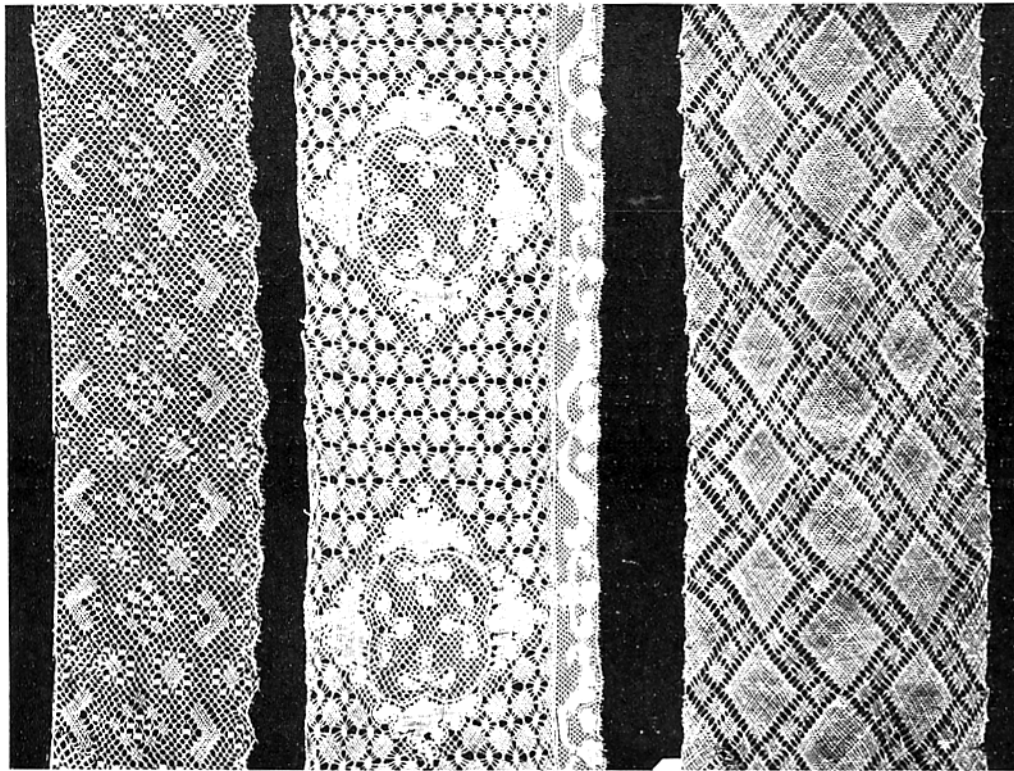


English Pillow Lace Part II. By M. Jourdain

LACE-MAKING² was formerly practised to a small extent in Hertfordshire, Derbyshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, and Hampshire, besides in the better-known centres of Devonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire. Lace was made in Wales at Swansea, Pont-Ardawe, Llanwrtyd, Dufynock, and Brecon, but never of any beauty.*

Lace was formerly made at Ripon in Yorkshire, and in 1862 one old woman still continued working at a narrow edging with a small lozenge-shaped pattern known in local parlance by the name of "four-penny spot." This lozenge-torchon-like pattern is the simplest type of lace, and was also made in Scotland, where it was known as "Hamilton" from its patroness, the Duchess of Hamilton, who introduced the manufacture at Hamilton in 1752. The edgings

* *History of Lace.*—Mrs. Palliser.



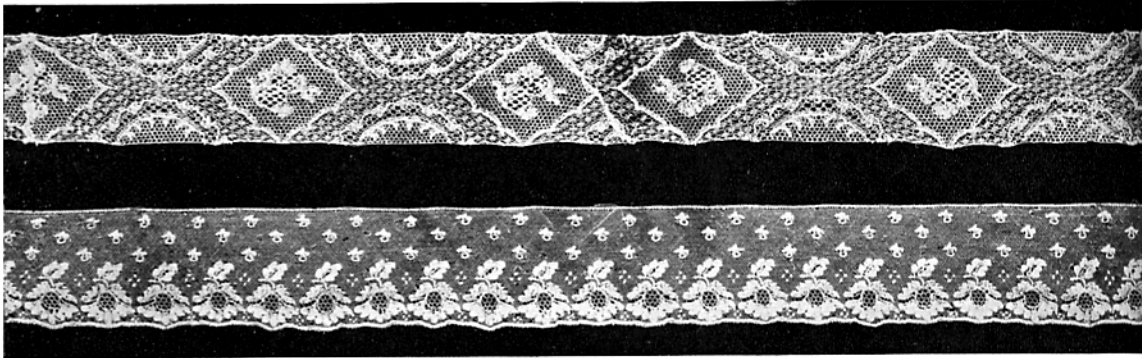
End of 18th Century

About 1800

Beginning of 19th Century

ENGLISH PILLOW LACE

The Connoisseur



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LACE

made there "were of a coarse thread, always of the lozenge pattern"; being strong and firm, it was used for night-caps, never for dresses, and justified the description of a lady who described it as of little account, and spoke of it as "only Hamilton."* The three specimens illustrated may be of this or of the similar Ripon manufacture.

The lace industry in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire has been attributed to Flemish immigrants, who fled from Alva's persecutions. A good quality of lace—to judge from its price—was made in Buckinghamshire † in 1678, the highest prices ranging above thirty shillings a yard, while in Dorset and Devon (more important centres) six pounds per yard was occasionally reached. In the eighteenth century Buckinghamshire lace is declared to be "not much inferior to those from Flanders," ‡ and occupied § an important place in the trade of the counties. But the only influence to be detected

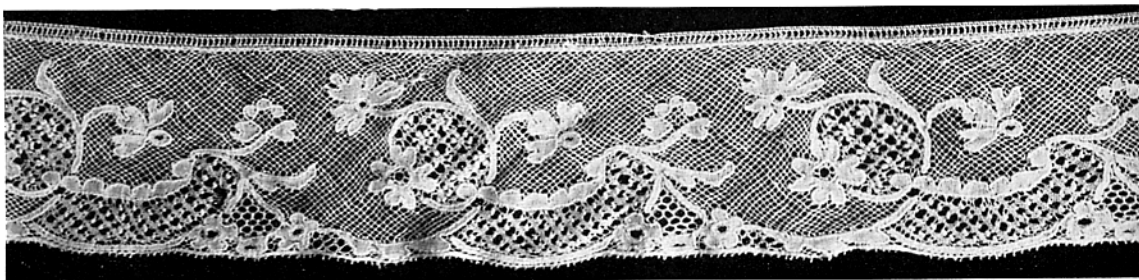
in Buckinghamshire laces is that of Lille, || which it closely copied, probably after the advent of the settlers from the French provinces bordering on Flanders after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. There was a later influx of "ingenious French emigrants" at the time of the French Revolution, which was expected to improve the native manufacture. ¶

The chief centres in the lace industry in Buckinghamshire were at Great Marlow, Olney, Stone Stratford, Newport Pagnel,** and High Wycomb. Here the lace was collected from the workers, for the industry itself was very widely spread in most of the villages in the county. In Bedfordshire, both Bedford and Woburn were important centres in the eighteenth century, and as late as 1863 the lace schools of Bedfordshire were more considerable than those in Devonshire.

"The duties of a lace schoolmistress were to insure on a certain amount of work being done, and moral suasion were not sufficient, a cane was resorted to for use. The other duties of the mistress were to

* *History of Lace.*—Mrs. Palliser.
 † In 1623 the bone-lace trade was already "much decayed" in Buckinghamshire.—*State Papers. Dom. Jac. I.*, vol. 142, P.R.O.
 ‡ *Magna Britannia*, 1720.
 § 1786, Oct. 1st. *The Marquis of Buckingham to W. W. Grenville*: "Your doubts upon the thread lace have alarmed me extremely. . . . When I look to the numbers employed, and to the effects which a revolution in that trade may bring on upon the property of this country. For God's sake! let me hear from you as soon as you can upon it; but remember how deeply I am pledged to our manufactory by the importance of it to our own land."—*MSS. of J. B. Fortescue, Esq. Hist. MSS. Comm. Thirteenth Report. Appendix, Part III.*

|| Hence Bucks. laces have been called "English Lille." Lille was very popular in England. One-third of the lace manufactured in the *Dép-du-Nord* was smuggled into England in 1789.
 ¶ *Annual Register*, 1794.
 ** "This town is a sort of staple for bone-lace, of which more is thought to be made here than any town in England."—*Magna Britannia*.

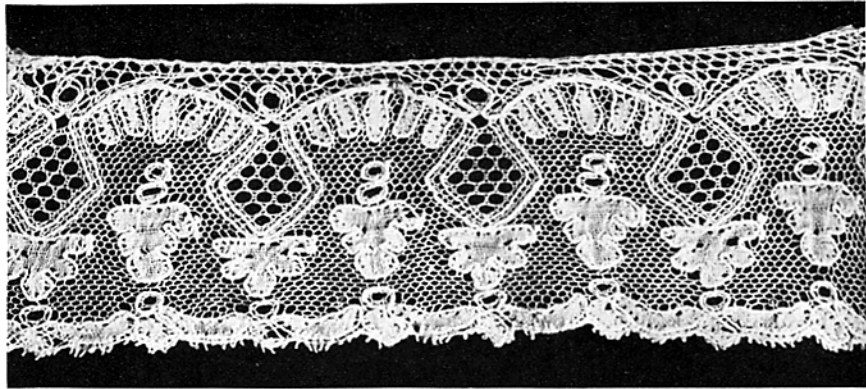


BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LACE

English Pillow Lace

prick the parchment (on which the pattern had been previously designed), also to buy the material for the work, to wind the bobbins by means of a small wheel and strap, and finally to sell the lace to the lace buyer, deducting a small sum for the house-room, firing, candles, etc.”*

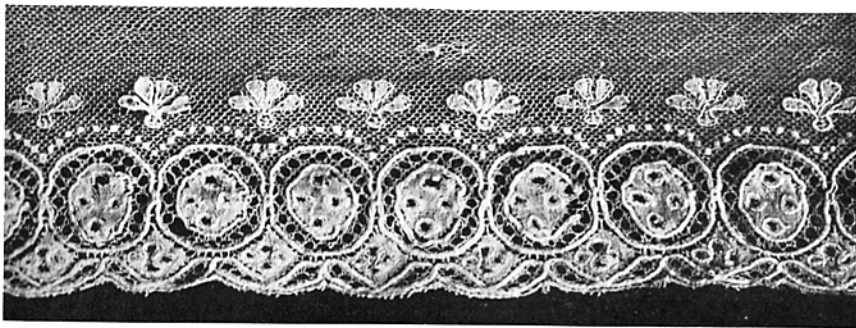
Fuller notes in his *Worthies*,† that in respect of manufactures, Northamptonshire “can boast of none worth the naming,” and in the eighteenth century its lace is not mentioned so frequently as that of Bedfordshire and Bucks. Anderson mentions that



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LACE

interest to note that pin-making was also carried on in the county.‡

While the laces of Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire may be classed together, there are certain differences in the productions of each county — differences in quality rather than type. The finest and widest lace was without doubt made in North Buckinghamshire. It is made in narrow strips, afterwards invisibly joined; in that district the bobbins are small, and have very ornamental “gingles.” In South Bucks., Northamptonshire, and in Oxfordshire the bobbins are larger, the work not so refined. In



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LACE

Kettering had “a considerable trade in lace,” and fine lace was made at Middleton Cheney. Spratton, Paulerspury, and Towcester † were also centres of the trade. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Wellingborough, and the villages on the south-west side of the county, appear to have had the largest number of lace-workers.

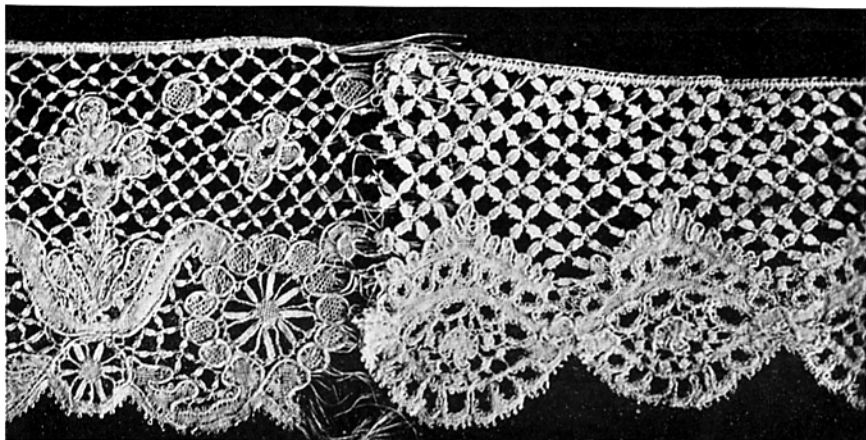
In connection with the lace industry it is of

* *Victoria History of the County of Northampton*, vol. ii.

† 1662.

‡ “This place is remarkable for a manufactory of lace and silk stockings, which employs most of the meaner inhabitants.” — *A Northern Tour from St. Albans, 1768. MSS. of the Earl of Verulam. Hist. MSS. Comm.*

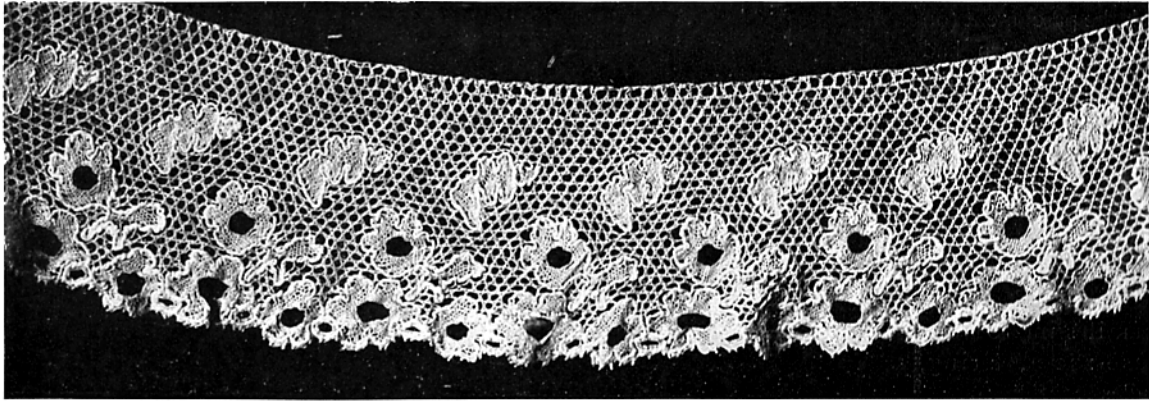
§ *The Victoria History of the County of Northampton*, vol. ii.



BEDFORD MALTESE (CALLED PLAITED) LACE

circa 1851

The Connoisseur



COARSE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LACE

Bedfordshire there is more gimp and less cloth (*toilé*) used, and in Buckinghamshire more cloth and less gimp.

In 1778, according to M'Culloch,* was introduced the "point ground," as it is locally termed. The *réseau* ground, like that of Lille, was composed of two threads twisted and simply crossed, not plaited, at their junction. "The mesh varies a little in shape from a four-sided diamond to a hexagon, according as the threads at crossing are drawn tighter or left loose and long." †

The untwisted outline thread is called locally the trolly. In design the oval-shaped openings, filled with light open *modes*, are closely copied from Lille, as are also the square dots, arranged in groups of three or four—the *points d'esprit* of Lille—which are to be found especially in the narrow "baby" laces.

In some specimens of trolly lace in the V. and A. Museum, the design resembles that of some Mechlin laces made early in the eighteenth century. The *réseau* is composed of six-pointed star-meshes, which was often made in Buckinghamshire. Another piece

of "trolly" has four varieties of fillings-in, which almost suggest that it is part of a sampler lace exhibited by lace-makers to encourage their patrons to select groundings to their particular taste.

The ground, sometimes known as "wire ground," "cat-stitch," and "French ground," was introduced about the time of the Regency, and although in many cases effective, has to be most skilfully arranged and interwoven with the pattern, otherwise a heavy-looking lace is the result.

During the Regency a "point" lace, as it was called, with the *toilé* on the edge, was for many years in fashion, and was named "Regency point." It is illustrated in Fig. 145 in Mrs. Palliser's *History of Lace*.

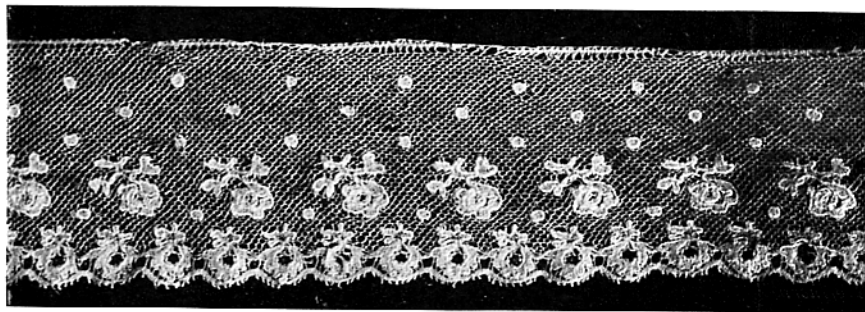
After the Exhibition of 1851 were introduced "Maltese guipures" of "plaited laces," a variety grafted on to the Maltese type. The ground is composed of a trellis and the characteristic Maltese oval enlargement, and the pattern is like that of the Buckinghamshire lace, but heavier. A very coarse cordonnet is used.

Run laces were laces in which the pattern, light and generally floral, was run in with the needle upon a pillow-made ground.

"On the breaking out of the war with France, the

* *Dictionary of Commerce*.

† *Point and Pillow Lace*.—A. M. S.



ENGLISH MECHLIN (MADE IN NORTH BUCKS)

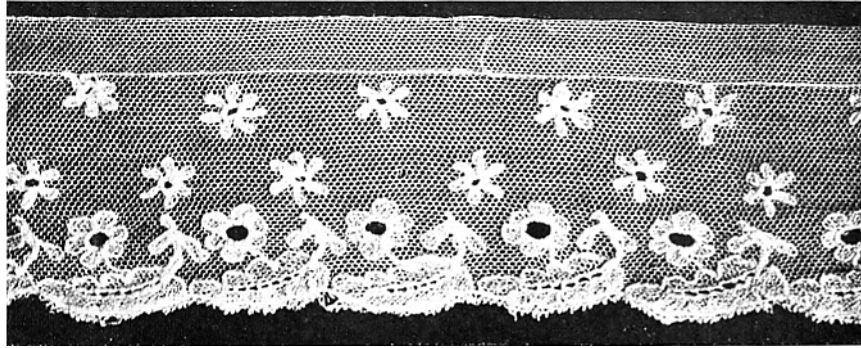
English Pillow Lace

closing of our ports to French goods gave an impetus to trade, and the manufacturers undertook to supply the English market with lace similar to that of Normandy"; hence a sort of English Valenciennes! In the specimen illustrated this net is probably made as for trolley lace, without pins, and a gimp is given instead of the Valenciennes edge.

English Mechlin was made in North Bucks. The design is an exact copy of late Mechlin, where the

prosperous days of lace-making in Buckinghamshire.‡ The upper part was intended to hold the lace pillow, while the two shallow drawers below were for the bobbins and patterns.

Of the Wiltshire lace manufacturers in the past we know little. Lady Arundel in the seventeenth century alludes incidentally to the "bone-lace" § of North Wiltshire, and there were lace schools in the county at the time of the Great Plague.||



ISLE OF WIGHT LACE

pattern consists of a series of stiff sprigs or flowers with small leaflets, and perhaps a further ornamentation of spots upon the ground near the pattern. The net in the English Mechlin differs from the Mechlin réseau, and is not so regular.

In Buckinghamshire lace "the shape of the pillow varies in the different parts of the county; in North Bucks. workers use a round, hardly stuffed straw cushion, while in Central and Mid-Bucks the pillow used is longer and thinner.*

The larger bobbins are called gimps. These hold the coarser or silky-looking linen thread which marks the outline and accentuates the pattern, and which is one of the characteristics of Bucks. lace. The "tallies" are four bobbins used to make the small square dots. These have metal bands twisted round them to distinguish them from the ordinary lace bobbins.

The number of bobbins necessary varies according to the width of the lace, a narrow edging requiring from two to three dozen, and a wider one several hundred; even so many as a thousand are required for a very wide pattern; but in this case it is necessary to have an extremely large pillow, otherwise the bobbins would fall over the sides and become entangled.†

A special kind of oak chest is a relic of the

* "Buckinghamshire Lace."—M. E. Burrowes. *Art Workers' Quarterly*, January, 1904.

† *Ibid.*

A little later, Aubrey, the Wiltshire historian and antiquary, complains that the "shepherdesses of Salisbury Plain of late years (1680) do begin to work point, whereas before they did only knit coarse stockings." Malmesbury was one of the Wiltshire centres, and also Downton, near Salisbury. The better Downton lace is very like the narrow and coarser Buckinghamshire,¶ and the ground is like that of Buckinghamshire, only worked without a pin in each mesh. The net is worked down from the head to the foot, and only pinned at the foot and the head. The workers call the net "bar-work." Other patterns are exactly like those illustrated as characteristic of Suffolk. The "French ground" is also used, which is the same as the Bucks. "cat-stitch" or "French ground," and is made with pins.

In Dorset the lace manufacture was already extinct about the early years of the nineteenth century, and no trace is left of its character, though Lyme Regis, Blandford, and Sherborne all made expensive laces of good quality. A few workers remained in

‡ One of these chests, dated 1702, is illustrated in *Point and Pillow Lace*, by A. M. S., page 178.

§ Describing the destruction of the leaden pipes at Wardour by the soldiers, she says: "They cut up the pipe and sold it, as these men's wives in North Wiltshire do bone-lace at sixpence a yard."

|| *History of Marlborough*.—Waylem.

¶ Many of the old patterns are the same as the Buckinghamshire ones.

The Connoisseur

Charmouth in 1871. Blandford in especial, according to Defoe, making "the finest bone-lace in England . . . and which, they said, they rated above £30 a yard."

Some pillow lace used to be made in the Isle of Wight, but what is known as the "Isle of Wight" lace was made on machine net, the pattern outlined with a run thread, filled in with needle-point stitches. The late Mechlin designs were chiefly copied. In 1900 there were only two or three old women workers left.

Suffolk has produced pillow lace of little merit.

The make of lace resembles that of Buckinghamshire lace and Downton, and that of Norman laces of the present time. In a number of specimens in the Victoria and Albert Museum the entire collection displays varied combinations of six ways of twisting and plaiting threads. The mesh is very large and open; a coarse outlining thread is used to give definition to the simple pattern.

At Coggeshall in Essex tambour lace was worked, and a specimen in the Victoria and Albert Museum was made by a survivor late in the nineteenth century.



SUFFOLK LACES