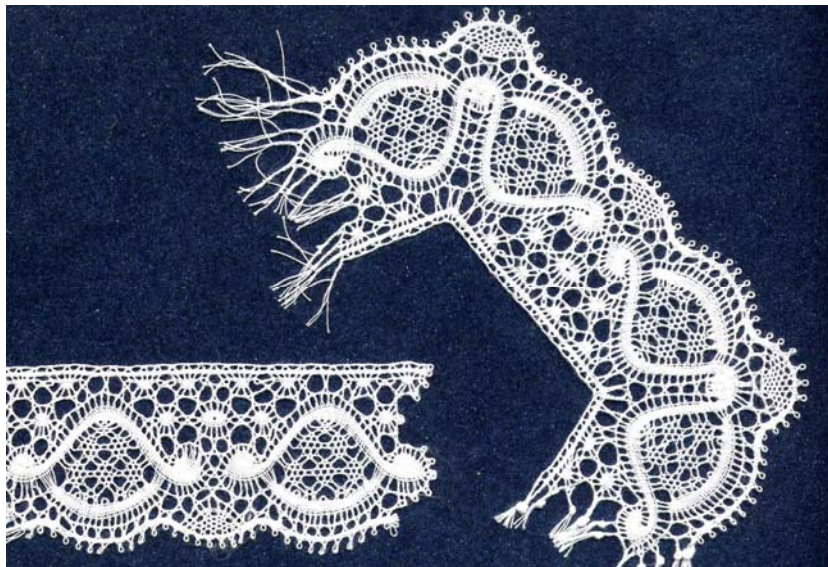


## A LACE HOLIDAY by Dr Christine Johnson



My 2008 annual holiday was spent researching bobbin lace in Belgium and Denmark. I attended Year 4 of the Binche course at the summer school at the Kantcentrum (Lace Centre) in Bruges. The term 'Binche' lace covers both an early Flemish lace made from c1650 until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the "revival" lace made from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The illustration above is an example of Binche revival lace from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is one of the fairy point or 'Point de Fee' patterns characterised by the use of fine thread and the presence of woven dots (tallies). This pattern is one of a family of designs called '13<sup>th</sup> century lace' because the motifs represent items from that period.

The 4-year course is taught by Anne-Marie Verbeke Billiet and is based on the revival laces and the design of new patterns. Some time is spent on reconstruction of 'old' Binche lace and the study of fancy grounds occurring in them. The course is aimed at experienced lace makers and the balance shifts from predominantly practical lace making in Year 1 to theory and design in Years 3 and 4.



This is a sample I made at the class, drafted from a doodle. I chose to design a corner for a pentagonal edging.

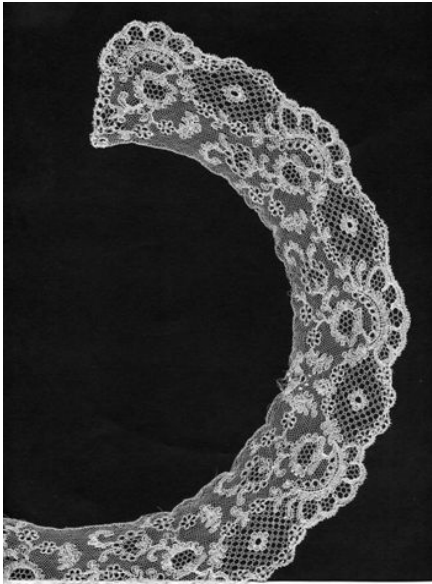
The weekend, in the middle of the fortnight long course, provided the perfect opportunity to visit several museums with lace collections in the vicinity, including:

- the Flax Museum at Kortrijk (Courtrai) housing a display of lace that covers the history of bobbin lacemaking
- the Museum of Lace and Costume in Brussels which has a minimal display of lace at present
- the Lace Museum at St Carolus Borromeus Cathedral in Antwerp. This collection of lace and its presentation to the public is maintained by a group of volunteers and is only open for 4-5 hours a week. However, the collection is used for study and some of the findings have been published.

A visit to a temporary exhibition at the Scottish Museum in Veere in the south of the Netherlands proved interesting. This exhibition was based on lace and embroidery produced and marketed by Werkers-Lockfeer, a family company operating from 1880 to 1965. The exhibits included original design sketches, worked examples of the design in both embroidery and bobbin lace, the pricking\* and the 'bleu' of the bobbin lace. A design was worked initially by an experienced lacemaker. From this sample, the "bleu" was produced to guide other lacemakers working the pricking. The "bleu" was made by putting the sample on light-sensitive paper and exposing it to the sun. All of the areas of the paper not protected by lace were turned blue by the light. There is a precedent for lacemakers using the latest technology of the day! The laces designed and sold by the Werkers-Lockfeer company were known as Beveren lace, one of the point ground/tulle laces.



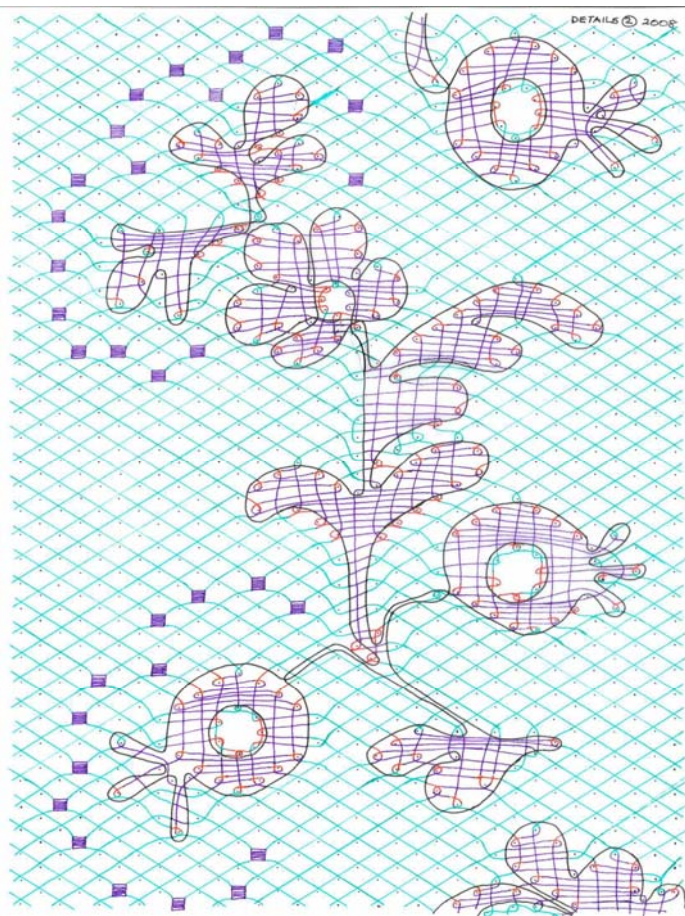
This is an example of point ground Beveren lace from my collection. The background mesh is hexagonal with a crossing of the threads forming the top and bottom and three twists of the threads on the remaining four sides.



Two examples of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Tønder point ground lace, a collar and 'Store klokken'

In Denmark, I spent two weeks in the museum in Tønder working on the reconstruction of another variant of the point ground lace family made in the so-called third period of Tønder lacemaking. In the early part of that period, from 1800-1850, the lace industry in Tønder was largely spared the decline that occurred elsewhere in Europe because a new middle class market for lace on costume emerged. During this time, most of the patterns were locally designed. Flowers from domestic gardens were popular designs. The stitches and techniques used during this era were different from those in use today. While my original aim was to make the beautiful patterns of a past era available to modern lacemakers, the project also became a re-discovery of lost working methods.

The final few days were spent in Copenhagen, continuing my study of Tønder lace at the Museum of Decorative Arts.



\*Bobbin lace is made on a pattern of dots and lines called a lace **pricking**. A pattern, such as this one, is drawn to size onto a sheet of card or parchment (often coloured to make the white thread easier to see.) The placement of each pin is pre pricked with a needle. The pricking is then pinned to the lace pillow. The lines give a guide as to where the threads go as they move from pinhole to pinhole.