

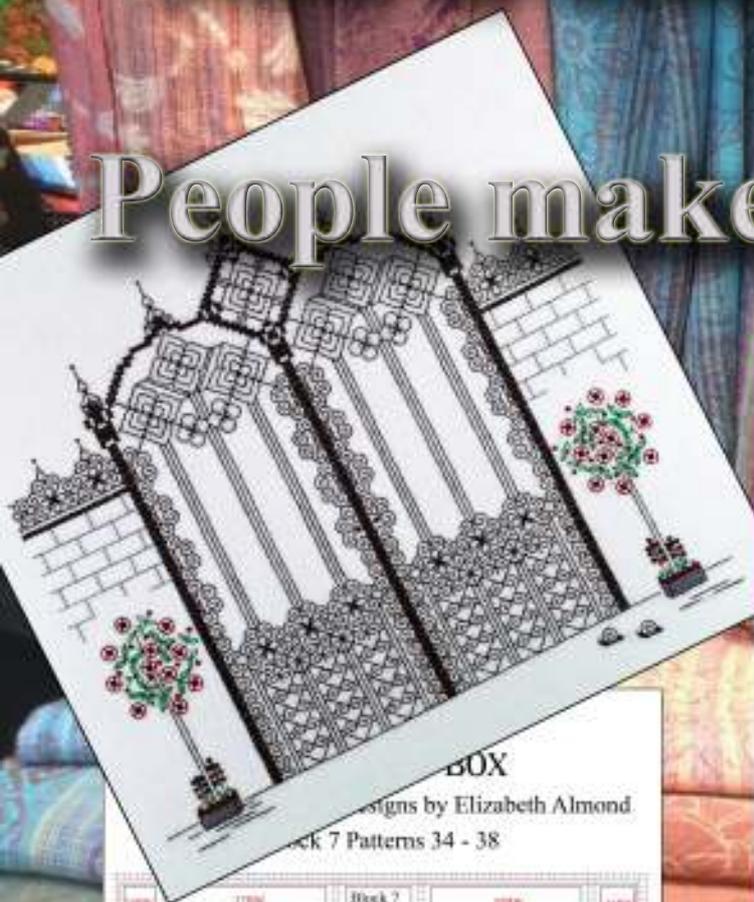


Blackwork Journey Blog

May 2016

Cotton Scarf

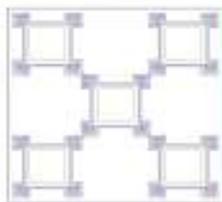
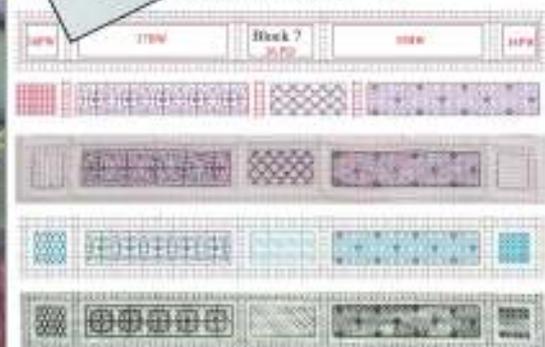
New E-Book, Chart & Designs People make a difference!



Blackwork Journey
'Sew Simple' -
Sashiko & Kogin
E-Book 5



BOX
Designs by Elizabeth Almond
Book 7 Patterns 34 - 38



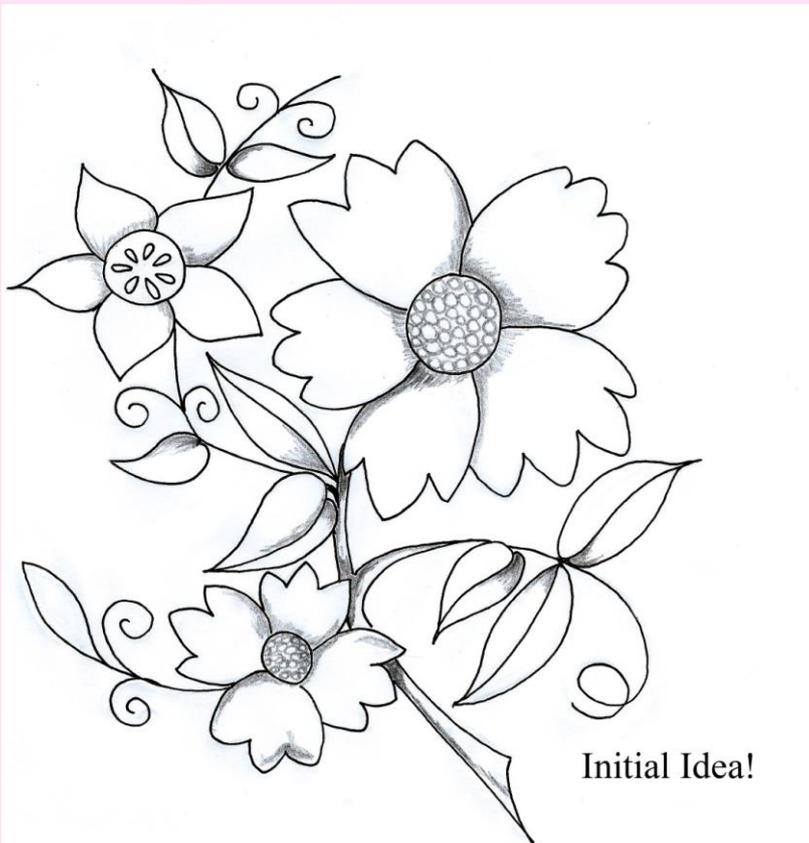
Create a sampler!



May is always a special month for me, the worst of the winter is just a memory, the days are longer and the garden is recovering from months of rain. The birds are nesting and the flowers are blooming. I sit in my studio and look across the garden and wait for inspiration to strike. When I first started designing in 2008, I thought ideas would peter out, but 400 designs later I am pleased to say that I have more ideas than time to chart and stitch them.

From designer to client!

When we buy a chart or kit, we seldom think about the processes that went behind its development or the designer who created it, but now I do the designing I am very aware of what lies behind the kit that is purchased from the shop or the internet and just how many hours are spent in their preparation.



So, how does it work for me?

I start with an initial thought, usually in the middle of the night. Sometimes I write it down as I think of it, but more often than not I head for the computer and jot the initial thoughts down. If I don't do that, the germ of an idea will have disappeared by the morning.

I then file the idea in a folder 'Future charts' and leave it for a while until I have thought it through, usually whilst doing the washing up or peeling the potatoes!

Passion flower – initial thoughts, two designs one square and compact the other long and narrow. The same stitches to be used in each design where possible, but which techniques will be used?

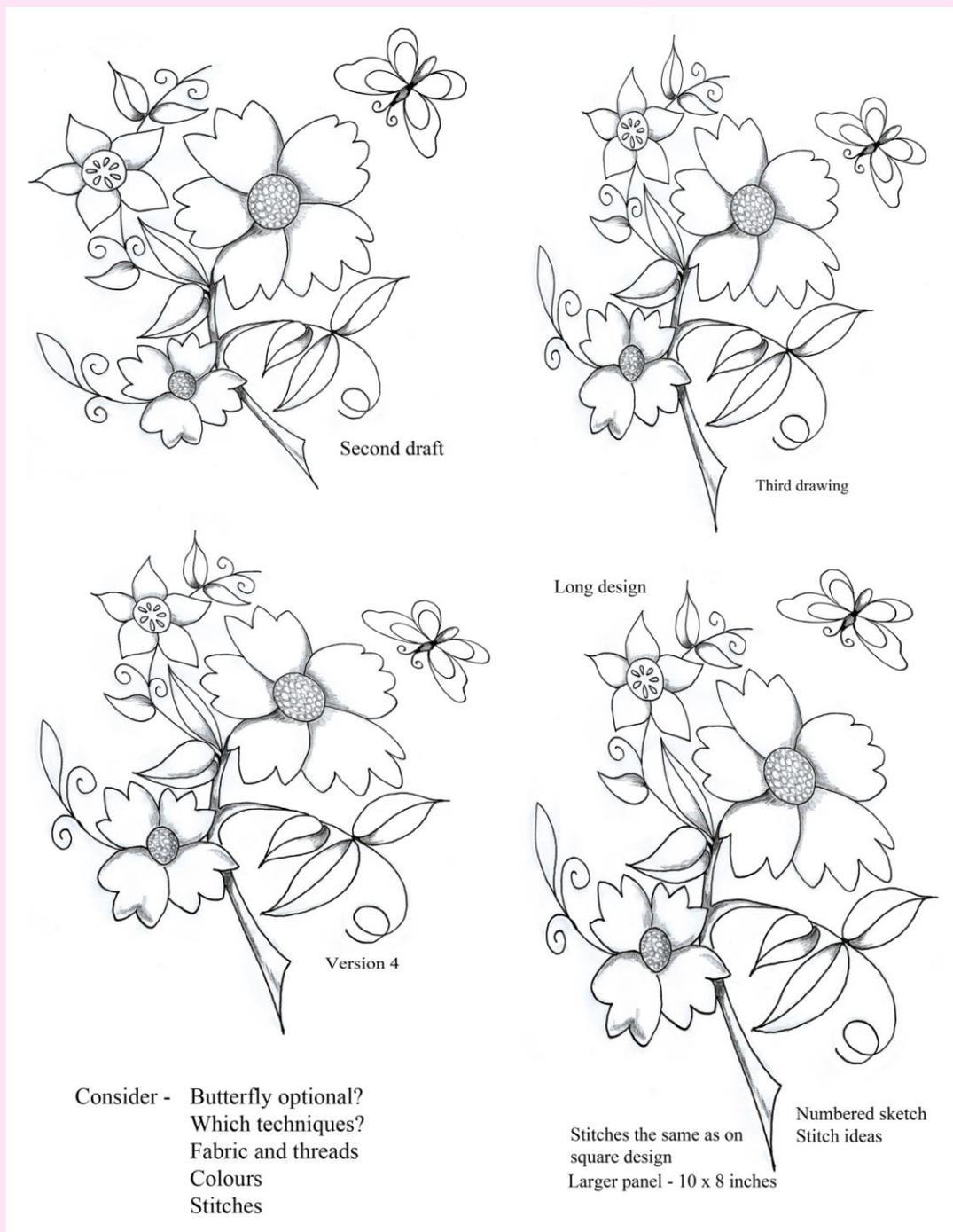
I then make an initial draft or drawing of the design, depending on whether it is a charted or free style design. I consider the fabric and threads I might use and lay them out in the studio and leave them for a while just to see if they still appeal to me a few days later. Once I am happy with the final sketch, it will be taken into 'Adobe Illustrator' using live trace and turned into a vector drawing to create clean lines for printing.

I then decide on the techniques I want to use and think about the stitches and patterns I want to work with and add them to the subsequent drafts. If there are new stitches or patterns, I try them out on the 'doodle cloth' using the thread I think I will be using. This gives me a chance to see what it looks like, make changes and iron out any difficulties before I chart the finished design for 'Blackwork Journey.'

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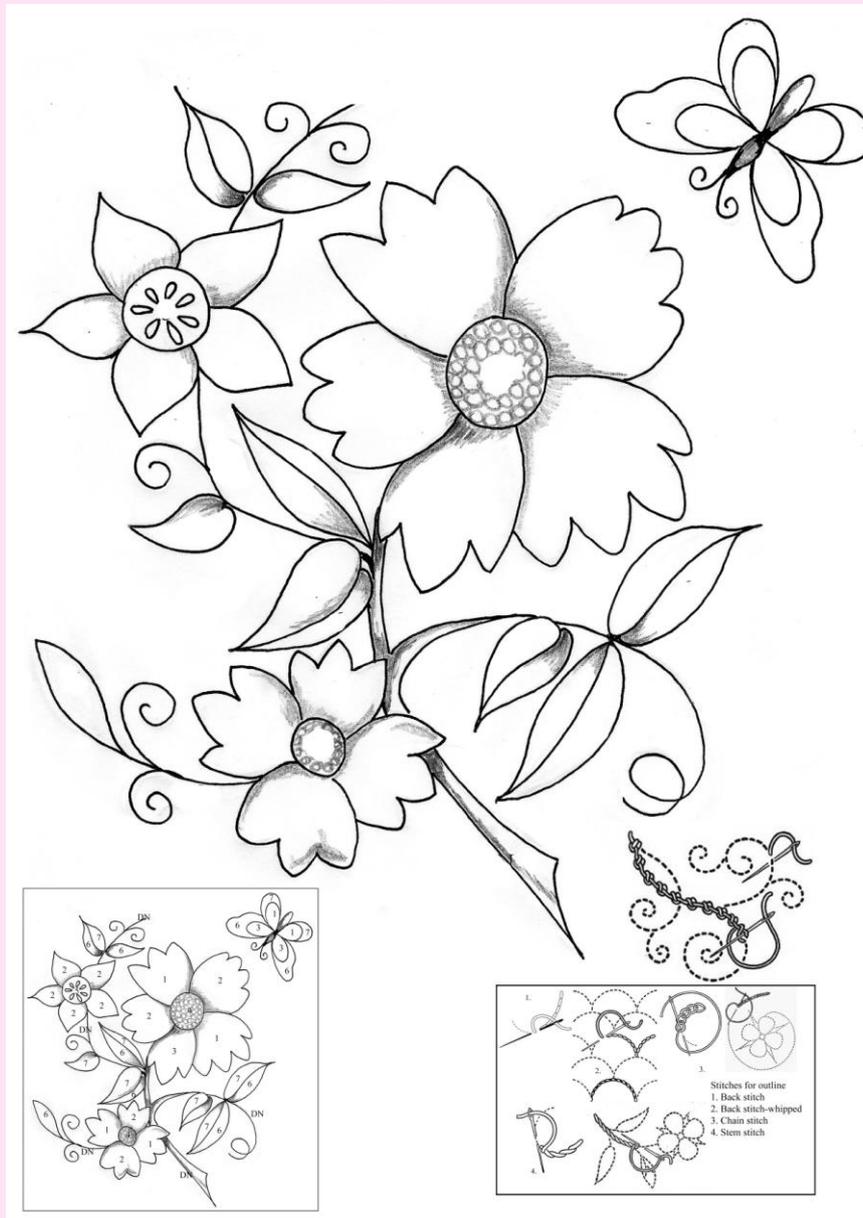
This process can take anything from a week to a month. 'Save the Stitches' was six months in preparation before I put a needle into the fabric. The design will be charted many times with numerous alterations until I am satisfied with the outcome. At every stage, I question whether I am achieving the effect I want and consider;

- Is the chart clear and the print large enough to see easily?
- What level of expertise will be required to complete it?
- Are the instructions clear and easy to understand?
- Do I need specialist stitch diagrams?



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- Are the thread colours appropriate to the design?
- Are the threads widely available and can alternatives be recommended?
- What fabrics will be most suitable for the design? Can it be worked on evenweave or Aida and if so, what fabric counts?



The changes may be subtle but they affect the overall appearance of the design

Only when I am satisfied that I have answered all my own questions will I print the design and stitch the sample. Whilst working the design, I check that the chart is correct and make alterations to the pattern as necessary. At this stage, thread colours and patterns can be altered. Photographs are taken of work in progress at different stages for reference to add to the chart.

The pattern is checked again and rechecked. A second pair of eyes is always helpful because a design may contain thousands of stitches and mistakes are made, however careful. There is a saying in the Middle East

‘Only Allah is perfect’ which I think is appropriate here! The completed pattern is then put to one side and left for a few days before rechecking and printing.

If the design is being kitted, fabric and threads are cut, beads counted, instructions printed and then packaged and costed. This can take many hours to do and the contents of each kit are checked carefully against a list to ensure that they are correct.

If the chart is to be added to the ‘Blackwork Journey’ website or sent to a magazine, photographs of the finished embroidery are also taken. A whitework design is especially difficult to photograph. The finished design is then posted to the magazine along with the embroidery and full instructions or posted on the website for you to enjoy!

A New e-Book - EB0005‘Sew Simple’ – A modern interpretation of Sashiko and Kogin Pattern Darning

‘Sew Simple’ was inspired by Sashiko and Kogin embroideries I saw whilst visiting Japan and is intended to encourage you to explore this aspect of counted thread embroidery and place your own interpretation on these imaginative techniques. There are two Sashiko and seven Kogin projects included in the book with charts and full instructions.



Sashiko style tissue holder
Sashiko style clutch bag
Pictures 1 and 2

Needlework Accessories:
Work Bag
Project Folder
Hussif
Pin cushion
Thread cutter case

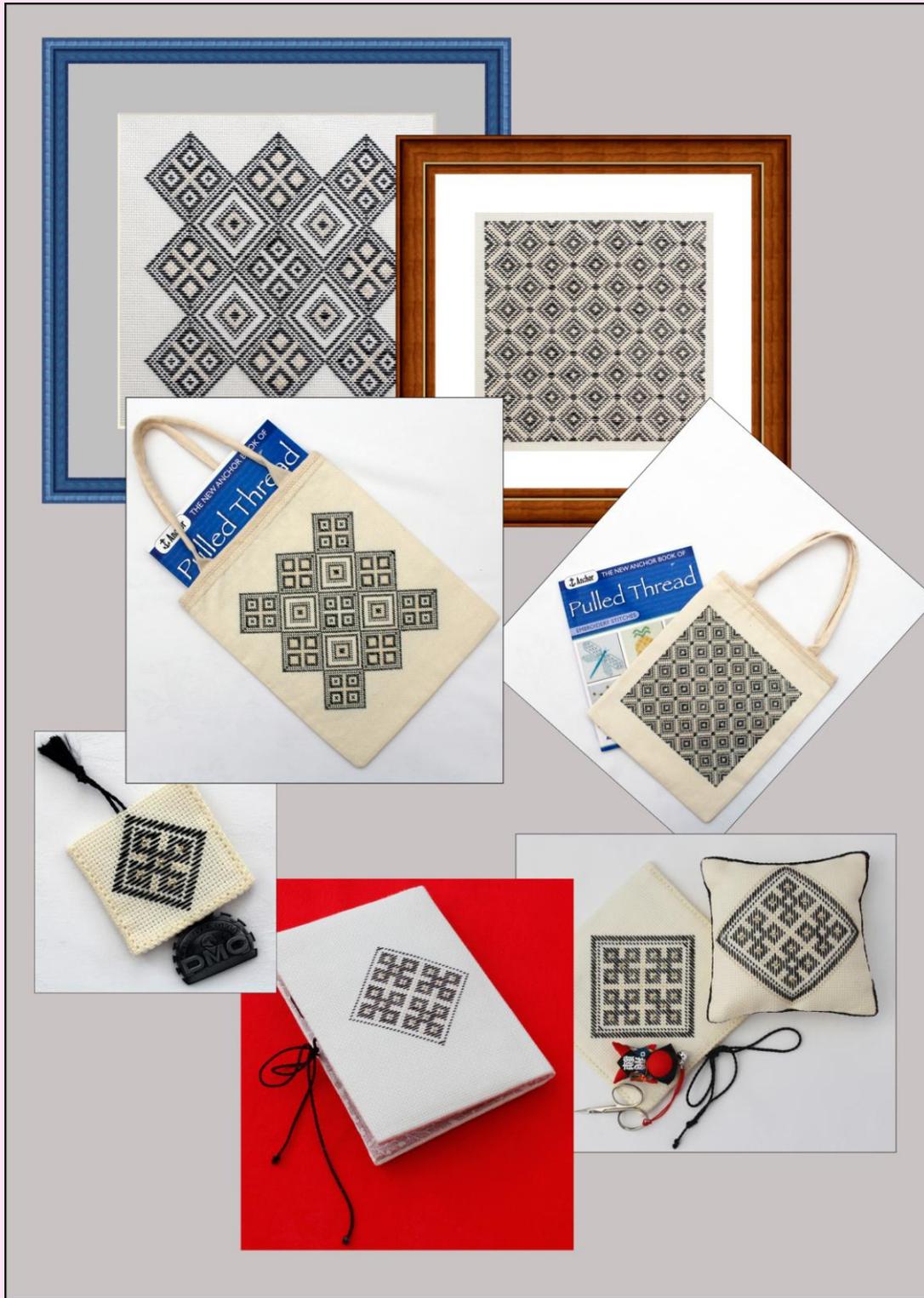


Thread cutter

The needlework accessories have been worked on 14 count Aida. The two pictures have been worked on 28 count evenweave. Either fabric can be used for all the projects.

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One of the attractions of this type of embroidery for me is that its roots are in the countryside of rural Japan where money and resources were scarce and people stitched of necessity, but in doing so, produced work of great beauty and joy!



EB0005 'Sew Simple' Sashiko and Kogin projects

Pandora's Box Block 7

This project is drawing to a close, but it has been such fun to create and to see the wonderful variations that readers have created. They truly have made the design their own and put their own personality on it. The members of the Facebook group set up for the project have had the chance to expand their knowledge and learn new pulled thread work stitches and create additional patterns.

New readers are joining all the projects every day, but there is still time to become involved. The patterns remain in the 'Freebies' site with no pressure involved, just the opportunity to explore and develop new skills and have fun at the same time.

The link to the Facebook group is:

Pandora's Box – Elizabeth Almond Designs

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

Block 7 Evenweave Patterns 34 - 38

Set within a border of Four-sided stitch

Locate Block 7 Patterns 34 - 38 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)



Pulled thread work and pattern darning feature in this block and make a contrast from the blackwork. Pattern darning has to be counted carefully especially when working on evenweave fabric.

This month, I have included a Celtic frame so that you can use the patterns from 'Pandora's Box' to create your own sampler.

Select five patterns from 'Pandora's Box' and place the five patterns in the Celtic frame or work one frame and pattern for a card design.

Large sampler:

Design Area: 6.43 x 6.43 inches

90 x 90 stitches

Material: Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida 11 x 11 inches

Threads:

DMC Cotton P rle No 12, one ball or DMC stranded cotton, one skein

Single Motif:

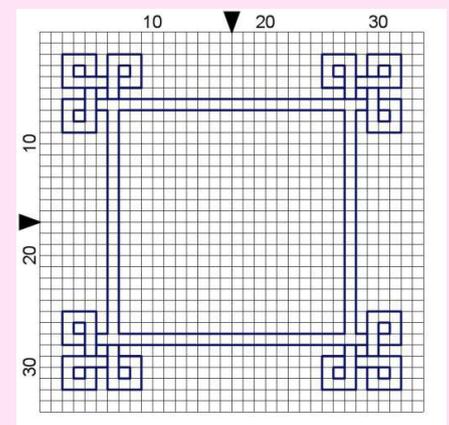
Design Area: 2.14 x 2.14 inches

30 x 30 stitches

Material: 6 x 6 inches

Frame:

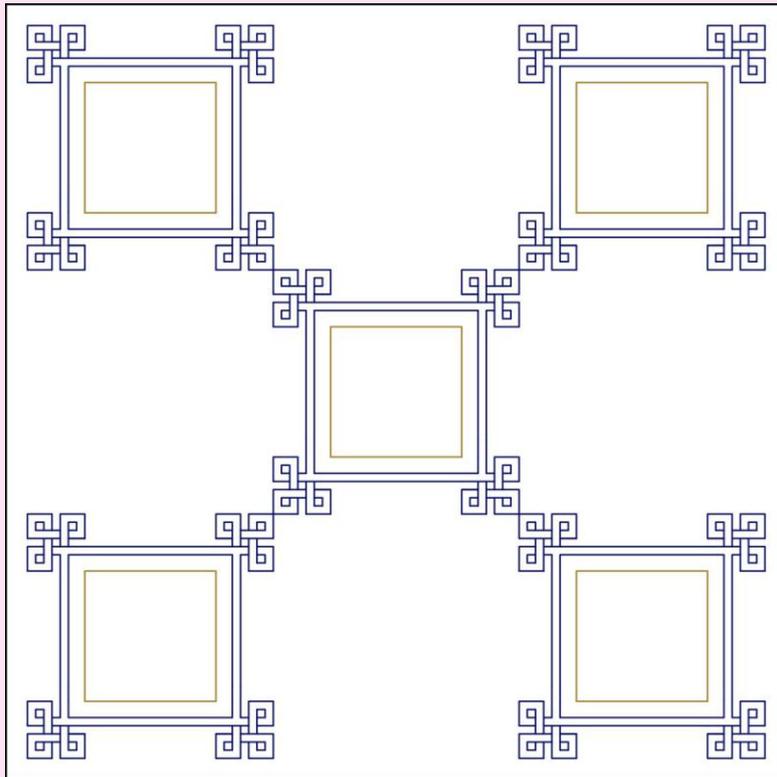
One strand of Cotton P rle No 12 or two strands of DMC stranded floss



Single motif

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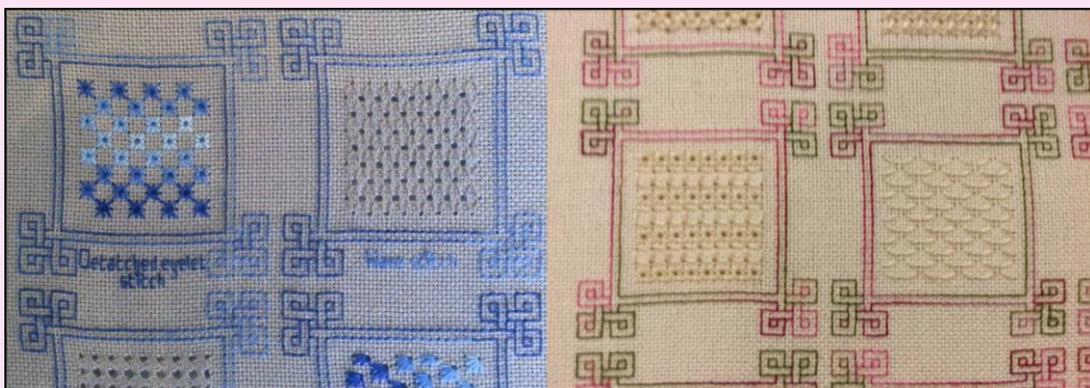
Filler patterns – one strand of floss for blackwork or pattern darning, two strands or, Cotton P rle No 12 for pulled thread work.



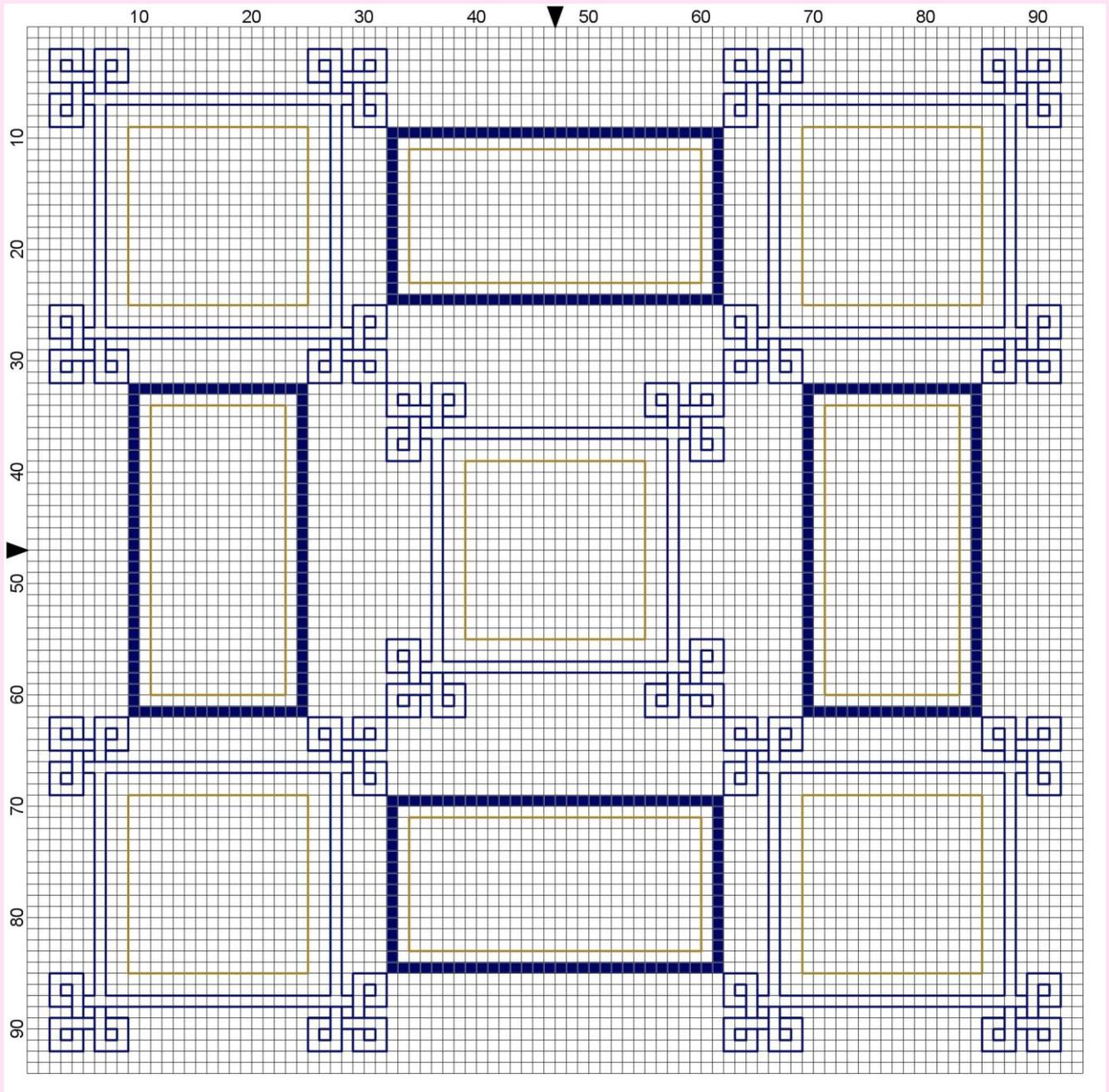
Five motif block – Chart in Block 7 'Freebies'

The motifs can be worked in many different ways to create a pulled thread sampler, a blackwork sampler, an Assisi or cross stitch sampler, or a pattern darning variation. The patterns from both the Aida and the evenweave versions of the project can be used and even patterns from previous charts such as 'Box of Delights' and 'Save the Stitches'.

Keep an open mind about patterns and techniques. They can often be combined to create new projects. For example, a second variation has also been included with four additional rectangles edged with cross stitch borders worked in two strands of floss. Inside the blocks, add pattern darning or Assisi work. Find the centre of the block and work the pattern outwards so that it fits correctly within the block. If the block is small use a petite pattern that fits comfortably. Do not put two heavy fillers together as it will unbalance the design.



Work by Jacqui and Michele shows just how different the same pattern can be



Variation 2

The cross stitch makes the blocks very heavy. They could be worked in back stitch to give a lighter impression.

Look back through the different patterns, choose your favourites and add them to the blocks. Many of the patterns are interchangeable and can be ‘mixed and matched,’ so keep an open mind and be adventurous. You will find it very satisfying to create your own sampler.

Experiment with different threads and different colours to achieve the effect you want– this is your sampler, so you make the decisions as Jacqui and Michele have done.

Making a Difference

Over the years I have been directly involved with a number of charities and met numerous dedicated people who give their whole lives working for a specific cause.

Every volunteer has a personal reason for working with a charity and I have heard many moving stories from people who seek no recognition or praise for their efforts, but carry on in their own quiet way giving their time unstintingly to raise awareness and funds for truly deserving causes around the world.

One such charity is the 'Karenni Student Development Programme (KSDP)' that provides aid for the Karenni people in Burma and in the refugee camps on the Thai/Burma border.

For many years, Beryl and Steve who oversee this registered charity have had a stall **called AID for BURMA** at the major needlework shows in Great Britain. It is stocked with colourful handmade items and I have bought pieces from them over the years, but it is only recently that I discovered the real story behind the charity.

The Karenni are largely a displaced population because civil war in their own country has forced many thousands to flee to safety in the refugee camps across the border in Thailand, where they have a safer environment, but very little autonomy and are not allowed to leave the refugee camps to work. They are dependent on aid from non-governmental organisations and charities such as KSDP.

I have visited the area in Thailand where these people are settled and can understand how difficult it is to sustain their families in such a demanding situation, which is why the story behind the charity is so important and why, as needlewomen, I think you will understand why I think the work that Beryl and Steve undertake deserves recognition.

Stephanie's Story



During the summer of 1999, Stephanie Lee spent part of her gap year living and teaching in the Karenni refugee camp on the Thai/Burma border just outside Mae Hong Son, in NW Thailand. She witnessed firsthand the urgent need for educational support and upon her return to the UK in September 1999, she founded the KSDP charity.

Stephanie returned to the refugee camp every university vacation, living the simple life of a Karenni refugee. Her first project was to fund 'The Future Stars Boarder' to provide housing and support for around 100 orphans and needy students who had no family in the camp to provide for them.

Tragically in November 2001, during an extended stay in the refugee camps, Stephanie was killed in a motor cycle accident near the camp. She was just 21 years old and her funeral was held in Karenni where she is buried.

Stephanie's family and her parents Beryl and Steve have vowed to continue her work and her parents regularly visit the camp and oversee the work of the KSDP.

Stephanie's philosophy was 'To help the Karenni to Help Themselves' and so every one of the KSDP's projects is run by the Karenni themselves with the assistance and financial support of the KSDP.

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There are so many ways in which the refugees are being supported by this charity, but the crafts speak for themselves. Only a very few items are made by the Karenni (some of the hand woven scarves) – and none by the students who are all far too busy studying at school or in the medic training programme! The majority are made by various other individual people – many from hill-tribes in Thailand, Burma and S.E. Asia. It is the profit from the sales that benefit the Karenni people and keep the projects alive.



Beryl Lee with her craft stall

It is not just about raising money for charities such as these as Beryl said, it is about raising awareness and understanding how difficult it is and how widespread the need for education, medical services and housing is throughout all the conflict zones of the world.



Printed fabrics, fine cross stitch, vibrant colours and intricate patchwork



Karenni girl weaving

I bought home many example of handicrafts when I visited the hill-tribes in Thailand, but the story behind this charity was one I felt I ought to share with you and to show you some of the crafts that they produce and through which, thanks to the dedication and commitment of Beryl and Steve Lee, the work of their daughter Stephanie continues.

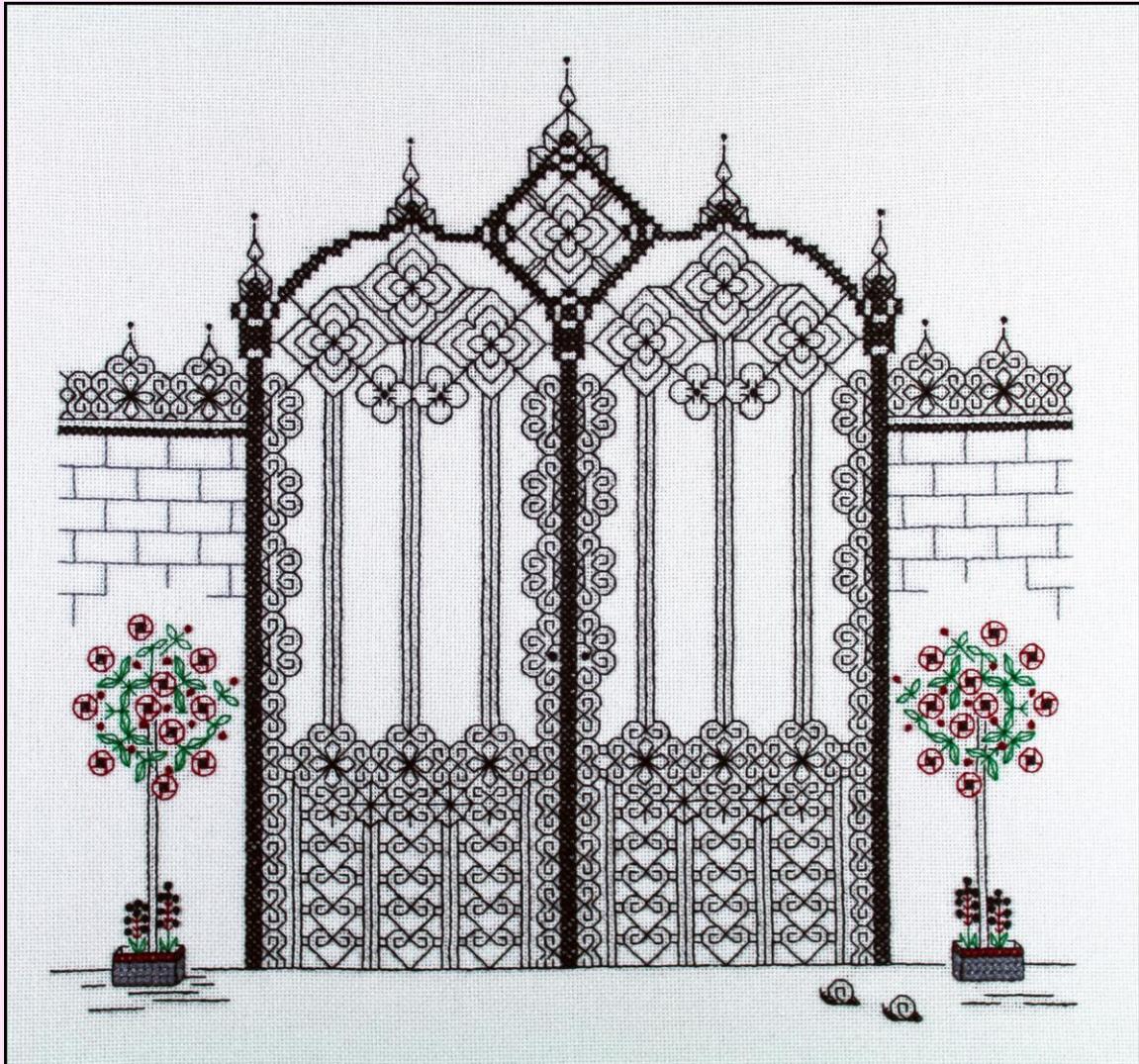
email:info@ksdp.org.uk



Medical trainees – new hope for the future!

CH0342 Portail des Fleurs - new chart!

Enjoy this ironwork gate opening onto a majestic mansion or your own secret garden. This is worked on Zweigart 28 count evenweave fabric using one strand of floss. Two tiny snails are off to explore will you join them?



I hope you have enjoyed reading this month's Blog and I look forward to the June issue and the final part of Pandora's Box.

Happy stitching,

Liz



