



# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

August 2018

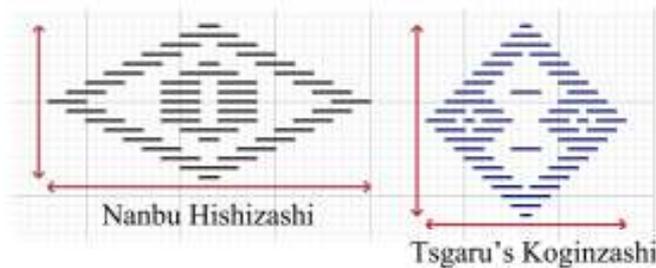


## Sashiko of Aomori

Over the past two years I have been exploring the Kogin embroidery of the Aomori Prefecture of Northern Japan after seeing some very old embroidery from that area. Finding accurate information is difficult as very little has been written on the subject and some of the information is conflicting and written mainly in Japanese. However, I wanted to explore the ideas created within these traditional embroidery styles and develop some modern Kogin style designs.

Even the word “Aomori” has a magic about it. Aomori literally means blue forest, although it could possibly be translated as "green forest". The name is generally considered to refer to a small forest on a hill which existed in the area.

Within the prefecture of Aomori in Northern Japan there are two distinct regions within the province where Kogin patterns have developed in different ways.



Hishizashi and Koginzashi are Sashiko patterns with their own unique development which cannot be seen in other regions.

The Nanbu area where hishizashi developed was the east side of the Aomori prefecture up into the northern province of Iwate Prefecture.

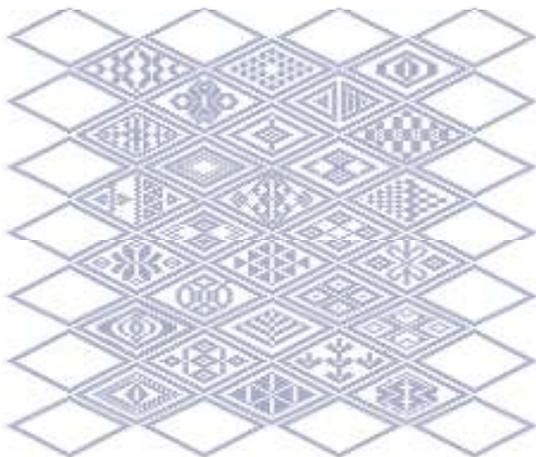
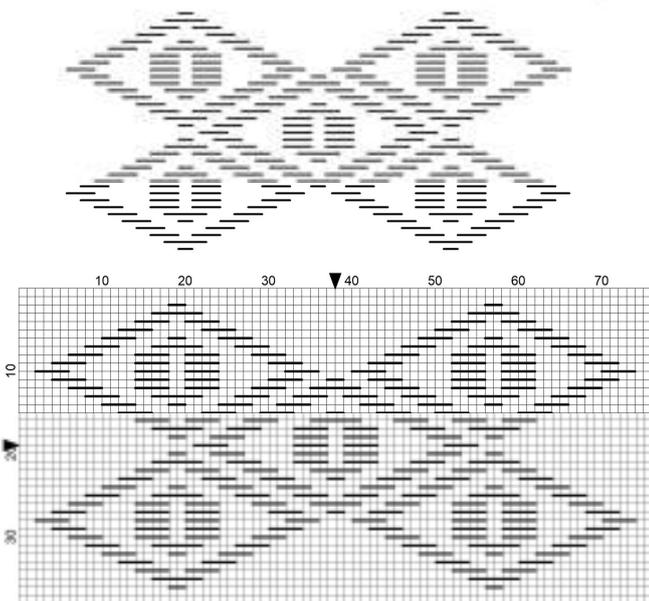
### *Nanbu's Hishizashi*

*The patterns would have been worked over 2, 4, 6, 8 threads as even patterns.*

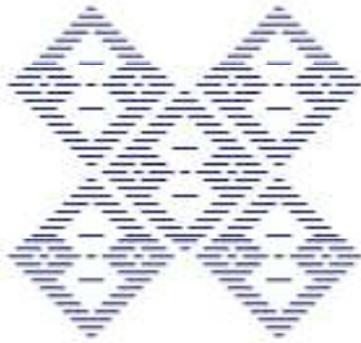
The climate of Aomori prefecture is very different between west Tsugaru and eastern Nanbu. This was a less fertile area than Tsugaru and it was not easy to get cotton sashiko thread because it was an area where crops do not grow easily so in turn, this affected the designs.

In the Edo period (1603-1868) the work clothes were made of hemp. The short kimonos which reinforced by stitching thread was called “tudure – sashi” or “sashi–kogin”. From this over a period of time sashi-kogin became known as “kogin”. Hemp thread would have been used until cotton threads became more common but once cotton became available the patterns became more complex

In Tsugara Koginzashi the foundation patterns are called Modoca. These consist of a thread count of 1,3,5,7,9 over the fabric grid. Both patterns are worked along the weft of the fabric from side to side. The patterns can be dense or light depending on the thickness of thread used. The name of modoco is named from the living environment and is still used as the name of the dialect of Tsugaru.



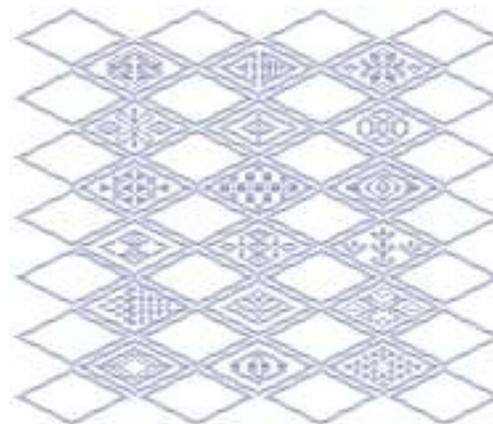
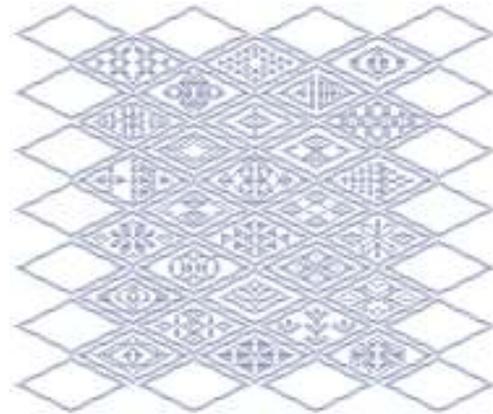
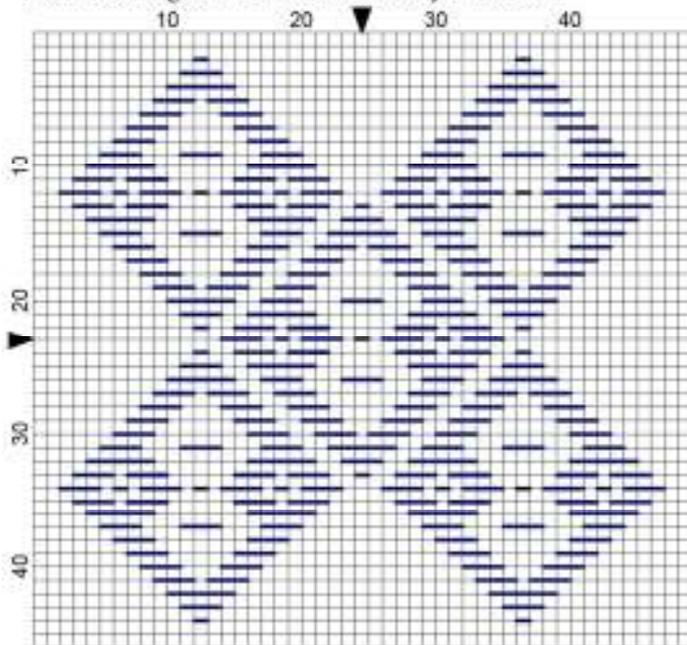
CH0357 Kogin Harmony



Many of the patterns relate to the everyday lives of the fishermen and farmers and the things they saw around them,

I wanted to use the ideas from the traditional patterns to create a pair of cushions. I have altered the patterns and included some elements over odd numbers of threads and I would say therefore that the cushion is in the “style” of hishizashi.

The diamond shapes in Tsugau's koginsashi are less elongated. Patterns look very different!





**CH0379 Hishizashi.**

*The two cushion patterns are based on the Nambu Hishizashi where the diamonds are elongated rather than on the Tsugaru Koginzashi where the diamond is not elongated.*

**Christmas comes early - threads, threads, threads!**

The main topic this month has been about the different types, their uses and their replacements.

**DMC Thread changes:  
Just Cross Stitch June 2018 – “Summertime”**

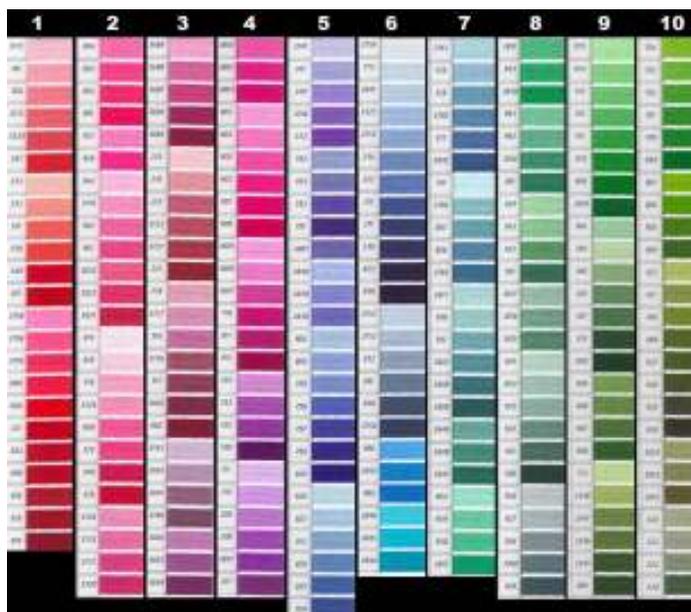
DMC have discontinued DMC 3891, so replace with DMC 995. There is very little difference between the colours.



You will also find Anchor given as alternatives on all the Blackwork Journey patterns.

Alternative DMC colour:

3880 replace with 223  
3881 replace with 164  
3882 replace with 839  
3883 replace with 722  
3884 replace with 535  
3885 replace with 312  
3886 replace with 3685  
3887 replace with 208  
3888 replace with 3740  
3889 replace with 445    3890 replace with 3766 *or*  
*buy cards with actual threads*  
3891 replace with 995  
3892 replace with 740  
3893 replace with 543  
3894 replace with 907  
3895 e replace with 646



*Download shade cards online*

DMC occasionally discontinue colours altogether. These are the discontinued colours and their replacements:

776 is replaced by 3326  
781 is replaced by 782  
971 is replaced by 740  
504 is replaced by 3813  
731 is replaced by 732  
806 is replaced by 3760  
3773 is replaced by 407  
868 is replaced by 801

### **What is Cotton Pérle?**

This question came up on my Facebook page, so a brief description is given below:

Cotton Pérle is a versatile, premium quality embroidery thread made from 100% long-staple Egyptian Giza cotton. It is double-combed and mercerised for exceptional sheen and workability. Each thickness is made up of a number of different plies of thread twisted together to make one strand. Cotton Pérle has a tight twist, unlike floche or stranded cotton.



There are various manufacturers such as DMC, Sullivan's and Anchor, but there are many firms selling space dyed pérles. Some manufacturers have variegated threads in both Cotton Pérle and floss which adds an extra dimension when embroidering.

*Threadworx No 3 Chilli peppers is an overdyed Cotton Pérle*



**Cotton Perle:**  
Sizes - 3,5,8,12  
Balls or skeins,  
variegated or plain



Cotton P rle comes in different thickness and colours in either skeins or balls. Because it is a non-divisible thread, it is used as it comes from the skein or ball. Highly lustrous and smooth, this softly twisted, non-divisible embroidery thread creates a slightly raised effect making it suitable for such techniques as hardanger, cut work, smocking, and needlepoint.

There are four different sizes: 3, 5, 8 and the finest size 12.

The higher the number the finer the thread. Numbers 3 and 5 are heavier than 8 and 12 and are used where thicker threads are needed. P rle No 5 works well with modern kogin embroidery, though it is not a traditional thread to use.

I use No. 12 when working pulled thread work designs and outlines in projects such as "Save the Stitches" where a slightly heavier border is required. Two strands of floss is equal to one strand of p rle. Numbers 5 and 8 are used in hardanger embroidery as well as traditional embroidery. Use a slightly larger needle than usual so the thread passes through the needle easily.

### **Sullivans Threads**

<http://www.sullivansusa.net>

M.T. Sullivan & Co. was established in 1972 in Australia and is the parent company of Sullivans Enterprise, Ltd. NZ and Sullivans USA, Inc. Sullivans USA, Inc. was launched into the market in 1992. Their current warehouse facility is located in Downers Grove, Illinois.

During the course of my work I use many different threads by different manufacturers, but when I received a request via the "Just Cross Stitch" magazine from Sullivans Threads "Would I like to try out our threads?" and they would send me a designer box with all 454 colours, then how could I possibly say no! In due course, a large parcel arrived from America which I couldn't wait to open. Tied with a yellow ribbon and lined with tissue paper the box revealed lots of little packets of threads, treasure indeed!

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They manufacture a wide range of embroidery products and their Six-Strand Embroidery Floss is a premium quality thread featuring 100% long-staple Egyptian cotton that has been enhanced and perfected to top quality. All 454 brilliant colours are 100% colourfast and fade resistant. Available in 8.7 yard skeins with 6 easy-to-separate strands. It is convenient to use and virtually knot-free and tangle-free.

On the skeins a DMC conversion number is printed which means that substitutes could be made if necessary. This brand is not widely available yet in the United Kingdom, but with the number of outlets selling Anchor threads being reduced I can see more retailers stocking their threads and I look forward to using them.



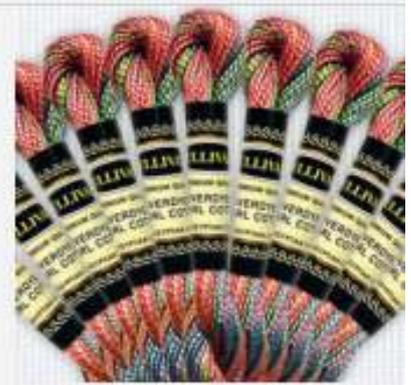
*Christmas comes early - a designer box of Sullivan's threads*



Overdyed Embroidery Floss



Metallic Floss



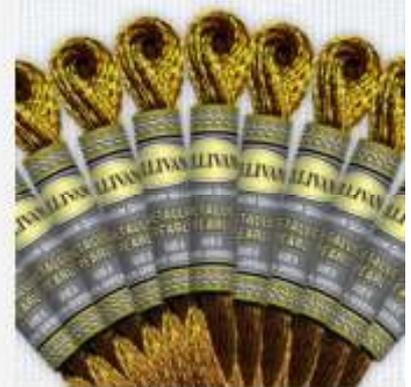
Metallic Pearl



Pearl Cotton Balls 8 and 12



Floss Displays



Floss Packs



*Sullivan's Threads*

### **Value your Eyesight – an article by Vicky Cole**

Many of the e-mails I receive are about the problems of embroidery and eyesight. Vicky Cole one of our members and a professional optician, has very kindly written this article which I have found invaluable and I hope you will as well!

“As time goes on, we all notice that our eyesight changes and this is most obvious when we are doing work that involves seeing fine details for any length of time....such as embroidery!  
If you have always had good eyesight or if you have only ever worn glasses for seeing far away, you will notice that your near vision becomes a bit blurry once you reach your forties and onwards. This is due to changes in the lenses inside your eyes - they gradually become less elastic and therefore less willing to focus

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on close work. Nothing to be done about this, I'm afraid! What your optician will be able to do is prescribe some glasses that help with the little bit of focusing that your own eyes can't quite manage. If you are short sighted you may find that you see your work better without your glasses and you should find a comfortable working distance that suits you. (If you are very short-sighted (like me) this would mean holding the work a bit too close, which can be hazardous to the eyes with needles whizzing back and forth, and it can also upset the way the two eyes work together).

Everyone should have regular eye tests (at least every two years) but please do go and have a test if you begin to notice problems with your vision when sewing. What will be particularly helpful for your optician is to know exactly what you need to see and at what distance, and the best thing to do is to take your work on the frame or hoop that you use. (If you have a giant and untransportable floor stand, measure the working distance before you leave home!) This means the optician knows exactly what she is aiming for and also, you will be able to satisfy yourself that the new glasses will help. For general convenience, a majority of people now wear varifocals or bifocals, but the reading area of this lens is a little restricted and positioned at the bottom of the lens. It is a very good solution to have some separate single vision glasses made up just for sewing (or any other prolonged close tasks, but NOT for walking about) as that will give you the whole of the lens to look through instead of jiggling your head about to find the right bit! They can be made the strength needed for your working distance, and if your work is very fine can be made a little stronger to give more magnification and a shorter working distance.

Sometimes glasses are not enough and we need to turn to magnifiers - there are so many different types available. As a general rule, the higher the magnification the smaller the width of field you have. It is good to experiment with different types if possible. Maybe consult friends and borrow theirs? Also, experiment with different pairs of glasses you may have in conjunction with the magnifier.

We all know the importance of good lighting when we are sewing, but as you and your retinas get older it is surprising how much more light you need. Light "dilutes" tremendously as it travels, so try and get your light source close to your work, and not in your line of sight or it could cause glare. Having the light shine over your shoulder is ideal. Natural daylight bulbs are available to help minimise distortion of colour perception.

I mentioned above about the way the eyes work together. Some people don't have automatically perfect binocular vision, and although they can usually control it well enough, a prolonged session of very detailed sewing could cause eye strain, headaches or even double vision if the eyes just give up trying to work together. Good binocular vision is very helpful for precise positioning of your needle. Again, this is something your optician should be able to help with, perhaps with exercises or by putting prisms in the spectacle lenses to help the eyes work together more comfortably.

Finally, thinking about eye health in general, there are some eye conditions than can cause changes to your vision. The commonest one as we get older is cataract, which is when the lens inside the eye becomes less transparent. Symptoms can include blurred or shadowy vision, problems with glare and changes in colour perception (particularly in how well we see blues and greens). Any distorted vision, e.g. seeing little kinks in straight lines, or a feeling of a central shadow should be investigated quickly, especially if it is of sudden onset. Uncontrolled diabetes can cause very dramatic changes in vision as the sugar levels fluctuate. I could go on....but as a general rule, anything that starts suddenly should be investigated. If in doubt, give your optician a ring and explain what you've noticed, and they should be able to advise you what to do."

Thank you Vicky for your very valuable contribution. I would welcome reader's comments on this article in the Facebook groups or by e-mail.

# Congratulations!

**Star readers!** This month I have received notification of yet more members who have won significant competitions.

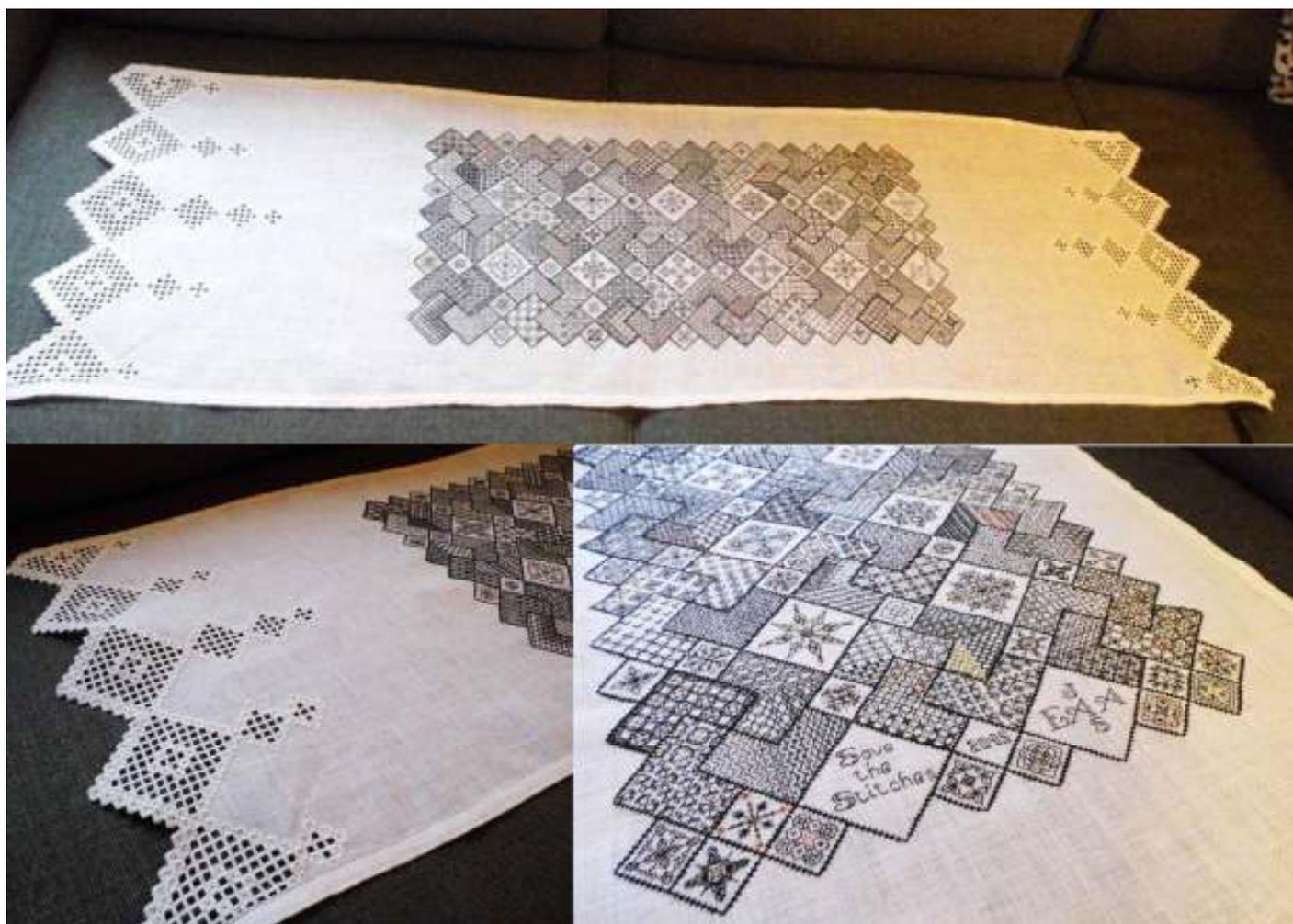


Ernene Verster won First Prize with her ‘Save the Stitches’ at the Bloem Creative Crafts Show

The Embroiderers Association of Canada held their seminar on Prince Edward Island recently and the group submission from Lakeshore Creative Stitchery Guild won the group project with their submission of “Sublime Stitches”.



Winning ladies from Lakeshore Creative Stitchery Guild 2018



*Joanna Stahura Marzeda has created the most beautiful runner combining hardanger and blackwork in her version of 'Save the Stitches'.*



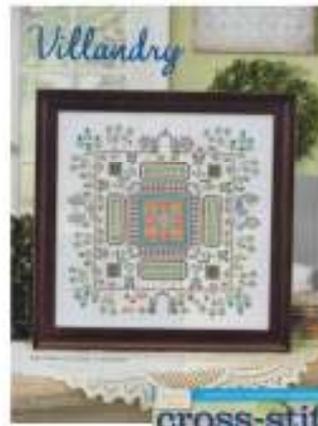
*Kogin band added to felt shopping bag.  
Designed and stitched by Liz Almond*

### **Keeping your options open!**

When you are stitching a pattern alterations in the layout or the use of stitches can be easily done if the idea is thought through carefully first. Joanne and Laura have both made changes to the designs to suit their needs.

Laura is a left handed stitcher who struggles with French knots so substituted beads for the knots in the original design. The secret is in choosing the right size beads and having the confidence to use them.

Note: Colonial knots are easier to create and more consistent than French knots!



*Beaded 'Villandry' by  
Laura Krulikowski*

“Cross-Stitch and  
Needlework” magazine  
Summer 2015



I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog.

If you have any queries please contact:  
[lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk](mailto:lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk)

Happy stitching! *Liz*

**New to Blackwork?**

**Experienced stitcher?**

**Want a challenge?**

**Tiny Treasures**  
Coming soon!