



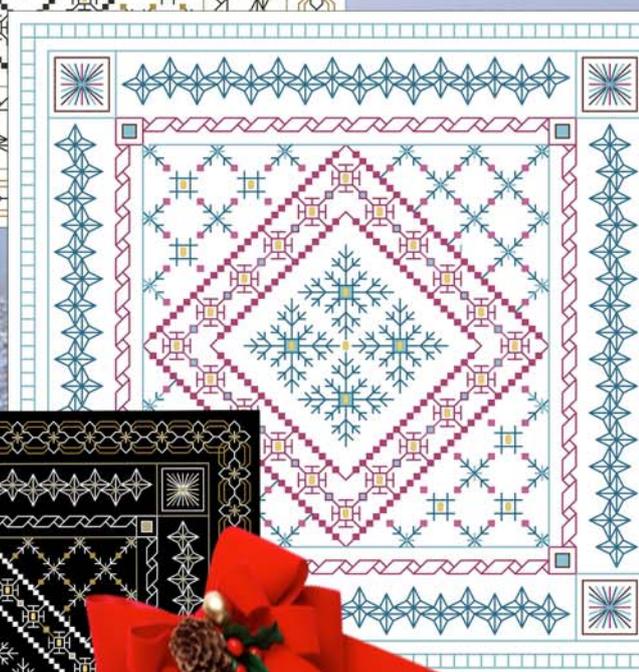
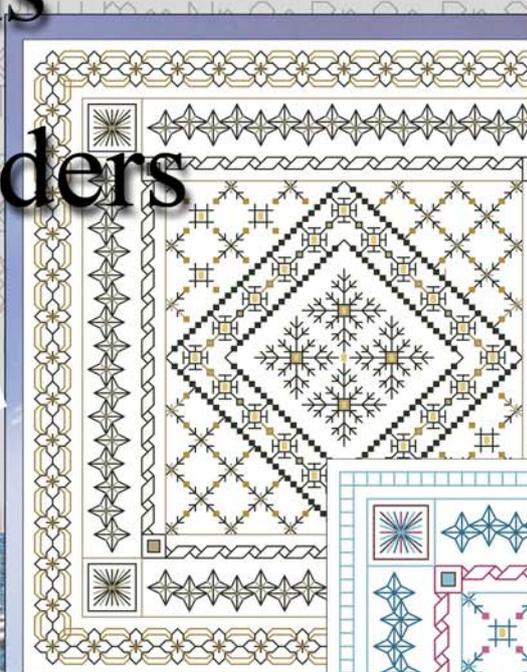
Blackwork Journey Blog

September 2016

Christmas in September!

New Designs

Talented readers



Blackwork Journey Blog, September 2016

August has been a really hectic month, with my son and his wife moving to San Francisco with baby James and taking up a new life and career as the Principal horn player with the San Francisco Opera. We have been to San Francisco several times and will be looking forward to more journeys across the 'Pond' in 2017 and to visiting the splendid building which houses the Opera Company. I may even get the chance to meet some of my Facebook members who live in the San Francisco area!

'Sublime Stitches' - the November project

As usual in a British summer, we have had quite a lot of rain which is the best excuse ever for either designing new patterns or working on my November project, 'Sublime Stitches'.



One of the alphabets in 'Sublime Stitches' was taken from an old linen sampler in my collection, which whilst small, badly worn and faded, was perfectly executed in four-sided stitch.!

Like 'Save the Stitches' it will be a large and rather intricate piece of work which I hope will challenge and inspire you to new adventures in stitching. The historical aspects of the embroidery and the research involved really appeals to my creative side and where possible I have included information about the background of the stitches and patterns. I have also included traditional embroidery stitches which are often overlooked in counted thread embroidery but can add texture and interest.

This sampler is a very personal piece and includes the stitches and patterns that I especially enjoy working. I have also incorporated the new DMC Coloris variegated threads but, as with the projects such as 'Pandora's Box', 'Box of Delights' and 'Save the Stitches' you will be able to use your own ideas to personalise the design. This project is challenging me as I am altering, adding and re-charting as I stitch. Working the embroidery is far more interesting than designing the chart, to watch it grow is very satisfying. However, if you are considering joining in and working 'Sublime Stitches' consider it as a long term piece not a quick fix!

However, I know that not everyone will want to work a large project so there will be some smaller samplers based on the larger pattern and a number of mini projects for cards etc.

Coughton Court, Warwickshire, England

I have stitched in many places round the world but always get a special thrill when I am stitching in a castle or a stately home where I know needlework has been worked by the ladies for generations. There is a link between the past and the present which becomes almost tangible, as if the needlewoman is looking over my shoulder. I have even been known to dress up for the part! We are very fortunate in the United Kingdom that we have many stately homes and castles, hundreds of years old and in many of them are pieces of embroidery and portraits of ancestors which reveal much about the way of life of the occupants.

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Coughton Court was the home of the Throckmorton family for 600 years. They were persecuted for their Catholic faith and risked everything on secret plots and political intrigue. The house is still occupied by a member of the Throckmorton Family.



Coughton Court, Warwickshire, England. Glass windows were a sign of great wealth!

Within this great Tudor house were many things of interest to the embroiderer especially the portrait of Lady Katherine Vaux, born c1490 to Nicholas Vaux and Elizabeth Fitzhugh. She was also the half sister of Thomas Parr, so she was aunt to Catherine Parr, Henry VIII's last queen. In 1512 she married George Throckmorton, with whom she had 19 children. Her brass tomb lies in the church at Coughton.



Portrait of Lady Katherine Vaux 1553 - 1558, wife of Sir George Throckmorton

Historically, there are three common styles of blackwork:

In the earliest blackwork, counted stitches are worked to make a geometric or small floral pattern.

Later blackwork features large designs of flowers, fruit, and other patterns connected by stems. Often these are not counted thread work and are outlined with stem stitch with the patterns filled with geometric counted designs.

In the third style of blackwork, the outlined patterns are "shaded" with random stitches called seed stitches. This style of blackwork copies etchings or woodcuts

The blackwork strawberry motifs on the dress were typical of the designs of the period. They look to have been stitched on a very fine translucent fabric with her undergarment, also stitch in blackwork, showing through.



Also on display was a chemise belonging to Mary, Queen of Scots in which she was executed at Fotheringhay Castle. It is made of fine linen with drawn thread borders inscribed on the bodice in red and dated Feb 11 1587.

This is an Elizabethan undergarment and only one other of this type is known to exist.



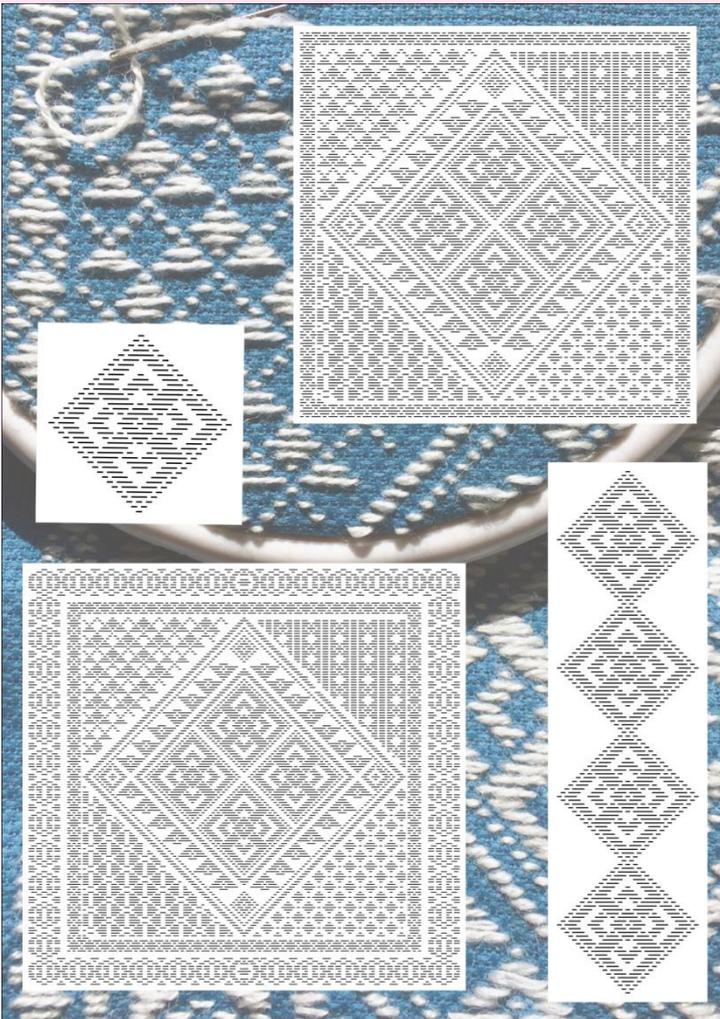
With a Catholic history there were a number of ecclesiastical items in the house, but a square embroidered cloth approximately 18 x 18 inches attracted my attention.

The embroidery was worked on a satin ground using coloured silks and silver-gilt threads, Heavy metal threads over padding, beads, couching and some stump work made this an intricate and well preserved piece of embroidery. The colours of the silks were still vibrant and the stitch details of the metallic lace border could be clearly seen.

"IHS" or "IHC" shown on the embroidery denotes the first three letters of the Greek name of Jesus.



New designs for September:



CH0334 Kyoto Kogin is another one in the Japanese Kogin series. The earlier ones are CH0341, CH0340, CH0339, CH0338 and E-Book EB0005 Sew Simple.

I experimented to see whether 'Kyoto Kogin' could be worked successfully in crewel wool and having used Appleton's Paterna wool for many years this was an obvious choice.

Crewel wool is 3 ply weight as distinct from Tapestry wool which is 4 ply weight. Crewel wool is sold in either hanks (25 g, 180 metres) or skeins (25 metres) which makes it very economical, especially since the design uses one strand of wool. There are 6 skeins to a hank. Skeins come with a paper numbered band around them.

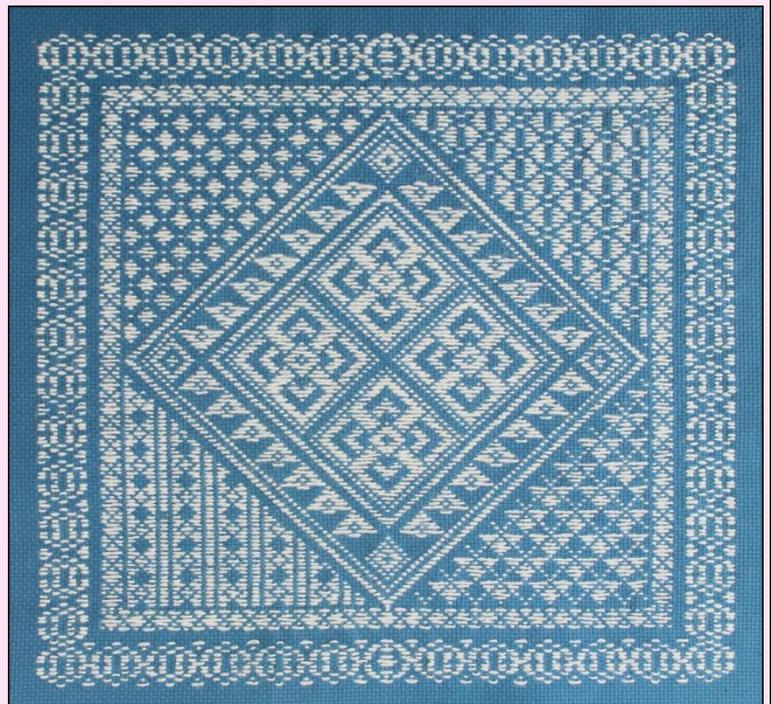
The design was worked on 14 count Teal Aida which is easy to count if eyesight is a problem. The wool didn't fray or fluff and I was pleased with the finish result as an alternative to working the design with floss or Cotton P erle No.12.

Of course, the design and its variations can also be worked in floss or Cotton P erle in the usual way.

A truly British Firm - Appleton Bros

For the last 180 years, the family firm of Appleton Bros. has been producing fine quality tapestry and crewel wool. Based until early 2013 in Chiswick, London, near the river Thames, Appleton's has moved more recently to the village of Long Crendon in Buckinghamshire, near the historic market town of Thame. Although the firm is no longer family owned, the essence of the company remains the same, with the quality of the wool and personal attention to detail being of paramount importance.

Appletons reputation has been built up over generations by selecting the finest English wools from the wool markets in Bradford, Yorkshire, and having them spun in the UK into either 4 ply tapestry or 2 ply crewel wool. It is hardwearing, mothproofed and durable.



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Tapestries made from it last for generations and Appletons is particularly proud to have been involved with the recent completion of the world famous Bayeux Tapestry, as well as the Prestonpans tapestry and the ongoing Great Tapestry of Scotland.



Appletons wool is dyed to 423 different shades, all of which are available in both tapestry and crewel weights. Some of the colours are the original shades used by William Morris in his designs and are still popular today. More modern shades have been developed over the years and a mixture of these are used by a variety of tapestry and rug designers around the world.

If you want to investigate Appleton Bros. further and see the projects they are involved in, including the completion of the three missing and final panels of the Bayeux Tapestry, follow the link below:

<http://www.appletons.org.uk/appletons-wool-in-action/>

Christmas in September CH0335 Blackwork Christmas



Knowing that many readers like to make an early start on their Christmas stitching, I have designed three variations on a Christmas theme.

The material used was Zeigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida, 12 x 12 inches and metallic threads and beads are added to give a Christmas sparkle!

The largest design is 18.87w X 18.87h cm, 104w x 104h stitches

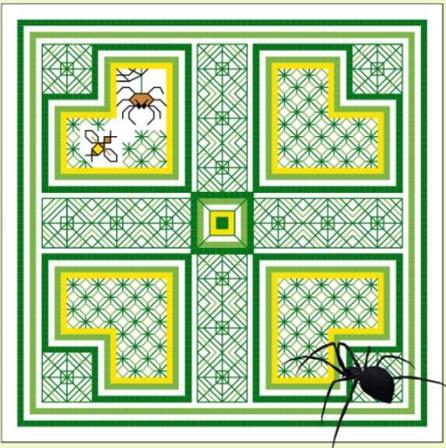
The central motif can be used to make a Christmas card.

Both **the** new charts CH0334 Kyoto Kogin and CH0335 Blackwork Christmas can be found in the 'Charts' section of Blackwork Journey.

FR0128 Spring Clean

Free designs are always popular and are a good way of trying a new technique without spending a lot of money on threads or materials, so when I received a request from a reader to change an earlier design into shades of green, I thought I would post the finished design in 'Freebies,' complete with spider!

FR0021 Cobweb is a pink version of this design (with spider).



'Stitch' Magazine August/September. The gentle art of Japanese Kogin stitching



Kogin embroidery was featured in this month's edition of 'Stitch' magazine which is a UK publication.

The bag was accompanied by a pincushion and needlecase which uses motifs selected from the main design. Four-sided stitch has been used for the edging.





Readers this month have sent in some really interesting photographs of work they have completed, but one reader really excelled herself.

I am just so proud of Judith Walker. To win one prize is great, but to win two in the same show is outstanding. Many congratulations!!!! It really makes designing worthwhile when you see results like this.

"For the first time ever I entered pieces I did in the Missouri State Fair. My version of Pandora's Box got 3rd place in the 'Any Other' class. My Save the Stitches got 1st place in the 'Elongated Piece' class AND Best in Division. Counted Cross Stitch where there are 11 classes."

Over the years a number of readers have won significant prizes with Blackwork Journey designs and it really pleases me to see the many ways in which the embroidery designs are used, from celebrating the memory of special individuals to christenings, weddings and confirmations.



Judith Walker!



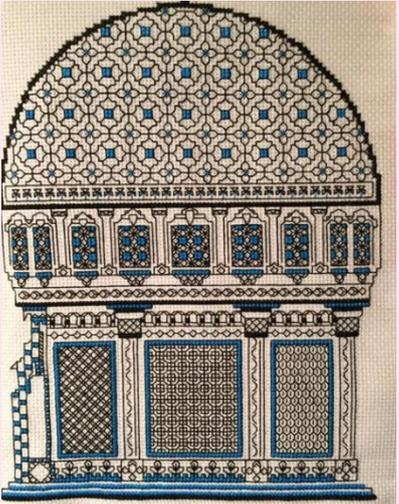
Maggie has used the central section from CH0344 Shooting Star to make a fabric box. Embroidered boxes are much more resilient to dirt and wear than you may think. To give them an extra protection I suggest you spray them lightly with a fabric protector such as Scotchgard. I have used fabric boxes for over thirty years and never has a problem with dirt or wear.

Susie has stitched CH0061 Mughal Mausoleum.

I visited India in 2000 and will be returning there in November this year. The mausoleum was a ruined building in a park in Delhi. When I went into the building in the roof was the biggest hornets nest I have ever seen. Needless to say I didn't stay very long!



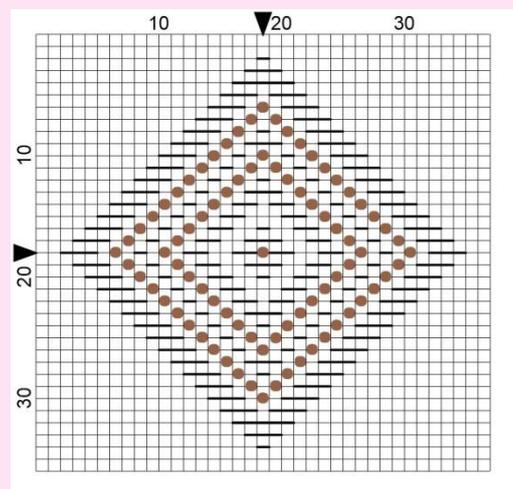
Giant Indian Hornet





Pulled thread work is a fascinating and underestimated technique. Last month, I posted PR0035 called "Natalie" and Patricia has sent me a photo of 'Natalie' her first ever piece of pulled thread work and Kathryn has posted her finished pulled thread work sampler in the Facebook group. They are both lovely pieces of work, so thank you ladies for all of your contributions and to all the readers who continue to send their photographs of work in progress, 'Save the Stitches', 'Pandora's Box' and 'Box of Delights' to the Facebook groups. There are many different interpretations of each design that make really interesting and exciting viewing. If you want to join the groups, please follow the link on the Blackwork Journey home page.

Just for fun, try beading a little Kogin piece and see what happens. This is my sample what can you do with the chart?



This diamond is a different shape from my sample. Stitch more than one to create a border or a larger piece.

Take a Fresh Look!

Every month I am going to take a fresh look at the stitches we use daily in our embroidery. There are many different ways these stitches can be used to change the appearance of embroidery. The changes may be small, but they can make a real impact.

September's 'Stitches of the month' are Chain Stitch and Cable Chain Stitch

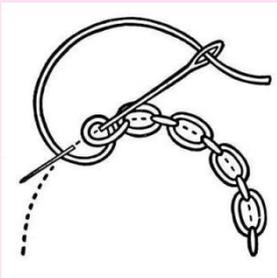


Chain stitch is one that most embroiderers are familiar with but do not use very often. It is excellent for covering lines and as fillers and can be the basis for many other stitches so knowing how to work an even line of chain stitches is useful.

Method:

Bring the thread out at the top of the line and hold down with the left thumb. Insert the needle where it last emerged and bring the point out a short distance away. Pull the thread through, keeping the working thread under the needle point.

Tip: Work down the line towards you.



Cable chain stitch is a useful variation of chain stitch and one I use in pulled thread work or as an embroidery stitch.

Method:

Bring the thread out at the top of the line and hold down with the left thumb. Pass the working thread over and then under the needle in a clockwise direction. Pick up a small piece of fabric in front of the needle. Wrap the thread round the needle and pull through gently. A small stitch is formed between the two chains.



Cable chain stitch

I hope you enjoy this month's Blog.

Happy stitching!

Liz