## Thimbles made from unusual materials

These thimbles were created for the collectables market – created mainly in 1980s and 1990s. There must have been a big demand for thimbles made of different materials for such a huge number created. There are still thimble collectors today who specialise in the unusual materials range.

I knew of the popular types of material like stone thimbles or those crocheted from cotton – the papier mâché from the Philippines. Once I started to find photos for this topic, I was stunned – there are thimbles from over 100 different and unusual materials. 1% of them were created in the late 1800s and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century: gutta percha, tortoiseshell (no apologies for including John Piercy's thimbles here) and vulcanite.

Some of the materials used were quite fragile, so unable to retain their thimble shape. In this instance they were placed over metal, wood or plastic thimbles (like beaded thimbles). Some were made to be used for the purpose created – like leather thimbles. I have made it clear under the specific materials, the thimbles that are not included within the scope of this topic.

Clever craftsmen created some of these thimbles to be able to exchange their thimbles with other collectors

(Yvonne Winspear of Australia)

I have attempted to list the materials in the following order within each group: maker, then country of origin and then the rest where neither of the above is known.

I have included as many catalogue references as I can find to help with the year they were made, using the following abbreviations:

CC - Collectors Circle (New York)
Fel - Feldman (Germany)
Gim - Gimbels (Maine)
KS - De vingerhoed (Netherlands)
PJW - PJ Walter (Germany)
TCI - Thimble Collectors International Bulletin (USA)
TTG - The Thimble Guild (Scotland)
TO - Thimbles Only (Jean Shoup USA)
TSL - Thimble Society of London
VH - John von Hoelle
VN - Vingerhoednieuws (Netherlands)

For similar topics see
Bog oak thimbles
Glass thimbles
Horn and bone thimbles
Ivory thimbles
Jenny Blair Designs' thimbles

## **abalone** see also: paua shell



in acrylic

#### acetate



France mother of pearl style

#### agate



over brass

#### alabaster

see also: lavender alabaster - pink alabaster - strawberry alabaster



Italy <u>MR</u> handpainted



Philadelphia USA John von Hoelle L: gold bands VH 13-14 b&w photo



Argentina











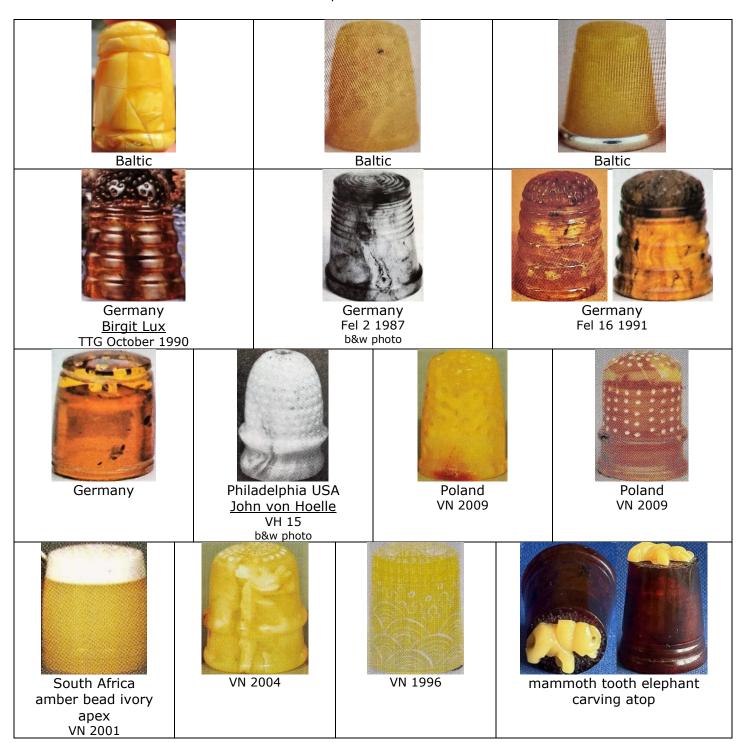




Italy



**amber** fossilised pine resin from Russia



#### amethyst



India carved lotus limited to **50** TTG March 1990



#### aventurine





India L: blue – R: green carved lotus limited to **50** TTG March 1990

## **Bamboo** see also: wicker



China TTG March 1991



India VH 1178, 1180 b&w photo



Philippines

#### bark



Healesville Australia <u>Michael Morris</u> 1989



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
salmon gum bark with
paperbark apex
over metal thimble
1990

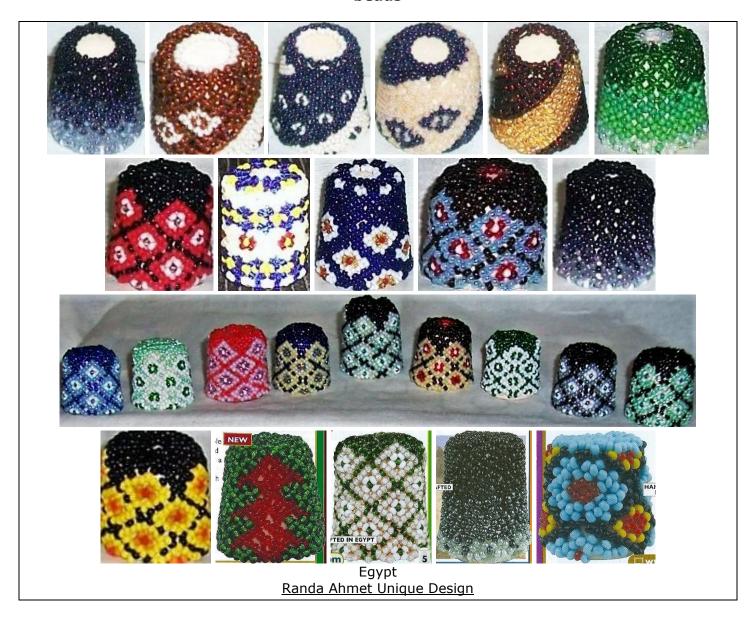


Sydney Australia
<u>Yvonne Winspear</u>
handpainted paperbark
over leatherwood
TTG January 1987

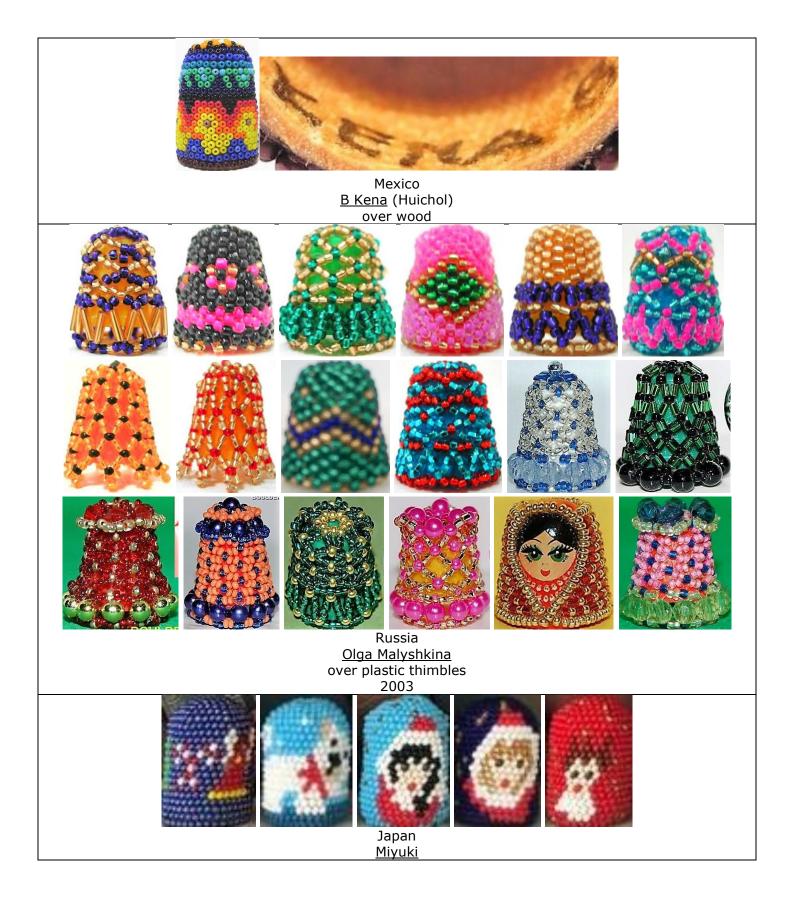


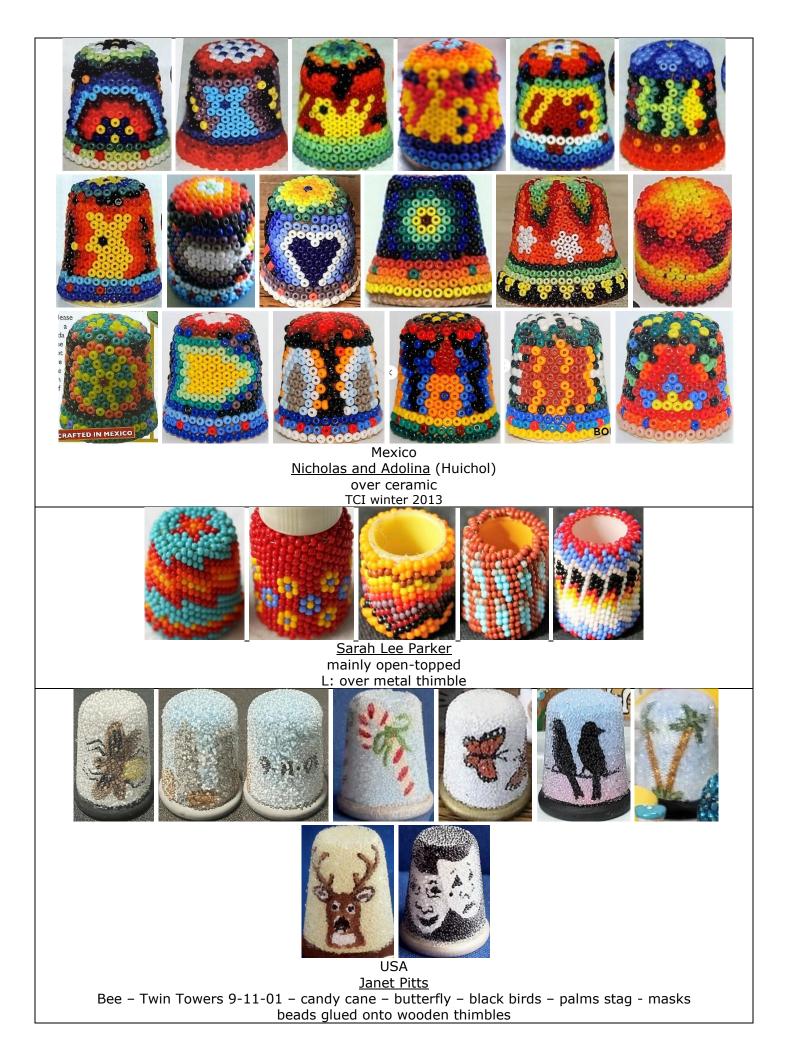
Australia plaited

#### beads



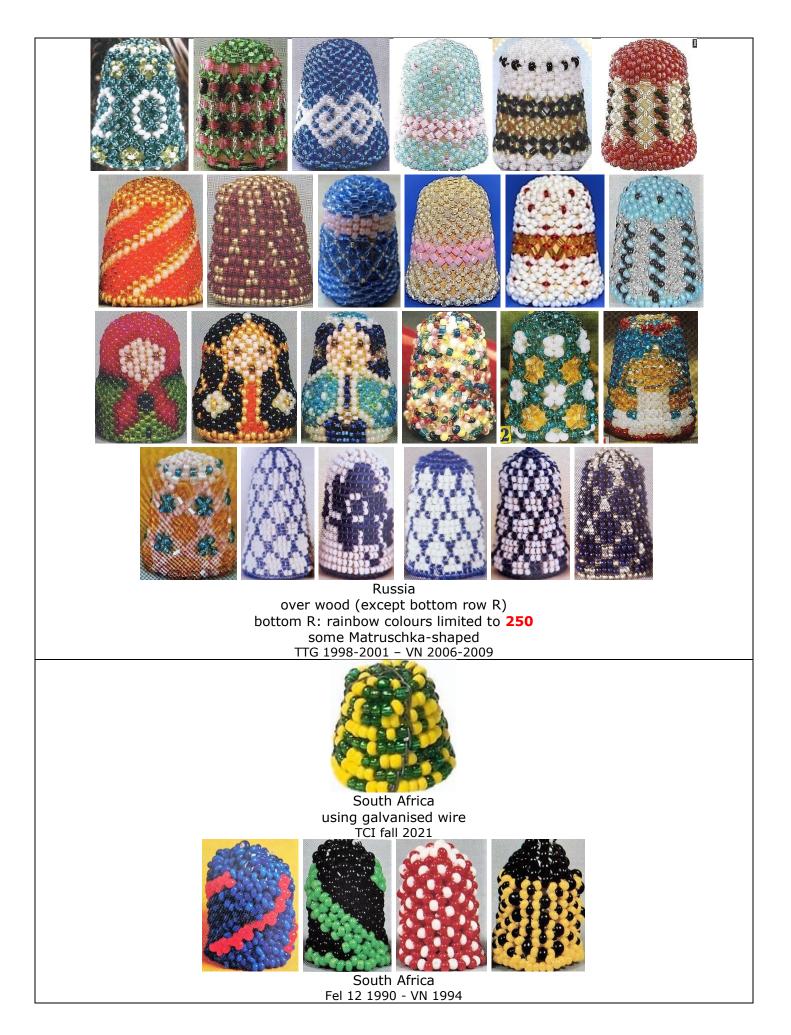








Kenya TTG September 2005





#### bear claw quartz



Argentina Sewing Corner 1978

#### birch bark









Urals, Russia Alex and Alfiya Guriny

#### black marble



UK <u>Caroline and John Smith</u> marble from Belgium TTG June 1988



Taiwan Sewing Corner 1978



VN 2001

#### black onyx



India carved lotus limited to **50** TTG March 1990

#### blue onyx



Argentina Juan Arrieta Quiroga

# **Blu Tack** commercial putty-like adhesive, Leicester UK 1969-



Brisbane Australia
<u>Sandra Menger</u>
'Thimbles of Australia Sue Gowan 1998'

#### brick



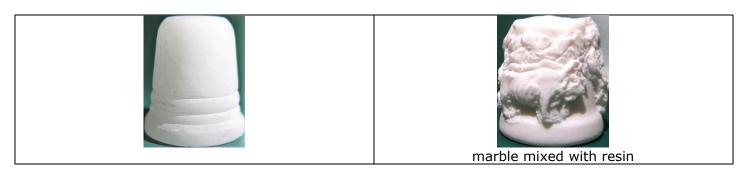
UK house brick limited to **750** TTG August 1991

#### calabash



Argentina

#### **Carrara marble**



#### carrot



#### chalk



#### coal





Wales <u>Kingmaker</u> bonded resin

miner's face (plain and handpainted) – miner - pithead - miner's lamp and tools all commemorating the end of the 1985 miner's strike (plain and handpainted limited to 3500) some miner's face thimbles are signed EI for Eddie and Janet

TTG March 1985



Wellsburg West Virginia USA compressed TO 1980-1983 - VH174

#### coconut shell



AP
late 19<sup>th</sup> century
maker's initials on apex
18ct gold apex and clouté studs in a ring
R: carved simple fleur de lis pattern by local women



Diamantina Minas Gerais Brazil late 19<sup>th</sup> century 18ct gold apex and clouté studs in two rings



Egypt Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Philippines over metal thimble TTG March 1996

#### concrete



UK
<u>Christine and John Smith</u>
created from old pavement
TTG September 1989

#### coral



France carved 19<sup>th</sup> century Christies 1995 117











Philippines etched TO 1984 - VH



Thailand TTG June 1988



pink coral Great Barrier Reef over metal TTG April 1988



blue coral Indian Ocean over metal TTG April 1988



over metal

#### cork



Bridge of Weir Scotland Carina Down



**corn** plaited after the style of corn dollies



UK Betty Blackwood TTG June 1985



UK

Mrs Horsfall
butterfly
limited to 250
TTG October 1998



UK flowers

#### corncob



USA brass apex VH 1177 b&w photo

#### cotton

thimbles are created of crochet, tatting, knitting or lacemaking. They were usually stiffened with sugar water or starch. Many are embellished with beads and ribbon see also: silk, linen





Queensland Australia Elena Dickson knotted lace over stiffened board





Conwy Wales <u>Pat Durrant</u> crochet



Perth Australia **Betty Dutschke** crochet



Helsinki Finland <u>Irja Helsila</u> tatting



UK Lynne Hutchings crochet limited to 250 TTG May 1986 b&w photo







Kilcoy Australia



Margaret Hickling tatting



Perth Australia Barbara Martin sewing







Brisbane Australia Sandra Menger crochet



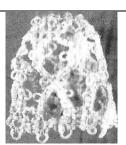
Melbourne Australia Ann Shuttleworth crochet



Mexico
Nicholas and Adolina
over moulded plastic
TCI winter 2013



USA
<u>Florence Regan</u>
crochet, some with crossstitch
Gim 1996



UK
Christine Ross
tatting
limited to 200
TTG May 1987
b&w photo



North Carolina USA <u>Jane Sapone</u> crochet b&w photo



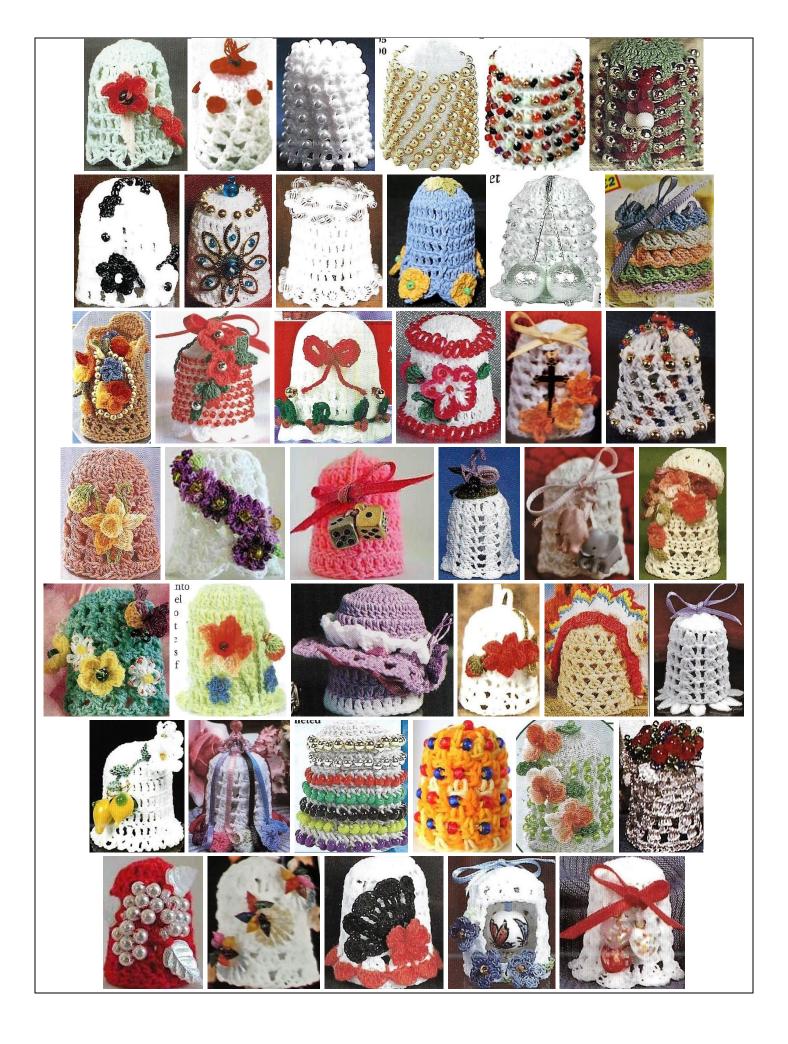
Connecticutt USA <u>Doris E Shaw</u> crochet



Melbourne Australia
Ann Shuttleworth
crochet



Netherlands <u>Miep van Eijk</u> crochet TTG November 1983 b&w photo





Jacqui (Jacqueline) Walker crochet find those commeorating Armistice, Olympics and a chair shape mostly no limited numbers available but the limited editions range from 75 to 300 TTG from March 1985-2005



California USA
<u>Chris Weber</u>
crochet
TO 2007 - 2007 - 1984



USA <u>Helen Werner</u> for Hawkeye Thimblers 1991











USA R: created for Hawkeye Thimblers



Finland needle lace















unknown makers

#### **Deliciosa Monstera**



Perth Australia <u>Barbara Martin</u> stitched dried calyx

#### fabric











USA
<u>Status Thimble</u>
kit to create this stitched fabric





Argentina made from woven cloth

#### feathers



handpainted feathers over plastic

<u>Marina Nestorova</u>

VN 67 2001



handpainted feathers over brass Marina Nestorova

## commercial modelling clay



Benoni South Africa Tessa Browne



Empangeni South Africa <u>Wendy Seymour</u>



South Africa metal thimble

#### fish skin



Quebec Canada Les Cuirs Fins de la Mer



**USA** Boulder Bay carp with filigree cap



Scotland salmon over brass or metal TCI September 1989 – TTG July 1990



Scotland dyed fish scale over wood

fossils



UK <u>Pinpoint Design</u> (later name used by Christine and John Smith) limestone TTG May 1993

#### granite







UK

<u>Caroline and John Smith</u>

Berlin Wall - Italian granorosada - Russian pink
yemel
C - R : TTG February 1988 - TTG October 1991

**grass** see also: raffia, straw



<u>Robyn</u> basketry

#### green marble



UK
Christine and John Smith
marble from Portugal
limited to 200
TTG December 1988



Taiwan Sewing Corner 1978

#### gumnut



Kalbarri Western Australia

**gutta percha**Rubber-like material discovered in 1843. Palaquiuim trees from Malaysia and Borneo It is brittle and lightweight. It was used as mourning jewellery as well as jet



#### haematite



#### heather

the roots are picked, dried, dyed, blocked, compressed, glued, turned and lacquered. First made into thimbles in 1980. Thimbles ceased by 2004













Pitlochry Scotland Hugh Kerr of Heathergems no two alike





Pitlochry Scotland Hugh Kerr of Heathergems metal rims



Pitlochry Scotland Hugh Kerr of Heathergems thistle-shaped

#### Helsinkiitti



Helsinki Finland Pekka Kiviluoto 1990

#### horse hair



Arizona USA <u>Donna Mendoz</u> TCI spring 2001 b&w photo



Arizona USA Leona Antone TCI spring 2001 b&w photo



Arizona USA <u>Linda Hendricks</u> TCI spring 2001 b&w photo

# **jade**also known as nephrite many jade thimbles are made with toppers – they are not included







#### jadite



#### Jersey cabbage stalk



**jet** jet was used as mourning jewellery, replacing vulcanite and gutta percha



carved cottage -cathedral - toadstools

#### kangaroo skin







Sydney Australia
<u>Yvonne Winspear</u>
brass kangaroo on boomerang pin
1983
TTG May 1984

## Kingman turquoise



Arizona USA

## **Kisii stone** mined by the Kenyan tribe of the same name











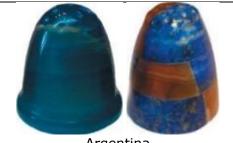




Kenya

L>R: handpainted figure - handpainted giraffe - leather rim - representing cheetah, giraffe, python TTG 1991 - 1994

### lapis lazuli



Argentina
<u>Juan Arrieta Quiroga</u>
R: with rhodochrosite



Pakistan VN 92 1999



Portugal CC 1978



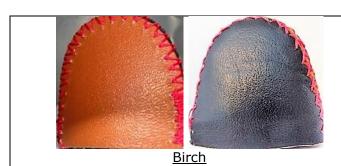
commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

#### lavender alabaster



Italy handpainted violet

**leather** see also: Canadian leather thimbles topic





Japan <u>Olympus</u>



<u>Clover</u> L: tailor's







Egypt
Randa Ahmet Unique Design
L: over plastic





New Lanark Scotland Ronnie Parker 'Easter 1984



Brisbane Australia Sandra Menger



Sydney Australia

Yvonne Wisnpear
handpainted chamois
over wood
beads on apex
'1788-1988'
limited to 100
TTG July 1988



India VH 648 b&w photo



Ireland sewing rind



Kenya



Korea



Mexico



South Africa



Thailand



L: tailor's – R: tall for use with long fingernails



UK gold-tooled streted over metal



UK gold-tooled streted over wood



#### linen



#### Lucite Gimbels used the term acrylic







**USA** Davy Jones Locker imbedded starfish and seahorse and seashells limited to 250 Gim 1990 – Sewing Corner 1976

shredded US currency

#### malachite



Argentina



Egypt Randa Ahmet Unique Design



Phalaborwa South Africa John van der Westhuizen



Gim 1990



marble

see also: black marble - Carrara - green marble - pink marble





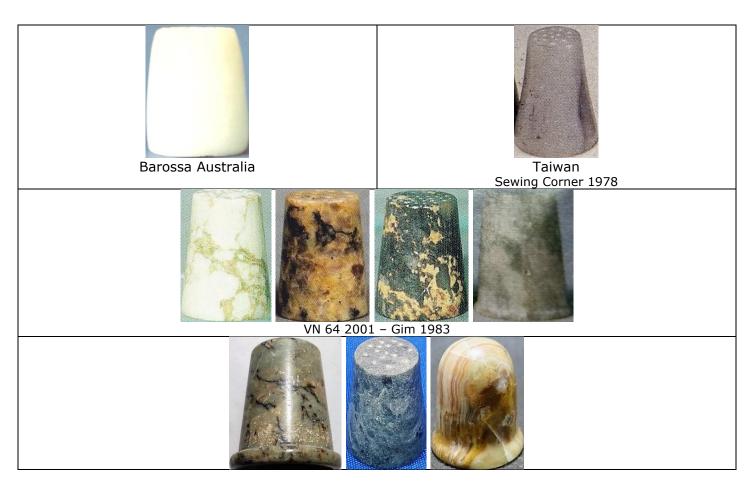


Christine and John Smith L>R: marble of chips from around the world -Carrara Italy – creamy two at R limited to 250 TTG May 1989 - January 1989 - December 1988





Philadelphia USA John von Hoelle VH 1088-89 b&w photos



### meerschaum

This lightweight mineral, sepiolite, is a lightweight claylike material. It floats on water and this gives its name sea foam (direct translation from German word meerschaum)







Istanbul Turkiye
Sinan Atilla
handcarved
two L: TTG August, October 2009



San Marcos CA USA Royal Meerschaum









South Africa baked Tanzanian meerschaum Fel 20 1992



Tanzania VN 46 1998









Turkiye handcarved top L: gold band 3rd L: brass apex bottom R: 'Türkey'

four R: VN, 1996, 1998, 2007 - Gim 1997 - VH665



foxglove

#### nundoorite



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

# onyx see also: black onyx - blue onyx



#### paper



# papier mâché

flour, salt and water are added to rice paper pulp often mistakenly described as wooden in second-hand market – a dead giveaway is Kashmir papier mâché thimbles are black inside









Kashmir India handpainted and lacquered in small batches by small family businesses all black-lacquered inside TTG 1988-2001 – TO 1983-2007 – Gim 1980-1082 – PJW 85-6 - VH714



**paua shell** see also: abalone





Philippines

# peacock feathers



## peat



UK handpainted The Lindow man bonded in resin TTG July 1997

# picture jasper



commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

# pink marble



Italy <u>MR</u> handpainted



UK
Christine and John Smith
limited to 200
marble sourced from Portugal



Turkey handpainted



handpainted







## plum slate



Llanberis North Wales UK

<u>Christine and John Smith</u> (Guild members)

limited to **250**TTG January 1988

#### pumpkin skin



Argentina carved by Toba peoples TCI spring 2013

# pyrophyllite



**raffia** see also: grass, straw



# red agate



### resin stone



### rhodochrosite





Argentina L: Sewing Corner 1976

### rhodonite





commissioned by The Rock Shop Perth from Asia 1990

# rice paper



Japan limited to **350** TTG September 1987

# rice stalks





Philippines R: Fel 13 1990

### rose quartz



Pakistan VN 99 2009

### rosso Alicante



UK <u>Pinpoint Design</u> (name used by Christine and John Smith) stone sourced from Spain limited to 300 TTG September 1988

### rosso Bilbao



UK Christine and John Smith stone sourced from Spain by these Guild members limited to 250 TTG April 1989

### rubber



California USA **Good Stuf** needle grabber



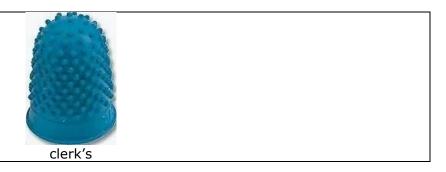
**USA** The Bionic Finger



clerk's



clerk's



### salmon stone



Philippines brass band Gim April 1984

# sand



Ryedale UK <u>Tony Barnes</u> sand from Gulf War TTG April 1991

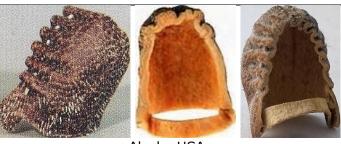


sand from Gulf War TTG April 1992



# seal skin





Alaska USA handmade by indigenous peoples

# serpentine



UK
Christine and Dave Smith
Cornish serpentine
limited to 500
TTG April 1988



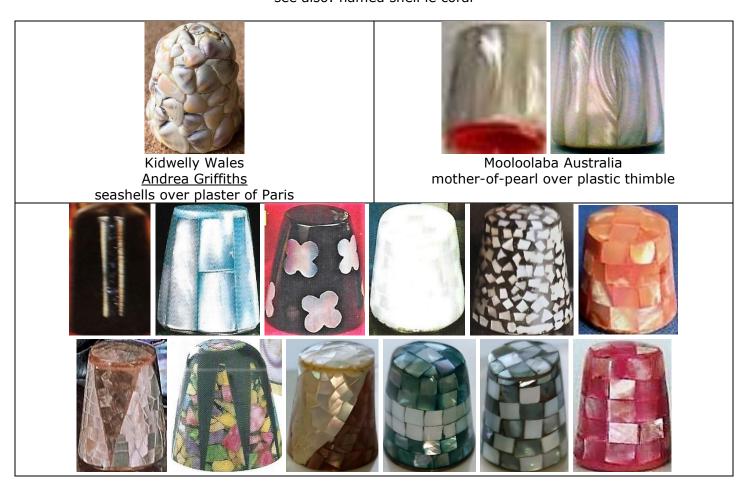
South Africa <u>Tswana Products</u> etched giraffe



South Africa

#### shell

Mexican shell over alpacca thimbles are outside the scope of this study see also: named shell ie coral





shell in form of chips or slices TTG 1988-2001 - TO 1983-1993 - VH995-997



# shingle



# silicone



**silk** see also: cotton - fabric







Korea Younmin Lee





Chuncheon Korea handmade, with silk stitches on padded silk or felt (some are quite crudely stitched) known as kolmi small opening at tip for fingernail KS 9 1987 - Sewing Corner 1978 - TTG July 2004 - TO 1984 - VH 1000-1002 - Fel 10 1989

**slate** see also: plum slate



Wales
<u>Kingmaker</u>
handpainted 'Snowdon'
bonded with resin
TTG February 1986



Wales
Pinpoint Precision
limited to **350**TTG March 1993



Wales Christine and Dave Smith TTG August 1987



Westmoreland UK
Christine and Dave Smith
limited to **500**TTG November 1987

#### snake skin



USA Boulder Bay (BB) Asian ratsnake filigree cap







USA Texas rattlesnake over wood TTG June 1991 – Fel 18 1991

### soapstone



Scotland Gem Rock Museum



USA <u>Parson Hayes</u> Sewing Corner 1978



South Africa etched zebra











India TTG October 1989 – Gim 1997 – TTG March 1994



#### stone

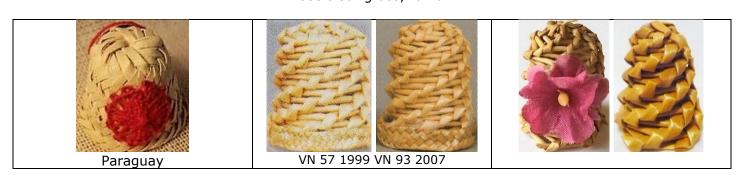
see also: named stones ie jade







**straw** see also: grass, raffia



# strawberry alabaster



**string** see also: Jacqui and David Parker of Olivia thimbles topic



# synthetics



Brisbane Australia <u>Ray Brittain</u>



Scotland
<a href="Penelope Burgess">Penelope Burgess</a>
tartan under resin



Deborah Hull



Cirencester UK

<u>History Craft</u>

inset brass apex
described as polymer ivory from ivory dust or sweepings or rosin
a few have metal 'compass' in apex



Melissa Hookway



Dudley UK <u>Woodsetton</u> peep: Visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip to China TTG November 1986



Argentina epoxy resin made by Toba indigenous people



China TTG June 2004 polyresin



UK 'Thimble Collectors Guild' - 'A stitch in time' TTG July 1987 August 1987



resin





synthetic ruby







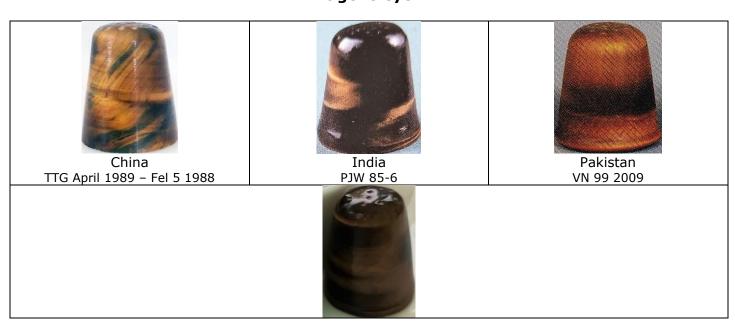
# telephone wire



# tiger iron



# tiger's eye



#### tortoiseshell

plastic fingerguards were created in tortoiseshell colour in 1910s



Birmingham UK

<u>John Piercy</u>

in November 1816 Piercy took out a patent, 4077, to combine tortoiseshell with gold, sterling silver, steel

British coat-of-arms on the slant with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon underneath is impressed into the shell. There is a gold rim and the width of tortoiseshell varies



another design has a large crown in gold with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon underneath dainty flowers and leaves surround a blank cartouche on the verso



another design has pinchbeck cartouche sounded by fine flowers flowers and leaves, with 'Piercy's Patent' underneath



another design has 'Piercy's Patent' over two lines with rectangular cartouche surrounded by flowers and leaves on the verso



steel-top with cartouche sounded by fine flowers and leaves with 'Piercy's Patent' on a ribbon in pinchbeck



very rare example with Queen Charlotte surrounded by laurel wreath 'Piercy's Patent' over two lines on verso b&w photo







'Piercy's Patent' pierced pinchbeck thimbles over tortoiseshell Christies 1995 114-115



China



Germany or Austria



carved 18<sup>th</sup> century Christies 1995 110



UK
various gold pique designs – stars, flowers, leaves and crosses
9ct gold apex



UK wide band of silver

### travertine



### turquoise



Egypt Randa Ahmet Unique Design

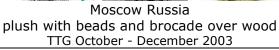


pierced, with Chinese lettering Gim 1991



#### velvet







### verdite



Phalaborwa South Africa John van der Westhuizen



South Africa Tswana Products



carved VN 95 2008



VN 46 1998

### volcanic ash



Washington USA Mt St Helen's ash



`Etna'

### volcanic rock



Scotland
Christine and John Smith
sourced from rock of Edinburgh Castle Mount
TTG September 1992

#### vulcanite

hardened rubber, which was used as mourning jewellery. It was replaced by gutta percha and jet



USA band of 14ct gold size lettered on apex

#### wax







Mind Your Own Beeswax

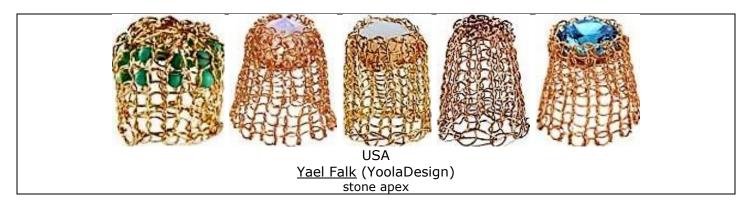
candle in shape of quilter's thimble

wicker see also: bamboo



UK basket weave TTG January 2001

#### wire



#### wool



Perth Australia Barbara Martin knitted





Sydney Australia <u>Yvonne Winspear</u> brass pin of map of Australia b&w photo

#### zebra stone



### References

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Elsa Giampaoli *Juan Arrieta Quiroga – and a friend.* <u>TCI Bulletin</u> spring 2021

Irja Helsila *Stone thimbles.* <u>TCI Bulletin</u> fall 2002

Magdalina and William Isbister *South American thimbles.* 2016

Molly Pearce *A Piercy's patent commemorative thimble.* <u>TCI Bulletin</u> spring 2005

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This listing of Thimbles made from unusual materials 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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