

SylvaC thimbles

The first time I saw SylvaC thimbles advertised, they were in Ruth Baum's *Shopping Service* in May 1981 and then in the spring 1982 issue. Ruth's mail order thimble company was based in London. I have since seen them for sale in the Spring 1978 issue of *The Sewing Corner* catalogue, from New York. Most of the following thimbles were offered for sale at the princely sum of £2.90 from Ruth: US\$10 from New York. The nine animals' and buildings' names I have used are from Ruth's catalogue. There are no further details in the catalogue about SylvaC thimbles. I traced the three other designs thru the listing of products in Ashbrook and Verbeek's books. In 2000, Ashbrook valued SylvaC thimbles at £20-30 [US\$30-50].

In another catalogue description, the makers are listed as **Shaw and Copestake, Ltd** in Longton, Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire, England. I had always wondered about the way SylvaC was written and once I knew the name of the company, it became clear: using the initial of each name at the start and end of the name!

The Sylvan Works factory was founded in 1894 by William Shaw and William Copestake and given the name of Shaw & Copestake. Copestake left that same year and Richard Hull joined in his place, but the Copestake name remained throughout. As the name Sylvan Works (the factory name) was already in use, Hull changed the trade name to SylvaC in 1935. The factory continued until voluntary liquidation in May 1982. Their main production line was ceramic novelty animals, with a large cross-section of designs; decorative and table ware was also produced. As thimble collecting gained popularity towards the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s, SylvaC introduced thimbles from October 1979, toward the end of their production life. They are no longer being produced as SylvaC ceased to trade in 1982.

I have added the dates as given by Susan Verbeek and the height of the thimbles. I have included the company identifying model numbers for each thimble, but these numbers are not on the thimbles.

The thimbles are shaped, chunky and made of a sturdy earthenware pottery. As shaped thimbles, they complement the Francesca range of shaped head thimbles. SylvaC thimbles are handpainted. The buildings thimbles [my terms] seem to have been made in greater numbers than the animals ones; the others are even rarer. The buildings thimbles all have a 'brick' or stone pattern. The thimble backstamp is 'SylvaC Handcrafted in England'. Being handpainted, there is the facility to change the colours of some of the designs and a rare colour change is for the pig thimble - a black pig instead of the pink-white one is one variety! Have you seen the very rare blue Leaning Tower? It does exist!











thimble mark

SylvaC thimbles are presented in oversize sturdy painted cardboard thimble boxes. The thimble boxes match the theme of the thimble and today these are as collectable as the thimbles themselves. Tho the thimbles do not have Shaw and Copestake as part of the maker's mark, it is included on the inside of the boxes. There is a verse and all the identifying marks are present in the inside of the boxes. Further confusion could arise with the name of **Schmid** lettered inside these boxes!



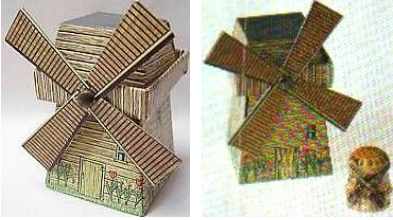




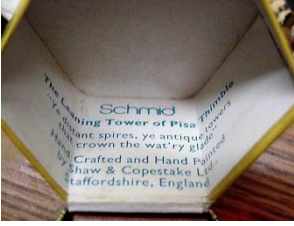
I have not heard of any other SylvaC thimble designs than these eleven listed here. I have never seen a picture of the SylvaC rose, daffodil and heart thimbles - have you?

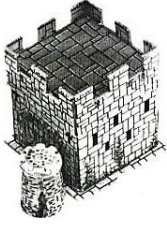









ANIMALS

<p><u>Clown and Circus 'Big Top' thimble box original Baum advertisement</u></p> 	<p><u>The Circus Clown thimble</u></p>  <p>1982 318mm SylvaC # 5059</p>	<p><u>Circus Tent thimble box</u></p>  <p>size 90x100mm</p>	<p><u>Schmid The Circus Clown round thimble box lettering</u></p> 
<p><u>Lion thimble and Lion Cage thimble box original Baum advertisement</u></p> 	<p><u>The Lion thimble</u></p>  <p>1979 SylvaC # 5062</p>	<p><u>The Lion Cage thimble box</u></p> 	<p><u>The Lion Cage thimble box lettering</u></p> <p>no photo</p>
<p><u>Pig thimble and Barn Sty thimble box original Baum advertisement</u></p> 	<p><u>The Pig thimble</u></p>  <p>1980 SylvaC # 5052 I understand there is a very rare black pig version</p>	<p><u>Barn thimble box</u></p> 	<p><u>Schmid The Pig thimble box lettering</u></p> <p>"I bought me a pig and the pig pleased me I fed my pig on the bayberry tree" Southern Mountain poem</p>

<p><u>Lucky White thimble and Paddock thimble box</u> original Baum advertisement</p> 	<p><u>The Unicorn thimble</u></p>  <p><u>1979</u> SylvaC # 5061</p>	<p><u>The Paddock thimble box</u></p> 	<p><u>Schmid Unicorn round thimble box lettering</u></p>  <p>"He spied a lovely Maiden, her arm with flowers laden He came and knelt beneath the tree and quickly fell asleep" From <i>Capture of the Unicorn</i> by Edward Julian</p>
---	--	--	---

BUILDINGS

<p><u>Dutch windmill and windmill thimble box</u> original Baum advertisement</p> 	<p><u>The Windmill thimble</u></p>  <p><u>1982</u> 318mm SylvaC # 5058</p>	<p><u>The Windmill thimble box</u></p> 	<p><u>Schmid The Windmill thimble box lettering</u></p>  <p>"Knowest thou the land ... where a wind ever soft from the blue heaven blows" Hand Crafted and Hand Painted by Shaw & Copestake Ltd., Staffordshire, England</p>
<p><u>Leaning Tower of Pisa thimble and thimble box</u> original Baum advertisement</p> 	<p><u>The Leaning Tower of Pisa thimble</u></p>  <p><u>1982</u> 445mm SylvaC # 5057 I understand there is a very rare blue matt version</p>	<p><u>The Leaning Tower of Pisa thimble box</u></p> 	<p><u>Schmid The Leaning Tower of Pisa hexagonal thimble box lettering</u></p>  <p>"Ye distant spires, ye antique towers That crown the wat'ry glade"</p>

<p><u>Norman Castle thimble and thimble box</u> original Baum advertisement</p> 	<p><u>The Castle thimble</u></p>  <p>1982 318mm SylvaC # 5053</p>	<p><u>The Castle thimble box</u> also known as The Blarney Castle</p> 	<p><u>Schmid The Blarney Castle, Co. Cork thimble box lettering</u></p>  <p>"There is a stone there that whoever kisses Oh: he never misses to grow eloquent"</p>
<p><u>Old World Cottage and thimble box</u> original Baum advertisement</p> 	<p><u>The Thatched Cottage thimble</u></p>  <p>1979 318mm SylvaC # 4831</p>	<p><u>The Cottage thimble box</u></p> 	<p><u>The Anne Hathaway Cottage thimble box lettering</u></p> 
<p><u>Wishing Well and thimble box</u> original Baum advertisement</p> 	<p><u>The Wishing Well thimble</u></p> <p>1982 SylvaC # 5060</p>  <p>1982 SylvaC # 5060</p>	<p><u>The Well thimble box</u></p> 	<p><u>The Wishing Well thimble box lettering</u></p> 

OTHERS

<p><u>Heart thimble</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">no photo</p> <p>SylvaC # 5056</p>	<p><u>Rose thimble</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">no photo</p> <p>SylvaC # 5054</p>	<p><u>Daffodil thimble</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">no photo</p> <p>SylvaC # 5055</p>
--	---	---

References

Stella Ashbrook. Collecting SylvaC Pottery. 2000
Susan Jean Verbeek. The SylvaC Companion. 1991
Susan Jean Verbeek. The SylvaC Story. 2nd rev ed, 1995

Contributors

Yolanta Bogdziewicz | Sue Christensen | Ros Forster | Pat Morris | Cath Spongberg | Mave Wiskin

This listing of SylvaC 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

© **Sue Gowan**
October 2004