# Other character head thimble makers

There seem to be far more of brands around today. The fact that many of the characters are identical to those made by Francesca is interesting

Buy handpainted thimbles and not the white unpainted versions, so that you have the joy of the handpainting - without the eyes being painted, the characters are "lifeless" - and a maker's backstamp is vital

I have included animals as characters as the Francesca thimbles included animal heads

#### Acorn

### England

this is the same shape of the Francesca and Artone eagle head thimbles



backstamp



**Eagle** 

Last update: 13 March 2024

# **Artone Pottery**

## Burslem, England

the backstamp is derived from an artist's palette with the words 'Hand Painted Artone England' lettered across it

the characters are not always named, so we will have to go on the accuracy of the likeness for identification

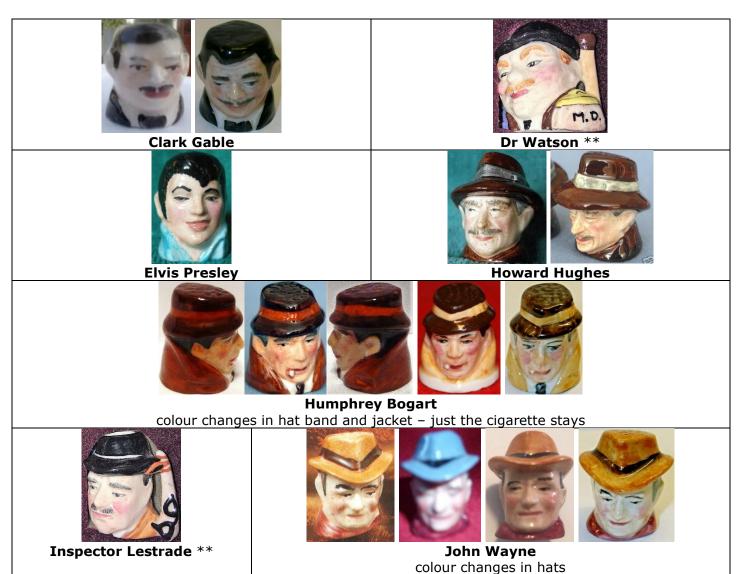
Some of these thimbles are in the shape of mini Toby Jugs \*\*



thimble backstamp



Toby Jug backstamp





**Marilyn Monroe** 



Proffessor [sic] Moriaty \*\*



Santa







Sherlock Holmes with magnifier















Sherlock Holmes with pipe \*\*





\*\* part of a boxed set of four thimble characters from Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes
They look like mini Toby Jugs but is the opening at the base?

### **US** characters



Eagle



**Eisenhower** 



Lincoln















**Ronald Reagan** 

Washington

### Clowns



### **Charles Dickens set**



some of Artone's Charles Dickens characters mini Toby Jugs – are also called thimbles – these are open at the bottom, and they have handles

### The Beadle - Tony Weller - Fagin - Gypsy - Artful Dodger - Mr Pickwick

Another set of Artone are definitely **Toby Jugs** – their openings are at the **top** and they have distinctive handles. It is your choice whether you collect them as thimbles or as Toby jugs. These are some examples.



Artful Dodger: opening at top, solid bottom







Artful Dodger - Bill Sykes - Tony Weller

# Gail Boekel [GTB]

handpainted in Florida, USA









green haired clown - 1979

# Colecções Philae

Lisbon Portugal

These thimbles are made of handpainted resin – a fairly new medium compared with china and porcelain. As you may see resin thimbles are fragile and chip easily. Founded in 1977 but these are produced much later



backstamp



**Churchill**he could be no-on else with that characteristic cigar



clown

# Country Life Design Studio England – fine bone china

the shape seems identical to the Victoria China dog and cat thimbles. The handpainting is very fine None are marked with the name of breed inside. The descriptions are mine



backstamp & label



## **Croft China**

### England - fine bone china

the thimble characters are not named inside apparently only 150 of each were created



backstamp







**Policeman** 





Yeoman of the Guard

# **Anne Dalton Ottervale China Company**

Devon, England - fine bone china

the handpainted animal thimbles are not named inside so the descriptive names are mine Anne creates dolls' house miniatures. They are described as wider at the base than regular thimbles.

Quirky, charming, and fun

They are mainly near full-body creations – I just didn't want them to get lost



backstamp





# Harlequin Design Studio

**England** 

According to information received in March 2013 from Gordon A Henry, the thimble maker of HDS ...
"I registered the company in the mid-seventies, where I exported the range to Australia and New Zealand as well as supplying the U.K. As I only used three decorators, the items were never massed produced (this allowed for excellent quality control) and resulted in a high standard of decoration. I think that my thimbles may be unique, as I was involved from start to finish in the production ... from the design / modelling stage, mould making, slip casting / fettling and sponging, bisque firing, glazing and finally - the decoration. I also designed (modelled) other sculptures (including birds, animals and figurines) from start to finish. As Harlequin was only ever a part-time business (as I was also working as a ceramic artist for Royal Doulton), I wound up the company around the mid to late nineties.

I used a single 'back stamp' (lithograph) using the name 'Harlequin' on the thimble itself and the other information was supplied on the display box ... character name, company etc. To start with I used a green display box, later changing to a clear plastic box that displayed the items in a slightly better light".

Many are pairs of characters.

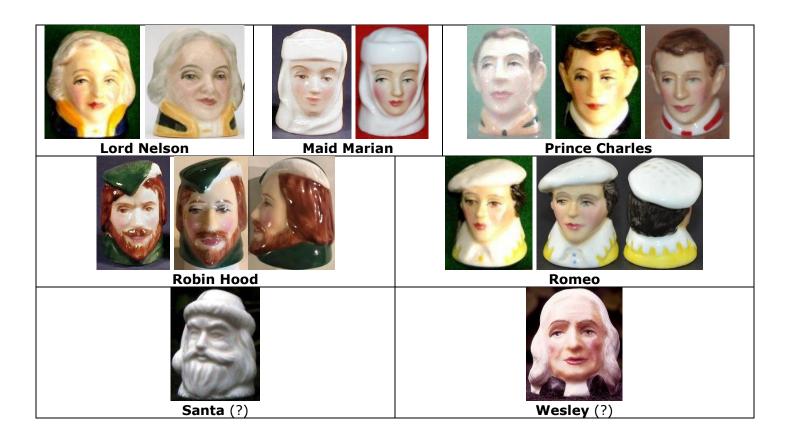


backstamp - GA Henry signature - Gordon Henry



Harlequin thimbles in green Schmid boxes





# **Harmer Sculptures**

Staffordshire, England – bone china

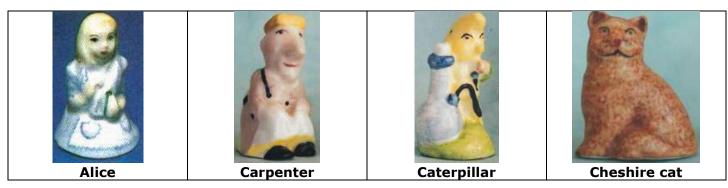
these handpainted thimbles were only produced some time during the 1980s, as Paul (?) Harmer died in the 1980s

The Alice in Wonderland set is made in Staffordshire, England and are made of bone china. They tend to be quite tall, with the Carpenter being 45mm.

The chief characters seem to be covered with this set of twelve thimbles



backstamp
Alice in Wonderland





## **Dickens characters**

**Walrus** 

See the Johnson Ceramics set - below - for the identical set of Harmer Dickens characters. Did Johnson acquire the rights to Harmer thimbles?



being handpainted, there are colour variations for this set of twelve characters



characters are named on verso

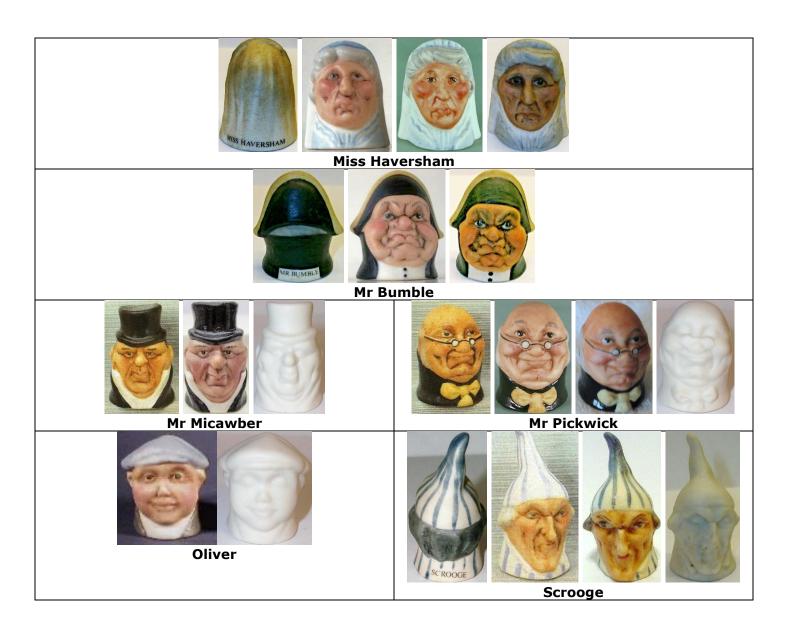
Queen of hearts

**White Rabbit** 



the unpainted thimbles still have the inner Harmer backstamp and character name lettered at the back of the head





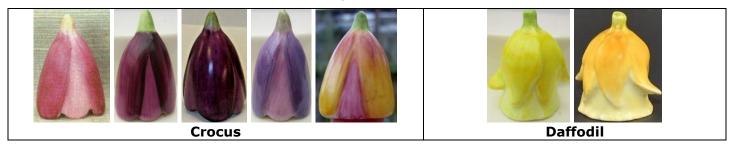
### **Flowers**

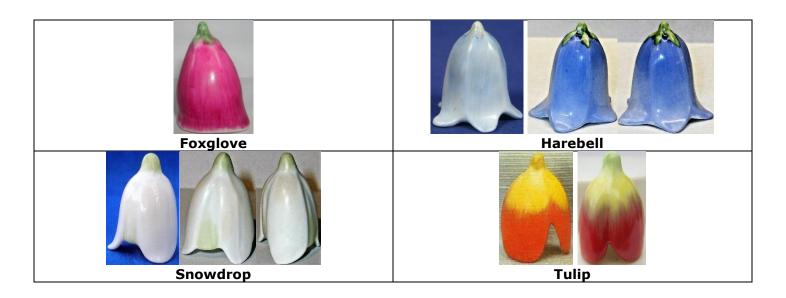
I first saw the Harmer Flowers set advertised for sale in January 1985 thru The Thimble Collectors' Guild in Scotland



backstamp

later versions of this set may be found under Johnson Ceramics





### **Clowns**

Like the Francesca thimbles - where the Dickens character moulds were "re-used" and painted as clowns - Harmer Clowns followed, and they resemble some of the Harmer Dickensian character thimbles

The makeovers could be - L to R: Mr Pickwick | Scrooge | Marley's Ghost | Bill Sykes | Brother Cheeryble

Mr Bumble

I understand that a few of these thimbles are not marked with the maker's name, and the clowns do not have names

handpaint red dots seem to unify the set - but there's always an exception!



### **Others**



### Healacraft

England - bone china

the Robin Hood set has six characters thimbles

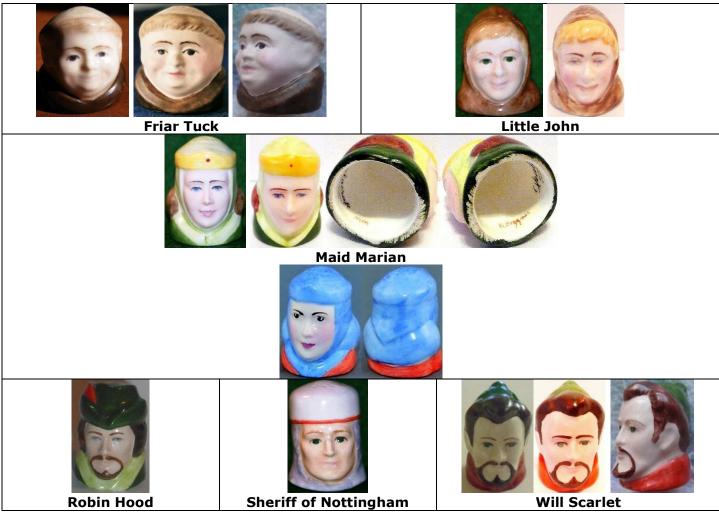
Tho the characters are not named as such in the thimbles, there are initials that match each character - SN would be for the Sheriff of Nottingham and LJ for Little John, MM for Maid Marian etc. The handpainter's initials of NH for Neil Higgins is lettered in brown alongside the character initials

I have seen regular-shaped thimbles handpainted by Neil Higgins with the Healacraft backstamp - also with the Sutherland China backstamp. Interesting connection?

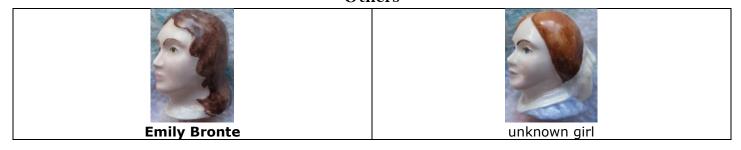


backstamp





# Others



## **Johnson Ceramics**

### **England**

their characters are named on the back of the head

These seem to be copies of the Harmer Sculptures' Dickens and flower thimbles. The characters are the same twelve and produced more recently than the Harmer thimbles. Did Johnson Ceramics acquire the Harmer thimbles' rights after the 1980s, when Harmer died?





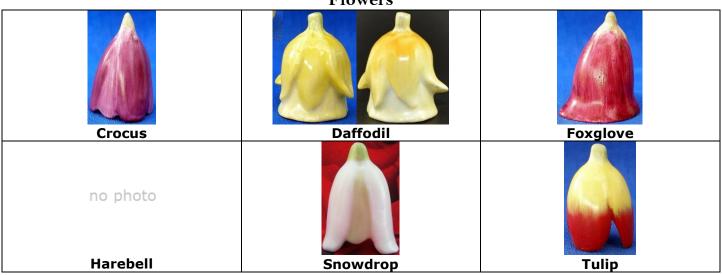


backstamp - character name - Johnson box

### **Dickens characters**



# **Flowers**



# **Lindner** Germany



# **Merryfield Pottery**

Torquay Devon
handmade and handpainted
"Every process from design to the finished article is inhouse"
many are in the shape of full-body cats and dogs – not included here
<a href="https://merryfieldpottery.co.uk/">https://merryfieldpottery.co.uk/</a>



"ugly"

### **Northern Rose**

**USA** 

this is an inclusion only as a buyer beware these dog heads are listed for sale as thimbles on ebay etc

they were not made as thimbles – rather as **thimble covers**, which makes them quite large – they cover a themed smaller thimble, like a dog biscuit affixed to the thimble

they are only made in the shape of a dog's head – Alsatian, poodle, spaniel and boxer-type – and they have the indentations along the chest area – they are not named in the thimble



### J Peers



King Charles II handpainted '84



King William I handpainted 84



Kina

# **Peggy Davies Ceramics**

## Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England – hand made and handpainted china

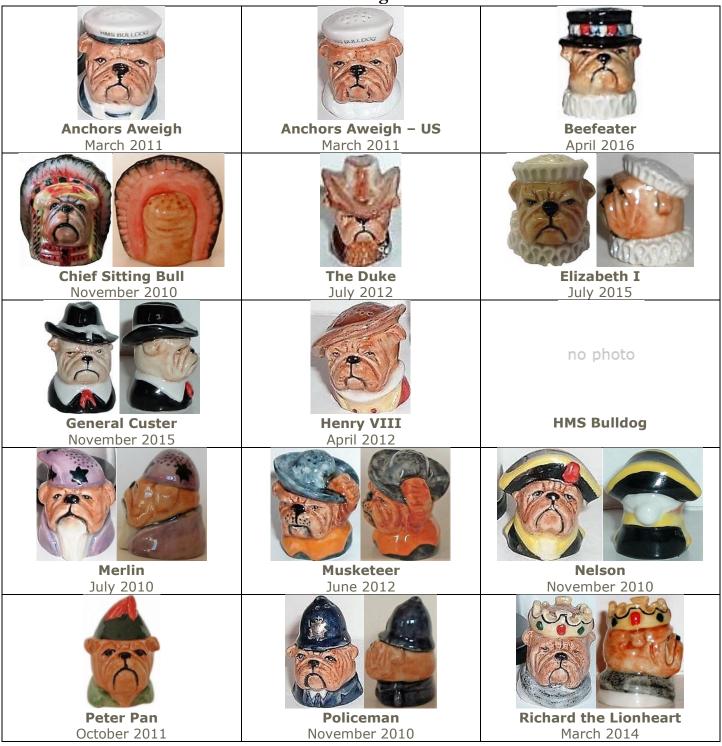
Modelled by Ray Noble. Davies (she died in 1999) worked at Royal Doulton for sixty years limited edition of 25

dates indicate when thimble was first created

there were nineteen bulldog characters created (2010-2016) There will be colourways

### www.bulldogs.co.uk

## **Bulldogs**





Roundhead November 2015



Sherlock Holmes July 2010





Uncle Sam
R: April 2016
L: colourway – only two produced



Viking March 2014



MrChurchill

November 2010
R: colourway – only two produced

### **Perennis**

### Staffordshire, England

Their Dickens characters were all produced with "© Perennis 1983" stamped inside. This early date of 1983 makes these thimbles by Perennis almost contemporaneous with the Francesca thimbles. Made in Staffordshire England, these thimbles are hand sculptured and painted, each presented in an individual box with reference card about the character, plus a wall mount wooden display box with thirty recesses.

Are these Dickens characters the only character head thimbles made by Perennis? At this stage, yes. There are the same number of Perennis Dickens characters as Francesca (30): but there aren't many overlapping characters

Perennis thimble boxes do not have the maker's name on, just "Staffordshire England" or "Crafted in Staffordshire England", where they were made - with the name of the maker Perennis

This has led to much confusion of the years, where Perennis thimbles have been described as made by Staffordshire with the Perennis maker's name in very small lettering within the thimbles, which is often overlooked

Some confusion is also occurring as Perennis released some Dickens character thimbles with the incorrect name inside. Perennis seem to have more naming errors of the characters than any other manufacturer of this type of thimble - poor quality control?

There are examples appearing in monochrome - a pale gingery colour

Being handpainted thimbles, there are always differences in thimbles from those illustrated: there are many different painters of the characters - I have recorded them when the colours are markedly different - as colourways - some are excellent - others rather ordinary or crude that don't really represent the Dickens character - and it's just not thimbles by different photographers - it will be worth your while to source the former. How many painters did Perennis employ? Are they still out there painting up the blank thimbles?

Early in 2013 I had access to the original advertisement in Australia for this set of thimbles. They were advertised for sale in Melbourne's *The Age* of March 28<sup>th</sup> 1983.

They were available for purchase as a set of thirty by direct subscription, for delivery at one per month. The sets were available only thru Buckingham Fine Arts, with a Melbourne address. According to the advertisement, "many thimbles offered to collectors are merely flat-sided and printed with decoration. However these are sculptured portraits which capture the full details of Dickens' characters". For the first time we know who the thimble designer was - **Arthur Wakelin**, a British artist. There is no mention of Perennis - the thimble maker - anywhere in the advertisement



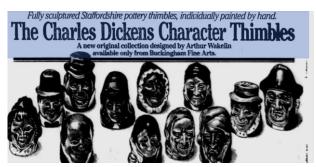




### Perennis thimble certificate - two different backstamps



certificate with © 1983 Perennis



black & white advertisement from Melbourne's The Age in 1993. These handpainted thimbles were only available by mail order thru Buckingham Fine Arts in Australia

### The Charles Dickens Character Thimbles



**Artful Dodger** -- Oliver Twist --



[-- Oliver Twist --]

+ gingery colour + incorrectly named as this is Fagin + bushy dark beard



**Bob Cratchit** [-- A Christmas Carol --] R: interesting to see the quill behind the ear this character not in Francesca's Dickens set







Captain Cuttle
[Dombey and Son]
this character not in Francesca's Dickens set



**Daniel Quilp**[- The Old Curiosity Shop -]
this character not in Francesca's Dickens set









David Copperfield [-- David Copperfield --]





**Fagin** [-- Oliver Twist --]











Fanny Squeers
[-- Nicholas Nickleby --]
this character not in Francesca's Dickens set











Inspector Bucket
[-- Bleak House --]
this character not in Francesca's Dickens set









Little Nell [- The Old Curiosity Shop -









Madame/Madam Defarge [-- A Tale of Two Cities --]

R: tho the certificate indicates the name "Madame ...", the name inside (L) has the alternate spelling this character not in Francesca's Dickens set





**Madame Mantolini** [-- Nicholas Nickleby --] R: trial colour

this character not in Francesca's Dickens set













**Marley's Ghost** [-- A Christmas Carol --] sad + angry faces this character not in Francesca's Dickens set







**Miss Haversham** [-- Great Expectations -

**Mr Bumble** -- Oliver Twist --]



**Mr Micawber** [-- David Copperfield --]







**Mr Pickwick** [-- The Pickwick Papers --]













**Mrs Bardell** [-- The Pickwick Papers --] + colourway

C: wrongly named <u>Bardello</u> named inside R: incorrectly named inside: Mrs Bardelloni this character not in Francesca's Dickens set













Newman Noggs [-- Nicholas Nickleby --]

incorrectly named <u>Newman Moggs</u> (right) this character not in Francesca's Dickens set





Oliver Twist [-- Oliver Twist --]







Pip

[-- Great Expectations --]









Sairey Gamp

[-- Martin Chuzzlewit --]
R: tho the certificate indicates the name "Sarah..." the name inside (L) has the correct spelling







**Sally Brass**[- The Old Curiosity Shop -]
this character not in Francesca's Dickens set







**Samuel Weller**[-- The Pickwick Papers --]
this character not in Francesca's Dickens set













**Scrooge** [-- A Christmas Carol --]









Silas Wegg
[-- Our Mutual Friend --]
this character not in Francesca's Dickens set



Sydney Carton
[-- A Tale of Two Cities --]
R: wrongly named Mrs
Bardelloni as it's Sydney
Carton
this character not in
Francesca's Dickens set











Tiny Tim
[-- A Christmas Carol --]
+ gingery colour + colourway







**Uriah Heep**[-- David Copperfield --]







Wackford Squeers
[-- Nicholas Nickleby --]
R: wrongly named Wackford Squeers as it's
Newman Noggs

# Carol Pongracic Handpainted ceramic

Handpainted ceramic characters not named inside Carol is a dolls' house miniaturist painter



backstamp





### Renaissance

### England - fine bone china

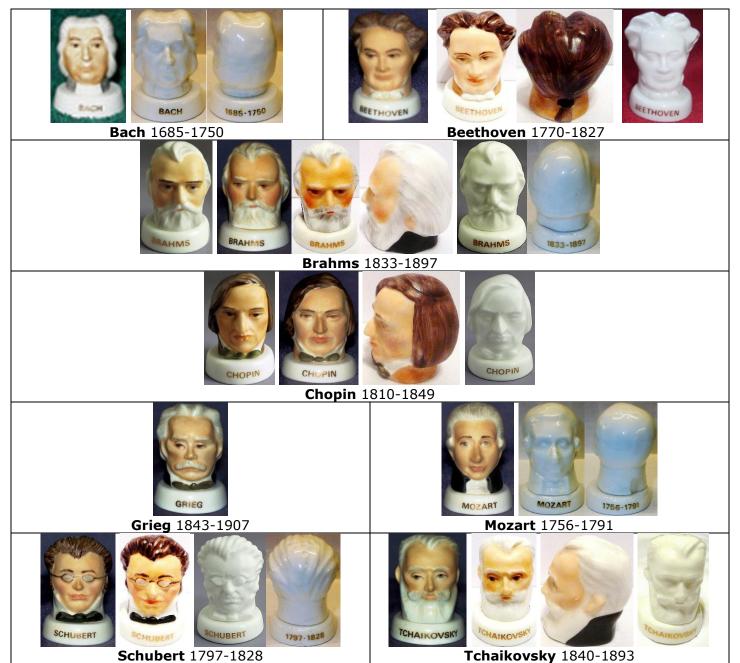
the Great Composers set of eight thimbles each have a small china plinth showing the character's name - with dates on verso. They are also lettered with the name & dates inside the thimbles

unpainted versions were first offered for sale by The Thimble Collectors Guild in late 1983





backstamp on thimble & plinth + named on plinth



### **Royal Worcester**

Worcester, England

they are not thimbles and only included as a buyer beware. These were offered for sale as thimbles on ebay.

They are candle snuffers. This pair is part of a set of fourteen, made in 1986.



candle snuffer backstamp



**Mr Caudle** 



**Mrs Caudle** 

### **Staffordshire Fine Ceramics**

Stoke-on-Trent, England

a few of these Dickens character thimbles are the same as those from Francesca and Perennis Dickens sets - using the same thimble boxes as those for Perennis? A small proportion of these thimbles are different from Perennis, and a few are like Francesca Dickens characters. Total of 14 Unlike the Perennis thimbles, there is no date inside the Staffordshire Fine Ceramics thimbles Until I remembered having the Staffordshire backstamp in the Scrooge thimble photo, I was going to delete this section as I thought most of the thimbles were made by Perennis However, they will remain here and no more will be added until I have verified their Staffordshire backstamps. Those marked with \*\* have had the backstamp authenticated as a Staffordshire Fine Ceramics handpainted character thimble

An interesting part-set of the Staffordshire Dickens set have made their appearance for sale on ebay. They appear to be made of black basalt - like Wedgwood's jasperware. This is a highly specialised form of porcelain: who has been producing them? They have the very distinctive Staffs thimble indentations on the crowns of the heads. I am not able to confirm yet, that they bear the Staffordshire Fine Ceramics backstamp. I have placed them alongside the matching Dickens characters, until more information comes to light

#### **Charles Dickens Collection**







\*\*Charles Dickens + basalt-type + backstamp









+ thimble boxes







\*\*Bill Sykes







\*\*Bux Fux + black basalt type







\*\*Ebenezer Scrooge + black basalt type









\*\*Fagin + black basalt type





\*\*Little Nell









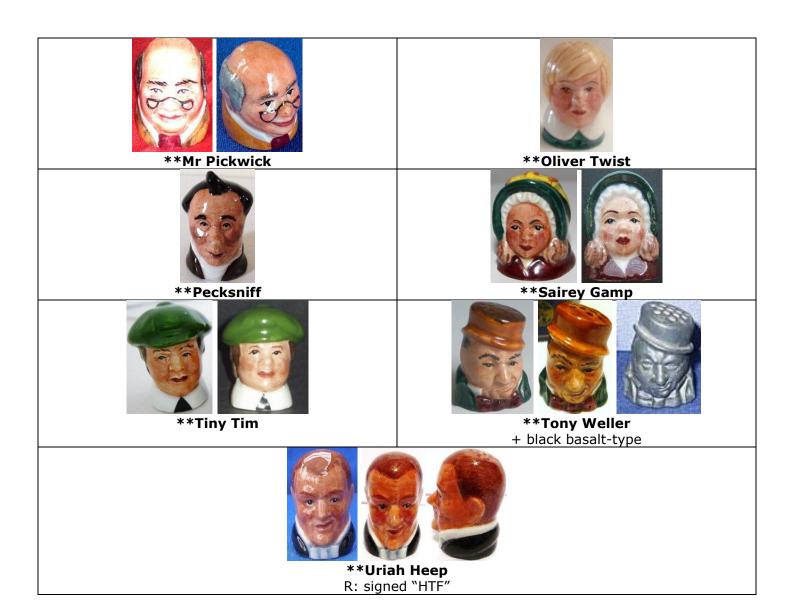




\*\*Madame Defarge

+ black basalt type

\*\*Mr Bumble



### Other Staffordshire characters



## **Sutherland China**

### English china

Sutherland China are well-known thimble makers. This group of head-shaped thimbles would be a small part of their production, as they are mainly known for their thimble-shaped production. There are characters duplicated from the Francesca series. When Francesca closed in the late 1980s,

Sutherland purchased their moulds using the following and destroying the rest

At last count, there are 66 Sutherland heads, as against 116 from Francesca, tho there are Sutherlands, not featured by Francesca. Originally it seemed that they never created new character heads of their own. There is a new set that no other manufacturer has produced before - the current Royal Family - some are painted, and the seven Royals heads are integrated within the sequence of characters below The Sutherland character thimbles are unsigned, unlike the Francesca ones

There are an increasing number of glazed white (unpainted) character heads appearing from Sutherland. Are these seconds or just unpainted stock that is surfacing onto the market, after they closed? Once Sutherland closed their doors in around 2002, what happened to their unpainted character head thimbles stock?

Most of these unpainted Sutherland thimbles are all backstamped with their maker's marks with the character name inside - maybe this is how Sutherland wanted to sell them - for collectors who preferred the glazed look, without the handpainted detail?

I have alphabetised all the Sutherland characters in one sequence, rather than using the order of the Francesca range. I don't believe that Sutherland ever issued or marketed them in sets as Francesca did, so it would make a mockery if I categorised them





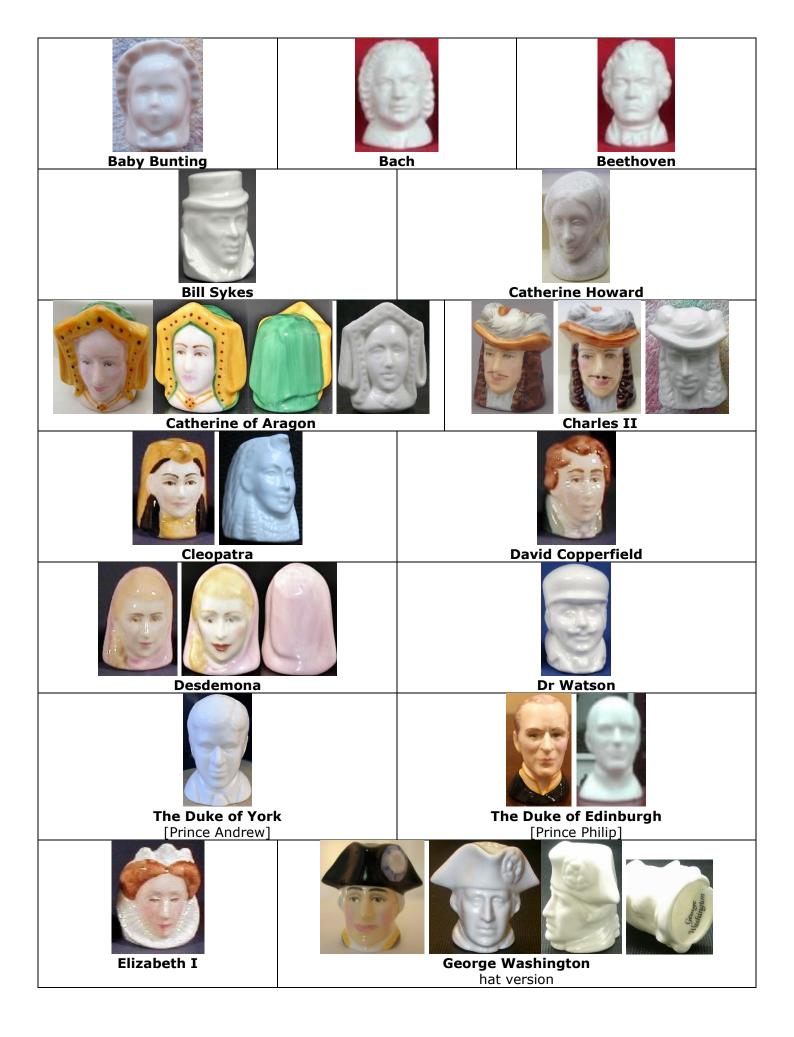
backstamps

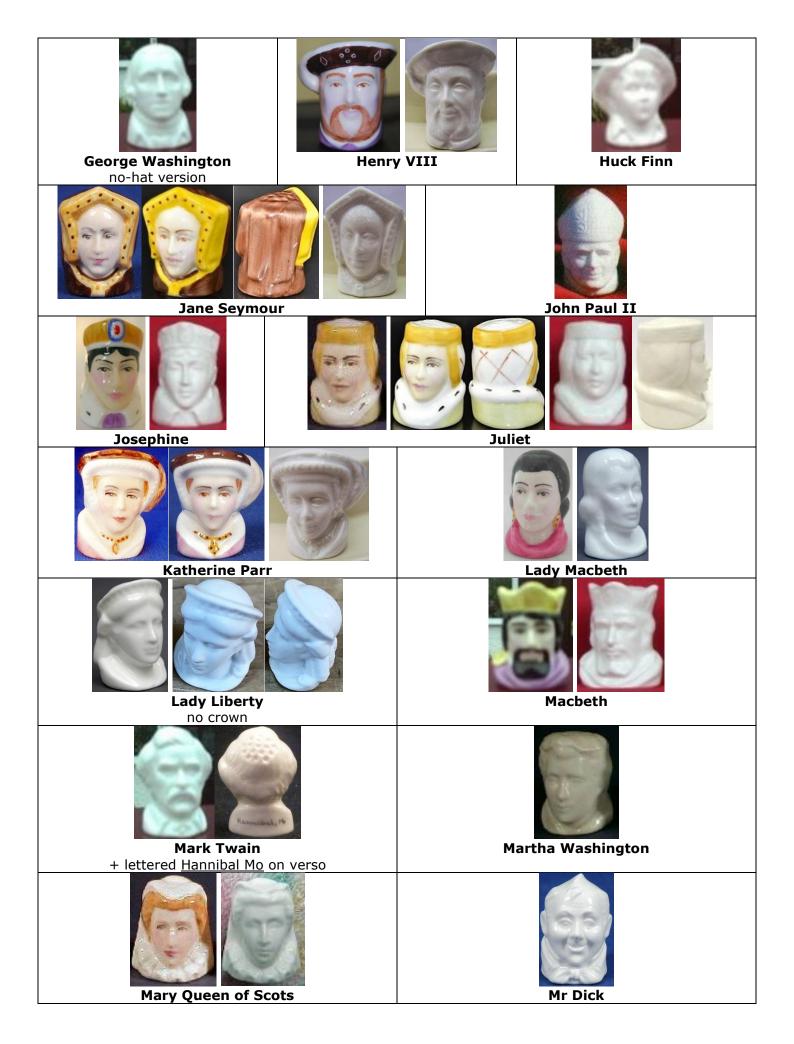


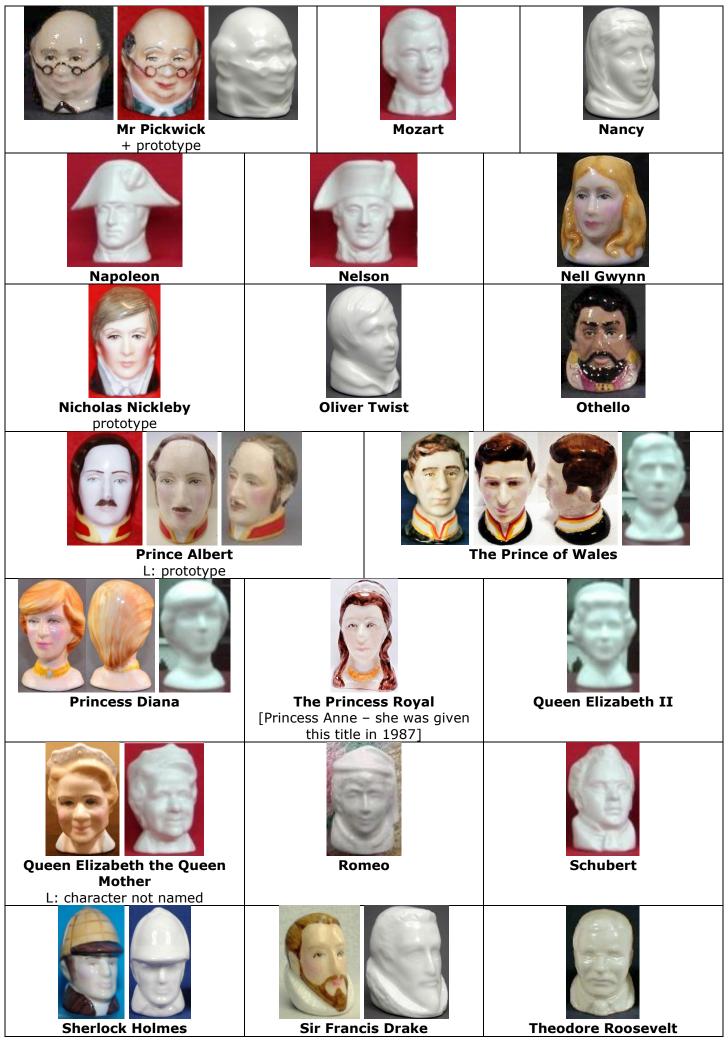
**Antony** 

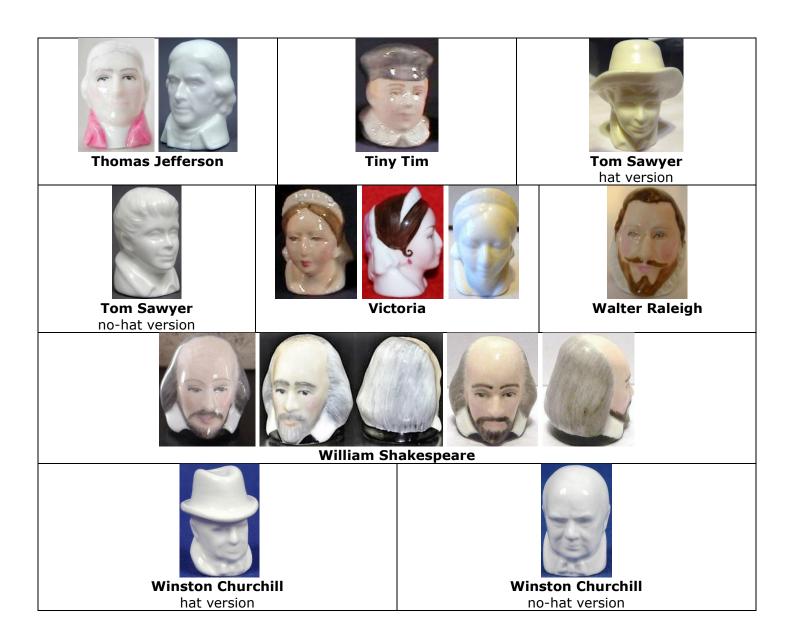
**Artful Dodger** 

R: uncomfirmed









## **Theodore Paul**

England - fine bone china

a few heads are similar moulds to Staffordshire's. The characters are not named in the thimbles

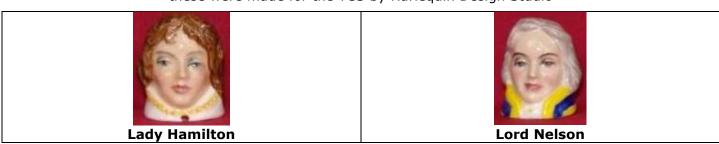


backstamp



# **Thimble Collectors Society**

England - bone china these were made for the TCS by Harlequin Design Studio



### **Tony Wood Studio**

Staffordshire - England

some of these were offered for sale in 1984-1987 by The Thimble Guild in Scotland Marketed as "A miniature microcosm of 17th, 18th and 19th century life" and they are a faithful reproduction of an original design from the Wood family private collection, from over thirty years ago They are like Toby Jugs in shape, with the opening at the top – but there are no handles like traditional Toby Jugs. The original Toby Jugs of the 18th century made by Ralph Wood Jnr form the basis for this series of thumbles

Similar designs may be seen under Wood Potters

Tony Wood is the ninth generation direct descendent of Ralph Wood - based in Stoke-on-Trent in England.

The thimbles are made of pottery and usually they are unnamed - the names used here, are from TTG adverts

4950 sets were made and they are handpainted, dated and signed - according to the advertisement Where I know the initials for each particular thimble, they are included

32 painters' initials have been recorded to date - those illustrated have the dates recorded A.B. - A.M. - A.W. [1987] - B.M. - C.A.Z. - C.H. - C.N. - D.B. [1987] - D.D. [1985] - D.D.H. [1987] D.D.K. [1987] - D.W. [1987] - H.B. [1985] - J.F. [1987/1988] - J.M. - J.P. [1987] - J.W. [1985] - K.D. K.M. - L.H. [19847/1987] - L.T. - M.B. - M.D. [1984/1987] - M.P. [1986] - P.D. [1987] - R.P. - S.E. S.Q. - S.W. - T.B. [1987] - V.W. [1987] - W.J. [1987]









backstamps





signed thimble - thimble box



certificate - 1987 The Thimble Guild



Betsy Toby WJ 1987





**The Clerk** WJ 198<u>7 - JF 1987 - LH 1987</u>









**The Collier** WJ 1987 - MD 1984 + JF1988









**Dr Johnson** + JW 1987 - MD 1987 - DB 1987











**Earl Howe** 1st Lord of the Admiralty + WJ 1987 - JP 1987 MP 1986



**Falstaff** LH 1987 - HB 1985



**The Gamekeeper** JF 1987





The Gardener JF 1987 - WJ 1987







The Haymaker MD 1987 - JF 1987 - VW 1987



**Hearty Goodfellow** JF 1987







**Judge** DDH 1987 - LH 1987 - PD 1987





The Lover + JF 1987



**Martha Gunn** MP 1986





The Musician + AW 1987 - JW 1987







Old Age JF 1987 - MD 1987 - JF 1987

The Parson JF 1988 - DW 1987









Ralph Wood + JF 1987

The Sailor MD 1984













The Shepherd + JF 1987 - DDK 1987

**The Shepherdess** + TB 1987 - DD 1985











The Squire JF 1987 - LH84 - TB 1987

The Thin Man JW 1985 - JF 1987 - JF 1988









**Toby Philpot** 

unknown characters JP 1987 - MD 1987

### **United Artists**

USA

distributed by Royal Orleans



© U.A backstamp



**Inspector Clouseau** 



**Pink Panther** 

### Victoria China

England - fine bone china

these ones differ from Francesca thimbles, in that their finish is matt

The cats or dogs or owls thimbles often resemble each other in shape, but the colouring is so different that the animals are easily identifiable – they are not named so these are my own descriptive names

Are there ten cats, six owls and 27 dogs?

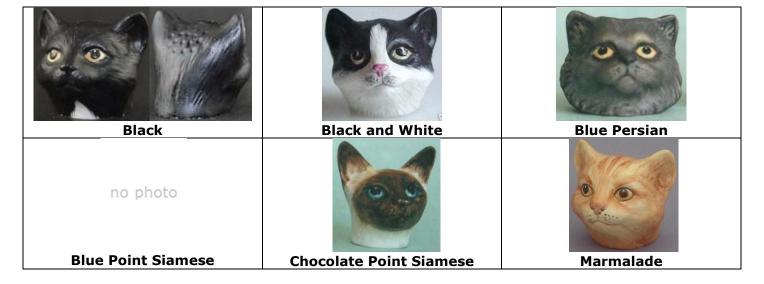
See also the dogs and cats under Francesca and Country Design Studio, which are a later version than the Victoria China animal thimbles

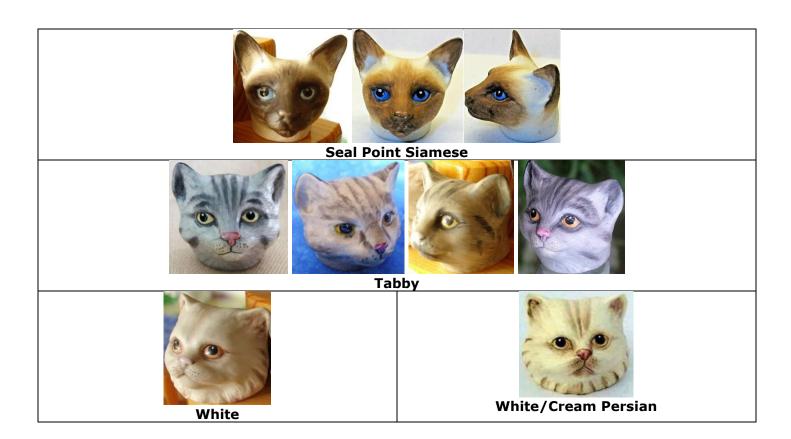
Victoria China owls are immensely popular with owl collectors as their owls are so realistic, using the matt colours found in nature



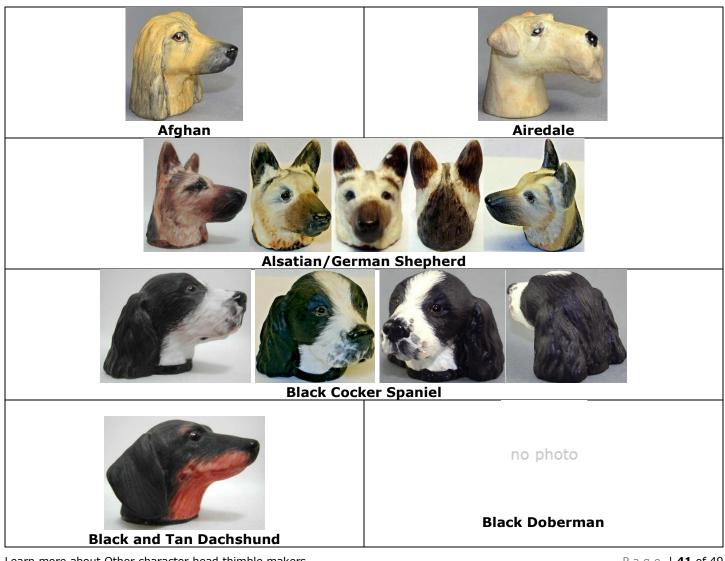
backstamp

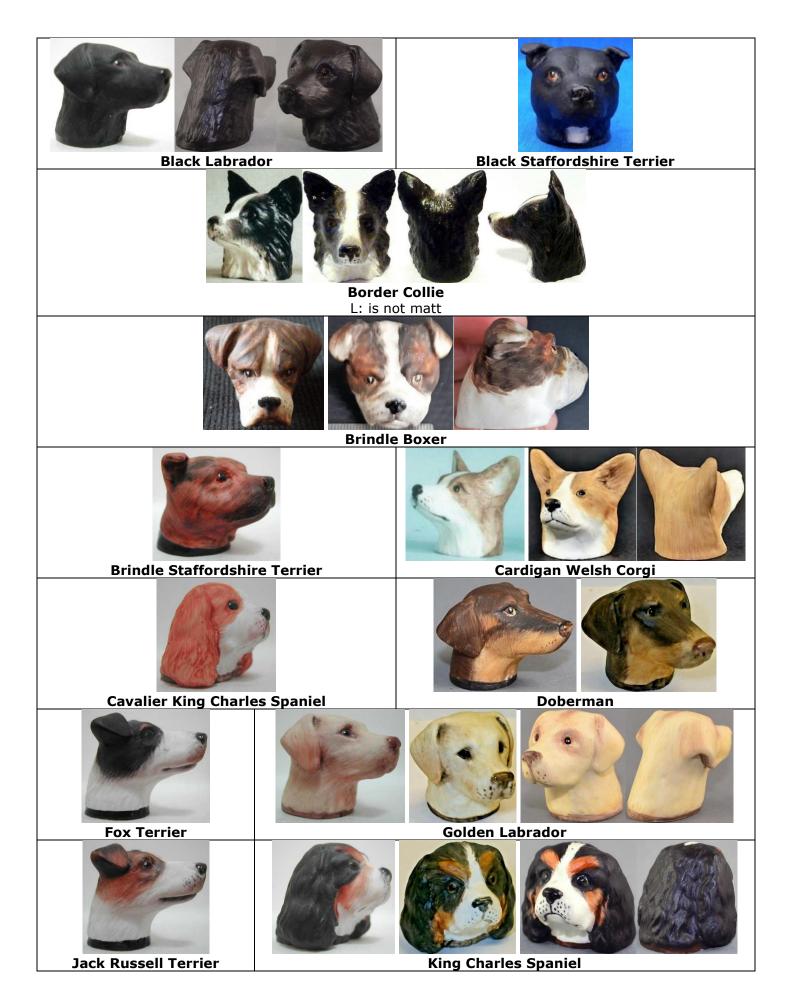
#### Cats

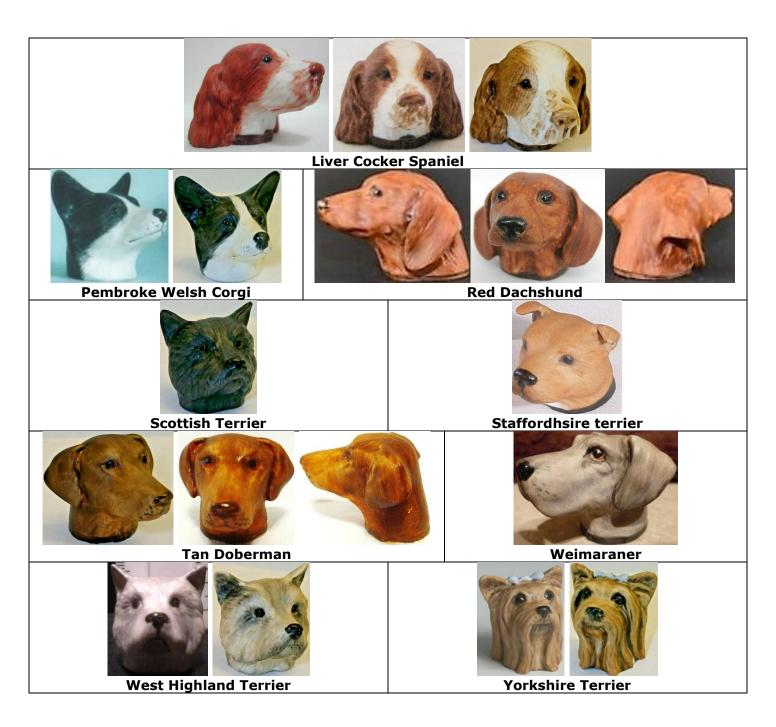




Dogs some of the dogs have black rims amazing eyes!

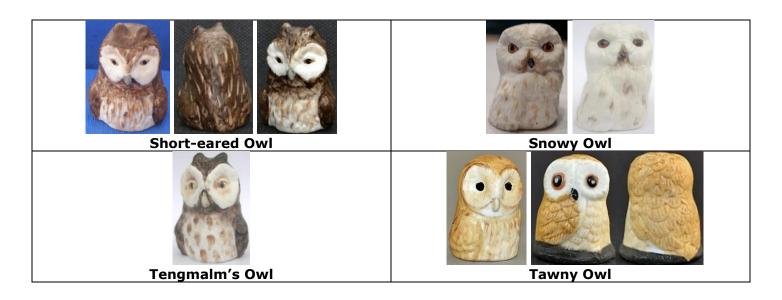






### Owls





# © The Walt Disney Company

Japan – porcelain



1988 The Disney Collection label series was updated in 2005



Snow White	Tramp

# The Welsh Porcelain Company

Wales
handpainted
they could have been part of Prinknash Pottery?



backstamp



Miner

### **Beth Wick**

USA handpainted porcelain



Pom Pom clown 1985

### **Wood Potters of Burslem**

Staffordshire - England

these thimbles were sold by The Thimble Guild, from 1988-1992

They are made of pottery and follow the shape of the 18th century Toby Jugs. Wood Potters of Burslem is a continuation of the line of Wood Family potters

Similar but earlier designs may be seen under Tony Wood

The Miniature Classics set "In the 18th century Ralph Wood created the 'Toby Jug'. From his original designs, twelve miniature pieces have been recreated in the 1992 edition of Traditional Toby Thumbles ... Wood Potters of Burslem ... Slipcast and handpainted collectors' treasures for you" -- excerpt from The Thimble Guild catalogue

Six painters' initials recorded to date – many are similar names for the Tony Wood thumbles CG [1992] – DB – JF [1992] – JW [1992/1993] – LH [1992] – SH [1992/1994]



Toby Jug Thumble Collection

this set contains: Parson | Collier | Ralph Wood | The Lover | Martha Gunn | Hearty Goodfellow | Squire Sailor | Thin Man | Shepherdess | Toby Philpot

so this is another set with some different Wood Potters characters from the set/s below?





backstamps - with TTG certificate

### **Miniature Classics**



**Betsy Toby** 



The Clerk + JW 1992



**The Collier** + JW 1992



**Falstaff** 



**The Gamekeeper** + CG 1992



**The Haymaker** 









**Hearty Goodfellow** + JF 1992

**The Lover** + JW 1992







**Martha Gunn** + JW 1992 -SH 1992







**The Musician** + JF 1992 -JW 1992

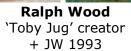








+ JW 1992







**Toby Philpot** 

### **Dickens characters**



selection of most popular and familiar Dickens characters including Uriah Heep, Oliver Twist, Pip and Ebenezer Scrooge

The list of **Contributors** may be found on Francesca and other character head thimbles

© Sue Gowan February 2002