EQUIPMENT

Pillow
A slightly domed mushroom or cookie pillow is often the most useful when starting lacemaking. These pillows should be used at a slight angle, i.e. they need raising slightly at the back. A loosely filled beanbag is easy to adjust to achieve a comfortable height.

Bobbins
I prefer East Midlands bobbins with spangles as they do not roll and, when used on a mushroom pillow, keep tension on the thread that helps keep the hitch in place. From my experience I believe lacemakers achieve the best results when using the bobbins with which they are most comfortable, keeping to the general rule that lighter bobbins are more appropriate for use with fine thread.

Spangle
The East Midlands bobbin's circle of beads provides the weight required for good tension.

Spangling
1 Use fine nosed pliers to make a small loop at the end of the wire (figure 4), use 22 or 24 swg brass wire.
2 Thread beads on the wire, starting with the bottom bead, working towards the smallest on one side, pass the wire through the bobbin then the matching beads on the other side starting with the top bead.
3 Bend the wire and pass the end through the loop. Allow a bare 13mm (½in) of space past the beads and bend the wire against the loop. Allow sufficient wire past the bend for another loop and cut off the remaining wire. Make a second loop interlocking with the first (figure 5). If the hole in the adjacent bead is sufficiently large, push the join into it.
Winding bobbins

1. Hold the bobbin in the left hand. Place the lace thread along the neck with the tail pointing towards the head and hold in position with the left thumb (figure 6).

2. Start winding the thread clockwise, when looking down on the head (figure 7). After a few turns, when the thread has stopped slipping, continue by rotating the bobbin anti-clockwise, first covering the ½ cm (¼ in) below the head (this helps to reduce slipping). If the thread is continually wound clockwise round the head the twists on the thread will be changed and this can lead to the thread weakening, shredding and even breaking.

3. When sufficient thread has been wound, secure with a half hitch. Hold the thread between thumb and middle finger, place the index finger in front of the thread and take it back and up under the thread to make a loop (figure 8).

4. Place the bobbin head behind the thread held between the thumb and index finger and bring the bobbin forward and up through the loop. The loop should sit in the short neck of a double headed bobbin (figure 9) or on the thread if the bobbin has a single head. If the loop tends to slip off the head before it is tightened place the left index finger across the short neck at X, but do not hold so tightly that the hitch cannot tighten.

5. Check that the hitch has been correctly made. After winding, the thread should emerge to the right from the back of the bobbin; it doubles back behind the bobbin and emerges the other side; it crosses in front of the neck and passes from front to back through the loop (figure 10).

When using very shiny bobbins, or when the hitch continually slips, a hitch with two turns may be used. Make the hitch as above passing the thread twice round the index finger (figure 11) before passing the head of the bobbin through both loops.

There are many methods that can be used for making the hitch and all can be successful, providing the thread doubles back before passing around the neck and through the loop (figure 10).
Linked, coupled bobbins or bobbins wound as a pair
Two bobbins wound from different ends of the same thread. Also called continuously wound (figure 12).

Figure 12 Linked bobbins

Pins
Fine stainless steel pins can be purchased in many craft stores. Avoid steel dressmakers' pins that may rust.

Pricking card
Traditionally parchment was used, but now we use glazed manila card 0.4 - 0.5 mm thick. It is strong, resists wear and is a suitable colour for the background when making white lace. Card from folders can be used providing a firm polystyrene pillow is being used.

Pricker
The pricker is a handle with a needle clamped in the end. They come in many shapes of which the one illustrated (figure 13) is the most common. The needle should have the same diameter as the pins that are to be used for making the lace; size no. 8 is suitable for the majority of pins, and the needle should protrude no more than 1cm (0.4 in). If the needle protrudes too far it will break easily, if it is too short the holes will be too small. Always try a pricker before purchasing as not all prickers suit all hands.

Figure 13 Pricker

Pricking Board
The firm support on which the pricking card is placed while the holes are being pricked. A cork mat, polystyrene sheet or several layers of corrugated cardboard are all suitable and 20cm x 35cm x 1cm thick is a suitable size. Ensure it is sufficiently thick, so that the pricker does not make contact with the surface beneath. Check cork for hard chips; these could deflect the pricker and cause irregular pricking. Pricking on a pillow is uncomfortable, it wears the pillow and does not always produce sufficiently accurate results.

Pricking
The pricking card pattern, with holes pricked through it, together with lines and other marks drawn with a fine felt tipped pen (0.1mm dia). Traditionally, black is used when working with white or pale threads and red when using black thread. Other colours are useful for corrections. Working black thread over black indicator lines can be confusing. Traditionally lines are drawn for the paths of the gimps, large black dots for tallies and crosses for mayflowers, but lacemakers have always invented their own reminders. Holes pricked incorrectly are ringed.

Making a Pricking (Making a card copy from a Pattern Draft)
Make a scan or photocopy of the pattern or pattern draft and attach to a piece of pricking card using staples, transparent sticky tape, Blu-tac etc. so that the card and paper are securely fixed together. Staples or transparent sticky tape are probably the most secure methods.
Place the card, with the draft attached on a pricking board and prick through all the dots, keeping the pricker vertical. Push the needle completely into the card at each hole, so that all holes are the full diameter of the needle. Lubricate the pricker by stabbing the needle into beeswax, or a wax candle, as required or rub a wax candle all over the paper pattern draft prior to pricking; the pricker will pick up sufficient wax as it passes through the paper. The footside may be pricked by first pricking only the top and bottom footside holes. Insert a pin part way into each, hold a ruler tightly against these two pins and prick the rest with the needle against the ruler. Do not use this method for pricking the ground as it produces ‘tram lines’ (figure 14), wider gaps between some adjacent rows showing as white streaks in the ground.

Ground should always be pricked diagonally, that is in the order in which the pins will be inserted when the lace is made on the pricking. The illustration, (figure 21) shows vertical ‘tram lines’ resulting from pricking lines of holes vertically.

Check that no dots have been missed by looking at the back of the card, and by holding it up to the light. Prick any dots that may have been missed and remove the Pattern Draft. Use a sharp HB pencil to transfer the indicators, the black lines and symbols drawn on the draft, onto the card pattern, using it gently so as to avoid making deep marks that may be difficult to remove with an eraser. When the lines and indicators have been correctly drawn go over them using a very fine felt tipped pen. Then so as to avoid soiling the lace remove the pencil marks using a soft eraser. Ring any holes pricked by mistake.

Cut out the pricking leaving a border of card about 1.5 cm (½ in) wide around the pricked holes.

When placing the pricking on a pillow consider the following -
- Do not place the top of the pricking so far up that you have to stretch too much.
- Do not have the lower edge of the pricking so low down that the bobbins are hanging off the pillow before you finish.
- A small motif must be properly centered on a pillow or the tension will be affected.

**Photocopying Prickings**

Many photocopying machines are designed to distort, the copy being slightly narrower than the original, in order to avoid words close to the edges of the original being lost. After a copy has been copied and that copied and this repeated several times, the distortion becomes very obvious. This is one of the reasons why it is often impossible to match four photocopies to make a square border, or relocate lace after moving up or after a corner has been turned. Always check a pattern with a corner carefully before pricking; to make sure that the width of the lace is the same both sides of the corner.
**Cover Cloths**

Pieces of fabric that are used to protect the pillow and pattern from wear, and the lace from collecting dirt. There should be one covering the pillow, protecting it from becoming soiled and worn and keeps the lace clean. A rectangular or square cloth should be attached using strong pins. A cloth may be shaped to fit the pillow with elastic in a hem around the edge to make it fit snugly over the pillow without needing any extra securing. Another cloth is placed over the pricking to protect the pricking and to stop bobbins from catching on it. A few inches along the upper edge should be folded under and the cloth secured by strong pins. The upper edge should be held with a firm tension as the second pin is inserted. This cloth should be several inches wider than the pillow and extend beyond the lower edge of the pillow. As lace is made it should be protected by wrapping it in white fabric. A cloth is thrown over the whole pillow to keep the dust off when the pillow is left.

All cover cloths, apart from the lace cloth, should be of a smooth, dark, fabric and be at least as wide as the pillow. Traditionally all cloths should be washed every time a piece of lace has been completed and lifted off the pillow.