Blackberry designs on sterling silver thimbles

This is my first thematic topic where the distinctive design around the thimble is the topic under discussion

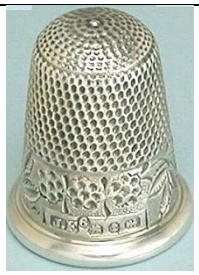
Isbister illustrates the botanical blackberry images that these thimbles were based on. Many of the spiky leaves are well depicted on most of the thimbles

We are looking at these thimbles from more than one hundred years ago. The makers may not have seen some of these designs as blackberries, especially the single rows of berries in the Charles May thimbles. Thimbles with rows of diamond pattern with daisies are not blackberry thimbles – this is a subjective choice on my part but follow Isbister

Isbister arranged the blackberry designs in his dissertation in the order of the different designs, with his descriptions

I debated for a while on how to arrange these thimbles. I have chosen to arrange them by the makers' marks. These may or may not be those of the thimble maker, just the marks used for the sponsor who commissioned the thimbles.
It is this order by Isbister that I have used to arrange the thimbles within each maker
The numbering in red is my own to facilitate referencing the entries below

The designs are:

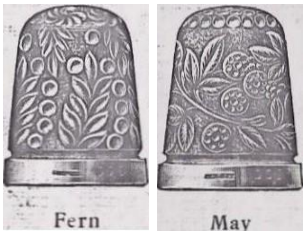
1 top only aggregated fruit	**2** all over aggregated fruit	**3** all over aggregated fruit + Greek key	**4** aggregated fruit above leafy band
 **5** single aggregated fruit band	**6** multiple aggregate fruit bands	**7** multiple aggregate fruit bands (single fruit)	**8** double aggregated fruit bands

Learn more about Blackberry designs on sterling silver thimbles

 9 vertical rows of fruit without leaves	 **10** vertical rows of fruit with leaves	 **11** blackberry bush leaves with aggregated fruit most commonly found blackberry design
 12 blackberry bush leaves with aggregated fruit - non-slip	 **13** blackberry bush leaves with aggregated fruit - single leaf	 **14** aggregated fruit background with bicycle
 15 aggregated fruit with placename	 **16** aggregated fruit with leaves in panels in border	 **17** nickel silver bush and aggregated fruit

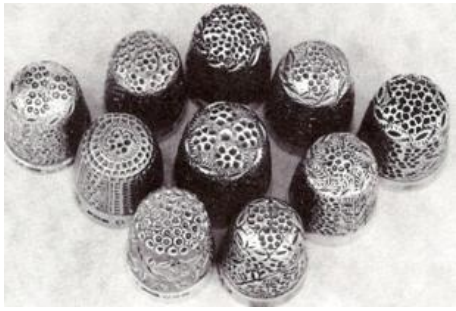
Pelham Burn mentions 25 different designs

These are two images from the Henry Griffith catalogue and they named their blackberry designs **fern** and **may**. They feature in the literature on blackberry thimbles



Scroll down to discover a non-British thimble with a blackberry design – I hope you're as delighted to see this

There are several different apexes to the blackberry thimbles. Many continue the design from the body of the thimble. Where thimbles have the berries featured in the band, the apex is plainly indented



four berries with leaves	all berries	seven berries	three berries with leaves	one berry

You may choose to collect blackberry thimbles by maker (eg James Fenton, who had the most designs) – one from each maker – or the different variety blackberry designs thimbles. They have one of the most recognisable designs and are worth seeking out

Where they are available, I have shown all views of the all-round designs

The dates refer to the years the blackberry designs were made by each thimble maker

The earliest date I have found is for **1881**

According to Isbister these thimbles are hand-engraved so there will not be two the same. The all over blackberry design is bright cut with a matt textured background with asymmetrical vines with leaves

Griffith 1895

As with all of the topics on British thimble makers, this topic will never be complete

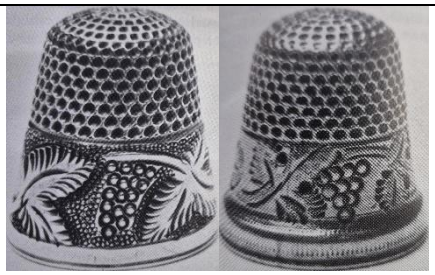
AB&CO – Alfred Bromet & Co

wholesale jewellers & importers of fancy goods
thimbles made by Henry Griffith
1899-1903

11

AL&CO (USA)

1880s



5

tho Gay Ann Rogers names these designs as grapes and leaves, the leaves are too similar to their British blackberry counterparts

BF

1902

11

bWI

7

CB – Christopher Potter Buckton

wholesale dealer in thimbles & fancy jewellery
thimbles made by Henry Griffith
1901-1919

8	11

Ce&Fd – Constantine & Floyd

factor
Chester thimbles made by Charles Horner
1888-1898

2	10	16

Charles Iles

their thimbles are nickel silver

2	5	17

CH – Charles Horner

Isbister was not able to find any CH blackberry thimbles

1896-1902

5

10

11

16

CM – Charles May

1896-1920

7

11

CU – Charles Usher

jeweller in Leicester, making badges, fobs & medals
thimbles made George Fidkin
1918

10

11

FW – Francis Webb

pencil case makers
1901

5

Gabler

Germany
from their catalogue: named Laub which means leaves

11

GB – George Boot

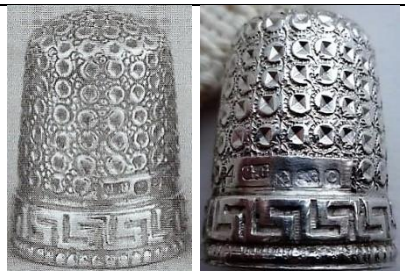
thimbles made by Henry Griffith
1901

8

GG – George Goodman

factor, who was a pin-maker, jewellery & hair curler manufacturer
1895-1903

2



3

10

11

Goldsmith Stern & Co

USA

5

GS – George Snook

Snook only made brass and other base metal thimbles
1896-1907

11

16

GU – George Unite
1887-1903

5

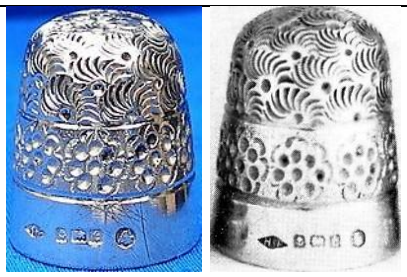
9

11

GWH – G W Harvey
thimbles made by Charles Horner
1899

5

HF – Henry Fidkin
1918-1919


5

9
PETER PAN

10

11

16

HF – Henry Fowler

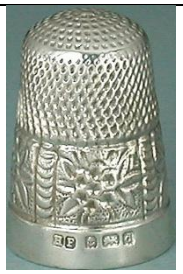
1896-1914

1

2

3

11



16

HG&S – Henry Griffith & Sons

1892-1913

5

11

13

HS – Henry Swann

jeweller – registered as a thimble maker
1888-1901

2

8

child's
10

11

HT – F J H Thomas
jewellers
1888

2

HWLD – Henry Williamson Ltd
factor
thimbles made by James Fenton
1899-1900

2

11

16

JA – James Allen
1898

10

11

JC&S – Joseph Cook & Son
1904

5

JDLD – Johnson Durban & Co

thimbles made by Henry Griffith

1898

11

JF – James Fenton

Fenton only sold his thimbles thru wholesalers and rarely made thimbles for others

JF registered six of his thimble designs

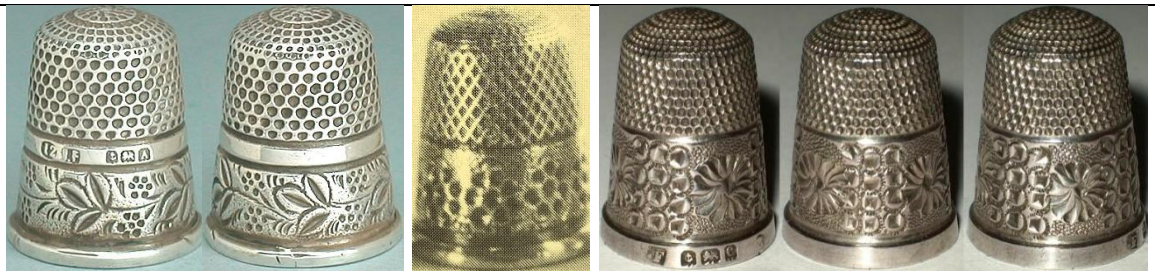
1886-1925

1

2

4

C: CRAMOND BRIG



5

6

8

9

10

11

13

14

Registered design R^D280564

JL– John Linegar

1881

1

JS – James Swann

registered as thimble makers

1893-1920

2

6

8

10

11

ISLE OF MAN – DUNDEE – STOCKTON – EDINBURGH

15

JT&S – John Thompson & Son

thimbles made by Charles Horner

11

MCAS

1901

11

M BROS – Miller Bros

1887-1895

5

MN&CO – Marion & Co

manufacturing jeweller

thimbles made by Henry Griffith

1900

11

NG&CO – Northern Goldsmiths & Co

thimbles made by Henry Griffith

1900

11

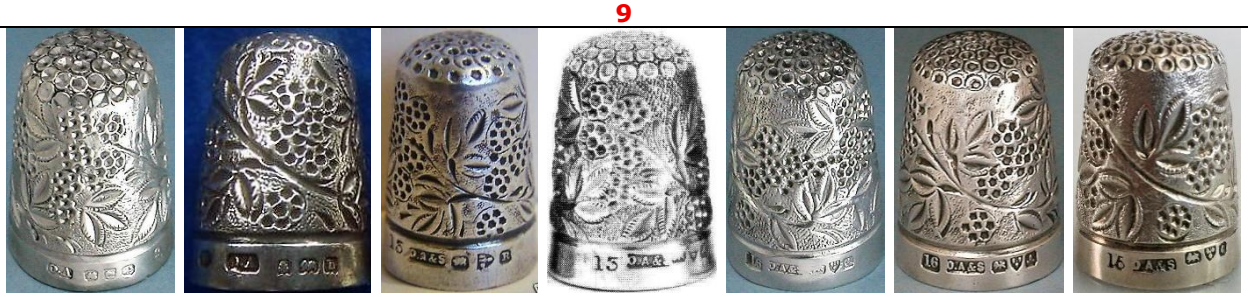
OA – Olney Amsden

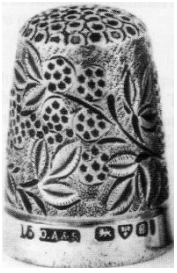
wholesale haberdashers, warehousemen, importers of foreign goods & warehouses
thimbles made by Henry Griffith
1893-1904

4

8

9



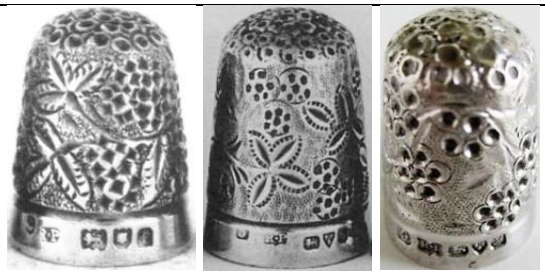


11

RP – Robert Pringle

wholesale jewellers (est. 1835)
thimbles made by James Fenton and Charles Horner
1901-1923

5



11

SB&S – S Blankensee & Son

1888

2

SBROS – Sydenham Bros

1911

11

SBRS - Steel Bros

1902

11

SF – Samuel Foskett

listed in Post Office Directory 1890 as silver thimble makers – "gold, silver and steel silver-lined repairing and any size or shape made to order"

1893-1899

1

4

5

7

11

SJL & Co – S J Levi & Co
electroplate manufacturers
thimbles made Henry Fidkin
1919

11

SR

11

S(T) – Swann Thimbles
successors to James Swann & Sons
1996

11

TK&F – Tozer Kennedy & Fisher

shipping merchants

1903-1911

10

11

WD – William Devenport

1906

11

WES – William Ernest Stallard

1894-1897

7

WHK – W H Kirby

1892

2

WHS – William Henry Sparrow

thimbles made by Henry Griffith

1902

16

WJH – William James Holmes

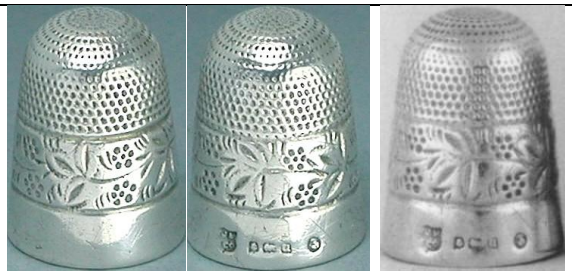
4

WJM&CO – W J Myatt & Co

thimbles made George Fidkin

1904-1919

1



5

11

16

WL – Walter Lunt

silversmith & jeweller
1907-1912

2

Unknown makers

indistinct marks or made pre-1884

STERLING SILVER **1**	SILVO **2**	**5**	nickel silver **5**
child's **5**	pre-1884 **5**	maker's mark rubbed **5**	maker's mark unclear **5**
5	H.W SILVO **9**	STERLING **11**	STERLING **11**

 mark overstamped **11**	 NON-SLIP STERLING **12**	 NON-SLIP PROV. PAT. STERLING **12** (patent taken out by Sydney Middleton Taylor)
 STERLING SILVER **13**		

References

Diane Pelham Burn *Blackberries: the pick of the crop.* TCI Bulletin spring 1994; summer 1995
William and Magdalena Isbister *Blackberry thimbles.* Rev ed. June 2013

Contributors

Eileen Leighton | Sue Franklin | Carolyn Meacham-Elegant Arts | Ray Nimmo | Wolf-Dieter Scholz | Svetlana

This listing of Blackberry designs on sterling silver thimbles does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects. Rather it invites comments and contributions to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

EMAIL thimbleselect@bigpond.com TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

© Sue Gowan
September 2026