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I will be adding to this a little but I will be putting in some more illustrations

South Bucks Bobbins. Some difficulties in Identification and Naming.



A selection of South Bucks Bobbins

Introduction.

Following an enlightening article by Pam Nottingham, (Keeping the Record Straight. Lace #77 Jan 1995. P 31) and also some helpful correspondence that I have had with her, but I am left with some questions in clarifying some of the names and descriptions of these bobbins.

Firstly, I am happy with the fact that South Bucks bobbins come in various sizes. It is also clear that they, as did many lace bobbins, have different names, usually in different geographical areas, for the same bobbins.

My questions are:

What are the differences between a Thumper, Bedfordshire Trailer and a Huguenot bobbin?

Are Dumps and Bobtails names for just the small South Bucks bobbins or for all but the Thumpers or large South Bucks bobbins?

What role does the pewter or wooden gingles play in any differentiation in the names we call the bobbins?

If we look at the historical descriptions of these bobbins we certainly find some overlap. Here are the descriptions I have collected.

COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL NOMENCLATURE.

WRIGHT.

DUMPS OR BOBTAILED BOBBINS. (Page 125)

(Wright) The earliest bobbins... ordinarily of box-wood, quite small and without spangles; and they were used only to make the finest kind of Bucks Point, the threads of which would have broken by heavier or spangled Bobbins. (p125)

(Whiting) Short. (two inches long), slim throated, bob-tailed bobbins or dumps. (p 222)

(Freeman) (Who incidentally uses the names "mostly noted by Wright." p. 33) Wood only, small, usually single necked, plain without spangles. (P33)

(Huetson) (Uses only the word "DUMPS") Did not have spangles... they are smaller both in length and thickness than other bobbins. They were used to make very fine lace, when a larger bobbin with a spangle would have been too heavy for the fine thread used, and it will be found that many dumps have been drilled and a spangle attached at some later date. (p102)

(Bellerby) Small and delicate with a single head, used to make fine lace, often interesting varieties of

woods no spangles. (p21)

(Bullock) Uses the terms “Dumps or BOBTAILS. ...wooden bobbins without spangle. They were smaller in length and thickness than an ordinary bobbin. they were used for fine lace where heavier bobbins would have broken the thread. Some of these bobbins were later spangled. (pp. 81 & 83

Comment: *It would appear from the above that the terms “dump” and “bob-tail”, “bobtail” can be used interchangeably. I would propose the following description:*

HUGUENOT (p129)

(Wright) The bobbins of the Aylesbury and Thame districts are squat in form, plain to a wonder, and they have no spangles; yet they are called strangely enough “Huguenots” (p129)

(Whiting) ... reminds one a trifle of little pagodas; but this type has only one puzzle ball and no spangle. (p 218) *(My personal opinion of her description is that she is talking about a church window of some kind(?))*

(Hopewell) HUGUENOTS OR THUMPERS.. South Bucks bobbins ... They are usually single necked without spangles though they may have had them added later. (p24)

(Bellerby) THUMPERS. Large rather bulbous bobbin usually with a spangle. (p21)

(Bullock) THUMPERS. bulbous bobbins without spangles., mainly found in the High Wycombe area of Buckinghamshire. (p83)

Comment: I think that we can say that these bobbins did not have spangles originally. Ideally I would like to us to adopt the term Huguenot following Wrights oral history findings, however I think that modern usage demands that we accept either of the two terms

SOUTH BUCKS.

(Bellerby) Heavy bobbins, usually with no spangles , single head, usually good wood nicely turned some times called BODGERS. They were made of leftover pieces of wood from chair making. (p21)

Comment: I would like the advice of others as to the use of the term bodgers. I have only found reference to this term in Bellerby.

TROLLY. OR BEDFORDSHIRE TRAILERS(P126)

(Wright) Gimp is wound from the quill to the trolley, “which is always surrounded with loose pewter rings called GINGLES. (p126)

(Whiting)Trolley (Huntingdonshire) or Trailer (Bedfordshire) used for carrying the outline lace cord or gimp suggesting the very heavy cable or overhead cord of trolley car lines.(p 221)

(Freeman) Stout, sometimes single necked, sometimes with spangles, fitted with loose pewter or wooden rings called “gingles’, mostly in wood but sometimes in bone with bone gingles. (p33)

(Huetson) ...have pewter rings round them but instead of being inlaid into the bobbin they are loose; these rings are called gingles and they fit loosely in a groove round the bobbin so that they can rattle

about. There can be any number of rings from one to nine, on each bobbin but from my own observation I would say that five or seven are the usual maximum. (p109,110.)

(Hopewell) ...for gimp thread and have loose pewter rings, "jingles" so that they can easily be distinguished. (p24)

(Bellerby) A fat bobbin with loose pewter rings or gingles. There are rare examples of wooden trollies with wooden rings, even with bone rings. (p21)

(Bullock) also known as trailers, were slightly bulbous, very strong, and had several loose pewter rings called "gingles". Bone trolley bobbins are rare especially those that have bone rings instead of pewter. Also rare is a wooden bobbin with wooden gingles.

Comment: I would like to see a convention of using the origin of the bobbin if it is known or can be distinguished, i.e. using the terms Huntingdon trolley or Bedfordshire trailer in those cases

MY CURRENT DESCRIPTIONS OF THESE BOBBINS.

Bedfordshire trailer bobbin.

A Huntingdon name for a thick, stout, sometimes single necked bobbin sometimes with spangles. (Adapted) Fitted with loose pewter or wooden rings called "gingles", mostly in wood but sometimes in bone with bone gingles. The historical description is, ".have pewter rings round them but instead of being inlaid into the bobbin they are loose; these rings are called gingles and they fit loosely in a groove round the bobbin so that they can rattle about. There can be any number of rings from one to nine, on each bobbin. Five or seven are the usual number of gingles, bone bobbins usually have bone gingles." Wooden gingles do not last as long as bone and pewter, which is probably why few are seen today. Also

called trolley bobbins, trollies, Huntigdon Trolley.

bobtailed bobbin.

Small and delicate with a single head. Did not have spangles. They are smaller both in length and thickness than other bobbins. They were used to make very fine lace, when a larger bobbin with a spangle would have been too heavy for the fine thread used. Many bobtails have been drilled and a spangle attached at some later date. i.e., adaptive bobbins They are a small South Bucks bobbin. Also known as Dumps.

dump bobbin.

A small, delicate bobbin used to make fine lace. It had a single head and was not spangled. They are smaller both in length and thickness than other bobbins. They were used to make very fine lace, when a larger bobbin with a spangle would have been too heavy for the fine thread used. It will be found that many dumps have been drilled and a spangle attached at some later date. They are a small South Bucks style bobbin.

Huguenot (s).

It is a large South Bucks bobbin.. It was unspangled though some have been adapted to take a spangle. Mainly found in the High Wycombe area of Buckinghamshire. Used in the Aylesbury and Thame districts. Also known as a Thumper.

Thumper bobbin.

A large South Bucks bobbin. Also known as a Huguenot. Probably used for metal or yak lace. They can be quite nicely turned, stained or decorated. . Mainly made in the High Wycombe area. See also, Huguenot,

South Bucks bobbin.

Thicker bobbins, usually with no spangles, single head, sometimes called Bodgers Bobtailed bobbin, Dump or (often incorrectly) Thumpers. They were made of leftover pieces of wood from chair making or from locally available woods such as beech, plum, apple, yew. They vary in length 85 mm (though some are smaller) to 115 mm.. The length of the neck varies between about 122 mm to 16 mm. One of the key identification features is the collar. It should not have a "protruding" (there are a few exceptions) collar, rather the shaft narrows down to the final diameter of the collar, and then cuts down to the diameter of the neck. Many of them were fancy turned within the confines of the traditional "long, thin, pear shape" and have a variety of decorations. Frequent examples can be seen with pewter rings, leopard spots either of pewter or different colour wood. (these latter are sometimes known as "domino" as opposed to leopard). Contrasting wood in sections is also seen. This contrasting sections can sometimes be a tell tale as to the possibility of the bobbin having a loose bobbin inside. Shake it and see. If it rattles then there is a chance that it is a "Jack in the Box" and very care fully (an I mean carefully) try and see if the neck will come away from the body or the bottom section will come away from the shaft. If it does not rattle, the it could still be a Jack in the Box with the tiny baby bobbin lost (as is often the case) or it could be a Mother in Babe where the small bobbin is attached to the section that pulls away. Some are aqua fortis stained or delicately drawn designs in (?) aqua fortis or perhaps (?) ink. One example of a thumper has been seen having an acorn turned at its end. True South Bucks bobbins were made only in a small area, the Chiltern Hills. Pamela Nottingham (Keeping the Record Straight" Lace #77. Jan 1995. P 31/77.) reports that she has some large (5.5 inches long) leather covered and lead weighted South Bucks bobbins. It was suggested to her that they may have been used for making decorated cords. Thumpers was a name given only to the very large South Bucks bobbins.

CONCLUSIONS.

Whilst I am not an expert in the field of South Bucks bobbins and I stand to be corrected. I would propose that from the evidence that the following be the case.

South Bucks Bobbins.

A family of bobbins that are characterised by their single neck, elongated pear shape and a collar that transfers from the shaft to the neck without any "sharp" transitional shaping except for the drop to the neck diameter. In their original construction, they are unspangled. Mostly they have a characteristic knob at the end of the shaft, possibly reminiscent of a rabbits bobtail.

This family of bobbins can be divided as follows:

Bobtails or dumps. The smallest and lightest members of the family. *This is based on the historical insistence that they are light bobbins.*

South Bucks. the middle sized members of the family.

Thumpers. The largest members of the family. *This is quite well established.*

Huguenots. The same as for Thumpers *It is quite well established that this is another name for a Thumper.*

Bedfordshire trailers or Huntingdon Trolley. A South Bucks bobbin with pewter or wooden rings. *My conclusion for this is based on the historical descriptions. These are the only ones that mention the gingles, they are not differentiated by size, only the rings.*

With regard to what the South Bucks lace makers called their bobbins that had gingles, one can only presume that they accepted them as just “decorated” South Bucks bobbins.

Perhaps they did call them “trollies” but it is not recorded.

We know that the original South Bucks bobbins were made in a small area of the Chilterns. Could it be that the “trollies” were made elsewhere?

Finally, as always in these discussions, I must make the point that there are few absolutes in bobbin nomenclature. There are a wide variety of names for similar bobbins. History has recorded some confusions also. The fact is that we may never know the answers to these questions. But at least we should discuss them and see if we can get somewhere.

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