

The invention of the stocking frame in 1589 by Calverton curate William Lee launched three centuries of development in machine-made textiles in the East Midlands. With over 2000 parts, it was able to produce at a fast rate stockings, underwear, and eventually lace (by dropping stitches to create holes in the fabric). It was operated from home, providing work for women and children engaged in finishing the knit.

The East Midlands became the centre for framework knitting thanks in part to local developments in cotton and silk spinning by Richard Arkwright and Jedediah Strutt, and wages which undercut those set by the London-based Framework Knitters Company. William Felkin's 1844 census of stocking frames found more than 27 times the number in the East Midlands than the rest of the country combined.

Machine-made lace was an offspring of the hosiery industry thanks to the invention of a machine patented in 1809, based on the stocking frame, by Derbyshire framesmith John Heathcoat. It was capable of replicating the motion of cushion lace bobbins to twist the yarn, creating a hexagonal bobbin net to which a pattern was added by female hand embroiderers.

Lace machines were finally able to produce patterned lace when in 1813 Nottinghamshire's John Levers introduced the machine which bears his name (also spelled Leavers). The machine used jacquard cards, punched cards controlling the threads, to create the pattern. Nottingham lace became famous around the world, and lace machines manufactured in the region were widely exported. When the lace industry fell into decline, the skilled mechanics would go on to bring their expertise to the city's bicycle industry.

"Lace is fashionable: be in fashion"



FRONT VIEW OF HEATHCOTE'S 2<sup>ND</sup> PATENT OLD LUGHBOROUGH BORDIN NET MACHINE, 1869.

A detailed technical drawing of a net machine, showing a complex arrangement of rollers, gears, and structural frames. The machine is designed for producing netting. It features a central horizontal section with multiple rollers, and a large, textured cylindrical component at the top. The drawing is labeled 'FRONT VIEW OF HEATHCOTE'S 2<sup>ND</sup> PATENT OLD LUGHBOROUGH BORDIN NET MACHINE, 1869.'

Above: List of stocking frames in 1844 and Heathcoat's 'Old Loughborough' bobbin net machine, both from *A History of the Machine-wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufactures* by William Felkin (London, 1867). East Midlands Special Collection Not 3.022 FEL.