Gadget thimbles

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ILES' PATENT, WITH FOUR HOLES ROUND THE SIDES AND ONE IN THE TOP
BRASS THIMBLE WITH A THREAD-CUTTER ATTACHED TO THE SIDE
A CUPRONICKEL ADJUSTABLE THIMBLE, ROSINA DURHAM PATENT, POSSIBLY 1892
ANOTHER TYPE WITH A DIFFERENT STYLE OF THREAD-CUTTER
ANOTHER BRASS THIMBLE WITH THREAD-CUTTER
AN ELABORATELY DECORATED EXAMPLE WITH A BLACKBERRY PATTERN - "VENTILATED ILES PATENT" AROUND THE RIM

A collection of gadget thimbles would form a niche within a collection. It wouldn't be a large collection, judging by the number of identical gadget thimbles repeated throughout the thimble literature, but it would be of great interest. Some sources list these as gimmick thimbles, but the usual terminology is gadget. Gosh - in the 15 years since I created this topic, the number of gadget thimbles has ballooned.

Most of the gadgets are made of cheaper materials - i.e., brass and metals - as they were meant for sewing. Where the country of origin is known, the USA predominates. It is so difficult to tell what most of these gadgets are made from, so I have grouped those together with a similar function.

A lot of the gadget thimbles are also patented, but this article is not about patented thimbles, only those that John von Hoelle describes as "A category of thimbles which have an ability to do some other feat besides protecting one's finger." It does not include tailor's thimbles, fingerguards, fingernail-shaped thimbles, peeps, thimbles that have ridges to fit within sewing kits, nor quilter's thimbles in general. There are also those whose purpose is not sewing, unless branded - sail maker's, ophthalmologist's, dentist's, wigmakers, potato pickers, thatcher's, for tobacco stemming, clerk's rubber etc - these too are excluded here.

There are four general groups of gadget thimbles - grippers, threaders, thread cutters and a combination of any of these functions. There is a small selection where the gadget thimble has another function. What does the term gripper mean? The gripper would aid the sewer to get the needle through thicker fabric.

Bertha Betensley's booklet makes fascinating reading, with line drawings of 52 US thimble patents - the inventiveness has to be seen to be believed.

Grippers

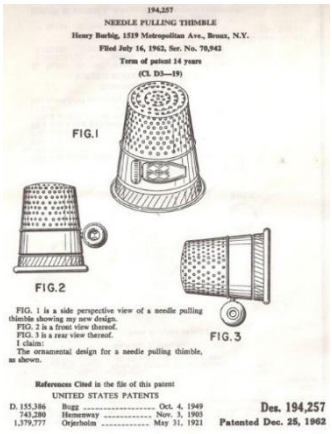
These are gilded brass thimbles with a needle gripper or pusher horizontally on the band. Mathis names this as the **Magic Thimble**. The paperwork that comes with the thimble identifies it as such. There is a spring end of the gripper.

Secondly, a similar gripper was patented (№ *193257*), in the USA on 25 December 1962, by **Henry Burbig** (Burig) of New York. The picture in von Hoelle's book [#450] shows this thimble holding the needle. He named it his 'Nimble Thimble'.

Henry Burbig

Some brass examples have **© Vernon** on the band. This is not the maker's name, rather the name of the retailer - Lillian Vernon - in New York. There are diamond patterns on the gripper.

A third version is made in Germany but marketed in the USA by the **Heddy Corporation** of New Jersey as the Heddy Handy thimble.



194,257
NEEDLE PULLING THIMBLE
Henry Burbig, 1519 Metropolitan Ave., Bronx, N.Y.
Filed July 16, 1962, Ser. No. 78,942
Term of patent 14 years
(Cl. D3—19)

FIG.1

FIG.2

FIG. 1 is a side perspective view of a needle pulling thimble showing my new design.
FIG. 2 is a front view thereof.
FIG. 3 is a rear view thereof.
I claim:
The ornamental design for a needle pulling thimble, as shown.

FIG.3

References Cited in the file of this patent
UNITED STATES PATENTS

D. 155,386	Bugg	Oct. 4, 1949	Des. 194,257
743,280	Hennessy	Nov. 3, 1903	Patented Dec. 25, 1962
1,379,777	Orjerholm	May 31, 1921	

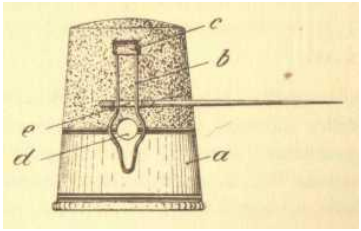
Burbig patent

Lillian Vernon's thimble

The Heddy

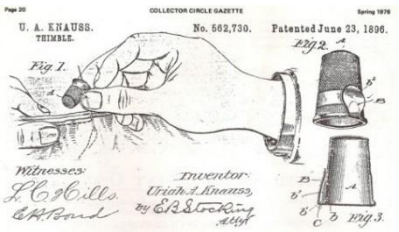
attached vertically to the side of the thimble. The needle would be secured into the top of the side gadget. The thimble is more ornate in its band patterning than most other gadget thimbles. The photograph on the most right, shows the gripper lever in the correct place, to the side.

This patented thimble's details appear in Greif - the patent was taken out in Germany by **Walter Schultz**; the Patent Nº. *577590*. "It is a thimble with a device to pull the needle. A small spring, double barred, rough on one side, about three millimetres wide, is attached to the side of the thimble. A needle is clamped lightly between the spring and thimble. This aids in withdrawing the needle from tough material".



This is the Needle Grabbing Clamp which Zalkin describes. It was patented (Nº. *562730* of 23 June 1896) by **Uriah A. Knauss** of Pennsylvania, USA. Looking at the patent drawings, the thimble was ..."not to interfere with the ordinary operation of sewing ..."
The thimbles are marked with size numbers.
Betensley has a description with drawings of the patent on page 25 (see References).

R: the original Knauss thimble showing date



Patent drawings

What an interesting gripper thimble this one is, recently discovered in 2014. It is very sturdy in construction. The top lifts up which will then allow the needle entrance and grip it - but how does one then sew?
There is a possibility that the US patent Nº. *2589499*, dated 18 March 1952, for this gadget was granted to **Varnell Donald Lake** of New Jersey – entitled 'needle pulling thimble'. Watch this space!

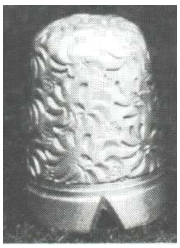
showing the closed and open positions

In 2019, this new plastic gripper has come onto the market. Known as a "Wonder Grip & Thimble" (2 in 1)
It's made by **Taylor Seville**. It is made for use on either hand and will fit any sized finger, being soft and flexible. The surfaces are "textured for a firm grip and dimples make for easier pushing and pulling". According to the cardboard mount there is a Patent Pending. There are also illustrations to indicate use.

Cutters

Alexander Gibson of Rosebrook, Port Fairy in Victoria Australia applied for a provisional patent on 31 December 1915. The application number *18302* relates to "improvements in and relating to thimbles". The patent was for a thimble with thread cutter, housed between the lining and the outer casing. According to the Australian patent details and drawings, the cutter is a knife for cutting thread. There is a slot in the outer face of the thimble and the knife exits at the apex edge. The thimble design has an inner lining that protects the finger from any contact with the blade. There is a knob that slides the blade up and down the slot. The thimble is indented all over and there is a rolled rim.
Alexander Gibson went to a considerable amount of trouble to register this patent in three countries, and it is not even certain whether the thimbles ever went into production or what they were made of. It is quite regular that thimbles that were patented never reached production. Being patented during World War I, they may have been difficult to produce.
The US Patent is Nº. *1255004*.

This unmarked English **Charles Iles** gadget is a quite simple cutter. It acts as a thread cutter and has a notch cut into the rim. Maybe it has been added after manufacture, so not original?
Do you have a similar one?



This is one of the most attractive of the gadget thimbles. It has a sliding mechanism, with a small cutting blade. It is marked PAT PEND, with a size mark 10 - from the USA. The maker's mark is for **S T**. Notice the well indented knurling, the vertical herringbone and the pretty patterned rim. It looks sturdier than other thimbles with a sliding mechanism. Now a more utilitarian flimsier example with a plain rim 2nd right] has emerged, also marked with size 10 but it is a larger size.

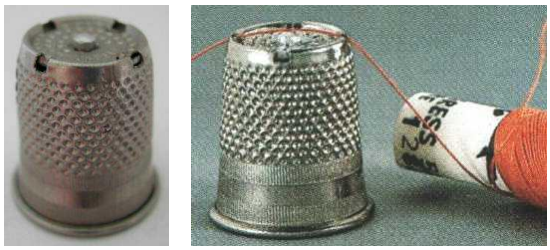
This metal gadget has a very practical idea as a thread cutter - with a curved slit in the body of the thimble near the apex. It is marked Pat Apl *396 36* on the band. There is also a hole in the band that seems to have no allied purpose.

This gadget has half of the apex open, with a thread cutter that protrudes as a hook on the apex. There is a D in the remaining half of the apex (significance unknown). This brass coloured base metal thimble is the **Howco** thimble that is also useful for the sewer with long fingernails. Made in the USA in 1950s.

Zalkin lists this as a seam ripper, patented by Kenly Bugg, May 20 1952, Patent No. *2597564*.
This is incorrect. The very lethal cutter listed further on, is Bugg's patent!

There seem to be several versions of this gadget thimble with a cutter. The cutter protrudes vertically away from the band. This example also has striations around the band that help in preventing the needle from slipping.
One version was patented by **W P Slensby** in the USA. The Patent is No. *315671* taken out on 14 April 1885, but this is not recorded on the thimbles.
Betensley has a description with drawings of the patent on page 47 (see References).

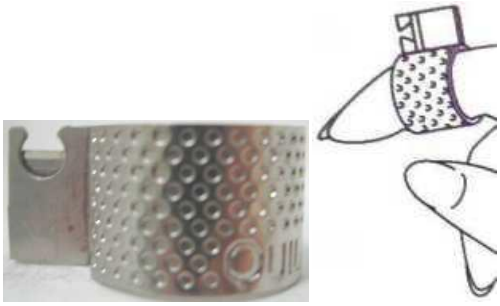
These are Austrian-made nickel gadget thimbles by **Settmacher Bros**. This was their only patented thimble design. There are four cutters at the rim of the indented apex, where PATENT is lettered. The blades rotate. From the 1920s. Unnamed.



There are two identical pieces to this thread cutter, vertically on the band. There are size marks and a slight difference in the shape of these two thimbles, with a flatter apex on the right.

There is a cutter affixed to the side of this thimble. The cutter seems to be scissor-like from the illustration.

This modern 'Ring Thing', from USA's **Quilt House**, is a tailor's ring shape, with a piece of metal at right angles to the thimble, with a cutting groove.



South African patented plastic gadget thimbles are known as **Snick**. Made in Cape Town, there is a plastic thread cutter jutting from the rim. There is a small blade between the cutter and the thimble. The name is lettered in the apex. Made from 1954.
According to the Snicks display box, the Patent is No.*761037,* No.229007.

Made of a smooth green, red and cream plastic (available in other colours) with a cutter blade screwed on to the finger-shaped apex. The red example has the following lettering on the rim British Patent Nº. *2225-50*. Inside there are six vertical ridges for a closer fit. 30mm height.
Some are sized – with the size number lettered up in the apex.

This is a brass thimble with what looks like a cutter blade. The edges are not sharp enough tho to cut. The lettering is **Greenaway's Patent**.

This adjustable cutter looks quite lethal and not very practicable for sewing. The cutter is mounted on the apex, with vertical splits in the body of the thimble.

This is another thread cutter that looks as lethal as the gadget above. The high chrome tempered steel cutter is mounted on the side of the thimble extending well above the apex and has two bevelled edges for cutting thread, but how would one sew with it, wearing it on the finger?
Betensley has a description with drawings of the patent on page 54 see References] which shows this thimble as patented by **Kenneth C. Bugg** as a stitch and seam opener, on 20 May 1952 in the USA. The Patent is Nº. *2597564* [patent incorrectly named in Zalkin as on Howco thimble]
The first advertisement shown names this gadget thimble as a "Thimble Pic", when the patent was still pending and it was for sale thru Falcon Industries Fort Wayne, Indiana, for $1 for two. This was in 1948.
The "Thimble Pic" shown at right, is in its original packaging, with a copyright date for 1947!

This is a metal thread cutter thimble from Japan.

This is a patented thimble with a registration date of 15 May 1900, USA. The aluminium or silver-plated (the example below shows that the silver-plate has worn down to the brass) thimbles have a small disc embedded into one side of the apex, which acts as a cutter.
The lettering around the base is *** Duke *** Pat. May 15. 1900 plus a size number.

Betensley has a description with drawings of the patent on page 41 (see References). The cutting instrument is a thin metal disc with several notches, having bevelled edges. It should sit in a depression. This thimble has a thimble box which is intriguing, and the answers lie in the lettering on the box - the price is 10cts - if it were English-made it would have the price in pennies or shillings. The name on the box is "Duke's Scissor thimble" to 'cut the thread' "Saves time teeth & temper".

This is the oldest thread cutter known and is scarce. It is made of sterling silver and has patent date Pat'd April 10, 1860 and April 2, 1861. There is no back to the gadget thimble and the curled cutter is made of a different material from the actual thimble.

This dagger-like cutter is affixed vertically to a brass thimble.

This cutter, which stands at right angles to the thimble, is a concave blade, and is lettered with SCOWENS PAT on the blade.

This cutting device is really simple - a curled cutaway piece on the rim – which serves as the cutter, on a steel thimble.

There are three examples of this thimble. One example is a metal patented thimble with a black cutting device, lettered PATD vertically on the band. There is a size mark as well. The second/third have the actual patent dates Pat.D Sept.17.1907 or Pat.Sep.17.1907 which date these gadgets to Edwardian times - the most prolific era of gadget thimbles. The lettering is also vertical. From the shape of the thimbles, they are probably USA-made. There is no size mark on the thimble on the right.

Here is another example of a silver metal patented thimble with a cutting device, lettered PAT PEND MADE IN U S A on one side, with the name of the maker **Traum** on the other. On the original packaging, the thimble is advertised as a fingerguard for the left finger, with a thread cutter (see advert, back and front)

This is another variation of a thimble with a cutter. This brass gadget has a recessed cutter near the rim, and one would cut the thread with the cutter that has been attached thru a hole near the rim. This example is a size 11.

This gadget thimble has a pointed sharp blade cutter on a metal rim. This is set into the upper sloped edge of the thimble. The black heavy-duty leather-like thimble has a flat apex under the blade. The lettering on the blade is 25 x-aXta and uses non-alphabetic symbols.

This is a delightful example of the ingenuity of the late 19th century gadget thimblemakers. This silver-coloured thimble has a gilt lining. The indentations are very well defined, with a plain wide band. There is a row of striations near the rim. The lettering on the band is Pat Apd For. The gadget has a neat mouth-shaped cutter than does not protrude far from the surface near the apex: see upper r-h side of first photo.

The actual thimble has now appeared for sale in 2024: PAT AUG 18 1885. This is an American patent taken out on that date by **Benjamin Franklin Walker** of New York. The US patent number is 324616. It is made of sterling silver. The example shown is #12.

PAT APD FOR

PAT AUG 18 1885

Another modern US thread cutter, this metal ring-shaped thimble is lettered VEACH THIMBLE SNIP with Pat. Pend. Made in U.S.A. lettered on the smooth surface. The steel cutter is at one end of the open ring - not that easy to use whilst sewing but the blade at the upper edge could be used to cut thread once the thimble is removed!!

This steel thimble has a sharp curved cutter tucked into the rim of the thimble. It is marked GAY which is lettered on the band as well as Patented Aug.22.05 with a size mark of 9. I would guess that this is a US made-thimble. Another of the Edwardian era inventions!

This double-decker thimble is made up of 2 thimbles. The blue part is a traditional plastic thimble - made post WWII because of its type of elongated indentations - which lifts off to use for normal sewing. The clear plastic under-thimble has a cutter on the apex and is protected when not in use by the upper-thimble.

This is an advertisement from *Roundabout* in late 1899, where a sterling silver thimble was available to their subscribers for $1. They must have been sized and you had to include your thimble size when applying. The cutter was situated, as a slit, on the edge of the rim. It is rare to find a silver gadget thimble.


WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

"Well, I Declare!" A THREAD-CUTTING THIMBLE!

OUR FREE GIFT TO SUBSCRIBERS.

PATENTED.

"The Doctors' Enemy."

OUR UNIQUE PREMIUM.

Our Unparalleled Offer.

ROUNDABOUT.

And here is another rare sterling silver gadget thimble - made rarer in that it was produced in the late 19th C. Hallmarked for London 1894, this thimble has a cutter where you pass the thread thru a groove on the rim, and it is cut.

This is a total mystery! I am hoping that a thimble collector will come forward and identify this - as a thimble or not!!
It does have markings on the outside that look like May 13 1856 (which if correct makes it an early gadget thimble) incised or stamped into the metal.
It is rusty, so it could be made of iron. It's quite light in weight.
The little spikey 'thing' on top is quite sharp.
The length at the front is 30mm and it tapers to 17mm at the back (where the join in the metal is). The diameter at the top is 17mm and at the open end it is 20mm.

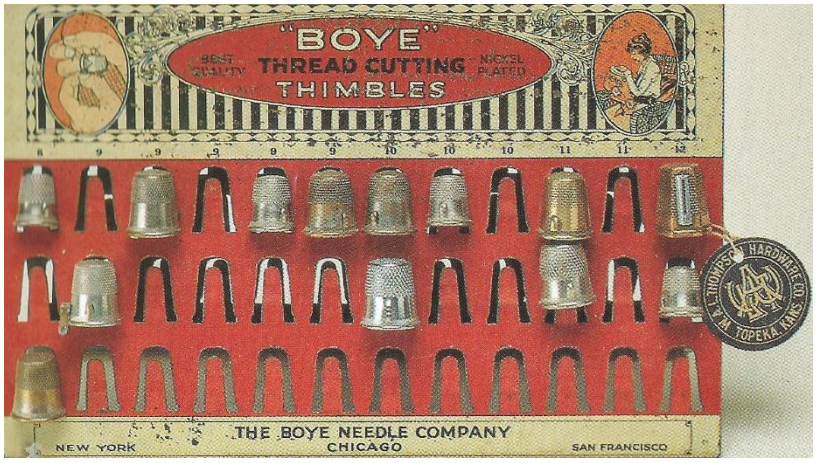
It's always wonderful to have the original advertisement for a gadget thimble. This is **The Clipper Thimble** "No more broken teeth The Clipper will cut and point thread ready for the needle"
Pat Apd for is lettered on the cutter under an arrow pointing left.
In 2013 an example came to my attention that bears the **Simons** of Philadelphia maker's mark in the apex, where you can see the gadget on the left-hand side of the thimble. I can find no reference photo in Gay Ann Rogers' *American silver thimbles* (1989). You will notice that the shield with the lettering is a slightly different shape to the advertised The Clipper Thimble.

These sturdy modern plastic cutters have the blade incorporated into the "handle". Those at left may have been made in Japan as they are reminiscent of the Japanese ring thimbles.
The examples at right without indentations are made in China and available in 2022. They have an opening to fit any sized finger.

This sturdy steel thimble has recently appeared in 2014. Being made of steel, it would probably date to 1910s. Note the interesting apex mark - does anyone recognise this? A steel cutter is affixed to the rim.

On first appearance this cutter gadget thimble, found in 2014, appears to be made by **Samuel Foskett** of London, as the sterling thimble is hallmarked in Chester, with his maker's mark. The thimble is his, but the steel cutter has been added by an unknown person, as the thimble could not have been hallmarked as it is not made only of sterling silver. The cutter has been attached very skilfully.

The USA's "**Boye**" nickel-plated thread cutting thimbles are displayed on the original display stand. There is a small cutter affixed near the thimble rim. There is an illustration on how to use the thread cutter in the left-hand top corner. Boye were based in Chicago, USA. 1930s. Betensley (p29 has details of this patent taken out on 15 June 1915).

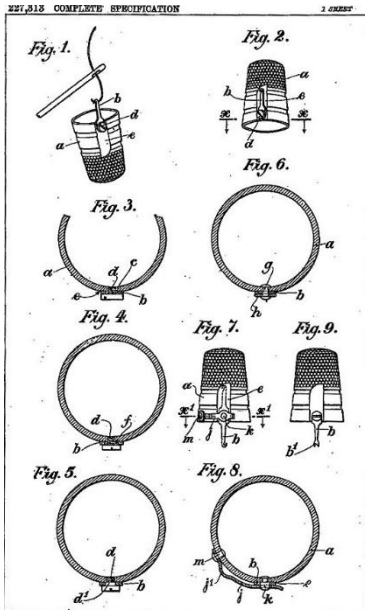


This thimble by **Gabler** is not sewing-related. It is known as a gangster thimble. The thimble is lettered in German 'De Zeuge' which translates as witness. They seem to be made of pewter? There is a fine rope threaded around the thimble – possibly to retrieve the weapon.

Threaders

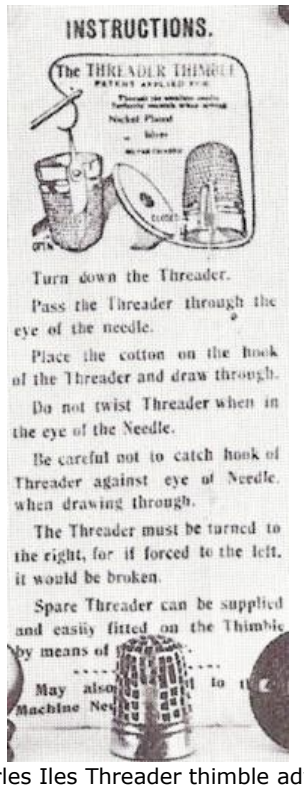
It is rare to find gadget thimbles in silver, with only 2-3 kinds known. This **Gabler** thimble from Germany is similar to its metal counterparts that has a sliding mechanism with a fine wire threader. The thimbles have the Gabler eight-point star on the apex and are marked 935. The threader is damaged in this example.

A cupronickel gadget (pictured left) is attached by a screw and the thimble was made by **Charles Iles** of Birmingham. Though it looks like a cutter, the fine arm that moves has a fine hook and it is used as a threader, when in the position as shown. The Patent is Nº. *227313*, dated 1924 and the English patent was shared with three other patentees, including **Frederick Henry Amsden** and **Llewellyn Charles Hoy** both of London; the third patentee was **Thomas Frederick Therlby** of Birmingham.
The threader is very fragile, and one may find thimbles with only the screw remaining where the threader has broken off. The threader appears on several differently patterned Iles thimbles, including these examples of the Greek Key pattern. Some examples have 'Provpat' lettered on the rim, and these examples would pre-date the patent date.
The example at 2nd L, shows 2 tiny stoppers in brass at the top of the threader, to prevent the threader from moving. The Patent Nº. *227313* is lettered on this brass thimble.
Any doubts about the maker of this thimble will be dispelled when the original Iles threader is shown in its original box with the crescent moon trademark of Charles Iles. The shell-shaped thimble container is also made by Charles Iles and with closer inspection it shows the threader on the thimble.
The photo at the most right is a brass threader. The screw is more rounded that earlier examples.


227,313 COMPLETE SPECIFICATION 1 SHEET
Fig. 1.
Fig. 2.
Fig. 3.
Fig. 6.
Fig. 4.
Fig. 7.
Fig. 9.
Fig. 5.
Fig. 8.

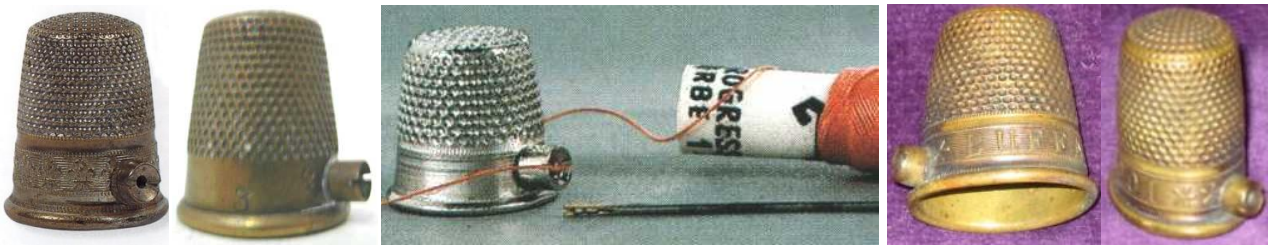
Patent 227313 drawings

In 2020, the following thimble was offered for sale on ebay. It is marked with the British Patent number, Pat.Nº 227313. as above.
The attached gadget is completely different from the examples above. Has it been altered, when the original threader broke off? Was it done in the factory, when it was realised that the threader was too fragile? This current attachment is far sturdier. There is still a stopper to one side but would it operate as a threader?
I would need to see a demonstration.



original Charles Iles Threader thimble advertisement

This gadget thimble with a small attachment on the band comes in various sizes, which attests to its popularity. It was produced in brass (some with patterned bands), steel or zinc, the latter made in Germany. The gadget has an opening for helping blind sewers to thread a special needle, which would have been supplied with the thimble. It is not a bulky attachment and would not interfere as much as other gadgets, when sewing. Believed to have only been made between 1920 and 1937.
The **Settmacher** brass version from Austria contains lettering as well – BUFFALO 1901. What would this mean?



In 1995 **Swann Thimbles**/**The Thimble Guild** created this hallmarked sterling silver replica gadget thimble – to replicate the threader examples, as above.

There is a fine wire threader attached to this aluminium thimble, in a sliding gadget vertically attached to the side of the thimble. Some have advertising slogans. The photo R advertises CWS Congress Soap.

Norma Spicer lists this registered design thimble [photo L], *REG.Nº. 711917* with the attached threader, which is the push-up wire loop type. The design was registered on 23 March 1923 by **Jeremiah Williams** of Bridgend, South Wales. Maybe the registered design is for the thimble's hexagonal shape, not the threader as there are more examples with no attached threader?

The advertisements, from the trade journals of the time, list it as silver-plated, but surviving examples are of brass. Being silver-plated, maybe on the examples shown here, the silver has worn off with use?

The name **Dextra** (with the lettering "Made in England") is used in the adverts of the time, but none of these letterings appear on the thimbles. The main feature of the Dextra advertisement, is as "the improved easy-threader". The advert also lists this as a patented design!!

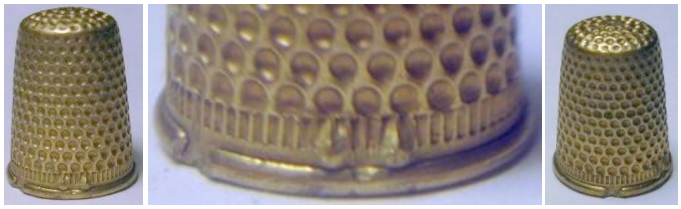
New photos received in late 2016, show a *Pat.Nº. 711917* thimble with a Greek key band with no attached threader cutter. According to Norma Spicer, Williams did not take out a patent on this thimble design. This example, shown R, has no rolled rim and the apex is shaped differently to the three examples at L. It is a size '2'. With the use of the word 'Pat.' instead of 'Reg.', it is probable that this is a later thimble? The example 3rd L has the same lettering ie Pat …

All these thimbles are linked with the numeral *711917* lettered on the rim, but there is no uniformity other than being hexagonal?

In 1931 **Gomms** of Birmingham produced placename sterling silver thimbles. A recent turn-up shows the Rhyl placename thimbles as having a threader. Shortly after this Gomms were taken over by Charles Iles to become Iles & Gomms.

This brass one has me stumped!! Do you know the purpose of the 'prongs' that are on the rim of this gadget thimble? There is an opening on the rim that may have been used as a thread cutter. Is there something missing or is this as it was made - for what purpose?

Re-reading Betensley [p32], maybe this could be the **Eugene M. Totten** patent taken out on 4 December 1906? If this is the case, this thimble is missing the needle threader which is attached along the body of the thimble.



Combination

This brass thimble has two gadgets - one is a needle threader that protrudes beyond the rim of the thimble and the other is the cutter on the rim. Some examples have PAT'D. These examples date from 1904.

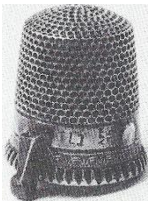
Finding this advert from *'The Modern Priscilla'* for March 1907, the ad for this thimble shows it was sold by M E Tice of Brooklyn. It is advertised as a "self-threading thimble" and with also a thread cutter.
The middle examples in the centre seem sturdier? This gadget thimble has the lettering THREAD CUTTER P'FCT'D 1904. I can also make out some numbers – 485. The rivets are also visible in this photo.

This is another combination gadget thimble. It has a vertical attachment, which combines a sliding mechanism with a small cutting blade to cut the thread, and a fine wire attachment for threading a needle. It is USA-made. Some variations of this thimble exist and some of are of brass. Bertrand and Zalkin name this gadget thimble **The Magic Thimble**, from 1926, with Patent Nº. *1585936*. The thimbles are marked M.T. PAT'D and Made in the U.S.A on the band, with a size marking.
The lettering on the accompanying box is "Thimble knife and needle threader all in one" – "gold plated Magic Thimble Inc. Reg. U.S. Pat. Off. Made in U.S.A. Printed in U.S.A Size 9."
Does 'Magic' mean that the seamstress has three tools in one – a thimble, a needle threader and a thread cutter?

The **Bionic Finger** is made of rubber. There is a needle puller in plastic on one side of the apex. This is on a spring that can be activated by the index finger to open the device. There is also a thread cutter hidden in the rim. Made in the USA. The apex is quite domed, and the size is M for medium.
A 2nd Bionic example has been made in a slightly a different way, where the identically coloured green thimble has the gadget placed lower-down on the thimble. This Bionic thimble is size 9. The apex is very flat, compared with the earlier example.

This anodised blue aluminium thimble has the name **Greist** lettered on the side of the thimble. This is not only a ventilated thimble or for use with longer nails, but it is wrap around in shape as well to fit every size of finger. The apex has a slit at one edge where it seems it is not properly joined - this would be used as a cutter. The aluminium makes it a very lightweight thimble to use.

This combination thimble is produced by **Ketcham & McDougall** of New York. There is a needle pusher and thread cutter on the band and rim and the rim is sturdy. The thimble is not marked for K&M but it appears in their catalogue #103. The thimble is lettered *Apr 85.*



This plastic or silicone needle puller has a protector thimble for the under finger. No details available

Other gadgets

Milward Knitter's thimble. Made of blue sturdy plastic, this tall thimble has five nipples vertically down the thimble. A metal movable arm covers these protrusions, and it can be moved to thread the yarn when knitting Fair Isle. The example on the centre right is made in India under the **Pony** brand. There is an opening down the side opposite the protrusions, making it a one size fits all.

More examples of knitters thimbles are the next pair at right - the orange one at left has a plastic arm with a clip-type closing; the yellow one is marked **Inox Wetric**. They were probably made for the Norwegian market by Rump/Altena of Germany.

The batch shown at furthest right are newly made in China (2021)



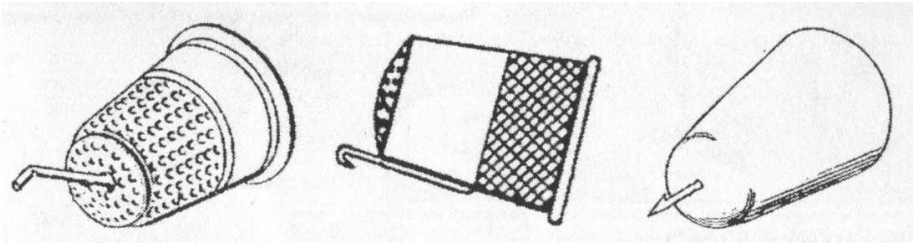


The plastic **Aero** crochet tension ring.

Dal-Craft Inc of Tucker, Georgia USA had a patent pending on their Bead-Nabber. There is a small patch of Velcro affixed to the finger-shaped cut away thimble to aid using picking up beads. Opening at back edge to allow to be used by any sized finger.
Marketed by **LeRan** ©1993.


A bead nabber that is marketed by Bead Company (Vic) of Collingwood Victoria, is identical to the 1993 patented bead gadget

According to Nakayama, no examples of these patented thimbles with hooks for tatting have yet been found (US 1,260,187 for Gourlay 19th March 1918).



1918 **E M Gourlay**; 1920 **L L Bauman;** 1921 **M C Mouser**

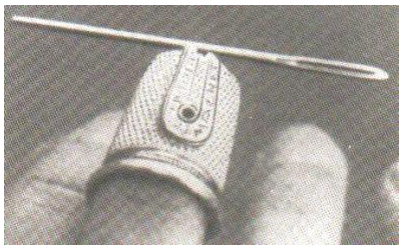
This American gadget helps in quilting, produced by **Colonial Needlecraft**. There is a brass raised guard rim above the edge of the apex, to prevent the thimble from slipping. The British thimbles are sized.

L: USA – R: UK

A modern **Iles & Gomms** anodised aluminium thimble has a magnet in the apex. Ideal for picking up pins, but disastrous for sewing as the needle keeps being unthreaded as the needle adheres to the magnet!

Gilt metal, made by **Iles & Gomms** of Birmingham, has a magnetised-apex thimble. This is a large size, so there must be demand as they come in various sizes.
The other is a silver-plated, German magnetised-apex thimble.

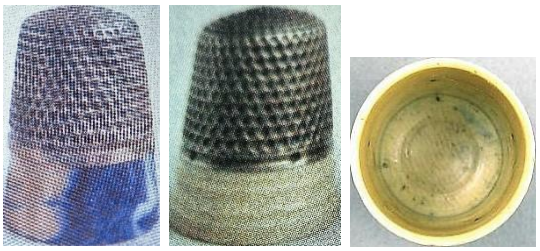
One of the magnetised nickel thimbles. The wording on the raised part of the thimble that is riveted on has **Magneto** - lettered twice on the magnet. According to Betensley, this is the patent of **Theodor Weigle** of Schorndorf, Germany, patented on 22 June 1909 in the USA. Betensley has a description with drawings of the patent on page 18 [see References]. It was created for picking up pins and needles.
According to Aldridge, on 30th June 1908, there was a Patent Nº. *13859* taken out in England by **W P Thompson**, on behalf of **Gebruder Gabler** of Germany. So, there are two versions of the Magneto thimble.
Unlike the modern thimbles with magnets in the apex, the magnetised piece does not interfere with sewing. It is recessed into the thimble so that it lies flush with the side of the thimble. The lettering around the band is PAT.in U.S.6.22.09.Germany.
According to Holmes, there were 3 qualities - silver-plated brass - Goldin (a form of brass) - aluminium.
The display card is also illustrated below, which held 36 thimbles.
There is also a brass copy of this Magneto thimble [see photo at centre]. This is lettered with the German patent no D.R.G.M. Nº *332084* [for Deutsches Reichsgebrauchsmuster] with the name of '**... J Bejcek ...**" lettered around the rim.
The brass example at right – tho missing the magnets – is well lettered around the rim with D.R.G.M. Nº. *332084.*




lower L also advertises CARL RONNING'S KAFFEE with D.R.G.M. Nº *332084* lettering above the advert
one of the other examples has a partial advertisement … J Bejcek …
lower R – Goldin showing hidden magnet

Another English gadget thimble is made by **Charles Iles**. It is his patented ventilation thimble. As the name suggests, there are holes for ventilation - one on the apex and three on the band. There is a lining of ivorine, to aid in cooling the thimble, as there is a space to allow the perspiration to escape from between the two linings. The patent is *Nº. 10821* of 1908, 12 October 1909 in the USA. The thimbles are lettered ILES VENTILATED PATENT around the rim. Betensley has a description with drawings of the patent on page 51 (see References).

Some **Iles** thimbles have the ivorine lining extending beyond the metal, secured by studs, without the ventilation holes. The Patent Nº. *4243* that dates from 1898, is for the lining. The linings could be of many colours of ivorine. Lettering is Iles' Patent.



649,310. THIMBLE. CHARLES P. ILES, Birmingham, England. Filed July 25, 1898. Serial No. 686,838. (No model.)

Claim.—1. The herein-described thimble, consisting of an interior rigid non-metallic body and an armor-cap covering the closed end of the non-metallic body and upper portion of its wall and terminating short of the mouth of the body, leaving the lower end of the latter exposed and self-sustaining, substantially as described.

2. A thimble consisting of a rigid non-metallic body provided with an outer metallic cap or shell, the inner body being provided with a circumferential groove and the edge of the cap or shell being upon into said groove, said cap or shell being indented and said indentations extending into the body to prevent the cap or shell rotating on the body, substantially as described.

This cupronickel gadget thimble is an adjustable thimble - for use in different seasons, when the fingers contract or expand, or for fingers of different sizes. The Patent Nº. *13605* was taken out by **Rosina M. Durham** on 26 July 1892 in England, as well as in France on 30 November 1892 and the USA in 18 April 1893. There are six flanges with an adjustable screw ring device around that allows the thimble to be made bigger or smaller.
Charles Iles manufactured the thimbles.
Betensley has a description with drawings of the patent on page 19 [see References]

Hem rollers, used to making it easier to Make a hand-rolled hem, seem to be the scarcest of the gadget thimbles. They were made in the USA and made of iron. Zalkin illustrates two: the two on the left was patented by **Downer** in 1861; the two on the right are Cleveland Ohio, **George H. Spencer's** patented thimble of 13 September 1870, Nº. *107420*.
It is a type of fingerguard with a roller attached "By a slight movement of the thumb, imparting an intermittent rotary motion to the roller, the operator is enabled to feed forward the fabric more readily and with greater rapidity than when it rests upon the finger in the usual way". The thimble is open-topped. The patent details show both an open- and closed end thimble.
John von Hoelle mentions that the rollers could be made of ivory. His example of the Spencer patent has the words PAT.1870 vertically on the thimble.
Betensley has a description with drawings of the patent on page 12 (see References).

3 views showing opening for nail

Thimbles with four vertical ridges are to prevent the thimble from rolling away and is made of brassy or gilded plastic. The insides are different. These thimbles are also found on plastic sewing kits.

This German made cupronickel collapsible or telescoping thimble, is from the 1920s. It folds down to a smaller size (in height).
There are gilded plastic examples of this type of thimble. I have one in a hussif from the French *Concorde*. Betensley has the patent details and drawings for another collapsible thimble, by **Grace F. Holden** in the USA for 9 July 1907. It folded to one-third of its size. Her reasoning was that it could fit into a purse more easily. See p20 of the Betensley booklet.

These sewing rings are used in Japan. The plate is worn on the palm side. As the thimble ring can open, this will fit all sized fingers.

This mystery thimble was purchased from Thimble Society of London catalogue spring 2000 #45. "A strange steel thimble, topped by a strange, pointed end. It does not look like a thatching thimble, could it have been used to comb straw?" She asked for suggestions as to its use.
The Amersham Museum was contacted in July 2025, who specialise in straw plaiting, an industry of the area. "It has no plaiting association … nor bonnet making." They suggested contacting the Royal School of Needlework who have also drawn a blank.
The thimble has s smooth inner lining. If you have ever used or know the purpose of this thimble, please let me know.

This gadget is **not sewing-related** - tho it has a pointed steel 'ripper' affixed. It is marked **Burke & James** CHICAGO on the attachment. It is made of a base metal.
A second identical gadget in the middle, turned up in 2010, and this has the lettering of ANTHONY lettered on the attachment. The attachments appear on various types of metal thimbles: some heavier than others; some with size marks.
A third identical gadget shown on the right, for sale on ebay, in 2010, but this has the lettering of SCOVILL MFGCO lettered on the attachment. Made of a base metal as well.
The information has now been shared - "that gadget with "blades" on them, were in fact used in **developing photographs** in the 1880s-1900. They were marketed as **Plate Lifters** and were used so one could lift a glass plate out of the developing chemicals easily and without getting one's finger in the chemicals.
One that **Scovill Mfg Co** marketed in c.1883 as a Scovill Efficient Plate Lifter and "This plate lifter is very nearly like an ordinary open-ended thimble with a pointed piece of metal soldered securely to it." These sold originally for 15 cents."

Comparing the two brands L: ANTHONY – R: SCOVILL MFGCo

This interesting thimble has a spring-loaded attachment that, with pressure, moves back and forward towards the thimble. Within the spring device there is a gripping mechanism, which we can only presume is meant to be used to aid in hemming. Additionally, there is a groove down the inside of the attachment - for a pin to anchor the fabric. The thimble is of a gilt base metal and some examples are marked inside with **FL^{D}**.

This gadget thimble is made in Germany for the Norwegian market and is used for knitting. There are two flexible wire coils with two yarn guides to keep wool or knitting yarn tangle-free. 80x120mm in size. The identical thimbles on their original backing cards shows the merit of keeping modern gadget thimbles within their packaging. This is the **Inox** brand.

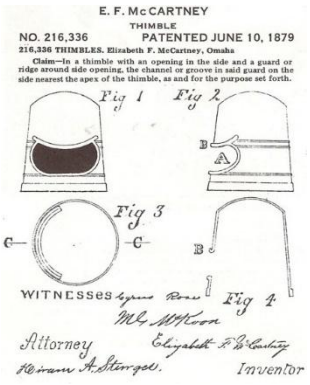

This interesting gadget thimble is a basting or hemming guide made of a base metal. It is lettered ***Hiawatha*** MAGIC BASTING GUIDE with PAT APPLIED FOR lettered under the ring part. The thimble fits onto the finger and being a ring will fit any size finger. The flange that is attached has inch marks incised to be used in measuring a hem.



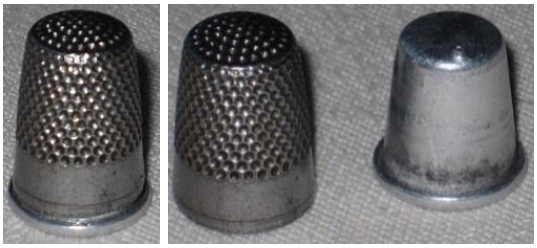
This is a modern US handmade sterling silver gadget thimble made by **T J Lane**. It is a quilting thimble with a difference. Like all quilting thimbles, the apex is concave, but there is an extra smooth flange to this apex edge, that is slightly concave. There is an applied butterfly motif, but this has nothing to do with the gadget. This example is size 8, with T J Lane's maker's mark.


Is this the original shape of this thimble or has it been tampered with or altered? Please let me know if you have an identical one, to answer this question. There is a slight bulge to the upper part of the thimble with a flat disc that overlaps the edge of the apex with a slight inner concave curve. Its use would probably help a quilter with the extra strength at the apex? This example is size 11 and by its shape is probably US-made.

There is an opening near the rim, so not near the fingernail area on this thimble. There is a smooth lip to the opening on this silver-coloured thimble, but this does not seem that sharp to be a cutter. According to the patent the opening is to avoid pressure from the thimble on the bottom of the fingernail and the ledge is to catch the needle if it slides off the top of the thimble.
The patent application was registered by **Elizabeth J McCartney**, from Nebraska USA,
Patent Nº. *216,336* on 10 June 1879.


E. F. McCARTNEY
THIMBLE
NO. 216,336 PATENTED JUNE 10, 1879
216,336 THIMBLES. Elizabeth F. McCartney, Omaha
Claim—In a thimble with an opening in the side and a guard or ridge around side opening, the channel or groove in said guard on the side nearest the apex of the thimble, as and for the purpose set forth.
Fig 1 Fig 2
Fig 3
Fig 4
WITNESSES
Attorney
Inventor

This double thimble is intriguing - the lining is a separate thimble - and made of a different metal to the knurled/indented over-thimble.



I came across this intriguing thimble for sale on ebay recently and wondered if it would classify as a gadget? Is it a one-off thimble - but quite a good idea? The Bakelite material is kind to the finger when worn in a ring-like fashion but with the strength of steel (?) with the apex embedded at the business-end.

Here is another puzzle for gadget thimble collectors. This is a sewing kit with a small wheel in the apex of the thimble that forms the closing edge of the kit. The kit is marked on the bottom: DEPOSÉ PATENTED and thus should come from France.
This piece of steel that projects from the apex rotates - to what sewing purpose? There is also a double lining to the thimble - presumably to protect the finger when the wheel rotates? The steel is smooth so possibly could have been used to open or press seams? One of the photos shows the steel removed from between the two layers of thimbles.
The tubular part is used as a sewing kit with threads etc.
The tube was once lacquered blue as the full sewing kit photo shows.

What is the purpose of this spike on the apex of this German thimble? The spike must have been added at a later date as it seems as if the brass spike has been inset into the apex.

Tho fingerguards are really not gadgets this ingenious item from the 19th century has been fashioned to fit any sized finger with the opening on the band. It seems very rigid but provides the finger with security from the needle? Smooth surfaces all over.

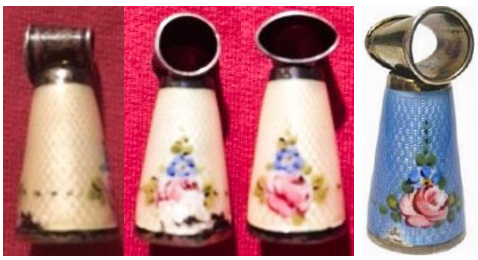
When I first saw pictures of this gadget thimble, I thought it had been squashed into this shape. On closer inspection it has been made in the shape of a finger – presumably for a better fit?

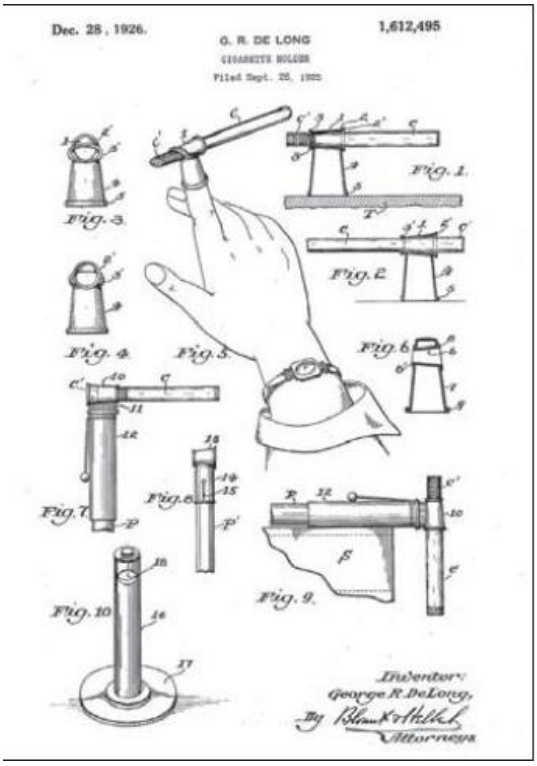
What an ornate thimble! Beautifully enamelled (tho damaged), this sterling thimble has a metal gadget on the apex - its purpose is unknown. It is hollow and tapered. The opening is narrow at .64 inches (16mm) and the thimble is 1.41 inches (35.8mm) tall. Is there something missing from the attachment? I would love to know more about this gadget thimble please.

It is lettered as follows **D E Long** Sterling U S Pat.Dec 28 1926.

William Isbister researched this thimble and had his findings published in the *TCI Bulletin* winter 2018.

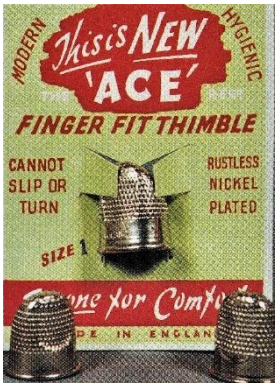
This is a cigarette holder!!





Is this strictly a gadget thimble? It is made of three parts (complete thimble is shown in the top left-hand image). The top outer layer is marked .800; the other two parts are of a silver-coloured base metal. Together they form a single entity, separated they can be used as a tailor's thimble a cross-hatched patterned thimble for sturdier sewing and the finer silver thimble for more delicate sewing? All this is my own supposition from the images.

This carded thimble, made in England, is named New ACE. It is different in that it won't turn on the finger whilst sewing. There are two finger-shaped indents in both sides of the thimble that prevent it from moving. 'A finger fit thimble' is lettered on backing card, it is rustless metal-plated. Available in various sizes.



I know I wasn't going to include thimbles not used for sewing but as it is branded …
Tho this was never made as a thimble for sewing, nevertheless it is thimble-shaped. The sides are reminiscent of a jelly mould. It is designed to fit on the finger of a pipe smoker, to tamp down the tobacco in a pipe. It became known amongst smokers as a pipe tamper thimble. It was made by **Falcon,** pipe manufacturers. It is made of aluminium and lined with plastic. Made in England. Lettering in the apex 'Pat Applied For'. It is sized. This example is '2'.

Another branded thimble not used for sewing, needs to be included as it is branded and needs recording. These are clerks' or bank tellers' thimbles. Instead of being indented, the thimbles have protrusions which aid in counting bank notes quickly. This orange rubber example has the brand **"Fasta"**. There is additional lettering of "Trade mark" as well as a size number.

This is a box of **Swingline** rubber thimbles. Made by **Acco** – country of origin unknown

This is a contemporary version of a gadget thimble. Made of malleable silicone, with breathing spaces cut into the sides for further comfort, the enhanced sized indentations gives the sewer a firm grip of the needle. Marked **Prym,** a company in Germany, this is marketed as an ergonomic thimble of the 2010s. Available in a range of colours. Now having the packaging we can read Further about these thimbles: the fingertip is of a softer silicone than the finger part.
There are now copies of these silicone gripper thimbles appearing – made in China. With the packaging information these are named as an 'ejector thimble' – with some 'interesting' translated bits in the blurb. Once removed from the packaging, there is nothing to distinguish them from the German-made Prym grippers.

This British thimble was created to help sufferers of arthritis (or rheumatism) have a comfortable thimble to sew with. Thimbles are marked on the outer band with **A.C^{E}** Pat 6253 and there is a size number. On the inner surface of the thimbles is lettered the clue you are seeking: ANTI-RHEU GEM with 'holes' around the inner rim just below this lettering. The holes are not evident on the outside.

There were rings made with the same Anti-Rheu band – boxes below.

A.C^{E} is the maker of these thimbles: **Alfred Constantine**, of Birmingham. The patent date of 6253 is for 1909. The advertisements shown would date from this period.

Other examples of these thimbles is marked A R G on the band (with diamond pattern). This may have been made by **Charles Horner** and he made thimbles for Alfred Constantine & Floyd.

This is another example of a gadget thimble not used for sewing. It is a thimble tape cutter of ADJUSTABLE size used by The Western Union Telegraph Co. The metal thimbles were manufactured by **J S Popper Inc.**

This gadget thimble is a CONTOUR THIMBLE. Made of 24ct gold pate, it is available in different sizes. This is the L size. According to the blurb on the thimble box it is 'The world's only contoured thimble. It conforms to the finger contour and best protection for long finger nails.
Manufactured by **U.S Thimble Co.**

This gadget has a sturdy row of serrated teeth across the apex of thimble. There is a reinforcing bar on the inner apex. Probably made of nickel-plated brass. Were the teeth placed there at the of manufacture or modified for a later purpose?

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This listing of Gadget 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.

March 2003