



Descendants of the Lacemakers of Calais

<https://www.lacemakersofcalais.com.au/>

What were they known as?

Search the records for Calais and St Pierre-lès-Calais and you'll find some interesting details about the residents. These records, available to researchers of the archives of the French département of Pas-de-Calais, include the accounts of births, marriages and deaths usually written on the day the event was reported, as well as census records and a register of livrets.

Usually these records note the occupation of the resident at the time the record was made and, being French records, they are written in French. Possible English translations are shown but when it comes to lace work it's not always possible to make a direct or simple translation of the French term and sometimes the work done changed with time. Also, not everyone worked in the lace industry.

As the lace industry evolved, the work scope of each process varied to suit the changing materials used in the processes. The scopes of work and work processes noted below are generally as they were in the mid-nineteenth century.

The following are some likely translations:

Workers

| French term m/f | English description |
|--|--|
| <i>brasseur/brasseuse or fabricant de bière</i> | brewer or maker of beer |
| <i>blanchisseur</i> | bleacher or a linen washer |
| <i>brodeuse</i> | embroiderer |
| <i>cabaretier</i> | tavern or ale-house keeper or manager |
| <i>cafetier/cafetière</i> | café owner or manager |
| <i>cocher</i> | coachman, cab (horse-drawn) driver |
| <i>couturière</i> | dressmaker |
| <i>cordonnier</i> | shoemaker |
| <i>dentellier/dentellière</i> | lacemaker – owner of machines and manager of the processes from making to packaging to selling the finished product |
| <i>dévideuse (f)</i> | winder, usually a female - winds thread from small wooden reels onto a larger reel for use by the bobbin winder. |
| <i>dévideur (m)</i> | winder, usually a male – selects the correct thread yarns and first winds threads onto a large warp mill and then onto the warp drum |
| <i>dessinateur</i> | designer as an artist creates a drawing of the lace fabric design |
| <i>esquisseur</i> | draftsman modifies the design drawing to create a machine useable sketch |
| <i>fabricant de rouleaux</i> | wooden reel or spool maker |
| <i>fabricant de tulle</i> | manufacturer – factory and machine owner |
| <i>faiseur de tulle</i> | maker of tulle, a “doer” |
| <i>fileur/fileuse</i> | spinner |
| <i>forgeron</i> | smith, blacksmith |
| <i>laçeur</i> | jacquard card lacer |
| <i>mécanicien</i> | machine mechanic assists the twist hand to ensure smooth machine operation |
| <i>ménagère</i> | housewife or housekeeper or boarding-house keeper |
| <i>ouvrier en tulle</i> | lace worker (generic term for a worker in the lace making industry) |
| <i>perçeur (de cartons)</i> | piercer of the jacquard cards – the card puncher or cutter |
| <i>perruquier</i> | wigmaker or hairdresser |
| <i>plieur/plieuse de tulle</i> | lace presser |
| <i>pointeur</i> | pattern perforator – modifies sketch design for production and prepares it for the card piercer by piercing the design sheet and adding numbers to indicate the location and colour of each thread |
| <i>presseur (de bobines)</i> | bobbin presser |
| <i>raccommodeuse</i> | mender – makes good any faults in the fabric |
| <i>rémonteur</i> [In Calais called the <i>armonteur</i>] | bobbin fitter - fits the filled bobbins. After checking each bobbin/carriage assembly, he fits the assemblies to the machine and feeds threads through the machine |



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|--------------------------|---|
| <i>survideur</i> | jacker-off – removes used bobbins and carriages from machine and then the remaining thread from the brass bobbins before handing them on to the bobbin winder. Also, winds thread onto a series of small wooden reels from hanks of spun material for use by the <i>dévideuse</i> and onto a very large wooden-framed drum for use by the <i>wapeur</i> |
| <i>tulliste</i> | twisthand – general operation of the machine and oversight of the other workers and feeds the threads into the machine |
| <i>wapeur or wappeur</i> | winds cotton threads onto long metal rollers (warp beams) fitted across the width of the machine. These threads become the warp threads of the fabric. |
| <i>wheleur/wheleuse</i> | bobbin winder - winds thread onto bobbins in a series and racks them ready for the bobbin presser. The thread in the bobbin is then used to twist around the warp and beam (weft) threads of the fabric. |
| <i>visiteuse</i> | material checker who marks faults for the menders |

What work did they do?

As the lace industry grew and developed in France often with English machines, parts and workers, the words used in the industry also evolved. Sometimes the French names for machine parts were adopted from the English words and often without change of pronunciation such as dropper. Then in the case of some of the names for the workers and the work processes such as *wapage* and *wheelage*, these were French versions of the English words while for others, a new French word replaced the English word. Some of the words for the lacemaking processes are as follows:

Processes – lace making

| French term m/f | English description |
|------------------------------|---|
| <i>apprêtage</i> | dressing – washing, starching and drying the bleached and dyed fabric |
| <i>blanchiment</i> | bleaching |
| <i>confection, finissage</i> | preparation of product and wrapping it to cards for wholesale use |
| <i>découpage</i> | clipping loose threads from the fabric off the machine |
| <i>dévidage</i> | winding threads onto a reel or drum |
| <i>échantillonnage</i> | preparation of samples |
| <i>laçage</i> | lacing together the jacquard cards |
| <i>raccommodage</i> | mending |
| <i>rémontage</i> | fitting bobbins and threading the warp threads to the machine |
| <i>perçage</i> | piercing the jacquard cards |
| <i>pilage</i> | folding the finished product |
| <i>pointage</i> | preparation of the design for use by the card piercer |
| <i>teinture</i> | dyeing |
| <i>visitage</i> | overlooking the nearly finished product |
| <i>wheelage</i> | winding threads onto brass bobbins |

References

Calais Lace Museum exhibits

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