An Introduction to Bucks Point Lace

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Contents

Introduction 5
   Equipment and materials
Pattern 1: Bucks Point ground sample 6
   Bucks Point ground, footside, catch-pin, left-hand picots,
   straight headside with picots
Pattern 2: Honeycomb ground sample 10
   Honeycomb ground with headside and footside
Pattern 3: Little Fan 12
   Working with a gimp
Angle of ground in Bucks Point lace 13
Drafting a pattern in Bucks Point lace 15
Pattern 4: Little Pea 16
   Six-pin honeycomb rings, honeycomb stitches in the headside,
   crossing gimps
Pattern 5: Plum Pudding 18
   Headside with valleys, honeycomb filling, catch-pin stitches
   against vertical gimps, mayflower
Pattern 6: Peacock's Eye 22
   Gimps side by side
Hexagonal motifs worked in sections 24
Pattern 7: Star motif 1 25
   Hexagonal motif changing direction for each segment,
   removing (finishing off) gimps, joining lace end to beginning
Pattern 8: Star motif 2 27
Pattern 9: Duke's Garter 29
   An edging with a right-angled corner, false picots
Pattern 10: Ring and tallies 32
   Starting on a horizontal line, eight-pin honeycomb rings,
   tallies in point ground
Pattern 11: A bookmark with variations 34
   Starting a motif or bookmark, finishing a bookmark or motif
   without a tassel, right-hand picots, tallies in honeycomb
Pattern 12: Rings and fingers 40
   Fingers of gimp in point ground, cucumber foot
Pattern 13: Two more variations 42
   Pin chain, pin chain and tallies filling, eyelets in cloth stitch,
   fingers of gimp in honeycomb
Pattern 14: Flowers and circles 44
   Adjusting patterns for effect
Pattern 15: Flower garden bookmark 47
Further reading 48
Introduction

Bucks Point lace is one of a group of bobbin laces which developed towards the end of the eighteenth century. The light open ground known by various names such as *Lille, fond simple*, or just *point ground* is a common feature of these laces, which were made all over Europe. The name of the English version comes from the East Midlands county of Buckinghamshire and the French word *point*, meaning stitch, which was used when referring to fine laces. Bucks Point was widely made not only in Buckinghamshire but also in the neighbouring counties of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

Bucks Point is a delicate lace worked in fine thread with the design outlined in a thicker gimp thread. Many of the patterns, particularly the simpler ones, are geometric. However, flowing floral designs, which are a real test of a lacemaker’s skill, are a feature of Bucks Point lace.

In this book the basic techniques of Bucks Point lace are introduced in a series of patterns, some traditional, others designed recently. This is not a book for complete beginners to lacemaking — readers are expected to know the basics and be familiar with winding bobbins, making prickings, working cloth stitch, half stitch etc.

Step-by-step instructions are given for the first six patterns, while for the remainder detail is given where needed. It is best to work through the patterns in order — a short sample is enough — to ensure that no necessary techniques required for the later patterns are missed.

Equipment and materials

Pillow: traditionally Bucks Point was made on a large, straw-filled bolster pillow but any flat or gently rounded pillow, either straw-filled or of polystyrene, is suitable. A roller pillow is useful for edgings.

Bobbins: 28 pairs are needed for the widest pattern; spangled bobbins are traditional but not essential; larger bobbins are useful for the thicker gimp threads.

Pins: fine pins (0.55 × 26 mm) in either brass or stainless steel.

Thread: the threads used for each sample are given but similar threads can be substituted.

Pricking card, pricker, cover cloths etc.
This attractive pattern has been drafted from an edging in The Lace Guild Collection. The way in which the cloth-stitch triangle in the headside is worked is unusual but very effective.
1. Work the first row of ground stitches from A to C, take gimp through left-hand pair, work through passives on D, work picot at E, return through passives and leave.
2. Continue with the ground until footside pin F has been worked.
3. Take the gimp to the right through eight pairs from the ground. Twist twice the six pairs needed for the honeycomb filling but do not twist the two pairs on the left.

4. Work all eight pins of the honeycomb filling, bring the gimp through the six pairs used, the two untwisted pairs, and the pair that worked the picot at $E$. Twist all the pairs three times — the gimp threads are kept tightly together because the two pairs which hold them were not twisted until after the gimp had been taken through them for the second time.

5. Continue with the ground until footside pin $H$ has been worked. Take the gimp through the seven pairs needed to work the cloth-stitch triangle. With each pair from the ground in turn work cloth stitch with each pair to the left then a picot, return through two passive pairs and leave. After working picot $I$ bring the gimp back through seven pairs — a pin (circled) is placed at the bottom of the triangle to hold the gimp in place.

Points to remember when working with gimps

1. The gimp is held in place between the threads of a pair.
2. At least two twists on a pair before a gimp, two or three afterwards depending on the stitches to be worked.
3. The gimp always goes under the left-hand thread of a pair. Lift Left is a useful mnemonic.
4. Cross gimps right over left.
5. When two gimps lie side by side, the pairs holding them are twisted on either side of both gimp threads but not between them.