

Royal Worcester decal thimbles

One of the first fine bone china thimbles produced for the collectables market is one with a decal by Royal Worcester. In 1974 this Bridal thimble was issued and is one of the most recognisable thimbles from RW. I am not sure whether RW named the thimble or it has become known by this name by thimble collectors over the last 30 years) This 1974 date is now no longer correct, as copies were received as early as **1960**, by collectors who have contacted me.

As thimble collecting increased throughout the 1970s and 1980s and Royal Worcester phased out their handpainted thimbles in the very early 1980s, their decal thimbles came to the fore as a niche collection for collectors.

In 1985, Royal Worcester produced their last decal thimbles. Their decal thimbles' output barely lasted eleven years. The exception to this is thimbles made under commission.

The Royal Worcester factory has now closed in Worcester in England, after 255 years and their works is now based in Sri Lanka.

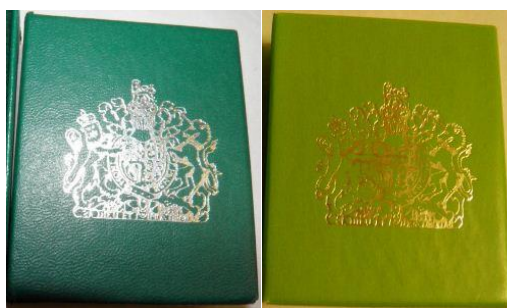
How do decal thimbles differ from those that are handpainted? A decal or transfer is applied to the blank thimble and the factory can then churn out more thimbles with identical patterns. Under a magnifying glass, a decal shows up as hundreds of small dots, similar to newspaper print seen under magnification. Royal Worcester would not have on-sold their decals, so their designs remain theirs. These high-quality thimbles are similar in quality and design to Wedgwood bone china thimbles.

The thimbles for decals used by Royal Worcester are exactly the same shaped-thimbles that were used for handpainting: tho they are thicker-walled, and the apex is flatter than their 1970s and 1980s handpainted range. In later years I have seen examples where these changed and that changed the character of the thimble, making them look like cheaper counterparts - where apexes are domed, and the walls are very much thinner.

The first sets of decal thimbles of the early 1980s, continue a tradition of Royal Worcester handpainted thimbles - by having a decal sprig featured on the verso.



backstamp in Royal Worcester decal thimbles is black and identical to those used on the post-1964 handpainted thimbles, showing that all their thimbles are made of fine bone china



Royal Worcester decal thimbles boxes with Royal Warrant mark on outside

See also "Learn more about **Royal Worcester Thimble Painters**"

Ballet

This set of six thimbles featuring popular classical ballets was issued by Royal Worcester. The scene is all around the thimble and each ballet is named inside and working with the Royal Opera House, were created in 1982.

There are two gold handpainted bands – at the rim and apex.



Cinderella



Coppelia



Giselle



Romeo and Juliet

note the strange bricklike patterning on this verso – do you know its significance?



Sleeping Beauty



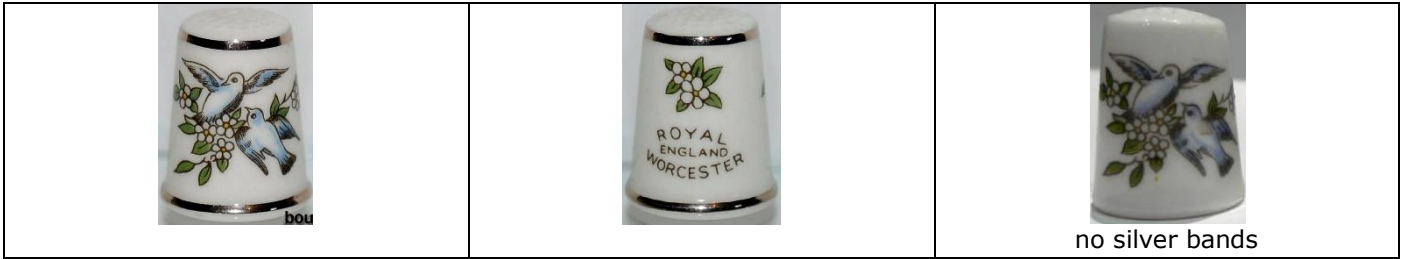
Swan Lake

Bridal

This is the first decal thimble issued by Royal Worcester.

It is one of the only thimbles with silver (instead of gold) handpainted bands: at rim and apex.
The backstamp appears on the outside of the thimble, instead of the more usual inner marking.

The maker's mark is lettered in silver.

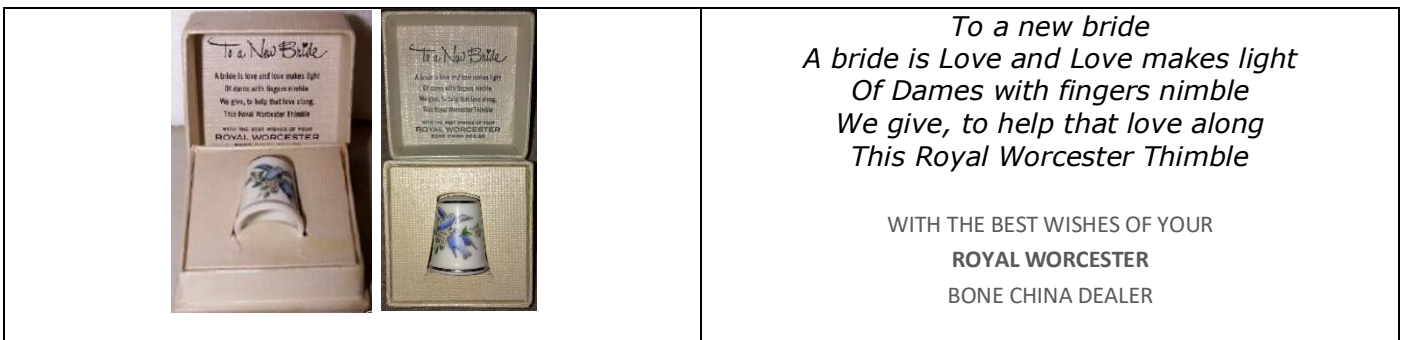


I understand that this thimble was a wedding gift as early as **1963** - did you receive your bridal thimble any earlier?

I have now seen an example that was received as far back as **1960**.

Note that examples without the silver bands are appearing for sale - they are still RW backstamped thimbles - just later versions.

Lovely to find an original box with the lettering "To a New Bride" with a verse to the bride from Royal Worcester.



Butterflies

This set of six thimbles featuring English butterflies was issued by Royal Worcester in the early 1980s.

There is a sprig of grass or flowers on the verso.

The set only has a handpainted gold band at the rim.

The butterflies are not named in the thimbles but only on the thimble boxes.

I know the other unnamed ones here are: charaxes sem - pupillis aegus - talemunus evagoris.

Maybe you know which is which or what the common names are?



Christmas

There are five annual thimbles [1980-1984], each with the date - either on the front or on the verso.

It was originally planned as a set of ten annual thimbles.

The 1980-1981 thimbles were made originally for the American market, with holly on the verso, with a gold band at top and rim.

The 1982-1984 thimbles have holly wreaths incorporated in the design on the verso, with a single gold band at rim.



Commemoratives

Royal Worcester did not issue many commemorative thimbles.

Wedding of Prince Charles and Diana 1981



boxed set of four all in gold
29 July 1981

the monochrome set of four gold thimbles are identical on the front
with varying icons on the verso

these thimbles only have a single handpainted gold band at the rim
the set was commissioned by Pobjoy Mint and was initially issued with their backstamp



single thimble in multicolour



boxed thimble with a sticker on the inner lid

Papal Visit 1982



lettered inside
handpainted gold bands at apex and rim

Birth of HRH Prince William of Wales 1982



21 June 1982
monochrome blues
handpainted gold bands at apex and rim

Cottages

These thimbles features English cottages but are not a set.

They were still available from the Royal Worcester factory shop, in Worcester, during my visit in 1995.

I note that examples without the gold bands are appearing for sale - they are still RW backstamped thimbles - just later versions!



R: later version with no gold bands



R: later version with no gold bands



R: later version with no gold bands



Cottage Garden

issued by Thimble Collectors Club
note that there is no gold band at the apex
R: later version with two green bands

Fauna

This set of six thimbles featuring English birds and animals was issued by Royal Worcester in the early 1980s.

The fauna are not named within the thimbles, so the terms used here are my own - if you know what Royal Worcester named them, please share.

Note that there are two gold bands - at the apex and at the rim. This is the original set.

Each has a different scene - the faunal territory is on the verso.

This set is rarer than their other thimble sets.

I note that examples with single or no gold bands are appearing for sale - they are still RW backstamped thimbles - just later versions.



blue tit

C: single gold band at rim

R: later version with no gold bands



fieldmouse or vole

R: later version with no gold bands



red squirrel

R: later version with no gold bands



robin

signed WP (the designer of the decal)

C: single gold band at rim

R: later version with no gold bands



stoat or weasel



stonechat

C: later version with one gold band at rim

R: later version with no gold bands

Flowers

this is a favourite RW theme - not a set

none of the thimbles have names?

some have the gold rim at both edges



Woodland



pink roses

with handpainted gold bands at apex and rim

a variation exists in this roses thimble

R – no gold bands and an apex reminiscent of Spode patterned apices

their shape is not the traditional RW shape (as they have a pronounced rim) – even the placement of the decal is different

Has this been produced since the closure of the factory in Worcester?



no gold band

Tableware designs

The "Blind Earl" design is in relief all round, to enable the pattern to be felt, the raised roses are then handpainted. The story goes that an Earl ordered a dinner service which he could feel the roses patterning.



Blind Earl - colour

top: with fluted edge - signed "S.R" - handpainted by Susanne Roberts

bottom: a flat rim but it's gold-painted to look as if fluted

signed "MM" - painted by Mandy Munslow

both of these painters worked in the handpainted thimbles section of Royal Worcester



Blind Earl - pink

flat rim with gold-painted rim to look as if fluted



Blind Earl - white

flat rim



Blue Scale



Evesham



Imari

issued by Thimble Collectors Club (TCC)
USA club thimble was named Finger and Thumb

Woodland animals

This set of six thimbles featuring woodland animals was issued by Royal Worcester in the late 1970s.

There is a sprig on the verso of each e.g. acorns, wheat.

The animals are not named inside the thimbles, only on the thimble boxes.

The names I have used here are from the advertisements at the time of issue.

This set only has a gold handpainted band at the rim.



American Flying Squirrel



Common Chipmunk

issued by Thimble Collectors Club
R: no gold band



European Squirrel

this was advertised for sale
in spring 1978 in the USA
under the name of Red Squirrel



Hare

this was advertised for sale
in spring 1978 in the USA
under the name of Bunny



Harvest Mouse



Roe Deer

Special Commissions

Bertrams Junior School 1918-1993

To commemorate the 75th founding of this school the Johannesburg, the South African headmaster, himself a RW collector, commissioned 75 thimbles as a fundraiser for the school.

The thimbles are lettered on the verso with the commemorative details.

There is an accompanying certificate of authenticity.



Gloucestershire Regiment



with regimental badge

Historic Patterns thru the Ages

Compton & Woodhouse

In 1993 Compton & Woodhouse, an English mail-order business, commissioned a set of 22 thimbles. The series was to commemorate the 242-year old heritage (1751-1993) of Royal Worcester, bearing the historical patterns on many early pieces of RW, held in the Dyson Perrins Museum in Worcester. There is no uniformity in the design with thimbles (ie no gold bands at the top and the bottom to link them as a set) - rather just the richness of the designs.

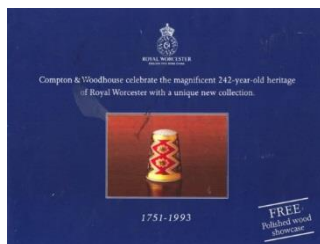
The thimbles were issued in batches of three and were accompanied by an illustrated card for each issue, with a picture, the name and history of each design.

The 42 thimbles are shown on the original flyer on a free wooden thimble rack.

I was a subscriber to the original set on offer but cancelled after the number reached 15, as the subsequent thimbles were of an inferior quality, with thinner-walled thimbles being used. Neither did they match the first 15 in size.

The names used here are those from the original flyer/s which accompanied the set.

The designs are not named in the thimbles, so once separated from their cards, the original name is lost.



		
Apple Green	Barr, Flight and Barr Imari	Bleu Celeste
		
Blue and Gold Panelled Imari	Cannon Ball	Chamberlain Garlands
		
Chamberlain Rose Sprays	Chamberlain Sprays	Chinese Scene
		
Cut Fruit	Davis Blue Band	Dry Blue Flowers
		
Duke of Clarence	Duke of Gloucester	Finger and Thumb
		
Flight Sprays	Fruit Swags	German Flower
		
Giles Flowers	Grainger Gold	Grainger Imari



Ho Ho Bird



Hop Trellis



Jabberwocky



Meissen Style



Old Mosaick



Oriental Panels



Phoenix Border



Pink Garlands



Pink Scale



Poppy



Puce Festoons



Rococo Sprays



Royal Lily



Scale Blue



Scarlet Japan



Scarlet Panels



Sea Green and Puce Floral



Sevres Style



Strings of Garden Flowers



Tobacco Leaf



Yellow Ground

The Hallmarked Thimbles of the World's Great Porcelain Houses

This set of 50, commissioned by the Thimble Collectors Club [TCC] in 1985, included one from Royal Worcester.



Thimbles of the Worlds' Porcelain Houses

This set of 25, commissioned by Franklin Mint in 1980, included one from Royal Worcester.



Thimble Collectors Club (TCC)

There were six thimbles included over the years issued by the TCC.
See the others which are part of "Cottages", "Tableware Designs" and "Woodland Animals" sets.



Country Garden



River Romance



Swans
signed M J Pledger (designer of
the decal)

Times Past

This boxed pair of thimbles was commissioned for this mail-order firm in England.



Others

None of these thimbles fit any of the above categories - until more information comes to light.
There are two different thimbles made for Ascot and for Winchester Cathedral.



Royal Ascot - i



Royal Ascot - ii



Sweetheart

R: later version with no gold bands



Enchantment



Winchester Cathedral - i



Winchester Cathedral - ii



Worcester's coat-of-arms

the city crest includes three black pears



this thimble design appeared in early 2000s
where bird decal was placed in random ways



Red Admiral/Tortoiseshell

different butterflies from the Butterflies set
as there are 2 different butterflies on each thimble
available with 2 or 1 gold bands



previously thought to be made for the 1985 National Heritage Year
does anyone know the correct event, name or date of issue etc?



tho this is made and marked in green by Royal Worcester, in a thimble shape
was it made as a thimble?

no - I understand it was made as a **funnel** or **filter**
the indentations on the apex are filter holes

Allied brands

The following thimbles brands have links with Royal Worcester - Palissy and Hammersley which were part of the Royal Worcester Group. Both of these brands which were absorbed into Royal Worcester but are outside the scope of this topic.

In the case of Palissy, they were taken over by RW in 1958. It was only in 1976 that the Royal Worcester name was added to the Palissy maker's mark, which has often caused confusion for thimble collectors. The Palissy Division was closed by RW in 1989. The Palissy thimbles are very different in makeup, being made of pottery and also in shape from the RW thimbles - chunkier?

The Locke thimbles - below - with Worcester's coat-of-arms - are eagerly sought after.



Locke and Co

L: the porcelain is translucent
the city crest includes three black pears

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This listing of Royal Worcester decal 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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