Australian wooden thimbles and sewing tools

This topic includes and updates Chapter 5 of Thimbles of Australia. It completes my Australian topics.

Woodturning is the ideal hobby for retirees. Some men's sheds have lathes for woodturning for their members. Another avenue to further this hobby is joining the local woodturners' group.
I have noticed some turners us wood fruit trees, where garden prunings made a cheap source of wood.

What I have noticed over the years is the total lack of woodturners' marks and the wood is rarely named. The occasional turner will supply a certificate with these details – once the thimble is separated from the thimble, the details are lost. Many have printed or hand-lettered stickers – many have since fallen out after forty years

I joined the Western Australian Woodturners Association (WAWA) in 1990. I wasn't a turner, but I wanted to meet people who were. Once it was known that I was looking for thimbles made of different wood, the monthly meetings provided great joy for this collector, and my collection grew exponentially. Once I moved to Queensland, I joined the Queensland Woodturners Association (QWA).

One can see which turners knew the purpose for which a thimble is made – there will be indentations or rings on the apex to aid in sewing.

A popular decoration may be lines burnt into the timber. A good finish will show off the timber's grain. I have included handpainted thimbles. Where the maker isn't known I have placed the thimbles under the painter's name.

I have found **182** different woods. Most are local or indigenous woods and there is a selection of wood from other countries. I love seeing burls which turners love as there is no grain to follow in a burl
I have found a couple of turners who used the scientific name when sharing the wood used.
Blackboy was the accepted term for grass trees – it is no longer used. Where it was use, I have followed suit.

I have added dates for thimbles when I acquired them – they are not lettered in the thimbles, rather indicating the era.

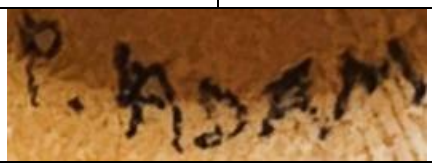
The first wooden thimble I saw in use was Mum's. She bought after migrating to South Africa in 1931. She made all our clothes, and this thimble was always present – even when she made my wedding dress. It is my most treasure thimble

Mum's stinkwood thimble

At the end, please join my journey with my adventure thru Australian trees

For other wooden thimble topics see
Modern British hand-decorated wooden thimbles
Scottish wooden thimbles

Pat Adam
Kingston Adelaide
Adams handpainted blank Robert Herron thimbles
South Australia lettered on the verso

kangaroo	koala
	

Keith Adams
Port Macquarie New South Wales
thimbles not signed

handpainted top hat with an opal and silver Sydney Opera House atop made by Peter Grossman, a Sydney silversmith

Roy Aldridge
St George Queensland
stickers accompany thimbles at purchase with name of maker and the wood used – too big to fit into the thimbles

African blackwood 2000	**conkerberry** 2000	**coolibah burl** 2000	**red cedar**

Syd Anderson
Longreach Queensland
thimbles not signed nor wood named
1990

dead finish	**desert oak**	**gydgea**	**red lancewood**
sandalwood			

David Appleby
Newcastle New South Wales
Appleby was a Master woodturner who turned wooden thimbles. Encouraged by Barbara Kelly, who was the outlet for his thimbles, David used a wide variety of Australian timbers to create his sturdy range of thimbles. In1988 this turner had one of his wooden thimbles presented to Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to Newcastle for the Bicentenary celebrations. He died in 1988 before it could be presented to the Queen.
Other timbers used: **brushwood - cedar - colonial pine - rosewood - silky oak**
thimbles not signed nor wood named

camphor laurel 1987	**NSW brush timber**	**sassafras**	
needleholders b&w photos			

Eric Barnes
Western Australia
thimbles not signed

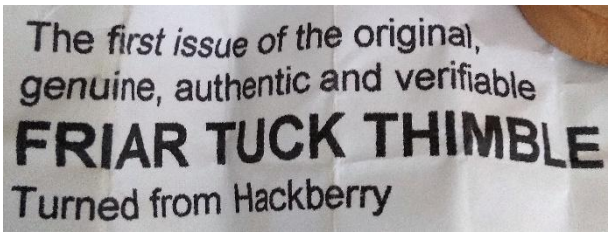
blackboy 1989	**paperbark** 1988	**W.A. banksia**

Vic Bickett
Victoria
signed - wood is on paper insert

grapefruit wood

Doug Birrell
Melbourne Victoria
Doug Birrell may be familiar to collectors in Australia as the past editor of the *Needlework Tool Collectors Society of Australia Newsletter.* Doug came to needlework tools through his interest in wood turning and carving. He incorporated pyrography in his designs. Doug created many of the wooden needlework tool commemoratives for the biennial NTCSA conferences
Doug died in October 2025
wood named on plain wood

eye inlaid thimbles
smallest round inlay is oftern made of **bamboo**
1997



Friar Tuck
hackbury - sycamore

Hindenloopen style
various grounds

inlaid

laminated

Love eternal for Vlada
2016

'Just a Thimble-Full'
2000

Minis (his Tom Thumb)
wood used: b**lack heart sassafras – celery top pine – huon pine - jarrah - Otways blackwood – Queensland silky oak - river red gum - silver silkwood – Western Australian sheoak**
2000-2002

Runic lettering
F N R

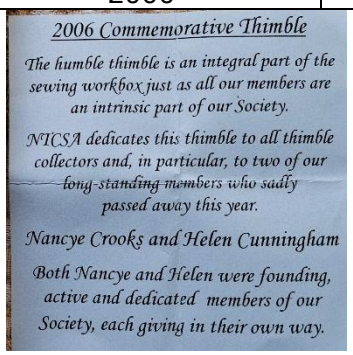
Theo Thimble
R: mini

blackwood

eucalyptus burl
2000

mallee root
2000

pear

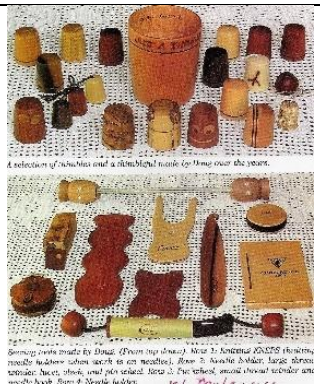


Pittosporum
NTCSA Conference 1994
bands represent two founder members Helen Cunningham and Nancy Crooks who died in 2006

silver leaf
2000

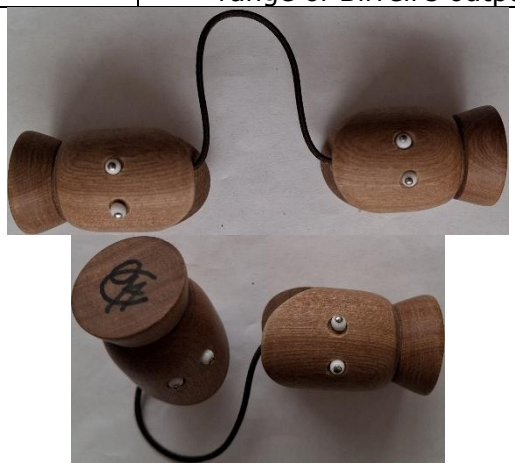
tiger myrtle

WA black sheoak



range of Birrell's output

NTCSA Corroboree 1992 pinwheel
silver silkwood



Queensland sycamore
NTCSA Conference 1994 KNEPS - knitting needle end protectors

NTCSA Covention 1996 cleek
sassafras

NTCSA Conference 1998 thread winder
W.A. sheoak

NTCSA Conference 1998 thread winder
W.A. sheoak

NTCSA Covention 2000 needlebook
huon pine

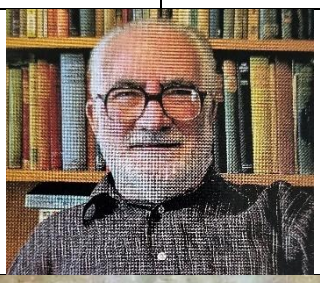
NTCSA Conference 2002 lucet

NTCSA Conference 2008 thread winders

NTCSA Conference 2010 needleholder
one end opens with pull tag

needleholder
apricot

thread holder
black heart sassafras



Birrell mark

Barry Black
Bungendore New South Wales

needlecase
sheoak

Elaine Boyd
Perth
WAWA member
thimbles not signed - wood named sometimes

koala

carob

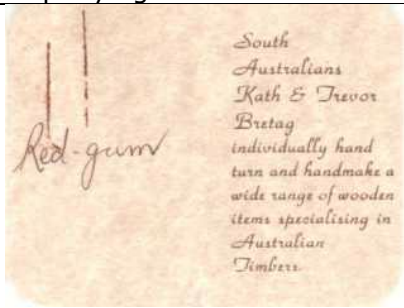
cherry plum

mulga

pittosporum

sandplain woody pear

Kath and Trevor Bretag
South Australia.
Small wooden boxes containing mini wooden thimbles in matching timbers are the forte of this couple.
Items not signed and wood not named tho an accompanying card. Other timber: **hakea**



red gum
1999

Mark Brett

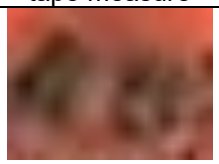
huon pine

Ray Brittain (R.B.)
Brisbane

What began as a part-time hobby, became a passion on his retirement for Ray. He has experimented with different shapes and his quilters' thimbles in local Queensland wood is most useful with their concave apex
wood named

carbeen	**ironbark**	**michelia**	**michelia champach**
Norfolk pine 1997	**quilter's**	**silky oak**	**slash pine**
cleek **rosewood**	needlecase	needlecase **michelia**	needlecase **red cedar**
sewing kit **carbeen**	sewing kit **ironbark**	sewing kit **leadwood**	
sewing kit **slash pine**	sewing kit **Tasmanian blackwood**	sewing kit **Tasmanian blackwood**	sewing kit

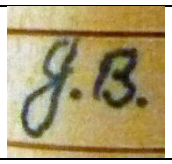
tape measure



R.B mark

John Brooks
Western Australia

sandalwood
1996



BTW Eco Linea

These souvenir handpainted thimbles have different woods used for the attachments from the thimble.
Most have 'Australia' lettered vertically on verso
thimbles not signed – nor wood named

Kangaroo
2003

koala

flag

penguin

platypus

cow

sheep

Calfra-Leak Products
Tasmania

large travelling kit (92mm high) contains **blackwood** thimble and four glass phials for needles etc
sheoak casuarina
2000

Alan Carmichael
Ravenswood Queensland
no maker's mark

sandalwood
1989

Jim Clarke
Perth
WAWA member
no maker's mark

tailor's **sheoak** 1988	**black morel** 1990	quilter's **karri**	no photo tailor's **hickory** 1990
lignum vitae	**Liliac** [sic] 1990	**mulberry** 1990	**olive** 1988

 peppermint 1990	 **quandong** 1990	 **sheoak** 1990	 **silver ash** 1990
 tuart 1990		 **woody pear** 1990	
 sewing kit **jarrah** 1990			

Neville W Clarke
Bongaree Queensland

no photo needlecase **Tasmanian blackwood**

Collings
Whyalla South Australia
one of the few woodturners to use scientific tree names
no maker's mark

 Acacia salicina	 **Callitris glauca**	 **Casuarina stricta**	 **Eucalyptus camaldulensis**

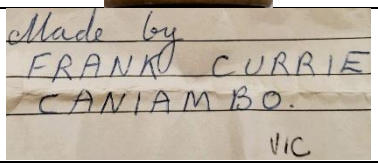
Greg Cranwell (G.C.)
McLaren Vale South Australia
wood not named
1987-1988

mulga	**myall**	**native apricot**	**swamp oak**

James Cumberland Brown
York; Fremantle WA
thimbles are unsigned nor wood named

400-year-old German oak	**blackboy**	**jarrah**	**sandalwood** 1989 R: later
sheoak		**wandoo**	
pinwheel **West Australian blackboy** 1995			

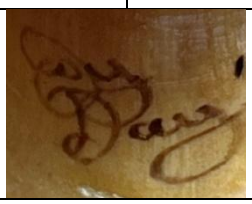
Frank Currie
Caniambo Victoria



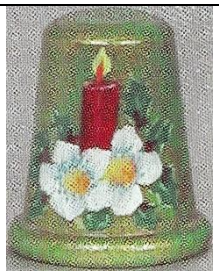
Gay Day

'Emu'
limited edition of **99**
1986

'Koala Australia'
melaleuca
limited edition of **99**
1986



Val de Vries
Clare South Australia
De Vries sold principally thru The Thimble Guild
signed on rim

2003			
	2003	2008	
2000	2004		2008
sewing set			

Andy Dmytryk

mahogany

Dave Dunn

McLaren Vale South Australia

thimbles not signed – nor wood named

apricot

ash

blackwood

cotoneaster

mulberry

oak

osage orange

quandong

red gum

she oak

silky oak
1990

tallow

teak

walnut

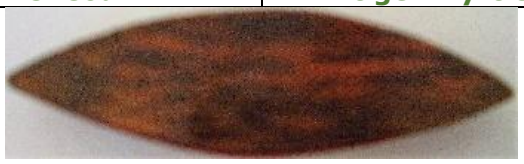
Harry Ellison
South Australia
died in 1989
wood is named

cotoneaster	**peach**

Bridget Fairchild
Perth
https://www.lacebobbins-findthemaker.com/bridget-fairchild.html

lace bobbins – unsigned, scenes named and dated

Peter Filmer
Tharwa ACT
thimbles not signed – wood named on stickers inside
other woods used for shuttles: **cedar – jarrah – native olive - tallow**

King Billy pine	**rosewood**	**sheoak**	**tiger myrtle**
tatting shuttle **silverash**		 tatting shuttle **tiger myrtle**	

Ruth Floth
Central New South Wales coast
Floth has handpainted them in a folk-art style
signed

teddy bear
b&w photo

Rosalyn Forster (RF)
Warrandyte Victoria
thimbles made by Doug Birrell
wood named

Sturt's desert pea 1999 **sycamore**	violets	
native cherry		

lace bobbins – detail at R

Lyn Foster

Newcastle New South Wales

Lyn Foster is an internationally recognised folk artist. She runs the Foster Folk Art Studio teaching her craft and she has classes in Sydney and lectures and teaches overseas

thimbles made by Robert Herron of Tasmania.

 huon pine dated '93' signed	no photo pink rose and ribbons and lace on black ground unsigned

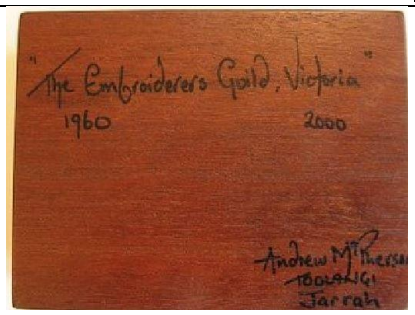
Ian Garth

Horsham Victoria

some signed - thimbles marked with numbers

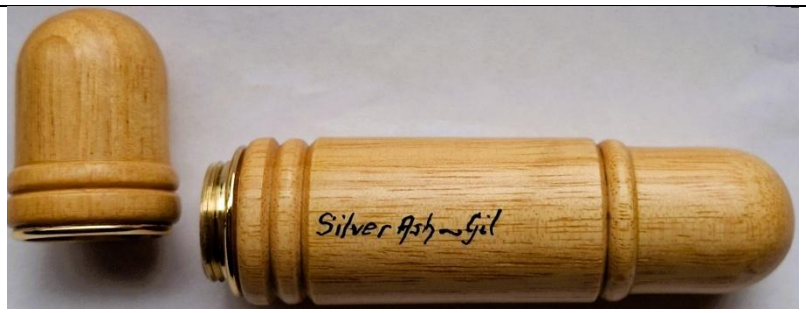
 African bean 5	 **blackheart sassafras** 3	 **concald alves** 1	 **red river gum** 2
 Victorian blackwood 4		 **WA buloke** named	

Peter Gertler
Melbourne
made for The Embroiderers Guild Victoria 2000



workbox
jarrah

Gil



needlecase
silver ash

Russ Godden
Tamworth

tape measure
walnut
1999

Sue Gowan (SJG)
Brisbane
made under the tutelage of Col Ward
signed and wood named

rosewood
1993

Neil Goyen
Warrnambool Victoria
thimbles not signed – nor wood named
2006

banksia

Murray pine

thimble holder

Bob Greschke
Born in Germany, Bob settled in Australia. Margaret Greschke (MG) handpainted his thimbles featuring a range of different designs for The Thimble Guild
thimbles not signed – nor wood named

Santa with kangaroo sleigh
1993

possum

Aborigine didgeridoo scene all round

'Kangaroo Paw WA'

possum

'Scarlet Robin'

'Superb Blue Wren'

koala

'Ashes 93'
'Australia'
willow

bush cottage

platypus
b&w photo

nesting thimbles
jarrah

nesting thimbles
myrtlewood

nesting thimbles
sassafras

'Frog a wooing go'
handpainted nesting thimbles by Ann Wallace of Pan Arts, Sydney
b&w photo

koala
handpainted base by Ann Wallace of Pan Arts, Sydney
pewter koala with opal Peter Grossman
b&w photo

Margaret Hagan
South Australia
As well as being a well-known silversmith Hagan is a woodturner and she incorporates her silver work into her turned thimbles.
items not signed – nor wood named

thimble and matching thimble case
thimble has a slice of Colwell jade as the apex which fits into a hole in the lid of the box
red gum
also available in **blackwood**

needlecase with sterling silver thimble marked HAGAN
red gum

Margaret Handley

This doll artist handpainted her thimbles with apex and the inside of the thimbles being gold painted
thimbles not signed – nor wood named

b&w photo

Roy Hardie

Brisbane
QWA member
items not signed – nor wood named

silky oak

quik-unpick
red cedar
1997

Lewis Harper

Geelong Victoria
thimbles are signed - wood not named
1991

boxthorn

cyprus

English walnut

grey gum

liquid amber

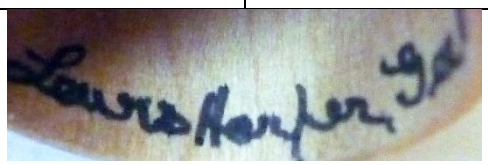
nyorta

pear

peppercorn

vergilia

zebrano



Lewis Harper Geelong

John Hartwig

Sunshine Coast Queensland

matching needlecase
2012
South American cherry

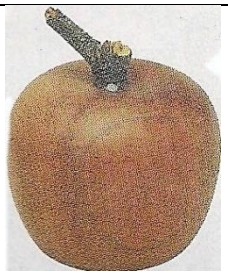
Robert Herron

Riverside, Tasmania

Herron has been turning thimbles from Tasmanian timbers since 1980 and he was still actively creating thimbles in November 2018. He is our most prolific and innovative and worked mainly in **huon pine**.
thimbles are hand decorated by Lisa Clarke – Thea Peschar - Joanna Wigzell – Dianne Williams, all with the Herron sticker inside

Herron also sold his thimbles thru The Thimble Guild and Gimbels (Maine)

'1788-1988'
huon pine



apple
huon pine

apple and pear
huon pine on **blackwood**

breaddough
huon pine – sassafras

convict
handpainted ball and chain
huon pine

grandmother and
granddaughter
sassafras

gumnuts
R: **eucalyptus**

history thimble
burmese teak from railway carriage
with a history note

'Just a Thimbleful'
huon pine

laminated
R: 2018

mouse
huon pine on **blackwood**

one cent coin on apex

opal in apex

pear
huon pine

smallest timber thimble in the
world
huon pine on **blackwood**
1999

stickware
made with 100 pieces
1989

tailor's
huon - sassafras

camphor laurel

camphorwood

casuarina

huon pine

Tasmanian goldey wood

Tasmanian huon pine
strangely named as huon is only found in southwestern corner of the state

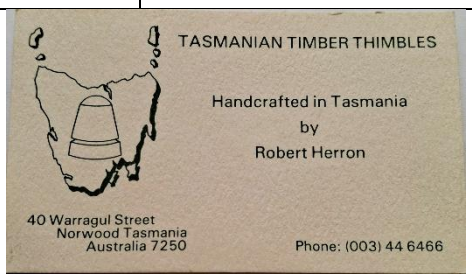
Tasmanian myrtle

Tasmanian horizontal
with a tree note
1989

Tasmanian waratah
1990

needlecase
huon pine and **blackwood**

pincushion combined pintray



card 2006

Lisa Clarke

In her Thimbella catalogue of 1994, Dorothy Andrews offered these handpainted Herron thimbles for sale
The topics are named along the outer rim, in lower case lettering. The thimbles are unsigned

'Bilby'

'Brushtail Possum'

'Echidna S.A.'
2001

'Koala'

'Tasmanian Devil'

'Tasmanian Echidna'

'Wombat'

'Rosella Parrot'

Frea Peschar

Herron commissioned Frea as an artist to pyrograph Australian fauna on his thimbles. Not many of these sets were produced
some are signed

koalas

possum

echidna

echidna – feather-tailed possum – wombat – platypus – sugar glider – wallaby – koala – kangaroo
1990

Joanna Wigzell

Some of Herron's thimbles were handpainted by his daughter Joanna Wigzell. They depict native Australian fauna. Each thimble has the name of the subject in upper case lettering along the outer rim. Some have J Wigzell lettered on Herron's gold sticky labels inside
Occasional thimble signed

'Sydney Australia 2000'

'Sydney Opera House Sydney Australia'

'blue wren'

'Eastern rosella'

'echidna'

'koala'

'koala'

'kookaburra'
b&w photo

'platypus Australia'

'possum'
b&w photo

 'possum'	 'wombat'	 'Clarendon House' (near Launceston)

Dianne Williams

Herron's thimbles were handpainted with wildflowers by this former Tasmanian artist. Robert's gold sticker is sometimes inside – only identifying the wood used

unsigned

	 wattle	 wattle	 wattle	 wattle **Tasmanian blackwood**
	 Christmas bells			
 Tasmanian eucalyptus 1987		 waratah	 waratah	

 heath **myrtle wood**	 black-eyed Susan **celery-top pine** 1990		 1987

Adrian Hunt

thimbles not signed – nor wood named

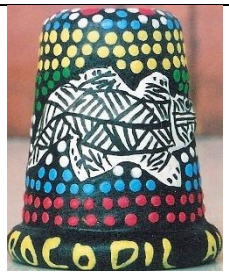
 blackwood

Indonesian

It seems sad that it takes painters from foreign shores to produce these Aboriginal-type dot painted thimbles. They were imported into Sydney by a small company in Sydney and sold at The Rocks
They have also sold by Pan Arts who also sold them to The Thimble Guild in late 2003
they are similar to those handpainted by Aboriginal artist Vicky Winters of Sydney in 1990s
Handpainted all over, including the apex, the fauna seems hidden amongst the dots There is a cockatoo with the Spanish 'cacatua'
some designs include 'Australia' as well

 Aboriginal …	 Ayers Rock	 cacatua	 cockatoo

cockatoo


crocodil (sic) Australia

crocodile

echidna

emu

kangaroo

kangaroo Australia

koala

koala and baby
Australia
2001

kookaburra

platypus

Sydney Opera House

wombat

Jim
Western Australia

karri

T W Kettle
Western Australia
thimbles not signed – nor wood named

jarrah
1989

Don Keynes
Busselton Western Australia
thimbles not signed - wood named
1991

karri hazel

persoonia

York gum burl

Anga Kooiwind
Groningen Netherlands

'Congratulations bicentennial Australia 1788-1988'

Jorgen Kristensen
Hawthorn, Melbourne
Born in Scandinavia, Margareta Kristensen moved to live in Victoria. In 2003, her husband's thimbles are handpainted with naïve designs

bride
2003

needlecase

Margaretha's initials

Jim Lalor

robinia

Tim Legg

Timbo's Shop

Browns Plain Queensland

Shaker workbox

Bob Malacari (BM)
Perth
1990

banksia nut

blackboy

coastal banksia

jam

jarrah

jarrah burl

mallee

morrell

mulga

needlewood

sandalwood
Embroiderers Guild of WA 1969-1990

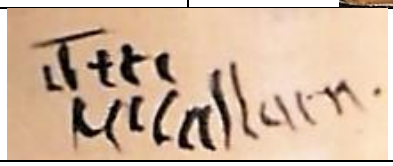
she-oak
quilter's

she-oak
Embroiderers Guild of WA 1969-1990

Dean Malcolm
Albany Western Australia

needleholder in woman's shape
jarrah

Jen McCallum
Strathalbyn South Australia

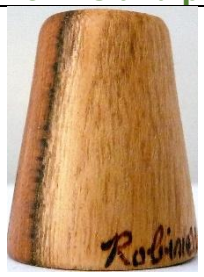
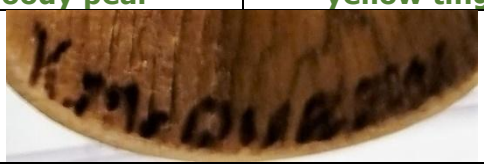


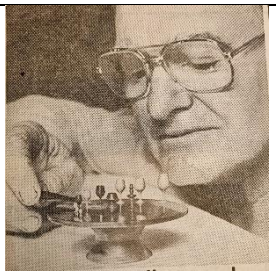
Heather McLean
Balandra Crafts
Scotland
signed

male convict
'Bound for Botany Bay'
1988

female convict
'Bound for Botany Bay'
1988

Keith McQueen
Perth
WAWA member
thinly turned thimbles – Mrs McQueen did the lettering
signed inside – wood named on outside
1990

beefwood	Brazilian purpleheart	carob	gimlet
grevillea candelabroides	hakea	jam W.A.	marri
Moreton Bay fig	native cyprus	Norfolk Island pine	N.W. almond
Plane tree	poplar	 robinia	salmon gum
W.A. christmas tree	woody pear	yellow tingle	York gum burl
			



1988

Sandra Menger

Brisbane

Sandra has been practising pyrography (poker work) for over 25 years (by 1998).
Since 1996, she has used her skills to burn the tiniest floral designs on Brisbane's Col Ward's plain thimbles. She also commissioned thimbles in shapes she required. Menger carved into the wood and then used her pyrography skills

carved

'Christmas bush'

Grevillea glauca *'Bushman's peg'*

gumnuts
R: **hoop pine**

laminated

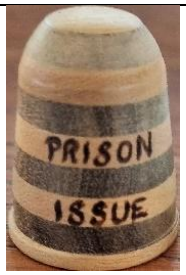
mini size
gumnuts – wattle
1999

mushrooms

pencil top

outline shape of Australian
'The Australian Institution usually known as 'The Dunny''

outline shape of Australian
gum nuts with border of Australian flowers
b&w photo



PRISON ISSUE No, 3246071
with convict stripes
1998

red rose

shell

stones

Swagman with billy tea
handle and teabag inside
camphor laurel
1999

thimble threaded needle gilt
scissors affixed

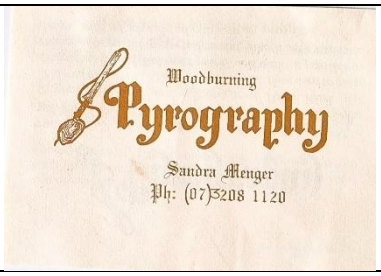
thimble
gilt scissors affixed

toilet with redback spider

wattle

'Fix-it' sewing kit

tape measures



MH or **NH**

Tasmanian huon pine

Richard Mitchinson

The Beach Shack Melbourne

needlecase

jarrah

J Mills

Toni Neve

Benalla Victoria

red gum

1991

lace bobbins
1992

Garth Osmond – Wood "n" Things

Victoria

Bullo buloak

tape measure

George Pearce

Cooroora Queensland

camphor laurel

Platypus Gallery
Melbourne
this is the wholesaler who assembled the thimbles
thimbles not signed (sometimes intertwined PG)– nor wood named

Ray Pope

iroko wood

John Read
Perth

Australian ebony	**conkerberry**	**gimlet**	**gutta percha**
ironwood	**jam**	**jarrah**	**mulga**
sandalwood	**sheoak**	**tingle**	

Geoff Riley
Melbourne
died in 1986

needlecase with plastic thimble
'blue wren'

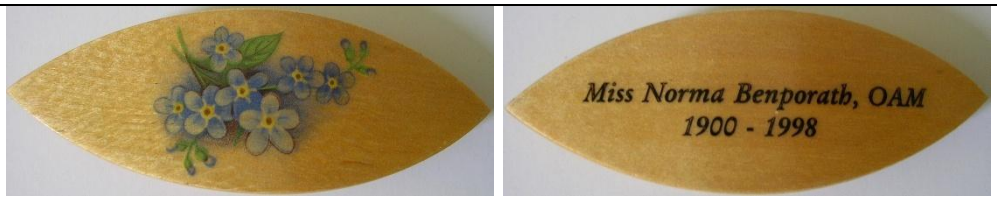
needlecase
'Greetings from Castlemaine'

needlecase
waratah

Trevor S

sassafras

Georgia Seitz
Alaska USA



tatting shuttle
'Miss Norma Benporath, OAM 1900 – 1998'

'Queensland Tatters'
Cooktown orchid

Sew Creative
Gatton Queensland

buttons

Don Shiel
Melbourne

blackwood

Ron Smith
Perth
WAWA member
thimbles not signed
1992

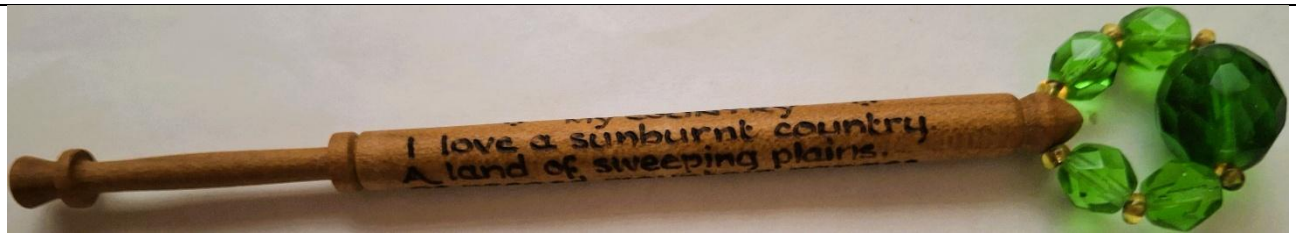
blackwood

boree

olive mangrove

Janet Soo
bobbin not signed

lace bobbin
'I still call Australia home ...'



lace bobbin
'I love a sunburnt country ...'

Mike St Clair
Canberra
thimbles not signed
1989

blackwood	**sassafras**	**silky oak**

Olga Stack
Perth
Olga Stack was enterprising enough to place an advertisement for her folk-art thimbles in the Kalgoorlie Airport, Western Australia. Her floral thimbles are all designed over a painted background and dated
1997

Alan Start
Victoria
thimbles not signed – nor wood named
1997

beefwood	**blackwood**	**walnut**

Raie & Trevor Summers
The Spindle Tree
Hobart Tasmania
wood named on sticker

sassafras

Lynn Syme
Queensland
thimbles not signed

rose alder

GJT

black heart sassafras

lemon-scented gum

olive

huon pine

huon pine
'Adelaide – Adelade'

maker's mark is sometimes on the outside (L) – mainly signed on the inside (R)

The Deepings Woodturner
Nicholls Rivulet Tasmania
thimbles not signed – nor wood named

'Corroboree 90'
(NTCSA)
handpainted by Fiona Curry (FC)
huon pine
limited to **150**

gumnuts
handpainted by Fiona Curry (FC)
huon pine
mini size

gumnuts
handpainted by Fiona Curry (FC)
huon pine
mini size

blackwood

leatherwood

clown darner-needlecase
sassafras
handpainted by Jill Roberts
1992

embroiderer darner-needlecase
handpainted by Jill Roberts

darner-needlecase
handpainted by Jill Roberts

happy birthday darner-needlecase
handpainted by Jill Roberts

violinist darner-needlecase
handpainted by Jill Roberts

fairy darner-needlecase
handpainted by Jill Roberts

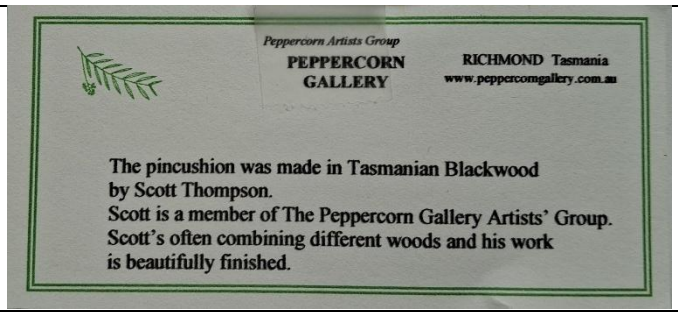
Mac Thomas

coachwood

huon pine

Scott Thompson
Peppercorn Gallery
Richmond Tasmania
not signed

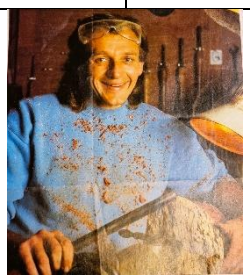
pincushion
Tasmanian blackwood
'N.T.C.S.A. 1987-2012'



Paul Tiernan
Newcastle
signed – wood unnamed
1999

cedar

rosewood



1990

Ian Trafford-Walker (ITW)
Murwillumbah
With an abundance of fallen timber on his property in northern New South Wales Ian encouraged his sons to utilise small pieces of bloodwood and carve out thimbles. No two are the same shape but the smoothness has taken hours of finishing to bring out the marvellous colours. This was in 2000, and a strictly limited number were produced

bloodwood
2000

bloodwood
carved by his sons

David Tulloch

South Australia

Malcolm Walter of Stirling South Australia commissioned Tulloch's wooden thimbles for applying his sterling silver pewter or brass motifs

farm scene
L: sterling silver = R: pewter

gumleaves
silver

kangaroos
brass

Koala
brass

possum
silver

huon pine

purple heart

sassafras

silky oak

E.W.

'Epacris Australia'

Beryl Ward (BJW)
Brisbane
using her husband Col's thimbles Beryl turned to handpainting them in 1990s

Col Ward
Brisbane
Ward being passionate about the timbers of Australia he was searching for a medium to showcase his hobby of wood collecting. From when he turned his first wooden thimble in 1991, by 2000 he had turned over 3000 thimbles from more than 650 timbers. Through his membership of the International Wood Collectors Society Col actively sought out pieces of timber that would reflect the beauty of the grain and used ten different shapes to showcase this
1993-1997
Col died in 2004

acacia

acacia cambage

African mahogany

Algerian briar
1999

alka

American bloodwood

American oak

Amish timber

avocado

bamboo

black locast

black wattle

bloodwood	**budgeroo** 1999	**bugwood**	**bush oak**
calantas	**coach wood**	**coastal cypress**	**cockspur**
conkerberry	**corkoak**	**cottonwood**	**crows ash**
gelong-gang	**golf gum**	**grevillea** (dyed)	**jacaranda**
jarrah burl	**Jelutong** (dyed)	**kwila**	**lawyer cane**
loquat	**mango**	**moringa**	**mountain ash**

mulga

New Guinea rosewood

padauk

pine (Amish farm)

Port Hacking fig

radiata pine

red ash

red cedar

red meranti

ridged mulga

rooting fig (ficus sagittate)

rose almond

sally wattle

satin sycamore

silky oak

silver leaf ironbark

spalid ash

spotted gum

staywood

threaded box

tulip oak

turkey bush

waddy

walnut

white cedar	**white meranti**	**yellow cedar**	dyed
top hat			

Wayne
Work of Art
Toowoomba

needlecase
rosewood

Dick Weaver

gidgee

N West
NSW

gidgee

Frank Willcock
Goomalibee Woodworks
Benalla Victoria

Redgum
1990

Yvonne Winspear (YW)
Sydney
there is a gold foil map of Australia up in each apex

L: taller – over china

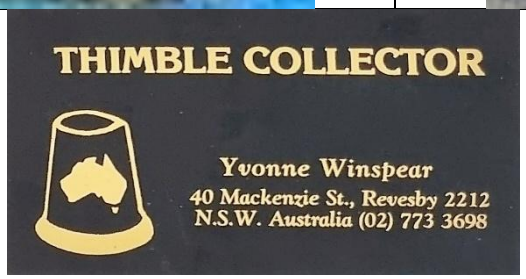
1986

around **600** of these thimbles were handmade

paperbark over leatherwood

'1788-1988'

120 thimbles of this design were made



1980s

Vicky Winters
Sydney
Vicky used Robert Herron's **huon pine** thimbles for her Aboriginal designs
they are the only thimbles handpainted by an Aboriginal artist
approximately **30-40** of each design
unsigned
1989

needlecases

Peter Wyer
Brisbane
QWA member
thimbles not signed – nor wood named

mangrove cedar

N Wyndham

Brisbane

pincushion

banksia nut

Handpainted thimbles and sewing tools – unsigned

I am including this batch of unknown Australian painters' thimbles – hoping that your similar thimble is signed – or you recognise the painter. I have added any lettering or my clues that are associated with these thimbles.

Aboriginal scene

Aboriginal scene

Geraldton wax

koala
indecipherable initials

koala
Australia

possum

finely handpainted seven paired scenes

myrtle wood

Unsigned thimbles and sewing tools

Acacia pyncnatha
South Australia

Australian rosewood

banksia

beech

button
Ross Tasmania
classwood

buttons
McLaren Vale SA

coachwood

coat-of-arms

coin

darner

darner

darner

darner

darner

Gulgong NSW
Burdekin plum

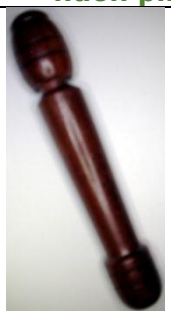
huon pine

huon pine

jarrah burl

Jondaryan Woolshed
Queensland

karri



needlecase
jarrah

needlecase
Peninsula Wood Turners Guild Frankston Victoria
blackwood
2000

needlecase
Peninsula Wood Turners Guild
Frankston Victoria
2000

nundoo

pincushion
mulga
Trust in Him at all times

pincushion

pincushion
Queensland threadybark oak

needle gauge
Tasmanian horizontalis

pincushions

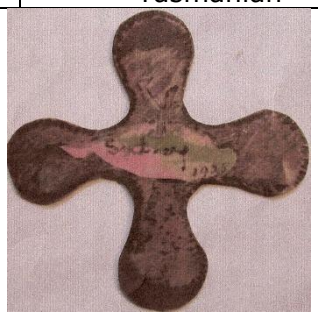
pine - rose

red gum

Tasmanian

Tasmanian bush buttons

thimble holder

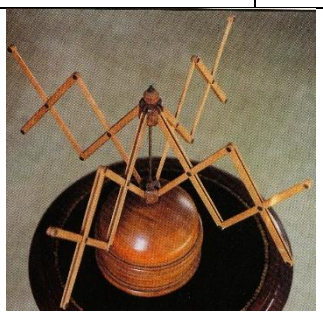


thread winder
HP Sydney 1925
plywood

weaving shuttles

weaving shuttles
Victoria
signature unclear

Western Australia



woolwinder
Christmas 1904
huon pine

workbox
Souvenir of Sydney

silky oak		

My Australian trees journey

We have visited botanic gardens in all Australian states – not to be missed on any trip to Australia. My first visit to Perth's Kings Park in 1988 was my introduction to trees of WA. The road with gums planted in memory to our fallen soldiers, as you enter is breathtaking.
Australia's red dirt is recreated at Cranbourne Botanic Gardens.

There are several treetop walks – at Geeveston Tasmania – Lamington National Park in the gold Coast hinterland. Climb the Gloucester fire lookout tree in Pemberton WA.

Western Australia has the greatest diversity of trees, and the south-west corner has tuarts lining the road. Smell the scent of a lemon-scented gum or sandalwood. I have worked with camphor laurel and that scent is addictive.

I attended the Small Tree Farm in Balingup in south-western Australia for a weekend of learning about trees and had a tree planted in memory of my father.

Only the banksia grandis that grows in Western Australia has nuts suitable for turning.

I am not into scientific names of my beloved trees – just the names I've learnt.

Most of these timbers have been turned into thimbles

boab Kimberleys 2009	**bottle tree** Anzac Square Brisbane 1993	**bunya pine** Bunyas Queensland they shed their massive fruit in January 2005
bushman's peg Currumundi Queensland 2011	**celery top pine** Geeveston Tahune Tasmania 2017	**desert oaks** Uluru 2013

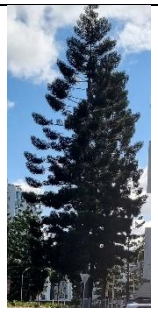
fig
Mary Cairncross Maleny
2025

grass tree
Cranbourne Botanical Gardens
Melbourne
2012

grevillea candelabroides
Eneabba Western Australia
1990

grey myrtle
Maleny Botanic Gardens
Queensland
2014

gums
I have 100s of photos of these amazing tree trunks

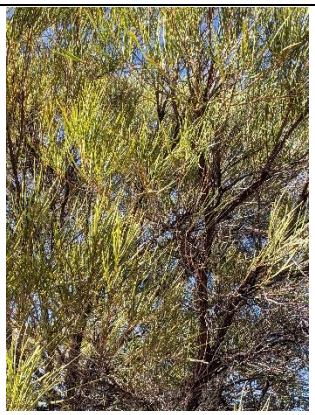


hoop pine
Kelvin Grove
these came to my attention
where Christie's unit has a grove
of these 85 year old pines
metres from her deck
2025

huon pine
it's illegal to cut down huon pine
Geeveston Tahune Tasmania
2017

illywarra flame
their colours light up a whole
forest
2017

jacaranda
Kelvin Grove Brisbane
2023



lancewood
Longreach
2021

marri nuts
Cranbourne Botanical Gardens
Melbourne
1989

Moreton Bay fig
Kelvin Grove Brisbane
2022

myrtle
Geeveston Tahune
Tasmania
2017

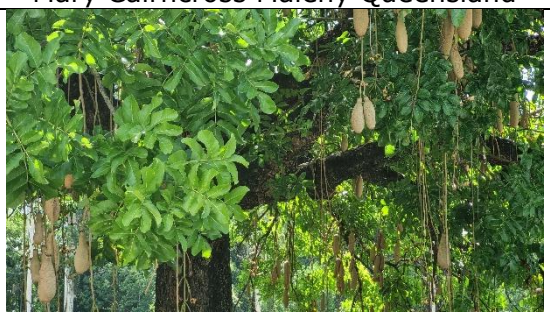
paperbark
Swan River Perth
1988

poinciana
New Farm Park Brisbane
1990s

river red gum
Murrumbigee Wagga Wagga – Fitzroy WA

rose gums
Mary Cairncross Maleny Queensland

salmon gum



sausage tree
landsborough Queensland
2025

scribbly gum
Murrumbigee Wagga Wagga
lines formed by moth larva eating below the bark
2025

sheoak
brown male flowers – Kimberleys
2009

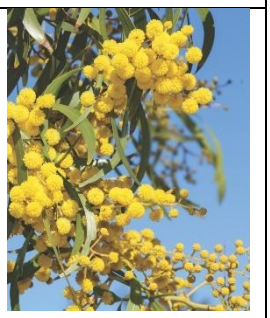
silver princess
Kings Park Perth
silver branches show off the gum blossoms
1988

snottygobble
Currumundi Queensland
2011

snow gum
Cradle Mountain National Park Tasmania
a more exotic trunk you'll never see
2019

Sydney blue gum
National Botanic Gardens
Canberra
1989

walnut
Hans Heysen's garden
Adelaide
2017



wattle
NSW roadside in winter

West Australian Christmas tree
they light up the bush

References

Doug Birrell *Wooden thimbles – possibilities for collectors* Needlework Tool Collectors Society of Australia Newsletter May 1999
Susan Jean Gowan *Thimbles of Australia* 1998
Norma Shattock *Doug Birrell: wooden thimbles and tools* Needlework Tool Collectors Society of Australia Newsletter April 2005
Thimble maker: Doug Birrell, Australia TCI Bulletin fall 2007

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Lee Bateman | Wendy Brittain | Beverley Dimmick | Joy Earles | Ros Forster | Andrea Griffiths | Margaret Harland
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This listing of Australian wooden 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

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September 2025