Thimbles made from unusual materials

These thimbles were created for the collectables market – created mainly in 1980s and 1990s. There must have been a big demand for thimbles made of different materials for such a huge number created. There are still thimble collectors today who specialise in the unusual materials range.

I knew of the popular types of material like stone thimbles or those crocheted from cotton – the papier mâché from the Philippines. Once I started to find photos for this topic, I was stunned – there are thimbles from close to 100 different and unusual materials. 1% of them were created in the late 1800s and during the 19th century: gutta percha, tortoiseshell (no apologies for including John Piercy's thimbles here) and vulcanite.

Some of the materials used were quite fragile, so unable to retain their thimble shape. In this instance they were placed over metal, wood or plastic thimbles (like beaded thimbles). Some were made to be used for the purpose created – like leather thimbles. I have made it clear under the specific materials, the thimbles that are not included within the scope of this topic.

Clever craftsmen created some of these thimbles to be able to exchange their thimbles with other collectors

(Yvonne Winspear of Australia)

I have attempted to list the materials in the following order within each group: maker, then country of origin and then the rest where neither of the above is known.

I have included as many catalogue references as I can find to help with the year they were made, using the following abbreviations:

CC - Collectors Circle (New York)
Fel - Feldman (Germany)
Gim - Gimbels (Maine)
KS - De vingerhoed (Netherlands)
PJW - PJ Walter (Germany)
TCI - Thimble Collectors International Bulletin (USA)
TTG - The Thimble Guild (Scotland)
TO - Thimbles Only (Jean Shoup USA)
TSL - Thimble Society of London
VH - John von Hoelle
VN - Vingerhoednieuws (Netherlands)

For similar topics see
Bog oak thimbles
Glass thimbles
Horn and bone thimbles
Ivory thimbles
Jenny Blair Designs' thimbles

abalone



last update: 14 May 2025

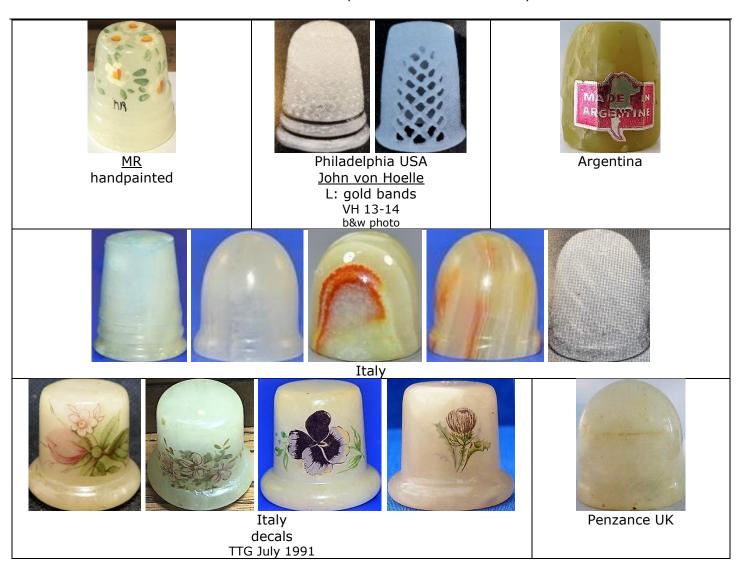
acetate



France mother of pearl style

alabaster

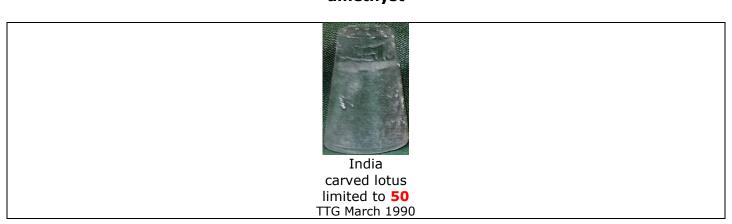
see also: lavender alabaster - pink alabaster - strawberry alabaster



amber fossilised pine resin from Russia



amethyst



aventurine





India
L: blue – R: green
carved lotus
limited to **50**TTG March 1990

bamboo



China TTG March 1991



India VH 1178, 1180 b&w photo



Philippines

bark



Healesville Australia <u>Michael Morris</u> 1989



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
salmon gum bark with
paperbark apex
over metal thimble
1990

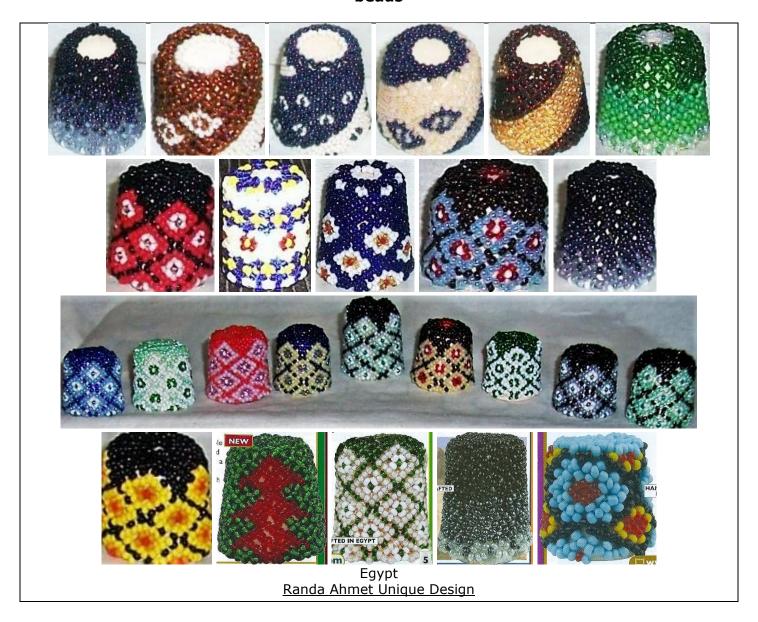


Sydney Australia
<u>Yvonne Winspear</u>
handpainted paperbark
over leatherwood
TTG January 1987



Australia plaited

beads















bear claw quartz



black marble



black onyx



India carved lotus limited to **50** TTG March 1990

blue onyx



Argentina Juan Arrieta Quiroga

Blu Tack commercial putty-like adhesive



Brisbane Australia
<u>Sandra Menger</u>
'Thimbles of Australia Sue Gowan 1998'

brick



UK house brick limited to **750** TTG August 1991

calabash



Argentina

carrot



Finland VN 67 2001



Finland VN 77 2003

chalk



UK <u>Kingmaker</u> bonded resin TTG September 1986

coal













Wales <u>Kingmaker</u> bonded resin

miner's face (plain and handpainted) – miner - pithead - miner's lamp and tools all commemorating the end of the 1985 miner's strike (plain and handpainted limited to **3500**) some miner's face thimbles are signed <u>EJ</u> for Eddie and Janet

TTG March 1985











Wellsburg West Virginia USA compressed TO 1980-1983 – VH174

coconut shell









Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil AP late 19th century maker's initials on apex 18ct gold apex and clouté studs in a ring R: carved simple fleur de lis pattern by local women



Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil late 19th century 18ct gold apex and clouté studs in two rings



Egypt Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Philippines over metal thimble TTG March 1996

concrete



UK
<u>Christine and John Smith</u>
created from old pavement
TTG September 1989

coral



France carved 19th century Christies 1995 117







Philippines etched TO 1984 - VH



Thailand TTG June 1988



pink coral Great Barrier Reef over metal TTG April 1988



blue coral Indian Ocean over metal TTG April 1988



over metal

cork



Bridge of Weir Scotland <u>Carina Down</u>



corn plaited after the style of corn dollies



UK
Betty Blackwood
TTG June 1985



UK

Mrs Horsfall
butterfly
limited to 250
TTG October 1998



UK flowers

corncob



USA brass apex VH 1177 b&w photo

cotton

thimbles are created of crochet, tatting, knitting or lacemaking. They were usually stiffened with sugar water or starch. Many are embellished with beads and ribbon see also: silk



Connecticut USA Edith Archibald crochet TO 1984



Toowoomba Australia <u>Beryl</u> crochet



Melbourne Australia
<u>Joan Blaney</u>
crochet



UK <u>Vilma Buck</u> crochet



Brisbane Australia <u>Kay Collins</u> tatting



South Africa Gili Davis crochet



Queensland Australia Elena Dickson knotted lace over stiffened board





Conwy Wales
Pat Durrant
crochet



Perth Australia Betty Dutschke crochet



Helsinki Finland <u>Irja Helsila</u> tatting



UK
<u>Lynne Hutchings</u>
crochet
limited to **250**TTG May 1986
b&w photo







Kilcoy Australia Margaret Hickling tatting



Perth Australia Barbara Martin sewing







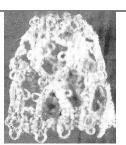
Brisbane Australia Sandra Menger crochet



Mexico
Nicholas and Adolina
over moulded plastic
TCI winter 2013



USA
<u>Florence Regan</u>
crochet, some with crossstitch
Gim 1996



UK Christine Ross tatting limited to **200** TTG May 1987 b&w photo



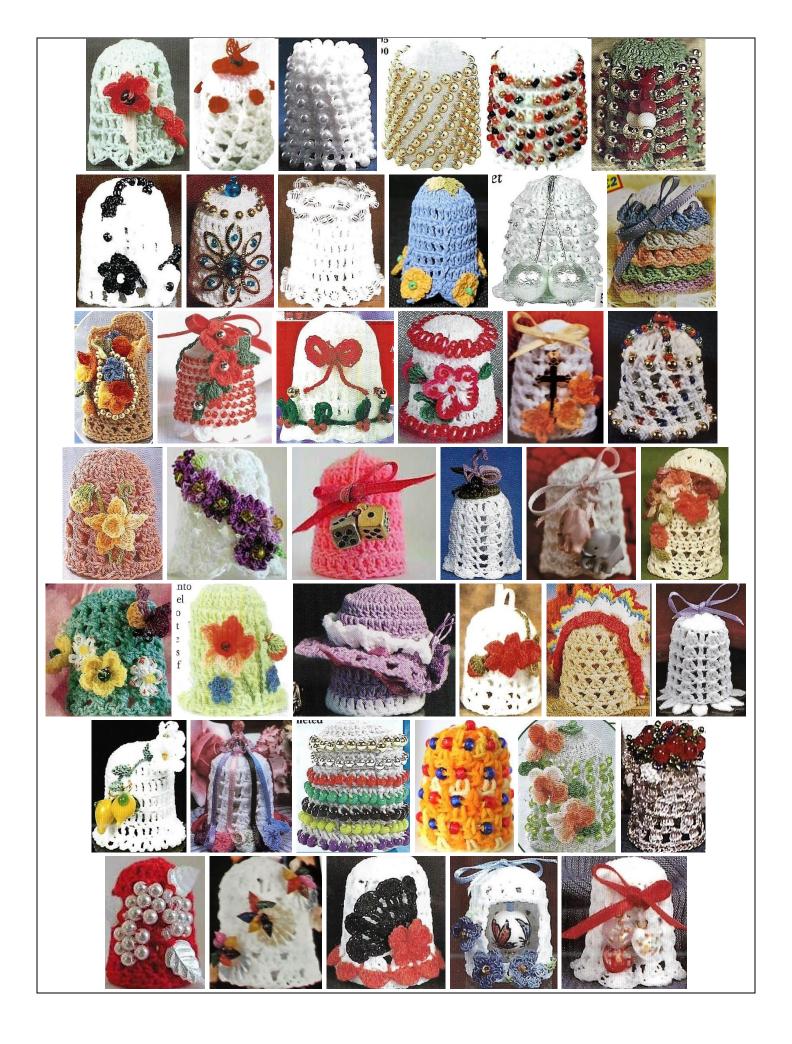
USA <u>Doris E Shaw</u> crochet



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
crochet



Netherlands
<u>Miep van Eijk</u>
crochet
TTG November 1983
b&w photo





crochet
find those commeorating Armistice, Olympics and a chair shape
mostly no limited numbers available but the limited editions range from **75** to **300**TTG from March 1985-2005



California USA
<u>Chris Weber</u>
crochet
TO 2007 - 2007 - 1984



Deliciosa Monstera



fabric



feathers



handpainted feathers over plastic

Marina Nestorova

VN 67 2001



handpainted feathers over brass <u>Marina Nestorova</u>

felt



Brisbane Australia Tricia Smout

FIMO commercial modelling clay



Benoni South Africa <u>Tessa Browne</u>



Empangeni South Africa Wendy Seymour



South Africa metal thimble

fish skin



Quebec Canada Les Cuirs Fins de la Mer



Scotland dyed fish scale over wood





Scotland salmon over brass or metal TCI September 1989 – TTG July 1990

fossils



UK

<u>Pinpoint Design</u>

(later name used by Christine and John Smith)

limestone

TTG May 1993

granite







UK

<u>Caroline and John Smith</u>

Berlin Wall - Italian granorosada - Russian pink yemel
C - R : TTG February 1988 - TTG October 1991

grass see also: raffia, straw



<u>Robyn</u> basketry

green marble



UK
Christine and John Smith
marble from Portugal
limited to 200
TTG December 1988



Taiwan Sewing Corner 1978

gumnut



Kalbarri Western Australia

gutta percha

Rubber-like material discovered in 1843. Palaquium trees from Malaysia and Borneo It is brittle and lightweight. It was used as mourning jewellery as well as jet



haematite



heather

the roots are picked, dried, dyed, blocked, compressed, glued, turned and lacquered. First made into thimbles in 1980. Thimbles ceased by 2004







Pitlochry Scotland Hugh Kerr of Heathergems no two alike





Pitlochry Scotland
Hugh Kerr of Heathergems
metal rims



Pitlochry Scotland Hugh Kerr of Heathergems thistle-shaped

Helsinkiitti



Helsinki Finland Pekka Kiviluoto 1990

horse hair



Arizona USA <u>Donna Mendoz</u> TCI spring 2001 <u>b&w photo</u>



Arizona USA <u>Leona Antone</u> TCI spring 2001 <u>b&w photo</u>



Arizona USA <u>Linda Hendricks</u> TCI spring 2001 b&w photo

$\begin{tabular}{ll} \textbf{jade} \\ \textbf{many jade thimbles are made with toppers-they are not included} \\ \end{tabular}$



























India lower R: chang san crystal jade limited to **50** TTG March 1990 - CC 1978 - PJW 85-6 - VN 74 2000



Portugal VN 92 2007







Taiwan





Jersey cabbage stalk



jet jet was used as mourning jewellery, replacing vulcanite and gutta percha



Missouri USA

<u>Brad Elfrink Elvenkrafte Studios</u>

thistle

with Siberian horn apex



Whitby UK









Whitby UK carved cottage -cathedral - toadstools

kangaroo skin







Sydney Australia

<u>Yvonne Winspear</u>

brass kangaroo on boomerang pin

1983

TTG May 1984

Kisii stone mined by the Kenyan tribe of the same name





L>R: handpainted figure - handpainted giraffe - leather rim - representing cheetah, giraffe, python TTG 1991 - 1994

lapis lazuli



Argentina
<u>Juan Arrieta Quiroga</u>
R: with rhodochrosite



Pakistan VN 92 1999



Portugal CC 1978



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

lavender alabaster

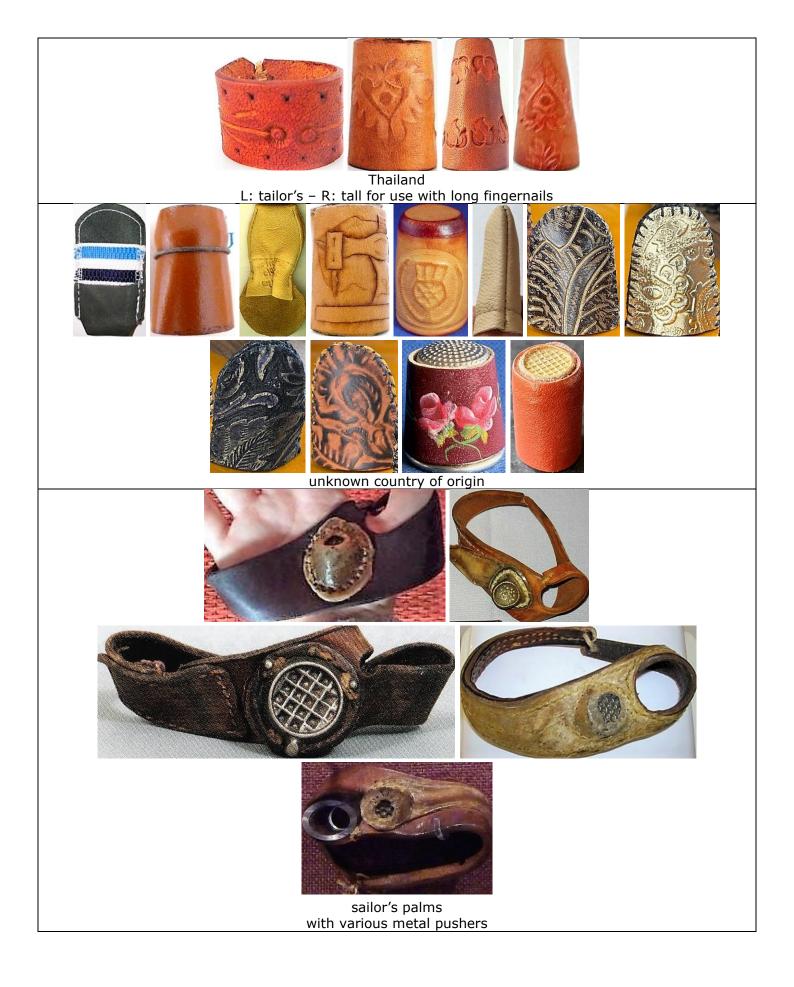


Italy handpainted violet

leather

see also: Canadian leather thimbles topic





LuciteGimbels used the term acrylic







USA

<u>Davy Jones Locker</u>
imbedded starfish and seahorse and seashells
limited to **250**Gim 1990 – Sewing Corner 1976

malachite



Argentina



Egypt Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Phalaborwa South Africa John van der Westhuizen



marble see also: black marble – green marble – pink marble







UK

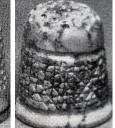
<u>Christine and John Smith</u>

L>R: marble of chips from around the world –

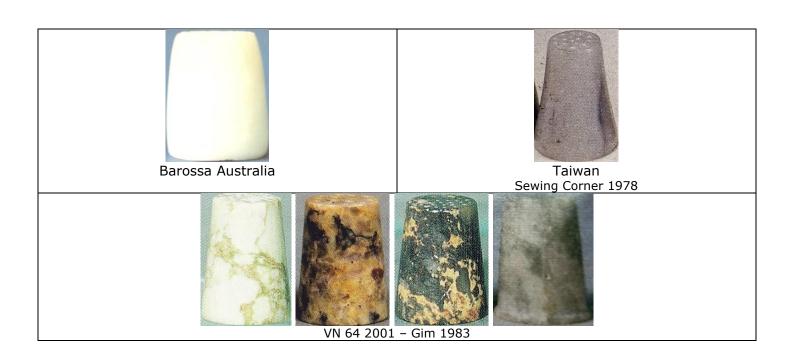
Carrara Italy – creamy

two at R limited to **250**TTG May 1989 – January 1989 – December 1988





Philadelphia USA John von Hoelle VH 1088-89 b&w photos



meerschaum

This lightweight mineral, sepiolite, is a lightweight claylike material. It floats on water and this gives its name sea foam (direct translation from German word meerschaum)





Tanzania VN 46 1998



Turkiye
handcarved
top L: gold band
3rd L: brass apex

bottom R: 'Türkey' four R: VN, 1996, 1998, 2007 - Gim 1997 - VH665

nundoorite



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

$\begin{array}{c} \textbf{onyx} \\ \text{see also: black onyx - blue onyx} \end{array}$



paper



papier mâché flour, salt and water are added to rice paper pulp







Apollo Bay Australia
Shirley Bennett - Haley
handpainted and lacquered
last five have opal on apex
1979-1985







Kashmir India handpainted and lacquered in small batches by small family businesses all black-lacquered inside TTG 1988-2001 – TO 1983-2007 – Gim 1980-1082 – PJW 85-6 - VH714



Japan TO 1983



Japan



Russia signed in cyrillic



Thailand



USA

paua shell





Mooloolaba Australia Shell Museum over plastic thimble



















New Zealand set mainly in Perspex or resin L: silver kiwi – bottom R: over wood





Philippines

peat



UK handpainted The Lindow man bonded in resin TTG July 1997

picture jasper



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

pink marble



MR handpainted



UK
Christine and John Smith
limited to 200
marble sourced from Portugal



Turkey handpainted



handpainted







plastic





Ecuador carved L: Andes and train TTG February 2002

plum slate



Llanberis North Wales UK **Christine and John Smith** (Guild members) limited to 250 TTG January 1988

pumpkin skin



Argentina carved by Toba peoples TCI spring 2013

pyrophyllite









Swakopmund Namibia L: 'Swakopmund'

raffia see also: grass, straw



Coventry UK <u>Jacqui Walker</u> TGG April 1984 b&w photo

red agate



India
limited to **50**TTG March 1990

resin stone



over plastic

rhodochrosite



Argentina L: Sewing Corner 1976

rhodonite





commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

rice paper



Japan limited to **350** TTG September 1987

rice stalks



Philippines R: Fel 13 1990

rose quartz



Pakistan VN 99 2009

rosso Alicante



UK

<u>Pinpoint Design</u>

(name used by Christine and John Smith)

stone sourced from Spain

limited to **300**TTG September 1988

rosso Bilbao

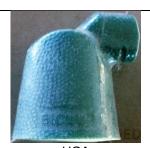


UK <u>Christine and John Smith</u> stone sourced from Spain by these Guild members limited to 250 TTG April 1989

rubber



California USA **Good Stuf** needle grabber



USA The Bionic Finger



clerk's



salmon stone



Philippines brass band Gim April 1984

sand

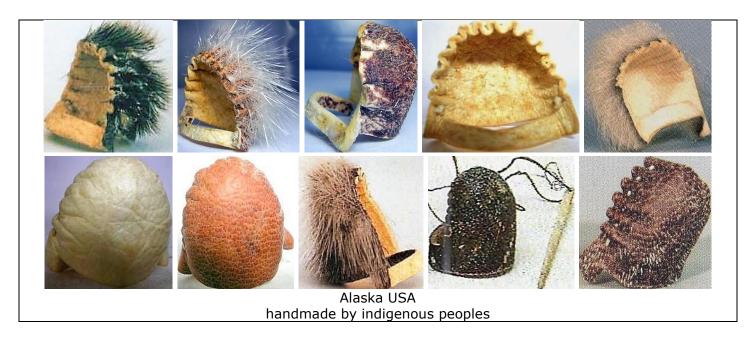


Ryedale UK **Tony Barnes** sand from Gulf War TTG April 1991



sand from Gulf War TTG April 1992

seal skin



serpentine



UK
Christine and Dave Smith
Cornish serpentine
limited to **500**TTG April 1988



South Africa <u>Tswana Products</u> etched giraffe



South Africa

shell

Mexican shell over alpaca thimbles are outside the scope of this study see also: named shell ie coral





shell in form of chips or slices TTG 1988-2001 - TO 1983-1993 - VH995-997



Thailand TTG August 2001

shingle



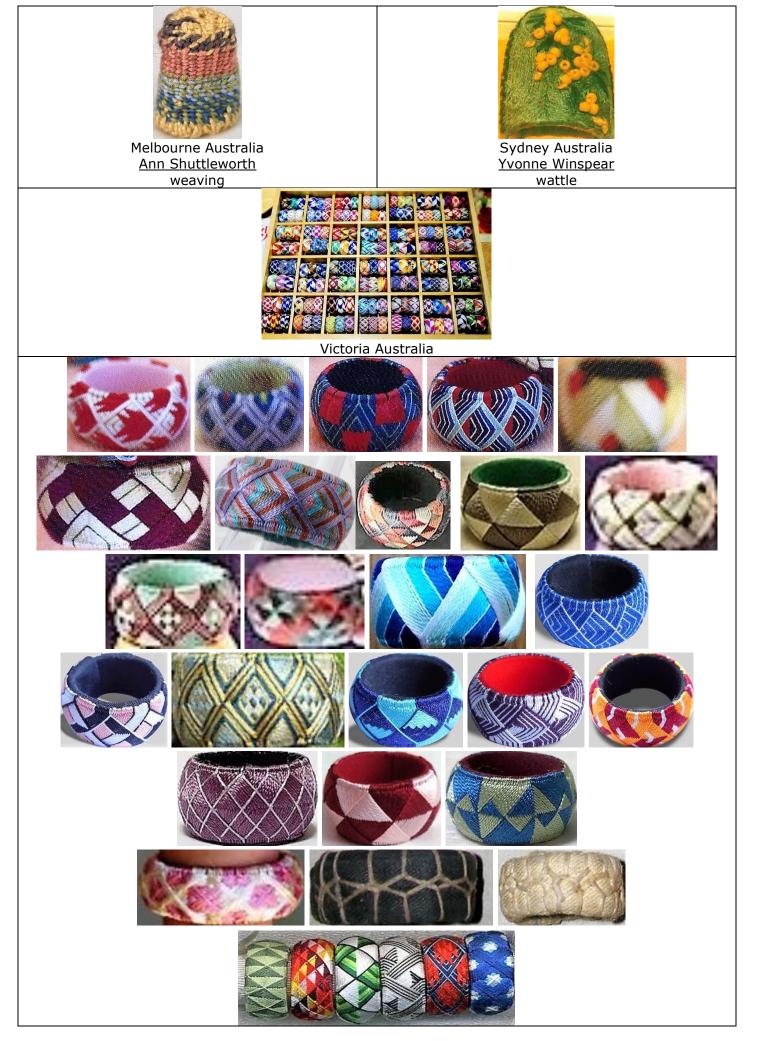
shingle collected from Criccieth beach North Wales

silicone



silk see also: cotton - fabric









Chuncheon Korea
handmade, with silk stitches on silk or felt (some are quite crudely stitched)
known as kolmi
small opening at tip for fingernail
KS 9 1987 - Sewing Corner 1978 - TTG July 2004 - TO 1984 - VH 1000-1002 - Fel 10 1989

slate see also: plum slate



Wales
<u>Kingmaker</u>
handpainted 'Snowdon'
bonded with resin
TTG February 1986



Wales Christine and Dave Smith TTG August 1987



Westmoreland UK
Christine and Dave Smith
limited to 500
TTG November 1987

snake skin







Texas rattlesnake over wood TTG June 1991 – Fel 18 1991

soapstone



Scotland Gem Rock Museum



USA <u>Parson Hayes</u> Sewing Corner 1978



South Africa etched zebra











India TTG October 1989 – Gim 1997 – TTG March 1994

stone

see also: named stones ie jade





Argentina <u>Martin Arrieta Quiroga</u>



South Africa
Susanne Rens



UK
<u>Christine and John Smith</u>
stone sourced from EuroDisney
limited to **475**TTG September 1992



UK
Christine and John Smith
stone sourced from The Thistle
Mill Biggar Scotland
TTG September 1991

















Argentina

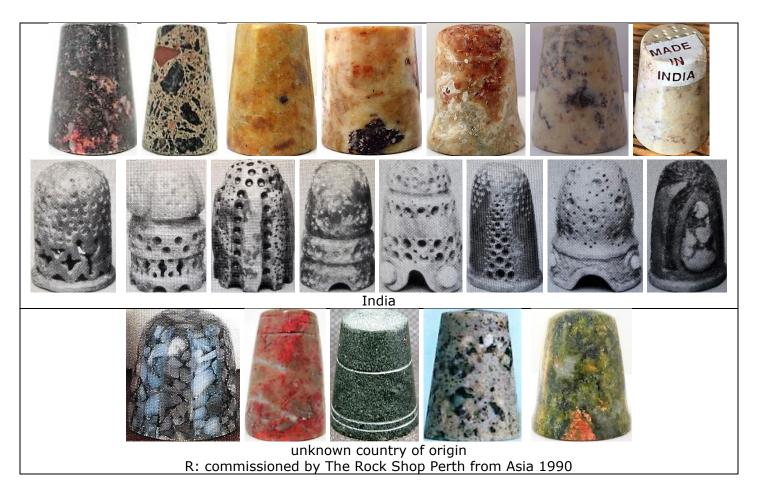




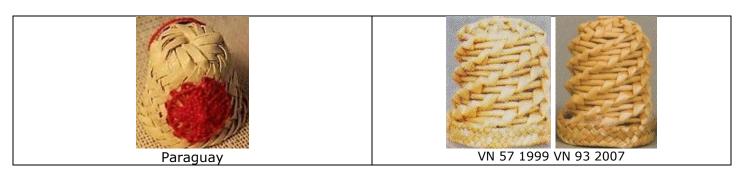
Canada indigenous peoples VH 325-6



China Fel 17 1991



straw see also: grass, raffia



strawberry alabaster



string see also: Jacqui and David Parker of Olivia thimbles topic



Sydney Australia
<u>Yvonne Winspear</u>
L: wound over brass – R: over plastic

synthetics

















Brisbane Australia Ray Brittain



Scotland
Penelope Burgess
tartan under resin



Deborah Hull



 $\begin{array}{c} \text{Cirencester UK} \\ \underline{\text{History Craft}} \\ \text{inset brass apex} \\ \text{described as polymer ivory from ivory dust or sweepings or rosin} \end{array}$



UK Melissa Hookway



Dudley UK

<u>Woodsetton</u>

peep: Visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip to China

TTG November 1986



telephone wire

synthetic ruby



tiger iron



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

tiger's eye



China TTG April 1989 – Fel 5 1988



India PJW 85-6



Pakistan VN 99 2009



tortoiseshell

plastic fingerguards were created in tortoiseshell colour in 1910s



Birmingham UK

<u>John Piercy</u>

in November 1816 Piercy took out a patent, 4077, to combine tortoiseshell with gold, sterling silver, steel

British coat-of-arms on the slant with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon underneath is impressed into the shell. There is a gold rim and the width of tortoiseshell varies



another design has a large crown in gold with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon underneath dainty flowers and leaves surround a blank cartouche on the verso



another design has pinchbeck cartouche sounded by fine flowers flowers and leaves, with 'Piercy's Patent' underneath



another design has 'Piercy's Patent' over two lines with rectangular cartouche surrounded by flowers and leaves on the verso



steel-top with cartouche sounded by fine flowers and leaves with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon in pinchbeck



very rare example with Queen Charlotte surrounded by laurel wreath 'Piercy's Patent' over two lines on verso b&w photo





'Piercy's Patent' pierced pinchbeck thimbles over tortoiseshell Christies 1995 114-115



China



UK carved 18th century Christies 1995 110











UK

various gold pique designs – stars, flowers, leaves and crosses 9ct gold apex

travertine



turquoise



Egypt <u>Randa Ahmet Unique Design</u>

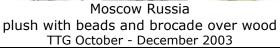


pierced, with Chinese lettering Gim 1991



velvet







verdite



South Africa Tswana Products



carved VN 95 2008



VN 46 1998

volcanic rock



Scotland
Christine and John Smith
sourced from rock of Edinburgh Castle Mount
TTG September 1992

vulcanite

hardened rubber, which was used as mourning jewellery. It was replaced by gutta percha and jet



USA band of 14ct gold size lettered on apex

wax



Bridge of Weir Scotland <u>Carina Down</u> candle with lace inset



Mind Your Own Beeswax



candle in shape of quilter's thimble

wicker see also: bamboo



UK basket weave TTG January 2001

wool



Perth Australia <u>Barbara Martin</u> knitted





Sydney Australia
Yvonne Winspear
brass pin of map of Australia
b&w photo

zebra stone



Kununurra Australia John Read

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Irja Helsila *Stone thimbles.* <u>TCI Bulletin</u> fall 2002

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Contributors

Joanna Blackie-Sew Many Bits | Jenny Bockel | Yolanta Bogdziewicz | Pawel Brzyski | Andrea Griffiths | Linda Heggs William Isbister | Nicola Kissane | Caroline Meacham-Elegant Arts | Ray Nimmo | Syuku Otsu | Irene Schwall Gillian Seymour | Norma Shattock | Erin Titmus | Claude Sirjacobs | Jean Taylor | Lucerne Wulf Krystyna Zagajewska

This listing of Thimbles made from unusual materials 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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