Working diagrams - Part 2

By Susan Roberts

In *Lace 136* I wrote about how to follow a working diagram without looking at the two main colour codes that are used (the multicolour Continental colour system and the red/blue system). In Part 2 of this series we will compare the two systems, their pros and cons, how you could adapt this to work with a photocopied working diagram along with diagrams for one of the patterns in this issue of *Lace*. It is important to remember that any coding takes time to get used to but once you understand the 'language' of the coding it makes perfect sense (those of you who have studied algebra or learnt to play music will be familiar with this).

As discussed in Part 1 a cross of two lines represents a stitch and a dash on a line represents a twist. A cross will always be worked in one colour. The table below shows how the different stitches are represented in the codes.

Multicolour system	***Stitch***	***Red/blue system***
	Cloth stitch	
	Half stitch	
	Cloth stitch and twist	
	Plait	
	Gimp	
	Tally/leaf	

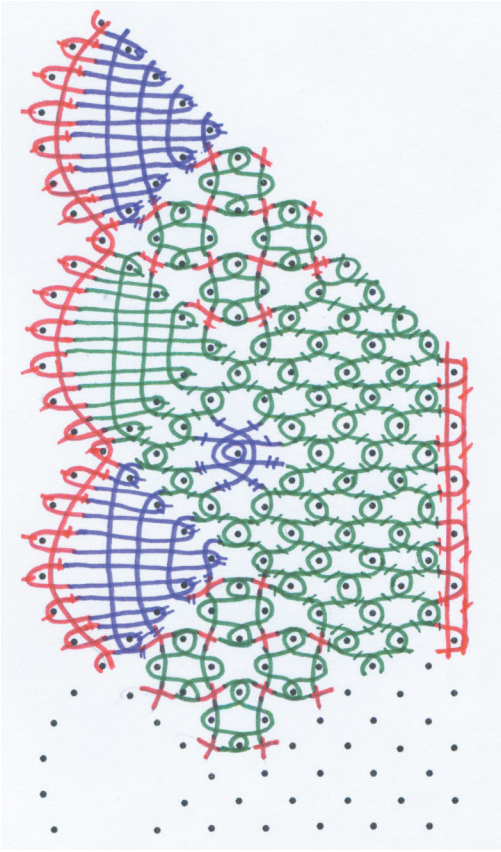
Pros and cons - Multicolour

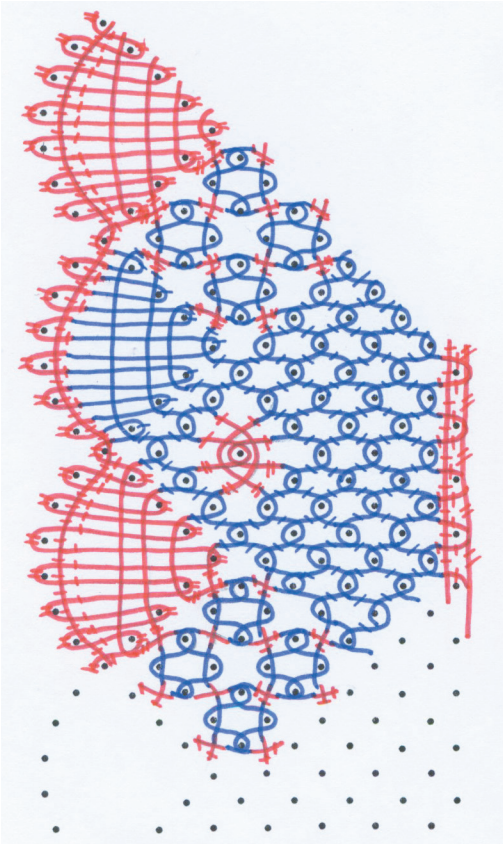
- The colour coding has twists that we normally think of as part of stitches built in meaning far fewer dashes (as the origin of this coding is from Flanders/Binche this make the grounds of these laces much easier to draw).
- Because of the number of colours the system appears complex (although the majority of the stitches will be in the main colours of purple, red and green).
- The number of colours increases publishing costs so publications containing this system can be more costly.
- The system has been created to allow all types of features that could appear in the lace.
- The yellow for tallies used can be difficult to see and doesn't always copy easily.

Pros and cons - Red/blue system

- With only two colours the system is initially easier to get to grips with.
- The limitations of two colours means far more twists (dashes) need to be indicated in the diagrams.
- With two colours publishing costs are cheaper than the multicolour system.
- The two colours do limit the stitches that can be represented easily, meaning a plait has to be shown as a series of half stitches for example which is more complex than the single blue line of the multicolour system.
- To reduce the complexity of diagrams the dashes are often omitted from diagrams (other than those intended for beginner), the lacemaker needs to know and understand this.

On page 34 you will find a Torchon garter that Lynda Brown shares with our readers. Below I have drawn working diagrams in each of the two colour systems for this pattern.





One point to compare between the two diagrams is the half stitch fans (the second fan in each diagram):

- On the multicoloured diagram there are no additional twists on the weaving lines (other than on the weaver at the headside pin where an extra twist is added to the weaver). This is because the (green) half stitch gives one twist going into the (red) cloth stitch and twist and the cloth stitch and twist means that the thread is already twisted once going into the half stitch.

- On the red/blue diagram additional twists are shown at the headside. Working from right to left the half stitch (blue) gives a twisted thread going into the cloth and twist edge to the headside, the coding does not have a specific coloured cross for cloth stitch and twist so the diagram consists of a cloth stitch (red cross) with an extra twist on the passive pair and two twists on the worker pair. Working back from the headside pin again there is no single coding for a cloth stitch and twist so a cloth stitch (red cross) with a twist (dash) on each thread is shown. This means the worker has the correct twists now to continue working the half stitch fan.

So what can you do if you don't want to pay for a colour photocopy (for your own personal use) while working the pattern? There is a relatively quick and simple way to turn a greyscale photocopy to a colour diagram. All you need is some coloured pencils in the same colour as the coding and use these to colour the areas just as I've done on a grey scale copy of the left hand working diagram above.