

# Stratnoid thimbles and other tools

What are Stratnoid thimbles made of? They are made of an aluminium alloy, called **Duralumin**. The aluminium [90%] makes them light and easy to use for sewing, the alloy [copper 4%, magnesium and manganese] makes them strong and durable. Duralumin was first used during World War I, which was used for washers in the aeroplane industry.

These thimbles were produced in their millions in Birmingham from 1922-1941. According to the newly found book written in 1960, 45,000 Stratnoid thimbles were made in World War II, until 1941 when the factories were bombed. They lost four of their five factories. They did not return to making thimbles after that loss of machinery.

There has been much controversy as to the makers of these thimbles. That should now (in 2013) read, as "who these thimbles were made for" \*\*. Two names stand out above the others - Laughton & Sons and the pin-maker firm of Stratton. In an article in *Thimbletter* Lucile Whiting wrote about her large thimble-shaped card on which were mounted Stratnoid thimbles. The card has the initials L&S Ltd Birmingham. I quote the reply by Edwin Holmes to this information in *Thimbletter*:

"Her 'Stratnoid' card proved to bear the initials L&S Ltd and also the mention of Birmingham. This evidently tied up with the Laughton & Sons name mentioned in my *History of Thimbles* and given further clue of its location. It was then a simple task to trace them. Laughton & Sons are plastics and fancy good manufacturers and they were originally known as Jarrett, Rainsford & Laughton after the founders. This accounts for the initials J.R.& L. which I saw once on another 'Stratnoid' thimble card. Moreover, they also had an office in London which went under the name of Stratton & Co. This accounts for Stratton & Co. being listed as thimble-makers in the London trade directories from 1922 to 1941 where they were described as the owners of the 'Stratnoid' trademark. The Co. no longer makes thimbles though the 'Stratnoid' trademark is still very much their own".



example of the thimble-shaped card

Further information supplied by Edwin Holmes is the address of Stratton & Co - 3 Hamsell Street London EC1.

\*\*The blanks for the Stratnoid thimbles were made by Charles Iles and later by Iles & Gomms of Birmingham. \*\*

The standard design for Stratnoid thimbles is plain indentations all over, with a plain band where the lettering is. There is a wide variety in size of the plain band, even in the same sized Stratnoids.

What makes these thimbles different from most other English thimbles is their size marks. There are two numerals – one at each end of the name of the maker’s mark: ie double sizing. No-one has yet suggested the purpose of this double sizing. The range of sizes makes them very popular with sewers, especially those with larger or very narrow fingers and the sizing is very consistent. The sizings are

- 0-12 - 18mm diameter
- 1-11 - 17mm diameter
- 2-10 - 16mm diameter
- 3-9 - 15mm diameter
- 4-8 - 14mm diameter
- 3-9 - 13mm diameter



DIFFERENT BAND WIDTHS ON SAME SIZED STRATNOIDS 0-12

Examples have also been sighted of thimbles that have a completely smooth apex - is that a just a case of poor quality control? Have you seen a similar example? The apex doesn't appear to have been tampered with or worn smooth with use.



SMOOTH-APEX STRATNOID

The most commonly found Stratnoid colour is silver, but the following colours exist in various shades: green, gold, pink, blue.



GREEN - GOLD - PINK - BLUE - ANODISED STRATNOIDS  
THIMBLE ON LEFT MADE BY ILES & GOMMS – MUCH LATER – DOUBLE SIZE 5-7

The rarer Stratnoids have an all-over daisy pattern or a diamond patterning. They are similarly marked with the brand name and sizes.



DIAMOND AND DAISY PATTERNED STRATNOIDS  
DOUBLE SIZES

These differently patterned Stratnoids only have single size numbering [5, 6 and 9] to the right of the Stratnoid name. The patterning on all these thimbles reminds me of Charles Iles' patterned thimbles. I have included an example of a thimble with identical patterning to Stratnoids, with Charles Iles marks, for comparison.

6 - 18mm diameter

Now that we know that Charles Iles manufactured Stratnoid thimbles, it makes sense now that the patterns are similar!



UNUSUAL DAISY PATTERNED STRATNOIDS  
MOST WITH SINGLE SIZE NUMBERS



PATTERNED CHARLES ILES THIMBLE [C]  
SIMILAR PATTERN TO STRATNOID THIMBLE [L]  
BRASS THIMBLES [R] HAVE SIMILAR DOUBLE MARKINGS TO STRATNOID THIMBLES

I have only encountered a few Stratnoid cardboard thimble boxes - and that's what collecting is all about - the chase. With the word "Engraved" on the box, presumably this box was only meant to hold the patterned Stratnoids? What do you think?

A recent find is the black thimble box on the Left, which is earlier than the more commonly found blue thimble box. The lettering is very worn but reads "Stratnoid Hand Engraved Thimbles"



STRATNOID BOXES  
32x24mm



THE VARIETIES OF STRATNOIDS - ALL SIZE 0-12

There have been other similar thimbles to the Stratnoids, in design and made of aluminium alloy. The lettering, tho, is KBC with a size number alongside. This stands for Kirby Beard & Co. They were also made in England. Did Stratnoid/Iles make them for KBC?

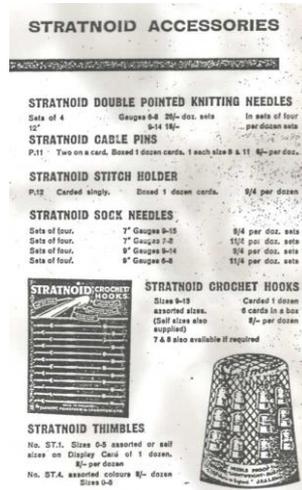


KIRBY BEARD & CO SIZE 6

## HABERDASHERY STRATNOID ITEMS

From early advertisements it is evident that Stratnoid made more than thimbles

- double pointed knitting needles
  - cable pins
  - stitch holders
- sock needles and
- crochet hooks



example of these adverts

Information is coming to light all the time that broadens the range of haberdashery tools that were made with the name of Stratnoid. This includes button hooks, thread winders, knitting needle gauges and stilettos. Not only were there double pointed knitting needles but single point ones as well. Look into your sewing boxes and see if there is anything else I have missed.

**Button hooks** are marked 'Stratnoid' England



STRATNOID BUTTON HOOK

Aluminium alloy **Crochet hooks** in my possession are marked with the Pat No 151307. I have now been sent a link for this patent, dated 1920. Marvellous to have this next link in the chain!!

**Glove button hooks** are marked 'Stratnoid' England



STRATNOID BUTTON HOOK

## The Pat. No. 151307 Crochet hook

There are also the powdered-coated Stratnoid crochet hooks. Some of these hooks don't feature a size number.



(1) STRATNOID CROCHET HOOK with SIZE and PATENT numbers.



(2) STRATNOID CROCHET HOOK with PATENT number (no size mark) and a more defined knob.



(3) Powder-coated STRATNOID CROCHET HOOK WITH ITS HOOK COVER; size on other side – no Patent number.

Laughton & Sons first used duralumin for their **knitting pins** [known as jumper pins then] in 1919, when the company realised there was a peacetime use. This is a Stratnoid **knitting needles'** advertisement which appeared in *Vogue Knitting Book* 1950s-1960s. According to the book on Laughton & Sons, in the late 1950s, the Stratnoid Knitting Pins were marked with inch measurements. This turned each pin into a measuring ruler as well as a knitting pin. The slogan used for this was "Measure while you work". Some of their knitting needles were marked **Ladye Jayne**.

Stratnoid Knitting Pins have a glass-smooth fast working surface, solid heads that cannot come off, a neutral grey shade that does not tire the eyes and specially tapered and rounded points that pick up stitches easily and will not split wool. Competition winners use them - you should too.

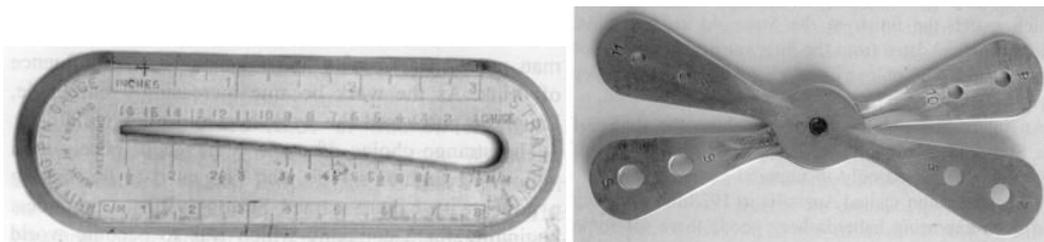
10" 12" & 15" 10 1/2 pair  
From all good wool shops.

**STRATNOID**  
- the *BETTER*  
**KNITTING PINS**  
ASK ALSO FOR STRATNOID CROCHET HOOKS

MRS. LAUGHTON & SONS LTD BIRMINGHAM 14

STRATNOID KNITTING NEEDLES

There are Stratnoid **knitting needle gauges**, which are quite rare. They are rectangular with rounded edges. Thanks to the new book on knitting gauges by Sheila Williams, we now have photos of the Stratnoid gauges. The other shape is not unlike their thread winder in the shape of a propeller and it too folds flat to close. Both are made of duralumin.



STRATNOID KNITTING PIN GAUGES

photos Sheila Williams

This is a Stratnoid combination **pincushion/string holder**. The lettering on the front is "Ask for Stratnoid Knitting Pins Crochet Hooks and Thimbles". It is not clear whether the "patent No 148021" refers to this item or not



STRATNOID PINCUSHION/STRING HOLDER

This is a Stratnoid **thread winder**. The winder is 108mm long and the 'arms' move, so that it folds closed when not in use.



STRATNOID THREAD WINDER

This is a Stratnoid **shoe horn**. This duralumin shoehorn with a suede backing which is used as a buffer for shining shoes, is housed in a leather hand sewn leather case. The case is lettered with gold thread T will ease the shoe and polish it too. The shoehorn folds out.



STRATNOID COMBINED SHOE HORN & BUFFER

This is a Stratnoid duralumin combination **shoe horn with buttonhook**. The buttonhook can fold away when not in use



STRATNOID COMBINED SHOEHORN & BUTTONHOOK

## FURTHER STRATNOID HISTORY & INFORMATION

More recently I have been approached to identify a Stratnoid **snuffbox** that has the RD design number 767198 [for mid-1920s]. I can find no trace of this design number. Other non-sewing items include buckles and **powder compacts** and the latter have the same RD no.767198. Was the snuffbox misnamed?

There is a link with Stratnoid and Australia and this is thru Rainsford, one of the original partners in England. A Rainsford factory was opened in Sydney in 1928 and they produced single-point knitting needles, knitting needle gauges etc. For more information, see Sheila Williams' book. In 1947 the factory was moved to Kingsgrove, Sydney.

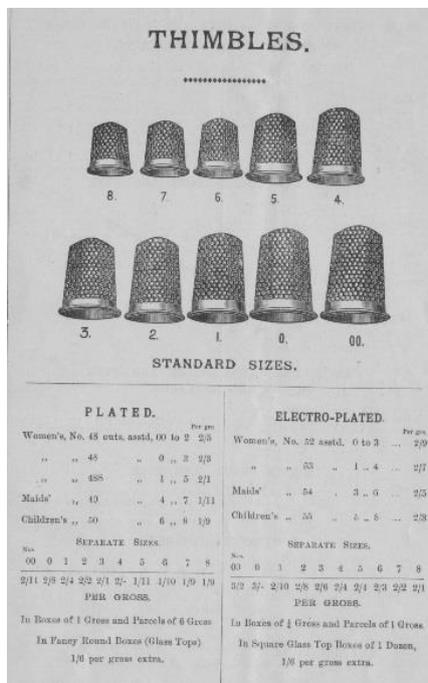
I understand from one of the apprentices in England at Laughton & Sons who was with them between 1972 and 1978 that during his time, there were other brand names produced by this family-owned company - Ladye Jayne and Twinco, which were from the plastic injection moulding section. The press tools section would have produced compacts and **cufflinks**. Factories existed in the USA and Australia, during his time. The company factory closed years ago but the building still stands today in Warstock Road, Warstock, Birmingham. The factory moved to this site in 1947 when their other factories were destroyed in Birmingham in 1941.

Having now read the history of Laughton & Sons, when I was able to buy the book in May 2008, written for the centenary of Laughton & Sons (1860-1960), this firm produced millions of items in the fancy goods line - a lot of men's jewellery, **hatpins** - and the haberdashery items, including the Stratnoid thimbles, formed a minute part of their production. For further information on this company, I hope you can find a copy of the book. During the war millions of **metal buttons** were made by the Laughton & Sons factory, amongst their war-time munitions output.

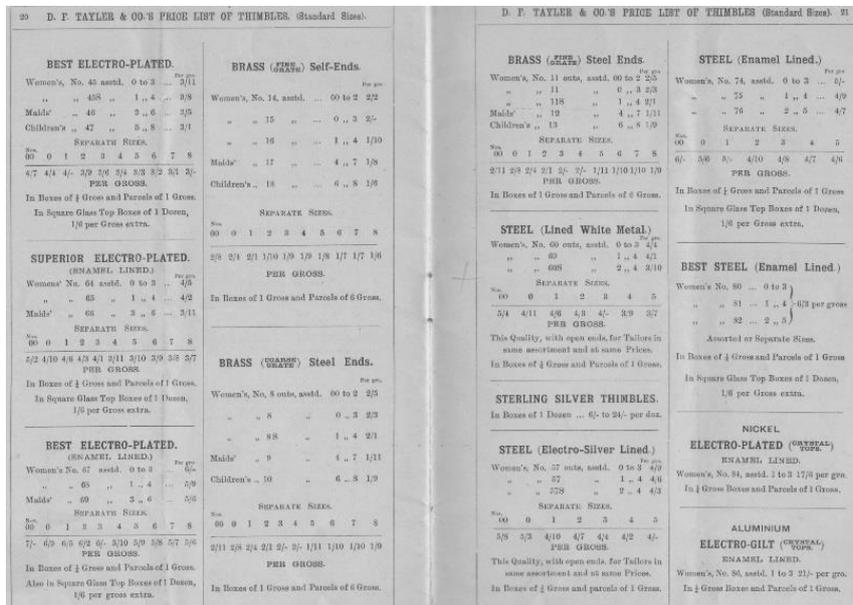
Brian Jowett recently contacted me in relation to Stratnoid and their previous company history. I quote "The original manufactured item of the Laughton Group were pins, provided in 1860 by Stephen Jarrett (40 year old, Pin Maker, from Mickleton, Gloucestershire) and Charles Rainsford (Commercial Traveller), with Manager William Law (previously pin maker with Edward Holt, Birmingham) in their premises at 7, Broad Street, Birmingham. Hair pins were added in 1904. By 1920, the Company amalgamated with Mr G A Laughton, (Haberdashery, Haircare and Jewellery), to form Jarrett, Rainsford and Laughton Ltd., with additions of Knitting Needles, Radio Receivers, and the Men's (Stratton) Jewellery range (Owned by Mr Laughton). (Stratton never made pins)."

Further I quote from Brian "Perhaps and additional connection to "Stratnoid" is that a company called "Syrolit" (later "Erinoid") who produced a form of plastic material, patented by a Victor Schutz in 1911, to make a material for Buttons, Combs and electrical equipment, often with the suffix "noid", which were familiar to Mr Laughton, and who also occupied the vacated factory of pin maker D. F. Tayler & Co, at Lightpill, Stroud. Syrolit focused their resources on developing the material whilst others such as Critchley Brothers (Knitting Needles) and Laughton (Thimbles) created the ultimate products."

Brian's interest in the name Stratnoid comes thru being the "Pin Manager" at D. F. Tayler & Co., who sold, throughout the world, "DORCAS" dressmaker pins, in the familiar blue and red boxes." Brian has shared the attached copies of the catalogue and price list for thimbles made in Birmingham by **D F Tayler** in 1888!! What a lovely find!! Wouldn't it be grand to be able to identify one of these thimbles today??



example 1 of these thimble catalogues



example 2 of these thimble catalogues

This is the beauty of hosting these *Learn More About ... Thimbles* topics. Interested people who have nothing to do with thimble collecting, are able to add to our body of knowledge.