

British sterling silver placename thimbles

What do British seaside holiday resorts have to do with thimbles?

There are many British silver thimbles made in the late 1920s by Henry Griffith & Sons, with names of placenames or towns - as keepsakes - which include seaside resorts, that have now become collectable in their own right.

After World War I, tourism became accessible to more people and the English thimble manufacturer, Henry Griffith & Sons, took full advantage of this by producing silver placename thimbles as souvenirs. He produced thimbles with the names of British destinations on the bands of his thimbles and he was the only maker to do so in any quantity. There are hallmark dates for 1928 (D), 1929 (E), 1930 (F), 1931 (G) and very occasionally 1932 (H) hallmark dates; rarely a 1933 (J) date.

The Great Depression saw the end of this lucrative production (very few other English thimble makers produced silver thimbles during the late 1920s, never mind the 1930s). Were the thimbles with 1925 (Felixstowe) and 1926 (Stratford-on Avon) and 1927 (Stratford-on Avon) hallmark dates an early marketing?

The placename is lettered in upper case in relief around the band of the thimble. Occasionally the name is lettered over vertical striations. I have noticed that two placenames are enclosed within inverted commas or quote marks e.g., some of the Stratford-on-Avon and Penrith thimbles. Short placenames like Rhyl, Rugby, Leven, Bude and York have a star or flower or shamrock symbol at either end.

Only Stratford-on-Avon has the lettering in smaller print as well as the standard used.

The placenames commissioned by Henry Griffith & Son are as diverse as the popular Stratford-on-Avon and Blackpool, to small inland towns like Rugby, up to Inverness in Scotland, to the ever-popular Chester, to the capital cities of London, Cardiff and Edinburgh.

There are Griffith thimbles for England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, as well as the Channel Isles - the Isle of Man and the Isle of Wight. It is interesting to note that there is a placename thimble for Oxford but not Cambridge - for Bristol but not for Bath. Dublin nor Belfast have HG&S placename thimbles.

In addition to the size marks, Griffith often used thimbles with 'The Spa' or 'Royal Spa' lettered on the rim. This lettering is on the band below the British placename together with a full set of hallmarks. A small proportion have no assay marks, just additional the lettering 'Made in England' and 'Sterling Silver'



It is apparent just from looking at this cross-section of placenames that Griffith thimbles made for Blackpool, Llandudno and Stratford-on-Avon were the most popular holiday destinations for sterling silver souvenir thimbles. Tho it may seem from such a comprehensive listing that these thimbles are commonplace, they are not.

It will be very worthwhile to search out the placenames that have relevance to your life. My personal favourite is for Halifax.

According to The Thimble Society in their spring 2007 catalogue, the HG&S placename thimble sold for 1/- (one shilling) in 1930.

Tho Henry Griffith is the most prolific he is not the only British thimble maker to produce placename thimbles. Other makers made placename thimbles decades before HG&S. The placename thimbles by these other thimblemakers are scarce.

S Blankensee & Son Ld (SB&SLd)
James Fenton (JF)
Gomms (G'S) (1930-1931)
William Griffiths & Son (WG&S)
Charles Horner (CH)
Henry Swann (HS)
James Swann (JS)(JS&S)
John Thompson & Son (JT&S)

There are a few variations to the single placenames - where a phrase is used. From Blackpool (Gomms) | From Brighton (**1830s**) | From Llandudno (Gomms) | From London (Gomms) | A Present from London | A Present from Rhyl (HG&S) etc
I have filed all these phrases with their single placenames.

Below are the extremely rare placename thimbles from the 1830s - makers unknown.



Brighton – Brighton Gift – Canterbury – Cheltenham – Dover – From Brighton – From Tunbridge
From Tunbridge Wells – Greenwich

Aldridge mentions 'A Trifle from Hastings'

Related topic:
Placename thimbles from around the world

A PRESENT FROM ... see name of town or city

ABERDEEN

Scotland



1931
Charles Horner
stone apex

ABERYSTWYTH

Wales



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

AYLESBURY

Buckinghamshire



1930

BABBACOMBE

Devon



1931

BANGOR

Wales



1930

BIRMINGHAM

Warwickshire



1929

BLACKPOOL/BLACKPOOL/FROM BLACKPOOL

Lancashire



1897

William Griffiths & Sons



1897 - 1927

James Swann



1930/1931



1930

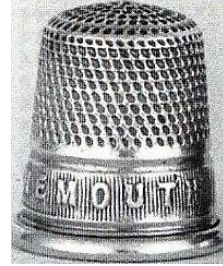
Gomms
From Blackpool
large lettering

BOURNEMOUTH/BOURNEMOUTH

Hampshire



1930



1931
Gomms

BRIDLINGTON

Yorkshire



1931

BRIGHTON/BRIGHTON

Sussex

see also: 1830s thimbles Brighton and From Brighton



1930



1931
Gomms

BRISTOL

Somerset



1930

BUDE
Cornwall



1931

BURSLEM
Staffordshire



1896

James Swann

CALLANDER
Scotland



Charles Horner

stone apex

CARDIFF/CARDIFF
Wales



1930



1928

S Blankensee & Son Ld
lettering upside down

CHATHAM

Kent



1930

CHELTENHAM

Gloucestershire



1897

William Griffiths & Sons

CHESTER/CHESTER

Cheshire



c.1900

James Swann



1930

COLCHESTER

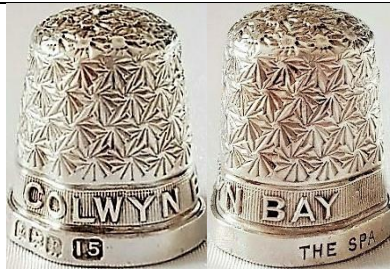
Essex



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

COLWYN BAY

Wales



1930

COMBE MARTIN

Devon



1932

CROYDON

Surrey



1930

DEWSBURY

Yorkshire



1930

Dolgelly

Wales

no photo

Henry Swann

DUBLIN

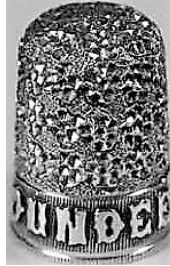
Ireland



Charles Horner
stone apex

DUNDEE

Scotland



1898
James Swann
blackberry pattern

EASTBOURNE/EASTBOURNE

Sussex



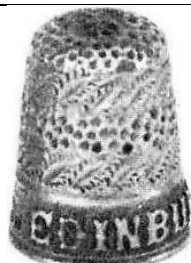
1929



1931
Gomms

EDINBURGH / EDINBURGH

Scotland



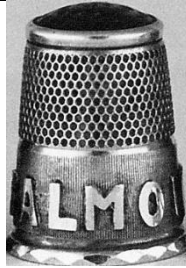
unknown maker



1930

FALMOUTH

Cornwall



1919

Charles Horner

stone apex

FELIXSTOWE/FELIXSTOWE

Norfolk



1908

Charles Horner

stone apex



1925

FROM ... see name of town or city

GLASGOW

Scotland



1909

James Fenton

with Celtic scrolls

GLASTONBURY

Somerset



1930

GORLESTON

Norfolk



1908

Charles Horner

stone apex

GRAVESEND

Kent



1929

GREAT YARMOUTH

Norfolk



1930

GUERNSEY/GUERNSEY/GUERNESEY

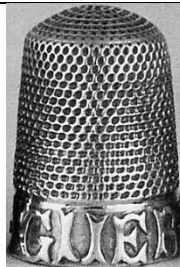
Channel Isle



1901

Charles Horner

name in a banner



1892

Henry Swann

no photo

James Swann



1930



GUERNESEY (French spelling)
1898
James Swann

HALIFAX
Yorkshire



1930

ILFRACOMBE /ILFRACOMBE/ILFRACOMBE
Devon



1897
Charles Horner



1930



1931
Gomms

INVERNESS
Scotland



1930

IPSWICH

Suffolk



1930

ISLE OF MAN / ISLE OF MAN

between England and Ireland



1894

Henry Swann

striated three-legged triskelion symbol



1893

James Swann

three-legged triskelion symbol
blackberry pattern



1893 - 1906

James Swann

triskelion is patterned



1924

Webb's Douglas thimble case



S. Webb Public Lounge Douglas thimble case

JERSEY/JERSEY

Channel Isle



1887 - 1906
James Swann

1887 is earliest dated placename thimble



1930

KILLARNEY

Ireland



1930

LEAMINGTON SPA

Warwickshire



1930

LEEDS

Yorkshire



MADE IN ENGLAND THE SPA STERLING SILVER

LEIGH ON SEA

Essex



LEVEN

Scotland



1933

LLANDUDNO/LLANDUDNO/FROM LLANDUDNO

Wales



1930



1930

Gomms

From Llandudno
large lettering

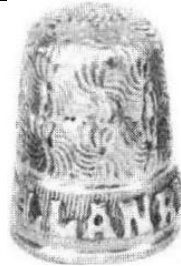


1931

Gomms

LLANRWST

Wales



unknown maker

LONDON/FROM LONDON/LONDON/A PRESENT FROM LONDON



1930



1930

Gomms
From London
large lettering



copper
Charles Iles?



1880s (?)

A Present from London
unknown maker

LOOE

Cornwall



1912

Charles Horner
stone apex

no photo

MINEHEAD

Somerset



1930

MONA

Wales

These thimbles carry the wrong symbol! The triskelion legs symbol is for the Isle of Man. Mona is the Celtic word for the Isle of Anglesey so the triskelion has nothing to do with Mona



1909
Charles Horner



1897
John Thompson & Son

MORECAMBE

Lancashire



1889
James Swann

NEWQUAY

Cornwall



1931

OMAGH
Northern Ireland



1932

OXFORD
Oxfordshire



1928

PEEBLES
Scotland



1931



1902

Charles Horner
stone apex

PENMAENMAWR

Wales



1931

"PENRITH"

Cumberland



1930

PENZANCE

Cornwall



1930

PLYMOUTH

Devon



1929

PORTSMOUTH

Hampshire



1930

READING

Berkshire



1929

RHYL/RHYL/ A PRESENT FROM RHYL

Wales



1930



1931

Gomms
threader gadget



1931

A Present from Rhyll

RUGBY
Warwickshire



1930

SANDOWN
Isle of Wight



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

SCARBOROUGH
Yorkshire



SHREWSBURY
Shropshire



1930

SKEGNESS

Lincolnshire



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

no photo

Gomms

SOUTHEND ON SEA

Essex



1929

SOUTHPORT

Lancashire



1931

Gomms

SOUTHSEA

Hampshire



1930

ST LEONARDS

Sussex



1930

STOCKPORT

Greater Manchester



1911

James Swann

blackberry pattern

STOURBRIDGE

Worcestershire



1896/1911

James Swann

"STRATFORD-ON-AVON"/STRATFORD-ON-AVON

Warwickshire



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER



1928
small lettering



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

In 2017 an eagle-eyed British collector has discovered this cast example of a Stratford thimble it is heavier than standard placename thimbles squarer and rougher on the inside there are thimble mould lines across the apex and thru the 'V' and 'O' letters the maker's mark has almost worn away Who is making these? Buyer beware!

TEIGNMOUTH

Devon



1930

TENBY

Wales



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER

TORQUAY/TORQUAY

Devon



1910/1911
James Fenton



1932

VENTNOR

Isle of Wight



1931

WALLASEY

Cheshire



1930

WALSALL

Staffordshire



unknown maker

WESTCLIFF ON SEA

Lincolnshire



1930

WESTON SUPER MARE

Somerset



1930

WHITLEY BAY

Northumberland



THE SPA MADE IN ENGLAND STERLING SILVER 16.

YORK

Yorkshire



1930

References

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This listing of British sterling silver placename 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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