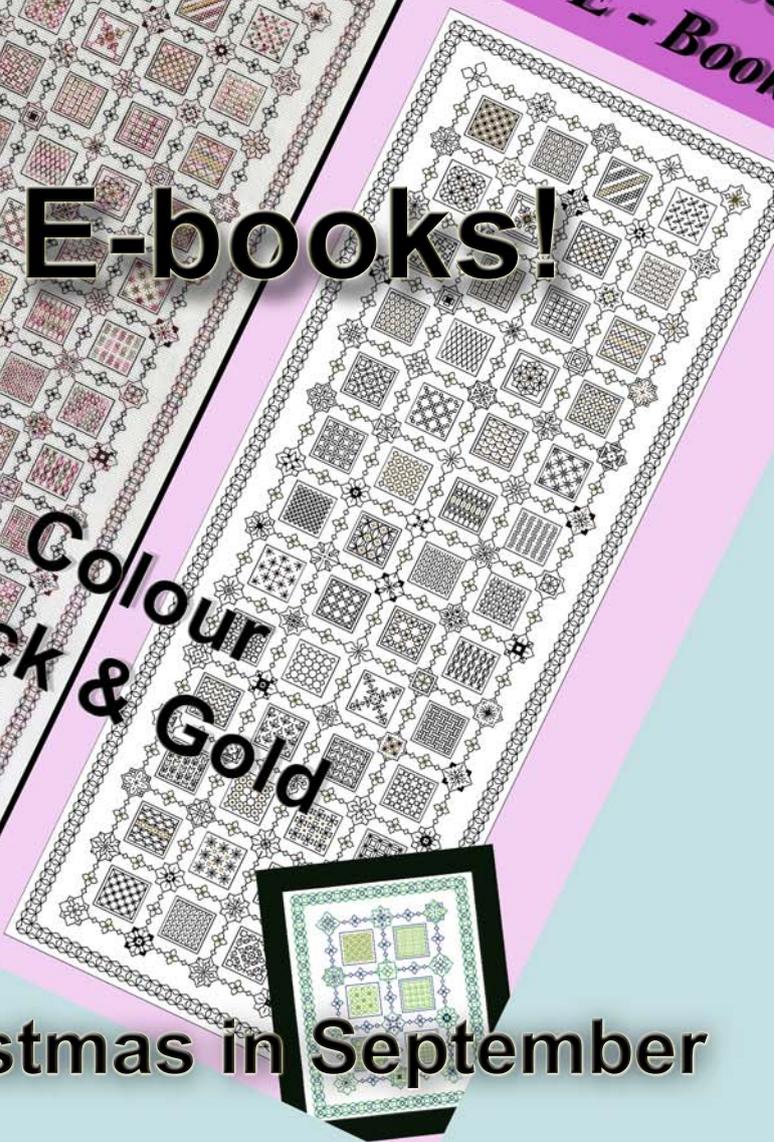
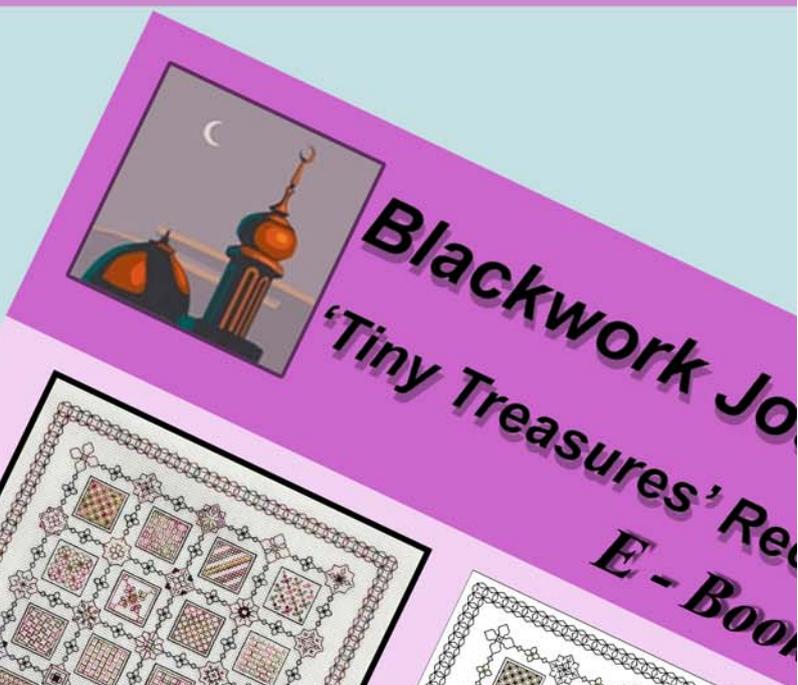
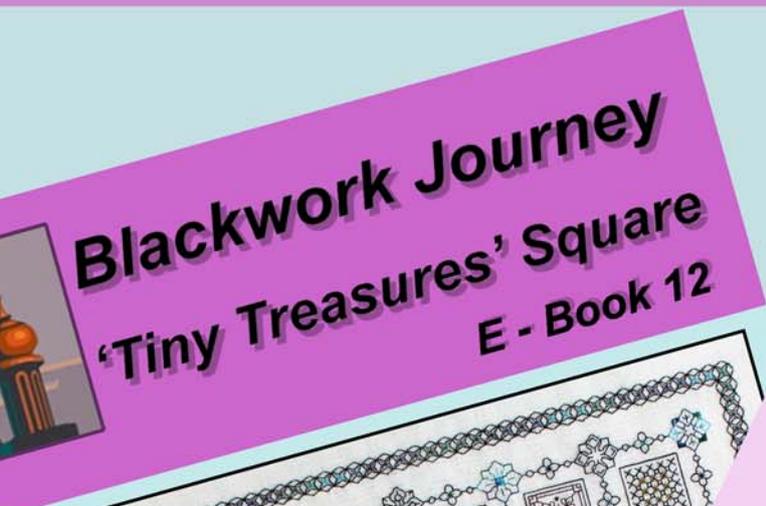




Blackwork Journey Blog

September 2019



Two New E-books!

**Black & Gold
Colour**



Christmas in September

August has been a very busy and rather unsettled month and typical of an English summer, wet and windy! However, it is a chance to catch up with family, meet friends and celebrate yet another birthday. I am sure the years go faster as you get older. It doesn't seem five minutes since my last birthday and the end of 'Tiny Treasures' – another embroidery project for Blackwork Journey. I have ideas for the next major project and have floated it past the Facebook groups to find their reactions, so watch this space!

New E-Books and Charts

After every project has been completed I bring out an extended e-book. However, because of the size of 'Tiny Treasures', the two different shapes - rectangular and square and that they are both available in colour and black and gold, the page count came out to 140 pages which was not practical, so I have produced an E-Book for the square design and an E-Book for the rectangular design.

Many readers have sent me photographs of their work in progress so I have included some of them in the e-books for readers to enjoy. I was delighted that so many people took up my challenge and have produced some really beautiful work in a great variety of threads and colours.



EB0012 'Tiny Treasures' Square



EB0013 'Tiny Treasures' Rectangle

Just to remind you of the challenge I set!

I know some readers have developed a taste for the unusual and like a challenge, so this time I decided to approach the group project from a different angle.

In the past I have created projects such as 'Save the Stitches', 'Box of Delights', 'and Pandora's Box 'and 'Sublime Stitches' and readers have followed the charts and usually worked the original patterns.

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This time, I set a list of guidelines, but those choosing to take the challenge had to make some choices and decisions of their own. No two pieces of embroidery would be the same. However, for readers who wanted to follow the designs as they have been worked, they just had to follow the instructions.

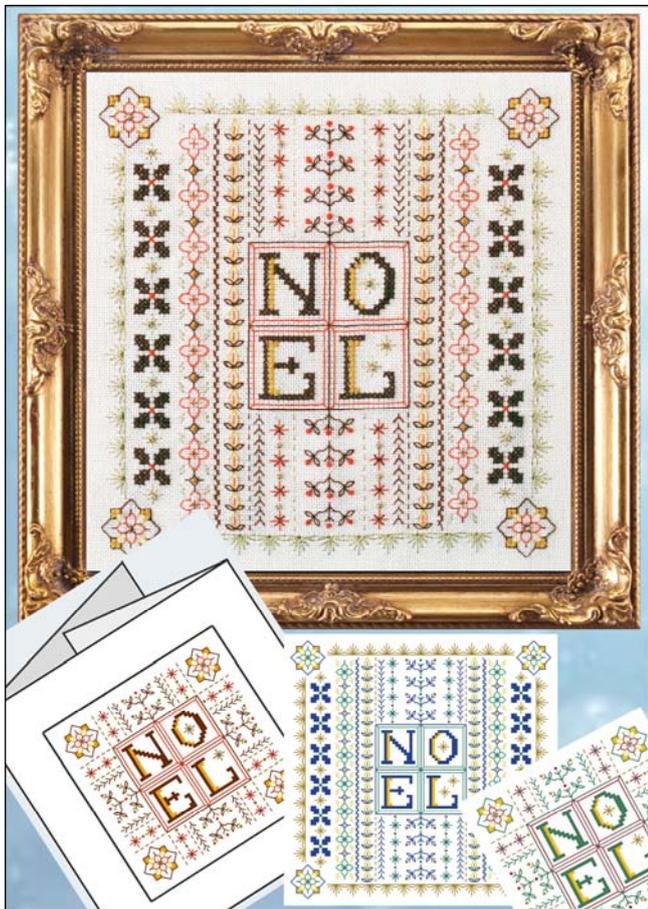
If you want to see more photographs of all the projects go to the closed Facebook group, where they are displayed in 'All Photographs'. I am delighted to see how many people have responded and their reactions to the finished embroideries. It is rather a nice thought that Blackwork Journey designs can be found in homes worldwide and the whole journey began because I couldn't find a design that I wanted to stitch, so I thought I would design one of my own. Little did I know where it would lead from those early days!

Facebook details:

Blackwork Journey - Elizabeth Almond Designs

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

Christmas in September



CH0394 Gilded Christmas

I enjoy making mini-samplers and cards with different colour schemes and different embroidery stitches and I know many people start their stitching for Christmas in the summer months, so I have designed a sampler and card

The sampler is 6.57 x 6.57 inches, 92 x 92 stitches
The card is 4.53 x 4.53 inches, 62 x 62 stitches

Different letters or initials could be added in place of 'Noel' to personalise the design and different colour combinations can be used.

If the detail in the middle square was left open it measures 32 x 32 stitches which is large enough to fit in an ornate letter in or a blackwork or pulled thread filler pattern.

The new e-books and chart can be found in 'E-Books' and 'Charts' on the Blackwork Journey website from September 1st.

Other Christmas designs in Blackwork Journey 'Charts':

CH0272 Blackwork Christmas 30 petite patterns

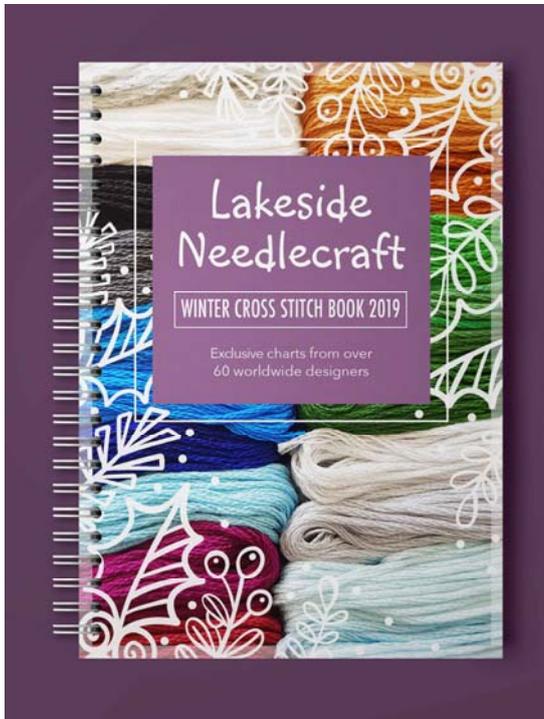
CH0292 Blackwork Noel

CH0331 Ribbons

CH0393 Christmas Creation

Books and Magazines

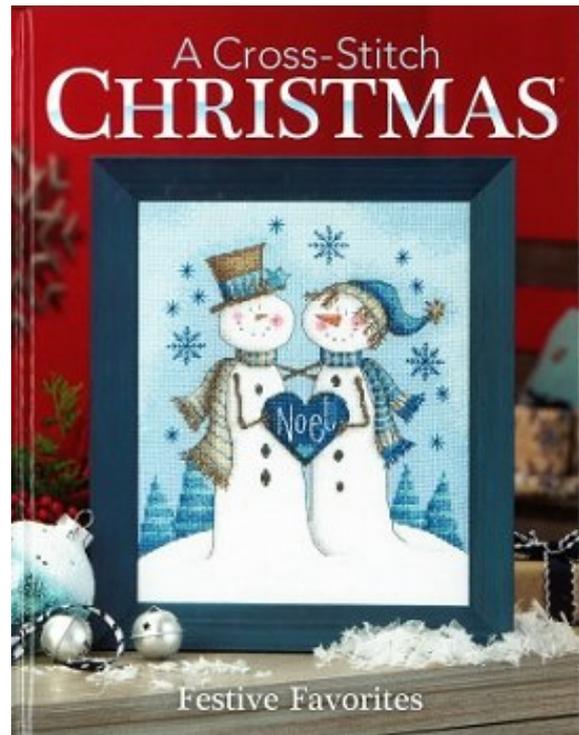
It is really exciting when I receive books and magazines through the post that contain my designs, and this month there are three different publications to feature.



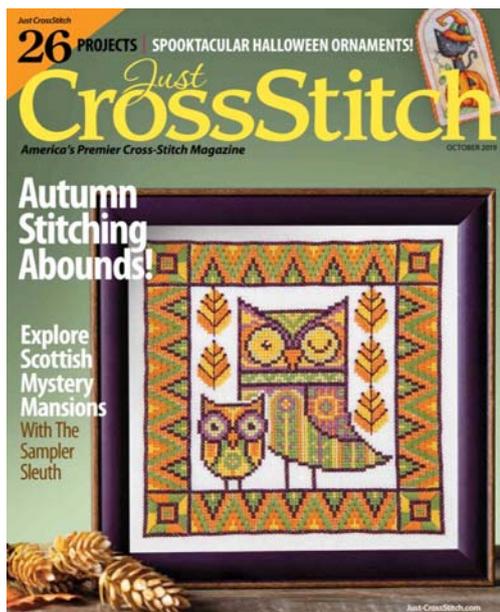
Lakeside Needlecraft Winter Cross Stitch Book 2019

Available from: www.lakesideneedlecraft.co.uk

This is a collection of 60 small patterns by designers from round the world!



'A Cross-Stitch Christmas'
Craftways Corporation



'Just Cross Stitch' October 2019

This magazine is also available as a digital download



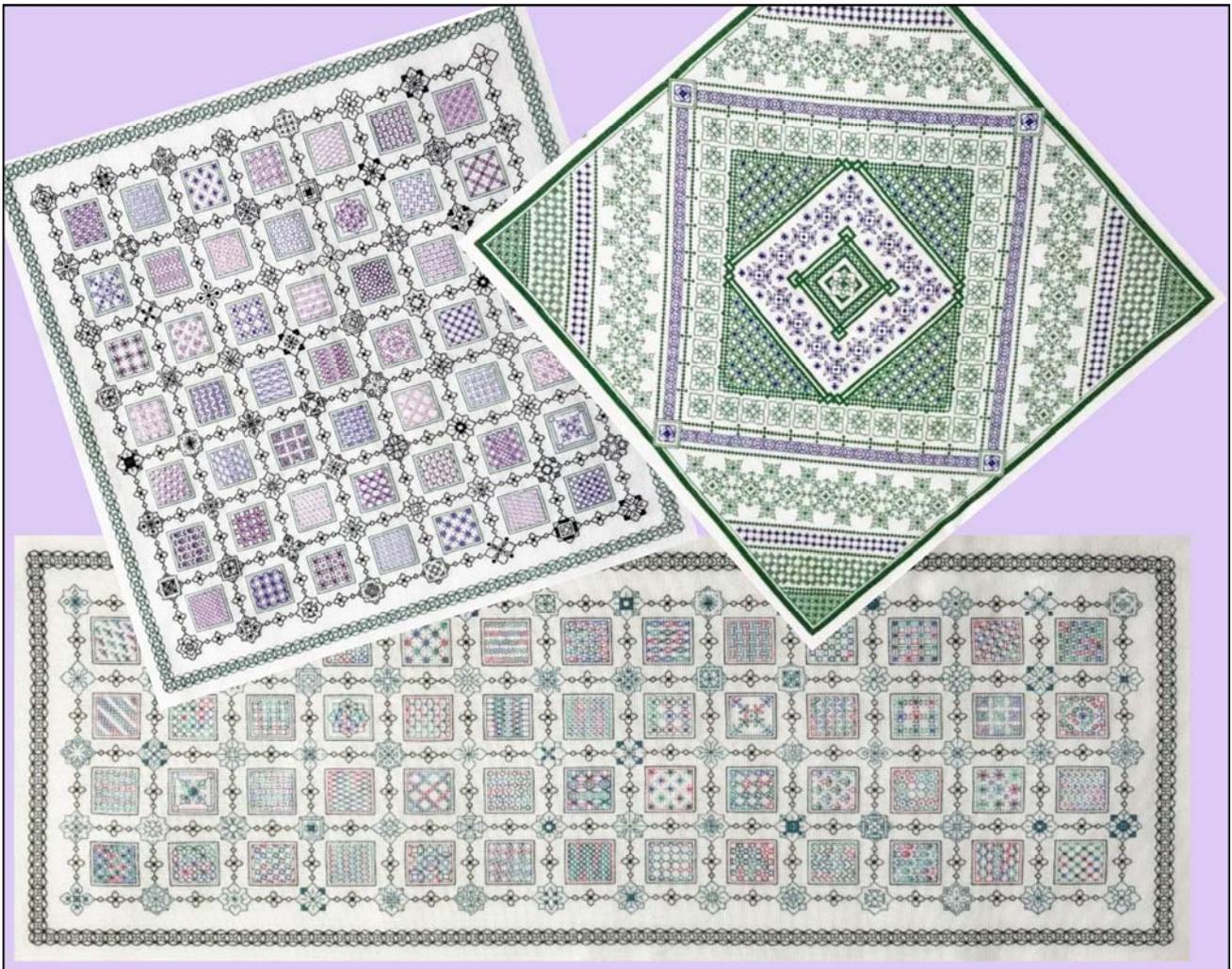
Talented readers

The latest member to win a prize for 'Tiny Treasures' is Judith Sherren who recently won Second Prize at the Cheshire County Show in the UK.

Congratulations Judith!

Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting Jenny Johnston. Jenny is a prolific needlewoman and produces some beautiful work. She also embroiders to raise money for charity and I know her work is really appreciated.

I thought you would like to see just some of her latest embroideries. 'Tiny Treasure' Square and Rectangle and CH0236 'Renaissance'



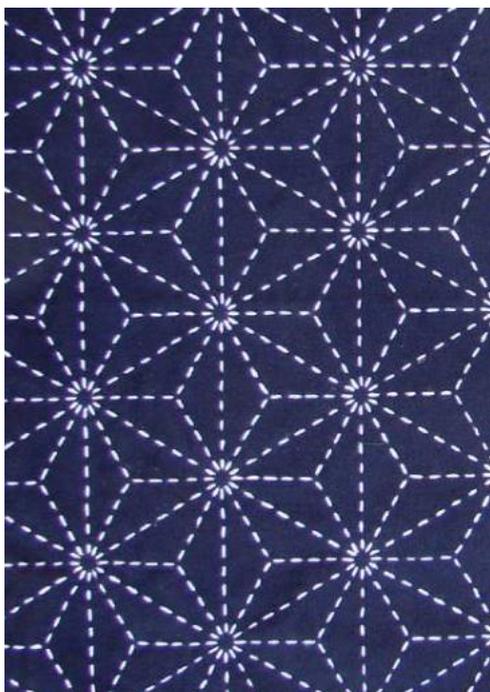
Kogin and Sashiko – two Japanese embroidery techniques

As many readers know, I am fascinated by traditional **Kogin** designs which originated in the north of Japan. Kogin embroidery is a form of counted pattern darning, which originated in the Aomori Prefecture of Northern Japan in the Edo period around 1600. This area is rural, with snow covered mountains, thick forests and rice paddies. Protective clothing for the farmers and fishermen was essential, so the fabrics were joined together by stitching and made into clothing for warmth and stability.

The patterns in Kogin embroidery are very intricate and many of the garments were very old and patched and re-stitched constantly with thick white cotton threads. Cotton fabric and threads were expensive, so local indigo dyed hemp cloth was often used for these garments.

The designs were usually geometric, often diamond shaped and the running stitches which varied in length, were only worked in rows, along the weft of the fabric. Different patterns were developed in different areas and placed in specific areas on the garments as bands or stripes. It was worked in the hand without using a frame and with a number of stitches on the needle at any one time, making it faster to stitch.

Working in the hand rather than on a frame requires a different approach and practice if you are to achieve the results which came so naturally to the local Japanese craftsmen.



Sashiko is a different form of pattern darning. Sashiko literally means "little stabs" or "little pierce" and is a form of decorative, practical embroidery. Like Kogin it was traditionally used to reinforce fabric, or to repair worn places or tears with patches, making the piece stronger and warmer.

Today, this running stitch technique is often used for decoration in quilting and embroidery. Again like Kogin, the white cotton thread on the traditional indigo blue cloth gives sashiko its distinctive appearance.

By the Meiji era (1868-1912) Sashiko had been established to the extent that it had evolved into winter work in northern farming communities, when it was too cold to work outside.

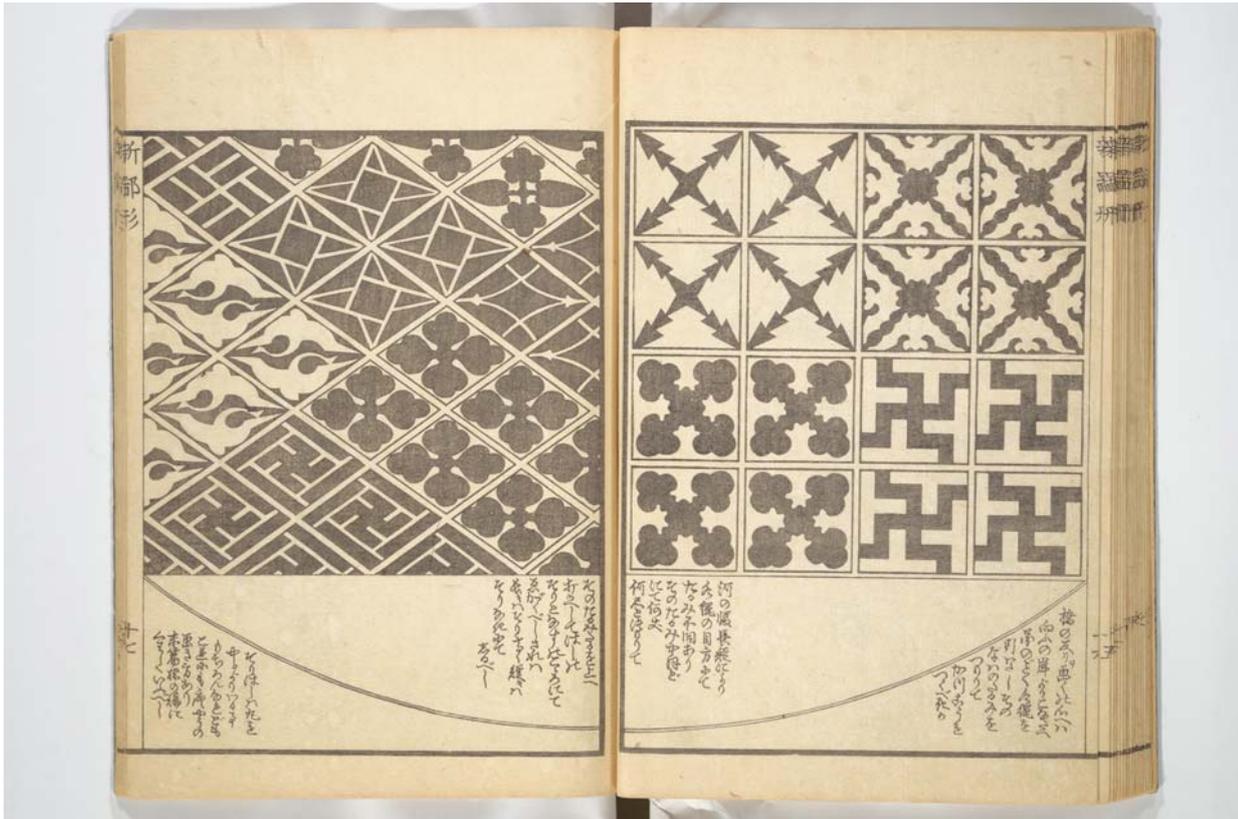
Sashiko – hemp design worked on indigo fabric in white threads

Mostly geometric patterns are used to make this work. There are two main styles:

1. Moyōzashi, in which patterns are created with long lines of running stitches
2. Hitomezashi, where the pattern emerges from lining up single stitches on a grid.

Common motifs used are waves, mountains, bamboo, bishamon, key fret, double cypress fence, arrow feathers, seven treasures, pampas grass, overlapping diamonds, linked diamonds, lightning, linked hexagons and persimmon flowers.

The embroidery uses special Sashiko thread and needles. Modern day Sashiko stitching is not restricted to the traditional indigo coloured fabric, but uses a variety of colour combinations including variegated threads.



The book is fascinating and gives an insight into Japanese life. The drawings would make wonderful embroideries

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An excellent website with downloadable free Isometric graph paper and many other types of paper is:

https://www.printablepaper.net/category/isometric_graph

The categories I find most useful are:

Graph paper

Isometric graph paper

Hexagon graph paper

Octagon graph paper

Pentagon graph paper

Dot paper

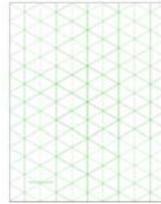
Quilting graph paper

Cross-stitch graph paper

Beadwork layout paper



Isometric Graph Paper with 1-inch figures on letter-sized paper



Isometric Graph Paper with 1-inch figures (triangles only) on letter-sized paper



Isometric Graph Paper with 1/2-inch figures on letter-sized paper



Isometric Graph Paper with 1/2-inch figures (triangles only) on letter-sized paper

These can all be used to help you draw accurate templates for your Sashiko designs. If you are a quilter check out the Quilting graph paper!



I have just finished stitching a large Sashiko table runner with eight different patterns and a smaller Kogin wall hanging featuring over 30 different Kogin patterns.

Kogin is worked along the weft of the fabric from side to side across the width of the fabric, unlike Sashiko which moves in many different directions. Both techniques are interesting to work.

There are many Kogin charts on the Blackwork Journey website in 'Charts' and 'Projects' if you want to try this technique. A full list of all the materials needed are included with the charts.



CH0351 Colour Aomori

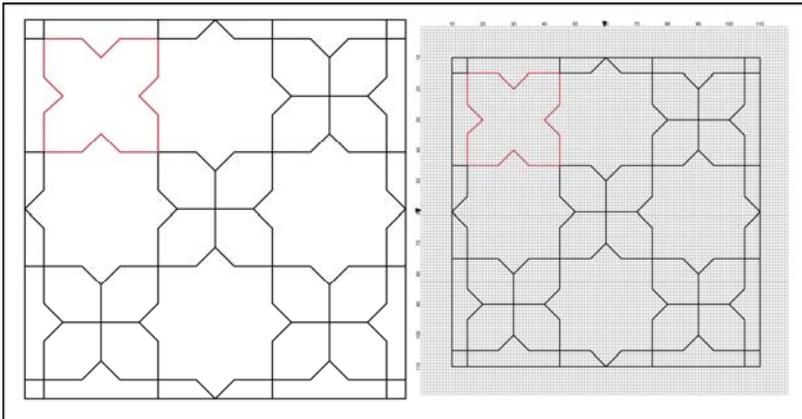


Extract from Kogin Conundrum worked on 16 count Aida using Cotton P rle No 5



PR0045 Spirit of Kogin

PR0040 Kogin, Kogin, Kogin



If you would like to try a small piece of Sashiko, a chart has been attached to the end of this Blog.

White thread on an indigo background was the traditional colour, but for a trial piece white or cream fabric stitched with blue would be easier to see.

Equipment needed:

Sashiko thread, 100% soft matt cotton. Sashiko thread is traditionally made of 100% matte cotton. It is strong and soft with a tight twist. It is non-divisible, meaning it cannot be separated into strands like embroidery floss, so you stitch with the full piece. Cotton à broder can be used if necessary.

Sashiko needles – long and sharp. If not available use an embroidery crewel needle

Thimble

Quilter's ruler or a ruler for marking fabric

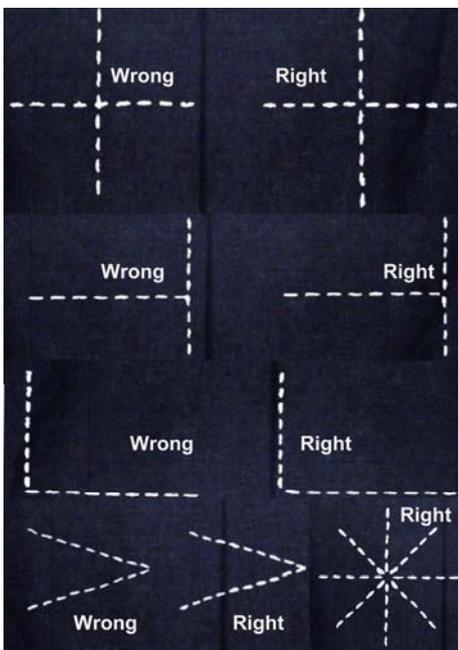
White marking pen, or quilter's white pencil for marking coloured fabric. If using light fabric a water-soluble pen can be used.

Fabric – medium weight cotton or a calico square, 10 x 10 inches

Sashiko kits that come complete with a pre-printed cloth, thread and a sashiko needle are available.

Stitches used: small even running stitches

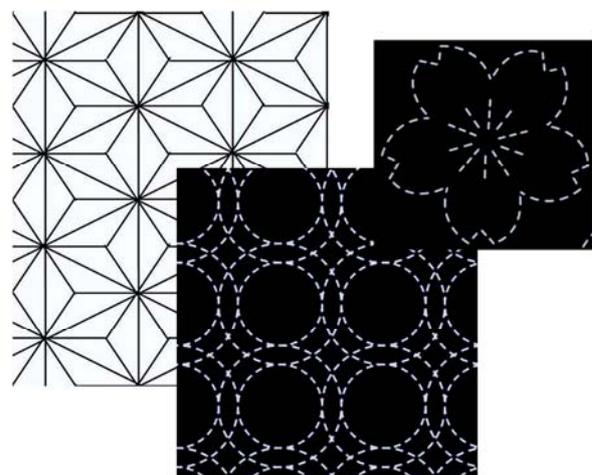
Method:



Trace the design lightly onto the fabric. Thread the needle with a long thread. Tie the ends together with a knot.

Working in the hand follow the pattern carefully making small running stitches. More than one stitch can be on the needle. Pull the thread through gently through the fabric being careful not to pucker the fabric. If it is too tight just ease the fabric through your fingers.

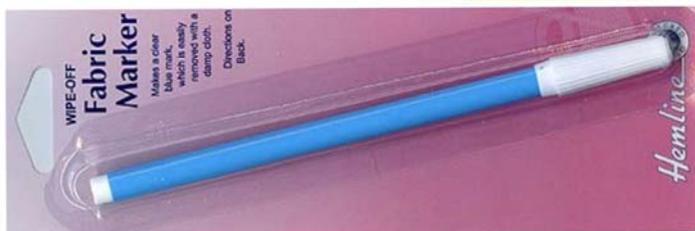
At a junction look at the diagram to see how the stitches meet. The stitches should be even and this comes with practice.



Patterns are easy to make using Graph paper to make a template. Circular patterns can be drawn by using a compass.



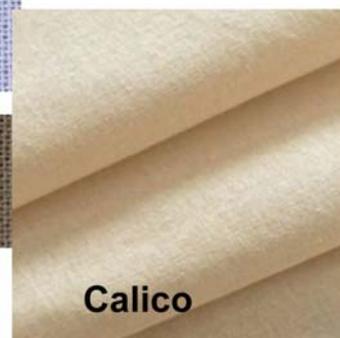
Sashiko thread



Indigo cotton medium weight



Olympus sashiko fabric



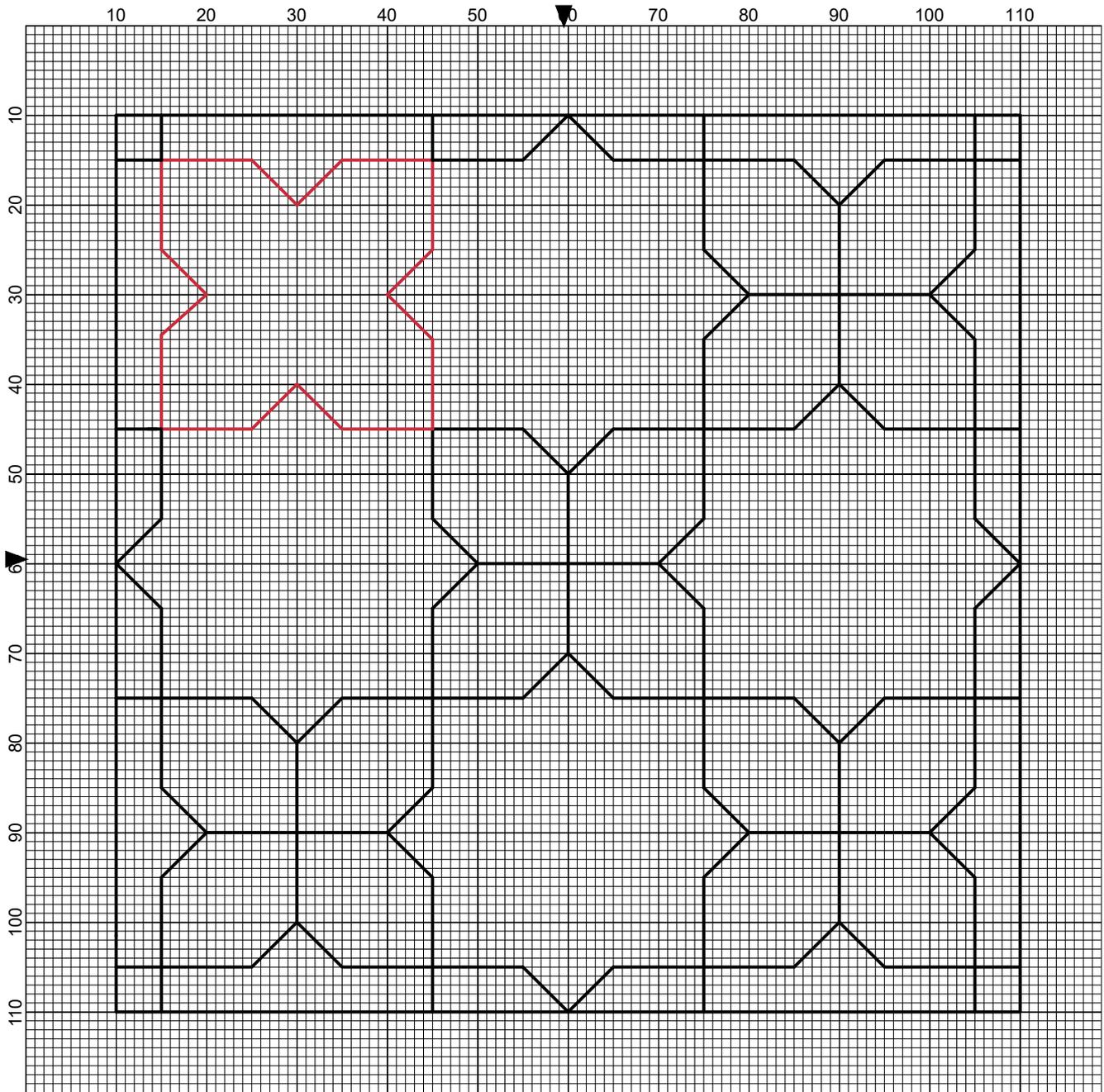
Calico

Equipment for starting Sashiko!

Happy stitching,

Liz

Sashiko Design



Elizabeth Almond