



Blackwork Journey Blog

September 2018



New to Blackwork?



Want a challenge?

Tiny Treasures

Coming soon!

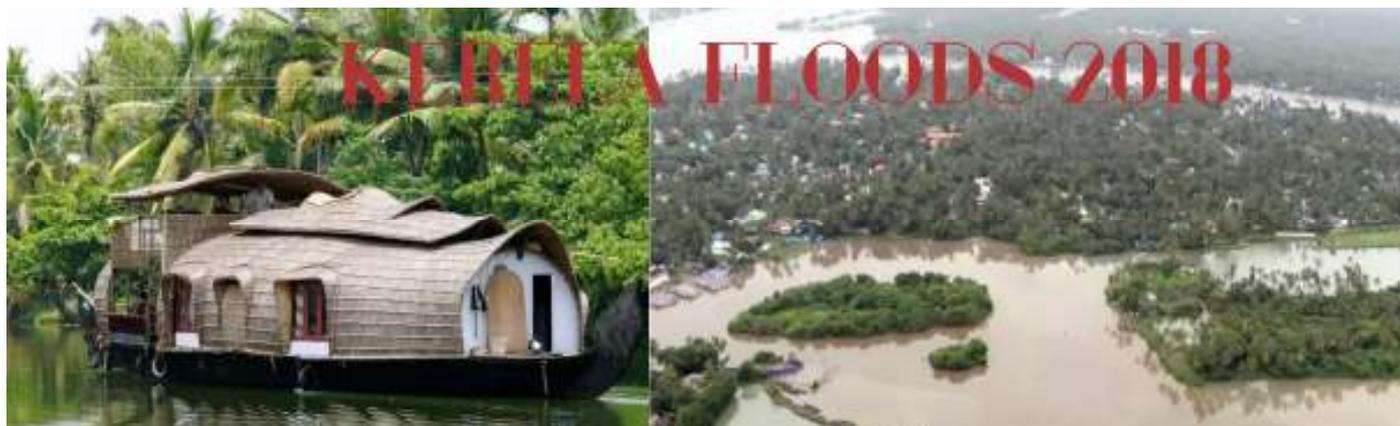
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Having watched the monsoon flooding in Southern India this week with its major loss of life and widespread devastation has brought home to me once again, how difficult the lives of so many people are and how hard they work to make a living and provide for their families.

I spent some time in Kerala and other areas of Southern India two years ago. I watched silk being woven, braids being made, cotton being hand printed and was welcomed into homes where there was one room and the most important item there was the loom. I was met with warmth and eagerness from both men and women anxious to show me their work and pride in their workmanship. I was greeted with quiet dignity and delight that I was interested in what they were producing. I have also seen this in Northern India and so many other parts of the world which I have been fortunate enough to visit.

In today's society, we take so much for granted, but it is only when you go back to the basics and see what little so many people have, that we begin to appreciate the things around us. Whilst the 24 hour news brings world events to our doorsteps and computers, phones and the internet have shaped our lives, the need for food, shelter and fresh water are a priority for millions worldwide.

As a craftswoman and teacher I understand and appreciate the work that is produced and the circumstances in which much of it is made. In Kenya recently I saw:



The tranquil beauty of the waterways and the recent devastation in the same area!

Thought for the day!

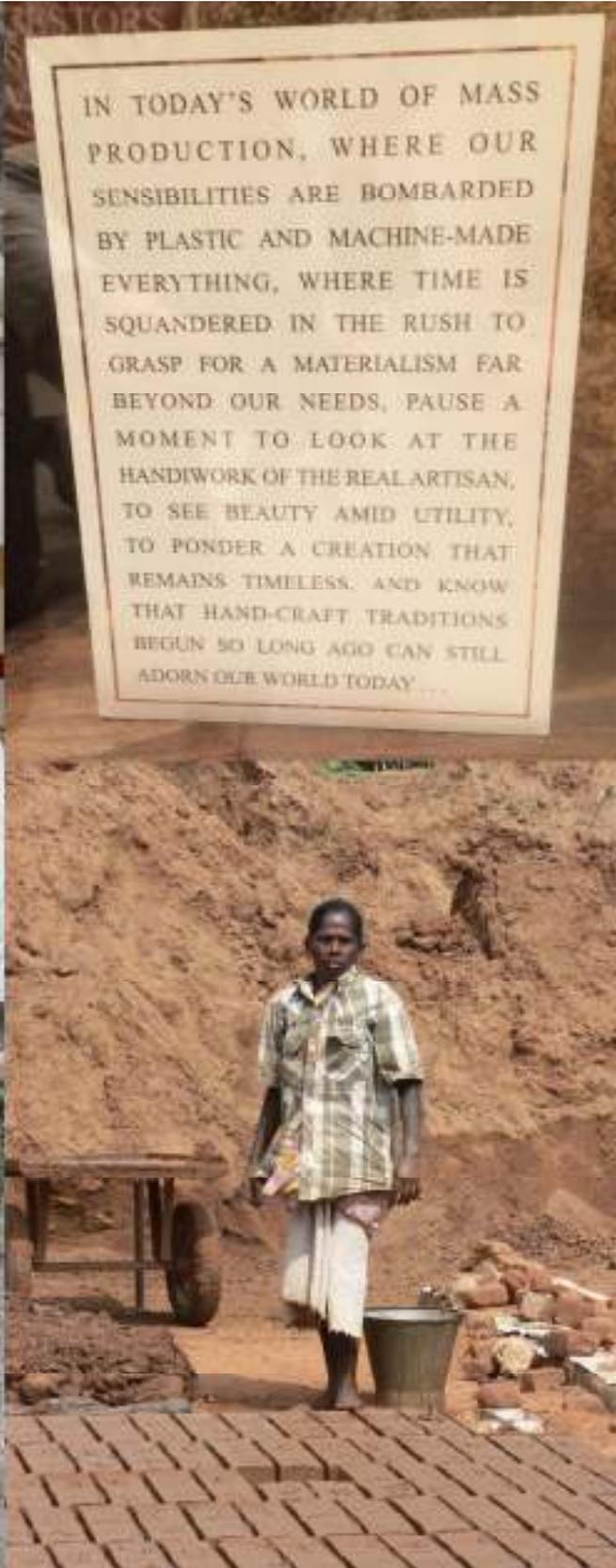
“In today's world of mass production, where our sensibilities are bombarded by plastic and machine-made everything, where time is squandered in the rush to grasp for a materialism far beyond our needs, pause for a moment to look at the handiwork of the real artisan, to see beauty amid utility, to ponder a creation that remains timeless and know that hand-crafted traditions begun so long ago can still adorn our world today.”

This statement was in a craft shop window in Nairobi. I photographed it at the time and have thought about it many times since. We need to take time to appreciate the creativity that is around us and to value it. Cheap clothing and goods comes at a high price for the men and women who work to fulfil our desires.

I have watched women beading sitting on a rubbish dump in Delhi for a high street retailer, visited a towel factory in Southern India where health and safety does not exist and watched women and children in the Far and Middle East, India and China working long days in poor conditions to earn a living. The standard of the work produced is often very high and their wages are very low. It makes me appreciate the conditions in which I live and work, the clean water and the lighting, ample food and a comfortable home.

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I think we all need to take responsibility for our actions and to consider the lives of men and women like ourselves who work so hard to scratch a living and bring up their families despite their conditions.



China, India Africa from embroidery to bricks!



From India to China, Africa, to the Far East, everyone is making a living in the best way that they know how!

Moving on....

Meeting readers is always a pleasure and this month Maureen from Montreal, Iris and Chudie Hong Ma (Chinese) are visiting the North West of England where I live. Maureen has been to the UK before and I spent some time with her in Montreal when I worked with the embroidery group there. I am looking forward to showing them more of the beautiful area in which I live and introducing them to some of the areas that were so important in the industrial revolution which did much to shape our country.

What was the Industrial Revolution and why was it so important?

The Industrial Revolution, which took place from the 18th to 19th centuries, was a period during which predominantly agrarian, rural societies in Europe and America became industrial and urban.

Before the Industrial Revolution, which began in Britain in the late 1700s, manufacturing was often done in people's homes, using hand tools or basic machines. Industrialisation marked a shift to powered, special-purpose machinery, factories and mass production. The iron and textile industries, along with the development of the steam engine, played central roles in the Industrial Revolution, which also saw improved systems of transportation, communication and banking.

Whilst industrialisation brought about an increased volume and variety of manufactured goods and an improved standard of living for some, it also resulted in often grim employment and living conditions for the poor and working classes. Manchester and Liverpool and the cities around it formed the backbone of the period with its cotton and woollen mills.

The influences of inventions from this period still affect our textile industries today and the work of John Kay, James Hargreaves and Richard Arkwright paved the way for development in my local area and worldwide.

Being surrounded by old mills, I cannot fail to be aware of their influence over past generations and on a recent visit to India I saw machinery in one of their mills that had been shipped to India from one of the former Lancashire mills in the UK.

Timeline

1733 Flying shuttle invented by John Kay: an improvement to looms that enabled weavers to weave faster.

1742 Cotton mills were first opened in England.

1764 Spinning jenny invented by James Hargreaves: the first machine to improve upon the spinning wheel.

1764 Water frame invented by Richard Arkwright: the first powered textile machine.

1769 Arkwright patented the water frame.

1770 Hargreaves patented the Spinning Jenny.

1773 The first all-cotton textiles were produced in factories.

1779 Crompton invented the spinning mule that allowed for greater control over the weaving process.

1785 Cartwright patented the power loom. It was improved upon by William Horrocks, known for his invention of the variable speed batton in 1813.

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1787 Cotton goods production had increased 10 fold since 1770.

1789 Samuel Slater brought textile machinery design to the US.

1790 Arkwright built the first steam-powered textile factory in Nottingham, England.

1792 Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin: a machine that automated the separation of cottonseed from the short - staple cotton fibre.

1804 Joseph Marie Jacquard invented the Jacquard Loom that weaved complex designs. Jacquard invented a way of automatically controlling the warp and weft threads on a silk loom by recording patterns of holes in a string of cards.

1813 William Horrocks invented the variable speed batton (for an improved power loom).

1856 William Perkin invented the first synthetic dye.



Hall I' th' Wood, Bolton, Lancashire, where Richard Arkwright lived and invented the water frame in 1764.

Without these inventions the textile industry of the present day would not have existed. In our area we live with the heritage of the past, the mills and factories and whilst the coal mines have closed and many of mills have been demolished or turned into apartments, they have left an enduring mark on our landscape and lives of local people.

I worked for many years with ladies who grew up and worked all their lives in the mills. Their working lives were hard, their days long and the wages and living conditions far from ideal, but they were some of the happiest and most grounded people I have ever had the pleasure of working with.

Quarry Bank Mill (also known as Styal Mill) in Styal, Cheshire, England, is one of the best preserved textile mills of the Industrial Revolution and is now a museum of the cotton industry. Built in 1784, this mill was typical of the many mills that dominated the skyline for generations.



Quarry Bank Mill (also known as Styal Mill) in Styal, Cheshire



A working Mule spinning machine at Quarry Bank Mill

September's Design - PR0045 'Spirit of Kogin'



There is a story behind this month's design. I recently produced CH0377 'Kogin Mini Sampler' to introduce readers to Japanese style Kogin embroidery and to produce a piece that was small enough to complete quickly and personalise for small gifts.

Once I had finished the pattern, I looked at the possibility of extending it and making a more detailed design so "from little acorns large oak trees grow" and 'Spirit of Kogin' was born.

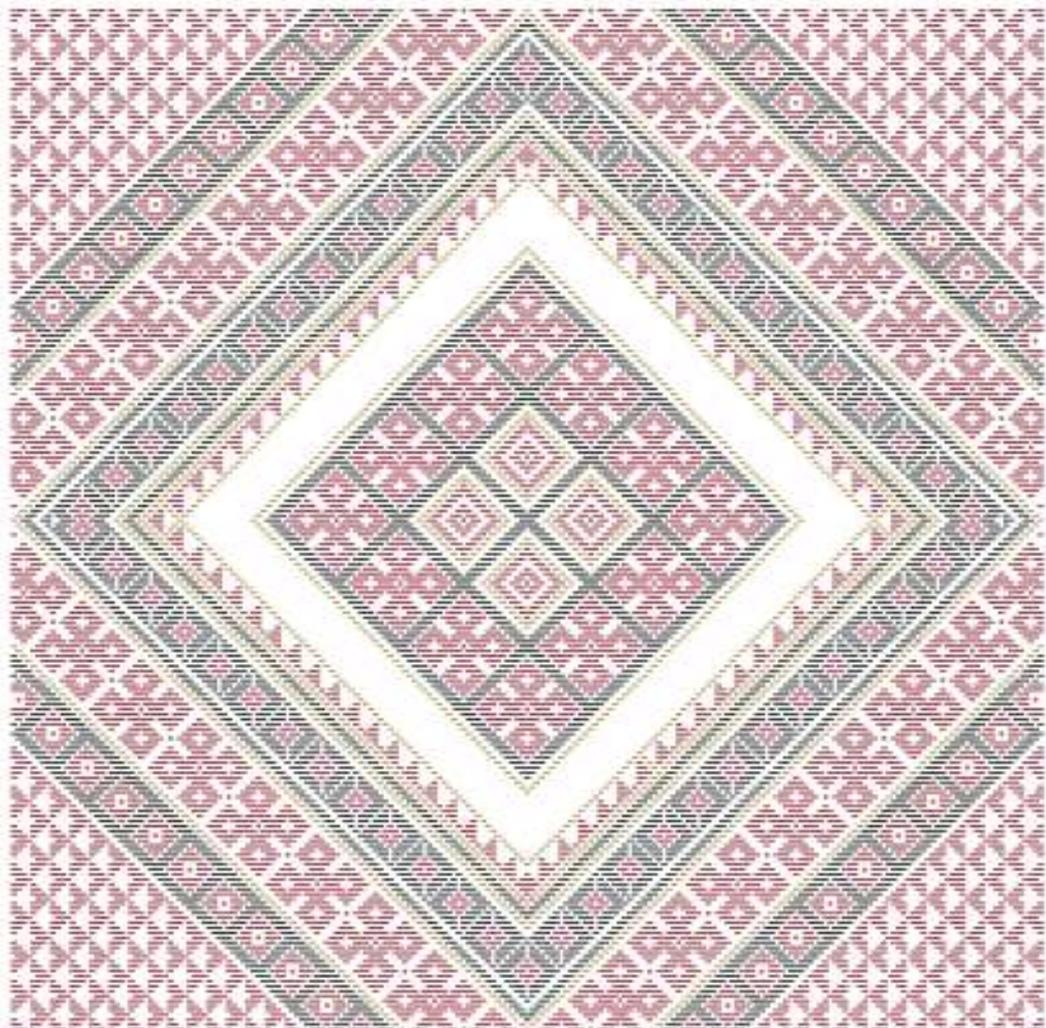
The blue design was worked on furnishing fabric using a matt cotton thread which was as near to the traditional kogin fabric as I could get. Working on dark colours can be difficult so reverse the idea and work blue threads on white.

CH0377 'Kogin Mini Sampler'



Use 14 count Aida or 28 count evenweave, 3+ strands of floss or DMC Cotton P rle No.8 or12 depending on how heavy the embroidery is to be. On 16 count Aida use no more than 3 strands of floss and for a more delicate effect use two strands of floss.

Extract from PR0045 'Spirit of Kogin'



The design can also be worked in different coloured bands with metallic threads and beads added for texture and sparkle.

'Tiny Treasures' – a new challenge!

Last month I mentioned that I would be starting the next new project, probably in October when Blackwork Journey is 10 years old. In the past I have created projects such as 'Save the Stitches', 'Box of Delights', 'Pandora's Box' and 'Sublime Stitches' and readers have followed the charts and mostly worked the patterns they have been given.

This time, I am going to set list of Guidelines, but the readers choosing to take the challenge will have to make some choices and decisions of their own. No two pieces of embroidery should be the same. Think about the finished project, is it going to be a hanging or table runner if so, you may want to add some extra fabric? Rather too much material than not enough! Both designs will be suitable for evenweave or Aida fabric.

Fabric requirements for 'Tiny Treasures'

The main project 'Tiny Treasures' will consist of 4 different elements:

Flowers

Pattern blocks

Mini links

Border, each part capable of being developed further if so desired.

There are two patterns to choose from:

a. Square design

Design area: 15.29 x 15.29 inches

Stitches: 214 x 214

Material:

Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida, 22 x 22 inches

If 25 count Lugana is used: 24 x 24 inches

The design consists of:

64 Flower motifs

49 Pattern Blocks

1 border and 112 mini links

Total: 226 Tiny Treasures

b. Rectangular design suitable for framing or a runner.

Design area: 9.86 x 26.43 inches

Stitches: 138 x 370

Material:

Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida, 15 x 33 inches

If 25 count Lugana is used: 17 x 35 inches

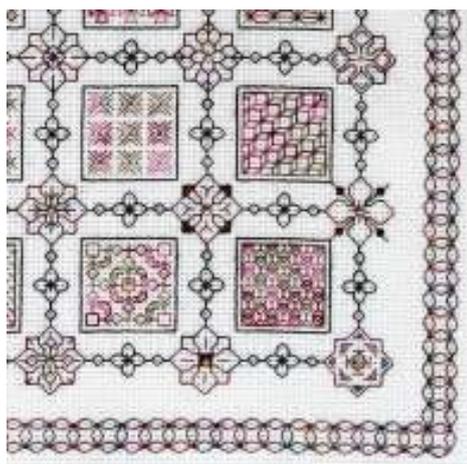
The design consists of:

70 Flower motifs

52 Pattern blocks

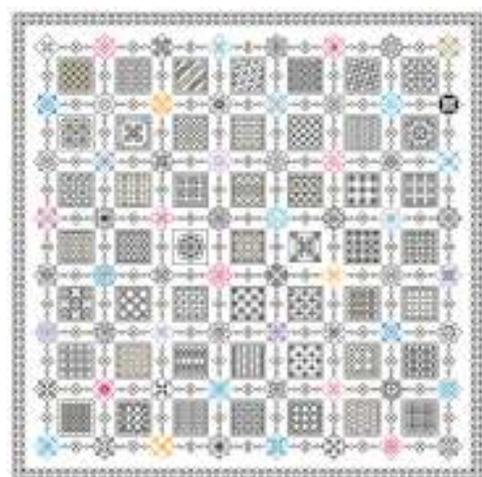
1 border and 120 mini links

Total: 243 Tiny Treasures



A section from the rectangular design worked on 14 count Aida in DMC310 and two shades of DMC Coloris

Layout for rectangular design



Black, grey and silver design

Yet another possibility! Coloured flowers alternate with black motifs.

Square or rectangular, which design will you choose?

Choosing fabric – making the right choice for you:

There are so many different fabrics on the market that choosing the right fabric can be a minefield unless you have some experience, so I have outlined some fabrics I find work well for counted thread and pulled thread work designs.

‘Tiny Treasures’ has been designed to work on either Zweigart Aida or evenweave and is suitable for a novice or a more experienced embroiderer who wishes to make their own decisions about the colours and layout that she chooses.

Aida Fabrics:

Recommended brand: Zweigart

Zweigart Aida ranges from 3.5-count up to 22-count.

Count refers to the number of threads per inch. Low count fabrics are great for beginners, 14-count is the most commonly used for cross stitch and counted thread work and higher counts are suitable for more experienced needlewomen, or those wanting a finer result.

I would suggest a 14 count Aida. There are some split stitches in the designs and 14 count Aida is easy to see and work with and the blackwork patterns show up well.

If you have difficulty counting there is a solution:



14 Count Aida - Easy Count 100% Cotton, Zweigart Fabric. Easy count fabric reduces counting time and helps make stitching much quicker and easier. The grid lines correspond to the grid lines on your stitching chart, and disappear when washed.

14 Count Aida - Easy Count

Evenweave fabrics:

Recommended brand: Zweigart

If you are investing time and money on your project cheaper threads and fabrics may let you down!

There are a number of different evenweaves you can choose from:

Zweigart cotton evenweave is used for cross stitch, embroidery and other needlecraft. It's easy to count as you stitch while allowing a good amount of detail.

Choose a fabric you are comfortable working with. If you are using evenweave for the first time consider using Zweigart 25 count Lugana.



25 Count Lugana

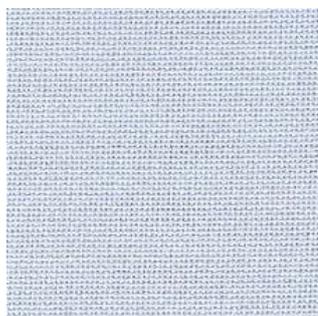
52% Cotton & 48% Rayon, Zweigart Fabric. An elegant fabric for table linens, samplers, pillows and other decorative accessories. Lugana is perfect for cross stitch, drawn thread work and other counted thread techniques. It comes in a wide range of colours. Antique white is easier to work on than white because of the glare factor.

The fabric handles well with minimum creasing and the holes are easy to see. The threads are smooth, unlike linen.



Zweigart 27 count Linda

100% Cotton, Zweigart Fabric. This fabric is an excellent alternative to 28 count linen for the needlewoman who prefers an easy count quality fabric. A light weight fabric with an easy care finish, perfect for clothing because of its close weave and draping effect. Also excellent for table linens and samplers.



Zweigart 28 count Brittany

52% Cotton & 48% Rayon, Zweigart Fabric. Brittney is a soft easy care fabric. For cross stitch, it is equivalent to 14 count Aida when worked over two threads and at the same time offers the stitcher a more even surface.

Note: Using space dyed fabrics can detract from an intricate sampler. Choose carefully! If using fabric other than Zweigart please check the fabric count, not all fabric is the count that it says it is!



28 Count Cashel Linen

100% linen, Zweigart Fabric. Cashel is suitable for all counted embroidery techniques including Hardanger. The rich colour range offers a wide variety of colours which are sure to complement any design. Linen is more expensive and difficult to handle. I would not recommend linen to a beginner. A more experienced embroiderer will not find it difficult to work with, but the slub and texture may not give the desired effect.

This is only a small indication of the fabrics that are available and with experience you will find the one that suits you best and works well. Keep an open mind and try out different fabrics, the transition from Aida to evenweave fabric is much easier than many people realise if you choose the right fabric.

Note: On evenweave fabric cross stitch is worked in **TWO** strands over **two** threads, back stitch is worked in **ONE** strand over **two** threads unless indicated in the pattern.

On Aida fabric cross stitch is worked in **TWO** strands over one block, back stitch is worked in **ONE** strand over one block unless indicated in the pattern.

Next month we will look at different threads and ideas that could be used for both designs.



Beautiful embroidery of 'Save the Stitches' by Amy Crumb

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog and it has given you plenty to think about.

Happy stitching!

Liz

Two different versions of 'Da Capo' by Nancy Meffe and Doreen Stubbe published in 'Cross Stitch and Needlework' magazine, 2012

