

A COLLECTION OF SEA GOING VESSELS DEPICTED ON EAST DEVON BOBBINS. An album.

Photos and drawings of ships and other seagoing vessels.

Brian Lemin July 2020.

Though I have lived more than half of my life in Australia, I was born in Devonport and lived a lot of my adult life in Plymouth and Exeter. I am clearly still a Devonian at heart and have enjoyed immensely my study of East Devon lace bobbins and the special genre of "Ships". I am very happy to share them with you. I am afraid that research about most of them has been very sparse and hard to find.

For those interested in the background to the tradition and carving of ships depicted on these bobbins I point you to the following reference that relates to such topics as scrimshaw and other relevant background information.

Lemin, Brian. *An Analysis of Maritime Decorations and Possible Decorators of Ships Depicted on East Devon Bobbins*, 23 pages. Posted December 20, 2010. [FIRST PAGE](#). File size 1.2MB [PDF](#)

As my study of East Devon and Downton bobbins developed I became very aware of the contribution of many bobbins to local history and I think that ships make a valuable contribution, though I will have to wait for future researchers as I am pretty well stuck on the other side of the world and that type of research is essentially local.

I would also like to mention that often Beer is said to be the origin of the nautical decoration of East Devon bobbins. I am sorry that whilst I believe this, I have no proof other than when the name Beer is carved on a bobbin.

If any reader can offer any information or add their knowledge to any of these entries, I will be glad to hear from them. I am pretty sure that the All Hallows Museum, Honiton or the "Arachne" lace list will put you in touch with me.

One thing I have found is that the names of ships can often be changed, usually when they were sold or turned to other uses. Also, very few of the ships depicted on the bobbins are named, plus the fact that I have no idea if they were merchant ships or naval ships, though some have a large amount of cannon placements.

Readers must know that I am no expert on historical ships and my comments start from a position of poor knowledge. (*I just like looking at the pictures! Smile*)

THE VESSELS

FIVE SHIPS



Here is a well-worn bobbin that close inspection reveals that there are 5 ships carved on it.

I am reasonably confident that this is a large lugger, but it bears no resemblance to the current style of lugger often raced in Beer on high days and holidays, there are no cannon placements in the modern ship.

So far this is the largest amount of ships I have found on any bobbin.



MIP 1838

Part of ships sail on the left in the middle band



Perhaps it is hard to see but if you see the brick hull shape, then the mainmast, you will make out the sails. You will also see the fish decoration. Does this indicate that it was a fishing boat? I have no idea.

This is on a gimp bobbin which is somewhat larger than the ordinary bobbin used by the lace makers.

Yacht "C" 1818



Here is the first of quite a few drawings of East Devon bobbin drawings I will be including in this album. I do this when I have never seen the actual bobbin, its picture or, in the case of this album I have failed to get academic access (free) to a bobbin in a museum. The "C" we think represents its name surrounded by XX's. It could also be a code for "love" to "C"!! (*You choose, smile*).

For the most part, I have no idea who made the drawings, but I am grateful that they did as it records them for posterity.

AD EW 5 CANNON SHIP



My guess that this is a "ketch". The presence of 4 facing hearts reinforces I my mind that many of these decorated bobbins were made for loved ones at home. Probably by the seaman themselves.

ASP MP

Two bobbins which depict the Asp. I am not sure they are both the same ship but they are clearly meant to represent the "Asp" that these seamen served on.

title

The "ASP" is the most seen of ships on these bobbins. It is famous from the novel by Jane Austen, "Persuasion". It is variously described as a frigate or corvette. There is just a smattering of evidence that it became a fishing boat off the coast of Devon after it was retired.



(Very doubtful evidence!) This is a fairly crude inscribed ship. You might notice a small fish near the tail of the bobbin.



ASP "CLARKE"

The Asp too is of Jane Austin's, "Persuasion" fame. See below for her page on the ship.



8 Gun Cutter - ASP. Possible ID features:

Woven
wave band
at top



Lettering
name



Bricks



Lettering



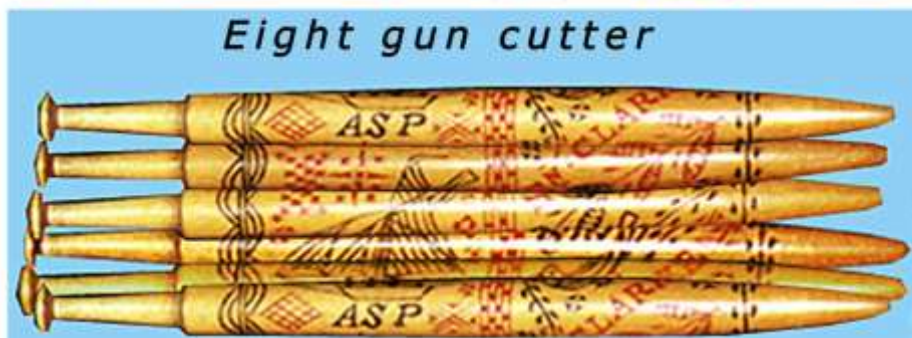
Bird



Bottom
band,
tail
undecorated



Eight gun cutter



Persuasion. Jane Austin. Wordsworth Classics 1996. p 46,47.

Anne suppressed a little smile, and listened kindly, while Mrs Musgrove relieved her heart a little more; and for a few minutes, therefore, could not keep pace with the conversation of others.-When she could let her attention take its natural course again, she found the Miss Musgrove's fetching the navy list (their own Navy list, the first that had ever been at Uppercross); and sitting down together to pour over it, with the professed view of finding out the ships which Captain Wentworth had commanded.

"Your first was the Asp, I remember; we will look for the Asp"

"You will not find her there. – Quite worn out and broken up. I was the last man who commanded her. – Hardly fit for service then. - Reported fit for home service for a year or two, so I was sent off to the West Indies". The girls looked in amazement.

"The admiralty," he continued, "entertain themselves now and then, with sending a few hundred men to sea, in a ship not fit to be employed. But they have a great many to provide for; and among the thousands that just may well go to the bottom as not, it is impossible for them to distinguish the very set who may be least missed."

"Phoo phoo," cried the admiral, "what stuff these young fellows talk! Never was a better sloop than the Asp in her day. - For an old built sloop, you would not see her equal. Lucky fellow to get her! – He knows there must have been twenty better men than himself applying for her at the same time. Lucky fellow to get anything so soon, with no more interest than his."

"I felt my luck admiral, I assure you;" replied Captain Wentworth, seriously. "I was well satisfied with my appointment as you can desire. It was a great object with me, at the time, to be at sea – a very great object. I wanted to be doing something."

"To be sure you did. – What should a young fellow, like you, do ashore for half a year together? – If a man has not a wife, he soon wants to be afloat again."

"From a South Wales Tourist brochure"

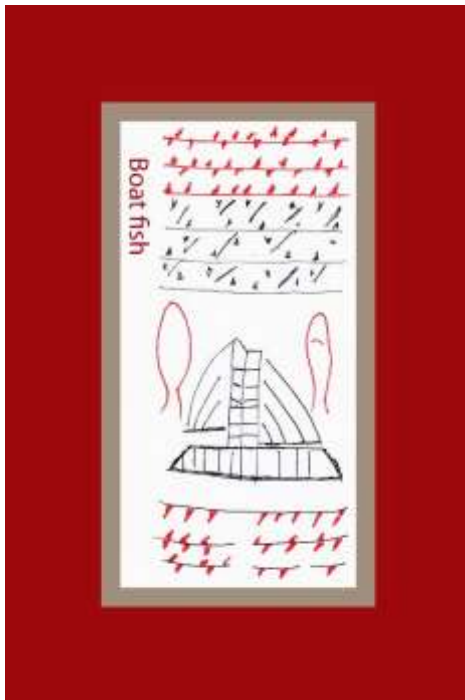
M A L BEER 1841

This bobbin is in the *RAMM Exeter Museum*. As I have failed to gain academic access to this collection and therefore have to pay (IMHO a lot) I cannot show it to you.

I find it incomprehensible that museum would put its income before the education of the public whom it serves, and its contribution to local history; especially as the date, is well earlier than the copyright and the bobbins were given to them in the first place.

This author is a volunteer and has never made any financial gain from his research and web publishing activities regarding lace bobbins.

BOAT FISH Drw.



This type of mainmast I have seen on other carved bobbins. I have often thought it may be a feature to climb up and look for shoals? I suspect the fish could have been whales?

CARLIN LANE 1877 STEAMBOAT DRW



This is a fascinating record for history. I have failed to get any more information about it. From the drawing, I would like to suggest the date could be 1877 not 1871 in the caption.

The first successful steamboat was built in Scotland in 1802. Early boats were driven by a paddle wheel (I can't see any indication of this on the carving) but boats did keep their sails in case they ran out of coal.

DART, MAN TWO SHIPS 1813



I am not sure of the "13" part of the date. There are two ships easily seen, a ships wheel too. The text is well carved artistically. The Dart is a local river hence Dartmouth.



The Dart capturing a French ship 1796 It cannot vouch that this is the same ship, but it is interesting!

E COPP 3 MASTED 1843



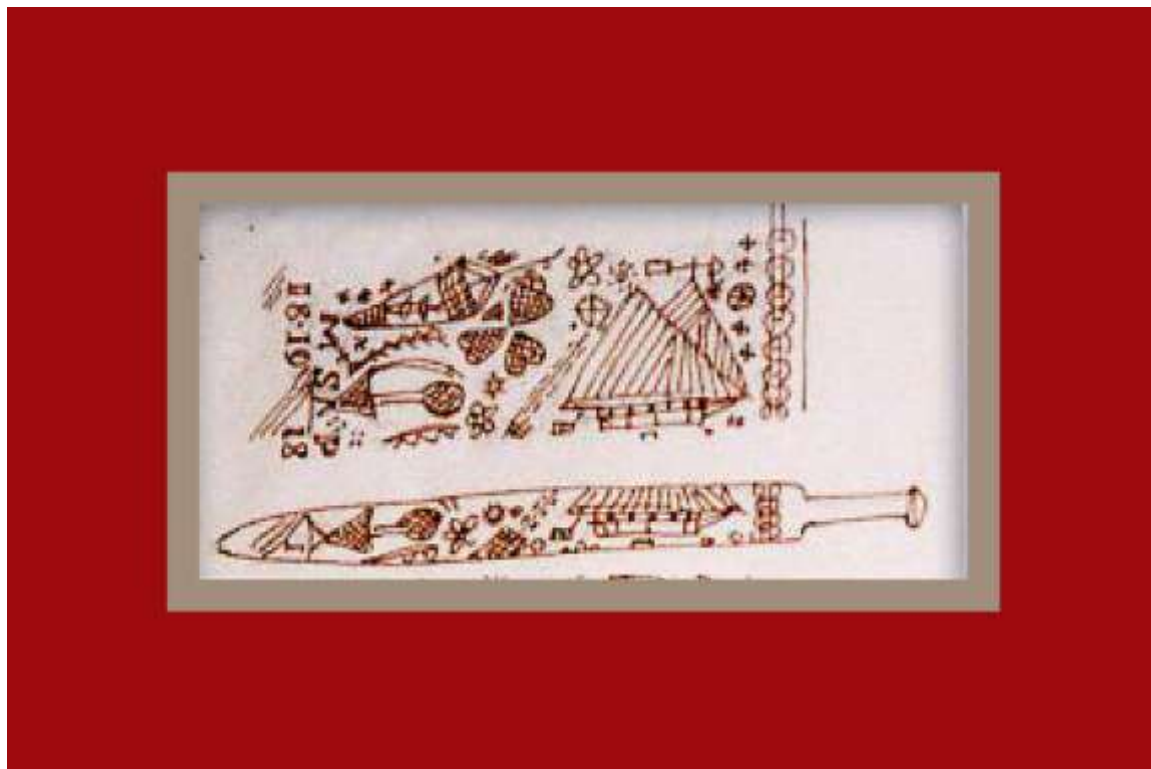
A well-worn bobbin. Needs careful study to see the features. The mast tips are arrowed downwards and the topsails arrowed at a slope.

FAVORITE E B JB



The catalogues name this Fav"o"rite Not the modern spelling in the caption.

FISHING BOAT AND NET 1918 S A P Drw



Similar trawling fishing nets are seen on other bobbins. Note weather vane on the mainmast.

FLY J R

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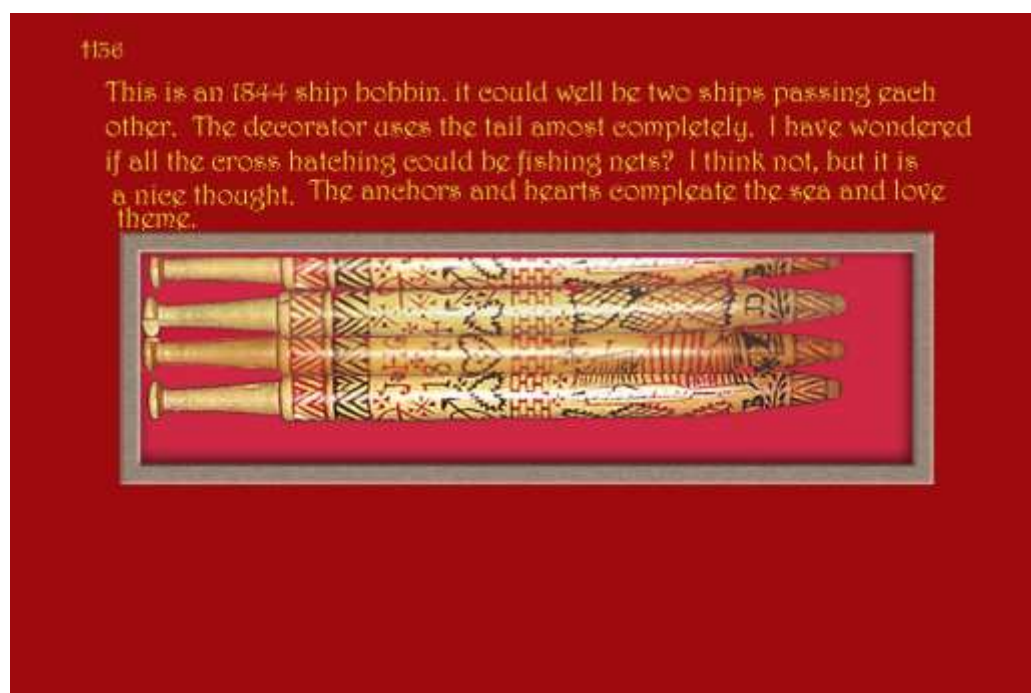
I understand that this bobbin could represent a local (?Beer) fishing vessel similar to the above drawing.

HHS I H C H THREE MASTED SHIP.



The looks like a well-armed ship.

J H G 1844



LARK R P S C YACHT Drw

In full sail.

MAP M O fish and seaweed

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M P ANCHOR AND SUN.



Quite worn but the ship still looks good. Sun with face, moon and anchor.

P T SMALL SHIP AND SEAWEED FRONDS

†129

Is it a "boat" depicted? I think so, the flag on the top seems to indicate this. It is surrounded by bold foliage and equally bold printing, though not such good print quality as on many bobbins.



P V T SMALL BOAT

t152

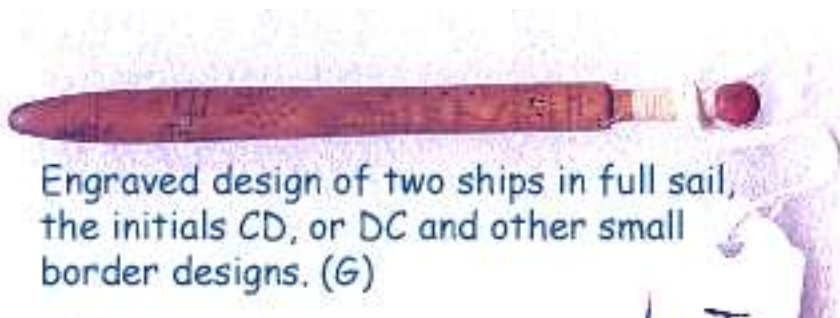
A more rudimentary sketch of a small boat. Decorated by the person who utilizes all or most of the tail and who uses quite a black sealing wax.



This decorator uses what I call "hairy hearts", possibly a B and a W in the hearts as well as a rudimentary face. Nice fouled anchor. This decorator uses the extreme tail as part of his decoration. This probably is an identifier for a particular decorator.

Questionable

Not questionable from them being ship bobbins but because of lack of detail



Very well worn and poor photograph



The middle band has unmistakable features of a fishing boat sail, but not much more.

R F YACHT IN FULL SAIL, HEARTS



FISHING BOAT WITH FISH.

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FISHING BOAT WITH WHALE

I like this scene. Seaweed coming up from the tail, a fouled anchor and an unmistakable whale. Carved by my "hairy hearts" decorator

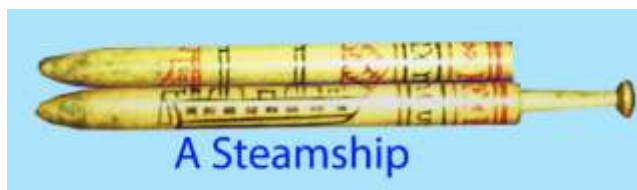
†12.

very clear nautical scene. It has a small boat, a whale and a fouled anchor. There are red wave like curves towards the tail. the tail is fully inscribed. Possibly the only decoration I have seen that, under the circumstances, can be likened to a scene...



STEAMSHIP, WITH FLAG AND ANCHOR



STEAMSHIP

This seems to have two funnels. Probably more modern. I still do not have a date for this which would be good for bobbin history.

TALL SHIP S C A S Drw

With streamers and large flag. Nice waves

THE ALMA and a second ship T S M

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TWO SHIPs



FOUR CANNON SHIP WITH ANALYSIS

Possible ID points are:

*Broad top
banding*



*Hairy faced
hearts*



*Tail
decorated*



Simple sketch



Unclassified. Possibly 4 canons

VIOKTORIA

115 is a detail of the vioktoria together with the bobbin. I presume that all the black squares on the hull equal cannons. If so the is is the heaviest armed of all the ships depicted on bobbins.





What a fabulous warship? No date.

UN-NAMED SHIP BY "HAIRY HEARTS DECORATOR"

1154

Here is an un named ship, it is nicely "drawn". The fouled anchor is central and the hearts are prominent. This decorator uses the tail of the bobbin more than others.



Nice big fouled anchor.

WILLIAM

Very nice decoration. William is quite artistic.

HALF FACE Drw

A typical local fishing boat. Why half a face I have no idea.

Conclusion

I hope you have enjoyed having a look at my album of East Devon bobbin ships. I love them.

I do not apologise for my annoyance with RAMM but I feel sore about it. That I cannot share what is in Devons premier museum, that they would rather keep locked up in a box rather than share them with local historians and collectors. This is the first museum in the UK that has failed to offer me the privilege of free access to their bobbin collections. I hope that one day I will be able to show them to you. What are museums for if it is not to educate the public for whom it was set up, especially as the bobbins were given to them in the first place and that they are all out of copyright (mind you some museums do charge for out of copyright images if they are being used commercially. I also recognise that museums cost a lot of money to run.) You win some, you lose some.

I will continue to make this my special collection and try and find out more about them as vessels. Perhaps you have a ship you are willing to share with me? Perhaps you are a historical expert on ships and can offer me some education? I hope so.

Enjoy, Brian

(www.brianlemin.com) Dictionary of East Midland bobbins.