

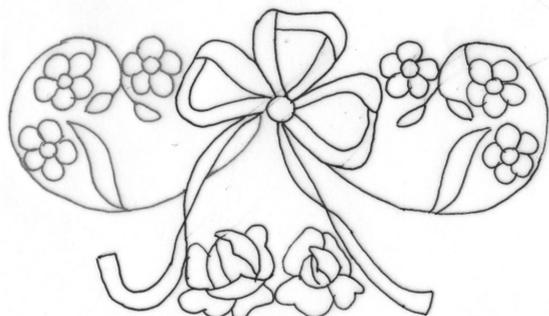
THE CHALLENGE - A HONITON MOTIF

BY SUSAN ROBERTS

I don't consider myself as a designer mainly because I can't draw and the laces I prefer to work tend to have flowing curves. I prefer to interpret patterns but I can trace, use a photocopier and use drawing packages I've got on my computer. As The Challenge was partly my idea I felt I had to have a go and design a piece of Honiton lace (I decided the design was too complex for me to design something in Binche, plus I'd have needed a lot of help).

There were two parts of the pricking I liked – the bow and surrounding flowers and the flowers in the corner. I set about tracing the two areas to isolate just the elements I was interested in. I flipped the tracing paper over to get the flowers on either side of the bow symmetric and close to the bow. I very quickly came to the conclusion that the corner flowers would be relatively simple design to work. Anyone who knows my Honiton will tell you I don't work small or simple pieces (luckily I do work quite fast).

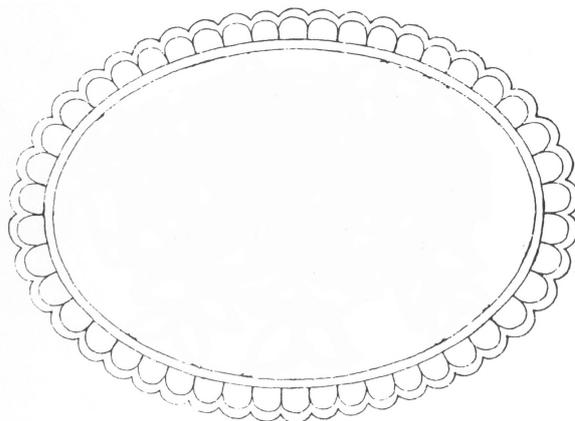
The bow (I do have a thing for nice bows, the wedding



veil I made – see *Lace 133* - has bows in it) and flowers looked quite nice on their own but I knew I would need to surround them by something to hold everything together. I knew I wouldn't be able to draw something from scratch other than a very basic shape. Then I remembered Barry Biggins interchangeable oval borders (see *A Wider View - designs suitable for Bobbin & Needle Lace, Embroidery & Quilting* by Barry Biggins). I looked through the book and found a number of ovals that interested me. I photocopied the line drawing of the ovals and did the same with my tracing of the bow and flowers and played to see what looked like it would give the best contrast. I eventually chose one that I'd liked in the past but never got around to working.

So I had my central design and my border but I needed to put the two together. They were different sizes and the oval wasn't quite the right shape. This was where the computer came in. I scanned the bell and the bow and then used PhotoShop to isolate the elements and manipulate the oval to squash it (top to bottom as you look at the finished design).

The next challenge was what size to work the lace. I printed the design out A4 size then traced all the lines



Oval shown at 70% of actual size

so I had nice crisp lines and could adjust the curves very slightly if I felt it was needed (one thing learning Binche has taught me is that designing larger scale and then reducing works well). Then to the photocopier and copies from 100% to 35% at 5% intervals. In the end I settled on 50% as a good reduction, any smaller and the sections were going to be too fiddly to work!

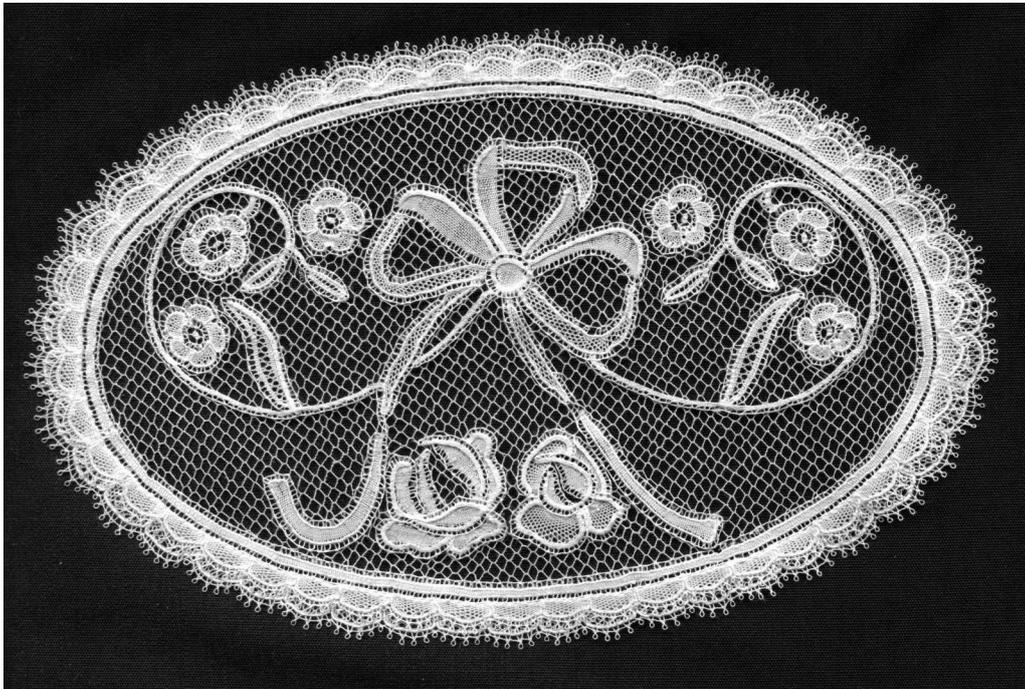
Finally I had my design that I could dot out! I always work Honiton in Egyptian Gassed 170 so dotted accordingly.

In terms of working the lace most of it is straight forward and relatively simple (although some points have got a lot of sewings in them). The edge was a different matter – I realised why I'd not worked it before, I wasn't sure how to work it! If I'd worked the outline and filled in the holes that were left it would have been very time consuming and I've have had some quite sharp points to contend with which are always difficult to work. By the time I'd ribbed down the spines and done a back to back rib back up (personally I don't like the effect of a roll) potentially there wasn't much space left and I would have a very limited choice of fillings that would work. So I made the decision to work a double layer of half stitch with picots on the outside of both rings. I did contemplate sewing into the picots on the smaller ring but those sharp points put me off and I didn't think this would give the best finished effect. I made sure that I started and finished the two layers at different places so I didn't get a bulge in the lace from bunches of thread on top of each other and also to make it a bit easier to sew the two ends of the second layer.

After over a year looking at the wrong side of the lace it was good to be able to finally see the right side and the raised sections of the bow.



Finished pricking



Finished lace (actual size)