

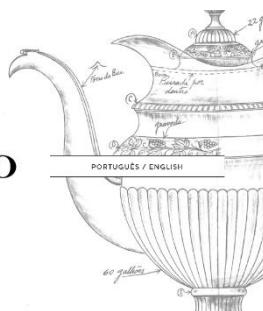
# Topázio, Portugal silver thimbles

I have always saved photos of these thimbles as my mother was born in Portugal. I first began to research these thimbles for inclusion in *Thimbles of Australia*. It was von Hoelle who identified the maker of the thimble I was featuring with an Australian flag, tho not as the maker but as made in Topazio, Portugal.

Topázio are silversmiths in Porto who began operating in 1870 and they still have an internet presence today. Their founder was Manual Jose Ferreira Marques and Topazio are still owned by his descendants.

The factory is located in Gondomar, an outer suburb of Porto.

They began by working their jewellery in gold wire. By 1920s they began to work in silver. In 1934 they took the name Topázio for their jewellery range. It was at this time that they used silver filigree in their range.



factory – business card

The first mention I can find of their thimbles was in Roz Belford's *The Shopping Corner*, in December 1975. There she had thirteen scenes for sale: they were only identified as having been made in Oporto, Portugal. We know that name as Porto today.

Topázio moved from sterling silver goods to silverplated items in the 1970s when the price of silver peaked and this date fits as the introduction of their waffle indented thimble range.

There are two other types of Topázio thimbles: those with knurled indentations and those made of filigree. These are their older sterling silver range.



Topázio are no longer making thimbles.

# Silverplated and sterling silver thimbles with waffle indentations

Many of the designs can be found in silverplate and sterling silver. Additionally, the thimbles are handpainted (Belford describes this as enamelled). There is a flat apex, and each thimble has a mark at its centre.

The silverplated mark has four arms within a circle.

The sterling version has a six-pointed star with 925 lettered within the circle.

The third mark has been found on sterling silver thimbles, where 925 or STERLING is also lettered within the body of the design. Topázio also made thimbles of 800 and 835 silver. The apex has knurled indentations.

The plated thimbles are lightweight.

In practice it is very difficult to identify the marks below, on the left and right, on the Topázio apex from photos, so I am not going to attempt it. I will only show if the centre mark is present



silverplated – 925 (apex 1) – 925 (apex 2)

This brand is easily identifiable by their distinctive silverplated thimbles with embossed scenes around the thimble with their waffle set of indentations above the scene or decoration.

The number of waffle lines is not constant: they can range from two to twelve lines and the bottom row fits around the design. These indentations of waffle are not unique to Topázio.

French sterling silver thimbles have similar indentations but one would never confuse the two if they were to hand. I have been fooled tho by the Lourdes thimbles: French. The French thimbles have a slightly domed apex which the Portuguese thimbles don't have.



Statue of Liberty  
L: French – R: Topázio

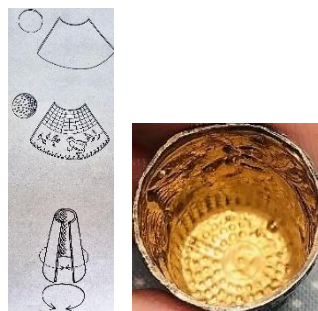
The themes of the scenes around the lower half of Topázio thimbles are many and varied. Some have Portuguese themes – rooster of Barcelos, Fatima etc.; others portray tourist icons from other countries – Eiffel Tower, Little Mermaid etc.

The greatest proportion tho are generic subjects, like a frog or a turtle. The embossed scenes may stand proud of the surface in the front view, continuing as a flat design on the verso.

Another type of decoration gives an outline or skeleton look to the scene or pattern.



Being embossed, the thimble design is die-stamped into a piece of silverplate and then joined to form a circle. The apex disc is then affixed to the circle. Many of the joins are not well done.  
The embossed design on the inside is which often gilded.



Very few rims are decorative, they usually have plain or beaded rims.

Being plated, some of the plate has worn off over time and the same applies to the handpainted parts.

Topázio used sticky labels for their thimbles. These may have fallen off. Some have been found inside the thimble. Otherwise there isn't any other lettering for Topázio. The label may cover any of the three types of apex mark.



Topázio silverplated souvenir thimbles have enamelled panels affixed.



The religious themes may have a circular disc on the band.



On the sterling silver range other than 925, STERLING or MADE IN PORTUGAL, there may be additional marks. These may be the city mark for Porto, an export mark and a maker's initials.  
To date only two designs have maker's initials. Another has the importer's initials.



current silver Porto mark of an eagle – the head faces in a different direction for the lower grades of silver

Topazio thimbles range have varying heights.

There is a buyer beware about the waffle indented thimbles: The Thimble Connoisseur's Collection issued by The Thimble Guild in Scotland: a set of six identical scenes to those made by Topázio: made in **THAILAND**. They were for sale in April 1998. The THAI thimble scenes are deer standing – horse's head owl – bird – deer leaping - angel



TTG April 1998

A British silversmith, **Ari Daniel Norman**, imported Topázio thimbles. He added his maker's mark **AN**. The range he imported can be found in Modern British silversmiths.



hearts - thistle design - marks: **AN** London 1990 with a London import mark

This Topázio cat thimble below has fake marks. The marks are: 7 (size) - CH (Charles Horner's maker's mark) – Chester assay mark – C (1953). Two things this 'maker' didn't know are that there is a Topázio mark on the apex and that Horner made their last thimbles in 1947.



Here is another example of a non-Portuguese thimble. The frog design is the same as the Topázio frog but the apex mark is not Topázio's. It may be Italian-made? The thimble is cast and marked 800 on the apex.



I have listed the scenes with the plain version first – then the handpainted version. To date there are **64** different scenes.

## abstract



925



925  
maker's mark: **GA**  
centre mark unknown

## Açores / Albufeira



Açores  
enamelled disc  
also lettered: Souvenir Portugal



Albufeira  
enamelled disc  
also lettered: Souvenir Portugal

## Altar Dom



## angel



925 on band  
Christmas 1994  
TTG November 1994



this may be a Thai thimble

**bells**



925  
VH 897



STERLING



Christmas  
gilt inside



Christmas



wedding - gold



wedding - white

## bird



this may be a Thai thimble



925 in scene  
TSL winter 2005



apex **1**



L: gilt inside  
Sewing Corner December 1975

## boats



925 in scene

## boy playing



gilt inside

**butterfly**



maker's mark: **FJ**  
Porto mark



gold-plated



925 and Porto mark



STERLING  
gilt inside



L: apex **1**  
Turquoise  
TTG July 1986



blue



Monarch

Sewing Corner December 1975

### cardinal



R: apex 1  
L: gilt inside



L: 925 gilt inside



### cat



gilt inside

Sewing Corner December 1975 – VH 901



cat with ball  
TO winter 19846



handpainted – blue cat with red ball – gold cat with red ball - gold cat with green ball  
R: gilt inside

### clover



L: 835 – R: 925, marks within band

### coat-of-arms



apex **1**  
this is Portugal's coat-of-arms

### crowns



silverplated  
L: Porto mark - C: crowns upside down – 2<sup>nd</sup> R: 925 – R: crowns on smooth band

### dancer



silverplated  
Porto mark  
gilt inside

## deer



leaping deer

L: Porto mark

R: this may be a Thai thimble



gilt inside



apex **1**



seated deer

STERLING

apex **2**

ornate rim



925

seated deer facing L

TO winter 1983



standing deer  
this may be a Thai thimble

### **dhow**



925  
Porto mark

### **elephant**



925



different scene on verso band



925 within band



L: entire band painted all over

**face**



925

Porto mark

similar to a Norwegian thimble marked 925S – without the same waffle indentations

**fairy**



R: apex **1**

**Fatima**



**flag**

planned as a set of country flags



Australia  
enamelled disc  
gilt inside  
silverplated



Canada  
enamelled disc  
Sewing Corner spring 1977 – VH  
906



Portugal  
enamelled disc



United States  
enamelled disc  
Sewing Corner spring 1977

### flowers



R: 925 with import into Florence marks  
star Pesaresi Anglo Company



turquoise and blue enamelled flowers  
Feld 17 1991

### frog



gilt inside  
Feld 10 1989



### **galleon**



835



925

Porto import mark - seahorse maker's mark, all stamped on rim  
gilt inside



gilt inside

### **goose**



silverplated

### granary



R: 835 Porto mark



Porto mark

### gryphon



L: 800 – R: 925  
VH 896 - TSL spring 2007

### hearts



L: gold – R: red and black  
gilt inside  
Sewing Corner December 1975

**Home is where the heart is**  
pictogram



925



TO spring 1987

**horse**



this may be a Thai thimble

**horse head in horseshoe**



apex **1**

**horseshoe**



### Houses of Parliament



### Ilha Terceira



enamelled disc  
additional lettering: Souvenir of Portugal  
Mat 214

### ladybird



VH 905

### The Little Mermaid



925  
apex **1**  
TSL autumn 2004

## Madeira



silverplated

## owl



apex **1**

a similar owl design could be a Thai thimble



red eyes

Sewing Corner December 1975



silverplated



clear crystal eyes



925

green crystal eyes

### parrot



gilt inside



925  
London import mark 1976  
importer: BL<sup>D</sup> Bennet Ltd

### penguin



VH 904

### playing cards



925 R: TO winter 1983

### poodle



925

Sewing Corner December 1975 - VH 898

### Porto



## Portugal



enamelled disc  
also lettered Souvenir of Portugal

## rabbit



925

## reçordacao Basilica de Fatima

reçordacao is the Portuguese word for Keepsake



R: MADE IN PORTUGAL

Sewing Corner December 1975 – VH 900 - TSL spring 2003

## reçordacao de Fatima



additional lettering: N.S. de Fatima  
TSL spring 2003



additional lettering: N.S. de Fatima



additional lettering: N.S. de Fatima  
gilt inside

L: STERLING apex 2

Sewing Corner December 1975 - VH 899 - TSL spring 2003



enameled disc  
additional lettering: N.S. de Fatima  
Portugal  
non-standard apex mark

## reçordacao de Portugal



925  
pink crystal hearts  
TSL winter 2008

**rooster (de Barcelos)**



left facing

L: 925 and STERLING apex **2**



right facing

non-standard apex mark



left facing

L: cast

Sewing Corner December 1975 - VH 903 - TTG March 1984



left facing



right facing

**sagitário**



enamelled disc

**Sancho Panza**



**Santa Teresa a Jesu Infante**



Porto mark

**shamrock**



925

apex **1**



gilt inside

**snail**



gilt inside

**snowflake**



L: silverplated - R: STERLING

gilt inside

**star**



TSL spring 2007

**Statue of Liberty**



apex **1**

TO winter 1983

**stork**



gilt inside

**sun**



925

**swans**



**teddy**



### thistle



925

apex **1**

Mat 152 - TSL autumn 1999

### turtle



silverplated

gilt inside

Mat 85 - Sewing Corner December 1975 - VH 895 - TSL spring 2007

### unicorn



925

R: Mat 243



925

facing R

TO winter 1983

**windmill**



925 R: TO winter 1983



**woman's head**



R: VN 31 1994

## Sterling silver thimbles with knurled indentations

This is a much smaller group of Topázio thimbles than the later silverplated ones. There are many similarities, like the apex marks, the varying heights of the same thimble patterning. The designs are confined to the border. I have included any marks and the apex mark on the flat apex, where available.

This group of thimbles that bear the mark TOPAZIO. This is lettered up inside the apex. A size number may also be present under the name.



The silver mark of an eagle for Porto is found on most of these thimbles. This mark dates the 833 silver thimble from 1938. There is usually a maker's mark of initials alongside. They are too small to identify any further details.



### acanthus



925 Porto mark with maker's mark L



### amizade



833 Oporto mark with maker's mark R  
with doves

## anthemion



830

**OXO**



925

MADE IN PORTUGAL



925

Porto mark

London 1975 import mark

**MFD**



925

Porto mark

London 1976 import mark

importer: BL<sup>D</sup> Bennet Ltd

gilt inside

**carnations**



835 Porto mark with maker's mark

### child's



835 Porto mark with maker's mark **A**  
size 2 on apex  
1920s  
gilt inside

### doves



gilt inside



Porto mark with maker's mark **L**  
unusual heart apex mark

### Fatima



N.S. de Fatima

**filigree**



835 Porto mark with maker's mark R



925

London 1991 import mark  
importers: MG&SA for Martin Gerald and Sid Adler  
Mat 213 – PJW 1985-6



925 Porto mark with maker's mark L  
gilt



925 Porto mark with maker's **SS** mark  
Mat 212



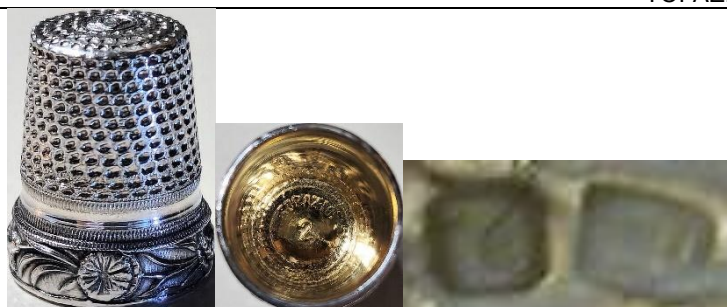
## flowers



800  
enamelled on gilt filigree band  
TOPAZIO  
1950s  
gilt inside  
VH 908



enamelled on filigree band  
TOPAZIO



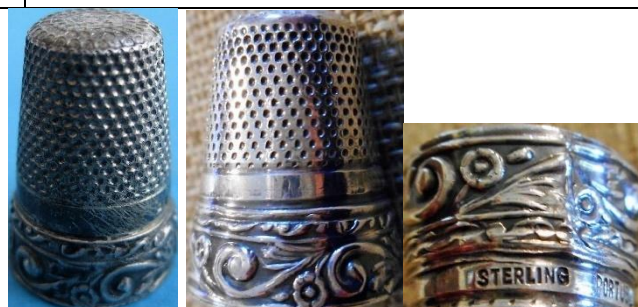
835 Porto mark with maker's mark L  
TOPAZIO  
size 2



833 Porto mark with maker's mark R



925 Porto mark with maker's mark L  
MADE IN PORTUGAL

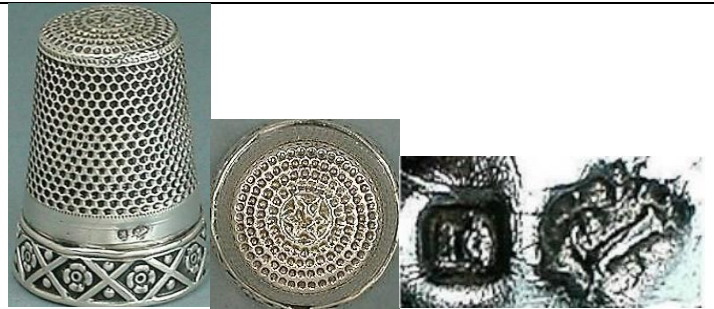


STERLING  
PORTUGAL



TOPAZIO  
size 3  
Porto mark with maker's mark L  
gilt inside





833 Porto mark with maker's mark R



833 Porto mark with maker's mark R

TOPAZIO

size 3

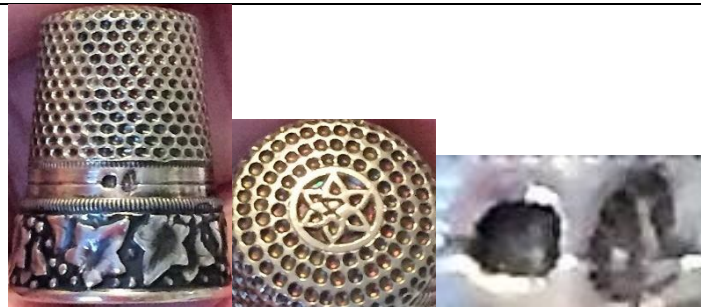
**grapes**



L: silver-gilt

R: 925

**leaves**



Porto mark with maker's mark R

**Lembranca**



835 Porto mark with maker's mark R

**pierced**



**rooster de Barcelos**



925

**roses**



835 Porto mark with maker's mark L  
gilt lined

**Salem 1692**



Sylvia Silberman, New York  
commissioned limited edition tailor's thimble  
reproduction of K&MD original  
for 1984 TCI Convention

**scrolls**



Porto mark with maker's mark R



Porto mark  
taller  
gilt inside

## Silver filigree thimbles

This third group of Topázio thimbles is different again. There are none of the familiar apex marks: they have flat or domed apices. They can be of filigree, light waffle indentations or ridged lines.

The filigree work is very fine. Typically the pattern duplicates around the thimble. There is different heights as with the waffle thimbles.

Most of the rims are plain or rolled basic pattern.

Other countries create filigree thimbles – Malta (with a Maltese cross) – India – Philippines – Israel – Yemen – Russia (modern with inset handpainted porcelain discs) – England (early 19<sup>th</sup> century).

### butterfly



925

### enamel



925 Porto mark  
maker's marks  
blue dots



835 Porto mark with maker's mark L  
blue enamelled flowers



925  
blue enamelled flowers  
gilt inside  
VN 2002



835  
Porto mark with maker's mark below  
green enamelled flowers



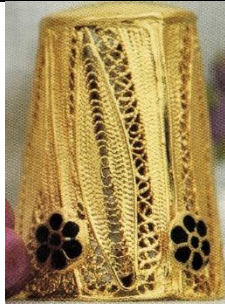
red enamelled flowers



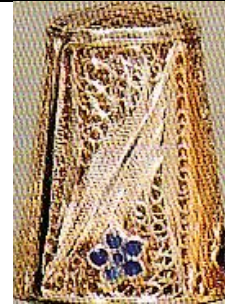
blue and green enamelled flowers



18ct  
blue enamelled flowers  
VN 2004



red enamelled flowers  
VN 1993

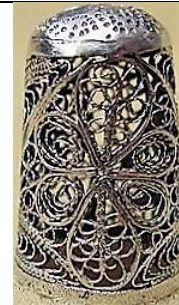


blue enamelled flowers  
VN 2004

### flower



925



925

### gilt



835  
Porto mark with maker's mark L

**heart**



**Portugal**



enamelled

**rooster de Bardelos**



835

enamelled cock



835

Porto mark with maker's mark L

**others**



Mat 213

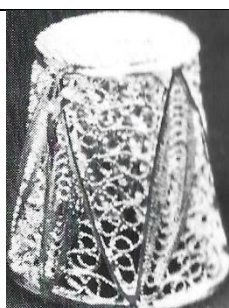




835 Porto Mark with maker's marks L  
R: taller version



900  
BSP



VH 909



TO 1983



TCI summer 2000

## Other sewing related items



needlecase  
833 Porto mark



needlecase  
833 Porto mark



stiletto  
833 Porto boar mark



thimble holder  
embossed acanthus  
loops for green chatelaine attachment  
'MADE IN PORTUGAL' with Porto mark



thimble holder  
embossed lotus flowers  
loops for green chatelaine attachment  
'MADE IN PORTUGAL' with Porto mark



thimble holder  
filigree  
PJW 1985-6

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This listing of Topázio, Portugal 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.

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