

Charles Iles *The ...* thimbles and boxes

Birmingham England

I have been interested in Charles Iles of Birmingham's base metal, and his plastic thimbles and none more so, than the named ones that include the initial word "*The*".

I can't think of any other thimble maker who named a selection of his thimbles in this manner. All, except one or two of these thimbles, are lettered in cursive.

The most famous of these Iles thimbles, commanding high prices, is "*The Dorothy*". Originally it was included as one of the "Five D..." thimbles, which included **D**orcas, **D**reema, **D**ura and **D**oris, as they all had the same beginning letter. *The Dorothy* is not a steel-cored sterling silver thimble and this grouping of the five named thimbles together may lead to the wrong impression of what it is made of.

"*The Dorothy*" is only silver-cased.

This is a term used by Charles Iles in his marketing of his merchandise.

Other Iles "The" thimbles are also silver-cased or made of nickel silver.

According to Norma Spicer in her book on Charles Iles, "*The Dorothy*" thimble was named after his daughter Dorothy Iles, who was born in 1882.

Most of the examples do not have the Charles Iles maker's mark, but a few do.



Charles Iles maker's mark

3 thimbles with touching rims in a triangular shield, was registered in 1876
this mark is often confused with and described as the Chester assay mark of three sheaves

What did the other 'The' terms/names stand for?

The fact that the little named Iles cardboard thimble boxes have survived makes them quite special and precious – they are fragile and have survived into the 21st century. Treasure them!

Some of the thimble boxes have a number on the front of the box?

Does this conform to the size of the thimble or the number of the design?

I have included a holder where the lettering is in French – Le ...

[For other Charles Iles' thimble topics see:](#)

Iles' handpainted and decaled plastic thimbles

CHARLES ILES “*THE ...*” THIMBLES with BOXES

THE BOUDOIR



The Boudoir Thimble
Nº.3



The Boudoir



The Boudoir
in The Boudoir Thimble box
Nº.3



The Boudoir
with maker's mark

THE CUPID



THE CUPID
with ENGLAND lettered above
decal on celluloid fingerguard



THE CUPID
with ENGLAND lettered above
decal on ivorine



THE CUPID
with no lettering above

decal on ivoryne
this would be a later issue than the other two examples



THE CUPID
blue plastic



THE CUPID
post-WWII pink plastic (long indentations)



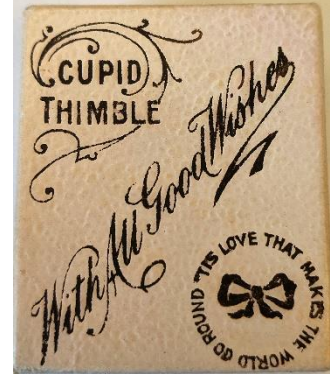
No. 630 - 3/6 net dozen

THE CUPID

With All Good Wishes lettered diagonally
ITS LOVE THAT MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND
with a small bow

THE CUPID in original box – with internal
lettering
WARRANTED ILES'S IVORINE

from the Iles catalogue



THE CUPID

With All Good Wishes lettered diagonally
ITS LOVE THAT MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND
with a small bow

THE CUPID in original box – with no internal
lettering

this would be the later box of the two



'The Cupid' plush heart shaped case
R^D210332 – 11 January 1892



from the Iles catalogue

THE "DORCOID"

by attributing these **THE "DORCOID"** thimbles - because of the use of *THE* ... to Charles Iles, rather than Charles Horner - I am sure to be setting the cat amongst the pigeons

in her chapter on Charles Horner thimbles, Spicer states "... which **may** be a Horner production but could also be an example of a **competitor** ..."

Why couldn't this competitor be Charles Iles?

there are no maker's marks on these thimbles

Di Pelham Burn listed THE "DORCOID" thimble in her booklet on steel-cored thimbles, but ascribes it more to Charles Horner



THE "DORCOID" 7



THE "DORCOID" 6



THE "DORCOID" 7

THE DOROTHY

initially in the 1980s The Dorothy thimbles appeared in the thimble literature only named Dorothy
Was this because it was difficult to show both words in one photo?
These haberdashers' counter display cases name them as DOROTHY and THE DOROTHY thimbles
note that each thimble sold for 2/6



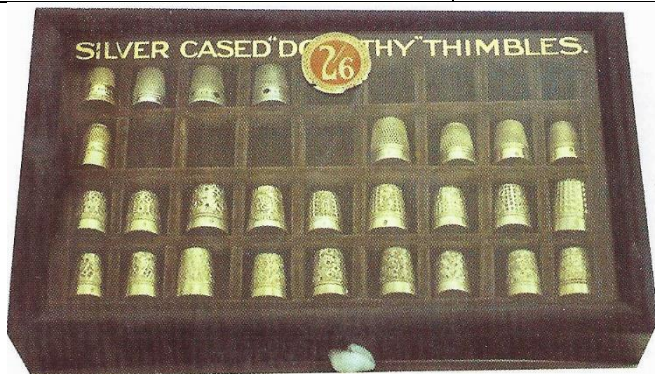
The Dorothy
with Iles maker's marks



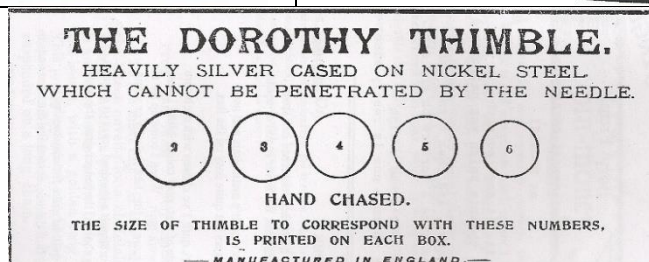
The Dorothy
brass, where the nickel has worn off
there are no maker's marks



The Dorothy
larger size which makes it seem
squatter
there are no maker's marks



THE DOROTHY THIMBLE
HEAVILY SILVER CASED
HAND CHASED
Nº.24 0/8
MADE IN ENGLAND



THE DOROTHY THIMBLE
advertisement



THE DOROTHY THIMBLE
diagonally lettered
With All Good Wishes
BEST ENGLISH MADE

THE HERCULES



THE HERCULES
brass-rimmed steel – R: brass
this example doesn't use cursive – rather uppercase lettering

THE "QUEEN'S RECORD" THIMBLE ...

according to Thimble Society of London

this thimble was made to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897

Iles registered his "The Queens Record Thimble" display case for shop counters as RD 291339 on 2 January 1897, the year of the diamond jubilee



THE "QUEEN'S RECORD" THIMBLE THE BEST OF ALL.

the lettering is different to most of Iles' other *THE* thimbles being in upper case cursive

THE STUDIO



The Studio



The Studio Thimble

N°.4

and Iles' Crescent Quality mark
rust-red velour lining to box
plain **The Studio** thimble



The Studio Thimble

N°.4

and Iles' Crescent Quality mark
red velour lining to box
Iles' daisy thimble



The Studio Thimble

box

N°.4

and Iles' Crescent Quality mark
plain **The Studio** thimble
greenish velour lining to box

THE TREASURE



The Treasure

the rimmed thimbles at right are a later production with their different shape

OTHER CHARLES ILES "THE ..." THIMBLE BOXES or HOLDERS

There are no matching named thimbles for these named THE boxes and thimble holders that I have recorded here for completeness according to Spicer "Obviously box making whether for counter display or for individual sale was of great importance to the Iles Company – in the early days they had their own box making department, but in later years it was contracted out to another company".

LE SOUFFLE

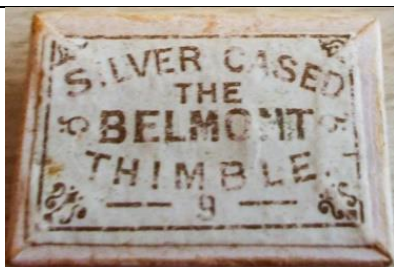


LE SOUFFLE

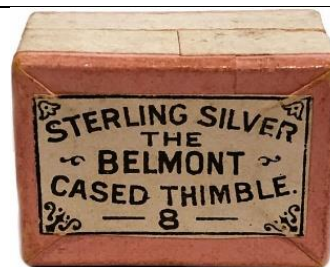
sticker: includes R^D N^O. 138883
purple velour bellows-shaped thimble holder

THE BELMONT

Imagine getting to 2017 before this thimble box (R) has been discovered – now to find the matching sterling silver thimble. Maybe it was never issued as a named thimble?



SILVER CASED
THE BELMONT THIMBLE 9



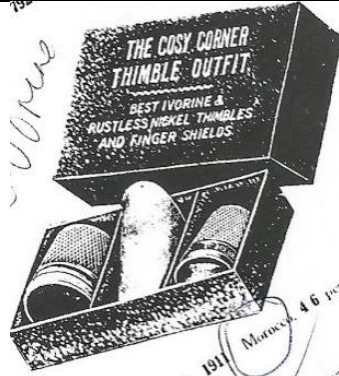
STERLING SILVER
THE BELMONT CASED THIMBLE 8

THE CORONET THIMBLE OUTFIT



SILVER CASED with a gilt coronet
Morocco box
these are the original Iles thimbles

THE COSY CORNER THIMBLE OUTFIT



BEST IVORINE 7 RUSTLESS NICKEL THIMBLES AND FINGER SHIELDS
these are the Iles original thimbles

THE FAIRY BOX



THE FAIRY BOX
R^D176058

SILVER CASED THIMBLES - Iles' TRADE MARK
gold velour box
original Iles thimble

THE FAIRY SLIPPER



cream velour slipper
Iles' TRADE MARK REGIS^D on the end of dark blue sole
R^D No. 128040 for this thimble holder
this Registered Design Number dates from the late 1880s



gold plush slipper



purple plush slipper
Iles' TRADE MARK H&CLTD on end of the sole
R^D No. 128040 for this thimble holder
MADE IN ENGLAND
SILVER CASED THIMBLE



there is a different mark on the end of the heel on this navy blue plush slipper
it's easier to read the lettering having a white background

Iles' C TRADE MARK on end of the sole
R^D No. 128040 for this thimble holder
MADE IN ENGLAND
SILVER CASED THIMBLE



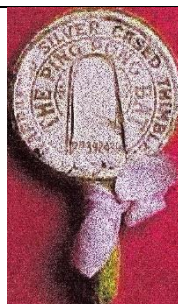
What a find! Iles obviously couldn't resist making boxes for every type of thimble – here's the box for
The Fairy Slipper – and it's in a beautiful blue plush
someone has really cared for this treasure with all three items being in such wonderful condition
it would now be nearly 120-130 years old

THE LATEST NOVELTY



SIZE 9
TRADE MARK ENGLAND
CELEBRATE lettered within logo with a crown

THE PING-PONG BAT



RD 392430
1901

THE THREADER THIMBLE



box with its original thimble
Iles' 'Crescent Quality' marks
No. 3 SIZE 4
MADE IN ENGLAND

OTHER CHARLES ILES' **NAMED** THIMBLE BOXES

collecting thimbles should be fun and this little section shows the playfulness that seems to flow from some of the Iles' named cardboard thimble boxes



COROZA SILVER THIMBLES
with matching thimble
No 4



DARLING'S THIMBLE
with small thimble
SIZE 4
ENGLAND



MY 'LITTLE DOLLY' THIMBLE
ART No 328
SIZE 5
MADE IN ENGLAND

with the C TRADE MARK
the original thimble is marked ENGLAND
with leaf patterning on band
internal diameter 13mm
box has handwritten 1925 on verso



MY LITTLE DARLING'S THIMBLE
SIZE 4
with small thimble 4 with beaded rim



"OUR PETS" THIMBLE
SIZE 4
ENGLAND



SILVER CASED THIMBLE

References

- Di Pelham Burn *Identifying steel-cored thimbles*. 1993
Di Pelham Burn *Identifying steel-cored thimbles update*. [At Your Fingertips](#) January 1994
Norma Spicer *Charles Horner thimbles* In: Tom Lawson. *Charles Horner of Halifax*. 2002
Norma Spicer *Iles: a family of thimble makers*. 2001

Contributors

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This listing of Charles Iles "The" thimbles and thimble boxes 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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