

# Alfred Bromet (AB&C<sup>o</sup>) thimbles 1893-1910

## including the Empire thimble

I have come across yet another Victorian-early Edwardian thimble 'maker' who never created a thimble. The marks for Alfred Bromet (AB&Co) were registered by Henry Griffith & Sons. They commissioned HG&S or Charles Horner to make thimbles bearing their maker's marks.



Alfred Bromet and Co of 38 Jewin Street, from 1890 in London were wholesale jewellers and importers of fancy goods. They commissioned thimbles from 1893-1910. Their marks were registered with the Chester (May 1883-1908) and Birmingham (1887-1902) assay offices.

According to Holmes (1991) their premises were burnt down in the great Cripplegate fire of 1897. They rebuilt in 1899 with showrooms for silver on the first floor. Bromet had retired in 1890, tho the remaining partners continued with the business. They closed in 1910.

There are a few clues as to why I know that Henry Griffith & Sons were one of two makers of AB&Co thimbles:

- HG&S had unique thimble sizing. Their sizes are 13-20, which is smallest to largest and usually coincides with the internal millimetre of the thimble. All Bromet thimbles have this sizing too.
- HG&S registered a Provisional Patent for Non-slip thimbles. Several Bromet thimbles bear the marks PROV.PAT NON-SLIP. The patent was taken out by Frederic Griffith in 28 October 1904 (No.23236).
- On 5 May 1900 Frederic Griffith registered an unnamed thimble design R<sup>D</sup>.356898. This thimble is rare and has become known as the Empire thimble. One example has been recorded with an AB&Co maker's mark.

The other Chester thimble maker commissioned by Bromet was Charles Horner. These can be distinguished by the size numbers as Horner-made thimbles have the sizing 1-11 for largest to smallest diameter. They also have his R<sup>D</sup>210800 (Princess May design) marks on the rim.

### Birmingham AB&C<sup>o</sup> thimbles



1899 #13

**Chester AB&C° thimbles**



1893 #10  
R<sup>D</sup>210800 (Horner)



1895 #10  
(Horner)



1895 #10  
(Horner)



1895/1899 #14 #15



1896 #7  
R<sup>D</sup>210800 (Horner)



1897 #17  
PROV. PAT NON-SLIP



1900 #14



1900 #11  
(Horner)



1900 #14



1900 #14  
R<sup>D</sup>171259  
(registered by Griffith 12 May 1891)  
known as his Dorothy pattern



1901 #13  
blackberry



1903 #14  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1903 #15  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1904 #17  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1905 #17  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1905 #16  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1906 #14 #15  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1906 #16  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1906 #16  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1908 #14  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1908 #16  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1908 #14  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1908 #15  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1908 #14  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



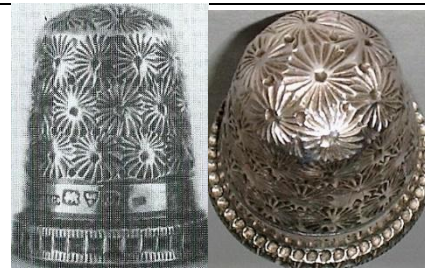
1909 #14



1909 #17  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP



1909 #15  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP

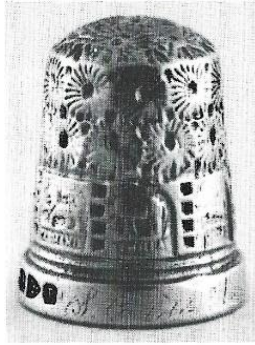


1909 #14  
PROV.PAT NON-SLIP

## Empire thimbles

Whilst researching *Thimbles of Australia* in 1997, it was an exciting discovery when I came across a previously unrecorded commemorative thimble for sale. This was in The Thimble Society of London (TSL) winter 1989 catalogue. The rarity of the thimble is reflected in the price of £390.

### VERY RARE COMMEMORATIVE THIMBLE



(582) This thimble is also unrecorded to our knowledge. It shows emblems of the British Commonwealth. Elephant with India (raised letters) Crown – England, kangaroo – Australia, Maple leaf – Canada, Lion – Tasmania, Impala – Natal, 2 Stars, – Illegible letters, Around the rim is Pat. No. RD 356898, size 15, Hll Mk AB & Co, Ches. date letter R for 1900.

£  
390.00

According to Bradbury's book of Hallmarks. According to the Birmingham Assay Office, in previous years date letters were changed mid-year, Chester's date letter in July. So a 1900 Hll Mk could denote an event in 1901. Queen Victoria died January 1901. This thimble was probably brought out to commemorate Edward VII's coronation. He was to have been crowned in 1901 but owing to illness the coronation was postponed until 1902.

*Thimble Society of London winter 1989*

After seeing an example in the collection of the Embroiderers Guild of Victoria's thimble, I realised that there were several small errors in the 1989 description above.

In describing the design as containing 'emblems of the British Commonwealth', this is incorrect. The Commonwealth only came into being in 1926. The emblems represented the British Empire so I have referred to this rare thimble as the Empire thimble – a name that has stuck until today.

In the advertising description above, there are seven emblems representing the senior countries of the Empire. They are:

India (elephant) – England (crown under a lion) – Canada (maple leaf beaver on a log) – Australia (kangaroo) – Tasmania (lion) – Natal (impala two wildebeest or gnu) – two stars with no country assigned (New Zealand four stars for Southern Cross)

It is strange that there are two emblems for Australia. One represents the country, the other one of the states, Tasmania. Tasmania only used a lion as their emblem from 1917. There was no emblem for South Africa, only the emblem for one of the provinces, Natal. The Cape was the far older British state, so why was Natal chosen?

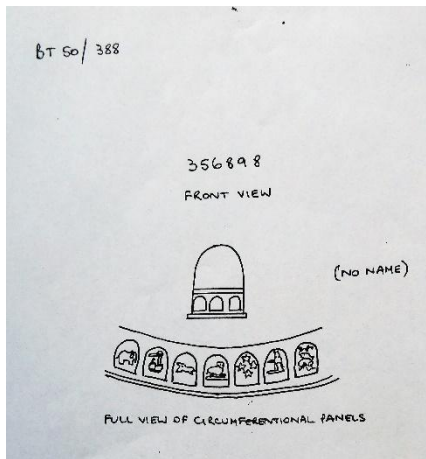
With two emblems representing Australia on this thimble it had to be included in my book. You will find this thimble entered under Henry Griffith & Sons, not Alfred Bromet & Co.

There is an assay date for Chester 1900 and R<sup>D</sup>356898 with a size mark 15 on this thimble. Faint engravings of an owner's name can just be made out. The maker's mark of AB&Co is relevant to this topic - no other examples of the Empire thimble have come to light with this maker's mark.

All other Empire thimbles have the maker's mark for HG&SL<sup>TD</sup>. Just five examples are known (AB&Co and HG&S). They have three assay dates: 1899, 1900 and 1901. All these dates were before the TSL commemorative conclusion that this could be a coronation for Edward VII.

It is interesting to speculate why no further thimbles were struck outside these dates?

From further research, I learnt that the unnamed RD was registered by Frederic Griffith, Henry's son. The design was registered on 5 May 1900. The emblems are named circumferential (sic) panels.



unnamed emblems: India - England - Tasmania - Natal - New Zealand - Australia - Canada

These thimbles are so rare that I will record all examples for posterity.



AB&C<sup>o</sup> Chester 1900  
 R0356898  
 daisy pattern upper half  
 name inscribed in italics on band  
 upper: example sold by TSL 1989 #15  
 lower: AB&Co Chester 1900 #13



HG&SL<sup>TD</sup> Chester 1899 #15  
 R0356898  
 stylised daisy pattern upper half



HG&SL<sup>TD</sup> Chester 1899 #13  
R<sup>D</sup>356898  
mixed pattern upper half

## AB&C<sup>o</sup> needlework tools



1906 Birmingham crochet hook (top)

## References

- Elizabeth Aldridge *Thoughts on thimbles: Gadget and patented thimbles*. 1985  
Susan Jean Gowan *Thimbles of Australia*. 1998  
Edwin Holmes *Charles Horner and the Chester marks* [Thimble Notes & Queries](#) autumn 1991  
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Norma Spicer & Diane Pelham Burn *British registered design thimbles*. 2003  
*The Thimble Society of London* winter 1989

## Contributors

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This listing of Alfred Bromet thimbles does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects. Rather it invites comment and contribution to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

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November 2023