



Blackwork Journey Blog

March 2016

New Charts and Challenges!

Talented readers

Using a Lucet



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The last few months in the United Kingdom have been stormy and miserable with high winds and torrential rain, so the thought of Spring this year is especially welcome. We don't normally go abroad until later in the year, but this year the idea of sunshine in February was very appealing so we headed for the island of Madeira, off the coast of Portugal. It proved to be a very interesting week, not just because we saw a pod of whales off the coast, but it is the home of Madeira whitework embroidery.

As usual, I did my homework before I went to find out where I could see this traditional embroidery and to see if I could buy material and threads and possibly buy some patterns. My research beforehand meant that I was able to spend a day looking at the history, talking to some embroiderers in their factory and looking through some old patterns. I also found some old patterns for sale on a market stall and some very fine cotton and a wide range of threads.

All this information can be found in the 'Inspirations' section of Blackwork Journey in April when I hope you will enjoy sharing my experience.

'Pandora's Box'

The next instalment and future development.

Photographs of work in progress are being added daily to the Facebook group and at the end of each month I get various comments posted about waiting impatiently for the next month's section, but I have never before had a poem written on the subject!

'Pandora's Box'

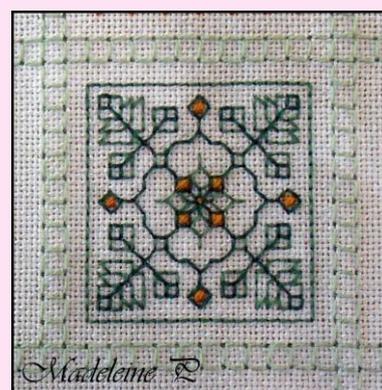
*So, here I am a-waiting
For February to arrive
When once again Pandora's Box
Will surely come alive!*

*I'll ponder and I'll think about
The way to do Block 4
Studying very carefully so
Mistakes I make no more!*

*So here I am a-sitting
With still 6 days to wait
Til February is upon us
It's the waiting that I hate!*

*Once the needle's in my hand
With thread and scissors too
I'm off at a run to do it all
And so I expect are you!*

by Rachel



Extract from Madeleine's project



Jacquie's Owls

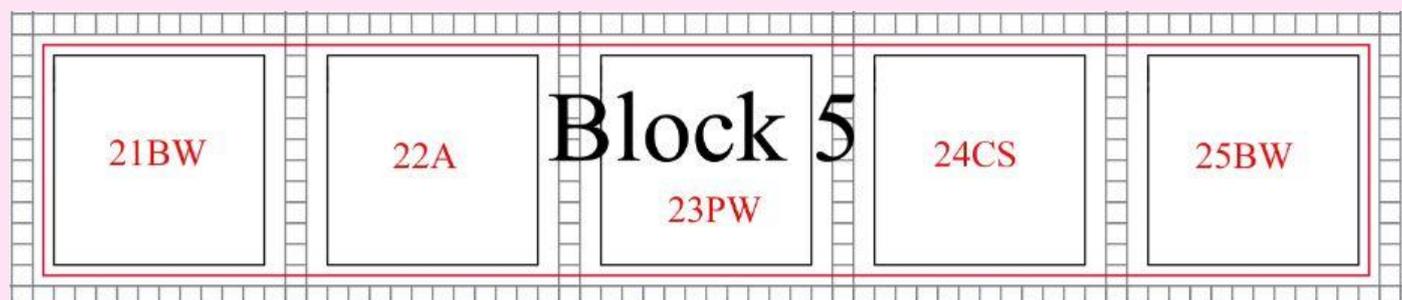
Jacquie is working Pandora's Box on both Aida and evenweave. The technique on the left is Assisi work where the background is filled in and the evenweave owls are worked in cross stitch and back stitch. Not every pattern in Pandora's Box can be worked on both fabrics, but in many cases pulled thread patterns can be treated as embroidery stitches and work well when they are not 'pulled'.

Where can 'Pandora's Box' lead me?

Learning new stitches and expanding your stitch portfolio can be very daunting at first, but by following the instructions carefully and looking at the illustrations provided, it is easy to work the ten different pulled thread work patterns included in the design.

Along with pattern darning and Assisi work the project consists of 41 different pattern areas plus the four-sided stitch border, but to expand the project further a number of small additional projects will also be included with Block 5 onwards to show how the patterns can be taken out of the project and used in different ways. The mini projects will work alongside the main blocks and will involve all five different techniques. I look forward to seeing how many different ways my talented readers will use to develop these extra designs!

Block 5



Block 5 Instructions Evenweave Patterns 21 - 25

Set within a border of four-sided stitch worked in two strands of DMC318 Pale grey.

Locate Block 5 Patterns 21 - 25 on the Master Chart.

Note: The patterns follow diagonally across the chart so some blocks will have more than one block of the same technique. (See Master chart) The two charts are NOT identical. It is not possible to work pulled

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thread stitches on Aida so alternative patterns have been included. The fabric and stitch variations have led to several patterns being placed in different parts of the chart, please follow the chart you have selected for the chosen fabric.

Design Size: 2 x 9.57 inches, 28 x 134 stitches

Stitches Used:

Back stitch, one strand

Cross stitch, two strands

Detached Eyelet, Cotton P rle or two strands of floss

Anchor 1325 Iris - variegated, three skeins

Anchor 1325 - is represented by DMC-333 Lavender on the chart.

DMC Cotton P rle No.12, white, one ball

DMC Cotton P rle No.12 - is represented by DMC-666 Christmas red on the chart.

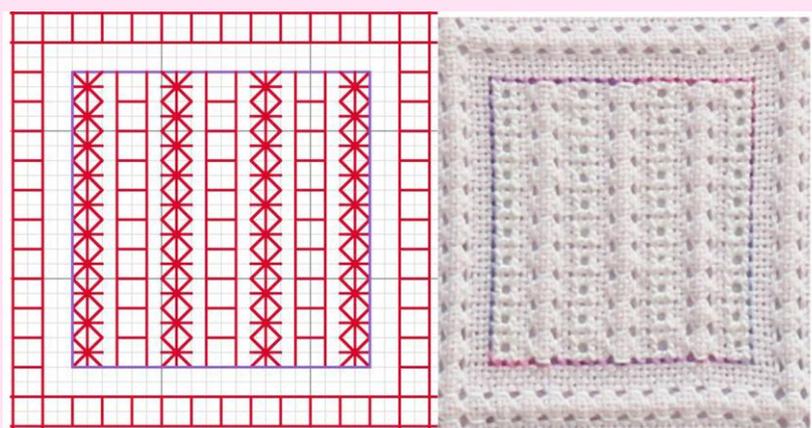
Do not add the beads until after the embroidery has been completed.



Block 5 Evenweave

Pattern 23 is a pulled thread design consisting of rows of eyelet stitch and four-sided stitch.

The two stitches complement each other, one is very dense and one is light and open.



Count four threads in from the edge and work the eyelet pattern from the top left hand corner downwards leaving one thread between each row. Work the row of four-sided stitch. Continue until the square is filled

Pull **medium tight** to create the holes. This is a very attractive heavy filling stitch suitable for covering small areas.



Block 5 Aida

Block 5 Instructions Aida Patterns 21 – 25

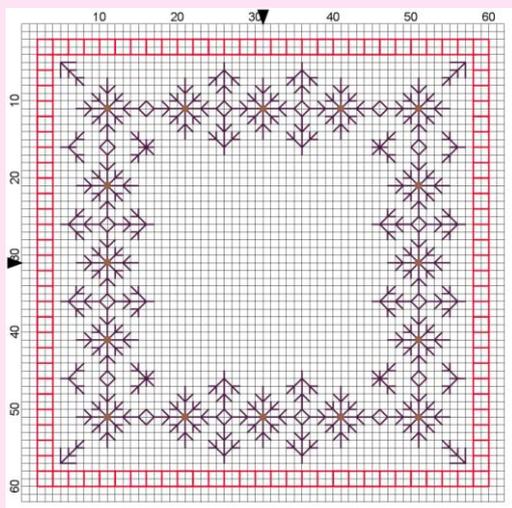
As you can see, by comparing the pictures for the evenweave and Aida versions most of the stitches are similar. Pattern 23 eyelet and four-sided stitch is worked as an embroidery stitch and the stitches are not 'pulled' as they would be on evenweave. They are just as attractive, but not as open!

Pandora's Box Mini Project 1

Owls are always a favourite subject of mine so I decided to make the owl motif the subject of my first mini project. The chart is attached to Block 5 and can be worked on either evenweave or Aida. Choose your own colours or follow the chart.

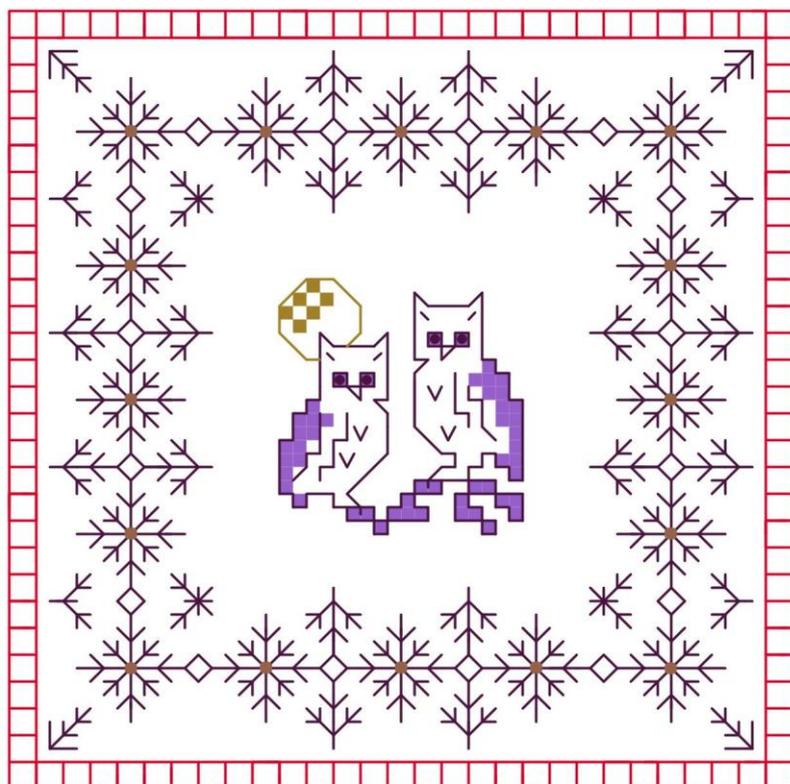
An alternative idea is to use the frame and add some initials to make a special personalised gift. An alphabet has been included. Find the centre point of the chart and position the letters carefully in the centre. The letters can be staggered to add interest. Work the cross stitch letters in two strands of floss. The letters can also be outlined with back stitch to neaten the edges of the letters using a contrasting thread.

There are two alternative alphabets available in 'Freebies' to broaden your choice of letters.



The frame can be used for a variety of projects!

I hope you enjoy these additions to the project and I look forward to seeing your pictures!



Assisi work from Block 5



14 count Aida

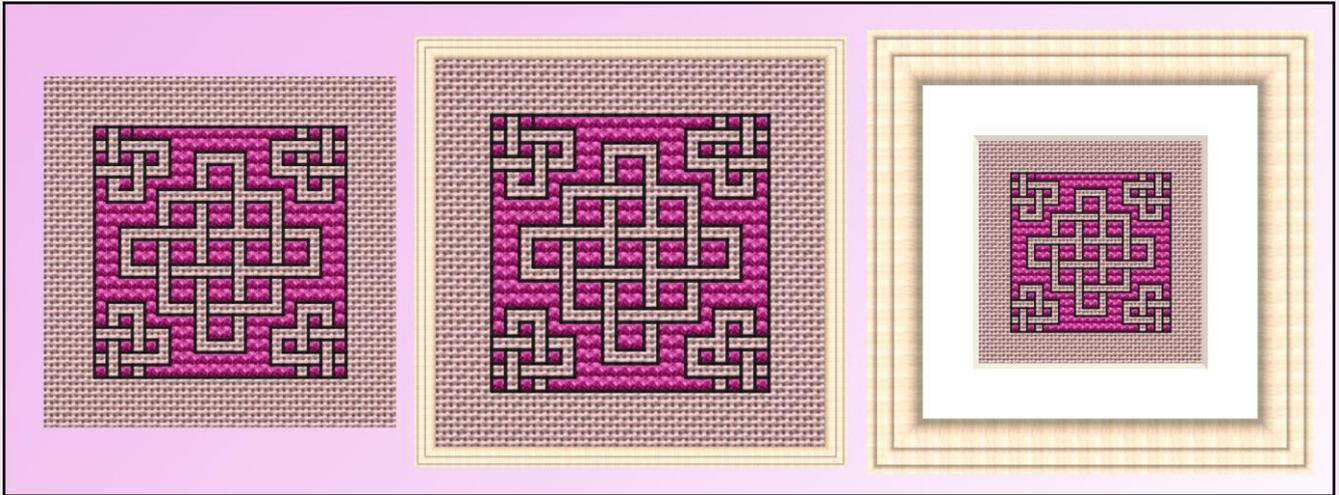


28 count evenweave

To mount or not to mount?

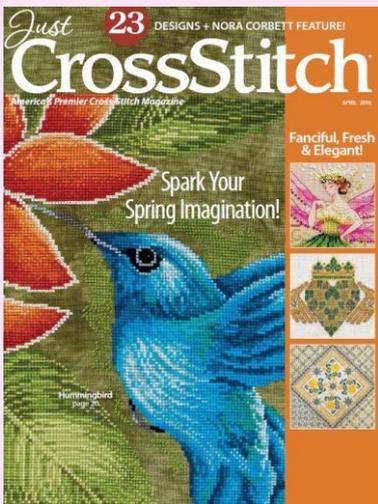
A design does not have to be large to make an impact, but how the embroidery is mounted is important. Adding a card mount emphasises the embroidery and if the embroidery is textured think about using a double mount.

From the three examples below, decide whether the embroidery would be enhanced by an appropriate mount. The mount and the frame should compliment and not dominate the embroidery



A suitable mount can emphasise the embroidery!

Latest publication ‘Just Cross Stitch’ April 2016



Finding a suitable name for a chart that reflects the style of embroidery can be difficult.

Shamina is a delightful Turkish lady whose name was just right for this design.



Shamina

Traditional blackwork gets a sunny makeover. Five shades of cotton floss and a sparkly metallic brighten this project that features a center of roses surrounded by four corners of intricate blackwork patterns.

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Following my visit to Japan in November I have been working hard to create some new designs which reflect their traditional techniques. Sashiko and Kogin embroidery really appealed to me with simple stitches and bold designs evident in all the work I saw and I wanted to bring the techniques into Blackwork Journey using fabrics and threads that was easy to access.

Last month I posted a diamond design with a more complex design to follow in March. As a result, I created CH0340 Sumiko. This was a challenge because although it is worked in running stitch in different lengths, it does require very careful counting.



The embroidery is worked in rows across the fabric. It is essential that the foundation row is correct because the design worked up from the base row. I worked the diamond motif and filler first and then worked backwards and forwards across the fabric turning the piece at the end of every row.

As in blackwork, if an error is made it can be spotted very quickly and rectified, but designing it on the computer was a serious challenge to my eyesight! The embroidery was worked on white Zweigart 28 count evenweave using two strands of floss. Blue evenweave could be used with white thread to replicate the traditional Japanese colours. If the embroidery is worked on 14 count Aida I would use three strands of floss because of the texture of the fabric.

CH0340 Sumiko

Sumiko was our guide whilst in Japan. Her knowledge of the traditions and customs was very helpful in a country where English is not a common language.

Handy Hint:

Cut and match the pages and paste them together to view the whole design!



CH0341 Pattern Plus

Having completed CH0340 Sumiko I embarked on a more practical project, making a small bag in Kogin style embroidery.

The design is freestyle rather than formal and both the back and front of the bag are decorated. The fabric was one piece of black Aida blockweave 14 count and the thread used was white Cotton P rle No.12, but three strands of white floss could be used as an alternative.

I took this project to Madeira with me and sat on the beach, boat and hotel balcony sitting in the sunshine. Working on a dark colour in sunshine was much easier, but in the evening when I was stitching I put a piece of white material across my lap to show up the holes in the fabric. However, if eyesight is a problem consider using a paler fabric. The designs work just as well with blue, black or red on a white or cream background.

If you are using darker threads or hand dyed threads check that they are colourfast. I used a well known brand of thread and the red leached onto the white fabric. No firm will guarantee that the threads are colourfast and the onus is on you to check, as I learnt to my cost recently!



The drawstring bag was worked on 14 count Aida



Making Cords!

Finishing off embroidery and making it up is as important as stitching the embroidery itself. I frequently need cords or ribbons to create a hanging, a drawstring (see picture) or to finish off an edge.

Finding the right colour or the correct thickness can be both difficult and expensive so I want to tell you about one of the most useful tools in my needlework box, my lucet! This tool produces a square cord and can be used with any thread! Whilst getting the tension right takes practice, the cord is both decorative and strong.

A modern lucet is usually made of wood or plastic with two prongs at one end and a handle at the other. It may have a hole in the handle to pass the thread through. The tool dates back to Viking and medieval times when it was used for lacing clothing. I saw Japanese armour in a museum in Kyoto which had been laced with flat braids, chain metal and lucet cords!

Using a tool which has a well documented history makes it more interesting to use and links the modern embroiderer to the past.



Modern plastic lucet

*Early 19th century bone
lucet, circa 1800*

*The lucet measures 9cm x
3.5cm*

*A similar example can be
found in "Antique
Needwork Tools"
Nerylla Taunton*



Creating a lucet cord

Materials: Lucet and cord. Cotton P rle, crochet cotton or embroidery floss may be used.

Practise with a thick thread or wool. When you are comfortable with the technique any threads may be used.

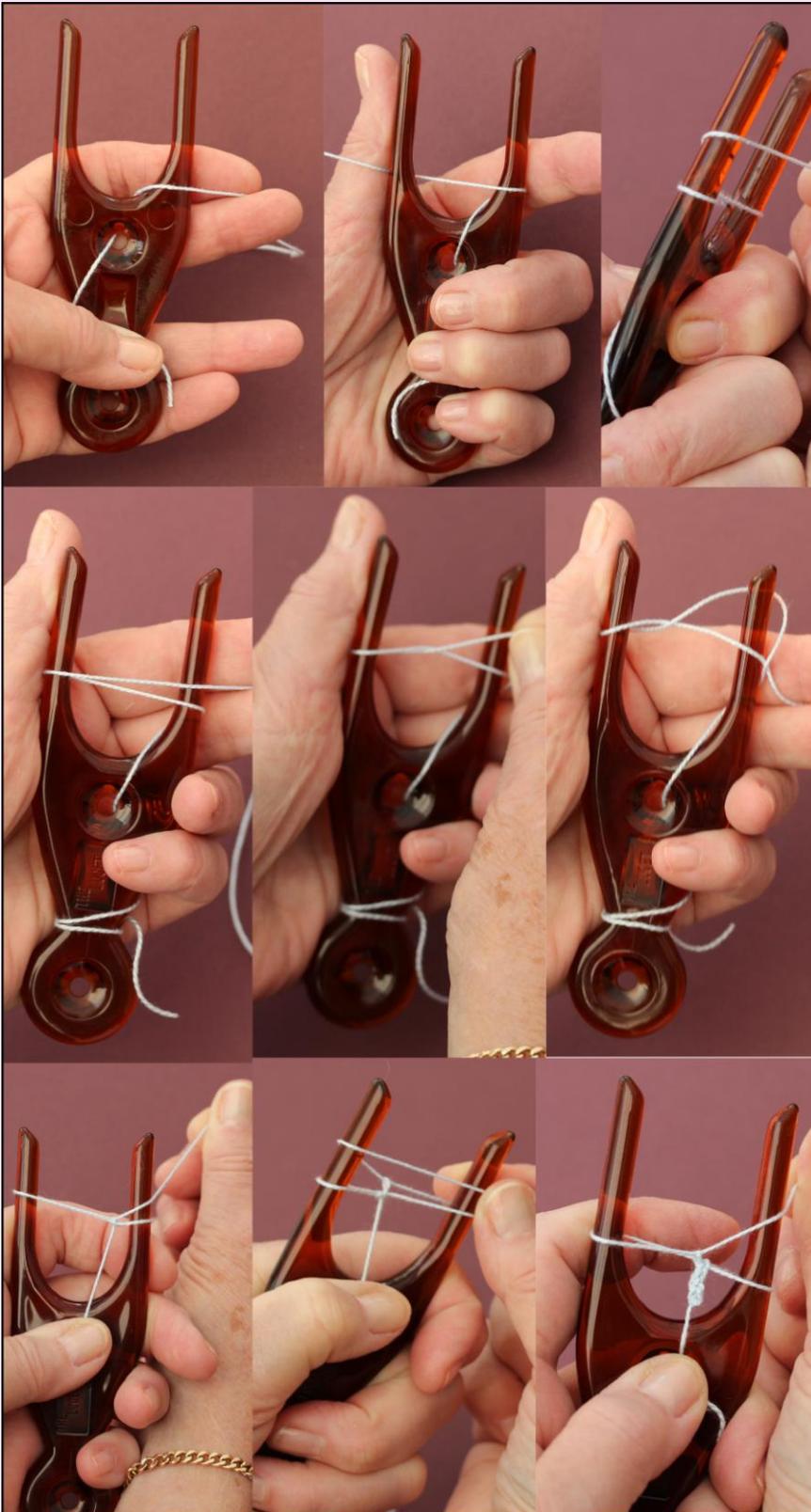
Hold the lucet in your left hand

1. Feed the end of the thread through the hole and wrap it round the handle, clockwise.
 2. Wind the thread across both prongs in a figure of eight.
 3. Lay the thread across the front of the prongs.
 4. Lift the lower loop over the upper thread on the right hand prong.
 5. Pull the thread taut and centre the stitches.
 6. Turn the lucet, laying the working thread across the front of the prongs; take the lower thread on the right hand prong over the top thread.
 7. Turn the lucet and repeat.
- Mark the front of the lucet with a coloured dot to remind you which way to turn it. Always turn the lucet in the same clockwise direction.
8. Once the first few stitches have been worked and the cord is forming, continue to take the thread over, turn and repeat until the cord is the required length.

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To finish, lift the loops off the prongs and pass the thread through the loops and pull the knot tight.

Note: The square shaped cord braid grows very quickly, but to create a neat braid always turn the lucet in the same direction.



It is much simpler to grasp a new technique by watching how it is being worked.

There is an excellent video if you want to learn how to use a lucet and work along with her.

You Tube Instructional Video on ‘How to Make a Lucet Braid’ B MacSwain
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3y5K7FiT2Og>

Pass the thread through the hole.

*Wrap round in a figure of eight.
Turn clockwise.*

*Two threads on the front forks
Take the lower thread over the top
thread, tighten.*

Turn clockwise. Centre the knot.

*Take the lower thread over the top
thread, turn*

Repeat turn, over, turn.

*Square braid grows by repeating the
actions of turning and taking the
thread over.*

*Keep the tension firm so that the braid
is even.*

*Wrap the cord round the handle to
keep it out of the way as you work.*

The Lucet Company

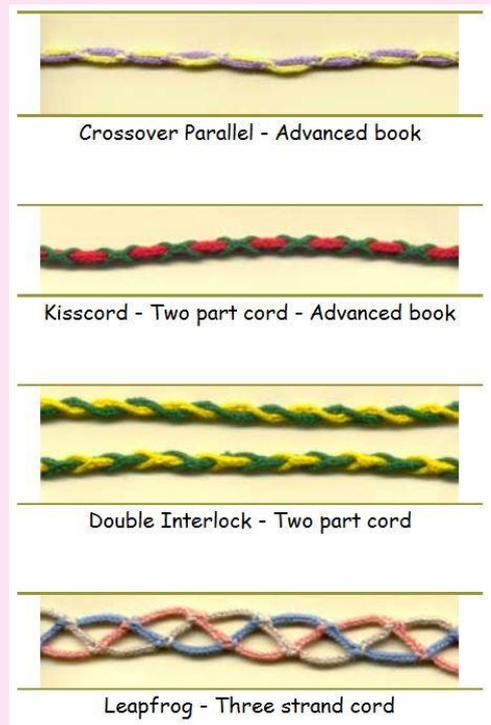
Ziggy from The Lucet Company is a master Luceteer who lives in the UK and demonstrates his art at the national shows as well as having an excellent website and online shop for supplies.

I met Ziggy again in February and took some photographs of his work. He is passionate about the braids he creates and has inspired many people over the years, including myself!



Like many craftsmen, he came upon this art by chance when he met two members of a medieval society who taught him to lucet. He has modified the traditional lucet design and produces his own, both wood and plastic with the addition of a bobbin which hold a whole skein of perle cotton and stops the thread slipping off the prongs!

Many different braid variations are possible, more than one colour can be used, beads can be added and frogging created.



The variations that can be created are endless and he makes lucets for children as well two instructional DVDs.

<http://www.thelucet.co.uk/index.htm>

Talented Readers



I love to see the pictures that readers send in to the Facebook groups and to Blackwork Journey.

Congratulations to Christine who won second prize in the Royal Melbourne Show 2015 for her 'Box of Delights' cushion. She is a prolific needlewoman and it is a joy to see her work.



Lots of young people enjoy needlework if they are shown what to do. Molly is practising with her lucet.

I feel very strongly that we need to pass our skills on to future generations or the art of needlework will die out!



*Christine Burton - Talented Reader
Royal Melbourne Show Second Prize*

FR0026 Satisfaction

Carole's saying makes a perfect gift!

Madeleine's bookmark adapted from Pandora's Box makes a special gift





Another very talented reader who often works in miniature is Jacqueline from France. She has sent me two photographs of her versions of Pandora's Box. The second one is beaded. She has used the following materials and this is her description:

Fabric: white cambric; 55 counts for 1 inch, or 22 threads for 1 centimetre.

Pulled threads: white Egyptian cotton for laces, n° 100

Threads: "Fine silk" "HOUSE of EMBROIDERY" South Africa.

These are gorgeous silks, variegated, shining, colourfast, and soft, with beautiful hand-dyed colours

Miniature embroidery based on 'Pandora's Box' on white cambric by Jacqueline

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog. Thank you to Ziggy for his contribution and to all my readers who have sent in their contributions. They are really appreciated.

Happy stitching!

Liz

Miniature beaded embroidery on evenweave by Jacqueline

