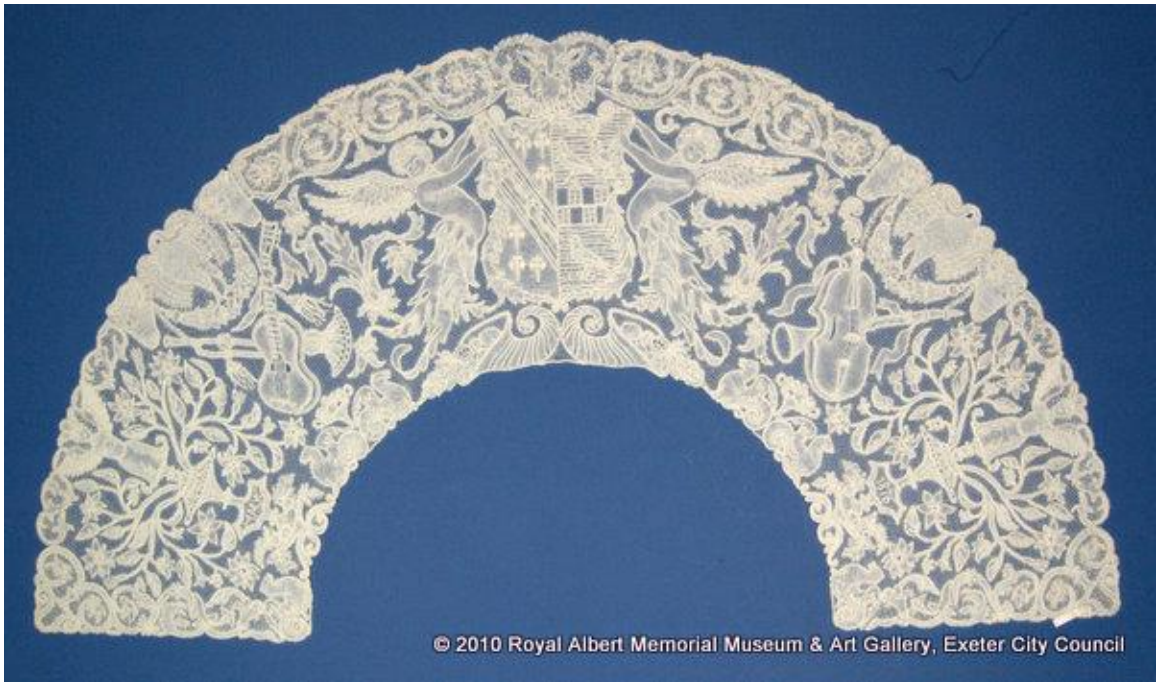
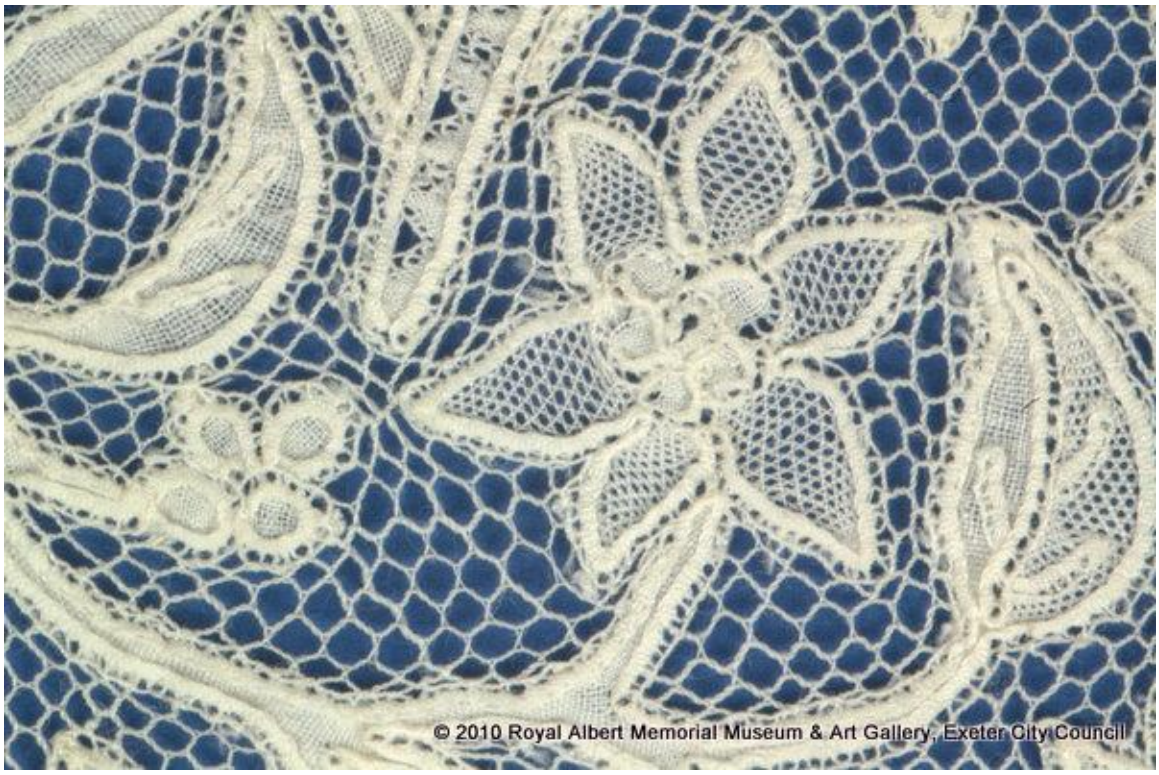
Identifying Hand-made Lace

DATS in partnership with the V&A





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Identifying hand-made lace

This booklet has been produced to accompany workshops of the same name held at The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, and The Burrell Collection, Glasgow in February 2013, and at The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle in November 2013. We hope to repeat the workshops at other museums. The workshop is one of a series produced in collaboration between DATS and the V&A, funded by the Arts Council England's Subject Specialists Network fund.

The purpose of the workshops is to enable participants to improve the documentation and interpretation of collections, and make them accessible to the widest audiences. Participants will have the chance to study objects at first hand to help increase their confidence in identifying textile materials and techniques. This booklet will share knowledge communicated in the workshops with colleagues and the wider public.

Other workshops/booklets in the series:

Identifying Handmade and Machine Lace (2007)
Identifying Textile Types and Weaves, 1750 -1950 (2007 & 2012)
Identifying Printed Textiles in Dress 1740 – 1890 (2007 & 2012)
Identifying Fibres and Fabrics (2012)

Front cover image: Fan leaf, designed by Thomas Kennet Were, East Devon, 1876, cotton. (© Royal Albert Memorial Museum, 24-1922)

Identifying hand-made lace

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Identifying hand-made lace

Introduction

> Lace is a versatile fabric for which there is no single comprehensive definition. In its most perfect form, it is a non-woven fabric constructed by the manipulation either of a single needle and thread or of a variable number of threads wound on bobbins. But this description takes no account of the grid-work of woven threads on which the earliest needle-made laces depended nor of the many net-based fabrics which traditionally have been accepted as lace: conversely it could be applied to other non-woven fabrics... This problem of technical definition is matched in any historical survey by the problem of scope; lace was both one of the most expensive of all fashionable textiles and one of the cheapest of home-made trimmings; on the one hand it was the sensitive indicator of the whims of fashion, on the other it was a slowly changing or even fossilized reminder of century-old styles. Between these extremes were almost as many varieties as there were social classes and regional differences.
>
> Santina Levey, *Lace – A History*, 1983

Lace can be challenging even for experienced textiles and dress curators. This booklet and the accompanying workshops have been developed to provide a starting point for colleagues to develop approaches to classifying, cataloguing, and interpreting their collections for their audiences. The workshops are intended to provide a balanced view, presenting the practical expertise of lace-makers and historical knowledge of curators working with lace collections. By studying examples of lace at the workshop, participants will begin to learn to do the following:

- distinguish common lace types and some stitches and techniques
- distinguish true laces from other forms such as crochet
- undertake simple documentation of different types of lace
- understand best practice in handling, storing and displaying lace.

After completing the workshop we hope that participants will be able to approach the identification of lace with greater confidence. We would welcome feedback on the workshops and the booklet, which we plan to modify in response to comments.

Jeremy Farrell's booklet from his 2008 workshop provides a helpful companion guide to machine-made lace.

Jenny Lister (ACE liaison officer, DATS and Curator, Textiles and Fashion, V&A)
Caroline Whitehead (Northern rep, DATS, and freelance curator)

Portrait of a Woman with a Book
Jean Voile, French, 1764, Oil on Canvas
(©The Bowes Museum)

Identifying hand-made lace

A guide to hand-made lace

Jean Leader

Development of lace and identification problems

By the end of the sixteenth century lace had become an important part of fashionable dress. Vast sums of money were spent over the next three hundred years on this essential element of high fashion. Portraits showing lace in meticulous detail show how important it was as an indication of status and wealth. The spur of having to keep up with changing fashion meant that there was constant development and refinement of styles and techniques. This is one reason why the identification of lace is complex.

Another problem in identifying hand-made lace is that even when styles and techniques became unfashionable they did not disappear completely, but often continued to be made. A vogue for collecting old lace of every type and description in the nineteenth century led to their resurgence in fashion. This nineteenth century passion for antique lace also saw old pieces being taken apart and re-modeled in both old and contemporary styles, sometimes with additional embellishments. In addition, copies of old laces were made, often so successfully that they are difficult to distinguish from originals.

Fibres used for lace

White or ecru lace from before about 1830 is probably made with linen. Silk, often coloured, and metallic threads were also used, but little of the early lace made with these threads survives. Through the nineteenth century cotton gradually replaced linen, while silk continued to be used and wool was occasionally used for novelty laces. Black lace, both in silk and in cotton, was very popular in the nineteenth century. A variety of synthetic yarns came into use during the twentieth century.

Techniques

The fashionable laces were the classic needle and bobbin laces, while embroidery, macramé, netting, tatting, crochet and knitting were also used to make lace. The earliest embroidered laces, and possibly macramé, pre-date needle and bobbin lace. The nineteenth century saw a renewed interest in early techniques, such as macramé and netting, to produce lace, usually for domestic use. The advent of machine-made net in the nineteenth century also led to new types of lace as the net could be embellished by hand or used as a base for applying needle- or bobbin-made motifs. Other popular nineteenth century laces combined machine-made tapes with needle lace.

When identifying a piece of lace deciding on how it was made, i.e. the technique (or techniques) used, is essential; this together with the fibre used, provides a fixed point, while features such as design and place of origin are open to debate. With so many possible techniques, a classification of some sort is needed and we will be using the Lace Classification System written by Rosemary Shepherd for the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, Australia, with her kind permission.

1. Embroidered laces

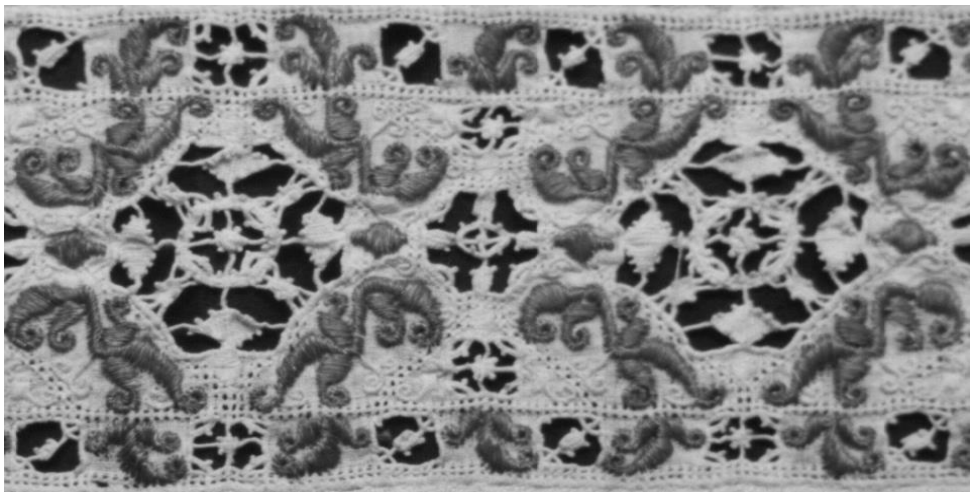
These are based on an existing fabric which is embellished in various ways.

Cutwork

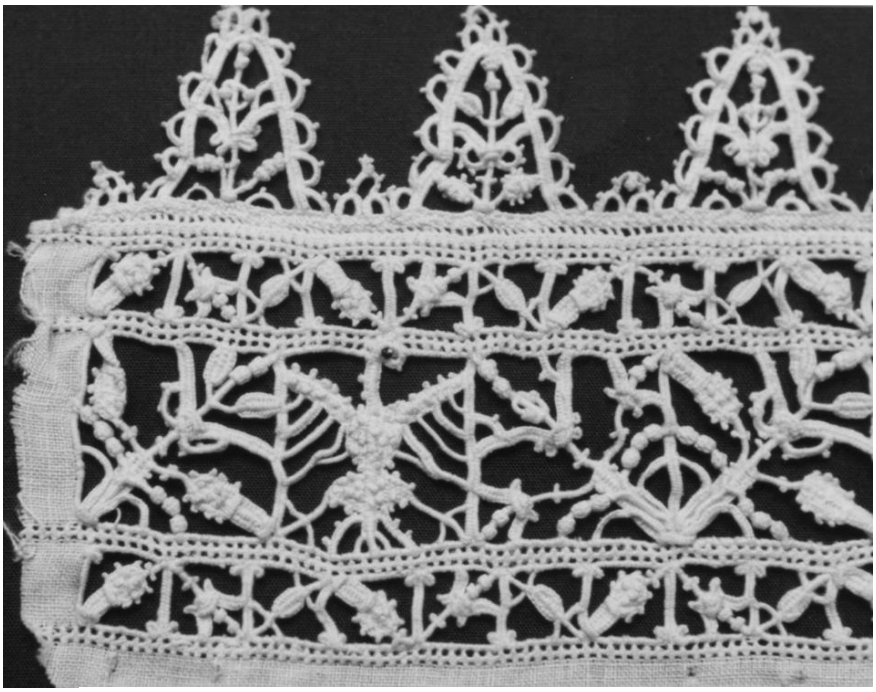
Reticella, Hedebo, Hardanger, Richlieu, Ruskin

With this technique holes are cut in an existing fabric with some threads left as a skeleton for working bars and other decoration with a needle. Indications are woven fabric with neatened cut edges and threads extending into the embroidery, grids of needlewoven lines and mainly geometric designs. Examples sometimes have dentate (zig-zag, teeth-like) points along the upper edge worked on a foundation of plaited threads — the start of needle lace.

The technique was probably first used in the early sixteenth century but continues to be used, so cutwork is difficult to date. The quality of the fabric, thread and work may be a guide — the better they are, the more likely an early date.



Cutwork, c. 1600 (© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, 1888.19.t)



Cutwork, c.1600 (© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection 1888.19.k)

Embroidered laces

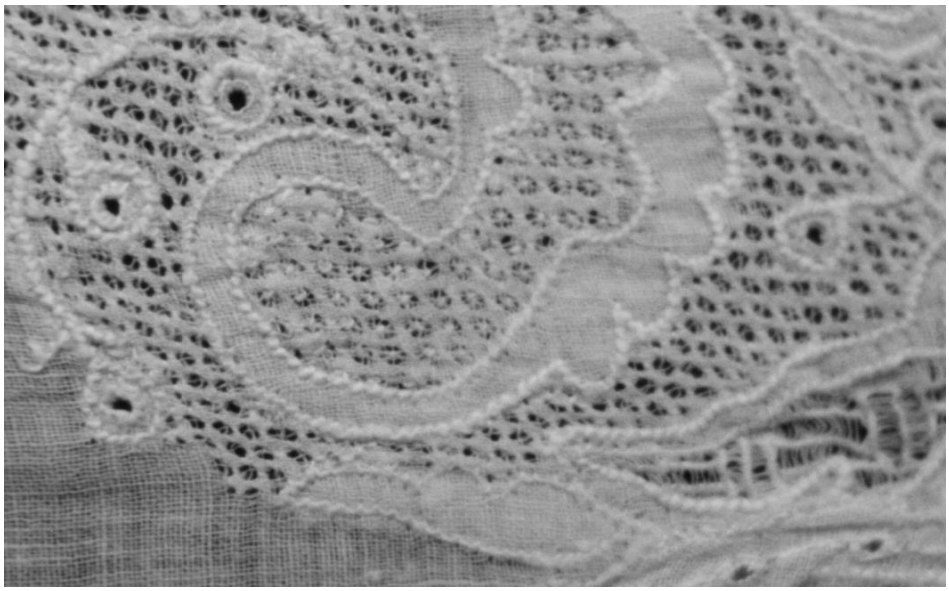
Pulled fabric and drawn thread work

Dresden and other embroidery

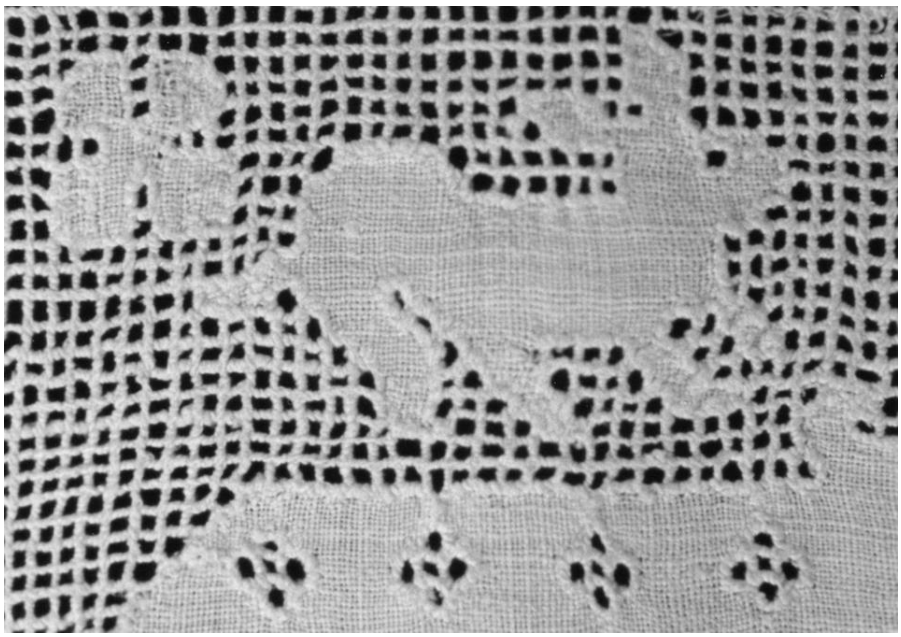
In pulled fabric work decorative stitches are worked tightly over groups of threads pulling them apart to form openwork patterns; the threads of the fabric are left intact. The finest work came from Dresden in the eighteenth century.

In drawn thread work some threads of the base fabric are removed and the remaining threads are usually whipped to make a grid with the remaining fabric forming the design. Italian drawn thread work (punto tirato) could be from the seventeenth century or much later as it continued to be made.

In some laces both pulled and drawn work are used.



Dresden work, c. 1750 (©CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection 1891.86.s(2) detail)



Punto tirato, 1600-1700 (©CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection 24.113, detail)

Embroidered laces

Embroidered nets

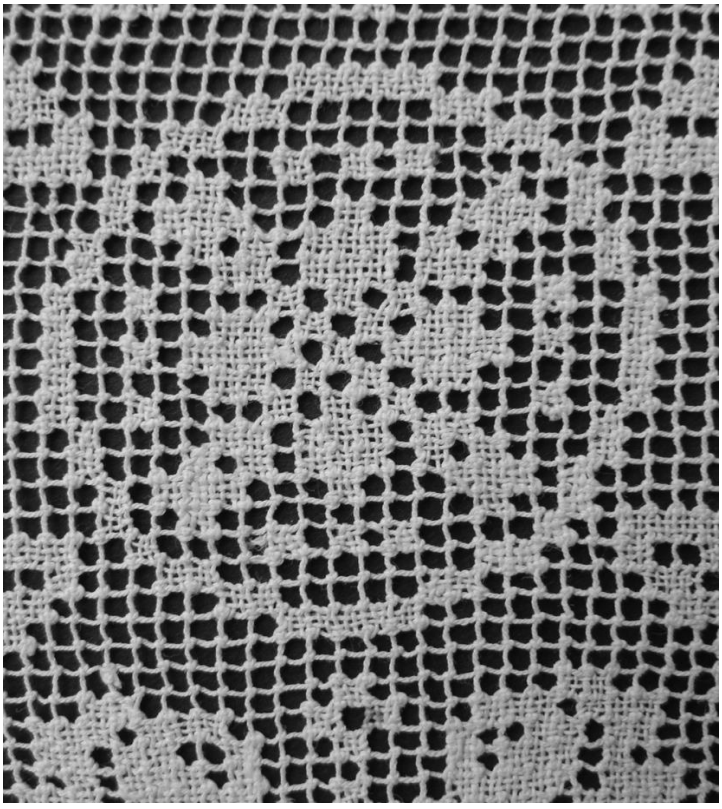
15th century onwards:

Filet, Lacis, Buratto

The early embroidered nets were usually worked with a hand-made knotted net (called *lacis* in Italian and *filet* in French) which is easily recognised by the knots at each corner of the square meshes. The design is darned into the net with thread running in and out of the meshes.

Filet (Lacis) was made from the fifteenth century onwards but by the eighteenth century its use was confined to rural communities. Its revival in the late nineteenth century when many of the old designs were copied makes dating difficult. At this time a greater variety of stitches were introduced and a more elaborate form of lace known as *Guipure d'Art* became popular.

Buratto (or Burato), a woven fabric with square meshes was also decorated with similar darned patterns, and in some drawn thread fabrics the design is made by darning in extra threads rather than leaving some threads in place.



Darned filet net, 1875-1900 (© J. Leader)

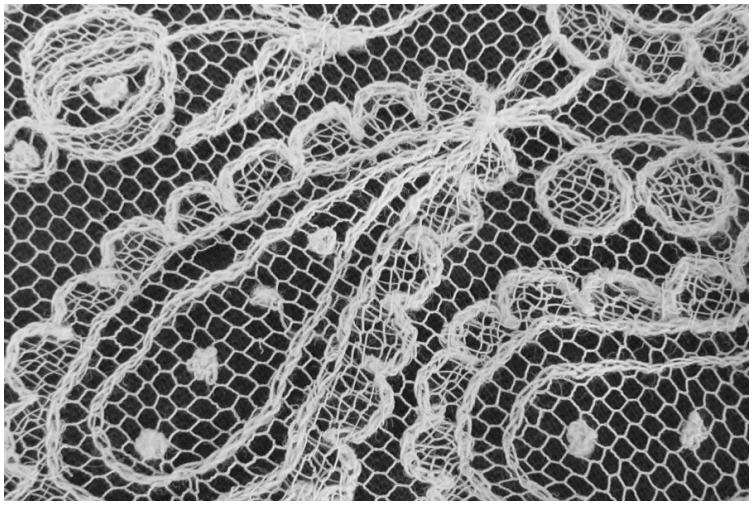
Embroidered laces

Embroidered machine made nets

c. 1810 onwards:

Coggeshall, Limerick, Lier

Decorated machine-made nets where the outlines of the design and the fillings are needlerun (with the threads running in and out of the meshes) or tamboured (chain stitch worked with a pointed hook) were made in Britain, France, Belgium and other parts of Europe.



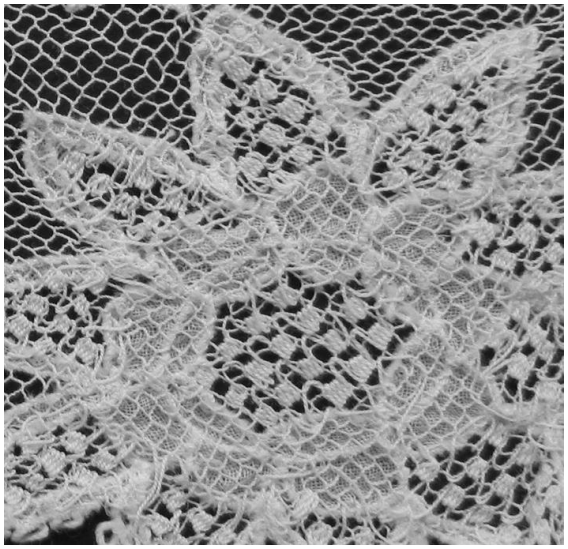
Limerick stole with tamboured outlines and needlerun fillings, 1850-1900
(© Lace Guild Museum AVC.108.2005)

Carrickmacross

In other decorated nets fabric is first appliquéd to the net along the lines of the pattern, then the surplus fabric is cut away leaving the net to be further decorated with needlerun stitches, and loops of thread, known as twirls, around the outer edge.

In Irish Carrickmacross lace a thick outlining thread is couched along the outline of the fabric areas, but in other similar laces chain stitch is used.

Carrickmacross, 1875-1900 (© J. Leader)



Detail of the back showing net over the fabric (muslin) and needlerun filling
(© J. Leader)

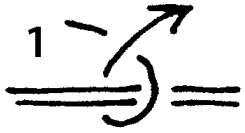
2. Needle-made laces

Needle-made laces are completely constructed textiles (i.e. they are not based on an existing fabric) which developed during the sixteenth century from techniques used in embroidered laces, particularly cutwork and drawn thread work.

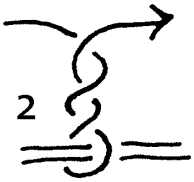
Buttonholed needle laces

These are the classic fashionable needle laces which form a very large group with styles that owed much to changing fashions.

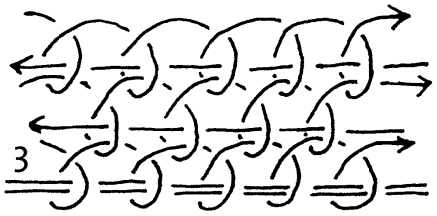
The basic unit is the buttonhole stitch (1)



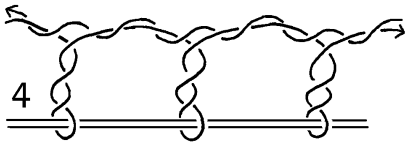
This can also be twisted (2)



Stitches can be packed closely together to give solid areas (3)

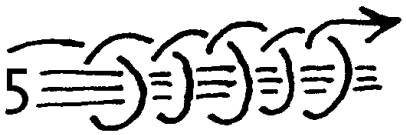


Or spread out to give a mesh (4).



Patterns can be made by missing stitches in a regular sequence.

Bars and outlines are threads covered with buttonhole stitches (5).



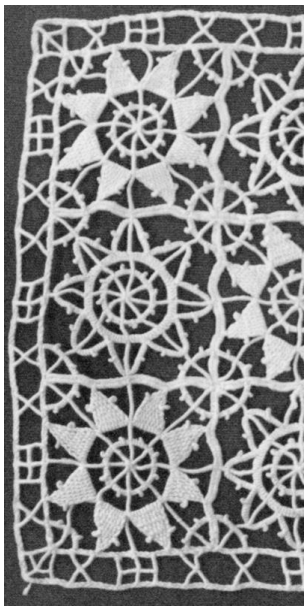
(© J. Leader)

To work the needle lace, foundation threads are couched down along the lines of the design. The design motifs are then filled with rows of buttonhole stitches, the ends of each row, worked over the foundation threads. The motifs are linked with short bars or a mesh ground of buttonhole stitches. The motifs may be further embellished by building up the outlines with padding threads held with yet more buttonhole stitches. The outline could also be decorated with picots (decorative loops).

Buttonholed needle laces

1600-1650

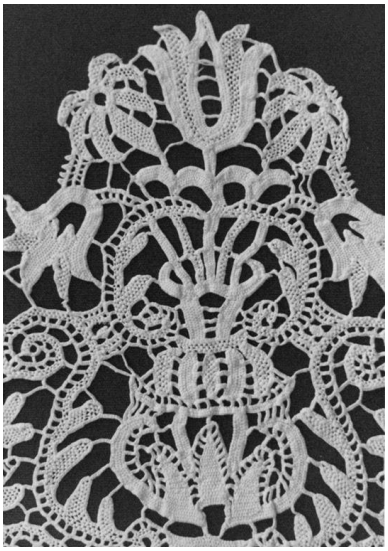
Reticella, Punto in aria



Reticella needle laces look very similar to cutwork but were worked on a grid of plaited or couched threads instead of a fabric grid.

The next development was *Punto in aria* (Italian for 'stitches in the air') where the patterns had move away from the rigidity of grids and the designs could flow freely.

Reticella, c.1600
(©CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection 1889.22.a)



Punto in aria, 1600-1620
(© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection 1888.19.a)

1650-1700

Venetian Gros Point, Venetian Rose Point, Venetian Point de Neige, Venetian Flat Point, Point de France

The next stage in the development of needle lace was adding patterns to the solid areas and the extravagant decoration of the edges of the design motifs. In *Venetian Gros Point* lace the patterned solid areas were worked with tightly packed twisted stitches and the edges of the motifs were padded with shaped bundles of threads covered with buttonhole stitches, and further decorated with a variety of picots. The patterns in the solid areas were made by leaving spaces between the twisted buttonhole stitches. The motifs were sometimes linked with short, irregularly placed buttonholed bars, or were simply joined where they touched.

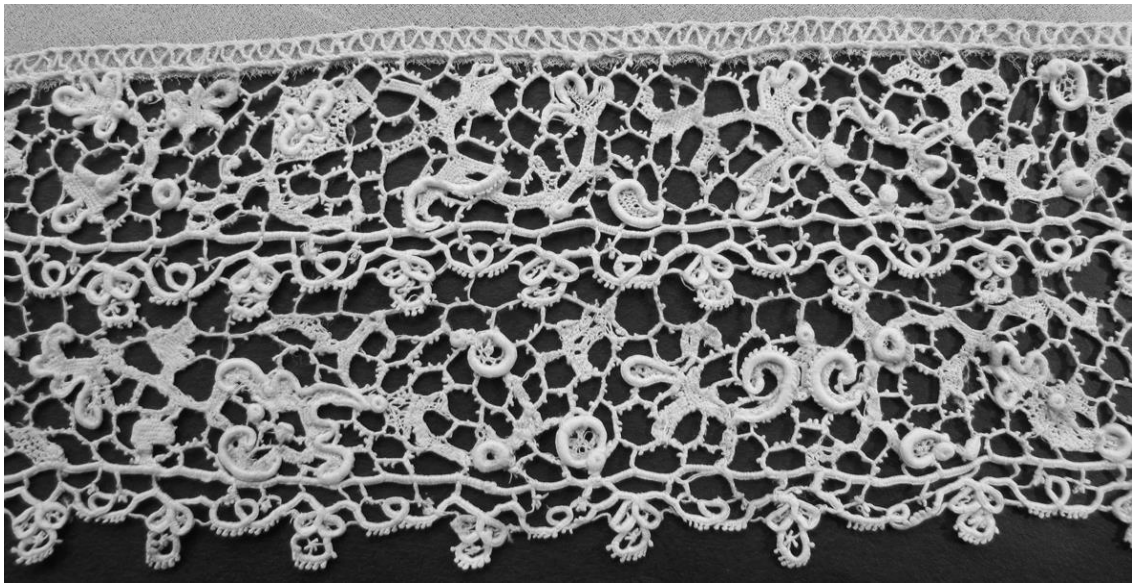
The heavy lace was not suitable for all purposes and other laces with similar but lighter designs were also made — *rose point* ('rose' meaning' raised') and *point de neige* (where the design was almost hidden under frills of picoted rings). A flat needle lace without padded edges (*point plat*) was also made.

Venetian Gros Point,
1670-90
(© CSG CIC Glasgow Museum, Collection E.1978.56.12)

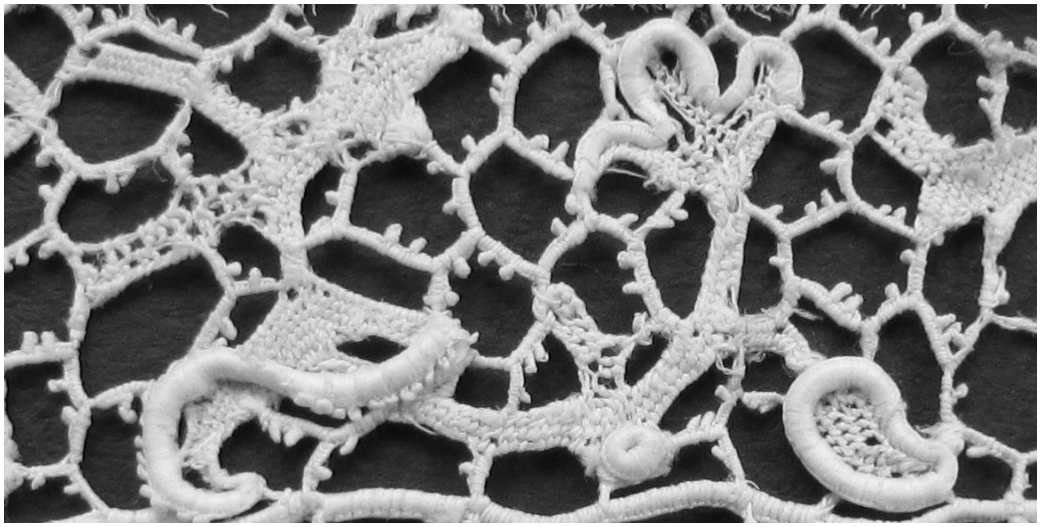
Buttonholed needle laces

Point de France

Towards the end of the seventeenth century efforts to establish the French needle lace industry in Alençon resulted in the development of a new style of lace, which became known as *Point de France*. In this lace the design is made up of small motifs often arranged round a vertical axis, linked by buttonholed bars decorated with picots. The motifs are mainly flat but some padded outlines closely covered with buttonhole stitches are used to emphasize the design.



Point de France border, 1670-90
(© J. Leader)



Detail of Point de France border
(© J. Leader)

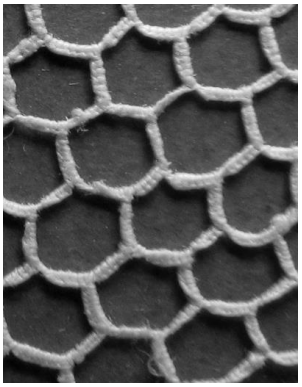
Buttonholed needle laces

1700-1900

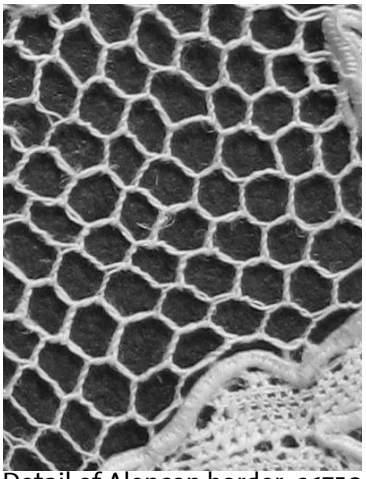
Alençon, Argentan

By 1730 mesh grounds had become increasingly important in French lace designs. Initially the areas of ground were relatively small and Argentan, a regular mesh of buttonholed bars was used.

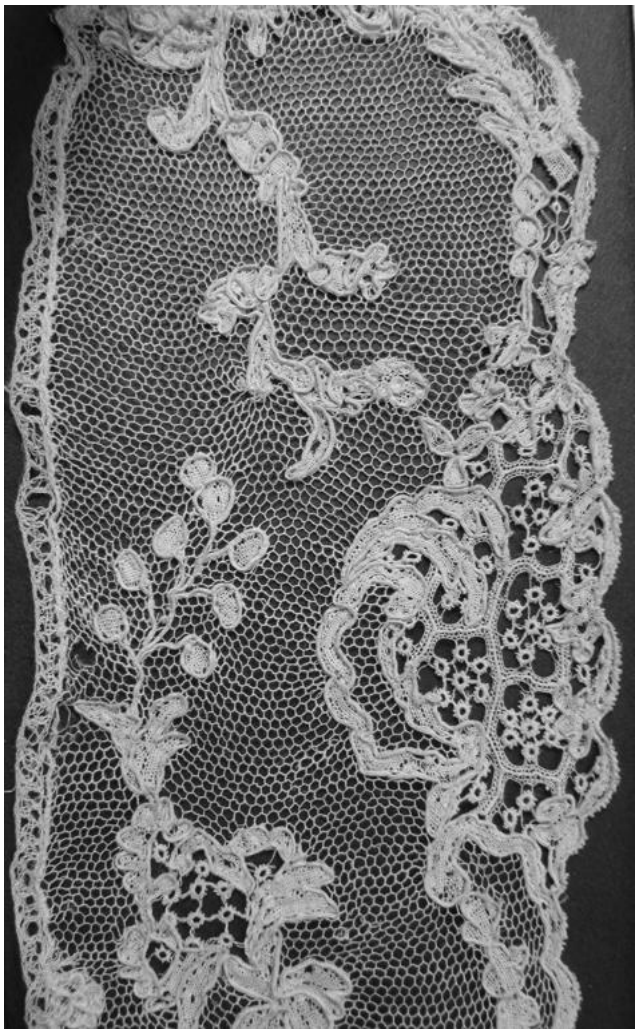
Towards the mid-eighteenth century Alençon ground, a mesh of much smaller twisted stitches was used. Lace designs also changed with larger areas of ground and a pattern that flowed from side to side of the lace.



Argentan ground, c.1700
(© Lace Guild Museum GF.121.1999)



Detail of Alençon border, c.1750
(© J. Leader)



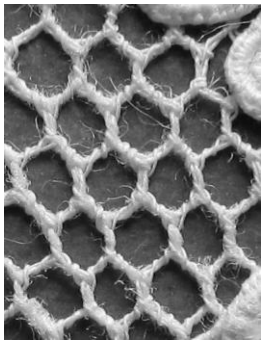
Alençon border, c.1750
(© J. Leader)

Buttonholed needle laces

1700-1900

Alençon, Argentan (continued)

By the end of the century the designs were lighter with the pattern area confined to the headside and small spots or motifs in the ground. Tortillé ground where the twisted stitches are reinforced by whipped stitches was often used.



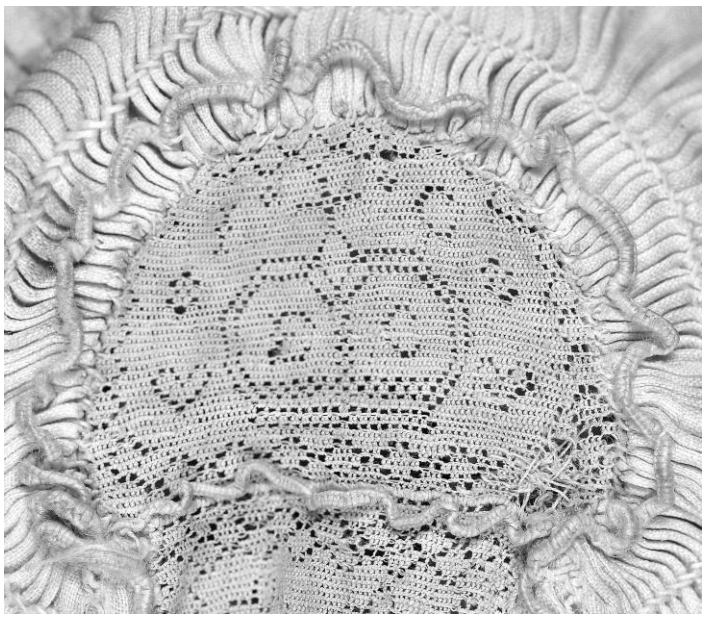
Tortillé ground

For French needle laces the raised outlines of the design were covered with tightly packed buttonhole stitches and areas of filling stitches were common. Alençon lace continued to be made during the nineteenth century — some superb pieces were produced but many of the smaller edgings were stiff reproductions of earlier designs.

Buttonholed needle laces

1700-1800: *Hollie Point*

Hollie Point is an English needle lace found as insertions in baby clothes, christening sets, and other clothing from the early eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. It is completely flat with no raised edges, and the designs are traditional ones depicting flowers, birds, animals, geometric shapes and sometimes incorporate text. They are built up by leaving spaces between the tightly worked twisted buttonhole stitches (like the patterns in Venetian Gros Point fillings).

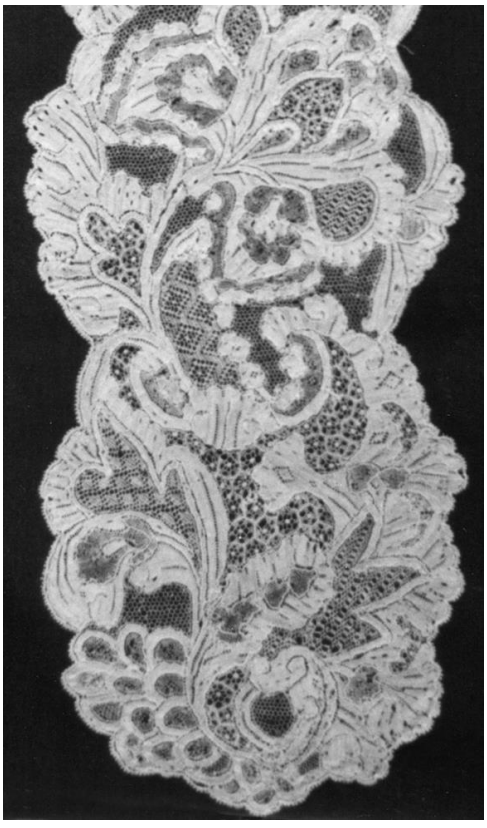


Hollie Point insertion in a baby's cap, 1750-1800
(© The Bowes Museum 2007.1.1.289)

1700-1900: *Brussels, Point de Gaze*

The designs of eighteenth century *Brussels* needle lace were similar to those used in France but the lace tended to be softer and was often completely flat with no raised edges

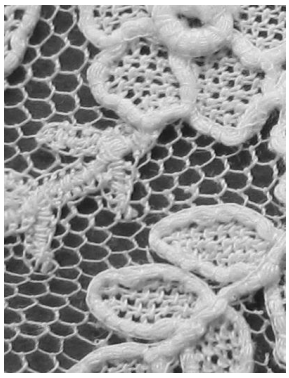
As the area of ground in the needle lace designs increased the bobbin-made drochel ground was often used instead of a needle lace ground (see Mixed Laces). Brussels needle lace continued to be made during the 19th century often combined with bobbin lace and/or mounted on machine-made net.



Brussels needle lace, 1730–1740
(© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection 24.111)

Buttonholed needle laces

Point de Gaze, a new style of needle lace which appeared after 1850, is easily recognized by its floral designs with the distinctive roses, often with extra petals to give a three-dimensional effect. The ground is worked with stitches in both directions, unlike Alençon ground. The outlines are padded but the stitches around them are spaced out, not tightly packed as in the French needle laces.



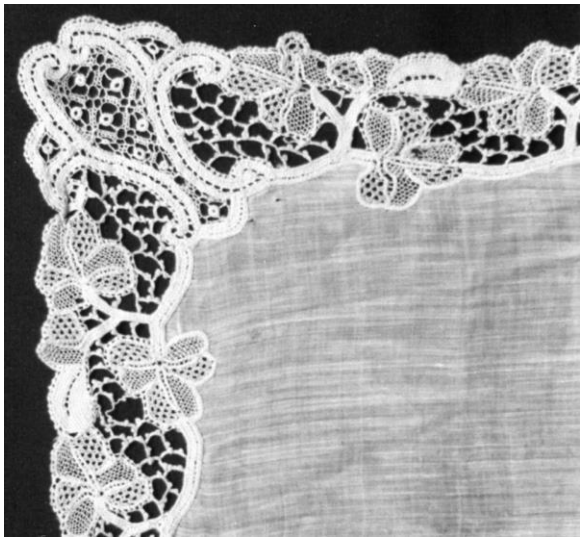
Point de Gaze border, 1875-1900, and detail showing ground and motif outlines with spaced stitches (© J. Leader)

1800-1900

Youghal, Inishmacsaint, Kenmare, New Ross, Burano

During the nineteenth century needle lace was made at various centres in Ireland. A new lace characterised by motifs with a distinctive edging of buttonholed loops, a variety of fillings and a ground of bars decorated with picots, was developed at the Presentation Convent in *Youghal*. Reproduction needlelace in eighteenth-century style was also made in Youghal and heavier laces inspired by seventeenth- century Venetian needle laces were made at *Inishmacsaint*, *Kenmare* and *New Ross*.

The Italian centre of *Burano* made both reproduction needle lace and lace in nineteenth-century style, as did other centres in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

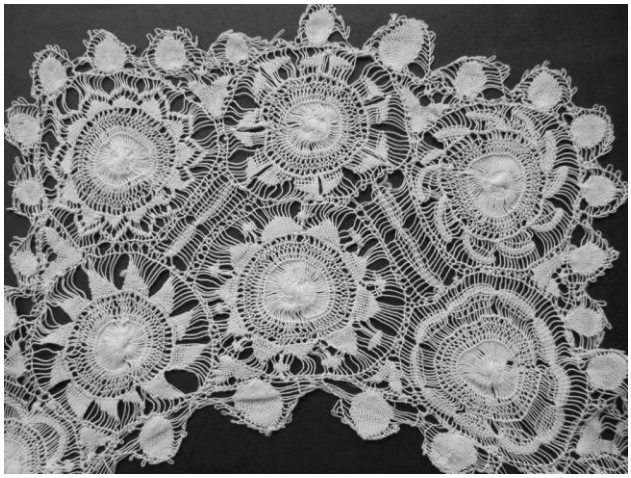


Youghal border, c. 1900
(© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, E1979.169.78)

Needle woven and knotted needle laces

Tenerife, Nanduti

These distinctive laces are made up of circles of radiating threads into which patterns are woven with a needle. The circles can be made separately and then joined. However, more elaborate articles, such as collars and wide handkerchief borders, are worked in one process on a pattern of the complete piece.

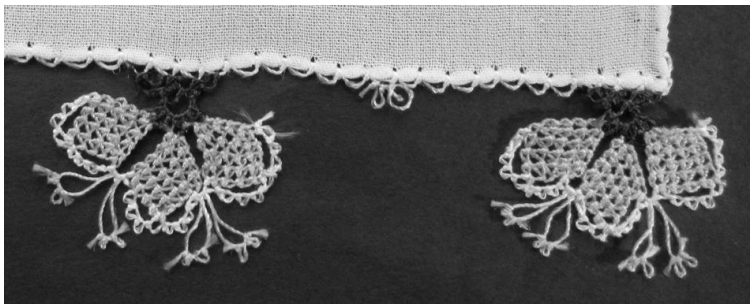


Part of a Tenerife collar, 1875-1900 (© J. Leader)

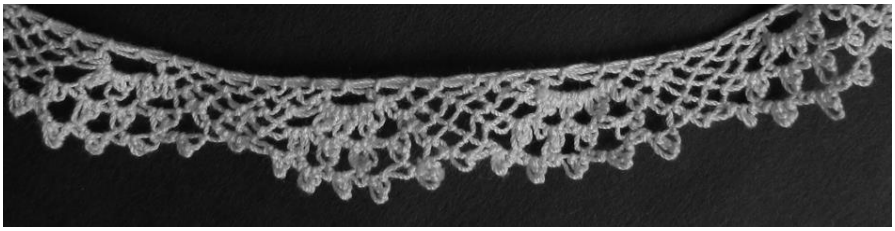
Knotted needle laces

Puncetto, Bebilla (or Bibila), Armenian and a variety of other names

The name *Puncetto* seems to be associated with northern Italy, the others with the Eastern Mediterranean area. There are local variations in the patterns and how the stitches are made. Knotted needle laces are not worked on a pattern, instead the first row of stitches are worked into fabric or over a bundle of threads. Subsequent rows of stitches are then worked into the previous row in a similar way to crochet.



Bebilla flowers, Turkish, 1975-2000 (© J. Leader)



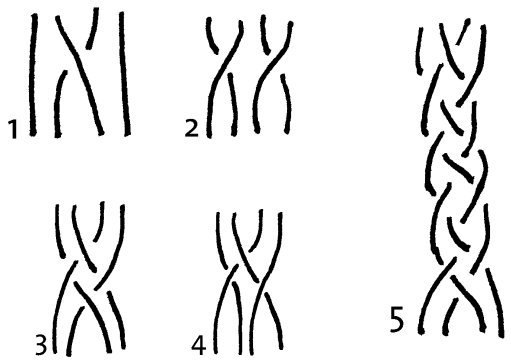
Knotted needle lace border, 1900-2000 (© J. Leader)

3. Bobbin laces

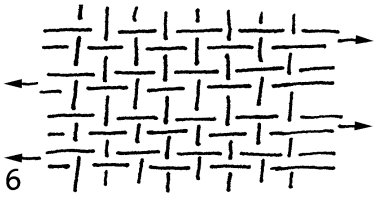
Passementerie or braidmaking techniques are the most likely fore-runners of bobbin lace which developed in the early sixteenth century.

Bobbin lace is made with multiple threads, each wound on to a separate bobbin and is worked on a pattern attached to a firm pillow. The stitches which involve two pairs of bobbins i.e. four threads, are held in place as they are made with pins pushed through the pattern into the pillow.

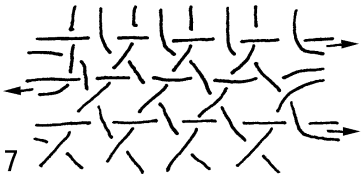
The basic moves are cross (left over right between pairs, 1) and twist (right over left within a pair, 2). Working cross, twist, cross gives cloth stitch (3) and cross, twist gives half stitch (4). Working several half stitches with the same two pairs gives a plait (5).



The pattern areas which may be outlined with a thicker gimp thread are usually worked in cloth stitch (forming areas which look like woven cloth, 6) or half stitch (giving a more open effect, 7) but more elaborate filling stitches are also used.



Weaving one thread of a pair under and over its partner and the threads of another pair gives a small solid shape known as a tally (8).



Pattern areas can be joined where they touch, linked by plaits or by one of many mesh grounds.

Bobbin laces

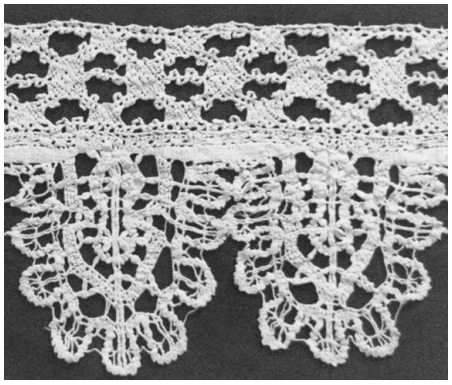
Continuous or 'straight' bobbin laces

In these laces the motifs and background of bars or meshes are made in one continuous process.

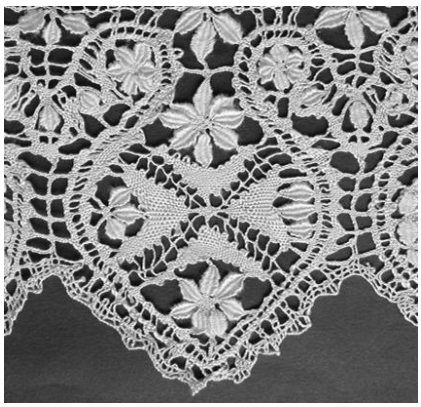
Continuous laces with the pattern motifs linked by bars (guipure laces)

Genoese, Maltese, Le Puy, Cluny, Bedfordshire

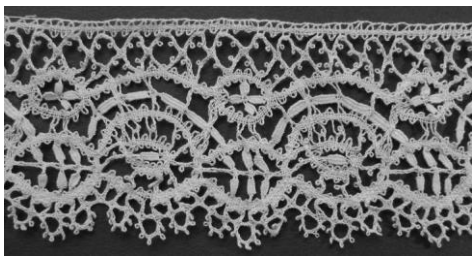
Features of these laces include trails in cloth stitch, plaits and tallies (also known as wheatears). In the seventeenth century laces patterns are often geometric and can be similar to those used for needlelace. This style of lace was not fashionable during the eighteenth century but became popular in the second half of the nineteenth century when it was made in many lacemaking centres. Nineteenth century designs can include areas of mesh grounds as a filling. The headside may be decorated with a ninepin edging (an arrangement of plaits and picots). Maltese lace was usually made with black or cream silk in designs that almost invariably included the Maltese cross and often featured large numbers of fat tallies.



Genoese, 1600-1625
(© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, 1891.86.g(2))



Maltese, 1875-1925
(© J. Leader)



Bedfordshire border, 1875-1925
(© J. Leader)

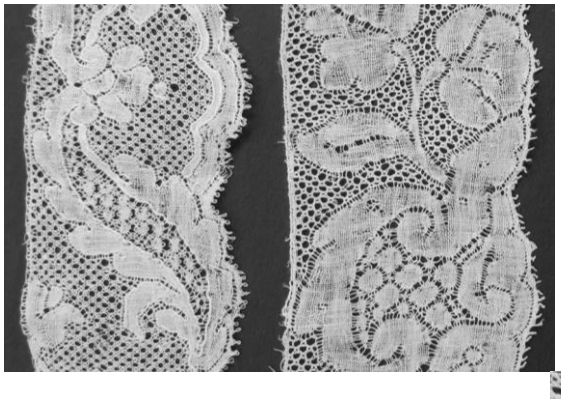
Le Puy border, probably 1875-1900
(© J. Leader)

Bobbin laces

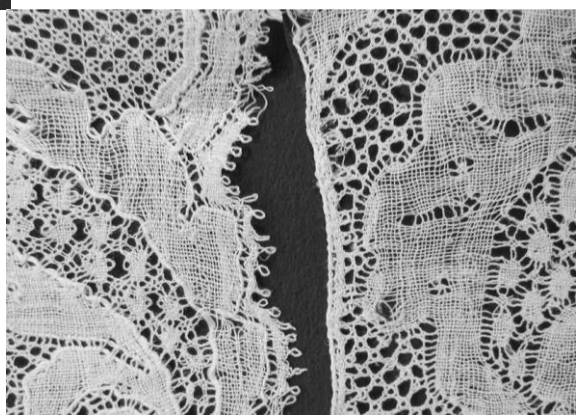
Continuous laces with a mesh ground

Valenciennes, Mechlin, Lille, Bucks Point, Blonde, Chantilly, Torchon

During the eighteenth century the designs for Mechlin and Valenciennes lace were usually very similar despite the differences in technique described below. In the early eighteenth century both laces were quite dense with decorative grounds in the small spaces between the motifs, but in the course of the century the space between the pattern motifs and the area of ground gradually increased.

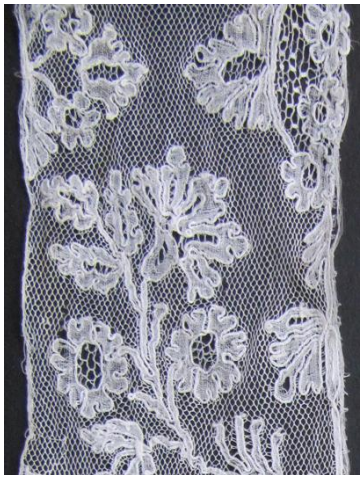


Mechlin (left) and Valenciennes (right) borders, both c. 1750 (© J. Leader)

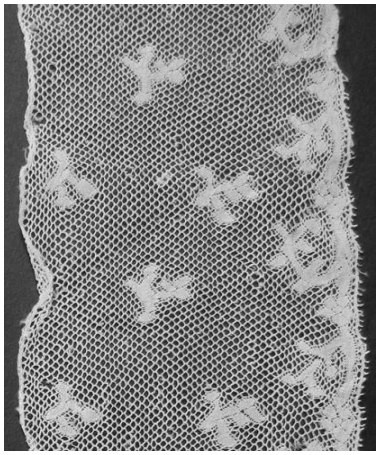


Detail of above showing the 5-hole ground and 'snowball' fillings (© J. Leader)

Valenciennes lace was completely flat with lines of tiny holes outlining the pattern motifs and picking out features within them. In the mid- to late eighteenth century a plaited ground with round meshes was most common for Valenciennes but in the nineteenth century this was replaced by a ground with longer plaits which gave square or diamond-shaped meshes.



Mechlin border with 'eis' ground, 1750–75 (©J. Leader)

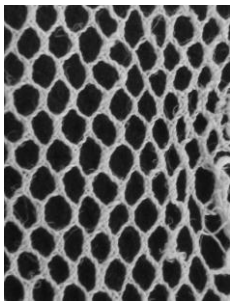


Valenciennes border with round plaited ground, c. 1780 (© J. Leader)

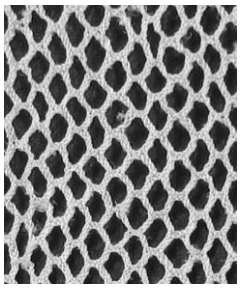
Bobbin laces

Continuous laces with a mesh ground

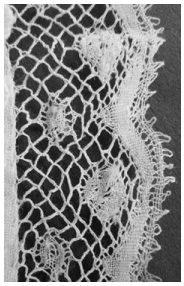
In *Mechlin* lace the pattern areas were surrounded and emphasized by a thick 'gimp' thread. By the late eighteenth century the use of a plaited ground, known as ‘eis’ ground, had become a feature of Mechlin and continued to be used into the nineteenth century.

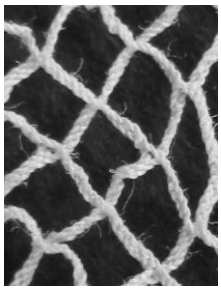


Mechlin 'eis' ground
All (© J. Leader)



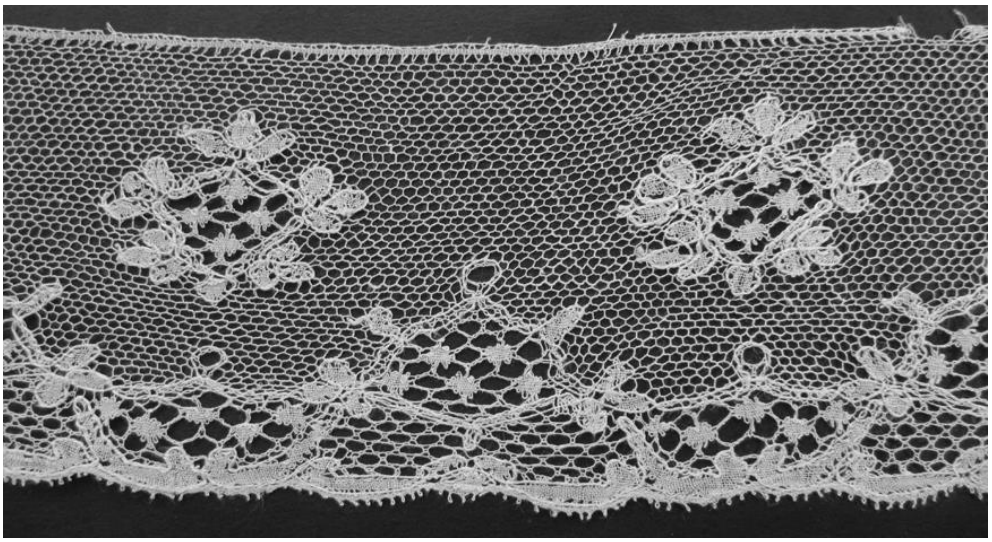
Valenciennes round plaited ground





Valenciennes border, 1875-1900 with square plaited ground

The use of the simpler point ground (see photograph overleaf, with Blonde lace) developed towards the end of the eighteenth century when lighter laces became popular. Laces with this ground are often given the name of *Lille* although there is no real evidence that the ground originated there, and by the nineteenth century this type of lace was being made throughout Europe. The patterns with motifs surrounded by a gimp thread are very similar to Mechlin designs.

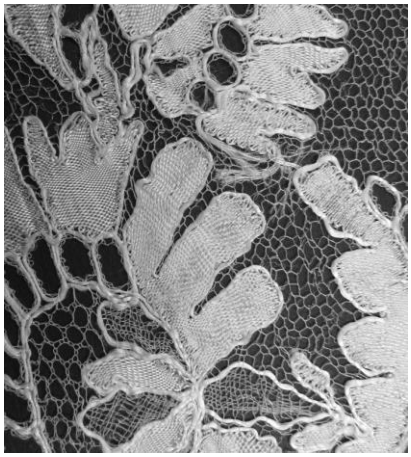


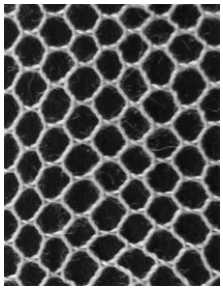
Bucks Point border, 1875-1900
(© J. Leader)

Bobbin laces

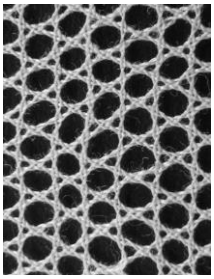
Continuous laces with a mesh ground

In *Blonde* lace the pattern areas are worked with a thick floss silk to emphasize them against the light point or kat stitch ground. Both cream and black Blonde were made.





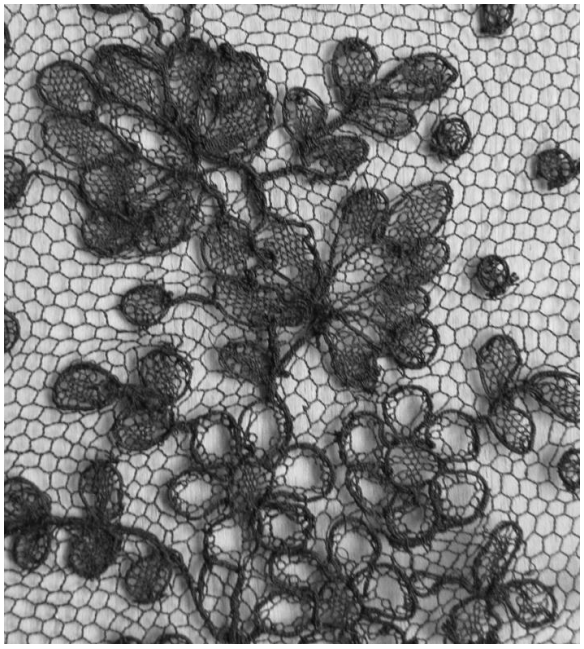
Point ground
(© J. Leader)



Kat stitch ground

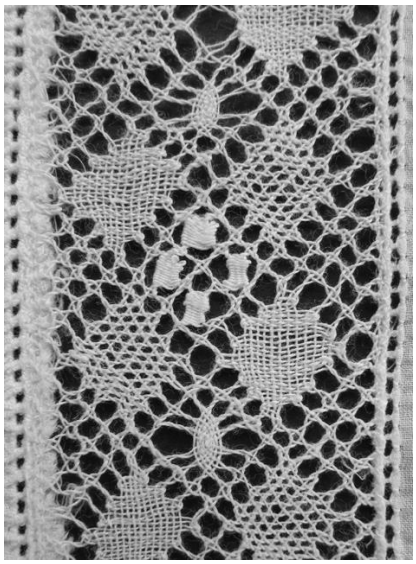
Detail from a Blonde border, c. 1830
(© J. Leader)

Chantilly lace, made with dull black silk, used the same grounds as Blonde but the pattern areas were worked in half stitch to give a lighter effect.



Detail from a Chantilly bonnet veil, c.1850
(© J.Leader)

Torchon, a simple lace with characteristic geometric designs, became popular in the mid-nineteenth century and was soon being made in many lacemaking centres.



Torchon insertion, 1900-1920
(© J. Leader)

Bobbin laces

Sectional or part lace

These laces can be divided further into those where the motifs are made separately and then joined with bars or a mesh ground, and those, usually known as braid laces, where a braid worked with relatively few pairs creates the pattern with curves linked by ‘sewings’ or bars.

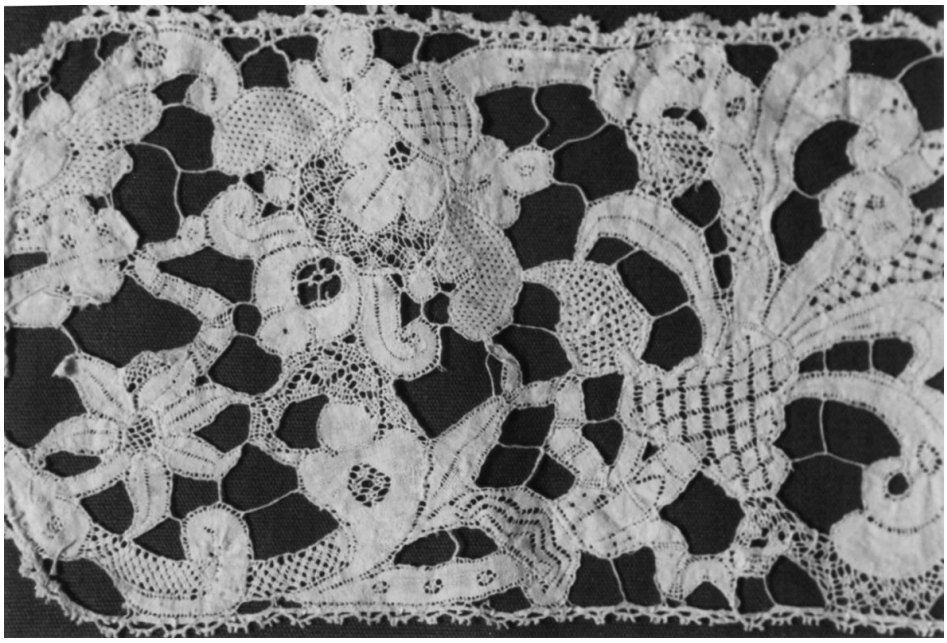
Part laces where the motifs are made separately

Flemish, Milanese, Brussels, Honiton, Duchesse

This type of lace developed during the seventeenth century as bobbin lace designs became more elaborate.

Part laces usually have a right and wrong side. Sometimes threads can be seen looped across the back where they were taken to work another part of the design, and it may be possible to see where individual motifs have been finished. If the individual motifs have raised edges, these should be on the right side.

Late seventeenth century *Milanese* and *Flemish* bobbin laces have very similar designs, making definite identification difficult. In both the scrolling Baroque stems, flowers and buds are worked in cloth stitch decorated with a variety of patterns and holes, and linked by bars or a mesh ground.



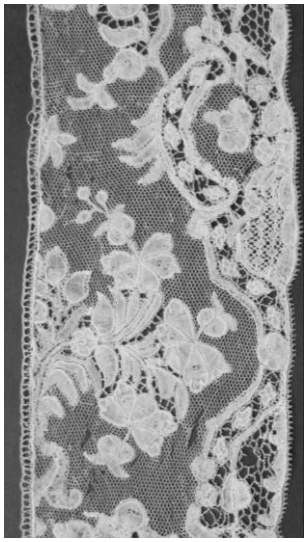
Milanese, 1675-1700

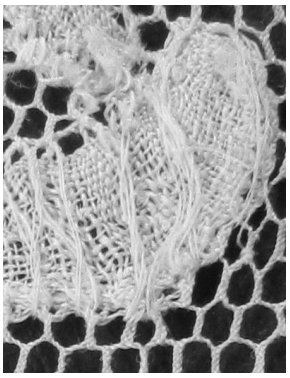
By the second quarter of the eighteenth century Flemish part lace was known as *Brussels* lace although it was not necessarily made in that town. Typical of Brussels lace are the drochel ground, similar to ‘eis’ ground but with longer plaits, and the working of raised edges on pattern motifs.

Bobbin laces

Sectional or part lace

Similar lace was made in East Devon, and is known as *Honiton* lace. Early eighteenth century Brussels and Honiton laces were richly patterned with bobbin-made bars, drochel or other grounds used to link the motifs. The changes in design during the eighteenth century were similar to those of the other fashionable laces.



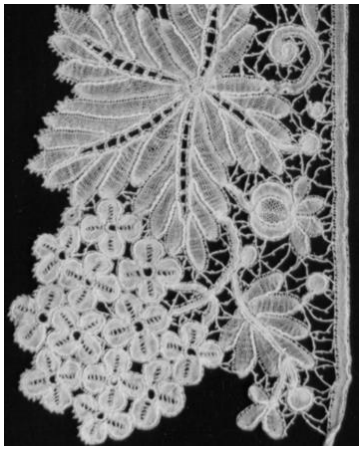


Left: Brussels border, c.1750. Centre: Detail showing drochel ground and raised edge. Right: Detail showing threads crossing motifs at the back.
(© J. Leader)

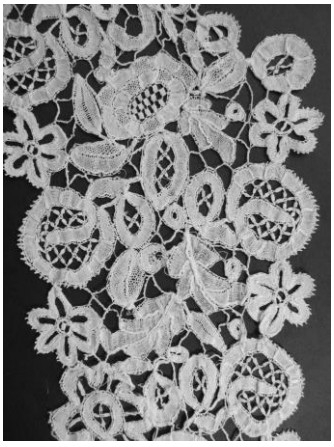
By the late eighteenth century the large area of plain drochel ground meant that it was often easier to apply motifs to pre-made drochel ground rather than work the ground between them. Once machine-made net became readily available in the nineteenth century, this was used instead of the expensive hand-made drochel net and had almost completely replaced it by about 1850.

The interest in guipure laces in the latter half of the nineteenth century led to the return of Brussels lace grounded with bars. Some of this was made with fine thread but heavier thread was used for a new lace called *Duchesse* whose designs were usually floral.

Nineteenth century Honiton lace features designs of leaves and stylised cabbage roses. By the late nineteenth century most of it was grounded with bars or applied to machine-made net.



Duchesse border, c.1890
(© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection 1891.86.u(2))

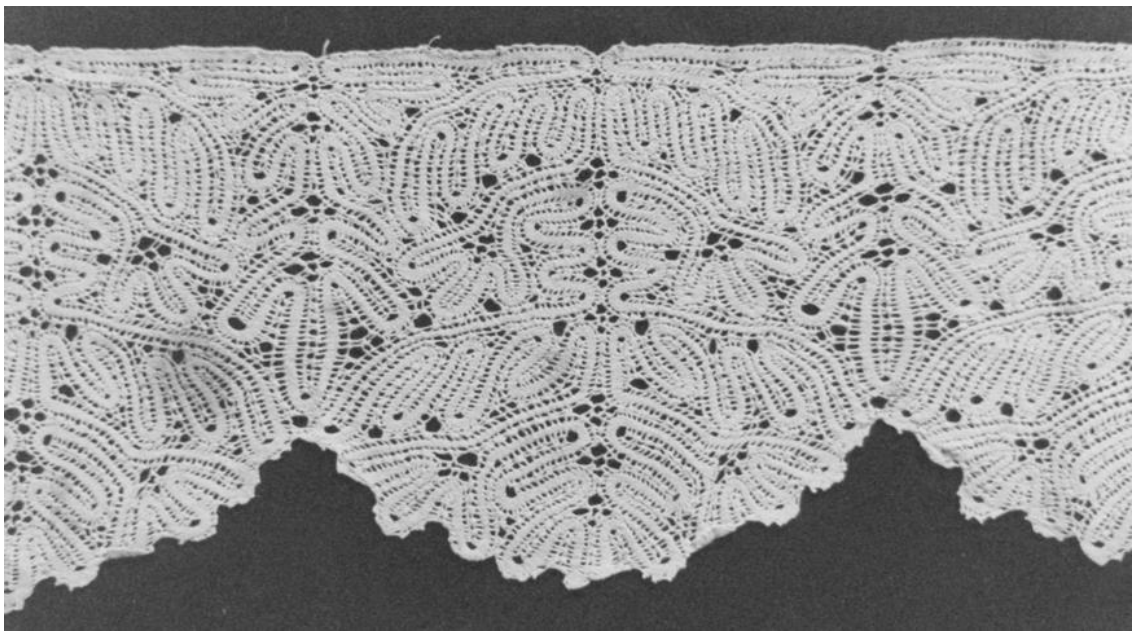


Honiton collar, c. 1890 (detail) (© J. Leader)

Part laces with meandering braids

Some Milanese-style laces, Eastern European, Russian braid, Idrija

These laces are probably derived from the Milanese-style laces which spread to rural communities where they continued to be made. Precise identification and dating is difficult unless the provenance is known.



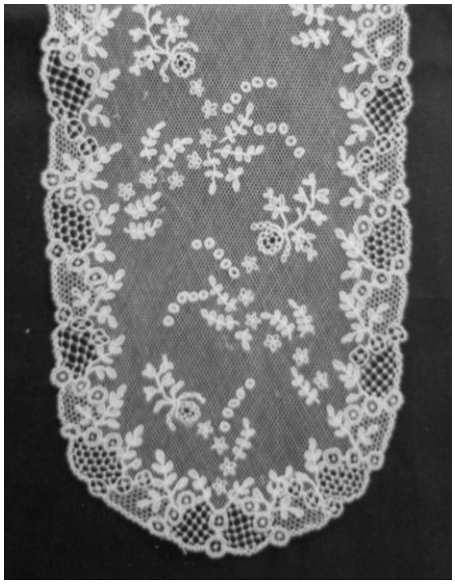
Braid lace, before 1850

4. Mixed laces

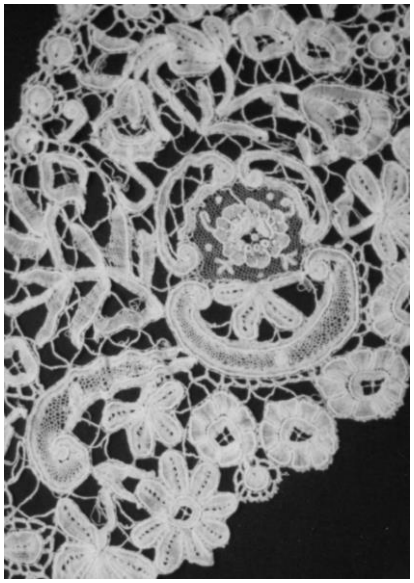
Laces can combine two or more techniques.

Bobbin and needle

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century Brussels needle lace motifs were applied to bobbin-made drochel net. The late 19th century *Brussels Duchesse* had needlelace fillings and inserts of *Point de Gaze* lace.



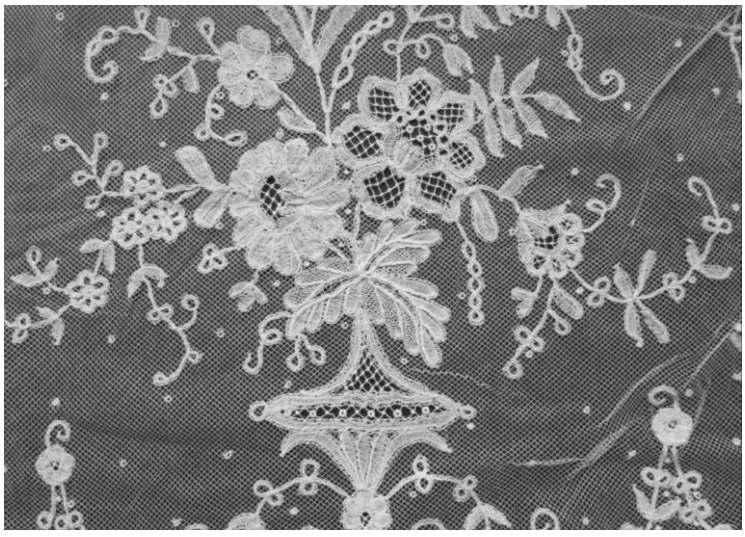
Left: Brussels needle lace applied to drochel net, 1775-1800
(© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, 24.21)



Right: Duchesse bertha or collar with Point de Gaze medallions, 1875-1900
(© CSG CIC Glasgow Museums Collection, E1981.118.8)

Bobbin, needle and machine

Nineteenth century *Brussels* lace applied to machine-made net often included both bobbin and needle lace motifs.



Brussels bobbin lace with needle lace fillings applied to machine-made net, 1875-1900
(© J. Leader)

Mixed laces

Bobbin and machine

Nineteenth century *Brussels* and *Honiton* bobbin lace motifs were applied to machine-made net.

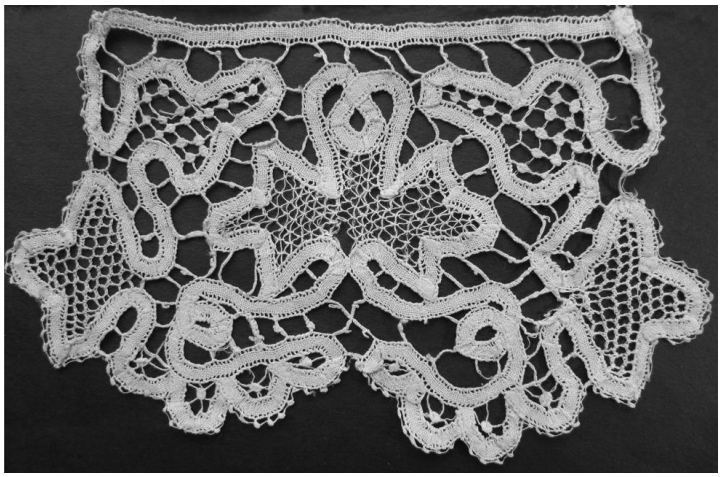
Honiton lace applied to machine-made net, 1875-1900. (© Lace Guild Museum CUL.26.2002)

Needle and machine

Theses laces cover different types such as some nineteenth century *Brussels* lace where needle lace motifs were applied to machine-made net and tape or point lace.

Tape or 'point' lace

Woven tapes were tacked to the pattern outlining motifs which were then filled with needle lace stitches; these were made in the seventeenth century and provided a relatively quick method of imitating the fashionable needlelaces. However, it was in the latter half of the nineteenth century that this type of lace really became popular. Patterns were available in shops and magazines for working at home, and it was also made commercially in several places including *Branscombe* in Devon and *Borris* in Ireland.



Tape lace with needle lace fillings and buttonholed bars, 1875-1900 (© J. Leader)

5. Knotted laces

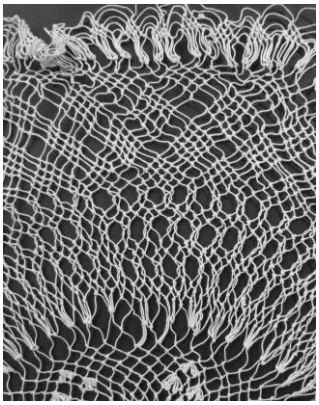
Tatting

Made from one or more threads wound on and manipulated with small shuttles. The designs are usually composed of small rings.

Tatted motif, 1975-2000
(© J. Leader)

Netting

Made using a single thread wound on a thin netting shuttle. It is made in a similar way to filet net with the size of the meshes regulated by gauges of varying sizes.

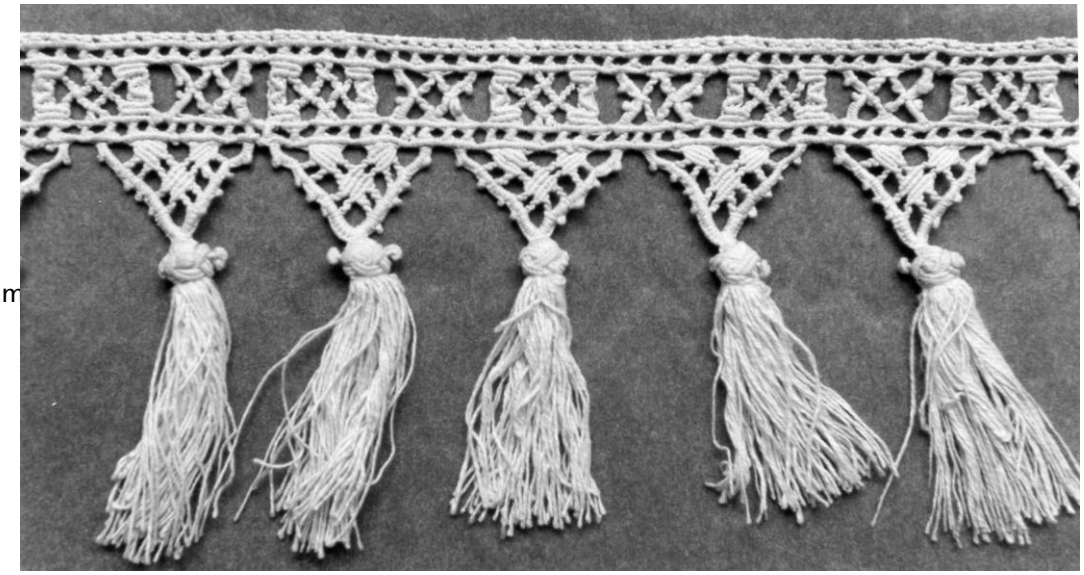


Netted doyley, 1875-1900 (© J. Leader)

Macramé

Made by knotting multiple threads. Examples are known from the late sixteenth century but it never developed far as a lacemaking technique.

Macram



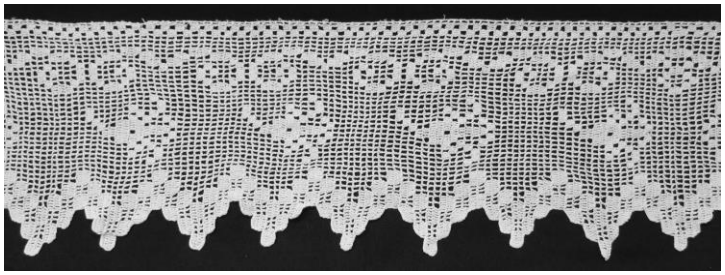
6. Crocheted laces

1850 onwards

Crocheted lace is constructed from a single thread manipulated with a hook to form a looped fabric. It became popular in the mid-nineteenth century and items made included borders, doyleys, and collars. The patterns, which were readily available in shops and magazines, often copied other laces.

Filet crochet

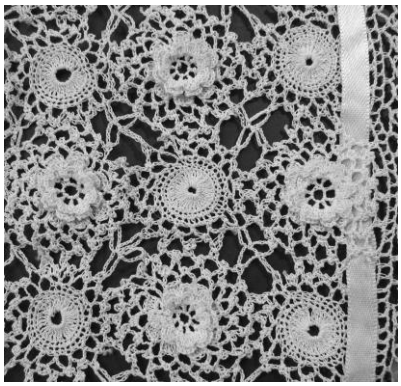
Which imitated darned filet net was particularly favoured for its pictorial designs.



Filet crochet, 1900-2000 (© J. Leader)

Irish crochet

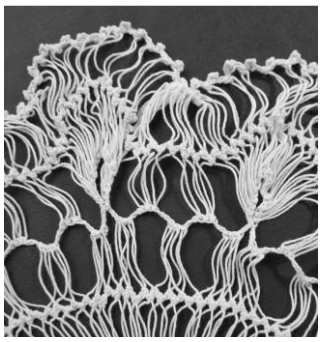
With three-dimensional motifs which often imitated Venetian Gros Point needle lace was made all over Europe, not just in Ireland.



Irish crochet with three-dimensional roses, 1875-1900 (© J. Leader)

Hairpin crochet

Involved first crocheting strips of openwork braid around a U-shaped gauge, and later crocheting them together to make completed items.

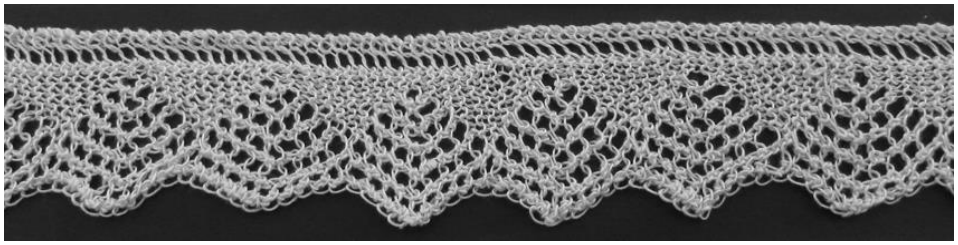


Hairpin crochet doyley, 1875-1900 (© J. Leader)

7. Knitted laces

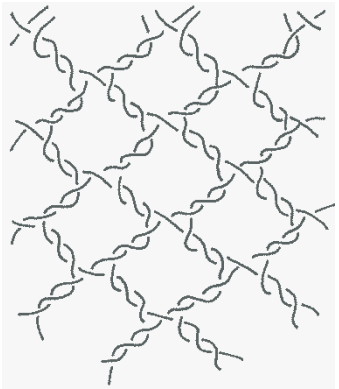
1850 onwards

Knitted lace is constructed from a single thread manipulated with two or more knitting needles to form a looped fabric. Like crochet it became extremely popular during the nineteenth century when items from small mats to large shawls were produced. During the second half of the century a cottage industry developed in the Shetland Isles using the fine wool from the local sheep to knit lace shawls.

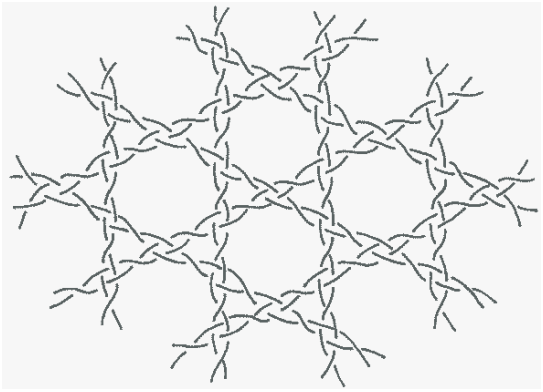


Knitted lace border 1875-1925 (© J. Leader)

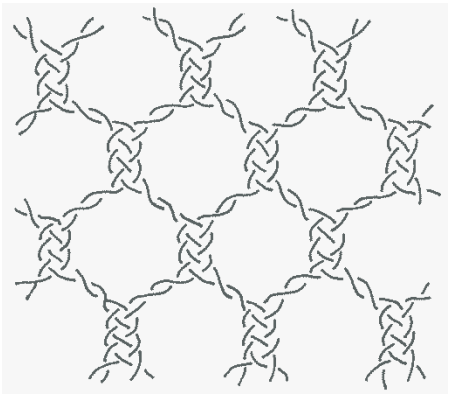
Bobbin lace mesh grounds: 1 line = 1 thread



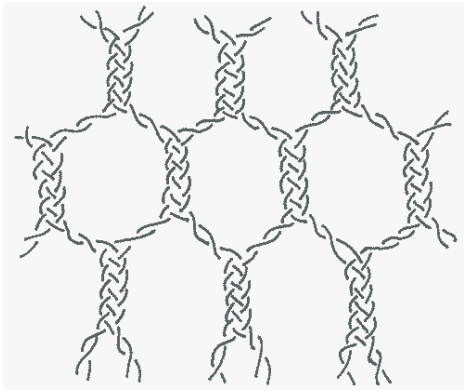
Point ground



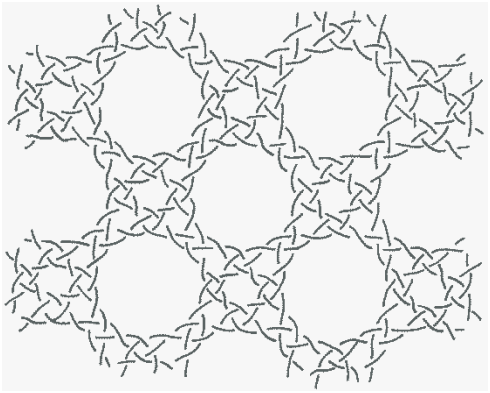
Kat stitch ground



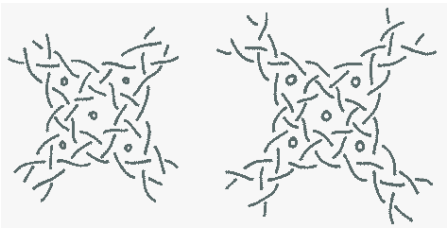
Mechlin ground



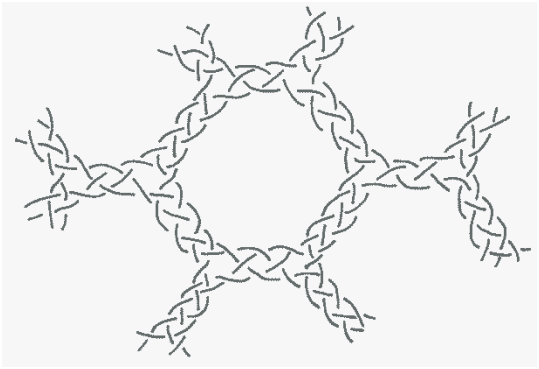
Drochel ground



5-hole ground

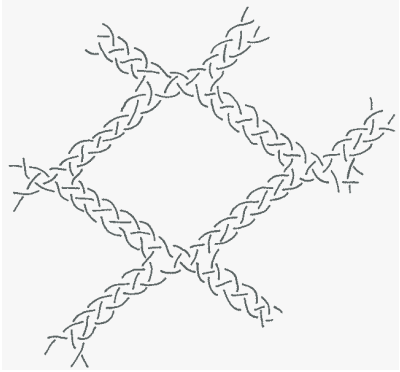


Basic units of 5-hole ground (small circles indicating the holes) with different stitches linking the units (half stitch on the left, cloth stitch and twist on the right).



Valenciennes round ground

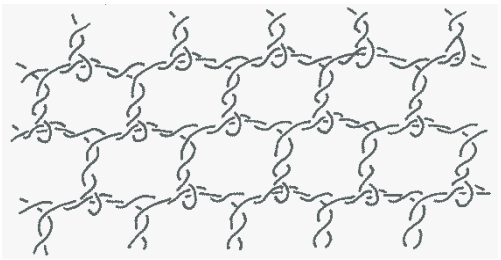
© J. Leader



Valenciennes square ground

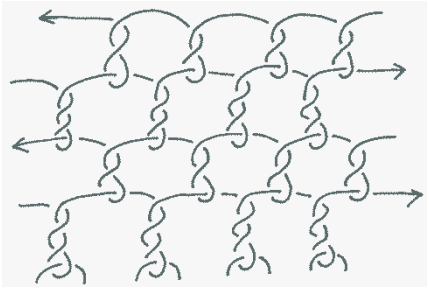
© J. Leader

Needle lace mesh grounds: 1 line = 1 thread



Alençon ground

© J. Leader



Point de gaze ground

© J. Leader

Conservation, display and storage of lace

Anne Amosford

Handling/ Conservation

- Long dangly jewellery, large chunky rings, bracelets and watches should be removed.
- Wear clean gloves when handling textiles to protect yourself and the fabric. Nitrile and powder free Latex gloves are best; cotton can catch on the lace fibres. Substances from your skin can cause irreparable damage such as grease marks, discoloration and the encouragement of mould growth. If you cannot wear gloves due to allergy, at least wash your hands thoroughly first and dry them completely. Metallic lace should always be handled with gloves.
- Food, drink and pens should be kept well away from the area where the textile is laid out. Pencils should be used if making any notes but still well away from the lace.
- Ensure there is enough clean, uncluttered space to lay the lace out fully. Acid-free tissue can be used to line a table. You should have adequate lighting to see the lace and consider using a magnifying lens.
- Always support the lace well and try to keep it flat. Handle it as little as possible. Place items in trays for transporting to tables etc.
- **ALWAYS CONSULT A TEXTILE CONSERVATOR BEFORE ANY INTERVENTIVE WORK IS UNDERTAKEN. IF IN DOUBT DO NOTHING.**
- A qualified conservator should carry out any treatment or repair. A list of suitable conservators in your area can be obtained from The Conservation Register at www.conservationregister.com (Tel.: 0207 7853804)

Storage

- Ideally lace should be stored in an acid-free box or drawer large enough to lay the item completely flat.
- Any plastic bags should be removed from lace storage as they can deteriorate and cause staining and damage to the lace.
- Labels should not be too large and should not be tied on through the voids as this could cause damage if pulled. Small labels of Tyvek can be made, accession numbers written with Rotring or Pigma pens and stitched carefully to the lace with a fine polyester thread.
- Lace can be particularly difficult to store if there are long lengths of it. If it is rolled on a small acid-free card roller it can create quite a lot of bulk and tend to spiral, so this is not ideal. (See additional notes).
- Small sprigs, short lengths and collars etc can be stored in polyester sleeves (e.g. Melinex) so they are visible and do not need to be directly handled. This however is NOT suitable for lace with any 3 dimensional elements as they would be flattened.
- If you have to fold an item to fit it in a box, plan carefully where the folds need to be made in packing. Try to avoid double folds. If items, such as veils, have to be double folded into a box then they are best stored rolled. Prevent creases by padding out any folds with acid-free tissue softly rolled in sausage shapes or round puffs. Use enough padding to support, but not too much to over-stuff and cause strain.
- Some small items of lace such as baby's bonnets, cuffs etc. can have soft storage mounts made to stop them being crushed.

- Ideally silk lace should be packed with un-buffered acid-free tissue, especially if particularly fragile.
- If a garment with lace elements must be hung, use a padded hanger covered in plain cotton calico and take particular care if the shoulders and sleeves are of lace. This kind of item might be better stored flat.
- If the idea is to store rather than study, pieces should be interleaved with acid-free tissue. For rolled items Melinex can be used for the outer cover so the lace is visible. Corners of the Melinex should be rounded so they don't catch in any of the lace voids. Cotton tape should be used to secure the Melinex and any extra labels attached to the tape.
- Photographs could be taken prior to rolling so the piece does not need to be unrolled every time it needs to be looked at.
- Check regularly for any insect or mould presence. Textiles should be stored away from any areas susceptible to damp and sources of heat or light (e.g. windows, radiators).

Display -flat lace

- Always seek the advice of a textile conservator before displaying lace.
- Small flat pieces of lace should be mounted by stitching onto a padded inert mount. Using the voids formed by the lace threads to stitch through. Items should be framed where possible using internal fillers to keep the glass away from the textile, or be displayed in well-sealed cases.
- Frame glass should be sealed with breathable tape to the inside of the frame and the back of the frame similarly sealed to deter insects and dust from entering.
- Due to the nature of lace and particularly if it is white, open display is not advisable.
- Framed textiles should be hung away from direct sunlight, radiators and open fires.
- The ideal for display is 50 lux and 55% relative humidity. Never use pins for display as this places stress on particular points and they can rust.

- Have all display fabrics tested before the final choice. Royal blue is a traditional colour for lace but any dark colour could have excess dye rubbing off on the lace unless a reputable display fabric is used.

Display - long and 3 dimensional lace

- Long lengths of lace (if they are larger than the display area) whether narrow bands, flounces or veils can have the excess lace attached to an acid free card roller covered with display fabric. The roller can be integral with the display so there will be no stress placed on the textile. Avoid creasing.
- 3 dimensional pieces such as collars, lappets and cuffs etc. can have acid-free card covered formers or Perspex mounts made to take the 3 dimensional structure of the object but without creating too much bulk.
- Try to rotate displays as objects can look very tired if left for too long.

Additional notes on rolling long lengths of lace

Long lengths of narrow lace have been thought unsuitable for rolling onto a roller due to the difficulties of rolling and keeping straight, not to mention bulk.

1. Cut a card mount from blue single walled card. 25cm x 10cm (with the ribs in the card running down the 25cm length).
2. Cut out a notch at both ends. 1cm in and 8cm wide, leaving two side pieces intact.

3. Cut a strip of polyester wadding 8cm wide and long enough to wrap around the internal section of the card with a slight overlap. Stitch this in place with a herringbone stitch to keep the double layer as flat as possible.
4. Cut a double layer of tissue to cover the wadding. Wrap this around the wadding and hold with a stitch.
5. Take the lace to be rolled and measure it if it is unaccessioned. Gently start rolling it around the form overlapping the lace where necessary. DO NOT PULL TOO TIGHT.

Suppliers:

Preservation Equipment Ltd. (PEL) - www.pel.eu
For:Tyvek, Secol sleeves, acid-free tissue paper etc.

Polyester Converters -www.polyesterconverters.com/index.htm
For: Melinex

Restore Products -www.restore-products.co.uk/ecommerce/
For: small reels of polyester thread

Crayford Tubes -www.crayford-tubes.co.uk
For: acid free card rollers

Ramplas Ltd - http://www.ramplas.com
For: Rampak Plastazote sheet (used at The Bowes Museum for lining storage boxes for rolled lace)

Identifying Hand-made Lace

Glossary and useful terms

For full glossary and close-up photographs of different grounds see S. Levey *Lace-A History* (1983)

Application (hand and machine) one fabric applied to another, e.g. muslin onto net in Carrickmacross lace or bobbin made motifs in Brussels and Honiton application laces

Bars/brides (mostly hand) used instead of net to hold the lace together; lace using bars is called guipure

Border (hand and machine) trimming with one straight edge (footside) and one straight or shaped edge which may be decorated with picots (headside); both hand and machine borders are made vertically with the straight edge to the right or left

Brides/bars used instead of net to hold the lace together; lace using bars is called guipure

Clothwork (hand) in bobbin lace the interweaving of threads so that the result looks like woven cloth

Cordonnet (hand) the foundation threads outlining the pattern in needle lace.

Couch to stitch down

Dentate triangular profile, like pointed teeth

Ecru unbleached, or a dyed pale cream colour

Fillings (hand and machine) usually small areas of fancy nets within the pattern as opposed to the ground which is the net background to the lace

Floss an untwisted soft, shiny silk thread

Flounce (hand) a deep border; (machine) a deep border made across with width of the machine; usually made on the Leavers machine as dress laces from 1920s onwards

Footside/footing the straight edge of a border made to be attached to fabric.

Gimp (hand) a thick thread outlining the pattern in some bobbin laces, e.g. Mechlin.

Ground/mesh (hand and machine) the net holding the lace together

Guipure (hand and machine) lace which has bars instead of net to hold the lace together

Half stitch (hand) in bobbin lace the interweaving of threads so that the result looks like a lattice; more open than clothwork; sometimes used for shading

Hand or needle run (hand) stitching in and out of the fabric, similar to darning; early lace embroiderers were called 'lace runners'

Headside /heading the edge of a border not attached to fabric – it may be shaped and decorated with picots and/or plaits.

Insertion (hand and machine) with two straight edges, used between the edges of two pieces of fabric, as application or as heading to a border

Leadworks/tallies/wheatears/points d'esprits small tightly woven squares or other shapes in bobbin laces – found as 'spots' in mesh grounds, in decorative fillings, and together with plaits in guipure laces (confusingly the old Bedfordshire name for these was 'plaits').

Mesh/ground (hand and machine) the net holding the lace together

Motif (hand and machine) an element of the lace design; also (hand) in chiefly Brussels and Honiton laces a flower (for example) made individually for application to net; also (machine) usually cut from a larger piece, again for application

Needle running (hand) see under Hand or needle run

Passementerie braid, tape or lace used for trimming furnishings

Picots small loops on the edge of lace or on bars linking the various parts of the pattern (guipure)

Reseau (hand) French for net

Tambour work (hand) a chain stitch made using a pointed hooked needle and originally a round frame (the tambour or drum)

Tape lace (hand and machine) a bobbin or machine-made tape tacked over a pattern and connected by needle bars and stitches, when finished the tacking is removed and the lace released; there are various types, Branscombe and Luxeuil for example; Princess and Battenburg refer to particular patterns of machine made tape; lace made with tape with pointed ovals is referred to as Honiton Point lace

Three twist net (machine) a net with three twists per side of the mesh making a diamond shaped ground. Invented in the 1830s. There is no hand made equivalent. Much used for applied work especially in Brussels and Honiton and sometimes called 'Brussels net'. There is also a much rarer four twist net.

Whipped edged using whip stitch

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Identifying hand-made lace

Useful websites and museums

http://www.laceguild.org/craft/index.html
http://www.powerhousemuseum.co/collection/database/search_tags.php?tag=lace
http://collections.vam.ac.uk
http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections
http://www.thebowesmuseum.org/collections
http://www.dressandtextilespecialists.org.uk/

Museums and consultants providing lace enquiry services

Museums

These museums have staff able to answer enquiries relating to lace.

Barnard Castle
The Bowes Museum
Barnard Castle
DURHAM
DL12 8NP
01833 690606
www.bowesmuseum.org.uk

Exeter
Royal Albert Memorial Museum
Queen Street
Exeter
Devon
EX4 3RX
01392 665360 (Thursday-Friday)
www.rammuseum.org.uk

Honiton
Allhallows Museum of Lace and Antiquities
High Street
Honiton
Devon
EX14 1PG
info@honitonmuseum.co.uk
www.honitonmuseum.co.uk

London
V&A Museum
Cromwell Road
South Kensington
London
SW7 2RL
textileandfashion@vam.ac.uk

Luton
Luton Culture – Museums
Curatorial Team
Wardown Park Museum
Luton
BEDFORDSHIRE LU2 7HA
01582 546723
www.lutonline.gov.uk/museums

Nottingham
Keepers of Costumes and Textiles
Newstead Abbey
Ravenshead
Nottinghamshire, NG15 8NA
01623 455903

Stourbridge
Gwynedd Roberts
Hon. Curator
The Lace Guild
The Hollies
53 Audnam
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DY8 4AE
01384 390739
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Identifying hand-made lace

List of Contributors

Anne Amosford

Anne Amosford is Senior Conservator at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), Exeter, specialising in Costume and Textiles. Her job at RAMM has been to conserve most of the items that are now on display as well as all the mounting of the costume. She is now involved with a long term storage project for their collections. She learned to make bobbin lace many years ago.

Gil Dye

Gil Dye is a lace teacher, author and researcher who has dabbled in a wide variety of lace techniques since she made her first crochet mat at the age of seven. Her principal interest is in bobbin lace and she is involved in a detailed study of the development of this lace in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Her introduction to museum practice came during a term as Lace Guild secretary when she prepared the Guild's successful application for Museum Registration.

Jean Leader

Jean Leader has been making and teaching needle and bobbin lace for over twenty years. She has also made at least samples of most other types of hand-made lace as part of a City & Guilds Creative Lacemaking course. Much of her knowledge of lace identification comes from working as a volunteer with the Glasgow Museums lace collection. She has taught lace study days at the Burrell Collection for the Glasgow University Decorative Arts Diploma and The Lace Guild. She also works as a volunteer for The Lace Guild Museum and is responsible for the *Craft of Lace* and *Museum* sections of the Lace Guild website. She has published books on Bedfordshire lace and Bucks Point lace.

Carol McFadzean

Carol McFadzean is a retired textile specialist and Deputy Headteacher. Her interest in lace began in 1985, where it became an instant passion. She has mastered making many traditional laces and is currently developing contemporary approaches to lace. Carol teaches ‘ad hoc’ courses both at home and abroad. Carol has been a member of the UK Lace Guild and Lace Society and OIDFA, the International Lace Organisation. Since retiring she was a member of the Committee organising the OIDFA 2002 Congress in Nottingham; she then became a UK representative for 2 years before joining the Executive Committee, firstly as Secretary and then as President for her final 4 years. Her Presidency involved visiting many parts of the world promoting OIDFA and lace. She is the current Chair of the Devon Lace Teachers. A chance historical lace find in 2002 lead Carol to begin researching aspects of Devon Lace; she is the author of three books and has become an avid lace historian. Her voluntary work at RAMM, developed from this research.

Shelley Tobin

Shelley Tobin is a dress historian, curator and author based in Devon. Shelley is Curator of Costume for the National Trust, based at Killerton House, and Assistant Curator for the Museum of the Year 2012, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter. She is also Historical Consultant to the Blandford Fashion Museum, Dorset. Shelley has worked with museum dress collections for many years, and has curated

many exhibitions focusing on the history of clothing and textiles, particularly western fashionable dress. She has served on the executive committee of the UK Costume Society, the committee for the Dress and Textile Specialists Group, and currently sits on an advisory panel for the National Trust known as the Costume Working Group. Shelley's books include: with Amy De La Haye, *Chanel, the Couturière at Work*, V&A publications, 1994; with Jane Ashelford, *The Care of Clothes*, The National Trust, 1996; *Inside Out, a Brief History of Underwear*, The National Trust, 2000; *Marriage à la Mode*, The National Trust, 2003; and Shelley recently contributed to *Fashion*, Dorling Kindersley, 2012.

Elizabeth Trebble

Elizabeth Trebble started lacemaking in 1978, becoming a lace teacher in 1985 specialising in East Devon, known as Honiton lace. She teaches adult education courses for Devon County Council, The WEA and Bucks County Council, and regularly teaches specialist courses both nationally and internationally. Her passion for the subject has resulted in her also studying and making other types of English and Continental laces. Elizabeth is a member of the Devon Lace Teachers of which she is a former Chairman, serving in that position for nine years. She is a member of The Lace Guild, The Lace Society and OIDFA, the International lace makers association. For many years Elizabeth has organised exhibitions to promote both the art of lace and lace making and its fascinating social history. She became a volunteer at RAMM in 2002 working on the extensive lace collection, amongst the projects undertaken has been identifying and compiling detailed records of the individual items held in that collection. Elizabeth regularly visits national and international exhibitions to improve and expand her knowledge of lace and lace making and its influences around the world.

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