



Blackwork Journey

Techniques

TQ0013

Introduction to Mountmellick

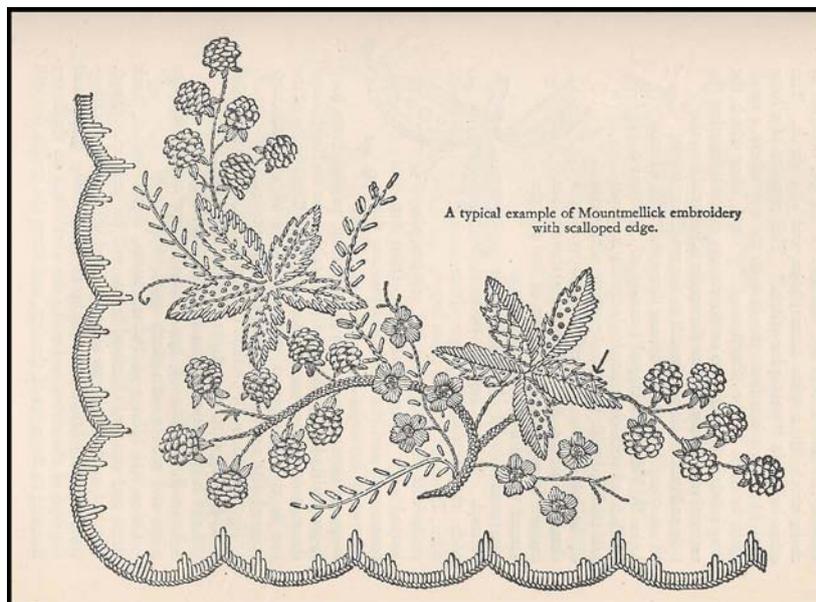


The Working Environment by Liz Almond

AN INTRODUCTION TO MOUNTMELICK EMBROIDERY

By Liz Almond of Blackwork Journey

Irish Mountmellick embroidery was developed around 1825 by Johanna Carter, who taught it to a group of women and girls. It uses matt white cotton threads on white cotton sateen fabric with a slight sheen. There are no open spaces, eyelets, drawn or pulled areas in this style of embroidery, but dense areas of embroidery created by a wide variety of threads and stitches. The plants featured in the design, were those that were found around the town of Mountmellick and included blackberries, oak, fern, dog roses and shamrocks. This style of embroidery is textured and tactile which contrasts with many of the other whitework techniques, such as Ayrshire work, which is densely embroidered on very fine fabric.



Mountmellick Work "Embroidery Book" Mary Thomas 1936

Finding the correct material and threads for a new project can be difficult, especially if the materials used are rather obscure. I wanted to use traditional threads and materials which I obtained from Empress Mills, Colne, Lancashire, UK (www.empressmills.co.uk) They are an old established English company from an area that once produced the finest cotton in the world and they still serve clients from across the world.

Materials: Medium and heavy weight Mountmellick fabric

The fabric needs to be heavy enough to support the weight of the stitching and to withstand frequent washing which white embroidery on white requires. Use the medium weight fabric and pre-wash it before drawing the design with either a water soluble pen or an HB pencil.

White Mountmellick threads: No.1 (the finest) No.2 fine (4 ply), No.3 medium (6 ply), and No.4 thick (7 ply). Do not divide the thread. Use it as it comes from the skein or cone.

Needles: Chenille needle No.22.

Darning needle has a large eye for thicker threads.

Tapestry needle No.24.

Embroidery ring or frame: Mount fabric drum tight to support the weight of the stitches. Remove the ring at the end of every stitching session to avoid marking the fabric.

Various soft matt crochet cottons can be used, but avoid the threads with a defined twist as they will not create the required finish.

Simple Flower Sampler

Design area: 3 x 3 inches

Material: 7 x 7 inches

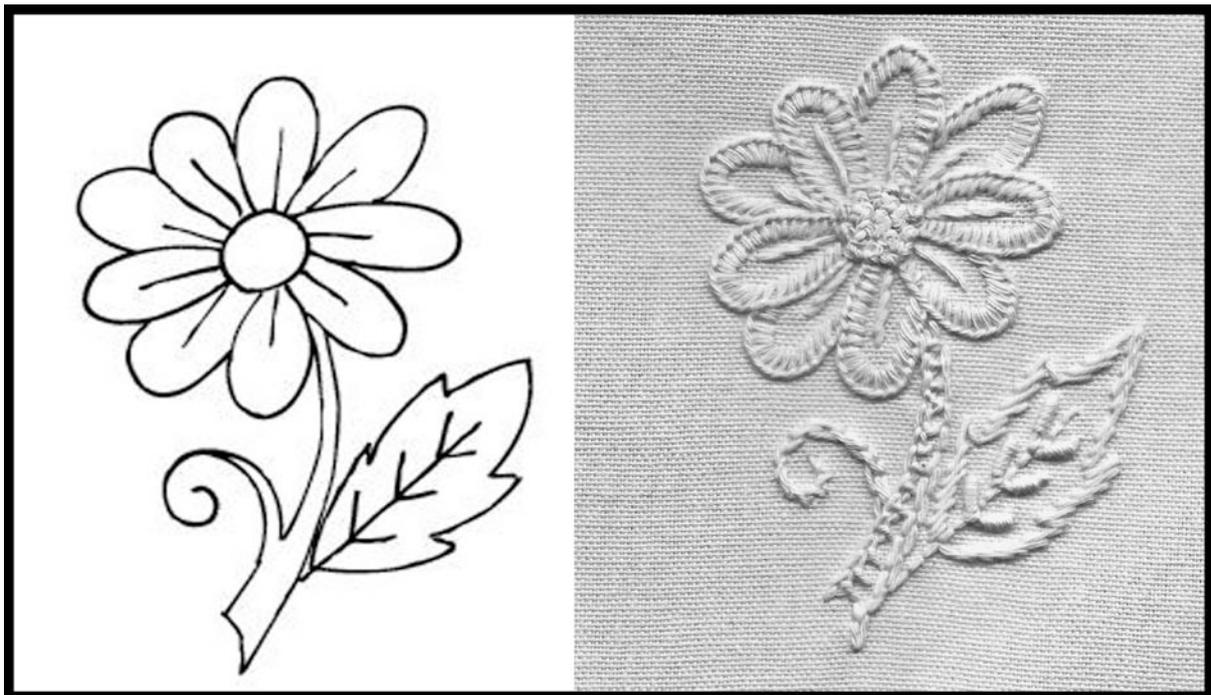
Threads: See above.

If mountmellick threads are not available use 4 strands of DMC stranded cotton to represent the thickest threads.

Method:

1. Trace the design lightly, using either an HB pencil or a water soluble pen. Test pen on a spare piece of fabric before drawing main design.

(See www.blackworkjourney.co.uk “Techniques” Part 8 and 9 for further transfer details.)



Many traditional embroidery stitches are used in Mountmellick embroidery. The simple flower pattern is an opportunity to try out the different stitches before embarking on a larger project.

Stem	Mountmellick, Stem, cable or chain stitches No 3 thread or 3 strands
Leaf outline	Stem stitch or back stitch whipped 2 strands whipped with 2 strands

Leaf veins	Main vein back stitch whipped, finer veins bullion knots No. 2
Flower petals	Buttonhole stitch outlines or satin stitch, unpadded. No.3 or 3 strands
Flower centre	French or colonial knots No 4 or 4 strands

2. Follow the guidelines in the table above to select the stitches and look at the diagrams below to see how the stitches are worked. If you want to change the weight of the pattern add an extra strand to the stranded cotton. Experience will determine which weight of thread you enjoy working with most.

Mountmellick stitch is a textured stitch frequently used in this type of embroidery. Follow the diagram carefully if you wish to include it in your flower design.



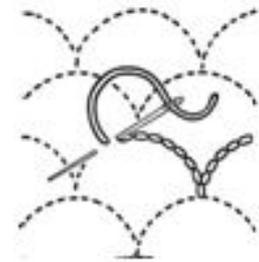
Stem Stitch



Cable stitch



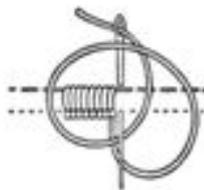
Chain stitch



Back & back whipped



Bullion knot



Buttonhole stitch



Satin stitch



French knots



Mountmellick stitch

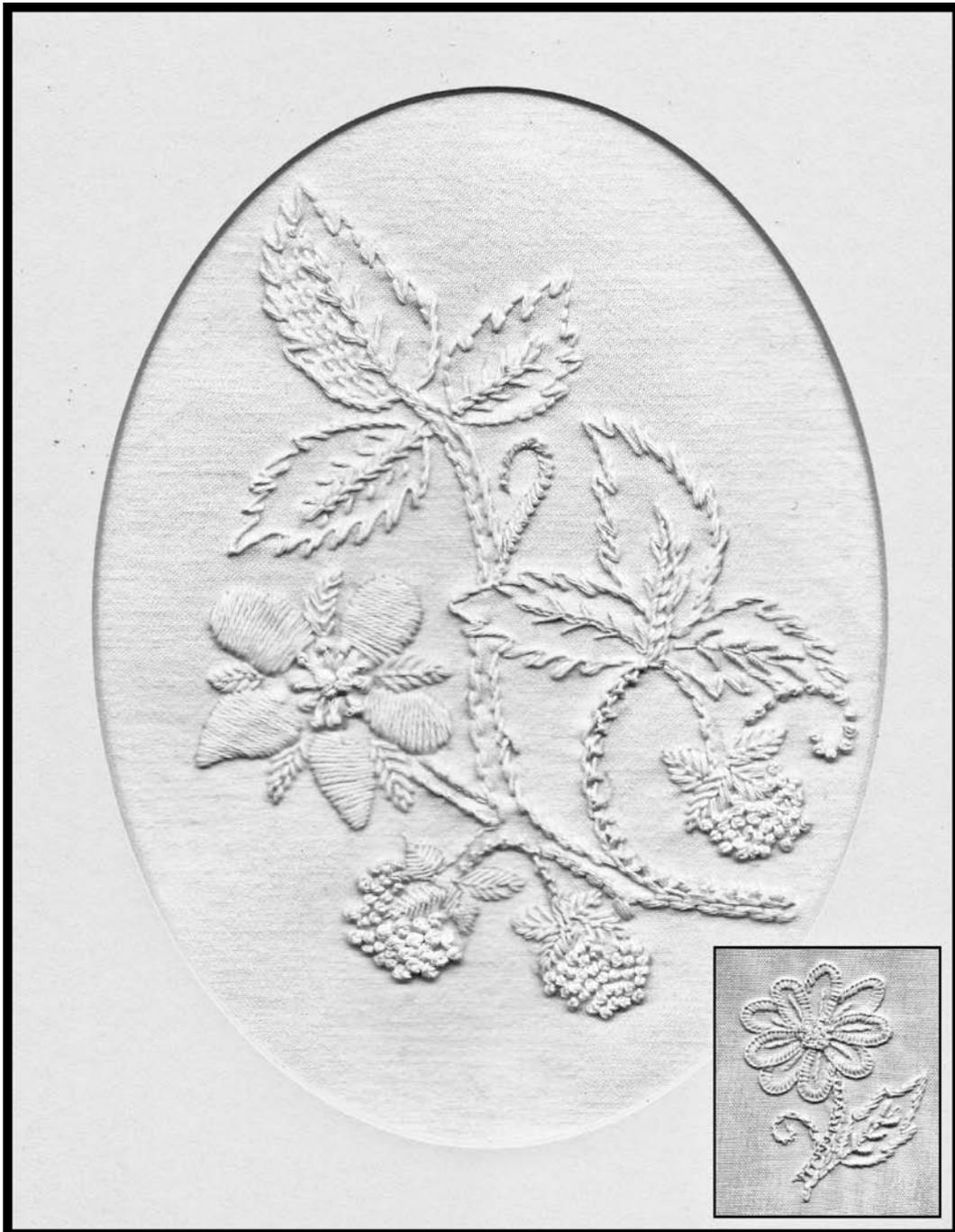
Follow the picture to help place the stitches in the correct position.

Remember to use thicker threads to create a heavier texture or,

Stitch the stitches more closely together but do not over pack the stitches. They should lie comfortably on the surface of the fabric!

Stitches used in Mountmellick Flower

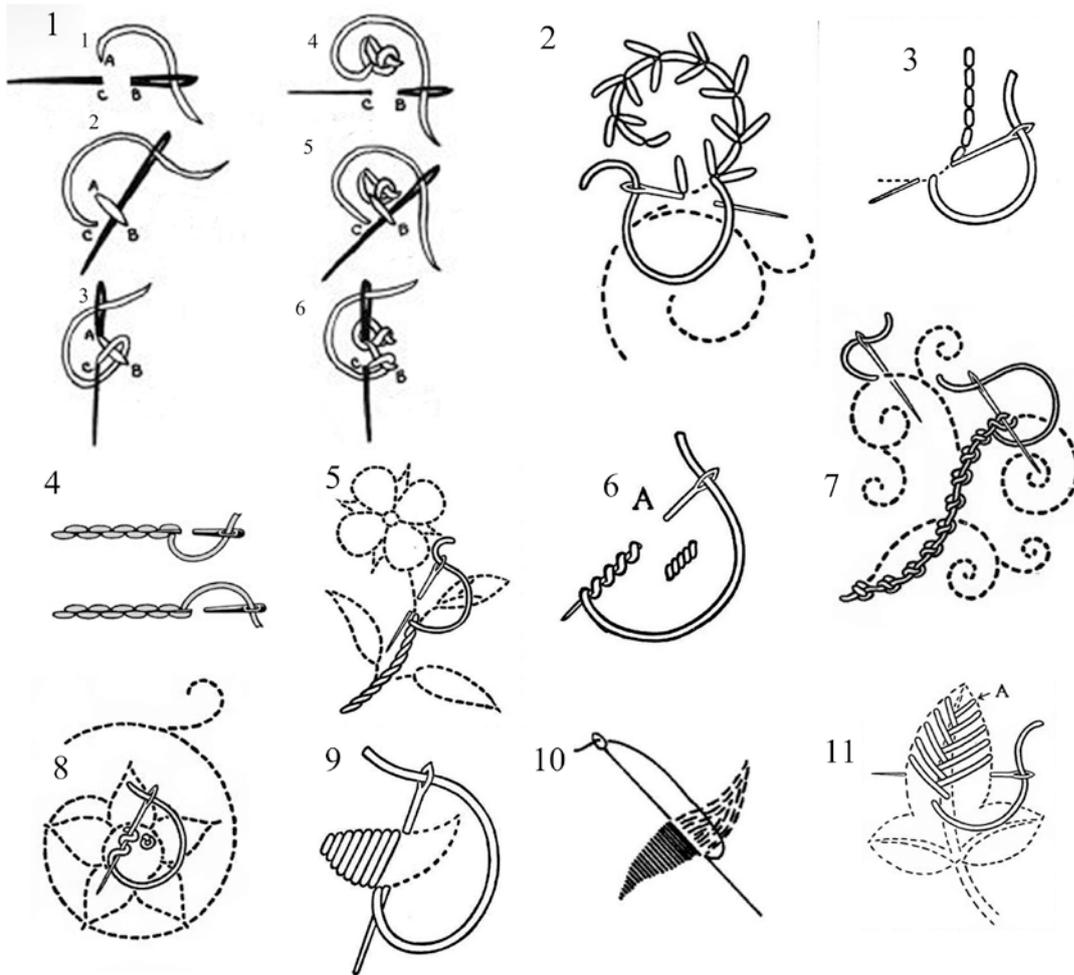
3. Work the embroidery from the centre outwards commencing with the French knots.
4. Once you have embroidered the design. Dip the fabric in cold water to remove the blue water soluble pen.
5. Place the embroidery face down on a soft towel and press lightly. Spray starch if necessary.



PR0013 'Brambles'
Mountmellick Design by Liz Almond Blackwork Journey

Stitches used in 'Brambles' design

1. Mountmellick	2. Fern stitch
3. Back stitch	4. Cable stitch
5. Stem stitch	6. Bullion knots
7. Double knot stitch	8. French knots
9. Satin stitch	10. Padded satin stitch
11. Fishbone stitch	



Stitches used in 'Brambles' design

Mountmellick work is usually finished off with a heavy buttonhole border or knitted fringe.

This is a simple guide to help you explore this traditional style of embroidery. Be creative and place the stitches where you think they will be most effective.

If you have any queries please contact: lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching! *Liz*