

## Book Appendix Glossary 12-02

Powerhouse Museum Lace Collection: Glossary of terms used in the documentation – Blue files and collection notebooks.

### Rosemary Shepherd: 1983 to 2003

The following references were used in the documentation.

#### For needle laces:

Therese de Dillmont, *The Complete Encyclopaedia of Needlework*, Running Press reprint, Philadelphia, 1971

#### For bobbin laces:

Bridget M Cook and Geraldine Stott, *The Book of Bobbin Lace Stitches*, A H & A W Reed, Sydney, 1980

#### The principal historical reference:

Santina Levey, *Lace a History*, Victoria and Albert Museum and W H Maney, Leeds, 1983

In compiling the glossary reference was also made to Alexandra Stillwell's *Illustrated dictionary of lacemaking*, Cassell, London 1996

## General lace and lacemaking terms

A **border**, **frounce** or **edging** is a length of lace with one shaped edge (headside) and one straight edge (footside). The headside shaping may be as insignificant as a straight or undulating line of picots, or as pronounced as deep 'van Dyke' scallops. 'Border' is used for laces to 100mm and 'frounce' for laces wider than 100 mm and these are the terms used in the documentation of the Powerhouse collection.

The term 'lace edging' is often used elsewhere instead of border, for very narrow laces.

An **insertion** is usually a length of lace with two straight edges (footsides) which are stitched directly onto the mounting fabric, the fabric then being cut away behind the lace. Occasionally lace insertions are shaped (for example, square or triangular motifs for use on household linen) in which case they are entirely enclosed by a footside. See also 'panel' and 'engrelure'

A lace **panel** is usually has finished edges, enclosing a specially designed motif.

The **footside** (sometimes 'footing') of a border or frounce is the straight edge that is stitched to fabric or garment.

The *headside* of a border or flounce is the shaped or patterned edge. The shaping may be as insignificant as a straight row of loops or picots, or as

An *engrelure* is a narrow lace insertion used between more valuable lace and the garment it is attached to. Its purpose is to protect more valuable lace from being accidentally damaged when moved from one garment to another (as was the custom). Engrelures were originally very simple bobbin laces, but from the nineteenth century onwards they were often machine-made.

*Brides/bars* are the narrow connections between the motifs of a lace that does not have a mesh ground. They are made and ornamented in various ways, depending on the lace technique.

*Ground* is the mesh background of a lace, which joins together the elements of the design. Chronologically speaking it is a later development, the earliest laces having bars joining the design elements.

*Filling stitch* is a decorative stitch or pattern of stitches used within a design element.

*Picot* is a thread loop which decorates the edge or joining bars of a particular lace. Picots are used in all the different technical categories of lace, excepting knitting and weaving.

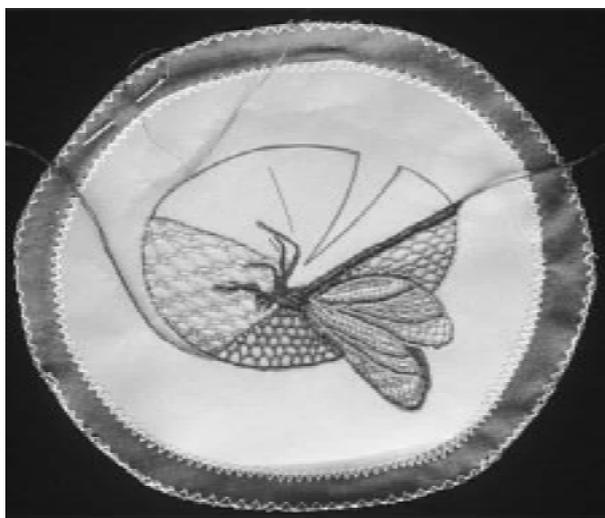
*Guipure* is a term, first used in the nineteenth century, for lace with bars linking the design elements, instead of a mesh ground.

*Raised work* is a general term used for areas of three-dimensional relief in a lace, which are worked as part of the lacemaking process. Different lacemaking techniques employ different methods of creating raised work and often have specific names for them.

*'Quadrant-joined'* means joined by a square, and refers to the late nineteenth century practice of re-fashioning a lace cap and lappets by trimming the cap back into a square shape, and attaching the lappets to adjoining sides of the square, thus making a berthe style collar. (for example, H5111-42)

## Needle lace terms

### General

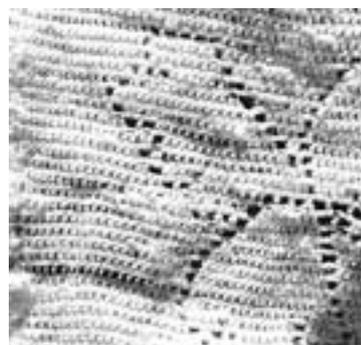


#### *The needle lace process*

Needle lace is created over a flat pattern. Originally the pattern was drawn on parchment, but nowadays architect's linen (or even thin card covered with adhesive film) is used, with a backing of cloth that is temporarily stitched to it. The foundation threads are couched around the outline of the design, through both pattern and cloth) and the spaces filled with the chosen buttonhole stitch patterns. The lace is completed by working the cordonnet and, if necessary, bars connecting the

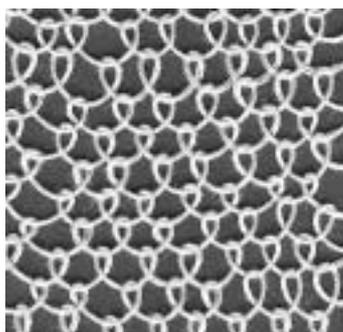
motifs. The pattern and backing cloth are then separated at the edges allowing the couching threads to be cut safely between the two layers. The lace can then be lifted off the pattern and any remaining loose threads removed with tweezers.

*Voided patterning* is the name given to the patterning of needle laces like hollie point, in which the design is formed entirely by leaving spaces in the stitching. This is also the way most decorative filling stitches are created in needle lace.



*Hollie point detail of H6625-1*

The *direction of twist* of the buttonhole stitch is recorded in the needle lace documentation because it varies between laces and is one of the observable characteristics which may in the future lead to a different attribution for any given piece. 'Twist' refers to the direction of slope of the thread as it passes from one stitch to the next.

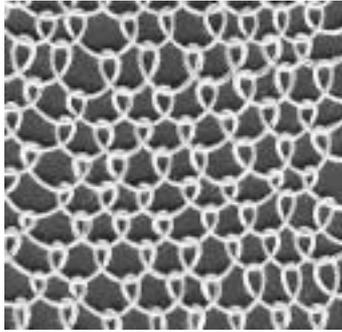


*Simple buttonhole stitch, worked back and forth. In this sample the 'twist' of each stitch – the orientation of the topmost thread of the buttonhole loop – varies according to the direction in which the row is being worked.*

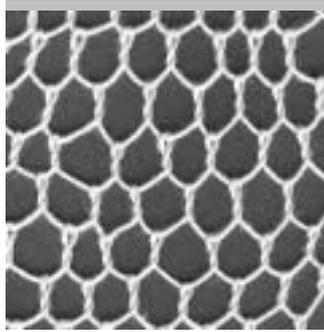
## Needle lace stitches and techniques

**Buttonhole stitch** is the basic element of most needle laces. In its simplest form (shown above and below) it is the embroiderer's blanket stitch worked "in the air," but it can also be twisted or knotted for decorative effect.

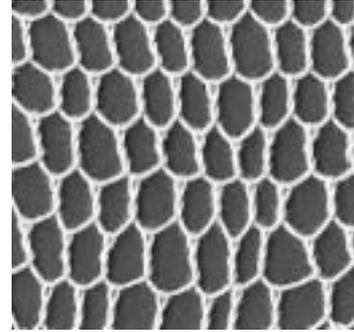
**Twisted buttonhole stitches** can be single (called simple buttonhole stitch), double or triple twisted and often form the mesh ground of a needle lace.



*no twists*

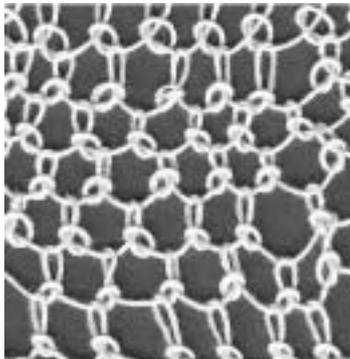


*two twists*

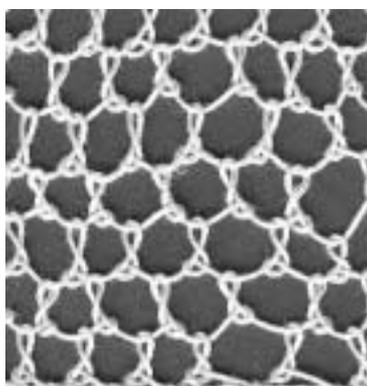
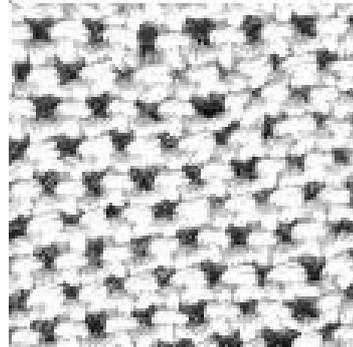


*two or three twists*

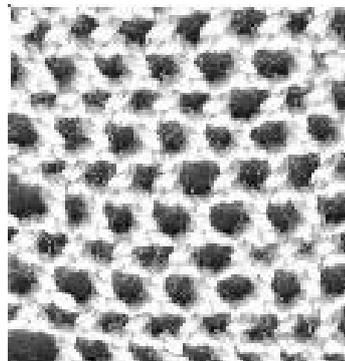
**Knotted buttonhole stitches** can be knotted around the stitch or knotted behind the stitch. The images show the open and closed form of each.



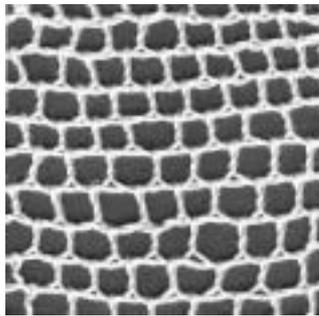
*Buttonhole stitch knotted around the loop*



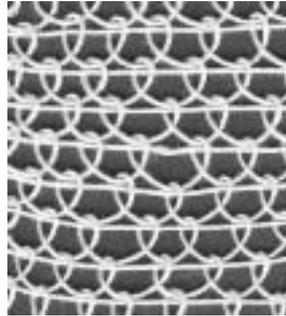
*Buttonhole stitch knotted behind the loop*



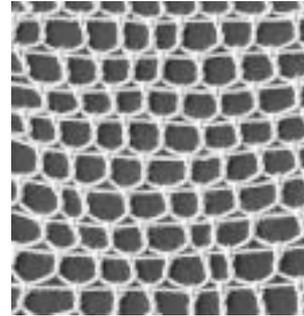
All three variations of buttonhole stitch can be used plain (as above) whipped or corded (that is, with a straight return).



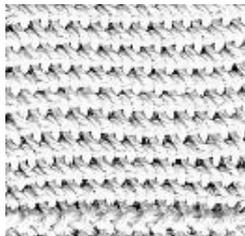
*Whipped, double-twisted*



*Corded, simple; open*



*Corded, double-twisted*



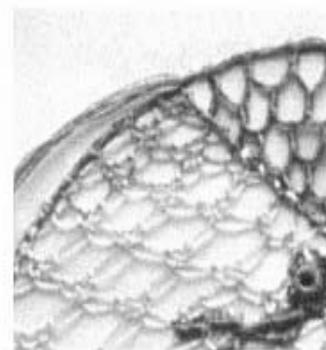
***Corded simple buttonhole stitch*** (left) is usually dense and often referred to as ‘cloth work’ because it forms the most solid areas of a design.

A ***Cordonnet or cordonette*** is formed by buttonholing over the foundation threads of a needle lace, often with extra threads added to create some relief at the edge of a motif, as in all the raised needle laces. A raised cordonnet is often further embellished with buttonholed loops or picots.



The ***Foundation thread or cord*** (generally doubled) is couched along the outline of the needle lace design, to provide the framework for all subsequent stitching. (See right.) When the lace is finished the couching threads are removed.

(*Couching* is a general embroidery term describing the process of anchoring a heavy thread to the surface of cloth with fine stitches which pass from the underside of the cloth around the couched thread and back through the same hole before moving on to the next anchor point.)



***‘Festooning’ or point de feston***, is spaced knotted buttonhole stitch, often used to embellish the edge of motifs in nineteenth century Youghal and Branscombe point.

***Raised work*** refers to various kinds of relief work used to emphasize parts of a design, generally in the form of a padded and decorated cordonnet. (See image above)

*Bride tortillees* ground is the hexagonal mesh ground of some Alencon and later Argentan needle laces, in which the foundation mesh is whipped over instead of buttonholed. Needless to say it is quicker to work than the buttonholed mesh.

## Bobbin lace terms

### General

(Refer also to the classification system.)

*The bobbin lace process* is best described as a form of weaving, in which the warp and weft threads are constantly changing places. There are only two basic movements, the cross and the twist, which always involve two pairs of threads. (See below) Bobbin lace is worked over a card pattern that is fastened to a pillow stuffed hard with material such as straw, sawdust, or horsehair. As each stitch, or row of stitches, is formed it is held in place with a pin pushed through the appropriate point on the pattern and into the pillow. The shape and size of both bobbins and pillows varies considerably from region to region.



*Continuous or straight lace* is the term for lace in which pattern and ground are worked together with the one set of threads, so that the wider the lace the more bobbins are used. It is generally acknowledged that the earliest bobbin laces were worked by this method.

*Part or sectional lace* is the term for lace in which the motifs are made separately and joined later over a master pattern with bobbin made sewings, bars or ground. (see also Braid laces.)

*Gimp* is a heavy thread, or threads, used to emphasize the edge of a motif, or an area within a motif, or occasionally to form the whole design. A gimp thread can be used on its own, or as one thread of a pair.

*Raised work* a term used for various kinds of relief work in bobbin lace. It can be found in any kind of bobbin lace but is most often associated with part laces like Brussels and Honiton.

*Tulle laces* are bobbin laces with an 'open' or half stitch ground which forms an hexagonal mesh. It is worked cross, twist, twist, twist or occasionally cross, twist, twist, and the pin is not enclosed. (In fact, sometimes pins are not used at all.)

*Plaited laces* are bobbin laces consisting mostly of plaits and tallies.

*Braid laces* are bobbin laces in which the design and working consist of a continuous tape-like braid or braids which work back on themselves and are joined as the work

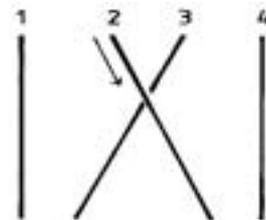
proceeds. A constant number of threads is usually involved in each braid, and the stitches are often, but not always, worked in horizontal rows, with the addition of different decorative elements. The earliest braid laces were the seventeenth century Italian Milanese laces.

**Tape laces**, or ‘mezzo punto’ laces, were originally (17<sup>th</sup> C) laces made by tacking a straight, separately made bobbin or hand-woven tapes around the outlines of a design and connecting them with decorative *needle lace* filling stitches and bars. In the nineteenth century this technique was revived and given various names, the most enduring of which is probably ‘point lace’.

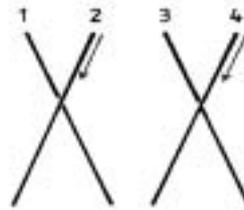
## Stitches or techniques

‘**Cross**’ and ‘**twist**’ are the basic movements, different combinations of which form all the stitches of bobbin lace. The movements are always made in relation to two pairs of threads.

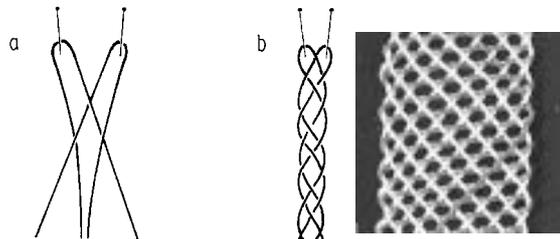
In the cross movement; the middle two threads move left over right (2 over 3)



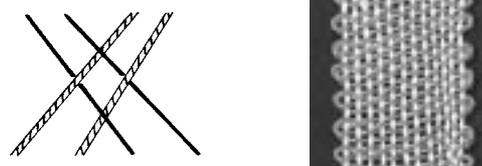
and in the twist movement, the pairs of threads move right over left (4 over 3, 2 over 1).



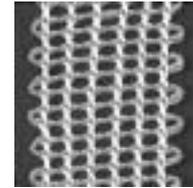
**Half stitch**; cross + twist (left) repeated with the same two pairs of threads to make a plait, and working one pair through others to make a half stitch block.



**Cloth or whole stitch**; cross, twist, cross (left) and a block of cloth stitch.



***Cloth-and-twist or whole-stitch-and-twist;***  
cross, twist, cross, twist

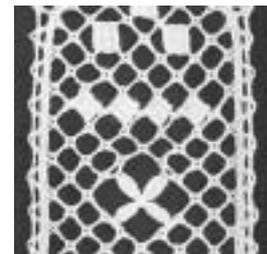


***Plaits*** are bars made by the working together sets of threads in such a way that all are used equally (unlike, for example, cloth stitch in which a worker pair travels back and forth like a weft through the passive threads). A plait can be worked with two (the most common, shown above), three or four pairs of threads. Plaits of varying width are a feature of many of the earliest bobbin laces.



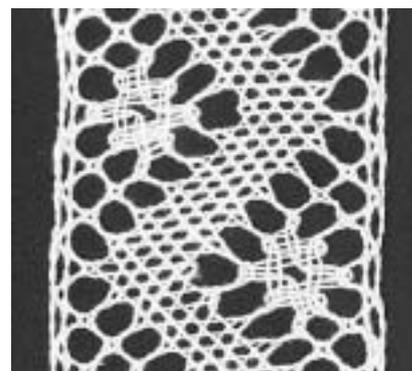
*Three and four pair plaits work with threads doubled (left) and singly*

A ***Tally or leaf*** is a small square, oblong or leaf-shaped motif worked by weaving one of the four threads about the other three, thus making an exception to the cross-twist movements which produce all the other bobbin lace stitch patterns.



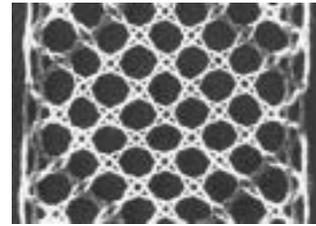
A ***braid (or tape)*** is a continuous narrow strip of lace. The earliest bobbin laces were braids which were used as seam insertions on linen garments, or to join narrow widths of linen for household use. The use of the word tape instead of braid can be misleading, since 'tape lace' generally has a specific different meaning (see note above).

A ***trail*** is a narrow straight or curved strip of lace, which occurs *within* continuous laces such as le Puy, Bedfordshire and Torchon. Unlike a braid, a trail has pairs of threads entering and leaving it, and the number of pairs can vary along its length.

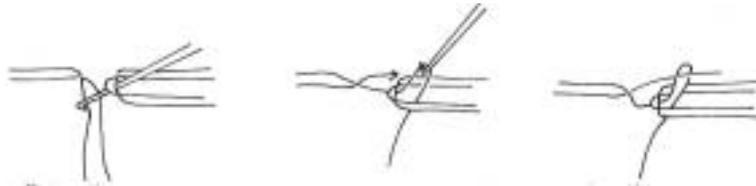


***Horizontal working*** describes the method of working half, cloth and cloth-and-twist, in which one pair of threads works through each of the others in series, in horizontal rows, back and forth. This 'worker' or 'leader' pair consequently uses more thread than the others. Horizontal working generally forms the solid areas of a lace design.

**Diagonal working** is the method of working mesh ground and filling stitches whereby the stitches are worked in diagonal rows, in one direction only, ensuring that each pair of threads is used equally.



**Sewings** are the means of connecting one part of a tape or part lace to another and have nothing to do with needles. Instead they involve drawing a loop of one thread of the active worker pair through an edge space of completed work, generally with a crochet hook or similar implement, and passing the other thread through the loop to secure it. The exact method of sewing may vary, as indicated in the diagrams.

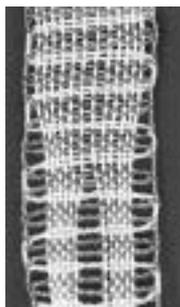


*Simplest form of sewing*

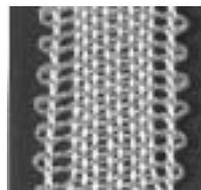


*Sewings from, and into a footside edge*

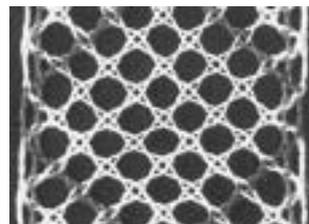
**Straight edges** – for braids and borders;



*Footside edges*

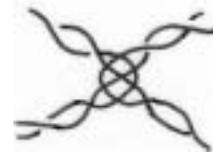


*Cloth-and-twist-edges*



*Torchon edges*

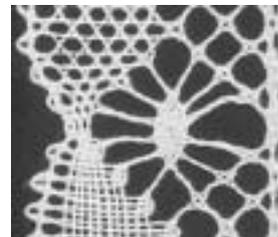
A **turning stitch** is generally worked cross, twist, cross, twist, cross (with or without twists before or after) and is used as a kind of 'lock' stitch when a pin is not used. It 'locks' because one thread of each pair is exchanged. This is especially useful for edge stitches of a horizontally worked braid because one thread of the worker pair is exchanged for a thread of the passive pair.



An *exchange stitch* is a cloth stitch (or sometimes half stitch) which exchanges one worker pair for the waiting pair at the edge of a braid with a footside or straight edge.

*Composite stitches* in bobbin lace are groups of stitches which form a decorative motif, which replaces an area of mesh, or relieves an area of cloth stitch; for example, spiders and snowflakes.

A *spider* is a composite stitch which generally has a single central pinhole and a variable number of 'legs', depending on how big an area of mesh it replaces.



*Snowflakes*- or shell, bud and toile stars- are composite stitches which are similar in form to spiders, but have a more complex structure. (Cook and Stott, pp 229-233, 247-253, 237-242)

Single or double *brides or bars* are used in some part laces to link the separate motifs. They are generally 2-pair plaits, with or without picots.

*Workers and passives* (also known as *weavers and downrights*) are terms appropriate for horizontally worked laces or motifs. The worker pair is the pair of threads which works horizontally back and forth through the passive pairs. The worker pair corresponds to the weft in weaving and the passives are the equivalent of warp threads.

## Some lace names

### Based on names of towns, regions or countries

#### *Embroidered laces*

Coggeshall  
Carrickmacross  
Limerick

#### *Needle laces*

Alencon  
Venetian gros point  
Argentan  
Point de France  
Brussels

#### *Bobbin Laces - continuous*

Bayeux  
Chantilly  
Point de Paris  
Binche  
Mechlin  
Le Puy

Buckinghamshire Point

Bedfordshire  
Valenciennes

Genoese  
Maltese  
Lille  
Tönder

#### *Bobbin laces - part*

Honiton  
Devon  
Brussels  
Bruges  
Brabant  
Point d'Angleterre  
Milanese  
Idria

#### *Mixed laces*

Romanian point (crochet braid with needle fillings)

Branscombe Point (machine-made braid with needle fillings)

***Crochet***

Irish crochet (distinguished by its use of raised work)

***Knitting***

Shetland lace

**Based on style or technique**

***Embroidered laces***

Punto tirato

Filet/lacis

Buratto

***Needle laces***

Point de gaze

Punto in aria

Coralline point

Gros point, flat point, rose point

Reticella

Hollie point

**Garments/accessories**

Fichu

Berthe collar

Lappets

Point de neige

***Bobbin laces – continuous***

Potten kant

Blonde/black blonde

Torchon

***Bobbin laces - part***

Braid lace

Rosaline/rosaline perle

***Mixed laces***

Tape lace

Princess lace

Battenburg lace

***Knotted laces***

Bebilla

Tatting

Macramé