

Iles' handpainted and decaled plastic thimbles

Charles Iles and later Iles and Gomms (1947-) produced plastic thimbles. Early on, they were usually cream in colour. Their ivoryine thimbles were first produced in 1913. So some of the thimbles included in this topic are thus well over 100 years.

There are two types of Iles plastic thimbles that are decorated along the band of the thimble. Most of these were handpainted but a small proportion had decaled illustrations applied to the band – these are included after the handpainted thimbles.

It is so long after these plastic thimbles were made it is difficult to know whether these decorated thimbles were produced in the Iles' factory. Maybe they were sent out to piece workers in the area, to be handpainted? There are enough similarities in the thimbles that have survived to make it likely that they were produced before they left the Iles thimble factory.

The handpainted thimbles are usually painted all around the thimble or just around the band.
It's interesting to see black monochrome scenes.

The decals would have been applied by the team in the Iles factory.

Decals are prone to rub off with use, tho there are a few examples that are in pristine condition, whereas the handpainted thimbles are still as clear as they were when they were completed.

The decaled thimbles seem to have far more detail than their handpainted counterparts.

In Edwin Holmes' book *The history of thimbles* (1986), he outlined how to tell whether a plastic thimble was made pre- or post-WWI. Thimble machines were converted for war work in 1939. After the war, new machines which produced injection moulded thimbles were brought into production. Plastic thimbles with elongated indentations were made after 1945. The dot type indentations were made pre-1939.

I have included all thimble photos from my database – showing differently shaped Iles plastic thimbles – and we can see how the thimbles have fared over the decades.

I have included other makers thimbles to complete a theme of hand decorated plastic thimbles. This includes thimbles made in Germany after 1945

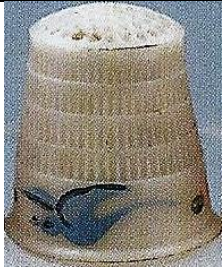
[For other Iles topics see:](#)

Charles Iles' 'The ... thimbles and boxes

[For other handpainted thimble topics see](#)

Australian handpainted thimbles and sewing tools 1973-2014
Cornish Enamels thimbles 1995-1997
Francesca character head thimbles
Gerald Delaney handpainted thimbles
Hazrah handpainted bronze thimbles (Mauritius) 2006-2009
Jacqui and David Parker of Olivia (Birmingham) thimbles 1983-1996
Jasper's of Yorkshire handpainted thimbles
Merryfield Pottery (Devon) thimbles
Modern British hand-decorated wooden thimbles
Modern British handpainted thimbles
Roger Gibbons pewter thimbles 1984-1990
Roger Harrison of Kelso thimbles 1983-1988
Royal Worcester thimble painters
Scottish wooden thimbles

HANDPAINTED THIMBLES



blue bird
1945-



bunnies



flowers on black band



Christmas tree



Dutch scene in black monochrome
includes figures, a windmill and tulip



flowers around rim
1945-



flowers in pink and blue
1945-



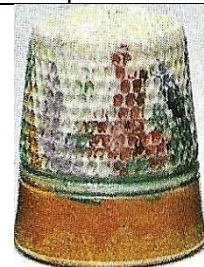
flowers in garden border
deep blue rim



flowers in garden border
blue rim with green bands



flowers in garden border
brown rim with green bands



flowers in garden border
wide gold rim



flowers in garden border
reddish rim and bands



flowers
pink and blue hyacinths
painted in top half
purple lines



flowers
daisies
gold rim and bands



flowers
orange
pale blue rim



flowers
red and orange
1945-



flowers
red and orange



flowers
roses
1945-



flowers
sprigs
narrow pink rim



flowers



flowers
wide mauve rim



flowers
iris?
1945-



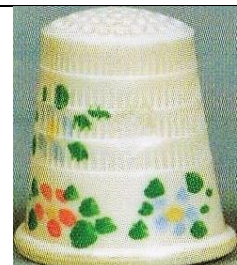
flowers
1950s-



flowers
stylised
1945-



flowers
stylised
Gabler - Germany
1945-



flowers
stylised
1945-



flowers
stylised



flowers
stylised



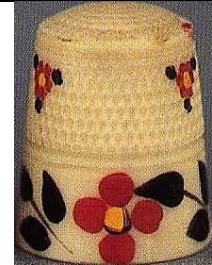
flowers
stylised



flowers
stylised



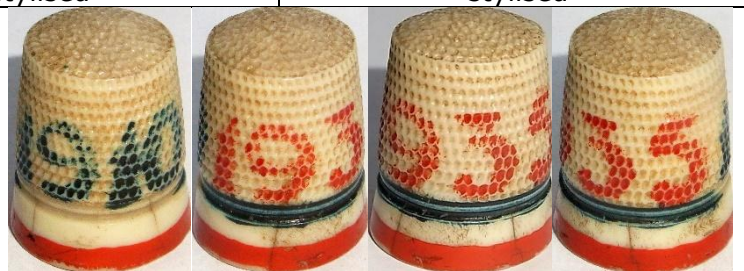
flowers
stylised



flowers
stylised



flower arbour



1910 1935
commemorating King George V's reign



pyramid, deer and palm
wide tan rim



pyramid, palms and figure with camel
Beige, pink and blue rim



tree
wide green rim and bands



woman with parasol



flowers in red and yellow



rabbits



gold, black and gold lines

DECALED THIMBLES



'Alice in Wonderland'

Alice with Cheshire Cat – Alice and the Dodo – Mad Hatter's tea party
1945- (non-flam plastic)



'Forget-me-not'
'Made in England'
with small blue birds
L: very wide thimble



1945-



gardening scene – including a conservatory, a wheelbarrow, watering can and sunflower



'GE VI'

Coronation scene 1937



sedan chair scene – including figures in period costume and a woman playing with a dog



'The Cupid'
'England'
celluloid fingerguard
cupids, roses, garlands and blue ribbons
top R: pristine condition



1945-

References

Norma Spicer *Iles: a family of thimble makers*. 2001

Contributors

Christina Bertrand | Andrea Griffiths | Linda Heggs | Caroline Meacham Elegant Arts | Kathy Rastall
Wolf-Dieter Scholz | Krystyna Zagajewska

This listing of Iles' handpainted and decaled plastic 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.

EMAIL thimbleselect@bigpond.com TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

© **Sue Gowan**
May 2025