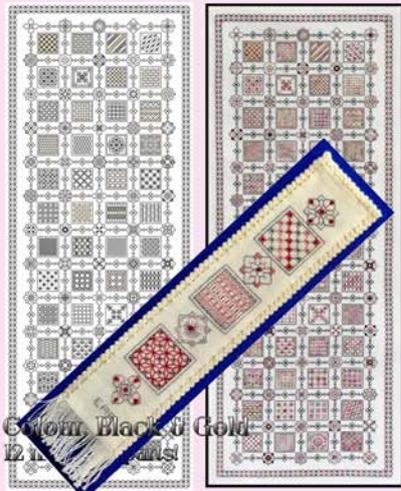




Blackwork Journey Blog

February 2019

TINY TREASURES®
Rectangle - Part 5



Colour: Black & Gold
12 monthly parts



TINY TREASURES®
Square - Part 6



Colour: Black & Gold
12 monthly parts



Blackwork Journey Blog, February 2019

At the beginning of the year I wrote down my aims and objectives for the coming year. I don't usually publish my resolutions, but now that we are a month into 2019 and our resolutions are being forgotten or overlooked, I thought that perhaps they might get you thinking about what you want to achieve in the coming year!

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS 2019

My aims are:

To encourage, support and challenge my readers.

To finish all my unfinished projects. (Wishful thinking?)

Learn a new technique and pass it on.

Enjoy what I am doing and take time to appreciate what I can do and not beat myself up over things that I haven't done. We are all human and make mistakes.

Take time to appreciate my family, friends and readers, they add extra zest to my life.

Visit new countries whilst exploring and appreciating my own beautiful country of England. Use my travels to find inspiration for the site and develop Blackwork Journey further.

Appreciate every single day however good or bad. Tomorrow is always a new start.

I posted this on the Facebook groups just before the New Year and my e-mail box was overflowing with comments and good wishes for 2019.

Future project?

I also posted some suggestions about possible projects for later in 2019 combining Kogin, sashiko and embroidery just to test the water and like a pebble dropped into a pond, the ripples just grew and grew.



For many people Kogin and sashiko are new techniques and returning to embroidery and using traditional stitches is not something they have done, so I intend to create a large piece or 'throw' using all these techniques.

Kogin

I am trying out different combinations on this piece of Kogin using all the patterns that I really enjoy working. I have also worked this design on Aida fabric and mounted it as a wall hanging just to see how it worked out.

This will be the basis for a throw, table cloth or hanging, whatever you decide to do, incorporating sashiko and embroidery patterns.



Sashiko

This piece of sashiko is being used to try different patterns out and see how they relate to each other. I appreciate that not everyone can work on dark fabrics, so I am thinking along the lines of twelve inch squares for all the patterns on a white or cream fabric so that regardless of eyesight, it can be worked by anyone.

Coloured fabric can be used and you will be shown how to draw the individual sashiko patterns. They are not difficult, they just take a little patience and for those who are frightened of drawing there will be a pattern sheet.

Embroidery

When I visited Japan a few years ago, I came home with numerous photographs of designs from stones in cemeteries to temples and pagodas and even kimonos, so these will be used as my inspiration.

One example was the Meiji Jingu shrine in Shibuya in Tokyo.

The shrine is dedicated to the divine souls of Emperor Meiji and his wife, Empress Shoken. Emperor Meiji was instrumental in opening Japan to the outside world after a long period of self-imposed isolation. It is Tokyo's largest and most famous Shinto shrine.

The shrine is built in the traditional nagare-zukuri style with Japanese cypress and copper. It is located in a beautiful part of Tokyo in a forest that covers an area of about 175 acres. The evergreen forest consists of around 120,000 trees of 365 different species, donated by people from all regions of Japan. The forest is an oasis after the hussle and bustle of the city.



Entry to the shrine grounds is marked by a huge torii shrine gate made of ancient cedar. Look at the top of the gate and you will see decorative symbols suitable for quilting or embroidery.

You then pass through the Minami-shin Mon shrine gate to the inner sanctuary of Meiji Jingu shrine. The buildings consist of the honden (The Main Hall), noritoden (The Prayer Recital Hall), naihaiden (The



Inner Shrine Hall), gehaiden (The Outer Shrine Hall) and shinko (The Treasure House). The buildings are made from Japanese cypress wood from the Kiso region of Nagano (regarded as the best in Japan) with green cooper plates used for the roofs. The buildings are a great example of Japanese Shinto architecture.

Inside the inner sanctuary we were fortunate enough to witness a traditional wedding with all the symbolism associated with such an important occasion.



Meiji Jinju Shrine, Tokyo
A traditional wedding.

There were potential design opportunities everywhere and in just this one shrine alone I found numerous ideas for embroidery, none more so than this huge collection of sake barrels (pronounced sar kee). They are called kazaridaru in Japanese and are a decorative display.



Sake has traditionally been a connection between the gods and people in Japan. These sake barrels are offered every year to the enshrined deities at the Meiji Jingu shrine. They have been donated by sake brewers from around Japan to the shrine with the sake being used for shrine ceremonies and festivals.



Two panels set into doors provided further inspiration!

I came home from Japan full of ideas for the future and now I am ready to put my thoughts to paper and explore these ideas further. It will take some time to design and stitch, but I will post regular updates.



I have often been asked why embroidery is so important to me and why do I feel the need to pass on my interests?

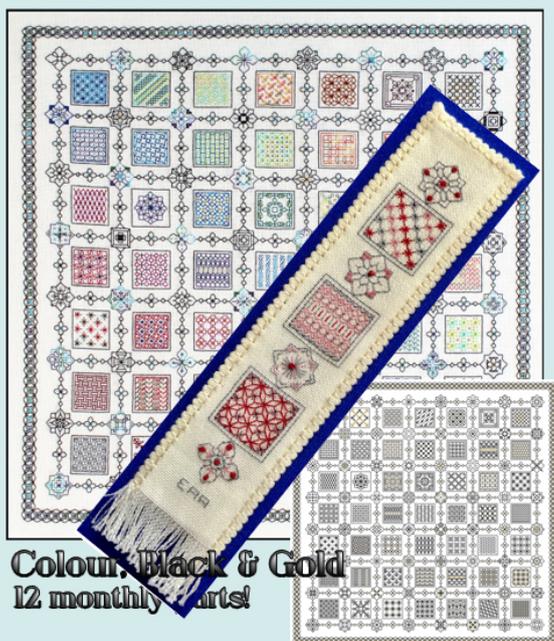
Traditional crafts derive from necessity and the need to provide functional beauty. I have seen this in many parts of the world from the male embroiderers working the Sheik's robes in Abu Dhabi to the girl stitching a cross stitch cushion in Kuala Lumpur and the hill tribes of Thailand. The women with their wonderful knitted clothes in Beijing, China were a sight to behold as were the women in the Masai Mara in Kenya whose craft work supported the village school.

From the simple to the ornate it gives pleasure to those who make it and those of us who see it!

These techniques and traditions were passed down through the generations, but with the advent of technology and the need to mass produce products and changing lifestyles, traditional crafts also change. We must change with them if these techniques are not to be lost.

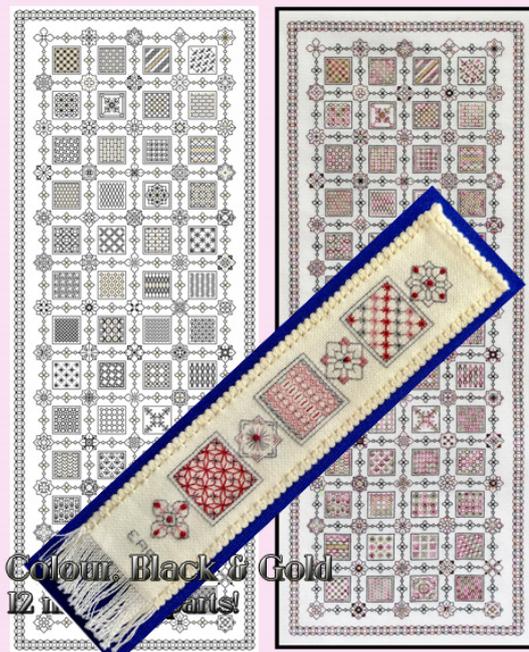
There is beauty to be found in traditional crafts and it are relevant to our lives today if we are prepared to include them. Having taught for all of my adult life and experienced the changes in both the pace and stress of modern living, now more than ever there is a need for rebalancing our lives and taking a fresh look at how we use our time and whether what we do brings us happiness and satisfaction.

'TINY TREASURES' Square - Part 6



Colour, Black & Gold
12 monthly parts!

'TINY TREASURES' Rectangle - Part 5



Colour, Black & Gold
12 monthly parts!

**Tiny Treasures
Square Part 6
and Rectangle
Part 6**

Blackwork Journey Blog, February 2019

This project is progressing well and many photographs are being posted on the Facebook groups. Several members are being very ambitious and none more so than Amanda who is working a cloth for her local chapel which is 300 years old in 2020. The planning and preparation that has gone into this means that the project should progress smoothly and the end result will be magnificent!

“It will be January before I make a start on my cloth for the Chapel. I have spent a long time ‘auditioning’ colours and practising stitching. I love the Coloris threads, but have finally decided that I will use 12 different plain colours for the flowers and black and a red (which matches the carpet) for the links. No yellow and no metallic. I’m not including any blocks as I like the more open look for the borders. As I’m getting people to sponsor me to stitch a flower I’ve had to spend a long time working out positioning and colours for each of the 126 flowers. Finally got there. Next stage is to print out the pages of the A5 book I’ve designed for people to write in, stick in the designs and thread samples and bind it - I will do a stitched fabric cover with 12 flowers on it. Good job it doesn’t need to be finished until 2020.”





Amanda's book will become part of the Chapel's history and I wish her well with this inspiring piece and look forward to seeing the Chapel and the cloth at the dedication in 2020.

'Tiny Treasures' Bookmark

This month as an additional 'gift' a bookmark will be included to use those scraps of fabric and threads we all accumulate.



Estelle has been working with me on her 'Tiny Treasures' and is going to turn it into a runner.



The oranges and browns have worked well!

‘Save the Stitches’

Waddinxveen is a town and municipality along the River Gouwe in the western Netherlands in the province of South Holland near Gouda. It is home to an enthusiastic group of needlewomen who produce a wide variety of traditional and modern embroideries. Amongst them is a lady called Tineke who has produced a piece of embroidery that has taken my breath away.

When I designed this project I stitched one example, Tineke has stitched four patterns on this beautiful cloth! Many congratulations on a really outstanding piece of work!!



Tineke's work

‘Save the Stitches’



New members are starting this project all the time and many readers have won awards for their ‘Save the Stitches’. I hope this encourages others to complete their work and to be as proud of it as Tineke.

New Designs for February

Two new patterns have been added to 'Projects' this month.
PR0050 'Textured Treasure'



This is an embroidery and pulled thread work design using textured stitches to add interest and depth.

The pulled thread work patterns are worked in Cotton P rle No 12 to contrast with the DMC Coloris variegated thread and the DMC 932 antique blue floss.

Other colours can be used, but the pulled thread work should be stitched with a pastel shade. A smaller design has also been included.

PR0049 Snowdrops, a harbinger of spring

In January and February one of the earliest flowering plants, the snowdrop peeps through the undergrowth marking the end of the winter months. They vary in height, size, shape and colour and make a suitable subject for a free style embroidery which can be worked as a whitework flower or pulled thread and blackwork design.



Two different pattern sizes have been included in this blackwork and pulled thread work design. The fabric used was Zweigart 28 count evenweave and the threads were DMC stranded floss.

Pulled thread work is worked on evenweave fabric. No threads are removed, but the threads are pulled together to create the stitches. The threads need to be strong enough to withstand the 'pull'. It is not a difficult technique to learn, but does require practice.

Pulled thread work can be used in combination with many other techniques and works well with textured stitches such as Smyrna cross which is used in PR0048 'Textured Treasure'

Blackwork Journey Blog, February 2019

Compiling the Blog this month, editing the Facebook groups and meeting new members has been really interesting as so much information has been sent in by readers for which I am most grateful. Check out the Facebook groups to see what members are working on.

Facebook groups set up for projects:

Blackwork Journey - Elizabeth Almond Designs

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/blackworkjourneydesigns/>

Pandora's Box - Elizabeth Almond Designs

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/425352680984872/>

Box of Delights Stitch-A-Long. Designs by Elizabeth Almond

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/blackworkjourney/>

Sublime Stitches - Elizabeth Almond Designs

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1695785137378480/#>

It is nearly a year since I was in Nairobi teaching at their Embroiderer's Guild and since then, I have been to California and Naples. There are so many places to see and so many ideas to develop.

This year I am going to Barcelona, Vietnam and Cambodia and the United States. Of these, Vietnam and Cambodia are the ones I am most looking forward to. From my previous experience of the Far East, I know I will find a wealth of textiles and crafts and new treasures to photograph.

Always at the back of my mind is the question "What can I find for Blackwork Journey?"



Meeting members

I recently invited a local lass called Christine who has been working on some of my designs, to come across to look through my embroideries. She is a member of one of the Facebook groups and I was intrigued when she posted a picture of her little three year old granddaughter on the Facebook group. A really good Granny and a delightful little girl! We spent an interesting few hours together and I will follow it up with a teaching session.

Catching their interest when they are young is positive and can produce some excellent young needle workers. If the subject catches their interest they will work for hours.

I hope you have found this month's Blog interesting.

Happy stitching!

Liz