frosted look - by Jenny's husband Robert. This was in their small craft workshop in York, United Kingdom. By 2001 their studio was based in West Haddon Northamptonshire.

He mixed lustre paint into the glass to create this stunning effect. So, we now know that it was more than Jenny who was at work.

Jenny's work began with perfume bottles, and this is what she is most well-known for. Her maker's mark of JBD is only found on her perfume bottles, vases etc.



De Vingerhoed 1987 catalogue description for these two thimbles "Fantasy in gold and Fantasy in silver": semi-precious stones set into the apex (amethyst on silver and topaz on the gold version) – the nickel design is then cased in silver or gold which is fused to the glass underneath.

This commission has the only known inserted stones, so are easily identified.

After these initial thimbles with stones, Jenny concentrated on silver- or gold-plate fused onto the frosted glass thimbles handblown by Robert: with no stones.

I don't know if Jenny named her thimble creations or whether they were supplied by the marketing department of The Thimble Guild. I have used the names they used, where available.

Now collectors are dependent on the second-hand market for these unique thimble creations.

None of Jenny's thimbles are signed.

Watch how the prices climbed in TTG between July 1986 and September 1993.

With your help, my aim is to complement these old photos from catalogues with all round photos.

Like with all silver materials, care should be taken with these thimbles as they will tarnish as they age. They are also prone to damage by tiny pieces of the metal "peeling" or denting. Treat them with care.

Gold-plated cased frosted glass



1991 bells, dove of peace

limited to **150**

TTG January 1991



Cobwebs

without the stone atop like the 1987 Dutch commission
design is bound by a band at rim and apex
also available in silver



Garlands

R: seems invented?

TTG December 1989



flower

design is bound by a band at rim and apex
also available in silver



gazebo
patterning continues over apex
TTG December 1989



holly and ivy
TTG January 1990



ivy with dragonfly
patterning continues over apex
TCG April 1986



lady ferns
also available in silver



Queen Mother 90th birthday
Rose of York
E.A.M.B-L 90 (her initials) lettered around apex
TTG September 1990



tree

is this the same design as the cedars – under Silver?



Tudor lattice

lattice continues over apex
design is bound by a band at rim and apex



unknown

none of her cased thimbles have the solid gilt apex
like on this thimble



unknown

Handpainted in colour on frosted glass

Jenny employed handpainters. Once they have been decorated the lustre designs are fused to the glass – the glass takes only a smoky hue with the handpainted designs.



Christmas roses
with holly and berries
limited to **450**
TTG December 1990



Country Garden
handpainted lustre set of 5
daffodils – primroses – cherry blossom – periwinkle



clematis – pyrethrum – cranesbill
poppies – scabious – leopards bane



roses - irises - flax



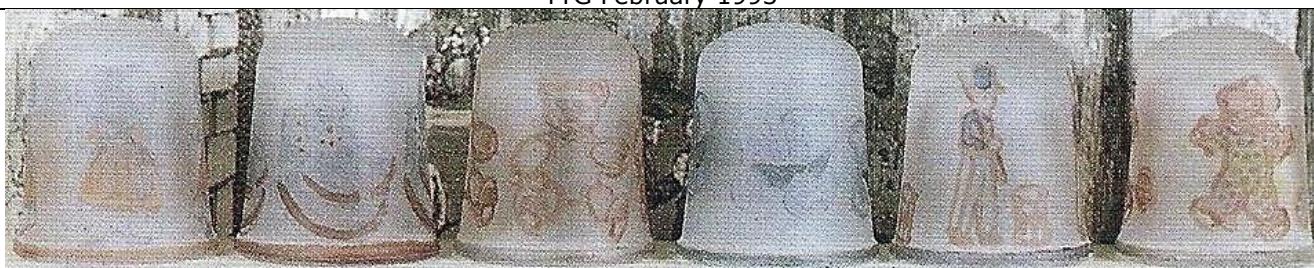
chrysanthemum – montbretia – michaelmas daisies
limited to **450** sets
TTG April 1991



Four seasons
garden in spring
TTG February 1992



Mother's pride
Mother lettered in gold at rim
floral garlands
TTG February 1993



Victorian nursery toys
set of six thimbles
china dolls - rocking horses - teddy bears - doll's prams - toy soldiers - clowns
TTG April 1990



toy soldiers



winter berries – ivy and holly berries

hp by Julie Boat
which continues over the apex
TTG December 1991



set of six

TTG May 1989

top: marigold

centre: rosebuds - iris

bottom: rose - Ikat - paisley



iris



Ikat (a Japanese weave)



paisley



rosebuds



rose

marigold

Handpainted in gold on frosted glass



Bethlehem

glass is a smoky blue colour

TTG November 1992



Princely Kashmir

L: lavender – R: heather pinks

limited to **125**

TTG September 1993

Signs of the Zodiac

each has all signs of the zodiac around the thimbles and the frosted glass seems smokier

the specific zodiac sign is painted on the apex

thimbles could be personalised with a name and date on the apex

TTG 1992



lettered J.E.N 15.1.38 – with inner view

| | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| | | |
| Aquarius | Pisces | Aries |
| | | |
| Taurus | Gemini | Cancer |
| | | |
| Leo | | Virgo |
| | | |
| | | |
| Libra | | Scorpio |
| | | |
| Sagittarius plum coloured glass | Capricorn | |

Silver-plated cased frosted glass



1991 Christmas bells

date is on the apex where the design continues
TTG January 1991



arabesque

design continues over apex
TTG May 1992



brocade

design continues over apex
TTG March 1993



Camargue

design continues over apex to a disc
TTG September 1992

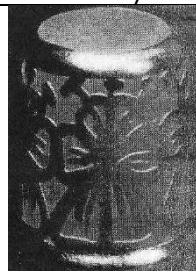


cedars

TCG March 1987



Chelsea
TTG January 1990



Cobwebs
TCG May 1986



Easter
four abalone eggs
limited to **175**
April 1993



fairy glade

set of six each depicting a woodland scene

includes: fairy gazing into still waters of a pond - fairies talking with woodland wildlife - dragonfly and a rabbit - two flower fairies collecting wildflowers - musical fairy playing a flute
design continues over apex on some designs

TTG June 1991



L: fairy gazing into still waters of a pond - R: two flower fairies collecting wildflowers



Japanese willow

TCG October 1986



lace

design continues over apex

TCG August 1986/Thimbles Only spring 1987



lady ferns

TCG July 1986

also available in gold



love birds

smooth silver covers most of the apex

TTG January 1990



lucky clover or shamrocks

design continues over apex

TCG December 1986



mistletoe

design continues over apex

limited to 450

TTG December 1990



Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother's 90th Birthday

E.A.M.B-L 90 (her initials) lettered around thimble

strings of pearls – thistles

small amount of design over the apex rim

limited to **450**

TTG September 1990



regent

small amount of design goes over the apex rim

TTG January 1990



silver cage

with tropical birds

design continues over the apex culminating in a solid central disc

TTG March 1992



silver fern

design continues over the apex

limited to **195**

TTG July 1992



silver ribbons

design is bound by a band at rim and apex

TCG February 1987



silver tree



silvery moon

with moon trees and sea

TCG September 1986



Tudor lace or Tudor lattice

design continues over the apex

design is bound by a band at rim and apex

TCG June 1987

lower: the lattice on apex is more regular



violets

design is bound by a band at rim and apex

also available in gold

TCG June 1986

References

Frosted glass, silvered thimble. *TCI Bulletin* summer 2019

The Thimble Collectors Guild/Thimble Collectors Guild/The Thimble Guild *catalogues* 1986-1993

De Vingerhoed *catalogues*

Contributors

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This listing of Jenny Blair Designs thimbles 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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