

## ***Lace in Fashion Exhibit at the Fashion Museum in Bath, England***

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*By Jeri Ames, with additional comments from Nancy A. Neff*

This 11-month exhibit, featuring 50 historic treasures, will be open to the public from February 4, 2017 to January 1, 2018.

You may use your computer to obtain the most recent information at any time:

<http://www.fashionmuseum.co.uk/laceinfashion>

A private January 9 news alert from a Pennsylvanian lace maker led to my immediate announcement of this exhibit on Arachne. This prompted no related discussion on Arachne, so a follow-up went out on January 17, to which Nancy A. Neff replied with excellent researched comments.

Lace lovers interested in rarely-seen laces may enjoy what we've been discussing about parchment lace.

First, this writer sought a website address where a photo could be found of a 1660 "silver tissue dress made from fine silk, woven with silver thread and trimmed with parchment lace".

Nancy provided an address (photo below - without the parchment lace). However, the lace was described at this website as "exquisite parchment lace, a rare and delicate fabric made using tiny strips of parchment or paper wrapped in silk."



A photo of the dress with lace was then found in my Lace and Embroidery Resource Center library. The caption is simply "Handmade lace". My observations are: A long, about 5 inches wide, rectangular-shaped lace collar of (perhaps) assembled squares of lace, attached around the bodice's wide neckline but not meeting in the front. It has a pointed edging. No date-when-made has been provided for the lace collar. Lace ruffles of a different design, also undated, are attached to puffed elbow length linen sleeves of a smock worn under the much shorter puffed sleeves of silver tissue.

Descriptions of Guipure lace/Parchment lace are a bit confusing.

Nancy found an Italian Lace History site that said: "Guipure lace was made either with bobbins or with the needle, sometimes with both, as when the large flowing pattern was first made on a pillow with bobbins, and the clusters of flowers, leaves, and ornaments were filled in with stitches worked with a

needle. The English term for this old Guipure was 'Parchment lace', and as such it is frequently noted in inventories."

Nancy also cited the 1900 book by Mrs. F. Nevill Jackson, *A History of Hand-made Lace* (republished in 1987 by Dover). A full reading of page 163 offers information about the widely-used term - Guipure - starting in the Middle Ages. One quote: "Guipure was the name given to a sort of passement or gimp made with 'cartisane'

and twisted silk. ....Derived from *guipé*, a thick cord round which silk is rolled. Cartisane is a little strip of thin parchment or vellum, which was covered with silk, gold, or silver thread. The work of Guipure lace-making was done either with bobbins or with a needle, the stiff lines which formed the pattern being held together by stitches worked with a needle or by plaiting of the bobbins."

Emily Jackson brings us up to 1900 with: "Lately the vellum, or cartisane padding, has been replaced with cotton thread called Cannelille, as it was found that the card stiffening was not sufficiently durable: it shrivelled (sic) up with heat, was reduced to pulp by damp, and would not wash."

This leads me to believe that by 1900 no one would use parchment strips wound with thread to make this type of lace, and they were beginning to understand lace conservation concepts.

The Lace Guild sent volunteers to Bath to help with this exhibit. Hopefully, an article scheduled for The Lace Guild's next Bulletin, will add clarity. There will be no museum catalogue supporting this exhibit.

