Retail jewellers' thimble cases and boxes

THIS TOPIC IS NOW CLOSED HAVING REACHED 500 BOXES - THANK YOU

Over the last 24 years I have concentrated on thimble topics that have largely focussed on the thimbles found in collections. Now it is time to focus on the small thimble boxes and cases that made their appearance in the mid-Victorian era, thru to the beginning of the 20th century and the Edwardian era – used by retail jewellers for presentation of a quality item – an early tangible form of promotion and marketing, that could hold a treasured item safely for years.

It is the names of the jewellery stores and their addresses that form a link to the past and their current existence 100 years on. The thimbles are made of sterling silver and gold, tho they form an incidental part of this study. At least half of the thimbles are still in their original cases.

Many jewellers did go to the expense of having their cases or boxes personalised.

Looking online to see if these Jewellers still operate, it seems clear to me that these were single family businesses and so didn't continue for more than one generation?

It has been important for me to record these antique boxes' details. This is especially true where the lettering is on the outside as it is more prone to wear and rubbing off the details.

Many of these boxes have their details worn away. I have transcribed all the information lettered in or on each box as well as any symbols found there.

I have observed that the simpler the wording, the older the box and therefore when jeweller existed. Just a place would indicate that they were the sole jeweller in the area?

Do you have a jeweller from this era in your family tree? Maybe you will find a relic here?

There are descriptors lettered in many of the following cases/boxes of what the stores stood for – jeweller (jeweller in the US) – silversmith – goldsmith – diamond merchant – watchmaker/watch manufacturer – (heraldic) engraver - even horologist - and quaintly, optician (and ophthalmic optician) – or supplier to the British Royal Family, the Admiralty etc.

It is quite intriguing to note some of the quirky details included – like the Optician's medical qualifications – even a three-digit telephone number is included in one example. Some thimble boxes even included the early post code (from 1857/8 London was divided into ten postal districts, each with its own code. In 1917 a number digit was added).

An image of one store is included in a French box (RARE). Looking thru the jewellers' names, many just used their family name – a small business.

The use of "City" - even "Within" seemed sufficient at the time – these terms meant London – sometimes the address ended only with a London street name! These are relics of gentler times: a long-gone era. As expected, **London** jewellers dominate - then add the Greater London boroughs, it's a substantial total of the British jewellers' boxes recorded here.

Most of the retail cases supplied by jewellers are made of faux leather and cardboard boxes with lettering on the lid, with the odd exception of the more expensive celluloid [10] or ivorine [1]. The cases' shapes are contoured to fit a thimble - rectangular or square in the case of boxes. The fastenings and hinges (applicable to the cases) are of brass. They weren't made to last, just to protect, so I feel these jewellers' boxes are worth recording here.

Some of the names and descriptors are very brief – others are ornate and wordy – the space was limited, as most of the lettering occurs on the inner surface of the case. The box's details are easier to photograph on the outside.

Gold lettering would have been more expensive – showing the prestige of the jeweller.

With the quaint practice of including multiple full-stops and commas, as part of the jewellers' details, it reflects the practice of a hundred years ago. I have chosen to omit these in the 21st century and organised the jewellers in alphabetical order by the first initial of each jeweller.

Whilst I was researching "Thimbles of Australia" (published in 1998) I actively sought out retail jewellers' thimble boxes. This numbered 17 jewellers. Twenty years on, this total has only grown to 31 cases. It

shows how important it is for your collection to search out these boxes, by preserving them for the future. By including them here keeps my book updated.

I feel a <u>date</u> included in the description at the time adds to the interest.

A buckled belt that surrounds the jewellers' details is a symbol of constancy. So far, I have encountered 24 examples.

With a few exceptions, none of the jewellers featured here were thimble makers. Can you find those that were?

There is nothing lettered on or in these retail jewellers' thimble cases or boxes that relate to actual thimbles. 'Dorcas Thimble Boxes' and 'Charles Iles THE thimbles' were covered in earlier Learn More About ... Thimbles topics.

Does your town, city or borough jewellery store feature here? Do they still trade? Please would you share an image? I was so chuffed to find a Brisbane jeweller's retail thimble celluloid case (see Other Countries). Thimble cases and boxes are a diminishing resource, so treasure any you have. I have tracked a few jewellers that still trade today.

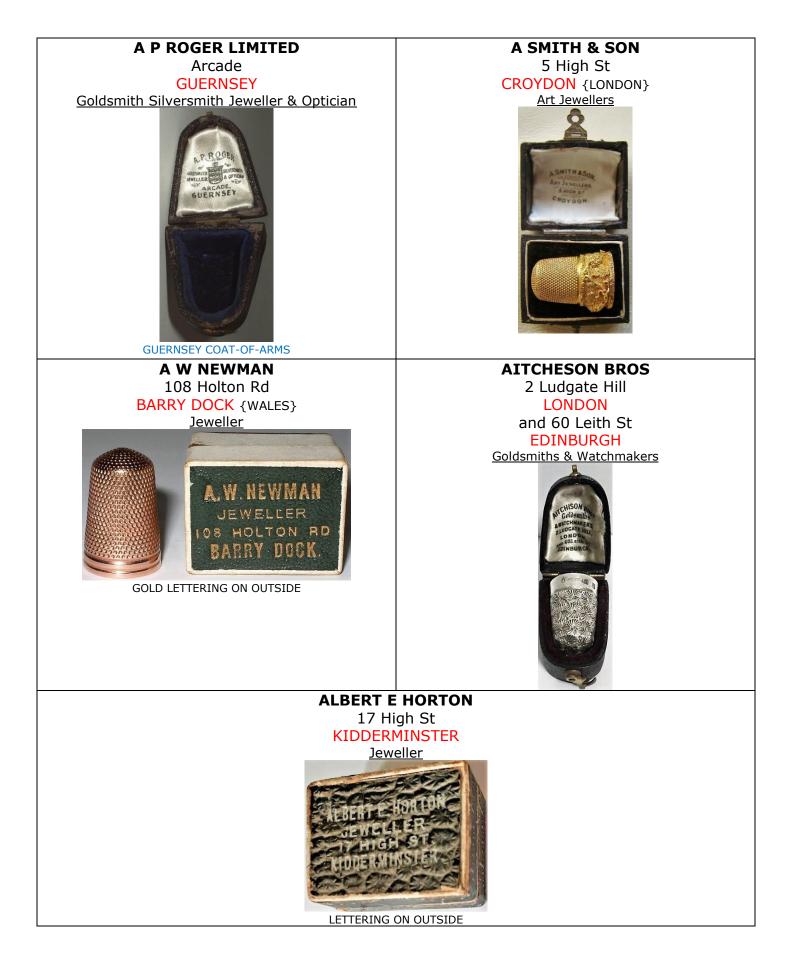
All these images are of cases or boxes sold on ebay so not all as clear as I'd like. Any error of transcription is mine alone: especially where the language used is not English. Please help to remedy these errors if you have a more accurate description – by emailing me.

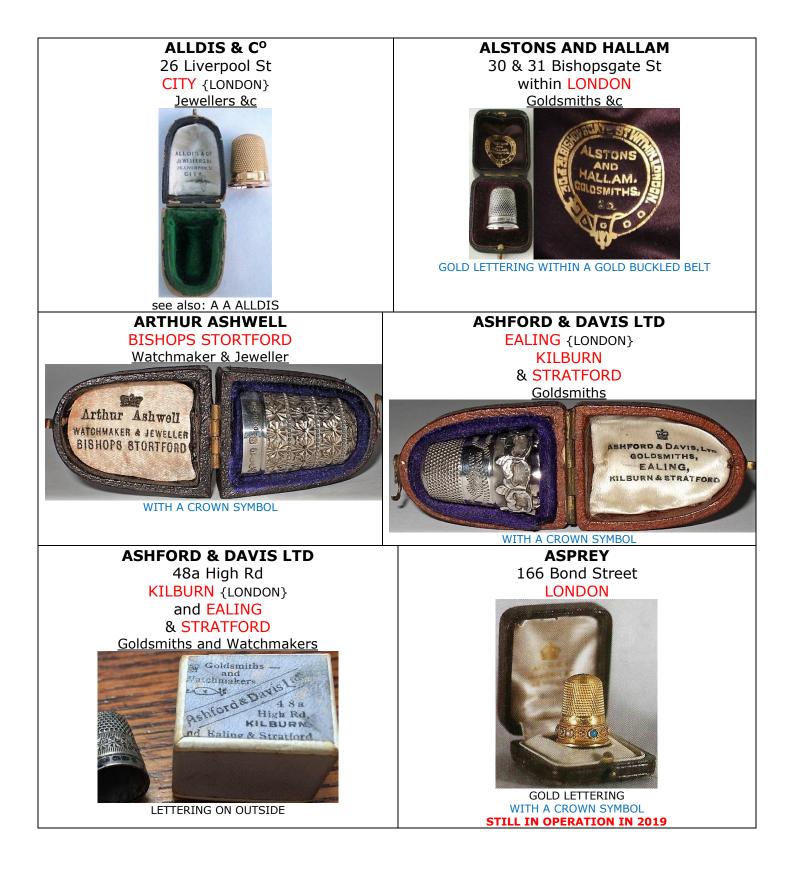
The list begins with the cases/boxes from Britain (298) – American (66) - Australian (36) European (85) - Other Countries (12) for the rest of the world. One box is over 180 years old.



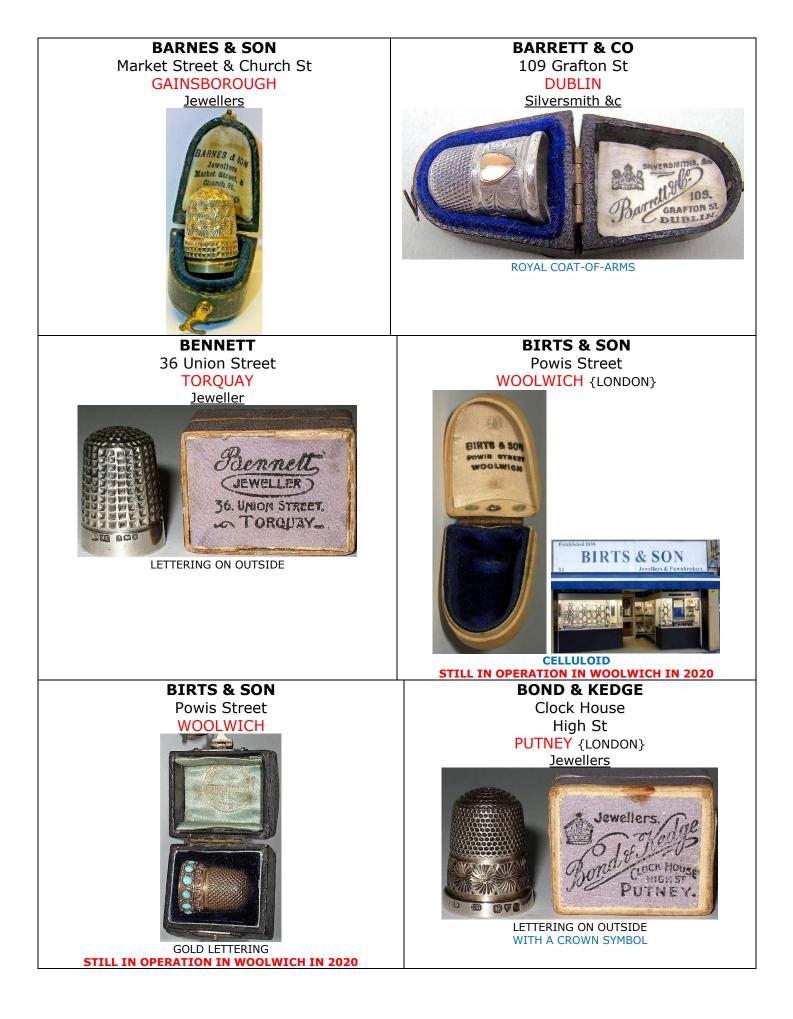
British Jewellers





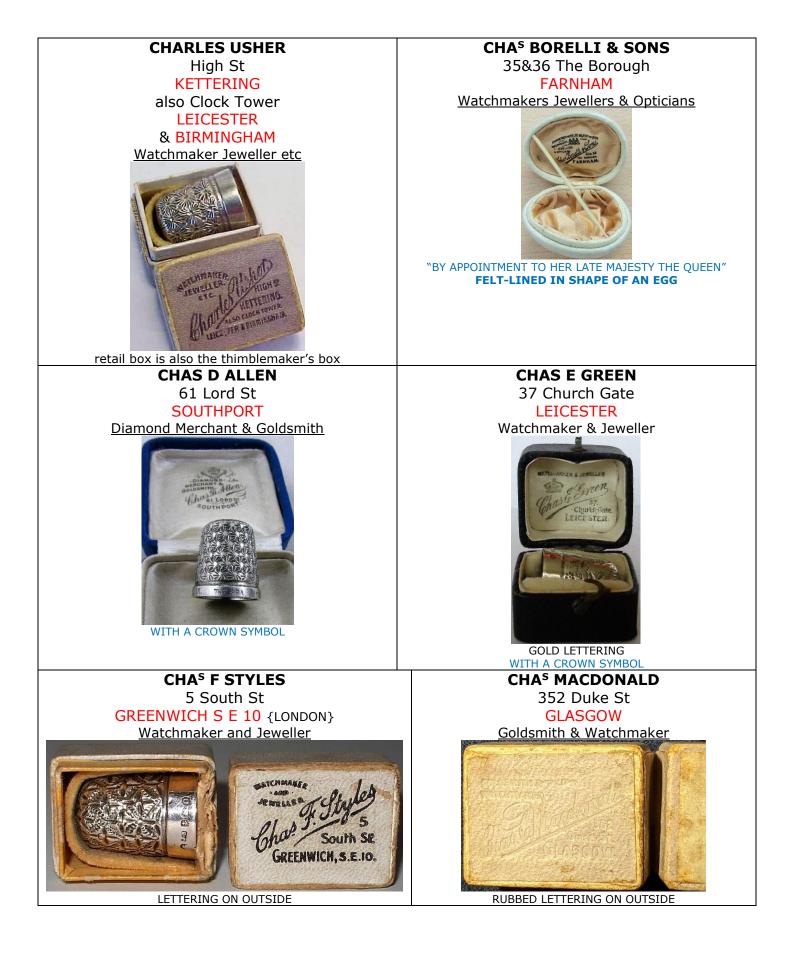










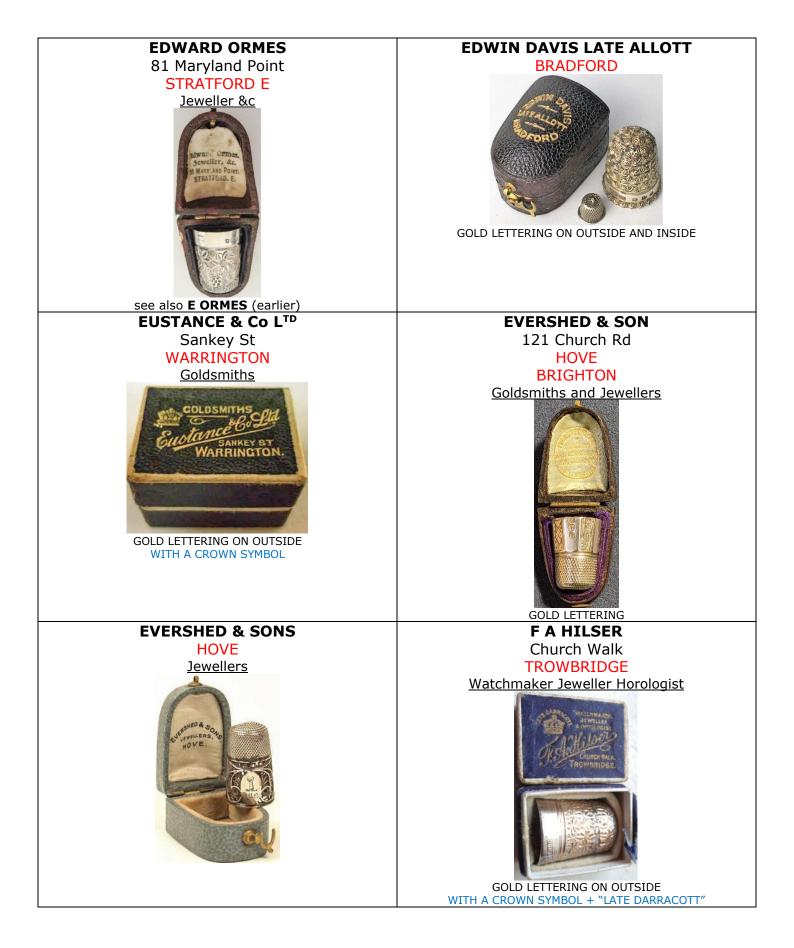














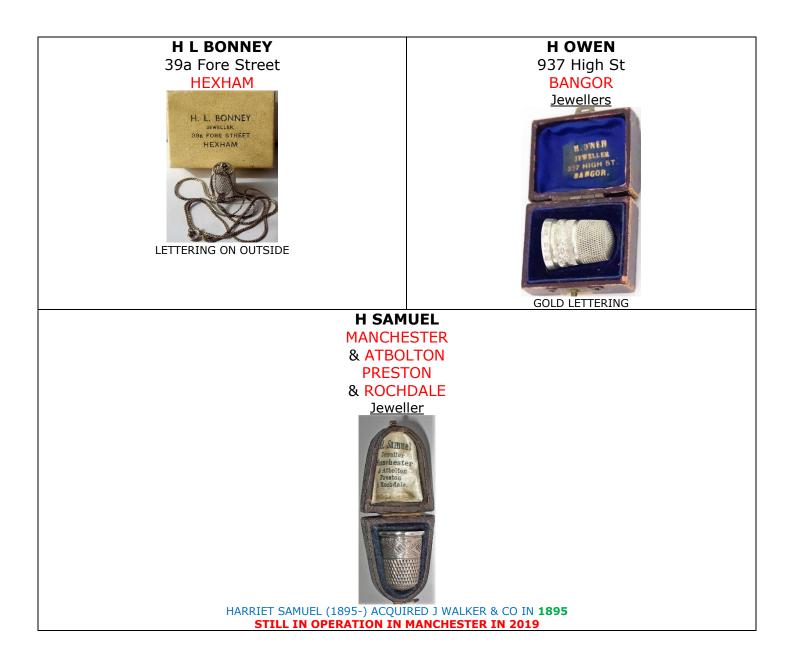
Learn more about Retail jeweller's thimble boxes



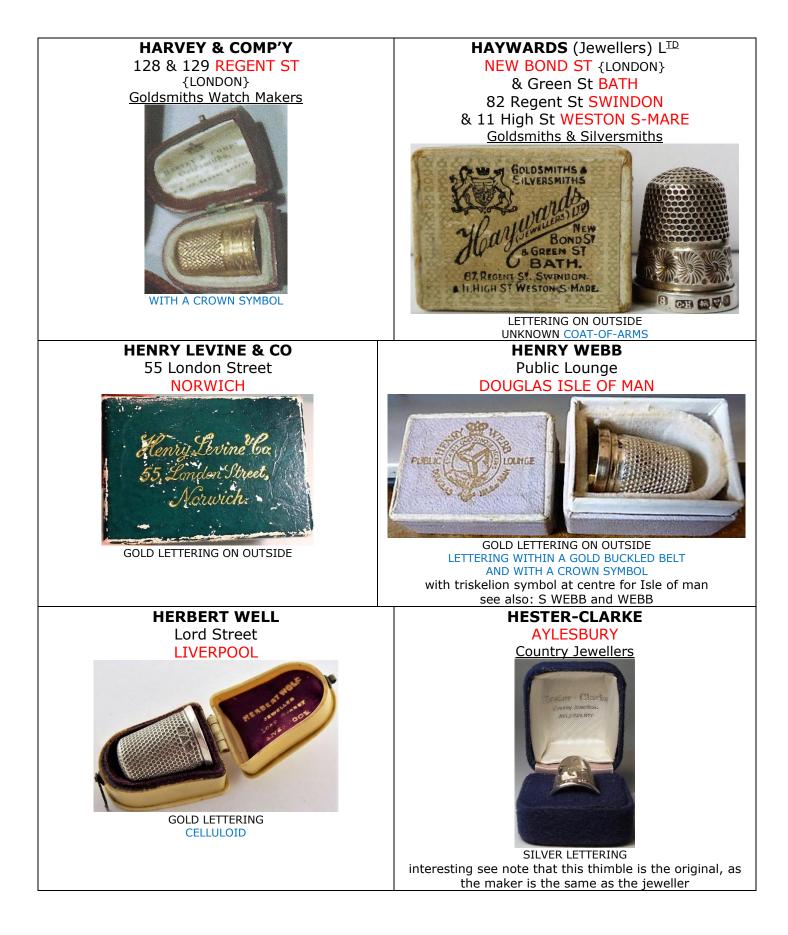




















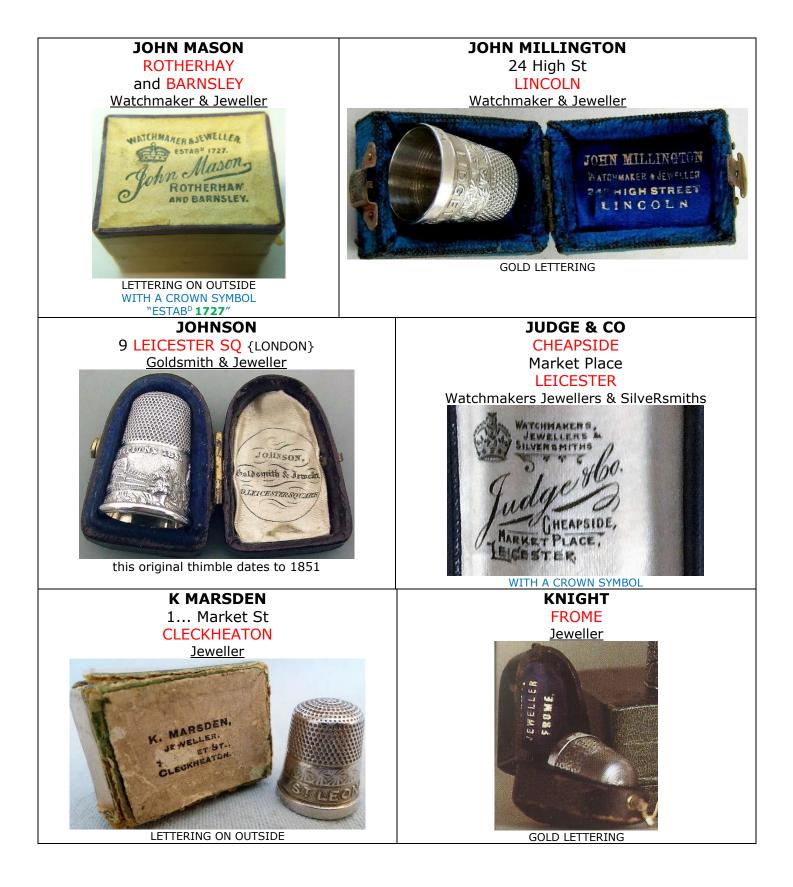






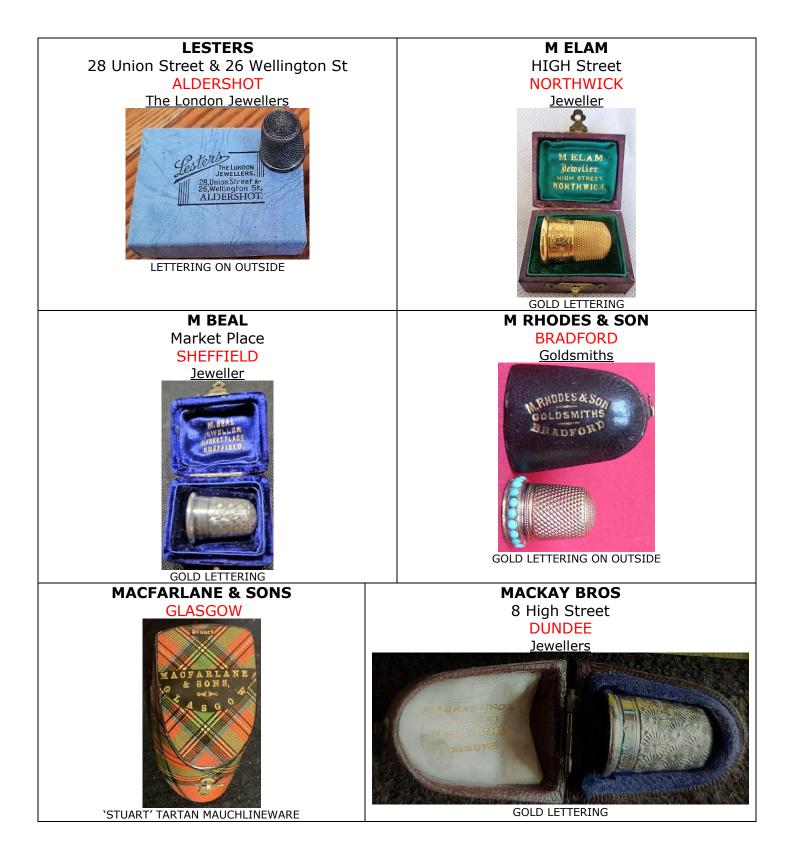


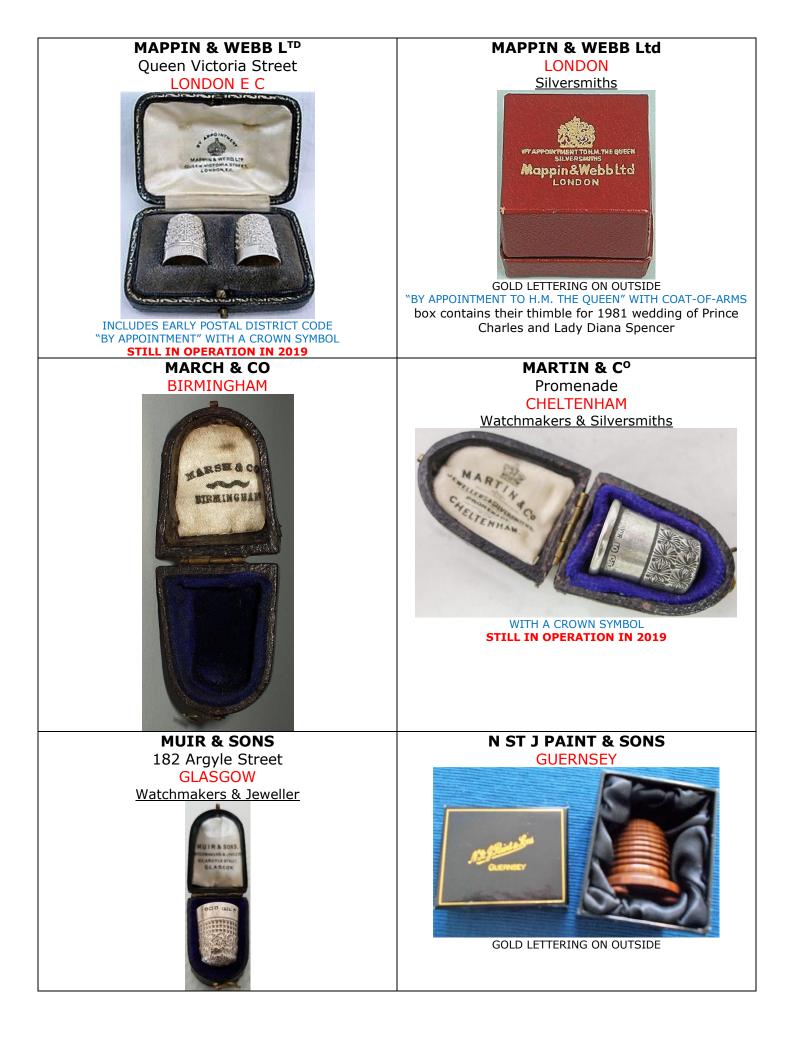




























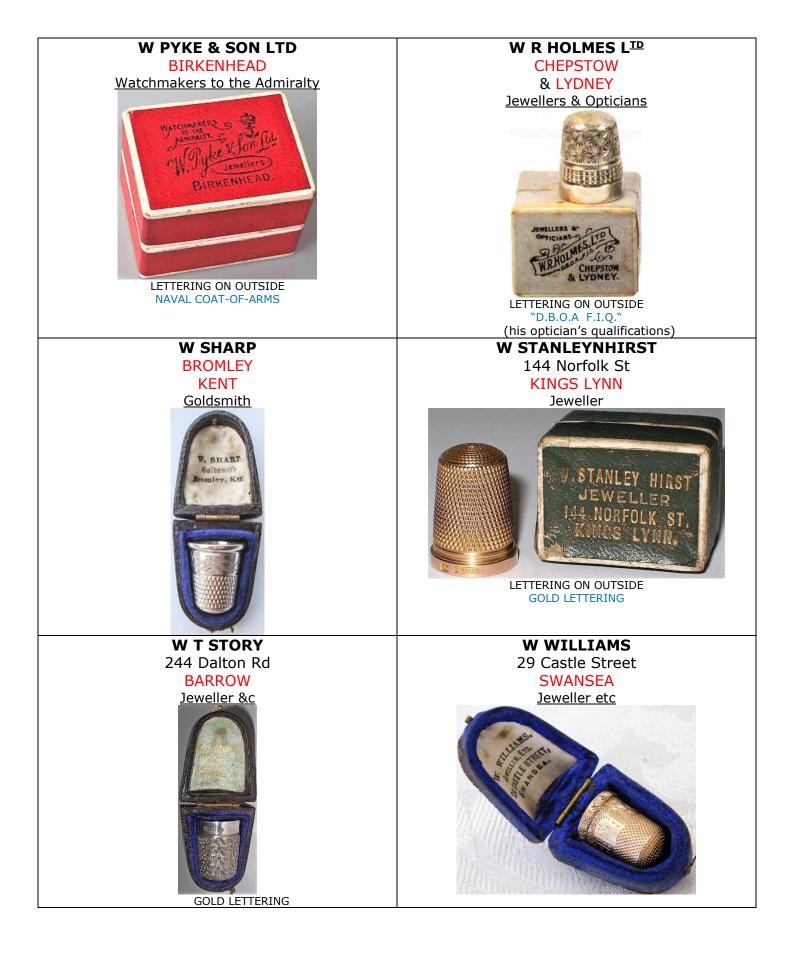












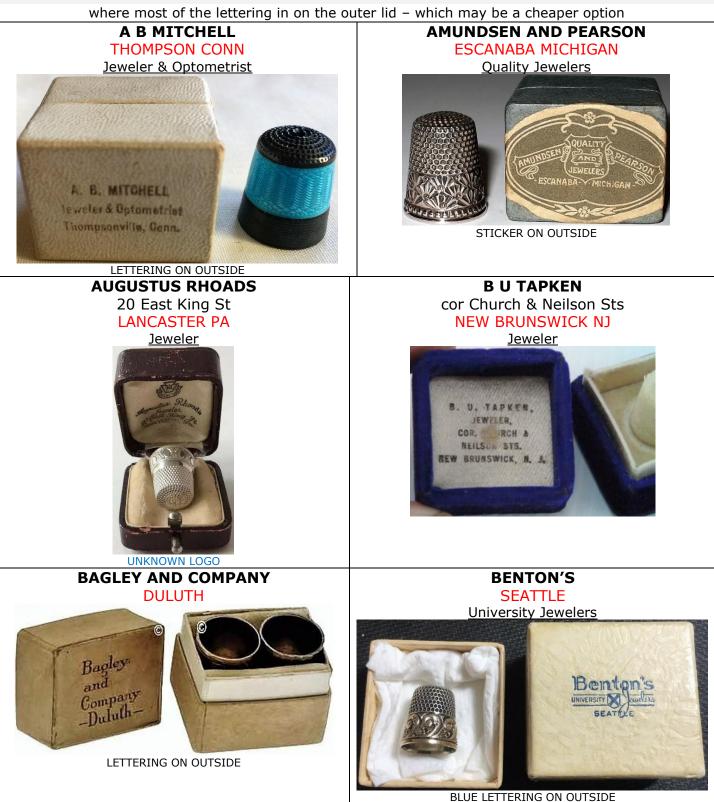








American Jewellers







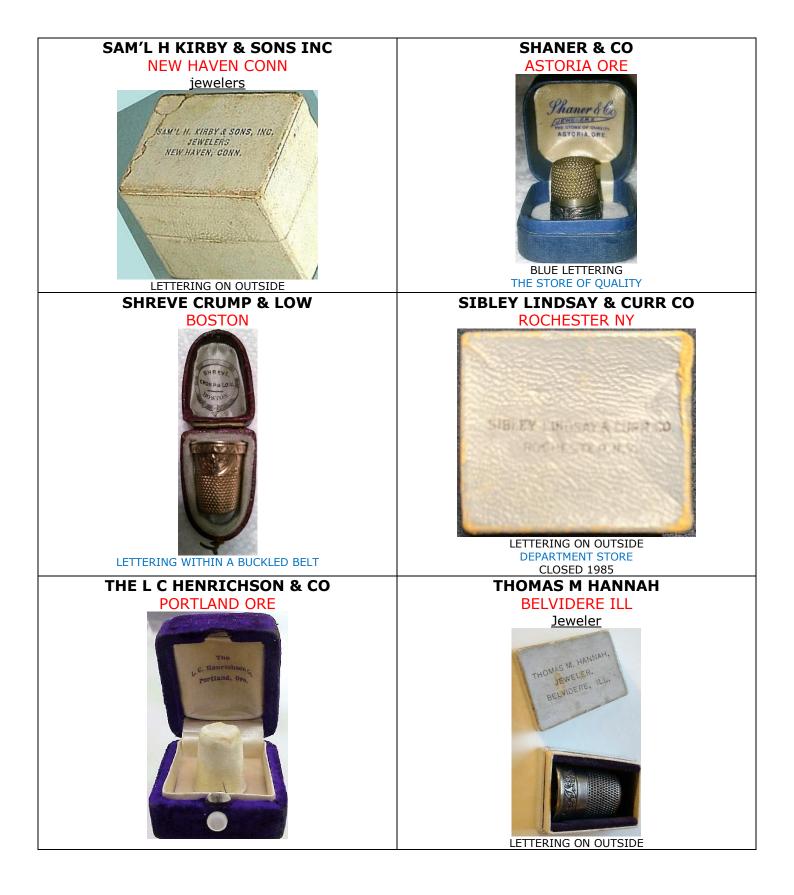








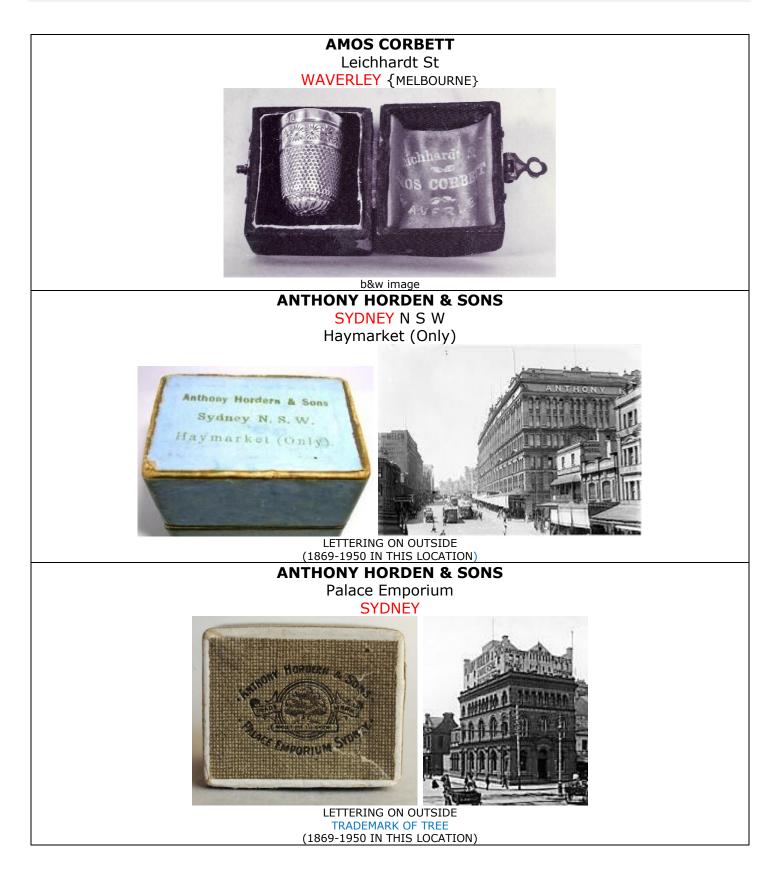


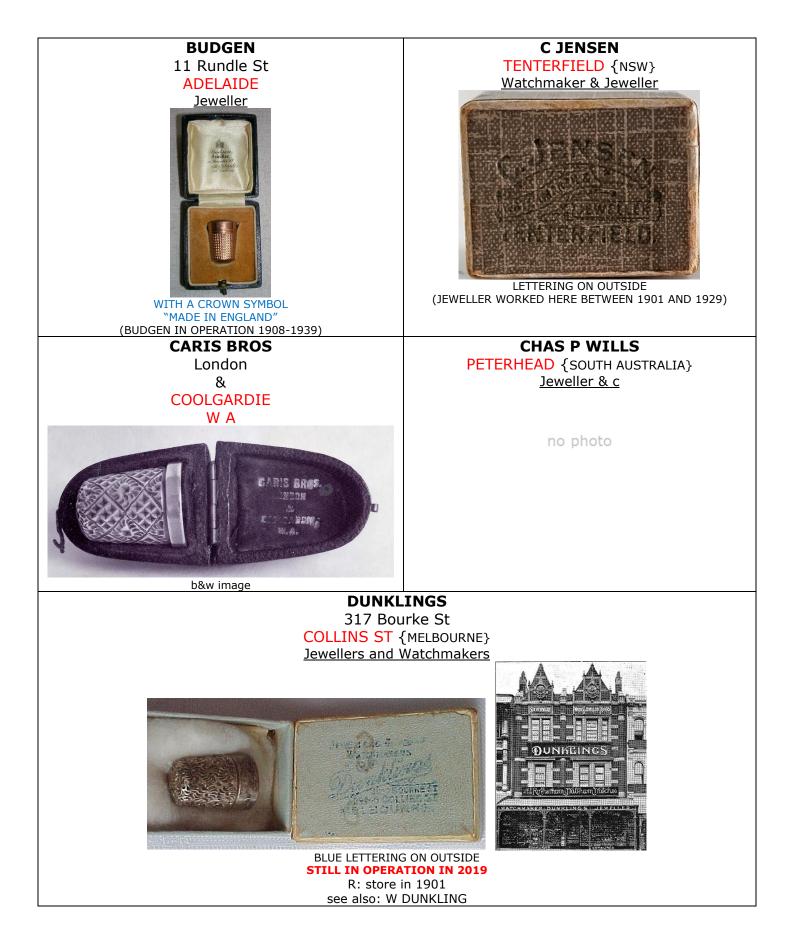






Australian Jewellers



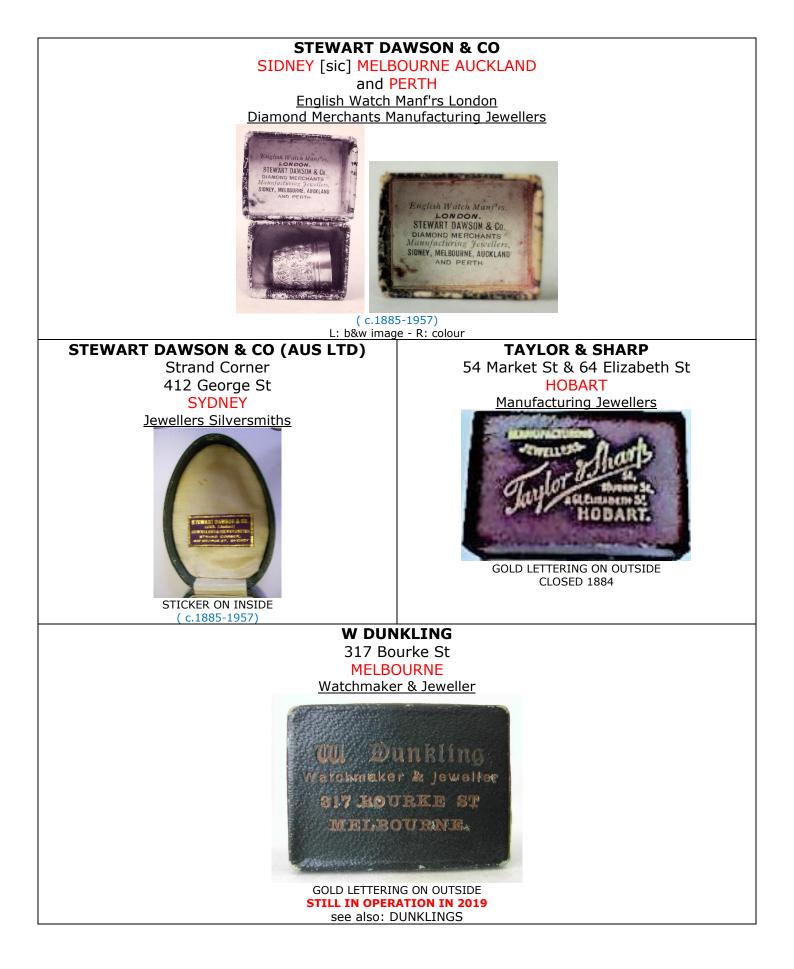


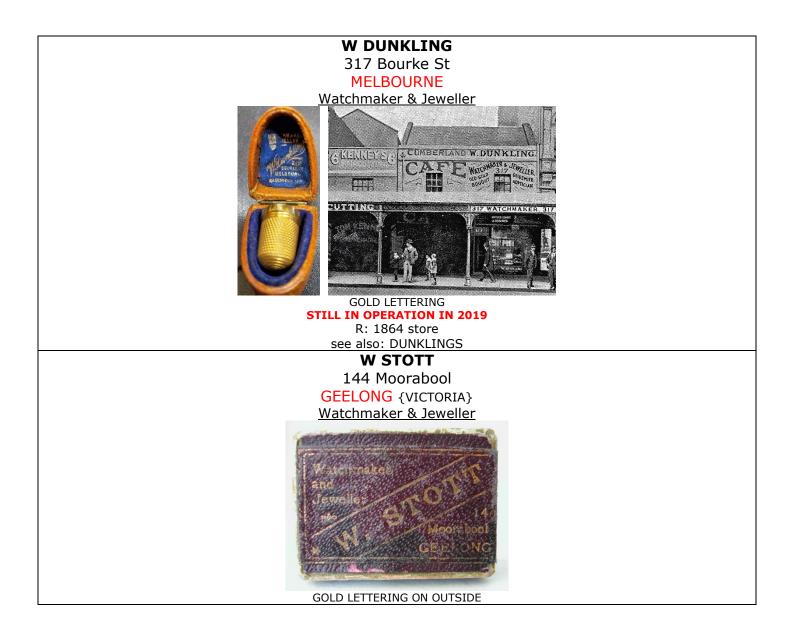












European Jewellers

where most of the lettering in on the outer lid – which may be a cheaper option all the French boxes have a distinctive shape

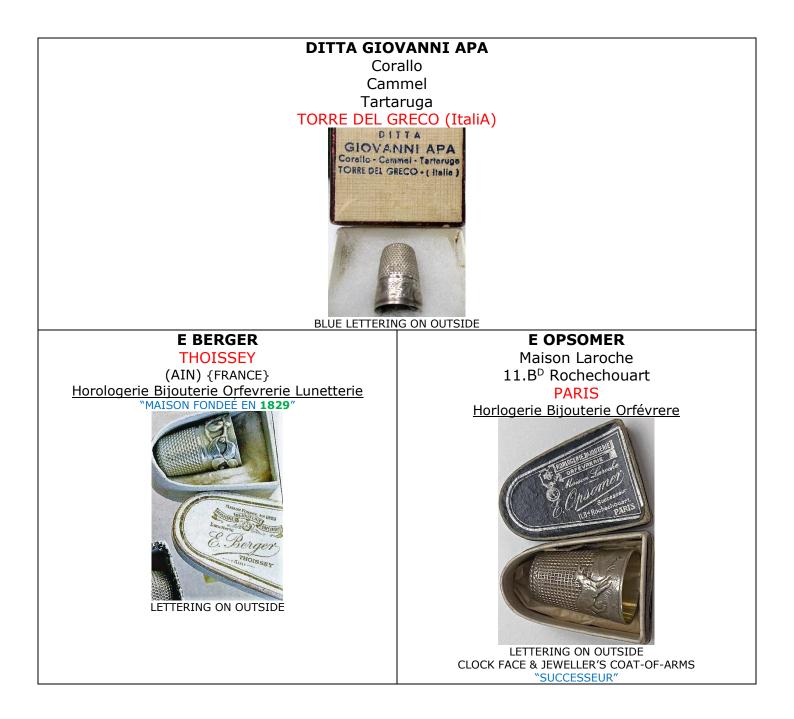






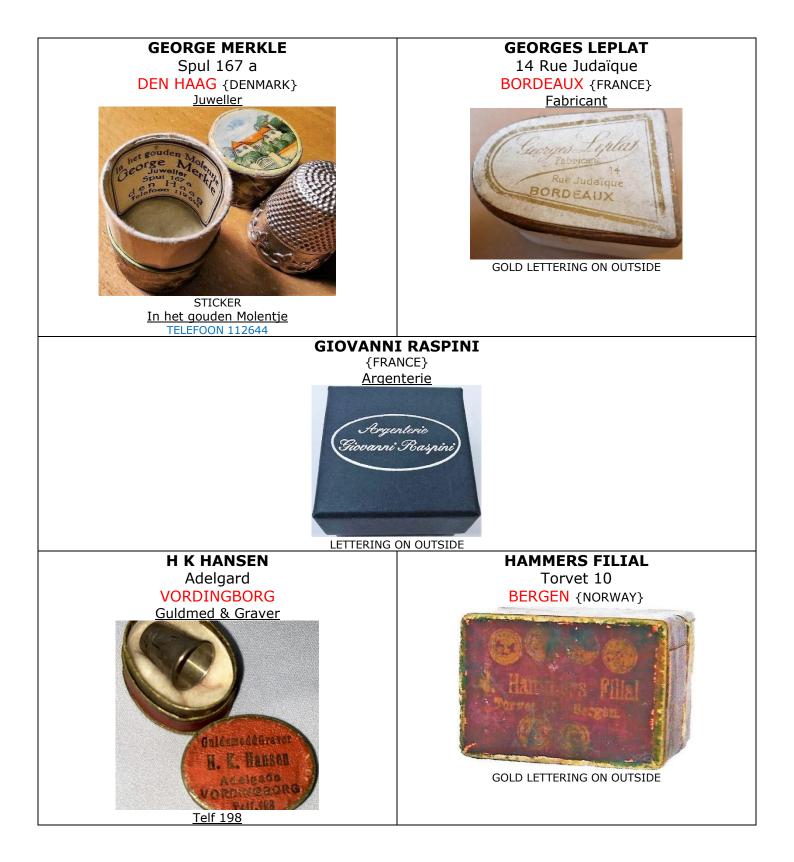










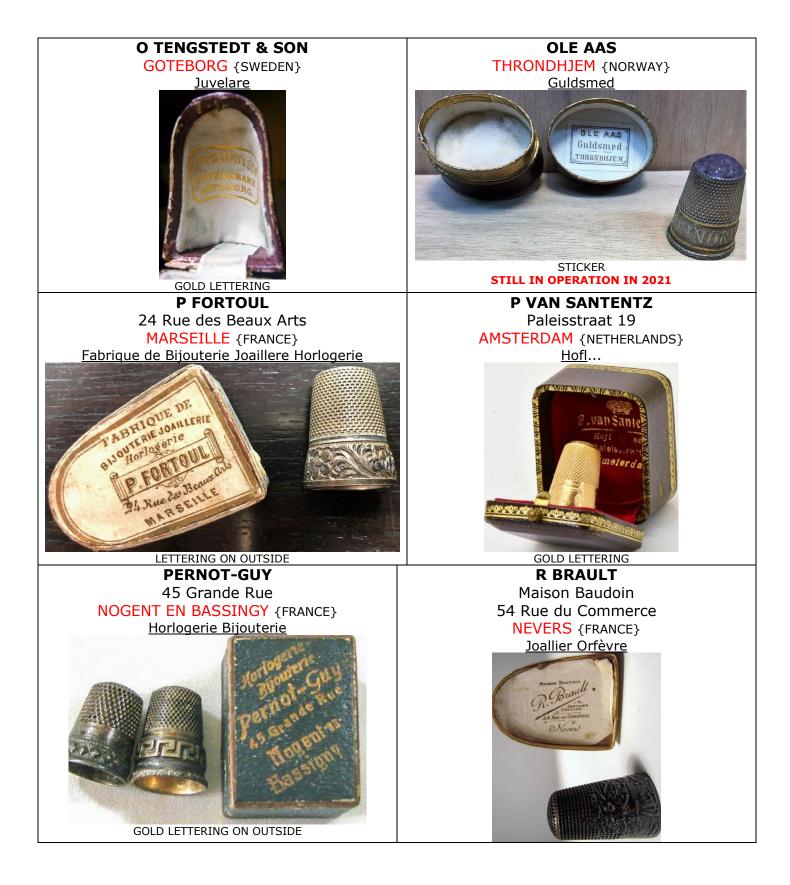
















Other Countries' Jewellers





References

Elizabeth Aldridge Thoughts on thimbles. Part V Commemorative thimbles. TCI 1984 Kenneth Cavill Australian jewellers: gold & silversmiths and marks. 1992 Gale Ebersole John Wanamaker & related sewing tools. <u>TCI Bulletin</u> spring 2017 Jane Sapone Presentation boxes tell a story. J.B.Dickey jeweler – Newton, Kansas. <u>TCI Bulletin</u> spring 2014 Dan Walbrun Enameled thimbles of Norway. 2012

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This listing of retail jewellers' thimble boxes 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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