

THE COUNTRY BOBBIN – ELIZABETH JONES, A UNIQUE LACE BOBBIN.

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INTRODUCTION

Just a short while ago a unique lace bobbin was offered for sale on Ebay and was bought by Diana Smith, who has an excellent bobbin collection. She subsequently corresponded with me about it and together we have pooled our thoughts and expertise.

Along with the email Diana sent pictures of other South Bucks bobbins from her collection as a comparison with the newly acquired bobbin, which for the purpose of this *preliminary communication*, we are calling, "The Country Bobbin".

THE BOBBIN

Let us start by looking at a picture of it. I had enough photos that enable me to project the bobbin decoration on to a flat surface. There is nothing magic about this but if you are to study a bobbin from a photograph, then you need to be able to look at it from all directions. The deep concave/convex shape makes the projection difficult, but it is sufficient for our purposes.

Of course the dominating feature of it is the name, Elizabeth Jones.



It is approximately 4 inches long and a ½ inch in diameter at its widest part. It has a shallow double head with a wide flat bulb, a deep small neck and a flat shallow top that has a straight "V" shaping to the top surface.

The neck is somewhat convex shaped and 5/8th of an inch long. It has a narrow turned collar with the shank nicely curving into it forming a distinct ridge. Just below the collar has a shaded (as opposed to cross hatched) band about approximately 1/8th wide.

The lettering is what might well be copied from the printing at the time and would be commonly called "engravers type".

ELIZABETH

JONES

This is our representation of it (Sorry we could not find a lower case "n" in Engravers type for this representation). Of course you can see that the solid on our type is shaded in the bobbin inscription; you will also see that a lower case "n" is used by the carver. The lettering is extremely well executed, and it is totally unique in size. By bobbin standards it could be said to be "enormous"!

Under the Jones is a really good sized fish, diagrammatic enough not to be able to identify it; and under that the picture of the animal.

Now what would that be? A dog – A cow - A deer? Mmmm, that sits well with our "Country Bobbin" thinking. We will look at both of these later.

THE STYLE.

There seems to be little doubt that it takes the form of a South Bucks bobbin. The comparison picture below shows you why we think this. You can see the South Bucks style, but also some other features we will look at in the next section. The Elizabeth Jones bobbin is at the bottom.

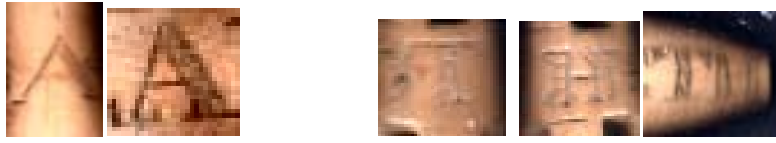
Firstly look at the similarity of the heads. Then we look at the curvaceous shapes of the South Bucks bobbins. The Country Bobbin matches up fairly closely in every way.



THE DECORATION.

Printing

Let us first of all look at the printing. Engraver style is on the Country Bobbin, and, if you look closely you will see the A on the left bobbin is incised in the engraver style of the Country Bobbin.



The "A" and the "TH" from the centre bobbin compared with the Country Bobbin

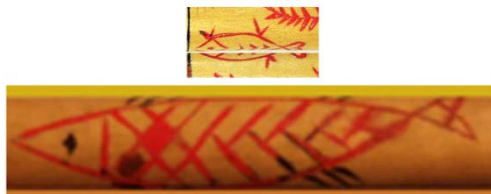
When we look at the comparison of the letters, we can see that whilst perhaps not exact, there are clear similarities between them.

The Fish

For an example of the fish we need to look at the maritime decoration of East Devon bobbins, as fish appear on them quite frequently, but less frequently in the form on the Country bobbin.



The Country Bobbin Fish.



Once again, not exact examples, but fish on bobbins are not unique. The Country Bobbin example is much finer it is shading and attempts to show the scales. The East Devon bobbins are much more diagrammatic.

The Animal

These are rare. We know of only two inscribed on bobbins. Let us first look at the animal on the Country Bobbin.

We have made him big so that we can really look at him and decide what he is. Both Diana and I reasonably agree that it is a "deer", but we are open to other suggestions.



Now let us look at other animals. These are found on the Shepherds bobbin. There are two depictions and you will have to decide what they are.



© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge T.7-1944
Lace Bobbin Wood, carved with figures (detail) English, c.1795

The Country Bobbin animal is at rest, the Shepherds bobbin animals are very dynamic and seem to be in full chase.

We are not quite sure what this tells us of the Country Bobbin, but at least we know that fish and animals are not totally unique, and that bobbin carvers were using these motifs in the South Bucks and other areas of bobbin making.

CONCLUSION

We suggest that from the evidence of the shape and similarities of the head etc, that we can safely say that the Country Bobbin is a South Bucks bobbin.

This bobbin genre seems to be confirmed by the use of a similar style of lettering in the South Bucks bobbins and the Country Bobbin.

Whatever this preliminary communication helps you to decide about it, we have to accept that the Country Bobbin is totally unique in the current knowledge of lace bobbins in this country. It is unique, it is crafted most expertly, and it has the oddity of a lower case "n".

If you allow the writers the luxury of fantasy thinking that the fish and the animal are reminders of a game keeper and the Country life! Or could it be a coded message - the deer representing Dear – 'DEAR ELIZABETH JONES' what then of the fish? Who knows about Elizabeth Jones? That is another line of study and may be quite revealing when discovered.

Contributions from readers are invited either via the Arachne list or to:

Brido11ATbigpond.com (you will substitute the "AT" appropriately won't you 😊)