

Samuel Foscett (SF) sterling silver thimbles

London

Samuel Foscett was a London-based thimble maker in Victorian England. Von Hoelle mentions him and his brother Henry as "English silversmiths known to have made thimbles in London 1865-1912".

Samuel Foscett was born in Limehouse, London, in 1848, the son of John Foscett and Sarah Scott. He married Elizabeth in 1871. In 1881 he lived with his family, including his three children, at 45 Essex Street, Islington. He still resided there in 1901. His eldest son, Samuel William Foscett, was a silversmith and his second son, Henry James Foscett, following in his father's footsteps, was a thimble maker.

Samuel Foscett succeeded his uncle Henry in the business in 1886 and he registered his mark in September of that year at the London Assay Office.

Samuel has a Registered design [RD265923](#) for a thimble, which he registered on 19 November 1895. His design was listed as 'panelled faceted diamond shapes with a daisy at each intersection'.

Samuel Foscett & Co were last listed as thimble makers in 1909 and the last thimble I have encountered is for 1909.

Foscett thimbles' maker's marks were registered in London, Birmingham and Chester assay offices. The most commonly found assay office mark is for London.

Like many of his contemporary thimble makers in Birmingham, SF began to mark the size mark on his thimbles – earliest probably from 1893. This may help you decipher a badly stamped hallmark date when there is a size mark present.

His thimble sizes range from 2 to 10 (largest diameter to smallest).

A very recent find is his Windsor Castle design and other scenic bands. Victorian silversmiths had been using Windsor Castle as a theme since the 1840s and this is a rare find - to find a hallmarked example, beginning with 1890. This makes a collection of the entire range of his output a wonderful niche collection.



SAMUEL FOSKETT

Trueform thimbles

Samuel was also involved in the Trueform finger-shaped thimble that was patented by Horace Bourne in 1904. The patent number is PAT.19157. The patent wanted to improve the comfort for the wearer – which would improve the health of the user.

Thimbles with this pat. number bear Samuel's maker's mark with the hallmark dates for 1905-1906. Each thimble shown has a different pattern.

This venture was not successful, and they were not made after these dates.



Trueform Thimble Bourne's Patent box + 1906 thimble in box

THE

Trueform Thimble.

(Bourne's Patent)

Something New and Interesting about Thimbles.

PROBABLY few people who use thimbles regard them of as much importance as they really are, or are aware of their great antiquity. We learn from the excavations that have been made from time to time, and also from writings, that both the Egyptians and Babylonians were magnificent embroiderers, and to enable them to produce such excellent results they must have used the thimble. Examples 2,000 years old have been found at Herculaneum of the same conical form as the thimbles of the present day.

Roman thimbles of the conical shape have also been found in England, and they are practically of the same design as those now in use.

One cannot but consider it remarkable that less inventive effort should have been spent over this most necessary and usual article, than over the other thousand-and-one things that are required in everyday life, and that it should have been left to the 20th century to make any real improvement in this line.

More especially is this so, when it is considered that medical testimony proves, that the present conical form is most injurious to wear, as by reason of it pinching up the nail and pressing on the flesh unequally, it is a very frequent source of whitlows and other troubles such as cramp, chilblains, etc., due to the restriction of the free circulation of the blood.

The pressure also effects the nerves of the whole hand, causing a feeling of fatigue and lassitude.

Moreover, thimbles of the usual pattern in no way conform to the finger, and are most uncomfortable to wear, and also are very apt to come off, when the finger end has to be moistened so as to make them keep on for a time.

The Trueform Thimble,

on the contrary, closely following, as it does, the shape of that part of the finger on which it is required to fit, is most comfortable and innocuous to wear, being held on by surface contact instead of pressure.

This Thimble is the only one which has obtained a certificate for **Hygienic Merit** from the Institute of Hygiene, 34, Devonshire Street, Harley Street, London, W.

A Comfortable Fit.

Advertisement for the Trueform Thimble (Bourne's patent), circa 1905. Private collection



1905
combination pattern with
vertical patterns of daisy and
diamond



1905/1906



1905
combination pattern with
vertical patterns of daisy and
blackberry
sizes 6/7/8



1905
9.375
plain
size 4



1905/1906
band of diamond-within-diamonds and daisies
cartouche has well-defined wavy edges
size 5



1906
plain
size 3



1906
blackberry pattern



1906
combination pattern of daisy and dot diamonds



1905
band of single daisies
size 4



Tho this thimble is not made of sterling silver it needs to be recorded here
Silver-plated with the Trueform Pat.1915 (size 7)
 it is similar to the sterling all-over daisy patterning
 we will never know if they were made by Samuel Foscett
 the odds are high that he was the maker, as he would have had access to the dies used for the original
 sterling silver thimbles



others just bear the lettering PATENT with sizes 2/3/9
 aluminium?



and now in 2020 a brass example with 19157 lettered on the band
there are no other marks



PATENT 2

The more one studies the patterns used by Samuel Foskett, the clearer the picture becomes. There are a limited number of patterns he used - large roses, diamonds-within-diamond patterns, large distinctive daisies etc.

He seems to have more decorated rims than most other British thimble makers.
I have grouped similar patterns so that this may be more evident.

Foskett seems to have used distinctive wavy-edged cartouches – almost exclusively on his thimbles with a decorative band and plainly indented upper half. The hallmarks have occasionally been stamped inadvertently into the cartouche.

Samuel even used the popular blackberry design for some of his thimbles: using this design which is usually associated with the Birmingham silversmiths.

He also produced 9ct gold thimbles.

There are several examples of his fingerguards, which are usually unmarked/unhallmarked.

Decorative bands



1889

when we encounter a mint example, we can appreciate these engraved bands
patterned rim
large cartouche with defined wavy edges



1889

Chester
wriggle work
cartouche inscribed with owner's initials of A M



1889/1891/1901/1903/1904/1909
diamonds-within-diamond pattern

1909 is the last date SF made thimbles



1890

wriggle-work
faceted rim



1890

Chester

'Victoria Fountain Brighton' lettered around the rim



1890

Chester

'Windsor Castle' lettered around the rim



1892

wriggle-work
patterned rim



1892
wriggle-work
large cartouche with wavy edges now carries assay marks



1892
9ct gold
coral stones set around rim, giving a pointed edge to the rim



1893
wriggle-work
rim has several lines



1893
finger guard
wriggle-work



1893
large roses band
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges
patterned rim



1893
birds
patterned rim



1893
'Balmoral the Queen's Highland Home' lettered around rim



1893
panels with alternating patterns



1893
roses
bloodstone apex
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges
patterned rim



1894
'Windsor Castle' lettered around the rim



1894
red stone
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges
patterned rim



1895
stylised leaves band
patterned rim
child's



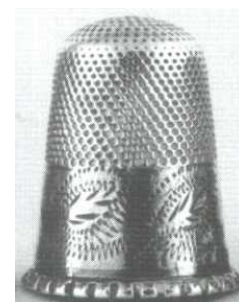
1895/1899 #10
wide well-defined cartouche
(not a gold thimble)



1896
nine "stones" set into trefoils over striations
(some stones missing)



1897
blackberry
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges



1897
wriggle-work
beaded rim



1897
inscribed with 'Dorothy' in
large cartouche with wavy edges



1897 #9
wriggle-work large cartouche with wavy edges that
carries assay marks
patterned rim



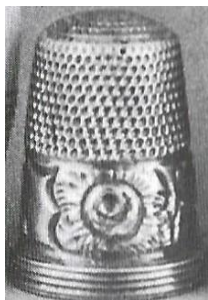
1898 #8
roses
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges that
carries assay marks
patterned rim



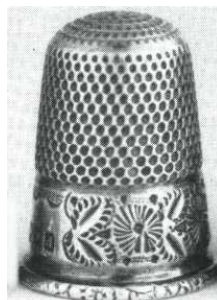
1898 #6
heavy long narrow cartouche with faceted wavy
edges that carries assay marks
patterned rim



1898
'Windsor Castle' lettered around the rim



1899
ringed rim



1899
patterned rim



1899 #7
patterned rim



1899
wriggle-work
patterned rim



1899
ferns patterned rim



1900
wriggle-work
faceted rim



1900 #4
distinctive daisies with leaves
large cartouche with faceted
wavy edges that carries assay
marks



1901
'Osborne House Isle of Wight'
lettered around the rim



1901 #9
patterned rim
large cartouche with faceted wavy
edges that carries assay marks



1901 #7
diamond pattern band below heavily indented top



1901
green stone apex
wriggle-work
faceted rim



1902



1902
roses



1902
blackberry



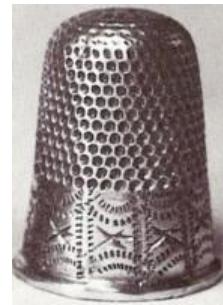
1903
roses



1904 #8
roses and dots
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges that carries assay marks



1904 #7
leaves and heavy dots at edge
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges



1908
unusual patterned panelled band

Decorative double bands



1891
large cartouche with defined wavy edges that carries assay marks



1892/1893/1894/1895 (size 7) /1897
large cartouche with well-defined wavy edges that carries assay marks

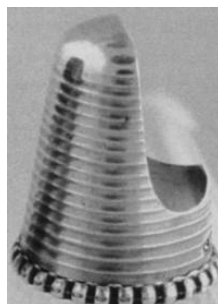
Plainly-indented
just the various rims distinguish them



1891
assay marks are within
the indentations, which
go down to the rim



1892
beaded rim



1892
fingerguard
beaded rim



1893
ornate



1893/1897 #9
floral rim



1893/1894/1895
double row of
blackberries



1894/1897 #7
rolled rim



1894/1897/1900
two rings



1894
ornate with diamond
patterning with diamond
shapes



1895
engraved 'E.M. BLUNT 61 SOHO R^D'



1897/1901/1907 #9
two rings



1898 #7
ornate using wriggle work



1908
flat rim

All over patterning



1889



1890



1891
beaten surface



1891
worn to holes thru use



1892/1899



1892



1893



1893/1894/1897 #8



1893 #7
unusual leaf patterning all over with blackberry
patterning on apex



1894
rows of paired leaves
with blackberry patterning on apex



1894/1895
scalloped rim with fleur de lis



1895 #9
R^D 265923



1895
tho the patterning used is that of the registered
design, it is not marked as such
scalloped rim with fleur de lis



1895



1895



1896



1896



1896 #7
Rd 265923



1897 #9



1897 #7
beaten surface



1897 #5



1897
R^D 265923
with starred daisy band



1897
blackberry



1898 #10



1899 #9
squared beaten surface



1899/1900



1901 #6
blackberry



1902 #7
patterned rim



1902



1902
Rd 265923
with starred daisy band and blackberries on apex



1904 #9
squared beaten surface



1905 #7



1905 #7



1906 #8
squared beaten surface



1907 #6
finely beaten surface



1907
huge daisies all over

References

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Gay Ann Rogers *An illustrated history of needlework tools*. 1983
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This listing of Samuel Foskett silver 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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