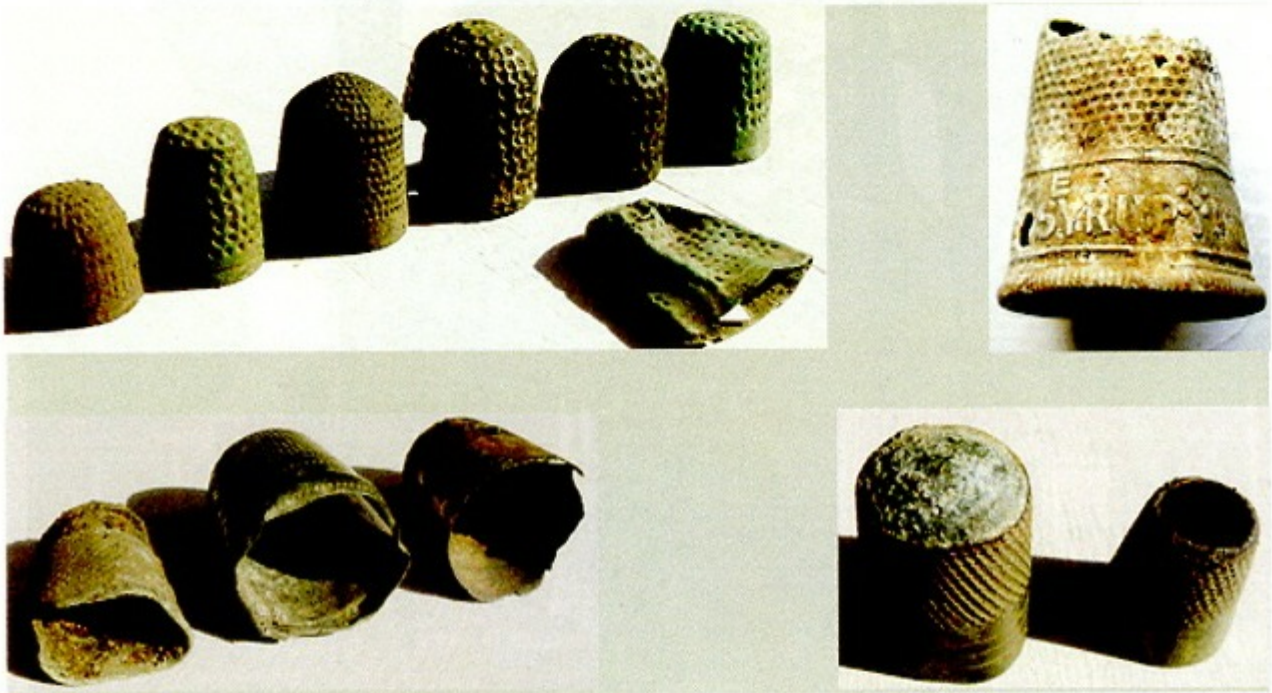


### The need for tiny thimbles

In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century sewing and knitting were taught as a drill in Standard I, because it promoted dexterity and disciplined movement, and was deemed to be useful for boys whatever trade they later pursued. The manual published in 1881 had the aim of teaching every child to stitch a neat seam and to cast on with large knitting needles within a matter of weeks.<sup>11</sup> They knitted woolen comforters to wear round their wrists. A 'Thimble Drill' was taught and for this thimbles were handed out. Every child had to learn to raise the second finger of the right hand whilst bending the others (difficult for a small child as the manual admits), before lifting the thimble with the left hand and placing it on the finger. The manual is of interest as it shows that the smallest thimbles were worn by boys as well as girls.



Top left: (a) Group of early cast bronze thimbles. Crushed brass thimble.

Top right: (b) 20th-century aluminium advertising thimble, originally enamelled.

Bottom left: (c) Steel-reinforced thimbles. Steel crown (left); steel lining visible (centre); detached steel lining (right).

Bottom right: (d) Adult and child's thimble, the latter without its steel crown.

(Photos: author)

### Thimble manufacture

With the exception of a 1930s aluminium thimble advertising 'Seager's Mother Indigestion Syrup' (Illustration 8b), all the thimbles are of copper alloy. The six earliest examples are cast bronze with spiral indents drilled by hand and date to the 16<sup>th</sup> century or earlier (8a). Four fit a male finger. Others are of thin-gauge sheet brass with stamped indents and are cheaply produced. Twenty seven per cent are reinforced with a steel crown and two specimens have a steel lining (8c, d). In 1885 the up-market thimble manufacturer, Charles Horner of Halifax, took out a patent for steel-cored silver thimbles. The brass thimbles from the Green are likely to have been manufactured in Birmingham. Some are of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>-century shape and the bi-metallic construction may have inspired Horner, and seems not to have been patented. Few thimbles from the Green are duplicates; clearly the thimbles were made - and separately lost - over a period of some 500 years.

### Conclusion

Capel St Andrews lost its church in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It never had a school, or shop or pub. Even its