

Gerald Delaney handpainted china thimbles

Gerald Delaney's name first came into my thimble sphere when I was researching thimbles to include in *Thimbles of Australia* in 1997. I owned a single example of his handpainted fruit thimbles, which I had purchased from Barbara Kelly (a thimble dealer from New South Wales) in the early 1990s, never really associating it with my Australian thimbles.

As part of my research, I met with several dealers around Australia. Barbara was the only one who sold Delaney thimbles. From her, I learnt that Delaney had been spending part of a year in Australia and the rest at his home in Worcester in England. This was in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Whilst he lived for periods in Australia, he painted thimbles for sale. Kelly would have purchased Delaney's thimbles from him, for sale thru her mail order catalogue. Some of the thimbles she had for sale included Highland cattle, a castle and one of Venice (and those featured below).

Gerald E Delaney was born in England in 1933. He studied art at the Worcester Victoria Institute. He served as an apprentice for seven years with Royal Worcester (1948-1954) and returned between 1971 and 1973 or 1974 (sources differ). He worked for Coalport in the intervening period. He specialised in fruit designs.

Search out images of his exquisitely painted fruit on plates, urns, vases, fruit bowls etc – both with Royal Worcester and Coalport backstamps. Post-Worcester, he also painted a range with his own 'GD England' mark. All pieces were hand signed "G Delaney". They were undated.

From 1974 he became a freelance ceramic artist and travelled the world holding workshops where he lectured and gave painting lessons. This would have brought him to Adelaide in Australia.

I have since learnt that his thimbles were also retailed by the store David Jones in both Sydney and Melbourne: a known date is 1990.

His handpainted thimbles were available from The Thimble Guild in Scotland between 1989 and 1993.

His thimbles are unsigned (no signature is part of the design). Rather they are ALL identified by a decal inside the thimbles: 'Hand-painted by G.Delaney'.



The exception to this are the thimbles that he painted when he worked at Royal Worcester. His thimbles are signed as any another other Royal Worcester thimble painter.



A feature that seems particular to Delaney's thimbles are the deeper gold handpainted rims than those usually found on thimbles.

Initially as a trained artist with Royal Worcester and Coalport he specialised in painting fruit, and this was reflected in his thimbles and still form the largest theme. He then branched out to birds etc.

He also undertook special commissions (see examples for The Thimble Guild).

As part of the marketing advertisement in The Thimble Guild of 1989 for the Gerald Delaney Harvest Fruits "To me it is a job I love. I've got to be satisfied before I allow anything to leave my studios". ... and again for butterfly set of two in 1991: "He tell us that he particularly enjoys working in the thimble medium, as the curvature and small area make especial demands on the artist's talents ... exceptional quality of his workmanship for which he is justly renowned".



Gerald Delaney February 2014

I understand that Gerald Delaney began to lose his sight – and has since died. Can anyone confirm this please?

For other handpainted thimble topics see

- Australian handpainted thimbles
- British modern handpainted thimbles
- Graham Payne handpainted thimbles
- Jasper's of Yorkshire handpainted thimbles
- Royal Worcester thimble painters

birds



Barn owl



Hobby



Kestrel

Birds of Prey (set of 3)
 each bird named inside
The Thimble Guild
 May 1993
 limited to 50 sets



Kookaburra

1980s

Barbara Kelly

bird painting does not continue onto verso
 two examples at right include sprigs of wattle
 R: added mark "Fine Bone China United Kingdom
 © HC"



Lyre bird
1985

Barbara Kelly



Robin

Barbara Kelly

these three thimble designs above would have been painted during Gerald Delaney's Australian period



Bullfinch (facing left)
Thimble Society of London



Bullfinch (facing right)
sprig on verso after the Royal Worcester style

butterflies



large blue butterfly
L: *The Thimble Guild* 1991
R: actual thimble
limited to 250



Peacock butterfly
L: *The Thimble Guild* 1991
R: actual thimble
limited to 250

commemoratives



Battle of Britain 50 years 1940-1990

Hurricane

The Thimble Guild August 1990

limited to 250



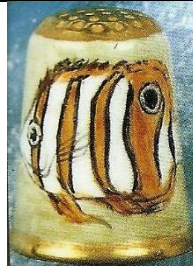
Columbus 1492-1992

The Thimble Guild September 1992

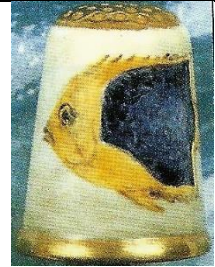
fish



Clown Sweetlips



Long Nose Butterfly



Rock Beauty

Tropical fish (set of 3)
 fish breed named inside
 top row: The Thimble Guild 1992
 limited to 195 sets

the painting doesn't go onto the verso but that is painted – see below
 in their catalogue, these are the three fish names used by TTG (above)

some confusion occurs when fish were named (by Delaney or the Guild?) as some seem mixed up or
 even incorrectly named!!

No names match exactly with the group below!



Clown Sweetlips



Rock Beauty (L) – Long Nose Butterfly (R)

L: as named on an recent ebay sale



Rock Beauty



Rock Beauty

fruit

this was Delaney's greatest mastery, nailing "... the curvature and small area make especial demands on the artist's talents"

I have used the dominant fruit as descriptor. You may not realise that many of these look the same – but allowing for being handpainted there is always a difference – some may have a larger portion to paint on – or just a different apex?

the still life painting of fruit continues all-round the thimble with a muted leaves background, giving the rustic impression of an orchard – and being handpainted, no two are the same

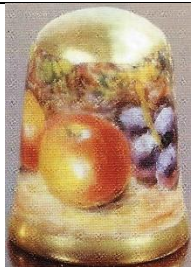
some of these fruit thimbles were sold in pairs by Barbara Kelly – was this done Kelly or Delaney?
All those available from Kelly were painted during Delaney's stays in Australia



apple
Barbara Kelly
1980s-1990s



apple & green grape
Harvest Fruits 1



apple & black grape
Harvest Fruits
The Thimble Guild
1989
limited to 250
(1st of set of 6)



apple & black grape
Harvest Fruits 2



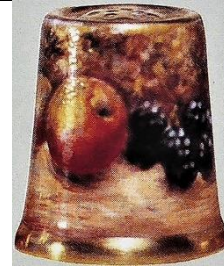
apple & blackberry
Harvest Fruits 3



apple & blackberry
Barbara Kelly
1980s-1990s



apple & blackberry
David Jones Melbourne
1990



apple & blackberry
Thimble Society of London 1989



apple & white grape



peach & black grape



peach & black grape
Barbara Kelly
1980-1990s



peach & black grape
Harvest Fruits 4



peach & black grape
Harvest Fruits 4



peach & black grape
Barbara Kelly
1990s



peach & blackberry
Barbara Kelly
1990s



peach & black grape

Barbara Kelly

1980s-1990s

sold as a pair



peach & blackberry

on mauve ground

The Thimble Guild

limited to 195



peach & blackberry

on mauve ground

Barbara Kelly

1990s



peach & white grape

Harvest Fruits 5



peach & white grape

Harvest Fruits 5



pear

Barbara Kelly

1990s



pear

Harvest Fruits
The Thimble Guild

1989

limited to 250
(2nd of set of 6)



pear

Barbara Kelly

1990s



pear & apple & white grape

Barbara Kelly

1980s-1990s

sold as a boxed pair



pear & blackberry

Royal Worcester

it carries a 1959 mark

this is not a date when DG was painting at Royal Worcester!



the signature in this RW thimble

wider RW china thimbles like this, were also used by Arthur Badham, Peter Platt etc



pear & blackberry

pear

Barbara Kelly

1980s-1990s



pear & white grape

Barbara Kelly

1980s



pear & white grape

Harvest Fruits 6



pear & white grape



plum & white grape
mauve ground
Barbara Kelly
1990s



plum & white grape & blackberry
Barbara Kelly
1980-1990s

other



castle
painted scene all around the thimble
Barbara Kelly
1980s



Highland cattle
painted scene all around the thimble
Barbara Kelly
1980s



lake scene
painted scene all around the thimble
L: apex 3 – R: apex 2
R: *Barbara Kelly*
1980s



Venice
painted scene all around the thimble
Barbara Kelly
1980s
added mark "Fine Bone China United Kingdom
© HC"

Other handpainted china merchandise by Gerald Delaney

Having discovered just how many thimbles Delaney handpainted with fruit, it now makes sense to share some of the other merchandise he painted with fruit. Just one example of each brand used, to illustrate this fine handpainter's work on large and small items.



apple & white grape
Royal Worcester 7cm high squat vase with fruit
signed



apple & blackberry
Coalport 24.5cm shallow dish with fruit
signed to the R - alongside apple



pear & cherry & blackberry
Gerald Delaney plate with fruit
this is the backstamp used by Gerald Delaney on his merchandise when he went freelance



apple & white grape
Edwardian fine bone china urn with fruit
signed below the apple



apple & black grape
Gerald Delaney fruit china brooch
handpainted with painted gilt china edging
central gilt findings
signed under single blackberry
Barbara Kelly
1980s

examples with handpainted birds



Blue tit & Robin
Gerald Delaney 16cm plates with birds
this is the backstamp used by Gerald Delaney on his merchandise when he went freelance

References

Francis Batt *The Morning Star shines again in Datchet.* [Ascot Windsor & Eton Times](#) 15 February 2014
Bridget McConnel *A collector's guide to thimbles.* 1995
The Thimble Guild *Catalogues* 1989-1993

Contributors

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This listing of Gerald Delaney 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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