

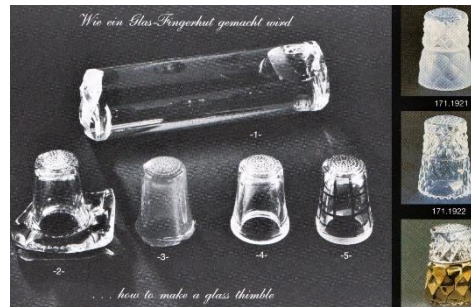
Glass and crystal thimble makers

In May 2020, I received a most interesting email from Norbert Ullmann, the current CEO of Ullmannnglass of Bavaria, in Germany. I know that surname will ring a bell with thimble collectors, as it did with me.

The reason for him in contacting me was that he is planning to write a book on Ullmannnglass glass and crystal thimbles. We corresponded over the next few months, which ended with my undertaking a thimble topic on glass thimbles. Ullmann offered to provide me with photos of the over 1000 different thimbles that Ullmannnglass have created since 1973. That felt too much like a promotional topic for me, as Ullmannnglass are still in business, creating thimbles.

I decided that when the time for a new thimble topic arose, I would cover all makers of glass and crystal thimbles, which he quite accepted.

This isn't going to be a technical treatise. We don't need to understand the difference between glass and crystal, as it doesn't affect who made the thimbles. I do want to highlight tho, the huge role that Ullmannnglass has played in keeping the interest in glass thimble afloat, since they began to produce glass thimble in 1973.



The family crest that features on the cover of their thimble catalogue, has a date of 1635. Generations of Ullmann have been involved in the glass and crystal business, and the next generation is currently involved. Producing glass thimbles under their own brand (thimbles marked with a sticker 'Made in West Germany'), Ullmannnglass were commissioned by other glass manufacturers to create thimbles for them, to their specifications. These thimbles would then be marketed with their own brand names. Some of these glass companies had attempted to make their own thimbles, but it would have been costly.

I can't think of any thimble manufacturer of any medium of thimble that has been producing collectables thimbles for over 45 years. Ullmannnglass certainly dominated their field.

This is nothing new in the thimble collectors' world – sterling silver thimbles in Victorian England were largely created by makers like Charles Horner and Henry Griffiths & Sons – they were just marked with other maker's assay marks, by Horner and Griffiths.

The same occurred in the 1980s when Sutherland China branded many of their thimbles with other china brand names.

It's just a matter of business and economics.

Mr Ullmann provided me with this non-technical information:

"Glass is a mixture of chemicals without any heavy oxides in it e.g. windows and bottles are made out of glass; but thousands of other products too.

Crystal glass is "glass with the addition of at least 10 % heavy oxides" to make it softer and clearer.

Lead Crystal is "glass with 24 % of lead oxide" added into the batch, which makes the glass heavier, sparklier, softer and allows for chemical polishing; (vs. hand polishing); mostly used in continental Europe.

High Lead Crystal is "glass with 33 % of lead oxide" added into the batch to make the glass even heavier, sparklier, softer than "Lead Crystal"; (mostly used in the UK and Ireland)."

The following mail order thimble businesses ordered and sold Ullmann glass thimbles from the 1970s-2020s: Lilian Vernon Inc (New York) – Heirloom Editions (Barbara Ringer California) – Gimbels & Sons (Maine USA) – The Thimble Society of London – The Thimble Collectors Guild/The Thimble Guild (Scotland) - Vingerhoednieuws (Friedy Kamp Netherlands) – Pan Arts (Australia) – Thimbles Only (Jean Shoup California) – Die Fingerhut Post (Feldman) - P J Walter Thimbles (Germany).

All glass thimbles were made for the collectables thimble market, which flourished in the 1980s and 1990s. This includes Ullmann glass thimbles which were "made to be used" by their thimble shape. I defy anyone to use these beautifully created thimbles to sew with. Their rigid sides and weight, never mind being created in one size only, wouldn't work as a sewing tool! Nor would thimbles that were created in the glass art market be used with items placed on top of thimbles.

Few glass thimbles have been marked with the name of the glass maker, so as collectors, we are dependent on applied paper 'makers' stickers and the paper thimble mail order catalogues from 1970s-2000s for this information. Unless this information is passed on when the thimble is sold, the maker's name is lost. The database hopes to remedy this.

For those of you who have ever tried to photograph glass thimbles, never mind a maker's mark, you will know that this is even trickier if the glass is clear!

There is another category that I will include after the alphabetical listing, where only the country of the maker is known. The thimbles are grouped by country (**15** countries to date). There are many famous glassworks/makers in Italy and Czechoslovakia/Czechia or Czech Republic (previously known as Bohemian glass). If one of these is your country, please get in touch so that this database can be updated with makers' names. Additionally, I have photos for 70 glass thimbles where no country nor maker is currently known. I plan on working to get this to zero!

How are glass thimbles decorated?

de Smet lists the following headings (each with a brief description of the techniques):

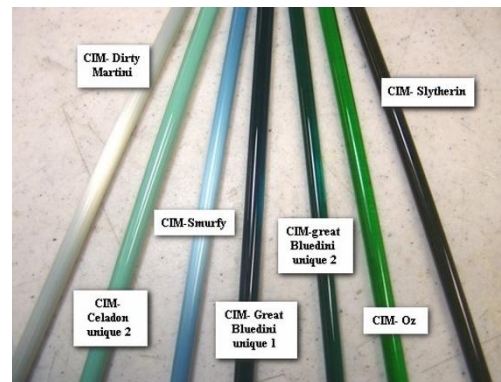
Painting
Enamel painting
Gold powder
Decorating glass with glass
Engraving
Stipple engraving (in dots)
Grinding and relief engraving
Etching
Millefiori technique

All these forms of decoration will be seen in the examples in the table below.

In the table, I have listed the known glass and crystal thimble makers alphabetically. This includes glass craftsmen – handpainters etc. I trust you will be able to find the thimble you are looking for here, to identify the maker. There are **95** 'makers' or decorators listed here. Please share your favourite glass thimble maker if not featured.

Many of these makers have created mouthblown glass thimbles, and I understand that they are known as art glass. I have also encountered the term lampwork (Ullmann describes them "uses borosilicate glass tubes, made for the laboratory industry and heats them up "over the lamp" and shapes it into the form of a thimble"). These are the handcrafted thimbles, part of the craft industry from all over the world. In the 2010s lampwork thimbles have become the most sought-after form of glass thimble.

A term not heard much anymore is 'cut glass thimbles' or 'frosted glass thimbles' (used in Von Hoelle's *Thimbles collector's encyclopedia*. 1986).



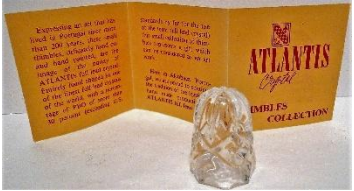
lampwork glass rods

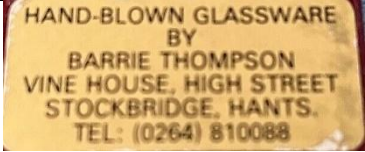
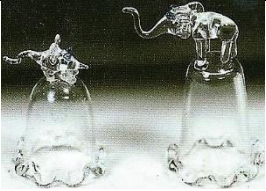
If any of these thimbles listed below were made by [Ullmannglass](#) and "rebranded" – you will find this information under "Notes". Often, we only know who the artist is if the thimbles are handpainted. In this case you will find the thimbles listed below by the **first** name of the artist. Otherwise, the studio name is used.

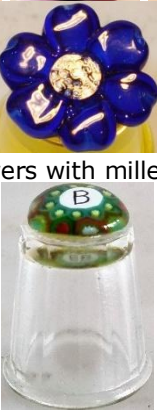
If you own one of these maker's or artist's thimbles – please let me have a photo of the maker's mark or a new photo to include or replace these from the catalogues. Maybe you have had a thimble handblown for you? Share if you know who made it for you – and where.

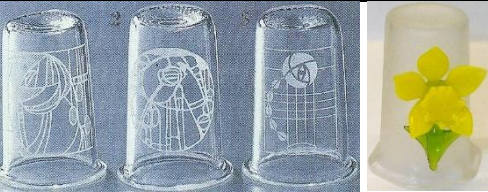
Thank you, Norbert Ullmann – this topic would not have been possible without your invaluable input.

Glass thimble makers

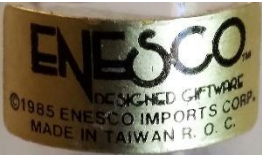
thimble	maker	marks/catalogue dates	notes
	Artglass Australia East Bundaberg Queensland Australia (Wolfgang Engel)		
	Atlantis Alcobaça Portugal		clear glass – handcut and handpainted – full lead crystal – domed - or concave apex 
	Aura Borealis Czechia		lamp glass or wound glass technique
 bee - hummingbird in flowers	Avon		

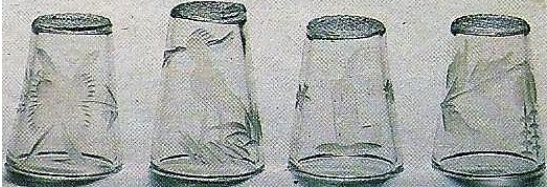
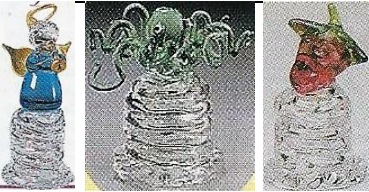
	Avondale Glass Pembrokeshire Wales UK	  gold glass blower on label	
 millefiori inserts	B&B Murano Italy		
	Baccarat Le Clairupt Bertrichamps France (Cristallerie d'Art R. Gross)		
 thistle	Barrie Reginald Thompson Stockbridge Hants UK		
 thistle	Blackford Aberdeenshire Scotland UK		
 mouse - elephant	Bob Scott UK	1988	individually blown – clear – scalloped rims

	Bristol Blue Glass (Henbury) Ltd UK	 1988	
 HP gondolier	Bruno Sutto Enedi Murano Italy		
 anchor – heart – thistle  petalled flowers with millefiori centres  clear base is fluted	Caithness Perth Scotland UK www.caithnessglass.co.uk	 anchor maker's mark  ... handmade in Scotland	Ullmann glass blanks – glass colours: blue – amber – clear – green – pink – mauve – ruby – mauve – turquoise – Caithness specialty is making paperweights – thimbles' apex are mini millefiori domed paperweights – these are made and applied by Caithness – I visited the Caithness works in 1996 and purchased several blanks in various colours – was informed at the time they were made in 'Holland' 

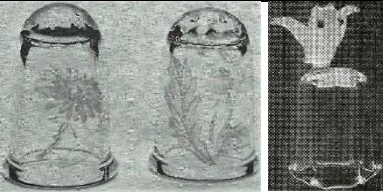
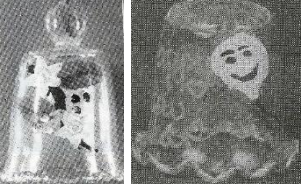
	Caledonian Crystal Scotland UK	2001-2002	some clear with etchings – others: series of twelve flowers of the month – either as colourful toppers or affixed in colour – clear or frosted
	Campanella Murano Italy		
	Carol Toevs USA	1979	signed and handpainted
	Colleen Schroll Lampwork (CMS) Chesapeake Bay Maryland USA	2008 - 	lampwork with raised colourful designs – signed CMS limited editions
	Connemara Celtic Crystal Co Moycullen County Galway Ireland	Connemara Celtic Crystal Ltd. Moycullen Co. Galway, Ireland. Tel: Intl. 353 91 555172 Fax: Intl. 353 91 555157	

	Corning Glass Works Inc Corning New York USA see also: Pyrex	1940-1945	non-lead glass made during World War II - because of scarcity of metals – never progressed past the prototype stage – not sold commercially – some have appeared in thimble collections – in clear or light blue – some marked 'Corning Glass' or 'Pyrex Brand' (information Holmes in his chapter on Glass thimbles)
	Crystalex Nový Bor Czechia	Factory still exists in 2025 but no longer produce thimbles	enamelled handpainted flowers
	Dan Jacobson USA	2012	began as a glassblower in 1972 – he adds his own colour to clear glass – freehand work – fluted rims – various heights
 Charles and Diana's wedding thimble	David Gulland Kirkcudbright Scotland UK	1981 	born in Edinburgh – studied glass design and engraving under Helen Munro-Turner at Edinburgh College of Art – own studio – his maker's symbol incorporates medieval glassmakers' sign and the initials of the artist surmounted by castle of Edinburgh
 iris – anemones – privet - pansies	David Smith UK (Valda Peacock) handpainter		Smith is the glass blower - set of twelve thimbles with Scottish handpainted flowers – gold painted rims – domed glass thimbles – with defined indentations in apex - limited to 500 <u>signed</u> and numbered
	Derwent UK	 30th	English crystal hand made lead crystal

	Dieter Schrade Berlin then: Wertheim Germany	1992 2005	mouthblown – coloured metal oxides fused into the glass
	Eliza M Wright Pompano Beach Florida USA		lampwork – with defined indentations in apex
 gold star	Elstner Crystal Company Bavaria Germany		
 hearts  flowers	Emilio Santini Murano Venice Italy	1987-1988	mouth blown with handpainted details – glass colours come from chemicals (like copper) added to molten glass – the apexes are concave - see also: Lucie Santini
 cherries	Enesco Designer Giftware Taiwan	1985 	

 gondolier	Eola Venice Italy		handpainted - signed
 b&w photo	Ernest F Damron USA	1979	handblown clear crystal glass – hand engraved - signed
 Angel – octopus - strawberry	Eugenie Arrowsic Maine USA	1986 1997	handcrafted glass – clear – glass base of spun coloured glass - characters atop
 coffee pot – cross – Texas yellow rose	Ferenc USA	1988 1997	handmade – etched on clear glass – some are spun glass – applied 22ct gold - scalloped rims
 cardinal – graduation – carousel horse - telephone	Frank Horvath Lakeland Glass Shop Florida USA	1996-1998 	scalloped rims – handmade – blown by moth - edged with gold – in 1963 Horvath completed apprenticeship in Hungary – master glass blower
 Dolphin – swan – teddy bear	GBS Cheshire UK		lustreware with characters atop

	George Davidson & Co UK	1890s	thimblefuls
 probable date of 78	Gigi Branch Devon UK		Gigi trained at Limoges in France her handpainted thimbles are signed <u>Gigi</u> see also: British modern handpainted thimbles for her work on china thimbles
	Giuliano Donaggio Murano Italy		
 reverse painting: bird in cage – handpainted bird	Graham Payne Grimley Worcester UK		his thimble range is mainly handpainted china and enamel
	Haegar Schultz South Africa		
 pewter blue tit on glass milk bottle	Holly Tree Miniatures UK	1994	combination of pewter on glass

 dandelion flower – bud - owl b&w photos	Hourglass UK	1983-1984	illustrated on clear glass – domed apex – or on apex
 apple trees – guac & sour cream – pumpkin spice – purple pink dichroic	Humming Line Creative Works Colorado Springs USA (Maxine Grossman (1957-2021))	2011 	lampwork glass
 apple – Happy New Year b&w photos	Jacqui and David Parker Birmingham UK	1986-1987	handpainted by <u>Olivia</u>
	Jenny Blair Designs York UK	1984-1992	handpainted designs - gilt or silver applied designs see separate topic on Jenny Blair Designs
 heart – watering can – The Thimble Guild with hand-embroidered cloth inserted	John C Spray Leicester UK	1993 1996 2003	scalloped rims – mainly clear glass

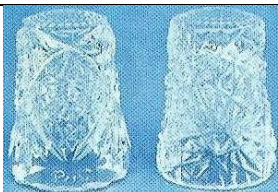
 Madonna and child – pig in pig – circus elephant - owls	John Squeo Windy City Glass USA	1997	items atop (toppers)
 bird in cage	Johnny Boschoff Pretoria South Africa (Gili Davis)		Gili is known for her handpainted porcelain - died 2015
 flowers	Karen USA		lampwork
	KB Italy		opaque glass – with sticky label see also Westmoreland
 six-sided rim with heart design at apex	Kilkenny Irish Crystal Tinnamona Callan Co Kilkenny Ireland www.kilkennycrystal.com		green sticky label
	La Serenissima Murano Venice Italy	 thimble sticky label	

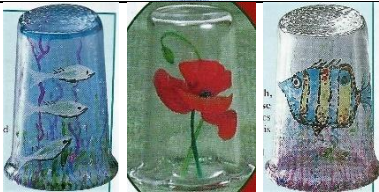
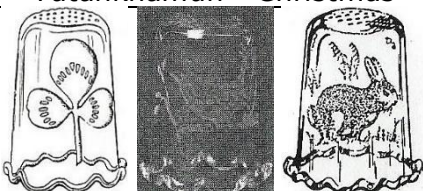
	The Laffing Glass (LGL) 125 Mason Street Saugatuck Missouri USA (Lynn Nurge) https://laffingglass.com	2012  L Nurge signature  accompanying thimble label	lampwork 
	Leo Pilley (handpainted by Kelly)		
	Libertine	2018 	used as glass nails – that's what's out there
	Lucie Santini Murano Venice Italy	1988	'tre fuochi' process (three times fired) – handpainted – concave apex - see also: Emilio Santini
 blue flower – rose – blue flower	Lynn Rogue River Oregon USA	1983 1987 	handblown – handpainted – thick 24ct gold rims

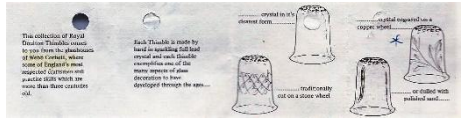
 pineapple	Mae Robinson USA	1990	hand engraved on handmade crystal – master engraver
 farm scene – Aboriginal dreamtime – possum – Sydney Harbour Bridge –	Malcolm Walter South Australia	 MW	clear or frosted Ullmann glass blanks – thimbles imported by Pan Arts – Walter has added six of his sterling silver Australian motifs as crowns around crystal – silver is marked MW
	Mariekuniek Amsterdam Netherlands http://mariekuniek.nl	 Marieke	glass bead maker – using soft glass – with defined indentations in apex
 4 abstract – face – fish	Mario Ramos <u>Vitreus Ignis</u> Madrid Spain with <u>Mariana Grande</u> (2002-)		workshop began in Buenos Aires Argentina (1988-) mouthblown

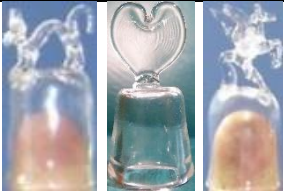
 gondola – sewing machine – girl – Fragonard	Mary Gregory USA	1978-1980	American handpainter on glass [1856-1908] – her style has been copied on thimbles – on a palette of white enamel – thimbles made in Italy – see also Westmoreland
	Mavis Smith Studio Solebury Pennsylvania USA		lampwork – glass bead maker – smooth apex
 Disney's Aladdin – rose fairy	Mayfair UK bases are made by Tudor Crystal Stourbridge UK		pewter characters
 styled in tribute to Tiffany Glass	Mayfair Edition UK		 not to be confused with these opaque cloisonne thimbles from China plique a jour method

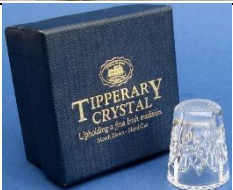
	Mdina Glass Malta {D Costea} handpainter		
	Morgan Indiana USA		coloured berry glass thimblefuls
	Moser Ohio USA		coloured berry glass thimblefuls
 1776-1976 – windjammer - koala b&w photos	Nico (Nick) Ferro USA (Michos) handcutter	1976 1979	handblown – free hand cut leaded crystal – carved into clear glass – born in Greece
	Nikki Shaw Glass Attic Somerset UK	2004	decorated with gold and diamante
	Nj Czechia		mouth blown identical maker's mark from their ceramic design

 bees	Paul Ticknor Osceola MI USA		
	Pepi Herrmann USA	1983 	born in Austria – master craftsman – handcut and signed lead crystal
	Pinpoint Design UK	1993	dried flowers applied over most of clear surface first thermochromism (temperature sensitive) thimbles which change colour
 moon – sun (night and day)	Poppie Gifts UK		crystal – fused platinum or gold into glass
 blue - green	Pyrex Brand USA see also: Corning Glass Works Inc	1942	
 gold tortoise – forget-me-nots – winter tree b&w photos	Quorn Glass UK (Eddie Hughes) glassblower	1983-1986	example of glass blower's art – mainly scalloped rims – gold rims fused into glass by a unique technique

 berries - tulip	R & T Decorative Glass UK (Tamar Altman) designer and handpainter	1994-1995	drawing inspiration from Tiffany – large size handpainted thimbles
 etched church	Rj	1978	
	R Corbett Cape Town South Africa	1985 1988	glass blowing firm – handblown – handpainted in black afterwards to give swirls
 fishes -poppy - fish	Rachel Pugh UK	2001-2002	handpainter
 Tutankhamun - Christmas	Raimundas Lapsys USA	1978	<u>signed</u> and dated – handcut by master cutter – Tutankhamun designs limited to 7500 – apex 22ct gold painted
 shamrock – wren - rabbit b&w photos	Riverside Works UK (Jeff Jeffries) engraver	1983-1984	engraved designs on clear glass – scalloped rim

 'Merry Xmas'	Robert Hands Edinburgh	1989	handmade & engraved
 wedding of Charles and Diana	Royal Brierley UK	1981	Ullmannglass blanks – etching by Royal Brierley – boxed as such
 Thumbelina – embroidery stitches	Royal Doulton Stoke-on-Trent UK	1980s  Webb Corbett named as maker -by hand - on Thumbelina set of five's certificate	Royal Doulton are china manufacturers – producing two sets of crystal thimbles – five Thumbelina set - Webb Corbett did engraving – four Embroidery stitches set made by Thomas Webb & Sons Stourbridge 
 starfish	Sandra Breedtschnek Bella Murano Glass Creations Cape Town South Africa		lampwork – using glass from Murano
	Saunders & Shepherd UK	1894	thimblefuls - RD 230818

 cat – heart – horse	Sklozam Czechia		blown glass – clear glass used
 Father Time – Hongluo – Confucius Disciples – Butterfly Rose	Mr Song Jim-Ming Hebel Province China		reverse glass painting ('in painting')
	Sowerby UK		frosted thimblefuls
 dolphins – kitten – cat – opal necklace fairy – kitten	Sterling Classic UK bases are made by Tudor Crystal Stourbridge		Connoisseur Collection – incorporating pewter – some using Ullmann glass blanks (dolphins)
	Studio Glass UK		
 snowman – daisy – dolphin	Suffolk Glass Works/Studios UK www.suffolkglass.co.uk	1994 2003	clear glass – some with coloured figurals atop

	Susan Stokes Canada		lampwork
 crocus – snowflakes - daffodils	Svetlana Chernova Russia		handpainted on Ullmannglass blank thimbles
 sulphur-crested cockatoo – different bases – set of five	Swarovski Crystal Vienna Austria www.swarovski.com		set of five crystal frosted birds atop crystal thimbles – two different bases (fish scale / fireball)
	Techniglass West Bay Bridport Devon UK		
	Tipperary Crystal Ireland		mouth blown – handcut – Ullmannglass blank thimbles – boxed in Irish-marked thimble boxes



black – blue – green – red



black with gold – handpainted – fluted



opaque –handpainted by Julie Menzies
(2009) - fish (2000)

Ullmannglass GmbH
Siegstatt 2-4
Osterhofen
Bavaria
Germany

www.ullmannglass.de

1973-



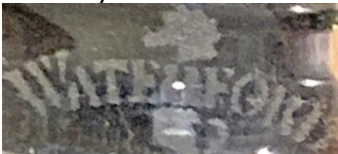
crystal colours: topaz – clear – blue – aqua – red – amethyst – ruby – many of these have a lustre finish - they use ten different thimble moulds for blank thimbles for their customers with customised orders – their most current catalogue lists over 160 different popular designs/colourway thimbles in stock which includes a 'novelties' section – some designs are etched – many handpainted - apex pleasantly slightly domed on all their range – not “well” hollowed out inside



Unique Design
Egypt

(Randa Ahmed)

designs made 2010

 R: moonlit clouds	Village Glass Bridge of Allan Stirlingshire Scotland UK (Tom Young)	1993-1994 1998	scalloped rims – fused with 22ct gold – from clear to heathery shades – handblown thimbles – some lustre
 mushroom – snowman	Walter Hasenfus Boothbay Harbor Maine USA	1997-1998 	spun glass with toppers
 three different shapes	Waterford Crystal Waterford Ireland waterford.com	 green seahorse logo sticker inside	<u>signed</u> on outer rim with seahorse logo lead crystal 
 lead crystal	Welsh Royal Crystal Wales		
 girl painting – Coca Cola – ballerina – Shirley Temple	Westmoreland USA	 boxes: Bubble Glass thimble/ M.S.R. Imports Inc, Taiwan	Ullmannglass blanks but branded as Westmoreland – some using Mary Gregory style designs using white enamel paint see also KB
 flowers – Jemima Puddleduck	William B Shane USA		scalloped rim – on 10th February 1981 Shane took out a US patent no. 258,174 for a patented rim with eight scallops – the patent was valid for 14 years

Country Glass thimble makers

This is where I am out of my depth – I believe I have the country of origin correct – please HELP if these are your country's thimbles. They are arranged in NO order

Argentina thimbles



Australia thimbles



Lismore NSW

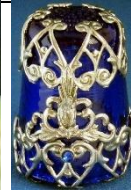
Czechia thimbles (Bohemian glass)



black paper inserted for photographic purposes



metal wire filigree cage over various colour glass
pink – topaz – green – blue



'častolovice' - tourist



'Pardubice' – tourist



from Jablonec nad Nisou in northern Bohemia – a traditional area of glassmaking – crystals are embedded in centres of flowers



from Jablonec nad Nisou in northern Bohemia
'Valtice' – tourist



blank thimbles awaiting decoration



'Praha' – tourist



gilt metal wire

Egypt thimbles



gold leaves



crown



stripes – topaz bird atop

Germany thimbles



engraved top half rest clear
– flat apex squat shape



purple ridged with gold
rim – flat apex



mouth-blown



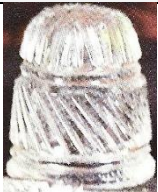
handpainted milk glass
1990



thistle-like shape



Great Britain thimbles

				
hand etched		19 th century cut glass with glass cross-hatchings	Georgian held in British Museum	
				
	Tudor rose		Stourbridge in 1993	
	G G for Girl Guides		Ironbridge	

Greece thimbles


Zakynthos

Hungary thimbles

	
lettered 'Hungary' in gold	'Hévíz' coat-of-arms

Italy thimbles
mainly from Murano Venice



handpainted
black paper inserted for
photographic purposes



Murano
cobalt - black cat



Murano
stripes



Murano
knobbed ("hobnailed")



Murano
metal apex



Murano
handpainted - cobalt



Murano
green dots - red dots



Murano
handpainted



Murano
handpainted



Murano
handpainted



'Venezio 1884'
spun glass
(Holmes in his chapter
on Glass thimbles)



Murano
opaque



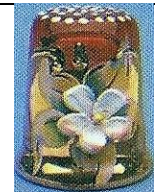
Murano
opaque - red - black - yellow - handblown -
1982



Murano
handpainted - turquoise



Murano



Murano
handpainted



Murano
handpainted - royal blue
showing distinctive white painted dots on apex



'1885'
spun glass with glass
flowers



from Roman times



Murano
handpainted



Murano

					
Murano handpainted with gold flecks	Murano metal apex	Murano handpainted Venice scene	Murano handpainted 'Venezia'	Murano handpainted metal apex	Murano metal apex
					
Murano metal apex	Murano handpainted gondolier	Murano handpainted metal apex	Murano handpainted	Murano metal apex	
					
Murano handpainted pierrot	Murano with matching needle	Murano vitro di ... goblet maker's mark			

Japan thimbles


handpainted - concave apex – gold rims

Scotland thimbles



handcrafted decorative stained glass

South Africa thimbles



etched 'Sue 14 June 1986' with flowers – scalloped rim
red paper inserted for photographic purposes

Spain thimbles



'Poblet' with handpainted city scene



bullfighting
white lettering behind the scenes



Flamenco dancer
white lettering behind the scene

Thailand thimbles



spun - 1992



1993

USA thimbles



four leaf clover like windmill shape -
1986



penguin inside clear plain thimble

no photo

thimble housed in Colonial Williamsburg
Foundation (information **Holmes** in his
chapter on Glass thimbles)



antique

Wales thimbles



handblown – scalloped rim - heart - dogwood



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This listing of Glass thimble makers 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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