

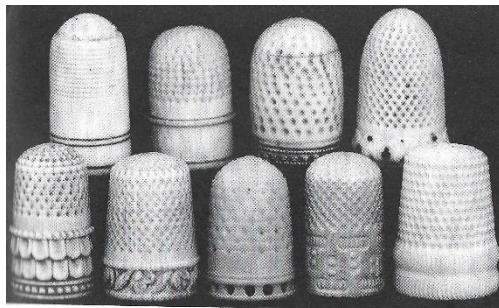
# Ivory thimbles

## elephant – hippo – mammoth – walrus – whale

### including some sewing tools

This is one of my broadest thimble topics where the thimbles described cover the longest era: thimbles from 1800 thru to 1990s. It brings together the countries where each of the types of ivory thimbles were created, across nearly two centuries.

Very few of the makers are known but where they are, they are listed at the start of each country. Most 19<sup>th</sup> century thimbles were carved by unknown hands.



1. Decorated ivory thimbles: Top Row (from left): green painted circles, red painted circles, patterned gilt metal band, steel studs (missing its cut steel band), #Made from 2 pieces of ivory.  
Bottom Row: 5 examples of carved and incised designs.

range of antique ivory thimbles

b&w photo – Di Pelham Burn

Ivory comes from the tusk or tooth of the five mammals listed above and is the same dentine as that of human teeth – dense material wrapped in a covering of enamel. Unlike bone, ivory is a solid material so it became an attractive material for carvers.

We are familiar with the whaling tradition where whales' teeth were a means of carving and decorating, to while away the long periods at sea. Whaling in Australia and the US provided vital whale oil for lighting in the nineteenth century. In 1971 whaling was banned in the US and 1972 in Australia.

Thimbles made of ivory form a very small output from any type of ivory.

eBay banned the international sale of elephant ivory in 2005 which led to a total ban in 2007. It's amazing how many 'faux' ivory thimbles have made their way onto the market since then: even those described as made in 1800! Bovine is another common term used by eBay sellers.

Mammoth ivory is not included in the eBay ivory ban, so this too may be a loophole?

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, elephant ivory became prohibitively expensive for making luxury thimbles. The discovery of celluloid, xylonite and then early plastic for thimbles in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century gave a cheap creamy alternative for thimbles. Charles Iles created thimbles of ivorine in 1913. It was close enough to ivory for collectors to test them for ivory. Ivory doesn't burn but plastic does.



examples showing the small burn testing marks on plastic thimbles



this type of synthetic material thimble became an ivory alternative for the collector's market in 1980s with faux scrimshaw sailing ships

Another cheaper alternative to animal ivory thimbles is vegetable ivory. This is the nut of the *Phytelephas macrocarpa* palm which are known as tagua nuts.



Tagua nut (vegetable ivory)

There are also carved meerschaum thimbles from Turkiye, that could be mistaken for carved ivory.  
Meerschaum is a fine chalklike white clay.



meerschaum

I have included as many catalogue references as I can find and used the following abbreviations:

KS – Kay Sullivan (Holland)  
PJW - P J Walter (Germany)  
TO – Thimbles Only (Jean Shoup USA)  
TSL – Thimble Society of London  
VN – Vingerhoednieuws (Netherlands)

As a librarian who is passionate about reading, I'd love to share these titles that relate to this topic

Lawrene Anthony *The elephant whisperer*  
Sara Gruen *Water for elephants*  
Sally Henderson *Silent footsteps*  
Mark & Delia Owens *The eye of the elephant*  
Mark & Delia Owens *Survivor's song*  
Sharon Pincot *Elephant dawn*  
Joanne Quinn *The whalebone theatre*  
Daphne Sheldrinc *An African love story*

for other topics made of natural materials see

Bog oak sewing tools  
Horn and bone thimbles  
Vegetable ivory sewing tools

## Elephant ivory

Elephant ivory is the most valuable ivory.

The nineteenth century was the era of big game hunting in Africa, which continued into the twentieth century. Elephant ivory tusks were highly prized trophies by big game hunters. This practice of shooting elephant for 'sport' was banned in 1973.

In 1989 CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endemic Species) banned the international trade in ivory. Poachers then became a massive problem for countries of southern Africa where elephants are endemic: slaughtered for their ivory to sell to the ivory hungry Chinese market.

In 1989, to deter the illegal sale of ivory Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi rocked the world when his adviser advised that the Kenyan stockpile of ivory be incinerated. It took accelerants days to burn twelve tons of ivory tusks.

In New York tons of elephant ivory tusks were crushed in Times Square in the 2010s.

Sub-Saharan African governments realised that there is more revenue to be had from tourist dollars of safari tours, than the sale of ivory: their herds are protected in the national game parks.

## American

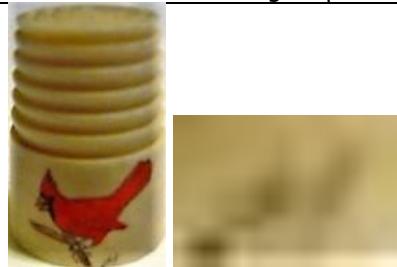
Where in the USA were these ivory thimbles made? I have entered any relevant details from the catalogues: New England or The North-West Territories?



**AR-4**  
scrimshaw whale  
1978



**M Carey**  
scrimshaw sailing ship



**DD**  
scrimshaw, handpainted cardinal



**DF**  
scrimshaw of lizard-like animal



**WF William Feeney** New England  
scrimshaw sailing ship with lighthouse  
1980



J.F.G.  
1970



JP  
scrimshaw, handpainted flower



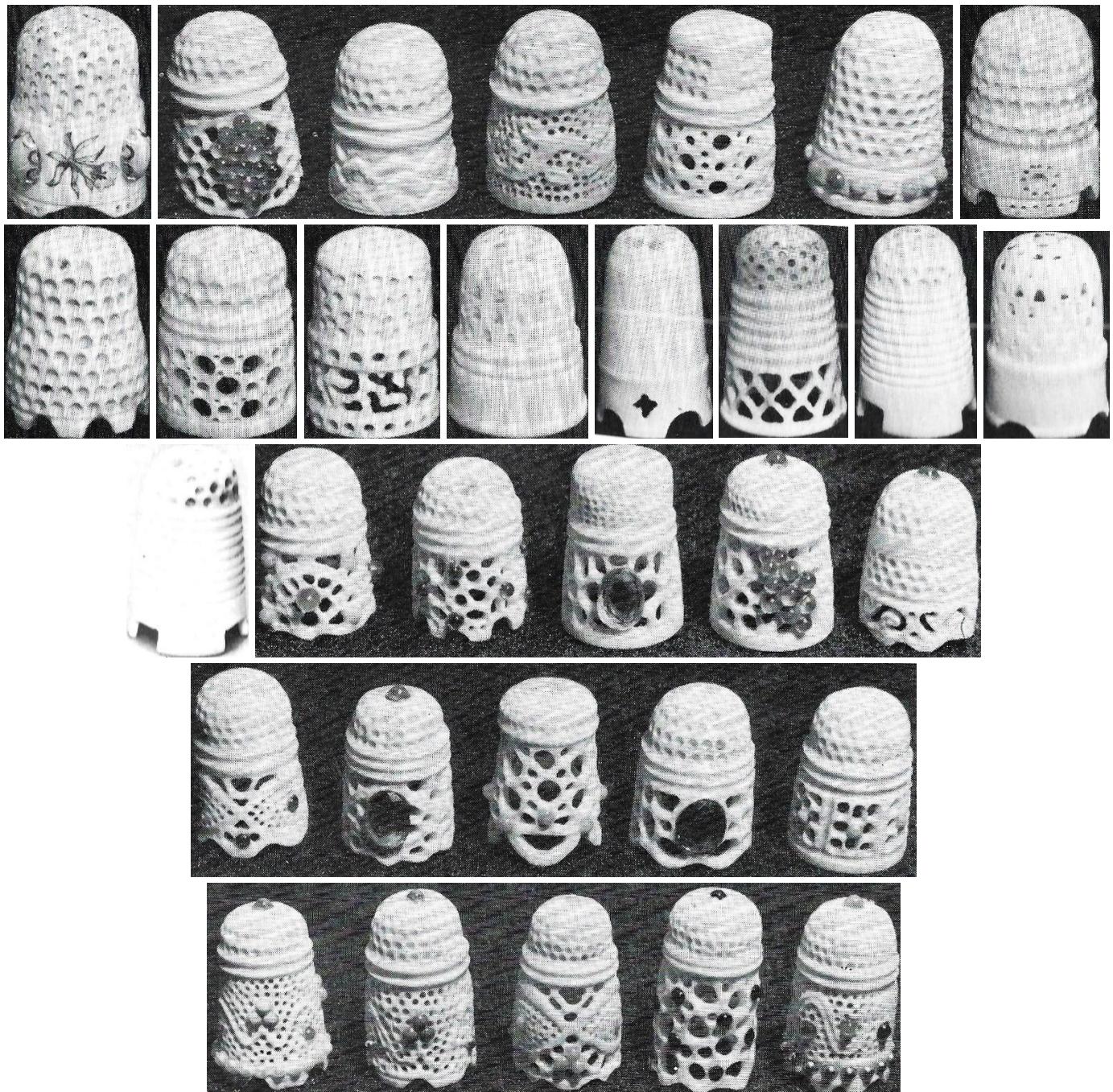
H for von Hoelle



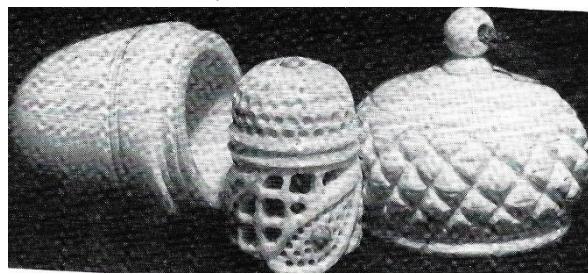
John von Hoelle Philadelphia PA

some of the range of his pierced ivory thimbles with semi-precious stones  
these stones include coral, seed pearls, aquamarine, amethyst, emerald, onyx and turquoise  
bottom R: 18ct gold birds

some have scalloped rims  
others have gold bands at rims  
von Hoelle turned these thimbles for family and friends  
1980s  
he had learnt to carve ivory in China in 1960s



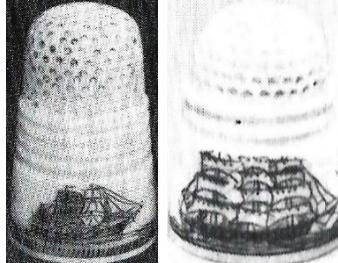
b&w photos from his book



thimble holder with matching thimble



three pierced thimbles – offered for sale on eBay as 1800s thimbles



indented first third, four or two concentric rings, scrimshaw sailing ships by ARA  
b&w photos



John in his workshop

The following batch of thimbles are machine-turned and they have the unifying design of six concentric circles turned into the upper half of the thimble. The apex too has concentric circles.

Scrimshaw sailing ships, with additional whaling symbols such as seabirds, clouds and waves which may be found on the verso, form the theme of this type of thimble.

No two sailing ships are created the same.

There are other designs as well and some of these have handpainted scrimshaw.

Signed examples are featured at the start of the American thimbles section. This batch have no maker's marks.

I am still trying to figure out why these US scrimshanders used elephant ivory to highlight their whaling industry?



apex with concentric circles – inside – accompanying leaflet



'Alaska' with state flower  
Forget-me-nots in colour  
slightly different apex



'Alaska' with state flower  
Forget-me-nots in colour



forget-me-nots in colour  
VN 96 2008



blue red and yellow handpainted flowers  
"consigned by Native American  
Inuit Artisans"



clipper  
birds  
little other scrimshaw



clipper  
heavy clouds  
birds



clipper  
with flags  
birds



clipper  
harpoon on verso



clipper  
"New England artists"  
Gim 1978



clipper  
striped clouds and seas



clipper



clipper



clipper  
whale  
birds



clipper  
whale



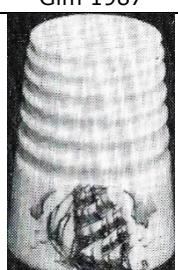
clipper  
whale  
Gim 1987



clipper  
birds



clipper



clipper



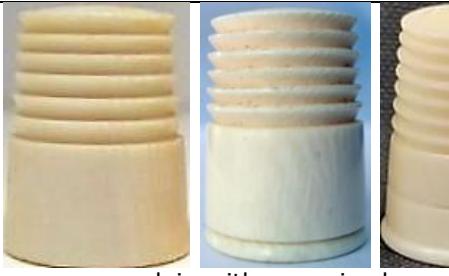
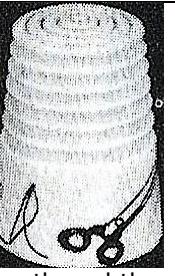
clipper  
whale



clipper  
whale

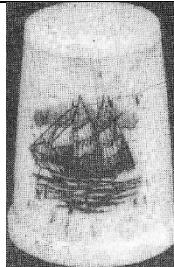
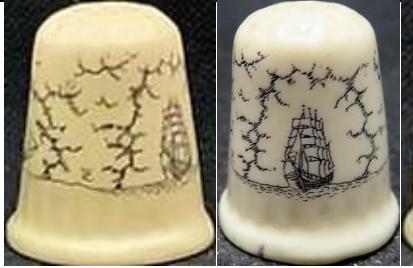


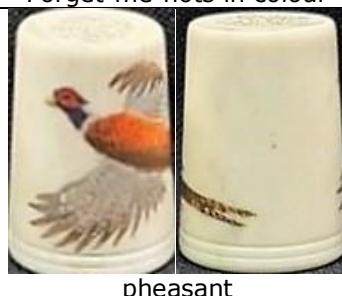
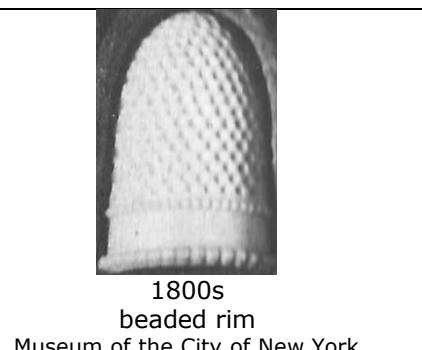
clipper  
birds clouds  
Sewing Corner 1978

 <p>clipper harpoon on verso</p>	 <p>clipper</p>	 <p>clipper with clouds and birds</p>
 <p>clipper and clouds</p>	 <p>handpainted rose pre-1989</p>	 <p>plain with carved rose</p>
 <p>plain with no scrimshaw</p>	 <p>scissors thread threaded needle Gim 1987</p>	 <p>scissors thread threaded needle Gim 1980</p>
 <p>scissors thread threaded needle handpainted "75"</p>	 <p>scissors buttons thread threaded needle</p>	
 <p>scissors thread threaded needle</p>	 <p>village wooden houses</p>	
 <p>posy of flowers handpainted</p>		 <p>bird handpainted</p>

These thimbles are different from those above: they have no concentric circles, leaving the thimble and apex smooth. Scrimshaw is similar to those above.



 <p>iris handpainted TO spring 1987</p>	 <p>iris handpainted TO winter 1984</p>	 <p>clipper lighthouse</p>
 <p>clipper whale's tail</p>	 <p>clipper whale TSL spring 1986</p>	 <p>schooner handpainted</p>
 <p>school handpainted TO spring 1987</p>	 <p>clipper whale handpainted TO winter 1984</p>	 <p>clipper handpainted TO winter 1984</p>
 <p>clipper whale handpainted TO winter 1984</p>	 <p>clipper TTG March 1986</p>	 <p>lighthouse handpainted TO winter 1984</p>
 <p>clipper with clouds</p>	 <p>clipper with clouds</p>	 <p>clipper with whale's tail</p>



thimble holder in shape of flower – thimble in flower

## Canadian

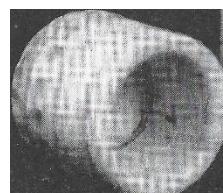


**Grenfell**  
Newfoundland and Labrador  
tooth-shaped

## Chinese

Estelle Zalkin gives the most comprehensive description of the early Chinese (Oriental) ivory thimbles: "thimbles were to form part of fitted workboxes which were then exported to Europe and America. Though they looked like thimbles, many were not usable working tools because they were bulky and not tapered inside to fit the finger. Some had indentations on the side and cap, while others were smooth and plain."

It seems that some of the craftsmen worked from drawings sent out from Europe, without having any knowledge of the function of these tools.

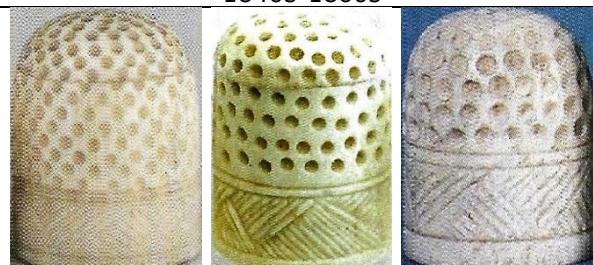


thick walled, not deep enough for use in sewing



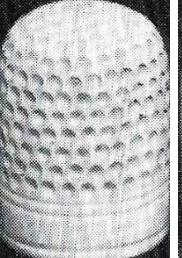
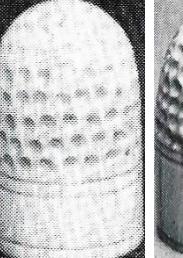
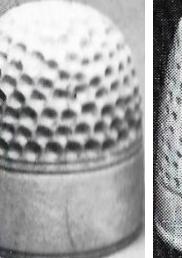
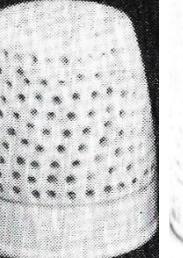
19<sup>th</sup> century  
made in two pieces

there may be one to five rows of indentations on the bottom half – the ones with four rows are identified as from 1840s-1860s



19<sup>th</sup> century  
rim of 'basket weave' patterning  
made in two parts

L: TSL winter 2000 – C: TSL summer 2007 – R: TSL spring 1994

						
 						
<p>19<sup>th</sup> century made in one piece bottom L: 1830s KS December 1984 bottom R: carved roundels on narrow band TSL spring 2004</p>						
						
1910s etched elephant			handpainted crane on nest painted upsidedown		Chinese scene signed	
						
<p>modern etched and painted bird and chrysanthemum Chinese signature on verso</p>						
						
<p>20<sup>th</sup> century carved dragons R: TSL winter 1989</p>					carved dragon	
						
	1970s				carved alternating indentations and striations	



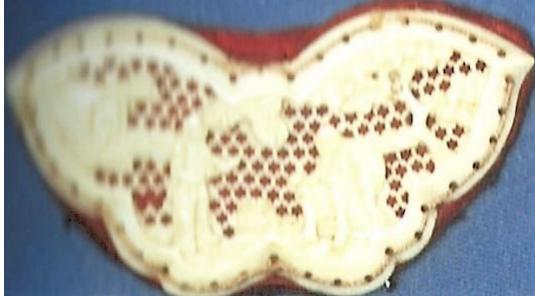
carved sewing tools from a workbox



thimble holder  
etched Chinese scene of mountains and valleys all  
round  
signed



thimble holder  
pierced with carved moths and birds design all over



butterfly pinwheel - Canton



late 19<sup>th</sup> century carved sewing tools - Canton



53



knotting shuttle



cotton barrels on plinth



clamp



tape measure - missing tape



etched needlecase  
signed



etched tatting shuttle  
signed



pincushion

## Dutch

The only examples for Dutch ivory thimbles are those identified as from convents. These were the personal possessions of women entering a convent.



19<sup>th</sup> century  
tortoiseshell rim  
apex is of silver with a Gabler star  
from a Brabant Monastery belonging to a novice

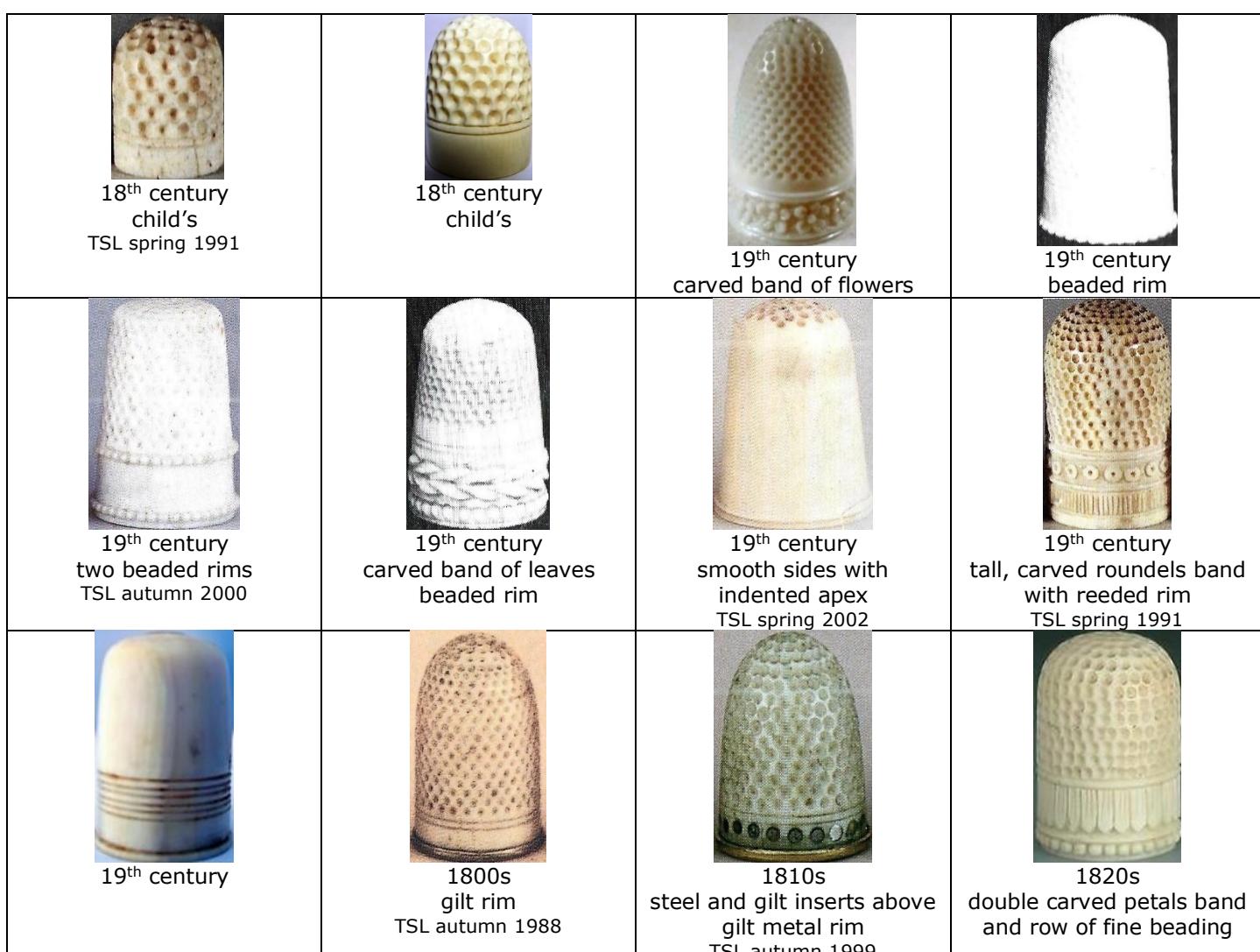


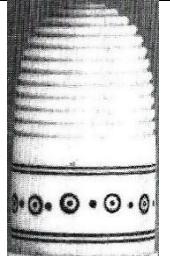
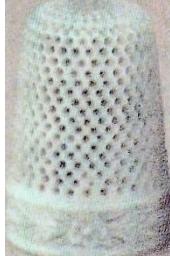
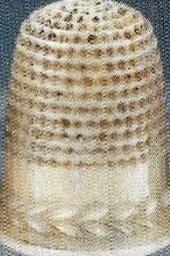
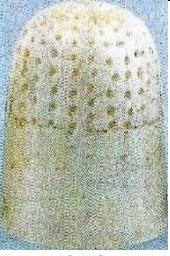
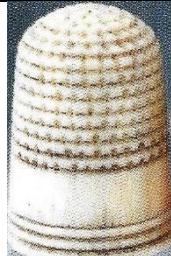
convent thimble with silver band  
L: TSL autumn 1993

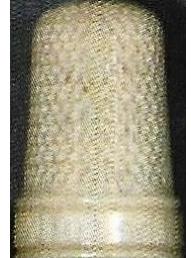
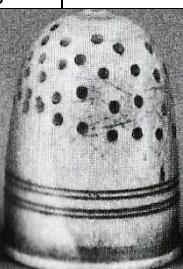
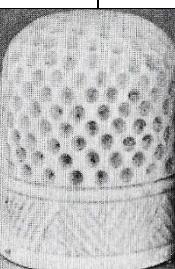
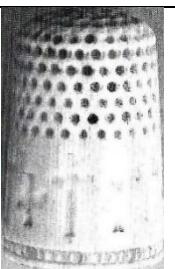
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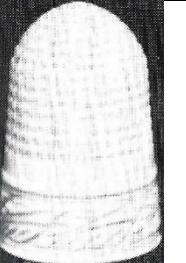
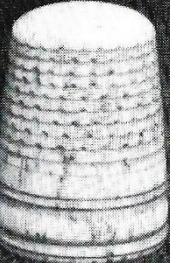
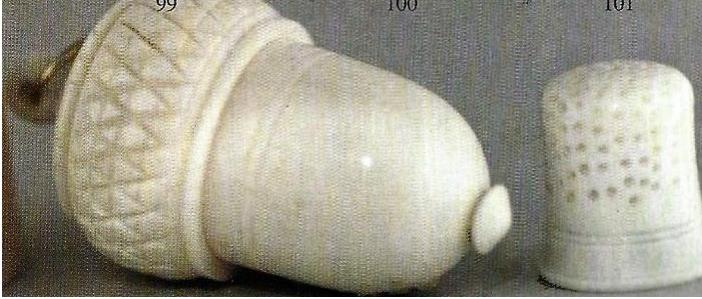
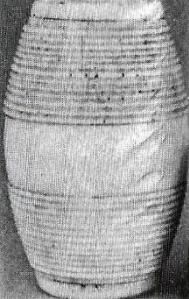
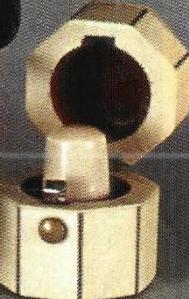
Unless mentioned as from somewhere else, I assume all TSL ivory thimbles are English.

I have noticed that thimbles listed in the TSL catalogues in the 1980s, had their details changed by the time McConnel published her *The story of the thimble* in 1997. These later descriptions are what I have used. An example is the inconsistencies when describing 'basket weave carved rim' attributed to Chinese, Indian and English carvers.



			
1820s child's narrow band of basket weave	1820s finely dimpled beehive shape with gilt metal band TSL summer 1992	1820s Madras work or hot needle decoration around band	1830s carved band of sloping leaves TSL spring 2007
			
1830s gilt metal rim TSL winter 1987	1830s carved roundels on wide band TSL autumn 1995	1830s turned TSL summer 1993	1830s carved band of diagonal leaves TSL winter 1997
			
1840s carved band of flowers TSL summer 1993	1840s narrow carved band of fruit flowers and leaves TSL autumn 1988	1840s carved band of stylised leaves beaded rim TSL autumn 1988	1840s carved band of leaves on wide band TSL autumn 2004
			
1840s child's TSL summer 1985	1840s narrow carved band of flowers TSL spring 1992	1840s TSL winter 2005	1840s carved band of leaves beaded rim
			
1840s TSL summer 2004	1840s-1860s carved narrow band of roundels TSL spring 1992	1840s-1860s double carved petals band and two rows of fine beading TSL winter 2001	1840s-1860s double carved petals band row of beading TSL autumn 2003

				
<p>1840s-1850s wide row of carved leaves hand indented hole in apex which would be a nerve hole TSL summer 1988, winter 1998</p>	<p>1850s plain raised narrow band TSL autumn 1992</p>	<p>1850s TSL winter 2005</p>	<p>1860s TSL winter 1984</p>	
				
<p>1860s child's TSL autumn 1986</p>	<p>1860s turned bands handmade indentations TSL spring 1986</p>	<p>1860s-1870s elegantly carved band TSL spring 1989</p>	<p>1860s-1870s rim of 'basket weave' patterning L: TSL spring 1986 - R: KS September 1988</p>	
				
<p>1870s bands of carved flowers TSL spring 1994</p>	<p>1870s carved band of flowers crack TSL spring 2000</p>	<p>1880s</p>	<p>1880s-1900s carved crosses band</p>	
				
<p>1986 turned in Cornwall by a hobby woodturner limited to <b>50</b> KS December 1984</p>	<p>1988 turned in Cornwall by a hobby woodturner based on Hungarian thimble design limited to <b>50</b> KS July 1988</p>	<p>beehive shape crack TSL summer 1992</p>	<p>carved band of flowers</p>	
				
<p>handpunched indentations gold band rim</p>	<p>handpunched indentations wide plain band</p>	<p>narrow band of carved roundels</p>	<p>'maid's' size carved leaves on wide band with ornate pattern on apex TSL winter 1986</p>	

			
wider gilt band on rim	thick gold band around rim	carved band of leaves	narrow row of roundels TSL winter 2007
			
	modern smooth with carved lines black spot on apex would have been nerve	child's smooth all over	
			
narrow band of carved roses	Madras work hot needle decoration		Stanhope peep
			
99 100 101			
acorn shaped thimble holder with thimble TSL autumn 2001		acorn shaped thimble holder with thimble	
			
barrel-shaped thimble holder TSL spring 1986	urn-shaped thimble holder carved fruit on lid TSL autumn 1992	egg-cup-shaped thimble holder TSL autumn 1996	panelled thimble holder with thimble TSL spring 1996

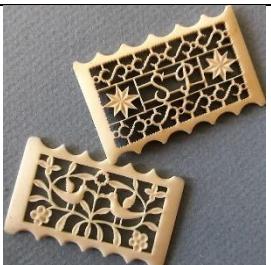
			
knitting needle gauge 1840s	thimble holder	thimble holder	
			
tape measure in shape of handpainted chess castle	needlecase in shape of parasol	needlecase in shape of handpainted parasol	stiletto 1860s
			
needlecase in shape of spaniel 1800s	thread winder		thread winders
			
Madras work or hot needle decoration needlecase	pique thimble case	Madras work or hot needle decoration needlebook with felt leaves	
			
sewing clamp with pincushion ornately carved thumb screw 1840s	thimble holder dyed red 1870s	pincushion and emery 1860s	



needlebook  
1810s-1830s



needlebooks carved  
1810s-1830s



thread winders  
1810s-1830s



pincushions  
1810s-1830s



pinwheels  
Madras work  
1810s-1830s



thread winder  
'C'  
1810s-1830s



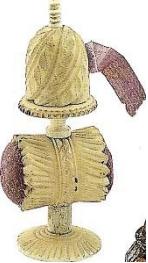
pinwheel  
etched flower 'A Present from Scarborough'



early 19<sup>th</sup> century carved sewing tools



Madras work or hot needle decoration sewing tools



emery, tape measure and pincushion  
1860s



necessaire in ivory and pold pique



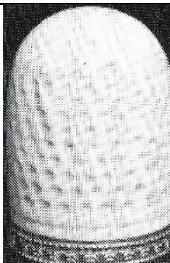
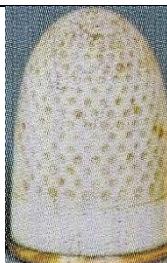
Cartier workbox

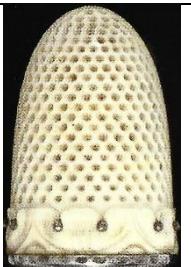


wide variety of Madras work or hot needle decoration sewing tools

### French

The French ivory thimbles of the 19th century tend to follow the form of the Palais Royale mother-of-pearl thimbles.

			
9ct gold rim	18 <sup>th</sup> century carved band TSL spring 1999	19 <sup>th</sup> century clouté studded decoration within fine carving	19 <sup>th</sup> century roundels around rim
			
19 <sup>th</sup> century beaded gold rim b&w photo	19 <sup>th</sup> century gold rim	19 <sup>th</sup> century beaded gold rim	1800s beaded wide gold rim TSL winter 2000
			
1820s beaded gold rim	1820s gold rim	1820s gold rim VN 60 2000	1820s gold rim

			
1820s clouté studded steel decoration and rim within fine carving TSL summer 1988	1820s Dieppe carvers carved band of a duck shoot: band of birds in trees, reeds, man with gun TSL summer 1988	1820s-1830s wide band of carving TSL summer 1993	1820s-1830s Dieppe carvers carved band of flowers and leaves TSL summer 1993
			
1840s Dieppe carvers carved band of flowers gilt metal rim TSL summer 1986	1900s carved temple building with sunflower on verso narrow band of basket weave R: apex Stanhope showing eleven turbaned men made for M.M.Shah & Co for Indian market		gilt metal rim L: showing deep crack
			
gilt metal rim	carved band of flowers and leaves TSL autumn 2000		cut steel on scallops with steel rim
			
Dieppe carvers carved band of flowers and leaves	smooth height 25mm		handpainted
			
scrimshaw band 'Souvenir de Dieppe' carved by Dieppe carvers on Normandy coast – flourished in 17 <sup>th</sup> century in 14 <sup>th</sup> C they imported ivory from west coast of Africa (TSL spring 1989) Chateau Museum in Dieppe has largest collection of ivory in Europe TSL winter 2001			



18<sup>th</sup> century  
thimble holder with fretwork  
thimble: plain wide band



1840s  
thimble holder and needlecase  
banded in gold and steel studs



1800s  
thimble as part of etui  
gilt metal studs



scent bottle with ivory thimble and ivory base  
with metal studs  
TSL winter 1989



thimble holder with carved fretwork  
thimble: plain wide band



Dieppe pinwheel  
carved flowers and fruit



sewing kit with clouté studded decoration



needlecases with clouté studded decoration



selection of Dieppe carved sewing tools  
late 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century



Dieppe carved needlecases  
in the shape of fisher folk mostly all holding a fish



19<sup>th</sup> century  
Shibayama inlay  
insects on pea pod needlecases



sewing kit carved in shape of pinecone



19<sup>th</sup> century  
Shibayama inlay  
insects on sewing case



sewing clamp with pincushion and  
thimble



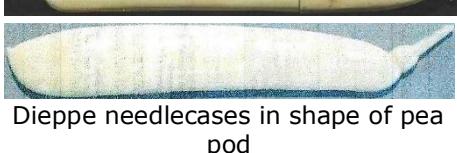
Dieppe pierced needlebook



needlecase with blue enamelled  
heart and red stones



needlecase with eglomise painting  
1780s



Dieppe needlecases in shape of pea  
pod



needlecase reel stand



butterfly pinwheel



pinwheel



pinwheel



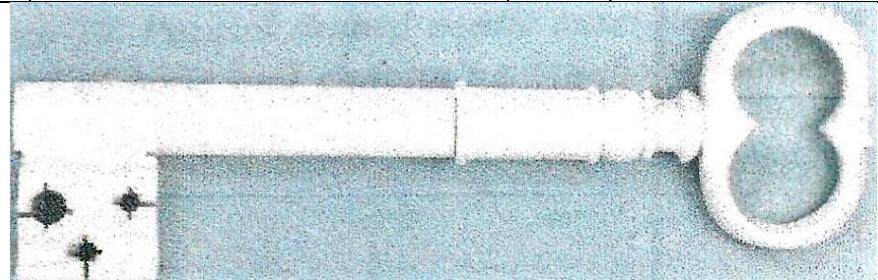
Dieppe pinwheel  
1840s



combination pincushion needlecase  
Stanhope 'Palais du Trocadero  
Exposition Universelle Paris'



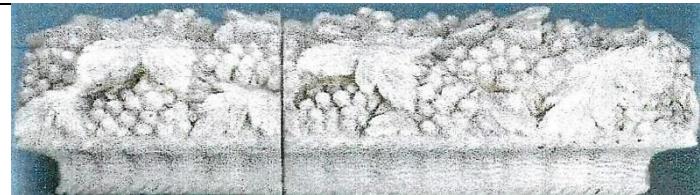
Dieppe pinwheel



Dieppe key needlecase  
1820s



Dieppe sewing clamp with pincushion



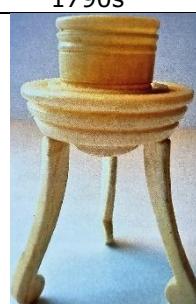
Dieppe needlecase  
basket of grapes



Dieppe figural needlecase  
1790s



Dieppe needlecase  
flowers and leaves  
sliding lid  
1780s



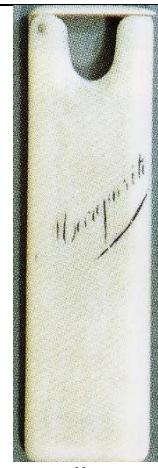
thimble holder stand



etui with cut steel  
1790s



pinwheels  
Dieppe carved flowers  
1810s-1830s



needlecase

## German



Feld 5 1988 – PJW 85-6

## Indian

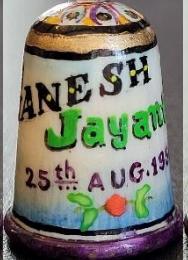
Only male Indian elephants have tusks – and then not each male elephant.



1952  
handpierced with stars shapes  
26 pearls set around rim



1956  
handpainted 'Ganesh Jayanti 25<sup>th</sup> August 1956' on verso



1957  
carved bearded male figural



1957  
Baby Jesus with Mary  
'Happy New Year 1957'  
only thimble Motiwala ever signed



handpainted Tah Mahal  
apex has floral touches of gold highlights  
gilt painted band

L: woman's portrait on verso R set: portrait is missing in the blank oval



carved flowers and leaves  
lower band has carvings of a lion, water buffalo and rhino  
apex has a carved lion's head  
silver rim with fourteen rubies



blue foil

sapphire set into apex which is carved with flower  
using an Iles' & Gomms plastic thimble 'Made in England  
Non-flam' he covered it in blue foil which shines thru the  
piercings  
the black bands are scrimshaw



handpainted Taj Mahal with Mumtaz  
richly floral apex



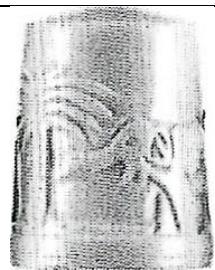
these thimbles were all sourced from Alta Thompson's collection 1950s



carved elephant



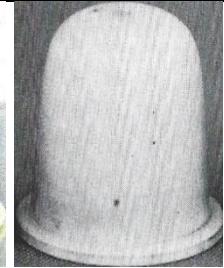
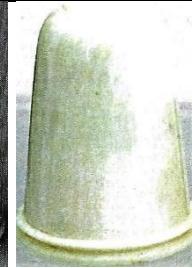
carved elephant



carved elephant and stylised tree



1850s  
made in two parts



1860s  
smooth all over  
for sewing pure silk

as there is no sharp surface to snag the silk  
for inclusion in Sadeli workboxes for India's European local market  
photos 3-6: TSL winter 1986, summer 2007



1890s  
Made in two parts



1890s



1900s



handpainted with domed brass apex



handpainted with flat brass apex



Sadeli work  
fine steel insets

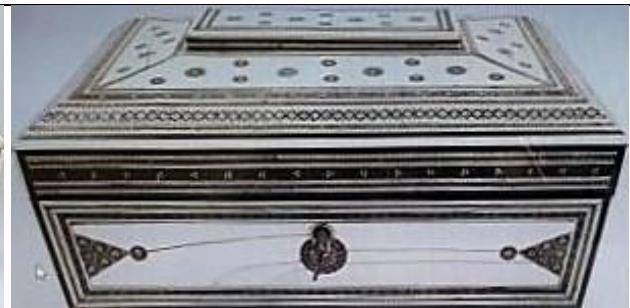
Anglo-Indian - all made for European market



19<sup>th</sup> century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox with brass feet  
teak and steel laid down in fine strips - ivory tools also showing tape measure



19<sup>th</sup> century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox  
teak and steel laid down in fine strips  
ivory tools also showing thimble



19<sup>th</sup> century Gudgerati's Sadeli workbox  
ivory, teak and steel laid down in fine shapes  
L: 1840s



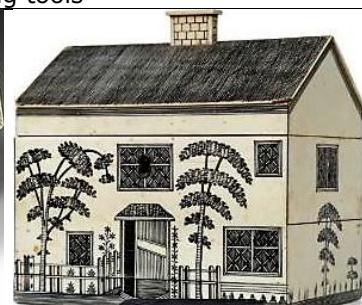
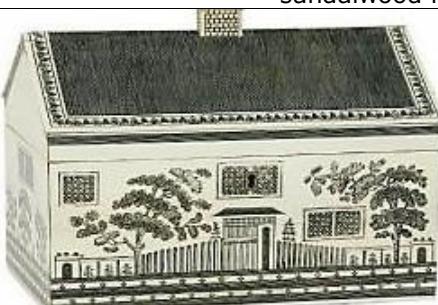
horn and ivory workbox  
Vizagapatam, east India  
late 18<sup>th</sup> century  
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



ivory workbox decorated with Lac  
contains ivory sewing tools  
ivory lids also decorated with lac



horn and ivory workbox  
Vizagapatam, east India  
late 18<sup>th</sup> century  
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



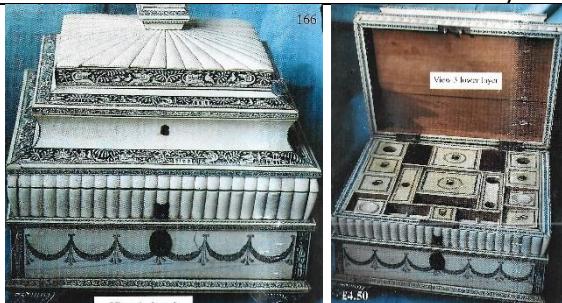
ivory and sandalwood workbox  
Vizagapatam, east India  
late 18<sup>th</sup> century  
sandalwood interior contains ivory sewing tools



ivory and steel workbox



ivory and sandalwood workbox



sewing casket  
with ink work Vizagapatam, east India  
1790-1810



workbox  
Georgian



display of Indian workboxes



stiletto combined with pincushion

### Italian or Portuguese



thimble holder in shape of flower bud  
thimble inscribed on apex in black 'MJ'  
on base letter 'd 28 Februa'  
1830s  
TSL winter 1998

## Japanese

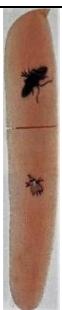
Shibayama work 1870s



etui



needlecase



needlecase in shape of peapod

## Kenyan

Amboseli National Park is known as the home of the African elephant in Kenya



carved elephant

it had a certificate of export 1980 from a Kenyan game reserve  
TSL winter 1997

## Namibian

Etosha National Park is the home of elephants in northern Namibia.



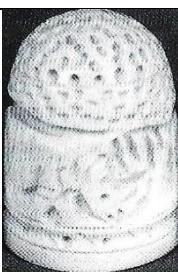
carved elephant



carved elephant



carved leaves



carved rhino

## New Zealand



1970



lace bobbin  
handpainted New Zealand native bird and flower

## Russian



scrimshaw with figures  
does the presence of a reindeer indicate that this is bone not ivory?  
'Sep 18'

## South African

Kruger National Park is the largest game reserve in South Africa.

The elephant ivory for these thimbles would have been sourced thru game parks from either culled or elephants who died of natural causes – never from poached ivory.

African elephants are far larger than their Indian counterparts. Both male and female African elephants have tusks.



**Tswana Products** Bophuthatswana



**John van der Westhuizen** Phalaborwa  
close to Kruger Park  
smooth  
sticker with 'JJ Ivory' in apex



carved elephant and trees



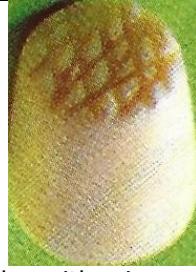
carved elephant and trees



carved elephant



## Zairean



smooth sides with criss-cross on apex

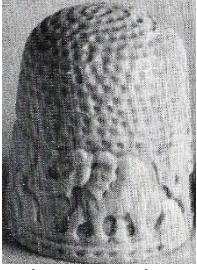
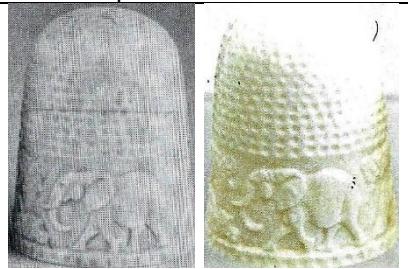
## Zimbabwean

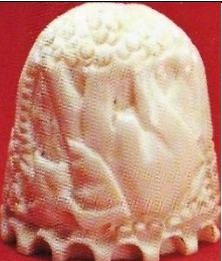
Hwange National Park (previously Wankie Game Reserve in Rhodesia) is the home of their elephants. The ivory carvers were from families with a carving tradition, "showing the finest workmanship, and a high degree of excellence" (TSL). Thimble sales provided much needed income.

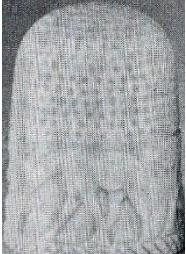
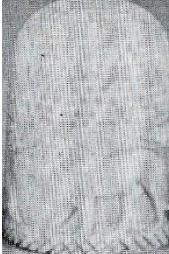
Many thimbles are straight sided, which would make them difficult to use for sewing. Being hand-carved no two thimbles are ever the same: even when they seem identical, the rim will be carved differently. The scenes continue around the thimbles. They are all hand carved including creating the thimble itself.

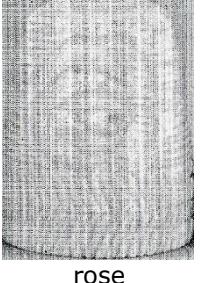
TSL sourced their ivory thimbles thru game reserves or protected 'nature parks'.

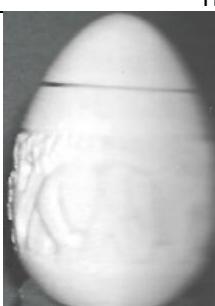
A photograph of an ivory thimble with an abstract, geometric design. The top part is smooth with a criss-cross pattern on the apex.	A photograph of an ivory thimble with an abstract design featuring bands of thick, textured lines.	A photograph of an ivory thimble with an abstract, rounded design.
A photograph of an ivory thimble with a design featuring vertical leaf patterns.	A photograph of an ivory thimble with an abstract, textured design.	A photograph of two ivory thimbles with abstract, textured designs.
A photograph of two ivory thimbles with abstract, textured designs.	A photograph of two ivory thimbles. The left one features the Great Zimbabwe Bird (Hungwe) as the national symbol of Zimbabwe.	A photograph of an ivory thimble with a detailed scrimshaw design of a buffalo and elephants.

 <p>elephants and trees black band may be of many strands of elephant hair TSL winter 1989</p>	 <p>elephants and trees TSL spring 1984</p>	 <p>elephants VN 15 1990</p>
 <p>elephants TSL summer 1985</p>	 <p>elephants single strand of elephant hair (top) and one of silver</p>	 <p>elephant single strand of elephant hair (top) and one of silver</p>
 <p>elephants reeded rim</p>		 <p>elephants single strand of elephant hair (top) and one of silver this example shows how difficult it is to neatly join both hair and silver</p>
 <p>elephants with trees</p>	 <p>elephants with trees</p>	 <p>elephants</p>
 <p>elephant TSL summer 1989 and summer 2007</p>	 <p>elephants TSL</p>	 <p>elephants TSL</p>

				
elephants TSL spring 1986		elephants		elephants TSL spring 1989
				scrimshaw elephant
elephants		elephants ellies are upsidedown scalloped rim		
				scrimshaw elephant and large tree
scrimshaw elephant		scrimshaw elephant		scrimshaw elephant and large tree
				elephant
elephants carved in bulbous shape upsidedown		elephant		elephant
				
elephants narrow band showing five of six carvings				
				
elephants		elephant		scrimshaw gemsbuck and trees

 <p>scrimshaw giraffe with hills</p>	 <p>giraffe</p>	 <p>scrimshaw giraffe and trees</p>
 <p>scrimshaw giraffe and trees</p>	 <p>guinea fowl</p>	 <p>'Harari' and elephants and trees</p>
 <p>hippos and trees single strand of elephant hair (top) and one of silver</p>	 <p>hippos and trees</p>	 <p>hippos single strand of elephant hair (top) and one of silver</p>
 <p>African hut (rare subject) TSL spring 1989</p>	 <p>lions TSL summer 1989</p>	 <p>ostriches</p>
 <p>rhinos and trees</p>	 <p>rhino</p>	 <p>rhinos and trees</p>
 <p>rhinos</p>	 <p>rhino</p>	 <p>water buffalo TSL summer 1989</p>

					
scrimshaw zebras and trees		scrimshaw zebras and trees unknown extra mark 'FO4D'		'Zimbabwe' and Great Zimbabwe Bird (Hungwe)	
					
leaves		leaves		leaves	
					
flowers different shape		flowers		horizontal ridges – smooth and tactile	
					
plainly indented TSL spring 1986		handpainted woman stamping corn		handpainted woman drumming	
					
handpainted woman stamping corn		flower with elaborate band		plainly indented TSL spring 1984	
					
flowers		rose TSL autumn 1986		carved roses	

				
				
				
				
				
				
				
				
thimble holder with carved elephants the base is not centred so it can never stand erect			thimble holder with carved elephants	

## Hippo ivory

### German

Hippo teeth were sourced from South African game reserves by the ivory carvers in Odenwald, Germany. They are handpainted. There is a Museum of Ivory in the Odenwald.

			
house VN 96 2008	rose TTG December 1995	flowers VN 96 2008	crane TTG December 1995
			
Lily VN 80 2004	lilies with Greek key rim	trees and rocks scene VN 91 2007	trees scene VN 91 2007

## Mammoth ivory

Fossilised woolly mammoth tusks are sourced from the frozen tundra in Siberia.

See the Horn and bone thimbles topic for examples of mammoth bone thimbles created by Brad Elfrink.

### American

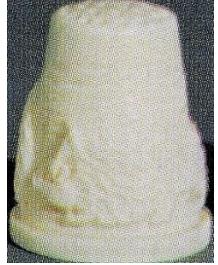
		
<b>Fish Creek Company</b> Ketchikan Alaska smooth		

## Chinese

				
scrimshaw painted fish Het vingerhoedje 4-1		scrimshaw cat Het vingerhoedje 4-1		scrimshaw scene VN 80 2004

## German

The mammoth carvers are based in Odenwald. There is a Museum of Ivory in the city.

			
carved abstract design VN 82 2004	carved vertical leaves VN 82 2004	carved giraffe VN 96 2008	limited to <b>500</b> PJW 85-86
			
carved bird Het vingerhoedje 4-1	carved rings limited to <b>500</b> PJW 85-86	carved ducks VN 31 1994, 81 2004	carved hippo VN 81 2004
			
carved rings Het vingerhoedje 4-1	plain Fel 13 1990	carved leaves VN 82 2004	carved rose band scalloped rim VN 79 2004
			
carved rose band four concentric rings VN 96 2008	carved rose fine rings on upper body Gim 1979	carved rose band scalloped rim limited to <b>500</b> PJW 85-86	carved rose band scalloped rim Het vingerhoedje 4-1
			
VN 38 1996	abstract design carving VN 82 2004	carved all over leaf pattern VN 82 2004	carved elephant VN 82 2004

			
carved acanthis swirls VN 86 2005	carved diagonal diagonal dots VN 86 2005	carved hanging leaves grooves VN 86 2005	carved swirled diagonals VN 86 2005
			
carved band with indentations	scrimshaw church	carved band of flowers	carved head
			
carved rings	carved flower on apex scalloped rim	carved flower on apex scalloped pierced rim	carved flower on apex
			
carved lily-of-the-valley	handpainted scene scalloped rim	carved mammoth	carved vertical wide grooves VN 86 2005
			
tall shape with very wide band VN 91 2007			carved rose Collectors Corner 1977

## Russian

The mammoth carvers were based in the Tobolsk factory in Siberia.



## Walrus ivory

### American

These teeth are sourced by Native Alaskans as part of their hunting traditions. I have chosen the term Native Alaskan, rather than the term of Eskimo that I grew up using.

These pewter thimbles that appeared from the 1980s onwards contain a very small piece of scrimshaw ivory in the apex.



L: maker's mark AS – R: Nicholas Gish



**Cheri Ables**  
fossilised



**Herminia Anslinger** Alaska  
'Alaska 49' with star  
commemorating Alaska as 49<sup>th</sup> State 1959  
maker's details from Alta Thompson's catalogue



**Arnold Kayutak**

bird in nest

Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details

distinctive maker's mark

from Alta Thompson's collection

1950s



**Arnold Kayutak**

walrus head

Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details

distinctive maker's mark

from Alta Thompson's collection

1950s



**Simon Pasruk**

sewing set in shape of seal

1978



**Jerome Saclamana**

baleen seal needlecase with thimble

2010s



face

Native Alaskan carving

maker's marks of two straight lines and one diagonal line

from Alta Thompson's collection

1950s



seal scene

Native Alaskan scrimshaw

maker's mark of two straight lines and

one diagonal line

from Alta Thompson's collection

1950s



totem bird  
Native Alaskan scrimshaw  
maker's mark of two straight lines and one diagonal line



Arctic fox with trees and midnight sun  
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details  
maker's mark of two straight lines and one diagonal line



Native Alaskan face  
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details  
from Alta Thompson's collection  
1950s



walrus  
Native Alaskan carving  
finely carved lines from centre of apex  
not well carved on inside



ring shape  
Native Alaskan carving with scrimshaw details  
figure is known as a Billiken doll – a good luck charm  
from Alta Thompson's collection  
1950s

 <p>plain</p>	 <p>scrimshaw Native Alaskan dogsled</p>	 <p>scrimshaw Native Alaskan sailing ship, whale and harpooner</p>
 <p>Native Alaskan large indentations on shorter thimble</p>	 <p>1920s Stanhope peep with 'Niagara Falls'</p>	 <p>1930s smooth all over <b>Ketchikan</b> Alaska</p>
	 <p>horse's head shape Native Alaskan carving from Alta Thompson's collection 1950s</p>	
 <p>owl shape Native Alaskan carving from Alta Thompson's collection 1950s</p>		 <p>peacocks atop Native Alaskan carving from Alta Thompson's collection 1950s</p>
 <p>7 IVORY WALRUS TEETH BUTTONS buttons</p>		 <p>needlecase Alaska</p>



scissors  
early 20<sup>th</sup> century

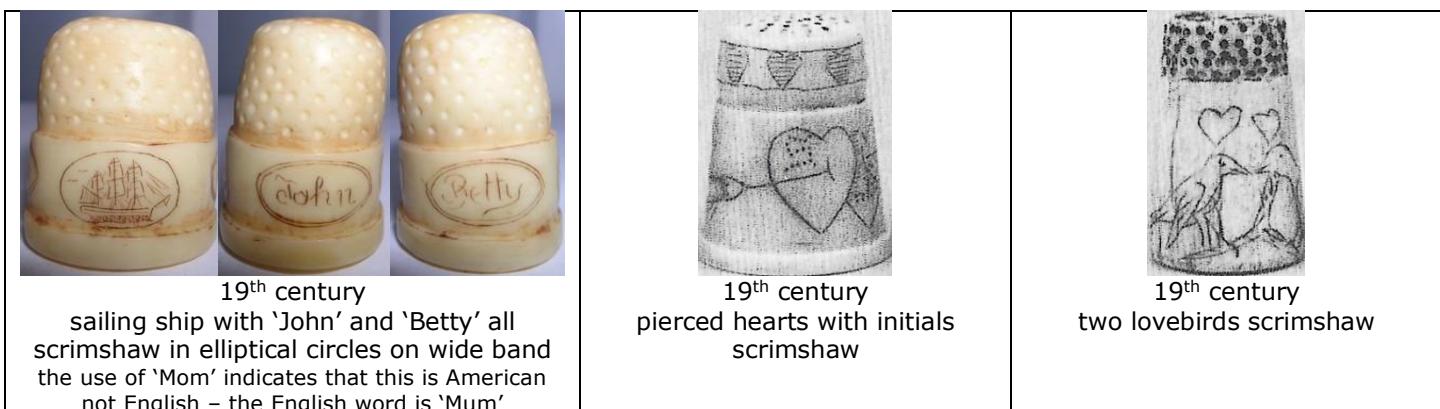
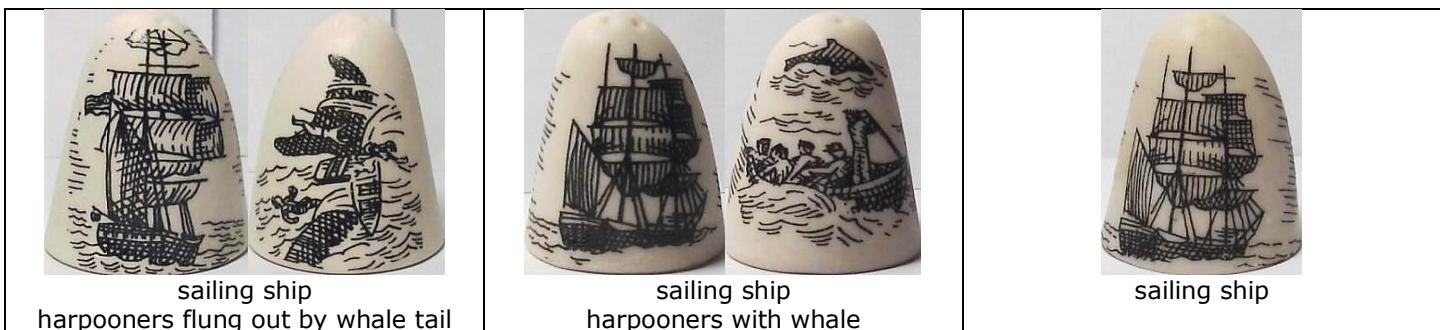
## Whale ivory Sperm and Orca whales

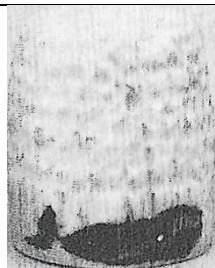
Whales have 23 teeth and these can be carved.

### American

The heart of the US whale oil industry was Nantucket MA, from 17<sup>th</sup> century until 1971 when it was banned.

The thimble is whale tooth-shaped. There is scope for greater scrimshaw detail in the harpooning scenes.





19<sup>th</sup> century  
scrimshaw whale



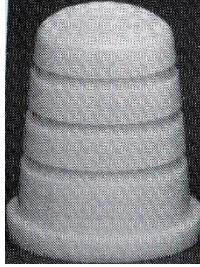
scrimshaw on band  
'I love Ann'



scrimshaw "Sir N W Ben ..."



carved flowers and leaves



sperm whale  
VN 19 1991



'Mother'  
1800s



handcarved in Alaska



handcarved in Alaska



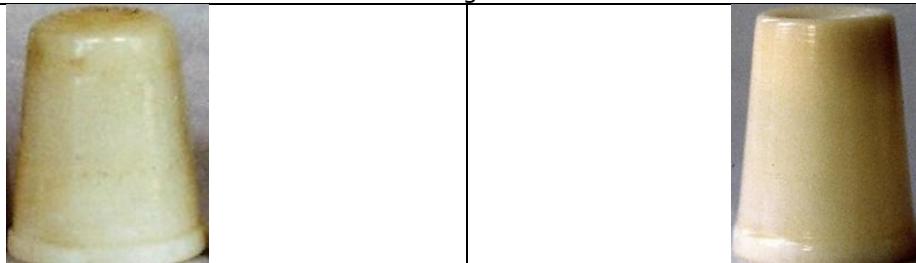
narwhale  
New England  
VH 73



Alaska  
carved ring  
1800s




**Jamie Bell** (JB) Albany WA  
scrimshaw sailing ships  
'Running Home'



**Ralph Bennet** Albany WA

Hand-turned dainty small ivory thimbles are made of Sperm Whale ivory. They are completely unadorned, with a flat or slightly concave apex. There are rings incised in the apex and there is a rim to the thimbles. The beauty of the ivory is shown as these thimbles have been polished to a fine sheen. There are no maker's marks but a card accompanying the thimbles gives the maker's name and address. The thimbles were made in the 1980s.



flowers and leaves



acorns



band of flowers



sailing ship



sailing ship and lighthouse



sailing ship  
'Endeavour'



band of flowers and leaves



lighthouse



posy of flowers and leaves



koala



flowers



posy of flowers and leaves



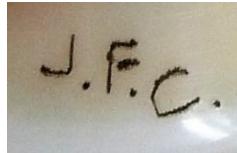
flowers

### James Cumberland-Brown (J.F.C.) WA

James is renowned for his scrimshaw. He acquired a great quantity of Sperm Whale teeth before the sale of whale ivory was banned in 1972. This miniaturist, from the Royal School of Fine Arts, has created exquisite scrimshaw thimbles. The scenes are carved with a probe or sharpened nail and then black oil paint is rubbed into the carving, to bring them to life. The thimbles were supplied with a certificate proclaiming 'This is to certify that this tooth was taken off the West Australian Coast prior to 1972'.

James turns the thimbles himself and the shape varies from thimble to thimble. Originally residing in York, Western Australia, where visitors to 'Hillside' could watch this artist at work, he then moved to East Fremantle.

James died in 2003.



#### *Certificate of Authenticity*

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THIS SCRIMSHAW  
WAS CREATED BY

JAMES CUMBERLAND-BROWN  
IN HIS STUDIO AT "HILLSIDE", YORK,  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

SIGNED: .....

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT  
THIS TOOTH WAS TAKEN OFF  
THE WEST AUSTRALIAN COAST  
PRIOR TO

1972

J.F.C.

SIGNED: .....

DESCRIPTION OF PIECE Thimble with Ship and  
Lighthouse

JCB York W.A. 1991

## English

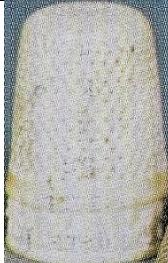
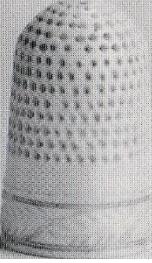
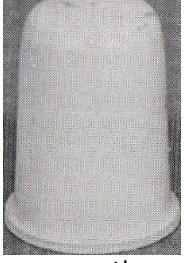
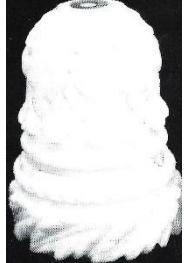


Stanhope peep  
1920s

 <p>posy of flowers and leaves</p>	 <p>flowers</p>
<p><b>James Cumberland-Brown (J.F.C.) WA</b></p> <p>James is renowned for his scrimshaw. He acquired a great quantity of Sperm Whale teeth before the sale of whale ivory was banned in 1972. This miniaturist, from the Royal School of Fine Arts, has created exquisite scrimshaw thimbles. The scenes are carved with a probe or sharpened nail and then black oil paint is rubbed into the carving, to bring them to life. The thimbles were supplied with a certificate proclaiming 'This is to certify that this tooth was taken off the West Australian Coast prior to 1972'.</p> <p>James turns the thimbles himself and the shape varies from thimble to thimble. Originally residing in York, Western Australia, where visitors to 'Hillside' could watch this artist at work, he then moved to East Fremantle.</p> <p>James died in 2003.</p> <p><i>Certificate of Authenticity</i></p> <p>THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THIS SCRIMSHAW WAS CREATED BY</p> <p>JAMES CUMBERLAND-BROWN IN HIS STUDIO AT "HILLSIDE", YORK, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.</p> <p>SIGNED: .....</p> <p>J.F.C.</p> <p>SIGNED: .....</p> <p>DESCRIPTION OF PIECE Thimble with Ship and Lighthouse</p> <p>JCB York W.A. 1991</p>	

 <p>Stanhope peep 1920s</p>
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## No other details

 <p>1950s 12 tiny elephants carved around the rim dyed pink</p>	 <p>carved roses</p>	 <p>1870s European fine horizontal lines with gold collar TSL autumn 2003</p>	 <p>narrow carved band VN 60 2000</p>
 <p>carved vertical ferns</p>	 <p>carved flower</p>	 <p>carved flowers with leaves</p>	 <p>narrow leaves band VN 43 1997</p>
 <p>carved vertical leaves band</p>	 <p>smooth sides</p>	 <p>smooth</p>	 <p>carved leaves on wide band VN 50 1998</p>
 <p>carved flower with leaves on apex</p>	 <p>deeply carved leaves rim</p>	 <p>wide band of finely carved zigzag</p>	 <p>modern carved mice dyed pale pink</p>
 <p>mini thimble holder carved flower op apex</p>			



marine ivory sewing kit  
scrimshaw THAI temple scene all round and thimble  
has deity and turret



carved ivory sewing kit in shape of corn cob, including  
thimble

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This listing of Ivory 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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