

Anchors as Decoration on East Devon (Honiton) Bobbins

Brian Lemin April 29 2020

This is a contribution to the East Devon and Downton study project.



Parts of an Anchor

Crown-The pointed end of the anchor which attaches the shank to the arms. Eye-Hole at the end of the shank through which the ring is attached. Fluke-The spade-shaped appendage of the arm used for digging into the sea bed to secure the vessel. Palm-Flat uppermost portion of the fluke.

Many of the anchors used by the decorators are what we call "Fouled Anchors". Foul is a nautical term meaning to entangle or entwine, and more generally that something is wrong or difficult. The fouled anchor dates back to Lord Howard of Effingham and his defeat of the Spanish Armata in 1588. *It represents the challenges faced every day in the Navy and the need to prepare for issues before they become disasters.*

For our purposes a fouled anchor consists of a standard nautical anchor with a rope or perhaps chain, looping or meandering through the structure of the anchor. It is usually just one rope but possibly two ropes can "cause" the fouling. I doubt if the inclusion of anchor in a design represents anything other and a decorative image.

Two anchors would have been in daily use at our bobbin time of history and these are illustrated in the diagram below. Should other illustrations be found the absence of a top of shank cross piece would make it of the

type used after 1830. It does not appear that decorators attempt to make particular copies of anchors, they just use them as a decorative device.



The Decorative Anchors

The following anchors have been extracted for their respective bobbins so as to concentrate on the anchors as a decorative device. Their context will easily be seen when seen within the whole bobbin.

I have just chosen a variety.

Some bobbins just have one anchored, others have many within the decoration.



This first one is perhaps the most artistically interpreted anchor on a bobbin



Here are small anchors. Often you can find these dotted around the bobbin as a whole



This anchor has the most "fouling" loops that I have found



Here are three together (and indeed more on the original bobbin) they have the two colours.



Though worn, this is a pleasing depiction of an anchor



This too shows the anchor as we imagine it should be



These have a nice long trailing fouling rope, on has the two colours



Not quite sure if the decorator had intended to make the trailing rope into a heart.



A nice anchor depicted amongst the seaweed on the sea bed.

Conclusion.

Well not much really!! Smile. I need to say there are many more out there to look at. A couple of designs seem to be associated with a special decorator. Needless to say, the presence of anchor on the bobbin almost certainly puts in a Maritime Genre.

There is little doubt that the area of Beer is the best source of Maritime bobbins and not surprising as it is a lovely "beach-based" fishing harbour.