



TULLE

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Newsletter : Australian Society of the Lacemakers of Calais

NEXT MEETING : Time: 26 February 1983 at 1 p.m.
Place: State Archives, Globe St., Sydney.

OUR LACEMAKING ANCESTORS : THE FRENCH CONNECTION.

The following article gives an account of the development of machine lace making in Calais during the 19th century and of the sequence of events leading up to the migration of our lace making ancestors from Calais to Australia.

King Louis-Phillippe (Louis XV111) landed in Calais in 1814 on his way to Paris to occupy the Bourbon's throne. This event heralded renewed trading between England and France in all goods in short supply as an aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. Lacemaking was at the height of fashion especially as lacemaking machines had been invented by Hammond and others and were producing lace much cheaper and in greater quantities than that of the traditional hand made lace. The English protected their industries by inflicting the death penalty on anyone exporting the means of production.

In 1816, three Nottingham workmen, Clark, Webster and Bonnington, motivated by profit, smuggled out several lace making machines in parts mixed in with scrap iron. Once in Calais mechanics were needed to re-assemble the machines, others to train French operators in their use and expert smiths and mechanics to build copies of these machines. Several hundred lacemaker operators moved from Nottingham to St. Pierre-les-Calais - a suburb of Calais - which in a short space of time became known as the "Nottingham of France".

These machines were gradually improved upon but it was not until 1838 that a mechanic, Samuel Fergusson, perfected the most important and beneficial invention for machine made lace. He adapted the system of weaving patterns on to textiles invented by jacquard of Lyon to that of reproducing patterns in lace. For the first time the perfect reproduction of lace designs on spindles was brought about, and to give almost infinite diversification of the number of possible lace designs.

The use of the steam engine in 1839, and later the electric motor, really set the seal of success on the development of the lacemaking industry in Calais, which, in later years, led to its supremacy in the whole of the world.

Even though in 1825 the old "Basseville" of Calais was still completely rural, by the year 1884 it had 52 lace factories, over two thousand master craftsmen lacemakers and designers and over 12,000 other skilled operators directly employed in the lace making industry.

The main processes in machine lace making, Calais style involved firstly, the manufacture of cotton tulle and secondly, its conversion by special needle-run techniques and machine application of patterns on to the tulle to form lace of various designs and widths. These operations were performed by the one lace-loom type of machine.

As gearboxes and oil-seals had not then been invented all bearings and gear trains were exposed. Powdered graphite was used as a lubricant and so, during manufacture was picked up from spindles and rollers and transferred to the lace, giving it a dark grey appearance.

A laundering process removed this and prepared it for dyeing where required. Cheaper and more efficiently produced lace table cloths, bedspreads, curtains, shawls, lace trimming and women's clothing in the finest designs were the end product and were most sought after

Now why did some hundreds of 'Nottingham People' leave Calais in early 1848, when it had such a rosy future and then migrate to an undeveloped new country like Australia?

In the 1840s Europe generally was in a state of political turmoil. Most countries were impatient of the slowness with which economic recovery was proceeding after the end of the Napoleonic wars. The climate of restlessness was aggravated by the onset of the Industrial Revolution and its associated high level of unemployment. In France in 1848, and in Paris in particular unemployed thousands of unskilled workers, together with many academics and students, had reached the point of staging massive street demonstrations in order to force the government to

institute many long overdue reforms like extension of the franchise, job-creation schemes, unemployment relief and educational reforms.

On the 23rd February 1848 an illegal political march on the pretext of attending a banquet, was staged by radical members of parliament and their supporters. King Louis-Phillippe's own National Guard was called out to disperse the huge crowds who had gathered to see the action. The General-in-charge refused to act unless the unpopular Prime-minister Guizot was dismissed. The upshot of this was that the aged Louis-Phillippe abdicated in favour of his son and grand-son, Guizot was replaced and by the 29th February 1848 all requested reforms were to be effected.

Louis-Phillippe, Guizot and other unpopular politicians fled to England in March/April 1848 through the exit ports of the Le Havre and Calais. It is thought that at this same time, the first stream of refugees including some English lacemakers and their families from Calais also left while Channel travel to England was still possible.

Lamartine, heading a Provisional French Government took the place of Guizot and Emile Thomas was appointed in charge of Labour, Industry and Unemployment.

By 25th May 1848, Thomas, through progressive reforms became very popular, with over 100,000 unemployed Paris workers on his books with relief schemes and worker re-training schemes working efficiently.

His popularity was resented by other politicians; he was forced to resign and sent to Bordeaux on a futile task. His supporters became furious and organised a massive demonstration for 23rd June 1848 at La Place de Bastille in Paris. Phase II of the "1848 Revolution" had started.

A new general Cavaignac was placed in charge of the armed forces -- he massed 50,000 troops opposing the demonstrators and ordered them to disperse. They did not move; a shot was fired and an Archbishop leading a church demonstration was killed. Cavaignac then ordered his troops to fire on the demonstrators, many of whom were armed.. until "they stopped firing back at the troops".

On 25th June 1848 -- firing ceased -- 900 troops had been killed and 2000 had been wounded. Over 1460 rioters had been killed with over 15,000 arrested. On 26th June an armistice was granted to the demonstrators who had dispersed and 9000 of them were released from arrest,

Cavaignac took over the government, divested parliament of its executive powers and set in train procedures for a new constitution for a Republic based on the American System with an elected President.

The Revolution was over and by December 1848 a new Parliament had been elected. Louis-Bonaparte was elected President with just on 6,000,000 votes :- Cavaignac, also a candidate, among others, secured 1,500,000 votes (well down because of his part in the "June slaughter").

At the height of the commotion, between March and June of 1848, the Stock Exchange and all Banks were closed, Factories were shut down and strict currency laws were enforced.

Although the whole situation was most acute in Paris most of the provinces were supportive of the reform sought but were not deeply involved in an active way. From March onwards most French people, including politicians and rioters themselves, became fearful that the "Reign of Terror" of 1789 Revolution was about to return. Calais became part of the escape route to England for the refugees from the Paris action.

This state of alarm "rubbed off" on many Calaisians and to many of the "Nottingham People" in particular. Albert Vion, pharmaceutical chemist and genealogist of present day Calais, from his researches, concludes that the English families who left when the future looked bleak in early 1848, had families of young children and sought places of safety for them. England and home, 20 miles away was an obvious choice ... so they became 'refugees'. The preceding French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the prospect of another "French" Revolution in 1848 was just too much to endure.

When the refugees arrived "home" in Nottingham the Civic leaders were faced with the prospect of caring for several hundred people arriving together and many seeking employment. They could not be absorbed ... the "Poor Rate" was inadequate for the number involved. Furthermore, these returning were not very popular as they were associated with those who had illegally smuggled machines out of the country -- even improving them perhaps to the detriment of Nottingham, and so in a sense, they were considered to be unpatriotic. They were urged and assisted to migrate to one of the colonies ... Australia or Canada.

The Saywell family was involved in this exodus and it is assumed that what happened to them also happened to other families who left at the same time and migrated to

Australia on the ships Agincourt, Harpley and Fairlie. Out of about eight families of Saywells residing in Calais in 1848 only two families managed to leave and migrate to Australia. At the end of June 1848 before other Saywell families could leave the 'revolution' was over ... a type of martial law was imposed by General Cavaignac and travel was restricted.

However, visible improvements in the quality of French life style occurred fairly rapidly after this. Those who 'stayed on' participated in the boom times for Calais which followed through to World War I. Not only did families of Saywells stay on when the others left but the majority of the families of "Nottingham People" did likewise. They were, and still are, looked upon with high regard and affection, as being 'Industrial Benefactors of Calais'.

In La Cemetiere du Sud in Calais a special section of the cemetery has been set aside for the "Nottingham People" and their descendants. Many family names connected with families who migrated to Australia in 1848 appear on the gravestones located there. Recent Saywell family burials there are: Gaspard Saywell, died 20th November, 1969 and Berthe Saywell, died 3rd January, 1982.

In September 1981 an important exhibition of the History of Lacemaking in Calais was held in "La Musee des Beaux Artes" in Calais. A lacemaking machine of the mid-19th century was on display (and still is) and a brief working run was demonstrated. A scale model of the township of Calais, circa 1881, together with the model of a typical lace factory featured prominently among other displays.

1848 Ship's Complement :: The Barque AGINCOURT

Tonnage : 669 tons. Captain Thomas SCOTT.
Departed Gravesend : 12th June 1848.
Arrived Sydney : 6th October 1848.
Cabin Passengers : Dr. Atkinson.
Immigrants : 50 Married Men 30 Single Men
 50 Married Women 22 " Women.
 * 50 Boys * 53 Girls

Total : 255. * Under 14 years of age.

NEWS FROM ABROAD

The feature article in this issue has been contributed by Theo Saywell. It continues the discussion which started in the first issue of "Tulle" on the motivating forces behind the move of the Lacemakers from Calais to Australia.

Margaret Audin has received copies of "Tulle" and our constitution and has sent them to Calais. In a recent letter she comments on the "refugee" problem :-

"..... Australia gained a lot by the reluctant admission of these people. I purposely did not use the words 'these refugees' as I am now looking for an answer to the question raised in 'tulle' - were they real refugees or not? I have asked M. Vion what he thinks and will send you his reply later."

"Naturally this will be translated into English for insertion in the magazine"

M. Vion is a genealogist of some renown and we look forward to his and Margaret's contributions to the discussion.

Margaret's letter goes on to pose a question of her own. "Apart from the activities of the lacemakers after their arrival there is another question I would like to put to descendants. Some of them have a French ancestor (through marriage). Did she pass down any French customs or did any of her descendants feel more drawn to the French side of things than the English? We have just discovered a young man, fifth generation of the Austin family and, although they have all been born in France, he is obviously an 'English' descendant in his way of thinking."

Well not only does the debate on heredity versus environmental factors go on in learned journals on psychology it even creeps into publications like this! Who first of all will define the Gallic mind? Members will recall (Tulle No1) that Michelet compared the characteristics of a Frenchman with that of an Englishman in terms not too flattering to the latter.

I know that my own grandfather often told me that his father was a Frenchman -he was born in Calais of British parents. This always seemed little consolation to me as I struggled, not altogether successfully, with graves, acutes, circumflexes and genders at school in an attempt to master the language of my great-grandfather. He at least portrayed himself as a Frenchman. How did other immigrants born in Calais see themselves?

SOCIETY NOTES

We certainly have something to live up to after the talks and displays last meeting. We were treated to two superb presentations.

Thank you first of all to our guests, the North Shore Cavalcade Group and their spokeswoman Doreen Bowen. The beautiful lace was a sight to behold and will certainly live long in all our memories -and that was only a small sample!

Mrs Bowen also put quite a lot of time and research into her speech notes and so we were doubly privileged to have a splendid talk on the history of lace illustrated by the actual products.

Lindsay Watts gave an excellent talk on the Bromhead Family and her methods of research. I always enjoy seeing things done professionally and, despite her modesty, Lindsay is truly a professional genealogist. Lindsay's talk was informative and was presented in a way which held one's interest to the last word. Congratulations and thanks to you Lindsay.

Turning now to the more regular part of the meeting. Honorary membership was conferred on Margaret Audin and Elizabeth Simpson and they appear amongst the members listed on this page.

Elizabeth Simpson will be coming to Sydney in early June. A meeting will be arranged to coincide with her visit. The meeting will be at the Salvation Army Assembly Hall in Elizabeth Street opposite Mark Foy's.

The speaker at our next meeting, which is on the 26th February, will be Chris Sutton. Chris will speak on the Stubbs Family and, secondly, on computerisation of records.

MEMBERSHIP LIST (continued)

<u>Family</u>	<u>Member's Name</u>
Duck	P.Styles K.Styles
Gascoigne	E.Bolton B.Kendrick
Honorary members	M.Audin E.Simpson
Lakin	R.Lakin
Lander	C.Lander L.Lander
Longmire	K.Ireland

THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF THE LACEMAKERS OF CALAIS

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