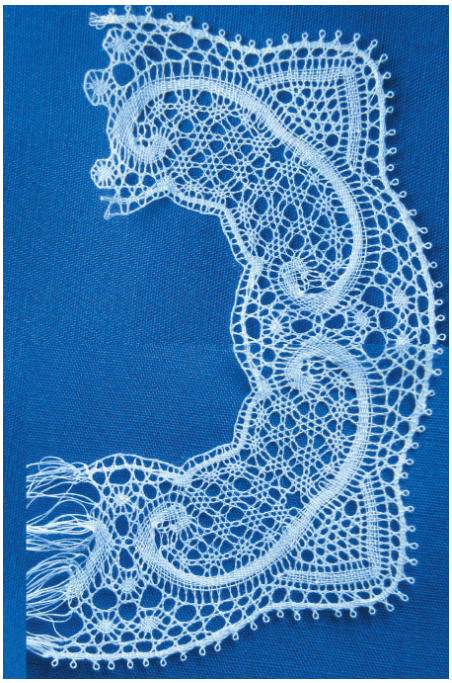
Continental Lace

Pattern Theme: Geometric shapes - A Binche Squircle

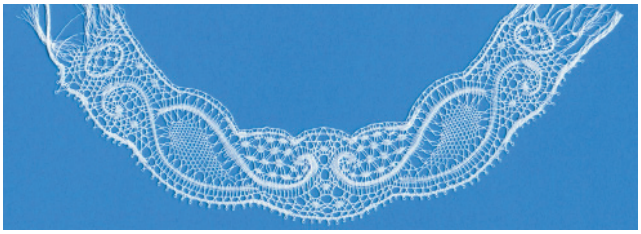
By Susan Roberts

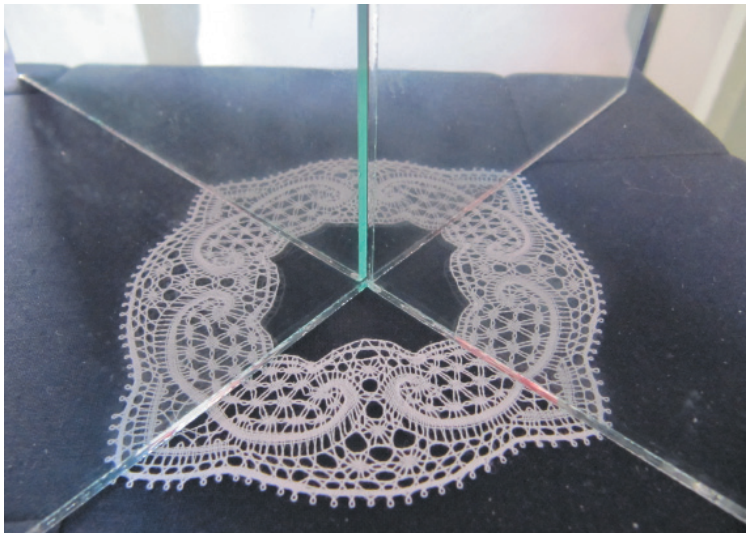


One of the first times I visited The Hollies as Editor I heard Sue and Maggie talking about the Squircle book. It turned out this was their affectionate way of referring to the squares and circles book the Guild produced (no longer in print but available to borrow from the Library if you want). This pattern started off as a circle and is now a square so a definite squircle!

So how did this transformation take place? The simple answer is with the help of mirrors, photocopies, tracing paper and sticky tape. I thought readers might like to know more of the detail. Yes this is a piece of Binche but you could use similar techniques in other laces.

My lace started off as one of the class patterns in Anne-Marie Verbeke-Billet's Binche Summer school at the Kantcentrum in 2013. It is an unusual piece as it was designed in a circle, creating your grid as you went rather than a straight piece of lace being made to fit a circle. When I had finished my sample of the lace I had some





spare time before my friend arrived back from her shopping and our evening meal so I started playing with mirrors over the lace and realised that there could be some interesting ovals, motifs and corners. I only had the lace to play with so needed to take photos to preserve what I was seeing in the mirrors to see later if it was possible to actually work the corners. So with the help of the blocks in my pillow I managed to prop the mirrors against blocks so that I had my hands free to take photographs of the lace. (It would have been so much easier if Olga had been back from her shopping but I knew I would lose the designs if I waited for her.)

The next step was to photocopy the lace multiple times and carefully mark out then cut identical 90 degree sections and stick them together with low tack tape (in case you need to reposition) to see the finished effect.

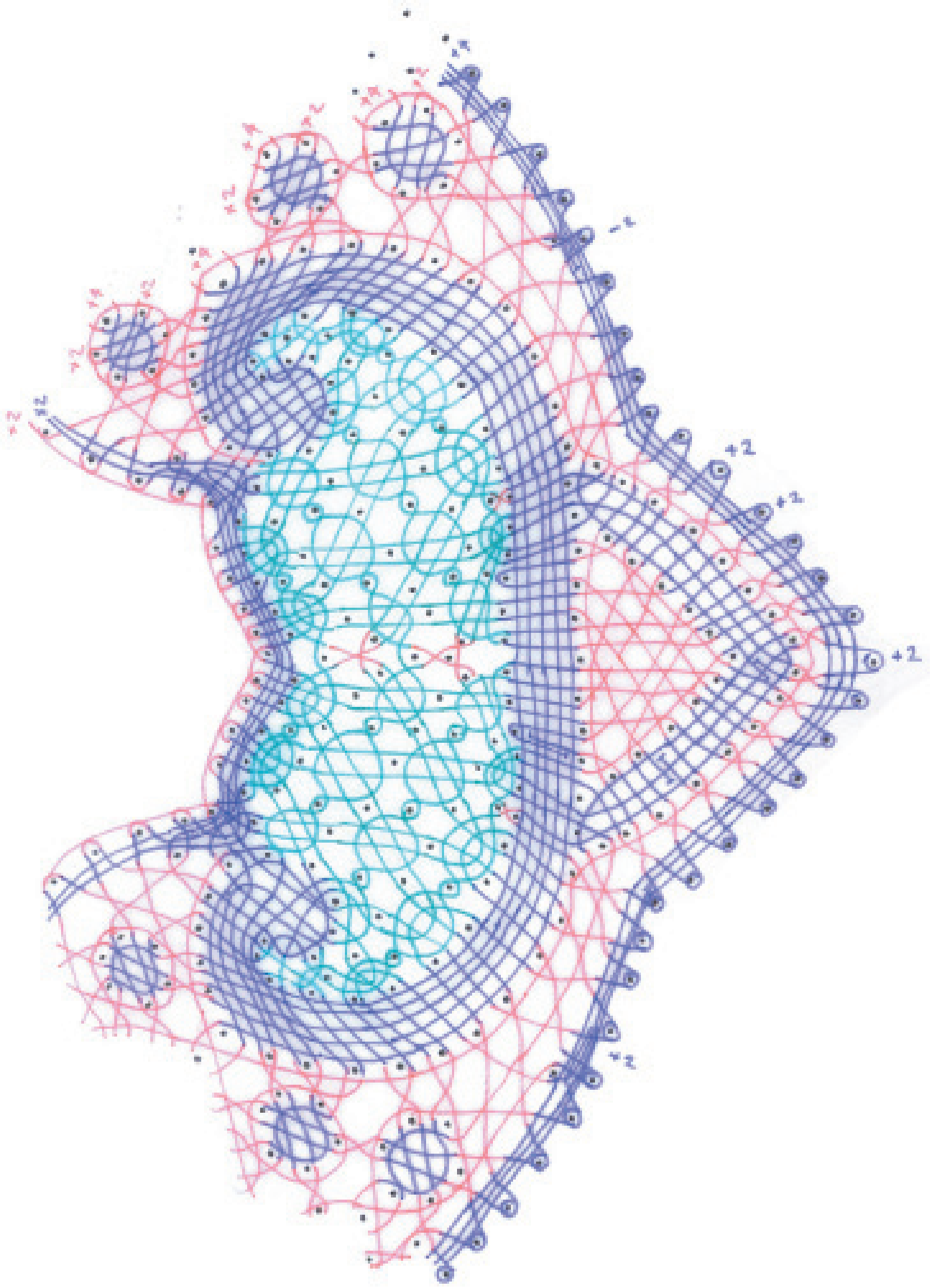
You can see from the scan on the right that I didn't do the whole square (you often find at this stage that if you do a square it doesn't quite lie flat - not an issue at this stage as there is time to refine the design).

The design method used by Anne-Marie is to design on as large a copy as a single photocopy will cope with. Photocopiers will copy at a maximum size of 400% so the design paper used in Binche is 400% of the pricking size for Egyptian Gassed 80 thread which gives a 4mm high snowflake. To convert your design to a workable size when you have finished you copy at 25%.

So I went to the 400% working diagrams and with a large protractor measured out a 90° section - no matter how hard you try on this large scale the small protractor that children use at school is unlikely to give an exact angle at the edges on a large scale diagram hence using a larger protractor. Once the section is marked out I drew the corner lines in yellow (yellow is rarely used in working diagrams so you don't think any crosses of the pair lines in the working diagram are stitches; it is also a colour that doesn't stand out too much). I then cut along the corner line.

The corner crossing is then designed with the help of a mirror but first you need to block out the working lines that are currently there that you probably need to adjust. To do this you take a strip of wide cover up tape and stick it on your mirror line covering up the section of the working diagram going into the corner and then draw over your yellow corner line. The next bit is the part that takes the time in Binche and is not easy as you work out how to adjust to work across the corner mirror line with the help of your mirror on the yellow line. Simplistically you adjust the positioning of the ground and cloth areas so that you can maintain and then work the design. I would probably need a whole magazine to explain how to do this in different scenarios in Binche so I will leave it for someone else at some point in the future to write the book on this. To get the other side of your corner technical drawing trace over the side you have just drawn and then flip and stick it to the first, being very careful to keep your angle lines clearly marked. Adjust for pairs that need to be taken out in the second half of the corner that were added in the first half. Once you think your design will work you put tracing paper over the technical drawing and trace over the dots to get your pricking (not forgetting to mark the corner lines), with the help of a photocopier set to 25% your corner pricking magically appears! Then you are into sampling and often refining to get your final corner and finished piece of lace.

My sample shows a start line that you should be able to use that means you can join the finished lace with a crochet hook rather than an overlap join. This suggested start line is shown on the working diagram.



Note - to balance the weight of the lace I changed the snowflake ground from cloth stitch to half stitch in the corner sample and diagram.