

# Charles Iles *The ...* thimbles and boxes

## Birmingham England

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Charles Iles maker's mark

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

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

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

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

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

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

For other Charles Iles' thimble topics see:

Iles' handpainted and decaled plastic thimbles

# CHARLES ILES "THE ..." THIMBLES with BOXES

## THE BOUDOIR



**The Boudoir Thimble**  
N°.3



**The Boudoir**



**The Boudoir**  
in *The Boudoir Thimble* box  
N°.3



**The Boudoir**  
with maker's mark

## THE CUPID



**THE CUPID**  
with ENGLAND lettered above  
decal on celluloid finger guard



**THE CUPID**  
with ENGLAND lettered above  
decal on ivory



**THE CUPID**  
with no lettering above

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



**THE CUPID**  
 blue plastic



**THE CUPID**  
 post-WWII pink plastic (long indentations)



No. 630 - 3'6 per dozen

**THE CUPID**

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

**THE CUPID** in original box – with internal  
 lettering

WARRANTED ILES'S IVORINE

from the Iles catalogue



**THE CUPID**

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

**THE CUPID** in original box – with no internal  
 lettering

this would be the later box of the two



'The Cupid' plush heart shaped case  
R<sup>D</sup>210332 - 11 January 1892



from the Iles catalogue

### THE "DORCOID"

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

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

Why couldn't this competitor be Charles Iles?

there are no maker's marks on these thimbles

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



THE "DORCOID" 7



THE "DORCOID" 6



THE "DORCOID" 7

**THE DOROTHY**

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



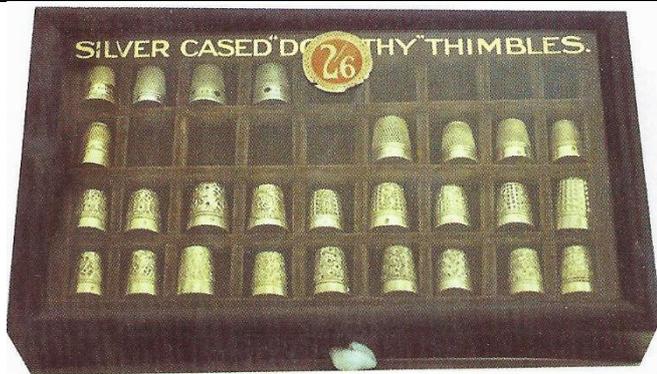
**The Dorothy**  
with Iles maker's marks



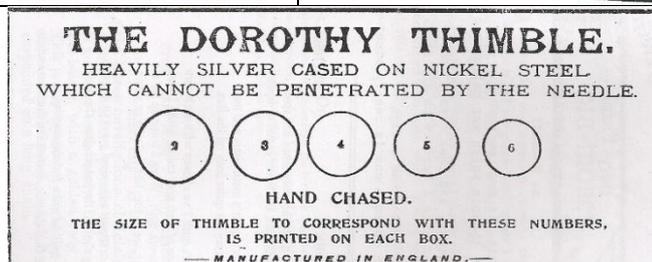
**The Dorothy**  
brass, where the nickel has worn off  
there are no maker's marks



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



**THE DOROTHY THIMBLE**  
HEAVILY SILVER CASED  
HAND CHASED  
N° 24 0/8  
MADE IN ENGLAND



**THE DOROTHY THIMBLE**  
advertisement



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

**THE HERCULES**



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

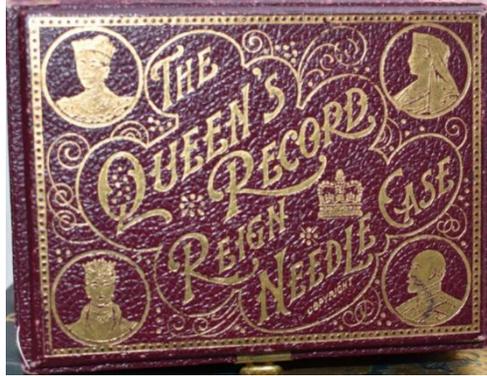
**THE "QUEEN'S RECORD" THIMBLE ...**

according to Thimble Society of London  
this thimble was made to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897  
Iles registered his "The Queens Record Thimble" display case for shop counters as RD 291339 on  
2 January 1897, the year of the diamond jubilee



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

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



**THE QUEEN'S RECORD REIGN NEEDLE CASE**

This case shows four monarch's busts including Queen Victoria and Edward VII, which dates it to 1902-

**THE STUDIO**



**The Studio**



**The Studio Thimble**

N°.4

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



**The Studio Thimble**

N°.4

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



**The Studio Thimble**

box

N°.4

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

**THE TREASURE**



**The Treasure**

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

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

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

## LE SOUFFLE



### LE SOUFFLE

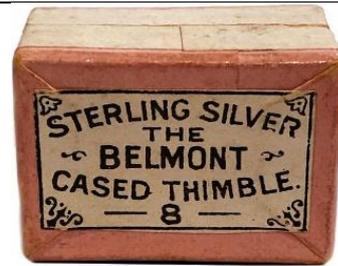
sticker: includes R<sup>D</sup> N<sup>o</sup>. 138883  
purple velour bellows-shaped thimble holder

## THE BELMONT

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



SILVER CASED  
**THE BELMONT THIMBLE 9**



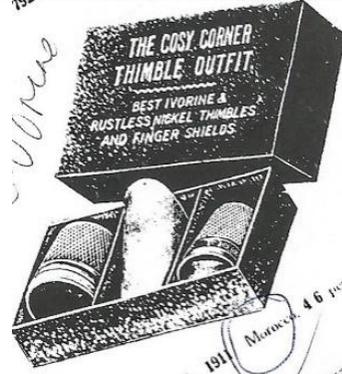
STERLING SILVER  
**THE BELMONT CASED THIMBLE 8**

## THE CORONET THIMBLE OUTFIT



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

### THE COSY CORNER THIMBLE OUTFIT



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

### THE FAIRY BOX



THE FAIRY BOX  
R<sup>D</sup>176058  
SILVER CASED THIMBLES - Iles' TRADE MARK  
gold velour box  
original Iles thimble

**THE FAIRY SLIPPER**



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



gold plush slipper



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



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

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



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

### THE LATEST NOVELTY



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

### THE PING-PONG BAT



RD 392430  
1901

### THE THREADER THIMBLE



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

# OTHER CHARLES ILES' **NAMED** THIMBLE BOXES AND CASES

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



COROZA SILVER THIMBLES  
with matching thimble  
N° 4

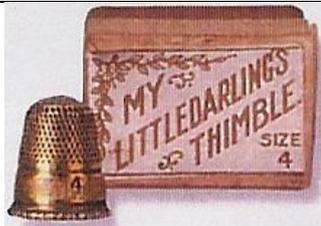


DARLING'S THIMBLE  
with small thimble  
SIZE 4  
ENGLAND



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

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



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



"OUR PETS" THIMBLE  
SIZE 4  
ENGLAND



SILVER CASED THIMBLE



INDIAN CHASED

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## References

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

## Contributors

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This listing of Charles Iles "The" thimbles and thimble boxes does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects.  
Rather it invites comments and contributions to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

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