

Charles Horner Ltd sterling silver thimbles made with other sponsor's marks

Charles Horner of Halifax, Yorkshire in England, is probably the best-known name in British thimble history. Known for their steel-lined sterling thimbles, they were also the manufacturers of sterling silver thimbles, some with the most beautiful designs.

Horner took out a patent (No. 8954 of 1884) for his steel-lined thimbles and they were lettered PAT. (being the abbreviation for Patent) with a size number alongside. This enabled him to provide the beauty of sterling silver - with the strength of steel which was sandwiched between two layers of silver.

In some of his early advertising Horner uses the term "armour plating" to describe these thimbles.

I have never been able to establish when the term Dorcas was first used for these thimbles.

In 1905 they took out another patent, No. 5115, which was their Improvements design. This was also to prevent other manufacturers copying their new way of creating these thimbles for a further period.

To distinguish his designs from his competitors, Horner registered his thimble designs (RD) and even named them. This would give Horner the jump he needed to stay ahead of his competition.

Even that early, he was superb at marketing for his share of the market.

These design names are now commonly known, used and instantly recognised by Horner thimble collectors of today. The designs are:

Diamond (R^D73426 erroneously for his R^D73624 of 1887)

Louise (R^D127211 of 1889)

Shell (R^D210799 of 1893)

Princess May (R^D210800 of 1893)

Hardwood (R^D429537 of 1904)

R^D426659 of 1904 was given no name but the design consists of a series of interlocking Louise.

Other familiar terms to Horner collectors like Flora and Star didn't have their design names registered.

These names were recorded tho in Horner's Dorcas advertisements of 1900 (see Holmes p107).

Apparently, it was a relatively expensive exercise to create the dies used for producing designs on thimbles. So once the dies were created for the Dorcas thimbles using these registered designs, they could be used on both his Dorcas and sterling silver thimbles. These RD covered these designs on both.

The factory used combinations of these designs to create their unique style: and the RD number which was stamped onto the band follows the dominant design, which is the top part of the thimble.

From 1884, the protection for registered designs on metal objects was for five years and later this period could be extended, thus securing their designs from being copied.

The expense of creating dies could have been off-set by creating thimbles for others, using the set of sponsor's marks instead of those with CH marks. These other marks are known as **sponsor marks**: indicating that they were not made by the maker shown. Other terms used are wholesaler, factors and smaller manufacturers. This applied to all the major Victorian thimble makers.

All CH sterling silver (and occasional 9ct gold) thimbles were exclusively assayed in Chester.

Horner used their own basic thimble designs and marked them with the marks of the sponsors as listed below adding their system of thimble sizes alongside (CH sizes are 0-15).

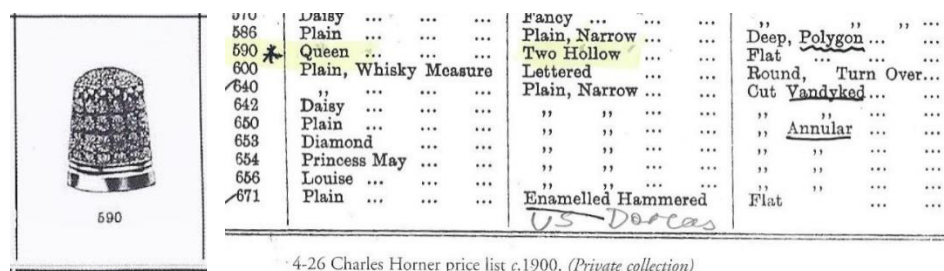
Importantly for identification, these Horner thimble sizes measure 20-11mm, which ranges from the largest to the smallest size.

Additionally, in the quite abbreviated Horner 1900 Catalogue we have the records of sterling silver thimbles being manufactured in the Horner factory each with a unique number.

There is an accompanying Table explaining the designs by those numbers (see Lawson p122-123 and Holmes p44-45).

Terms like Daisy, Ottoman, Persian, Vandyked, Annular, Galerie and Polygon are used in the Table. I have included the Horner Catalogue reference numbers, as identification, to match the corresponding thimbles with a non-CH mark.

An intriguing discovery during this research is that I discovered a previously unknown term used by Horner in his 1900 Table: no 560 **Queen**. I am not able to decipher the design as illustrated in the Catalogue. Do you know what this thimble design looks like?



The CH catalogue entry for 1900 – R: the description from his Table

According to Holmes (p110) "... the firm of Charles Horner was the largest producer of thimbles during the period 1900-1910. Subsequently under the weight of competition business in plain (sterling) thimbles became less profitable, Charles Horner gradually lost interest, and by 1925 they were making Dorcas thimbles only".

I have encountered a small number of CH sterling thimbles with hallmark dates up to 1936.

In The Thimble Society of London (TSL) spring 1990 issue "The entire Spring catalogue has been devoted to the Charles Horner thimbles purchased at the Chester (Sotheby's) auction on the 16th January 1990 ... all the thimbles were found together in the showrooms. The thimbles are in mint condition, as crisp and sparkling as the day they were made ... I was granted the privilege of photographing the entire collection before it went under the hammer ..."

Bridget McConnel of the TSL goes on to quote from the press release by Sotheby's: "A charming collection in the sale comes from Halifax, the home of the prolific silversmith Charles Horner Ltd. The firm which closed in 1982, was probably best known for the manufacture of silver thimbles and the sale contains 500 (400) of them, dating from the late 19th century and early 20th century. Previously, they were housed in two glass-fronted cabinets in which they were displayed in the firm's stockroom to facilitate re-orders ... They were sent for sale by the former managing director of the company who bought them when the factory closed down ... Horner died in 1896, leaving a large family including six sons, two of whom, James Dobson Horner (died 1913) and Charles Henry Horner (known as Harry, died 1949) became managing directors..."

TSL listed the 100 thimbles they had for sale from the auction in the following way: "The size number of each thimble will be shown first, followed by the maker's initials, the assay office and they year. The registration mark will be given when one appears".

Browsing thru this catalogue one becomes aware of the Horner thimbles with other marks and this was the starting point for this little bit of research I have undertaken.

What a resource this issue is for me to be able to illustrate some Horner thimbles with the designs used on thimbles that don't bear Horner marks, rather showing those of sponsors.

Clues can be found in the designs used for these non-CH marked thimbles, or the presence of a Horner RD number on the rim.

I am aware that in my comparative choices, size can change the look of the thimble design. I have not gone into the detail of checking how many minor differences there are in each design – they match as closely as I have the resources for.

Henry Griffith & Sons (HG&S) of Birmingham and later in Leamington was one of the other prominent Victorian thimble silversmiths in competition with Horner for a slice of the thimble market. They also made the thimbles that they were commissioned by their sponsors.

Griffith was the only British thimble maker to use the millimetre sizing on their thimbles – sizes 13-20, which equate to 13-20mm openings: smallest to largest which is the opposite from the CH sizes.

If in doubt whether you have a Chester thimble made for a British sponsor by either CH or HG&S – use this size clue.

Griffith didn't only use one assay office as Horner did – the main assay office he chose was Birmingham, then Chester. This can cause confusion when trying to locate Horner-made Chester thimbles.

Some the following may also have made thimbles themselves.

Some of the sponsors below engaged both Horner and Griffith to make thimbles for them.

In 2003 Spicer & Pelham indicated that Horner made thimbles for 20 other sponsors. This study reveals that there were actually **32**.

They go on to say " ... the small makers would have bought the thimbles, which already had the RD number on them, and then had their own hallmark put on the thimbles".

At this stage only eleven of these sponsors' thimbles below, bear Horner's RD marks.

From this small sample, the earliest date I can find by Horner with a non-CH mark is 1885 and there are very few examples of thimble assay dates in the 1880s. The biggest proportion are for 1890-1900, tailing off in the Edwardian era, ending in 1911.

After years of handling thousands of British thimbles and amassing many thousands of photographs, one gets a feel for the high quality of the earlier Horner thimbles and this is evident in the examples I have chosen to illustrate the following sponsors' thimbles.

The photos are mainly in black and white so don't show the thimbles at their sparkling best.

From this small sample two sponsors stand out – HWL^{TD} and JT&S.
HWL^{TD} was Horner's first sponsor: in 1881.

Other Charles Horner thimble and related topics

Alfred Bromet (AB&Co) thimbles
Charles Horner's early Dorcas "PAT." thimbles
Dorcas thimble boxes
Horner and hearts
Olney, Amsden (OA & OA&S) thimbles
Robert Pringle (RP) thimbles

AB&C^o – Alfred Bromet & Co

see also topic: Alfred Bromet (AB&Co) thimbles including the Empire thimble



Horner 1901#8
(CH catalogue 400)



Chester 1893#10/1896#7
RD210800

AJD&C^o – A J Davenport & Co



Horner 1902#8
(CH catalogue 213)



Chester 1896#9

AMB – Abraham Meyer Blankensee

there are also AMB thimbles with Birmingham assay marks



Horner 1888

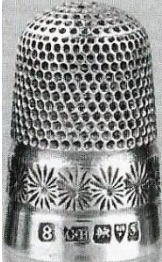


Chester 1890#9/1899#6

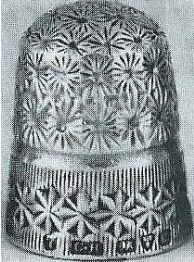
AS – Albert Sydenham

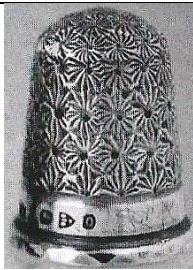
I was going to remove this sponsor as too few examples have been found until I found this advert, showing Sydenham's connection to Charles Horner Ltd

All these choice patterns Silver Hall Marked are now kept in Stock. MOST OF THESE PATTERNS ARE REGISTERED					
					
304 per HI/- per doz.	328 per HI/- doz.	400 per HI/- doz.	368 per HI/- doz.	420 per HI/- doz.	349 per HI/- doz.
SILVER HALL-MARKED THIMBLES OF EVERY DESCRIPTION AND PRICE TO SUIT ALL MARKETS.					
A SYDENHAM, Wholesale & Manufacturing Jeweller, 26, Frederick Street, BIRMINGHAM.					

 Horner 1906#8 (CH catalogue 279)	 Chester 1905#9
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C&C^o – Carrington & Co

 Horner 1889#6	 Chester 1883#6
 Horner 1904#7	 Chester 1896#9
 Horner#10 R^D127211	 Chester 1897#9 R^D127211



Horner 1897
(CH catalogue 400)



Chester 1900#6
R^D210800



Horner 1907#6



Chester 1903#8

CE

no photo



Chester 1903#8

C^E&F^D – Alfred Constantine & Floyd

there are also C^E&F^D thimbles with Birmingham assay marks

no photo



Chester 1888 1889
REG.112123

no photo



Chester 1892#10



Horner 1904#6



Chester 1894#7



Horner 1898#8
(CH catalogue 229)



Chester 1894#9



Chester 1897
(CH catalogue 412)



Chester 1897#10
R^D210800



Chester 1899



Chester 1897#7



Horner 1902#8



Chester 1898#8



Horner 1904#5
R^D426659



Chester 1907#8



Horner 1905#8
(CH catalogue 653)

I haven't found a matching CH thimble - this is the closest



Chester#7
(CH catalogue 650)

CP – Charles Peach



Horner 1898#7



Chester 1907#7
(CH catalogue 215)

CS*FS – Saunders & Shepherd



Horner 1905#10
(CH catalogue 642)



Chester 1899#7

D&F – Deakin & Francis

there are also D&F thimbles with Birmingham assay marks 6



Horner 1900#8
(CH catalogue 304)



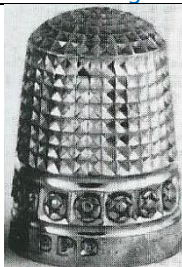
Chester #8



Horner#11
(like CH catalogue 249)



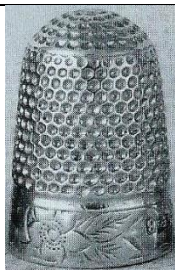
Chester 1896/1898#7
R: R^D210800



Horner 1898#9
(CH catalogue 481)



Chester 1898#7
R^D73626



Horner 1905#9
(CH catalogue 530 A)



Chester 1900#10



Horner 1909



Chester 1907

EGP – Eustace George Parker



Horner 1898#5
(CH catalogue 202)



Chester 1894#11



Horner 1904#7
(CH catalogue 203)



Chester 1895#8



Horner 1903#9
(like CH catalogue 420)

I haven't found a matching CH thimble – this is the closest



Chester 1898#6



Horner 1896#7
(CH catalogue 213)



Chester 1900#7



Horner 1906#7



Chester 1900

GG – George Goodman

his sizing marks are different from both CH and HG&S
there are also GG thimbles with Birmingham assay marks

see also topic: George Goodman (GG) and Gomms (G'S) sterling silver thimbles



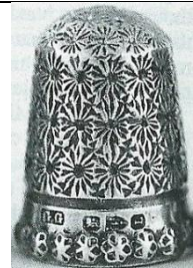
Horner 1911#8



Chester 1895#6



Horner 1897
(CH catalogue 412)



Chester 1894
RD210800



Horner 1899/1907
(CH catalogue 585)



Chester 1904

GV&C^o – Gourdel Vales & Co



Horner 1898#6



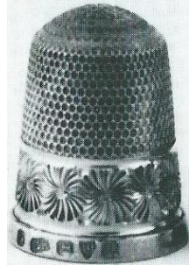
Chester 1893#6



Horner 1901
(CH catalogue 328)



Chester 1893#8

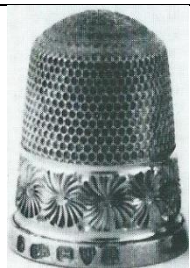


Horner 1898#8
(CH catalogue 229)



Chester 1895#8

GWH&C^o – G W Harvey & Co



Horner 1907#8
(CH catalogue 229)



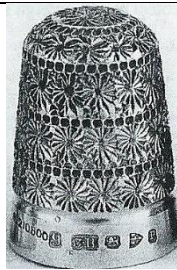
Chester 1893#6



Horner 1907#6



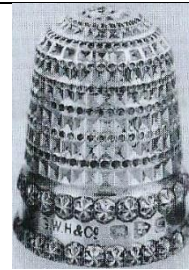
Chester 1894#6



Horner 1898#9
R^D210800

([CH catalogue 418](#))

I haven't found a matching CH thimble - this is the closest



Chester 1899

no photo



Chester 1899
R^D73626

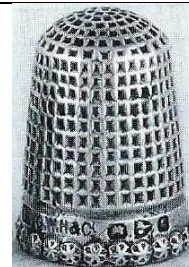


Horner 1902#8
([CH catalogue 213](#))



Chester 1901/1904

no photo



Chester 1903
([CH catalogue 483](#))



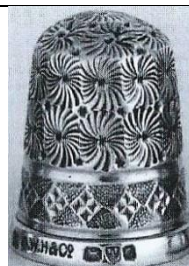
Horner 1897#6
([CH catalogue 480](#))



Chester 1903



Horner 1905#7
([CH catalogue 570](#))



Chester 1903



Horner 1898#10



Chester 1906#8



Horner 1922#7
(CH catalogue 327)



Chester 1911#9

no photo



Chester 1913



Horner 1936#8



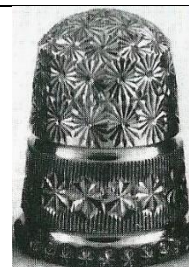
Chester 1914#6

H&T – Hilliard & Thomason

there are also H&T thimbles with Birmingham assay marks



Horner 1897#7
R^D210800
(CH catalogue 474)



Chester 1900#7
R^D210800



Horner 1900

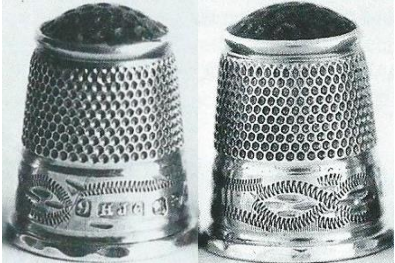


Chester#5 or 9

HCF – Henry Charles Freeman

no photo	 Chester 1894#6
 Horner 1897#7	 Chester 1895#7
 Horner 1904#11 interestingly, the persian design has two rows of dots or holes	 Chester 1897#9 R ^D 210799

HJC – H J Cooper

 Horner 1901 (CH catalogue 328)	no photo Chester 1896#7 R ^D 73626
 Horner 1907 (CH catalogue 213 S) b&w photo – green stone	 Chester 1896#9 b&w photo – green stone



Horner 1897#6



Chester 1897#7



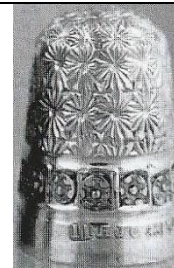
Horner 1894#8



Chester 1900#6
'NASSAU N.P. BAHAMAS'



Chester 1905#11



Chester 1905#11
(CH catalogue 481)

HW – Henry Wainwright



Horner 1889
(CH catalogue 300)



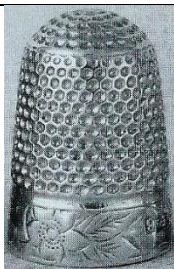
Chester 1889#9



Horner 1892#8



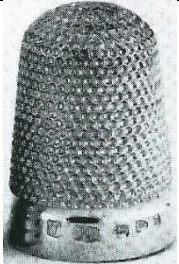
Chester 1892#9



Horner 1905#9
(CH catalogue 530 A)



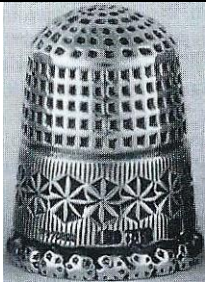
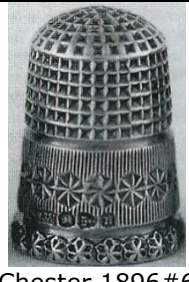
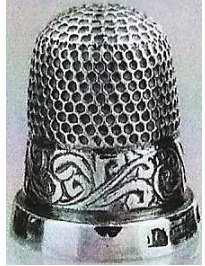
Chester 1899#6

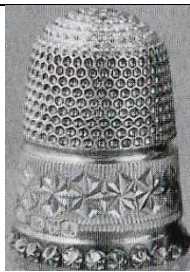
 Horner 1898 (CH catalogue 519)	 Chester 1907#6
 Horner 1898#7 TSL 1990-8	 Chester #10
 Horner 1889 (CH catalogue 300)	 Chester an illegal mark as the CH mark has been over stamped with HW

HWL^{TD} – Henry Williamson Ltd

I have deleted five unique designs for this sponsor as there are no matching patterns by CH
there are a few HWL^{TD} thimbles with Birmingham assay marks

 Horner 1896#7 (CH catalogue 213)	 Chester 1881#5
no photo	 Chester 1885

no photo	 Chester 1886
 Horner 1922#8 (CH catalogue 443)	 Chester 1892#6 9.375
 Chester 1898#11 R^D73626 (CH catalogue 476)	 Chester 1896#6
 Horner 1897#10 ('peapods')	 Chester 1897/1898#10 R^D127211
 Horner 1923#7 (CH catalogue 481)	 Chester 1898#7
 Horner 1894 (CH catalogue 212)	 Chester 1898#10



Holmes 1901
(CH catalogue 475)



Chester 1899#7



Horner 1904#9
(CH catalogue 213 S)



Chester 1899#9
b&w photo



Horner 1901
(CH catalogue 328)



Chester 1904#6



Horner 1907#11



Chester 1905#9



Horner 1896#7
(CH catalogue 213)



Horner 1906#10

Chester



Horner 1903#8
R^D426659



Chester 1906#7
R^D426659



Horner 1904
(CH catalogue 213)



Chester 1909#7



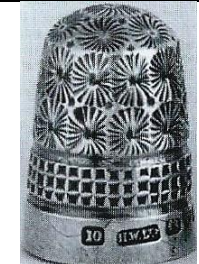
Horner 1905#7
(CH catalogue 570)



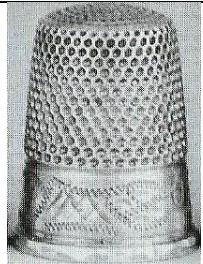
Chester 1909#5



Horner 1900#8
(CH catalogue 304)



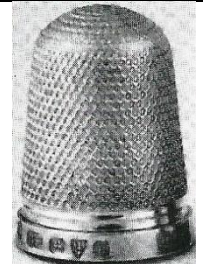
Chester 1909#10



Horner 1922#6
(CH catalogue 213)



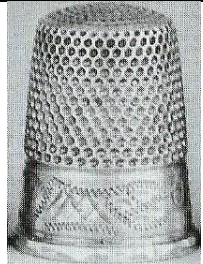
Chester 1911#6



Horner 1906#7
(CH catalogue 201)



Chester 1911#6



Horner 1922#6
(CH catalogue 213)



Chester 1913#7

IS&C° – Isaac Silverston & Co



Horner 1897#7
(CH catalogue 474)



Chester 1897#8
R^D210800

JT&S – John Thompson & Sons



Horner 1893/1907
MONA



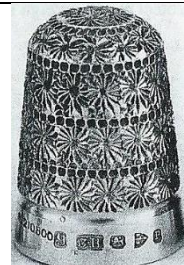
Chester 1889#6/1897#8
MONA



Horner 1905#6



Chester 1893/1910#10



Horner 1898#9
R^D210800
(CH catalogue 418)



Chester 1893



Horner 1900#10
(CH catalogue 427)



Chester 1893#11/10
R^D210799



Horner 1901#8
(CH catalogue 400)



Chester 1894#9
R^D210800



Horner 1902#8



Chester 1894#10
R^D73626



Horner 1906#10



Chester 1895#6



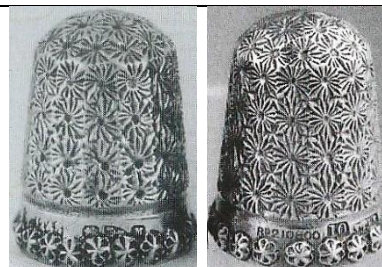
Horner 1917#8
(CH catalogue 440)



Chester 1895#10



Horner 1895#6
R^D210800
(CH catalogue 412)



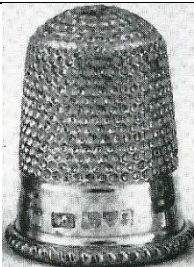
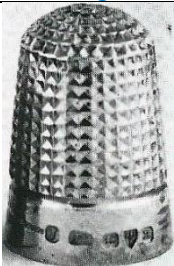
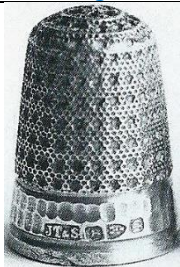
Chester 1895/1902#10



Horner 1899#7
R^D210800



Chester 1895#6/1898
R^D210800

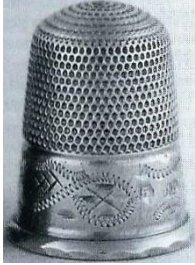
no photo	 Chester 1896
 Horner 1906#7	 Chester 1896#9
 Horner 1897#6 (CH catalogue 480)	 1896 #11
 Horner 1900#7 R^D73626 (CH catalogue 320)	 Chester 1900#9 R^D73626
no photo	 Chester 1900#12 (CH catalogue 3213)
 Horner 1894#8 I haven't found a matching CH thimble - this is the closest	 Chester 1904



Horner 1901#10



Chester 1906#6



Horner 1907#5
(CH catalogue 213)



Chester 1910#6



Horner 1897#7
(CH catalogue 474)



Chester#6



Horner 1898
(CH catalogue 519)



Chester 1909#8/#9/1910#9

M&C – Marks & Cohen

there are a few M&C thimbles with Birmingham assay marks



Horner 1912
(CH catalogue 213 S)



Chester 1897#7/1903#9



Horner 1910#.6.
(CH catalogue 530 S)



Chester 1905/1909#9

RP – Robert Pringle

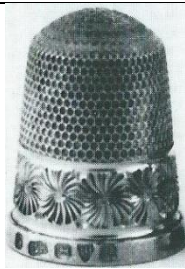
there are also steel-cored sterling silver thimbles with this maker's mark
there are RP thimbles with Birmingham and London assay marks



Horner 1898#5



Chester 1894#6



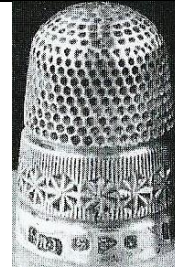
Horner 1898#8
(CH catalogue 229)



Chester 1897



Horner 1898
(CH catalogue 519)



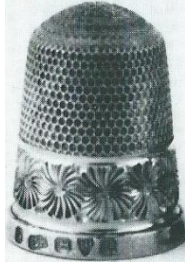
Chester 1898/1899



Horner 1889
(CH catalogue 300)



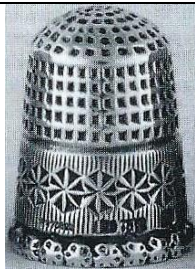
Chester 1899#10



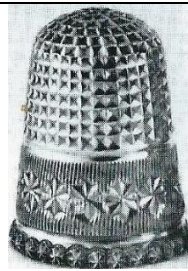
Horner 1898



Chester 1899#10



Horner 1898#11
R^D73626
(CH catalogue 476)



Chester 1900#7

no photo

tho the thimble alongside comes from the 1990 CH auction



Chester 1906#11



Horner 1902#6
(CH catalogue 427)



Chester 1906#6



Horner 1924#7



Chester 1906#8



Horner 1901
(CH catalogue 328)



Chester 1907#10



Horner 1898#5



Chester 1913#5

S&C° – Sydney & Co

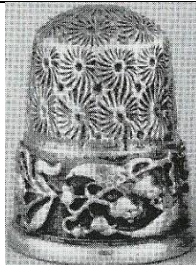
there are also steel-cored sterling silver thimbles with this maker's mark



Horner 1903#8
R^D426859



Chester 1904#11/1911#10



Horner 1890s



Chester 1906



Horner 1904#10



Chester 1910#.6.



Horner 1912#7



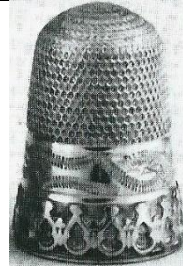
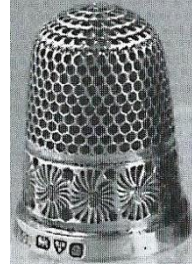
Chester 1911#8

S&G – Salmon & Gluckstein

no photo tho the thimble alongside comes from the 1990 CH auction	 Chester 1904#8
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SBROS – Sydenham Bros

there are early (1887) SBROS thimbles with Birmingham assay marks

 Horner 1894# 8 (CH catalogue 233)	 Chester 1894#11
 Horner 1898#7 (CH catalogue 407)	 Chester 1898
 Horner 1898#9 (CH catalogue 270)	 Chester 1900
 Horner 1898#8 (CH catalogue 229)	 Chester 1902

T&S – Tandy & Sons



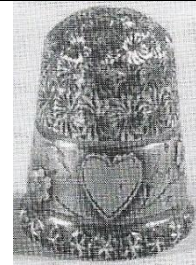
Horner 1906#7
(CH catalogue 289)



Chester 1893#6



Horner 1899#7
R^D210800

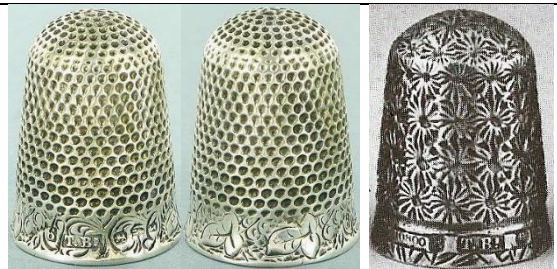


Chester 1895
b&w photo

TB^S – Turnbull Bros



Horner 1901#8
(CH catalogue 400)



Chester 1892#6

R: 1892 anomaly: the band from TB^S appears as a composite design with an R^D210800 for CH

no photo



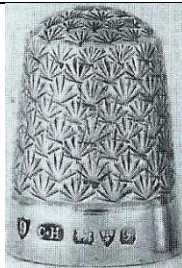
Chester 1894
(CH catalogue 213)



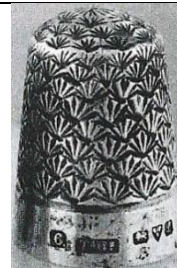
Horner 1917#8
(CH catalogue 440)



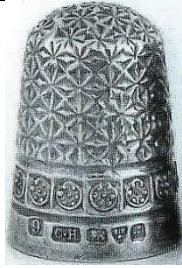
Chester 1894#7
R^D127211



Horner 1909#9
(CH catalogue 420)



Chester 1911#.6.



Horner 1909#9



Chester 1911#9

WBROS – Wengold Bros



Horner 1898#8
(CH catalogue 229)



Chester 1900#9

WEHW



Horner 1897#7
(CH catalogue 474)



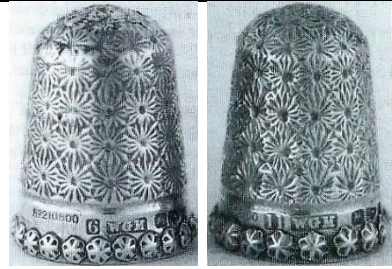
Chester
R^D210800

WGM – Walter & George Matthews

there are a few WGM thimbles with Birmingham assay marks



Horner 1897
(CH catalogue 412)



Chester 1893#6/#11
R^D210800

no photo



Chester 1894#7/#6
I will leave this here as an example of a thimble
probably made by WGM

WH – William Hutchinson

no photo



Chester 1895 child's
(CH catalogue 213)

no photo

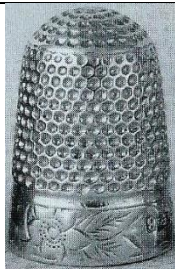


Chester 1895

no photo



Chester 1895



Horner 1905#9
(CH catalogue 530 A)



Chester 1900#4



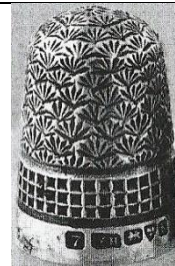
Horner 1908#9
(CH catalogue 302)



Chester 1903



Horner 1900#10
(CH catalogue 302)



Chester 1909#9



Horner 1917#8
(CH catalogue 440)



Chester 1910#8
design worn

WHW – William Harrison Walter



Horner 1901
(CH catalogue 328)



Chester 1885



Horner 1892#8



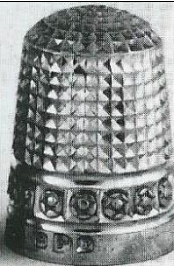
Chester 1889#7



Horner 1917#8
(CH catalogue 440)



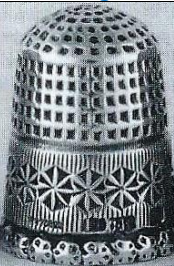
Chester 1894#6
R^D127211



Horner 1898#9
(CH catalogue 481)



Chester 1895/1900#11
R^D73626



Horner 1898#11
(CH catalogue 476)



Chester 1896#7
R^D73626



Horner 1913#11



Chester 1897/1906 #7



Horner 1897#6
(CH catalogue 480)



Chester 1900



Horner 1897#7
(CH catalogue 474)



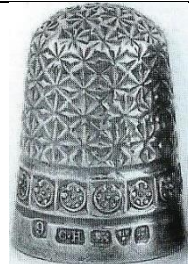
Chester 1903



Horner 1898#8
(CH catalogue 229)



Chester 1912



Horner 1909#9



Chester#9

WJH – William James Holden

there are WJH thimbles with Birmingham assay marks



Horner 1917#8
(CH catalogue 447)



Chester 1896



Horner 1923#8
(CH catalogue 300)



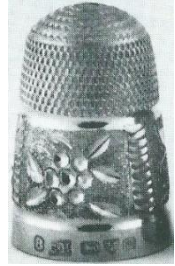
Chester 1896#7



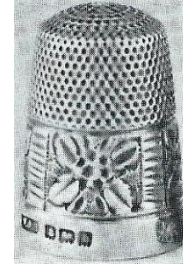
Horner 1905#8
(CH catalogue 530 A)



Chester 1901#7



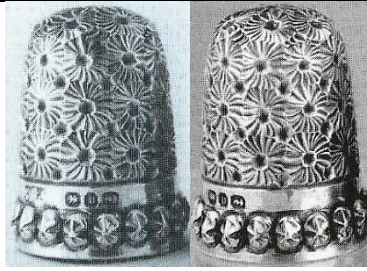
Horner 1902#8



Chester 1901
see also: **CF&F**

ANOMALIES

Isn't it always the way? Just when you've nailed a topic, there are an odd assortment that fit nowhere and blows big holes into the whole venture



This **GG** thimble has the correct look for a Horner thimble with the beading associated with his thimbles – EXCEPT this thimble was assayed in BIRMINGHAM in 1901!



a beautifully executed HG&S 1923 Birmingham thimble – of the out-of-registration Louise pattern



and to end

a **Birmingham 1901** assay mark for Charles Horner – using a familiar design

we are aware of another CH mark for London 1896 = for **Charles Hirth**
(often confused with Charles Horner's mark. This was a foreign maker, the F mark for a foreign maker will distinguish his thimbles from Horner's).

his thimbles are lighter in weight and European in style



References

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This listing of these Horner 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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