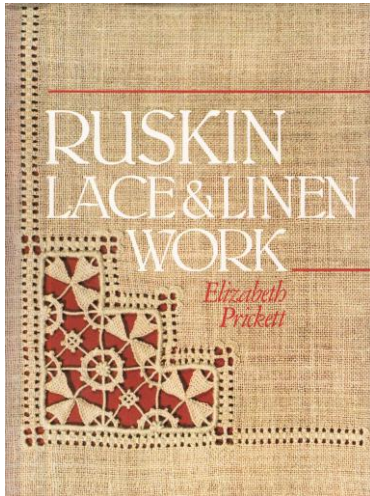


Ruskin Lace & Linen Work

Elizabeth Prickett



Ruskin Lace is a type of English lace from the latter half of the 19th century. It mixes various embroidery techniques with needle lace.

The book starts with a history of the development of this lace. John Ruskin encouraged the linen industry in the Lakes region of England to improve people's incomes. As this industry grew, Marion Twelves realized that if the linen fabric was processed into finished products, more money would be made. She taught embroidery to local women of the region. One of the forms of embroidery was referred to as "Greek Lace" that was a form of Reticella lace. Ultimately that became known as Ruskin lace.

This book covers a lot of technique, ranging from hemming the linen to adding decorative motifs. The illustrations do a good job of showing the thread paths. Additionally, there are a lot of patterns to choose from.

I will note that the copy that NELG is the original edition published by Batsford. I also have a later self-published edition that differs slightly from the original, mostly in the materials recommendation and more patterns.

As usual, I like to take a working book for a test drive. The pattern I chose was the first one which is well documented for a beginning piece. The linen I used is Glasgow linen 28. The thread is Bockens linen 50/3. I followed the directions more or less. It recommends the use of "leather cloth" underneath to provide some stability as you are sewing. From the description, it could be an old cloth-backed vinyl table cloth since it is described as plastic covered cloth. I chose to use card stock with my pattern copied onto it with a cover of clear plastic. This seemed to have worked well.



The four-sided stitch used is something I haven't seen since it doubles the number of threads on each side. I found winding the thread around the bars to be somewhat challenging given the thread size, the thread stiffness, and my impatience. The rest of the implementation went well.

Given the changes in materials over the lifetimes this book, the revised edition recommended perle cotton 10 as a possible thread. I think that this opens the door for modern variations with color.

Despite my initial doubts, I think I will try a few other samples. They are easy to do, however I would never recommend this to someone who has no embroidery experience. A few beginner embroidery projects will make learning this lace a lot easier.

Sharon Sacco