Blackwork Journey Blog

NEW DESIGNER SOFTWARE

'Sublime Stitches'
Part 10 - Evenweave

So much to do and so little time!

Just occasionally everything seems to happen at once and all the deadlines come together which means careful planning and a lot of juggling. September was just such a month with very detailed submissions being collated for a conference in Canada in 2019, kits and charts to prepare and deliver for teaching in Kenya, a magazine design to be completed and posted and talks and day schools to prepare for in England!

Alongside all the needlework activities I have a home, family and delicious grandchildren to spend time with and enjoy before they grow up and fly the nest to university. My husband keeps me grounded and generally, I keep on top of everything, but there is always another design to create, a piece of material that just calls to be stitched and new threads to experiment with. I must confess that being organised is not my strongest point, but I can normally lay my hands on anything in my studio immediately so that must say something about my thinking and organisation!

Needlework is an addiction and I am an addict and happy to admit it and hopefuly, I will continue to design and stitch for many more years to come!

'Sublime Stitches' Part 10

I am coming to the end of this project and have some lovely stories and photographs from readers to celebrate their progress. It is a large project, but I have been encouraged and delighted to see how many readers have tacked it and made it their own with little personal touches.

I enjoy adding little 'extras' into the parts for smaller gifts and ideas and welcome readers sending me their ideas on colour and fabrics. Because readers are so prepared to share their knowledge I have found new threads and fabrics which I would not otherwise have heard about.

Readers posting pictures in the Facebook groups have helped other members who may not be quite so confident with colour or are new to needlework so everyone benefits.

Part 10 Evenweave 'Sublime Stitches'

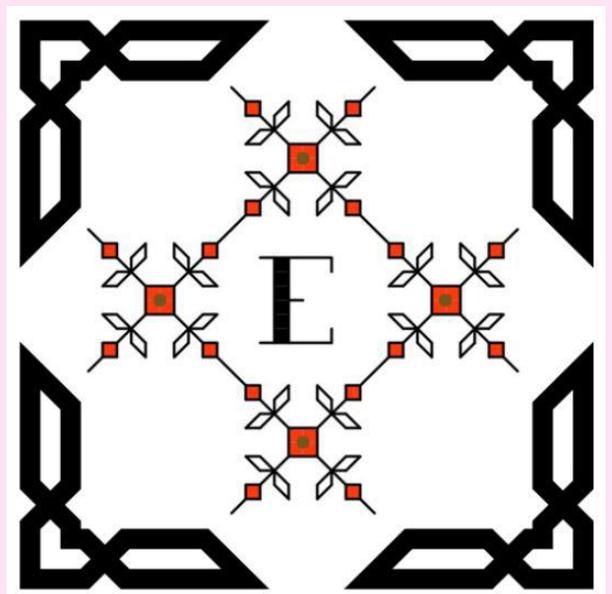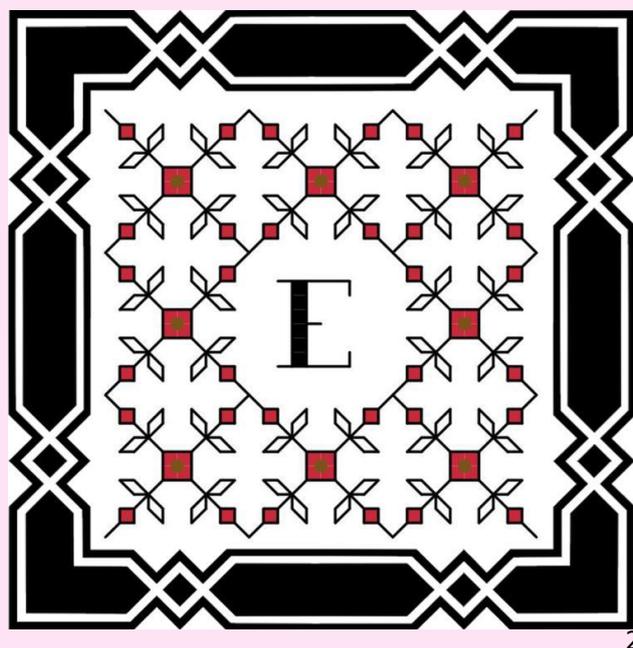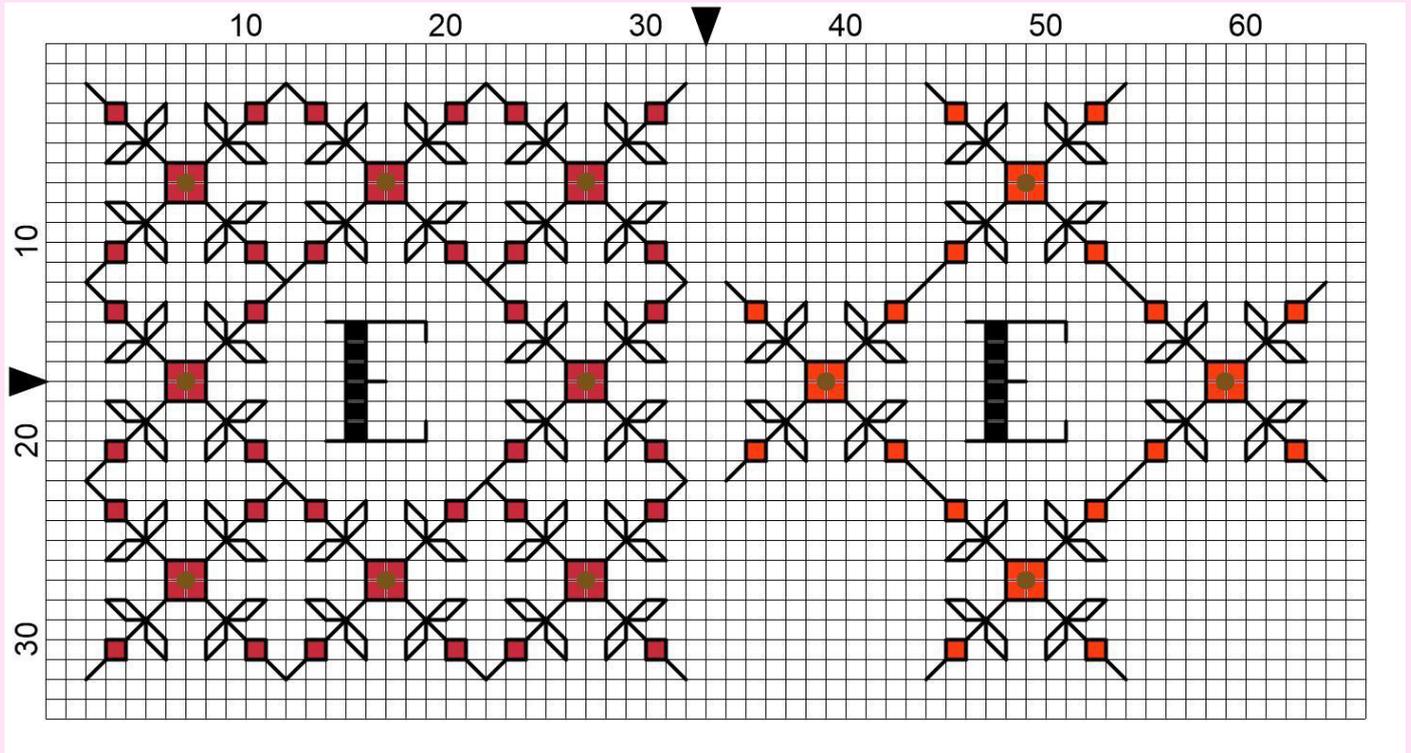'Sublime Stitches'
Part 10 - Aida

Part 10 Aida 'Sublime Stitches'

If you look carefully at the different elements that make up the samplers shown below, you will see that they can be used in different ways by joining them together and making new patterns, borders or complete projects.

You can personalise your work by adding initials, monograms and dates.

Look for frames and mounts that are a little different and even a very small pattern can become a work of art!

Extract from 'Sublime Stitches' Part 10

CH0363 Sampler 10 based on Part 10 of 'Sublime Stitches'

Creating a series of samplers based on the different parts of 'Sublime Stitches' has been a challenge and certainly designing and stitching one a month in time for the Blog and website to go online on the first of every month has led to some late night stitching, but I am really pleased with October's design. I have used shades of blue and DMC Light Effects E317 Titanium and silver beads to create a twilight effect

Since I have a passion for owls the sampler is built round two little owls sitting on a fence!

Part 10 Sampler based on 'Sublime Stitches'

I always look to see if I can find an appropriate quotation to go with my design and this month I found two that I really liked and summed up the mood of the sampler.

"Twilight fell: The sky turned to a light, dusky purple, littered with tiny silver stars."
— J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

J.K. Rowling

and "Dawn and dusk are mutual friends of the sun; one opens the door for him to a brand new day and the other one has to shut it to embrace the darkness of night." — Munia Khan

Reader's Stories

This month a series of photos were posted on Facebook with the story behind them, so I thought I would share Bernarda's work with you. Based on CH0351 Colour Aomori, Bernarda has created a truly beautiful piece of embroidery.

Bernarda Valenčič wrote on 18 September;

"I have finally finished my tablecloth, based on Elizabeth's motive from Aomori Gold.
I usually want to combine some new patterns with our national Slovene heritage. My mother gave me an old beautiful home-made linen cloth with 50 count in one direction and 34 count in the other direction. So this kind of weaving was the most suitable for such fabric. It took me half an hour to make one row and about 60 hours for finishing.
This piece will be the present for my friend together with some home-made pottery, which is typical for my town.
Excerpt from the book "Slovene National Embroideries"(1974). This kind of weaving belongs to techniques of figured hand-weaving, which is actual in Slovenia still today.
By embroidered weaving the long narrow strip of linen are decorated, which 350 years ago were used as women's head coverings. Later on, so called nuptial kerchiefs were very important articles of folk customs, especially of nuptial rites.
Motives are entirely geometrical and strictly symmetrical, arranged into tectonic belt ornament of woven belt. Composition of ornaments on long narrow stripes of linen consists of horizontal woven belts passing from one to the other end of the tissue, rhythmically changing and becoming more and more narrow."

The photo of one of the originals from the museum.
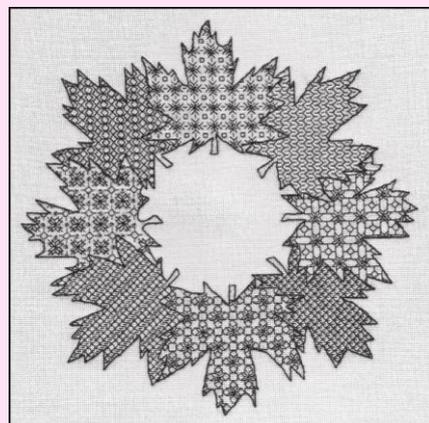
Japanese style Kogin

CH0351 Colour Aomori

Bernarda's embroidery - Needlework crosses all countries, boundaries and religions and unites us all in its history and creativity!

Whilst needlework has its serious side, it should also be fun as Maureen Spira from Montreal proved when she designed and stitched a blackwork trainer for her friend! The maple leaf just adds the finishing touch!

CH0308 Maple leaf wreath

Software Packages

I am frequently asked what software I use to create the charts and my Blackwork Journey site and whilst this sounds an easy question to answer in fact, it is much more complicated than it sounds. Embroidery software helps users create embroidery designs and whilst the majority of embroidery software is specific to machine embroidery, there is also software available for use with hand embroidery such as cross stitch.

I have four different pattern designing software programmes on my computer which I use for different projects. None of them is perfect and they each have advantages and disadvantages.

Publishers often ask for their charts in specific software programmes, so whilst I might design a chart in one programme I often have to redraw it in another!

The main software programme I use for my designs is **PCStitch 11**. Generally, it works very well for me and there is the option to try it out before you buy. The operating system is simple to understand and the chart symbols are very clear.

It carries a comprehensive range of threads including Rainbow Blending Filaments, Sullivan's Embroidery Floss, Threadworx Cotton Floss and Week's Dye Works as well as the usual Anchor and DMC threads.

Other Features Include:
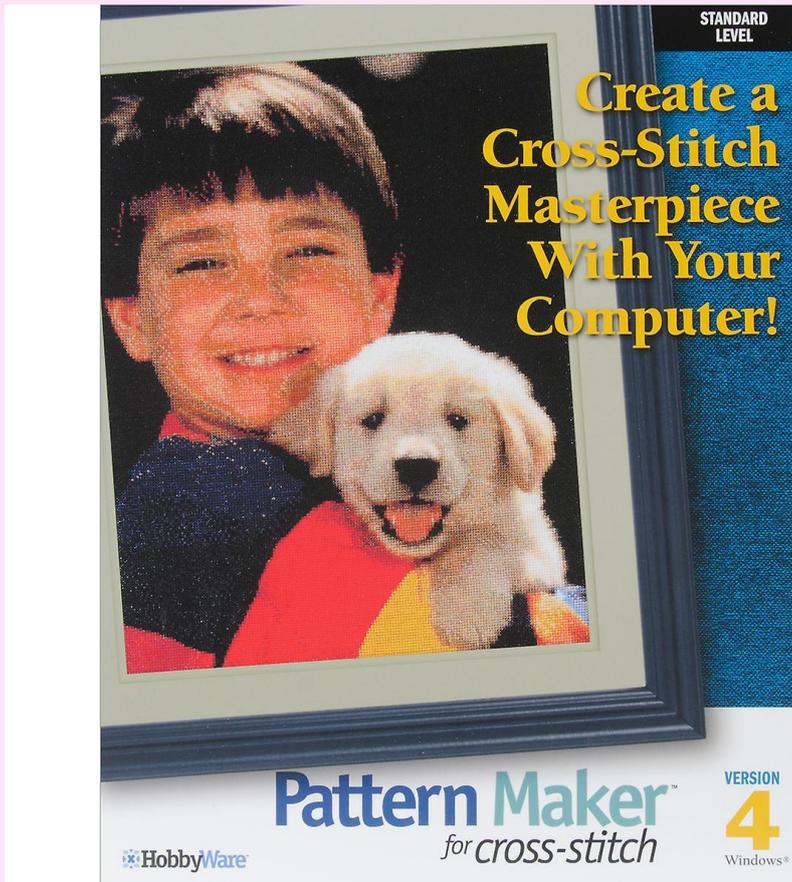
- **Highlight Palette Entries:** Instantly see where a floss is used in your designs. **more...**
- **Designer Logos:** Insert Logos and other graphics into the Pattern Information sheet.
- **Auto Backstitching:** Instantly add backstitching around a single or multiple color area.
- **Custom Palette Sort:** Define a custom order of palette entries on your printouts.
- **Palette Symbol Enhancments:** Select custom symbol colors for printouts. Choose symbol by stitch type.
- **Export to PCStitch 7:** Allows you to save your pattern files in old PCStitch format.
- **Pattern Browser Panel:** Easily find PCStitch files on your system. **more...**
- **Open PVF Files:** Allows you to Display and Print Pattern Viewer Files. **more...**
- **Complete Design Tools:** Cut, Copy, Paste, Rotate, Flip, Fill, Mirror Mode
- **Multiple Stitch Types:** Use full, 1/4, 3/4, and half stitches
- **Beads:** Add Mill-Hill beads to your patterns
- **Flexible Backstitching:** Attach backstitching to any location in a grid square.
- **Multiple Floss Lists:** DMC, Anchor, Kreinick & Coats floss lists included.
- **Specialty Stitches:** Use over 60 speciality stitches such as the Lazy Daisy.
- **6 Display modes:** View the pattern stitches as symbols, stitches, or both.
- **Unlimited Zoom Settings:** View as much or as little of the design as needed.
- **Enhanced Rulers:** View rulers as inches, centimeters, or stitch count.
- **And Much, Much More...** Download PCStitch now and see all it has to offer!

PC Stitch 11 tool bar, floss pallet and chart examples

There are occasions when it creates error messages which can be annoying, but there is a dedicated helpline.
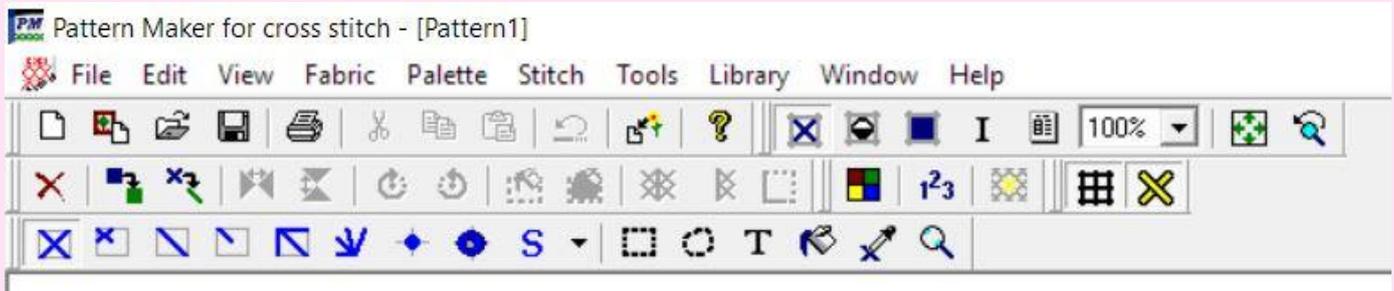
The software is not designed for the Apple Mac which means I have two computer setups, one for Microsoft Windows and one for Apple Mac.

The second programme I use has been around for many years and is well recognised in the design field and is **Pattern Maker Version 4 for Cross stitch**
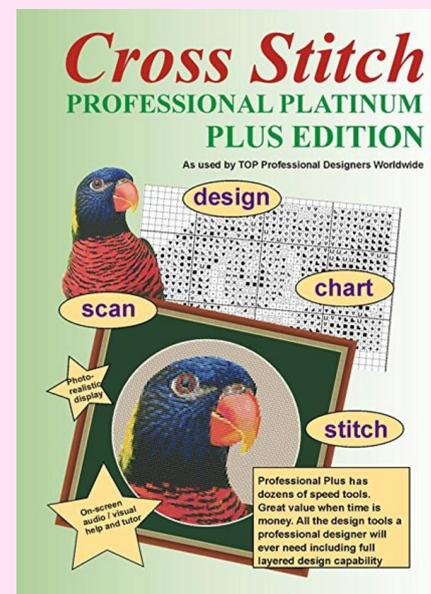
Product description
HOBBYWARE-Pattern Maker Software: Standard Version. An easy-to-use Windows programme that enables you to create very personalised cross stitch designs by 'stitching' with the mouse or turning a digital photo into a design
This software features up to 240 colours per pattern, fabric sizes up to 999 x 999, a variety of knots and stitches and so much more.
This package contains one software C.D. and one instructional booklet. Minimum System Requirements: Windows 95, 98, ME, 2000, or XP, 16-bit colour resolution, 64MB of RAM, and 20MB of hard disk space. Made in USA.

Pattern Maker toolbar

The third programme I use is **Cross Stitch Professional Platinum Plus by dpsoftware.com**
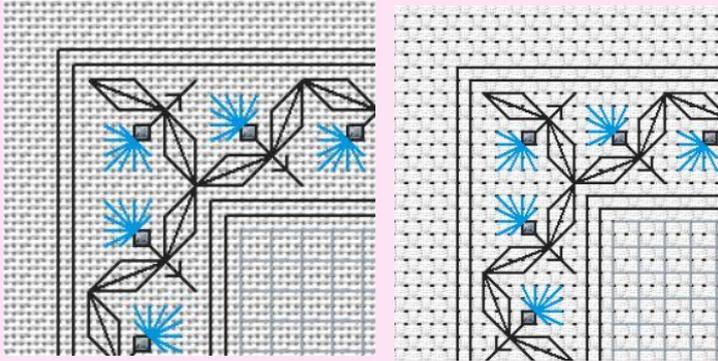
Cross Stitch design software for converting photos to cross stitch charts or construction of charts by drawing, importing clipart or with built-in motif library. Not only for cross stitch, but also tapestry or rugs. Easy conversion of photos into charts with matching to manufacturers thread colours. Layered design capability and full video help system to explain everything in detail plus a printed and bound manual in colour. After registration, users can download any new versions released for 2 years and have the option of purchasing additional years at any time. A special feature of DP Software's cross stitch programmes is the extremely realistic stitch display, so you get a true impression of what your design will look like when stitched. The manufacturers Plus edition has many extra tools to help speed up the design process. It also has the ability to backstitch to 1/2 cross level and to fill with blackwork patterns. Colours per design are 220 against 75 in the basic version. Imported photos can use petit-point in user selected areas to
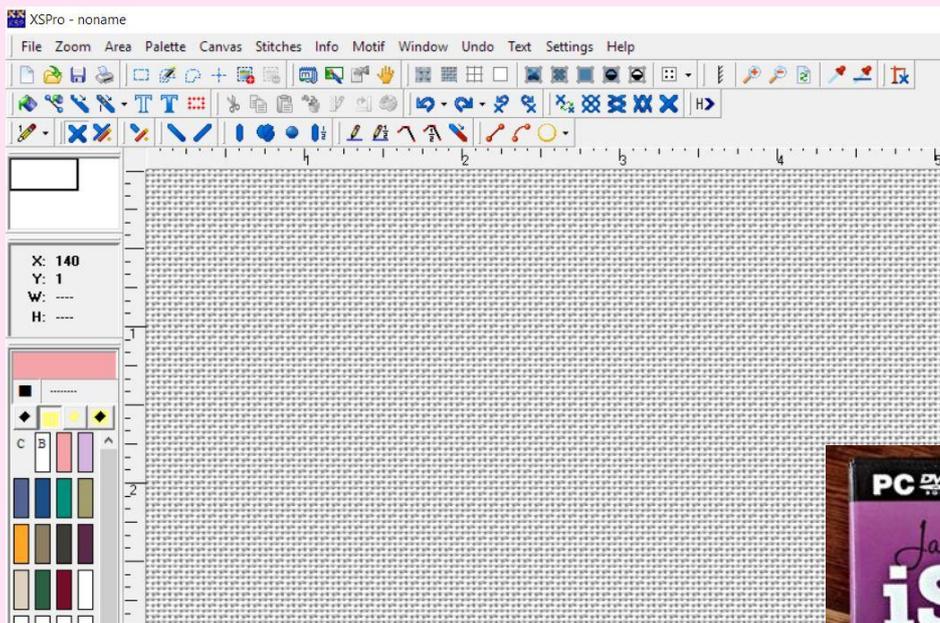
increase detail. Suitable for commercial kit production with user definable thread length estimation, wastage allowances and thread organiser printing. Completely customisable key layout using a template system and built-in word processor.colours have been spectrophotometer measured to ensure the program picks the right colours. A UK telephone number gives technical support 7 days a week and there is an online forum as well, complete with suggestion box. Can be upgraded at a later date to Publisher version.

Whilst this is an expensive programme, it shows the embroidery on a variety of fabrics and can show the embroidery in a frame.

The programme can be used to show embroidery on evenweave or Aida fabric as well as a grid or canvas which makes it a useful program to have with features that the other programs do not have.

The programme is not as simple to use as the other two, but comes with a comprehensive manual. It is designed for Windows, but is not available in Apple.
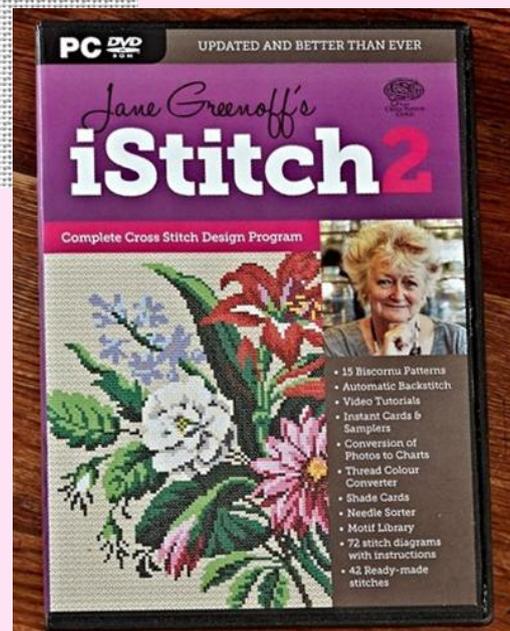
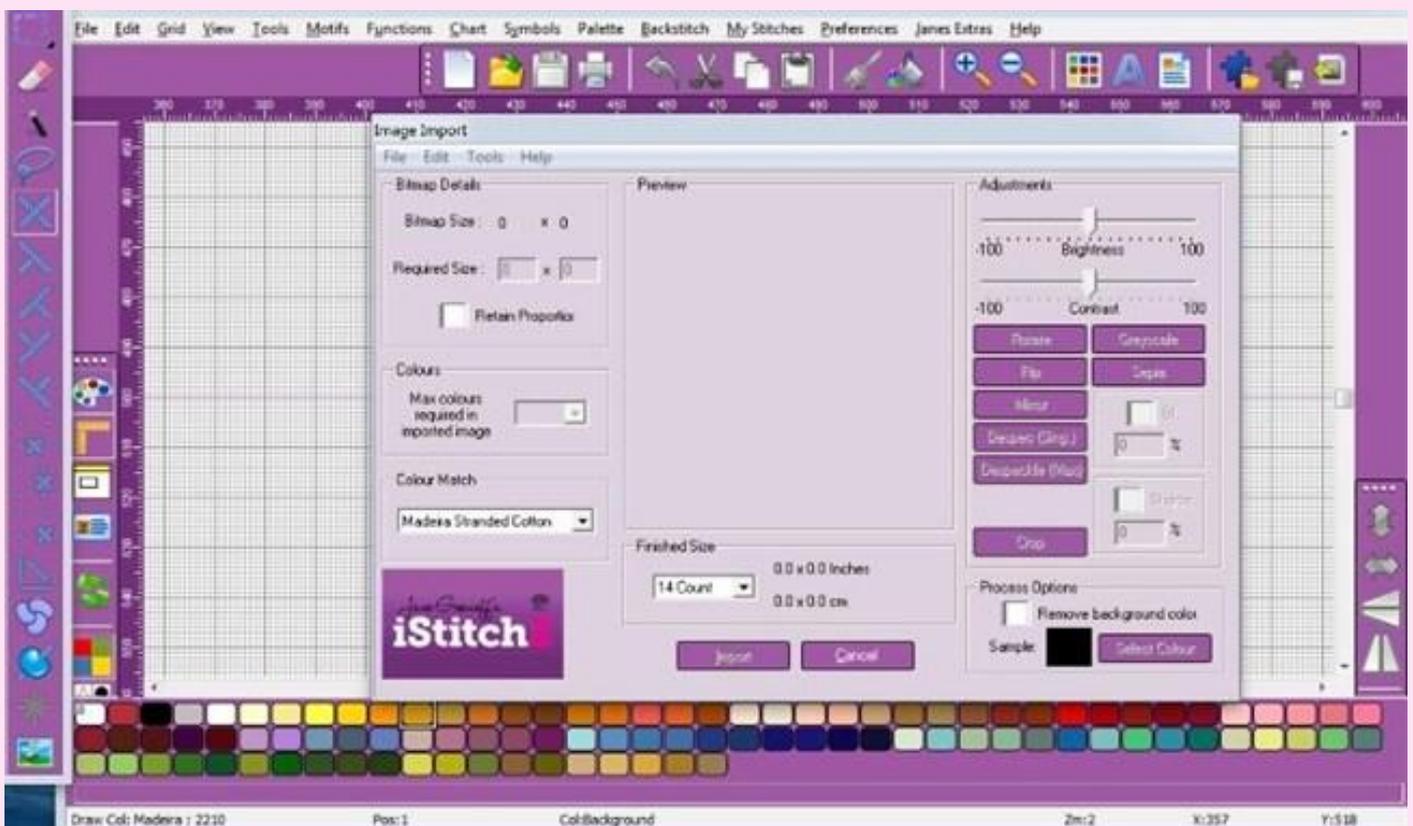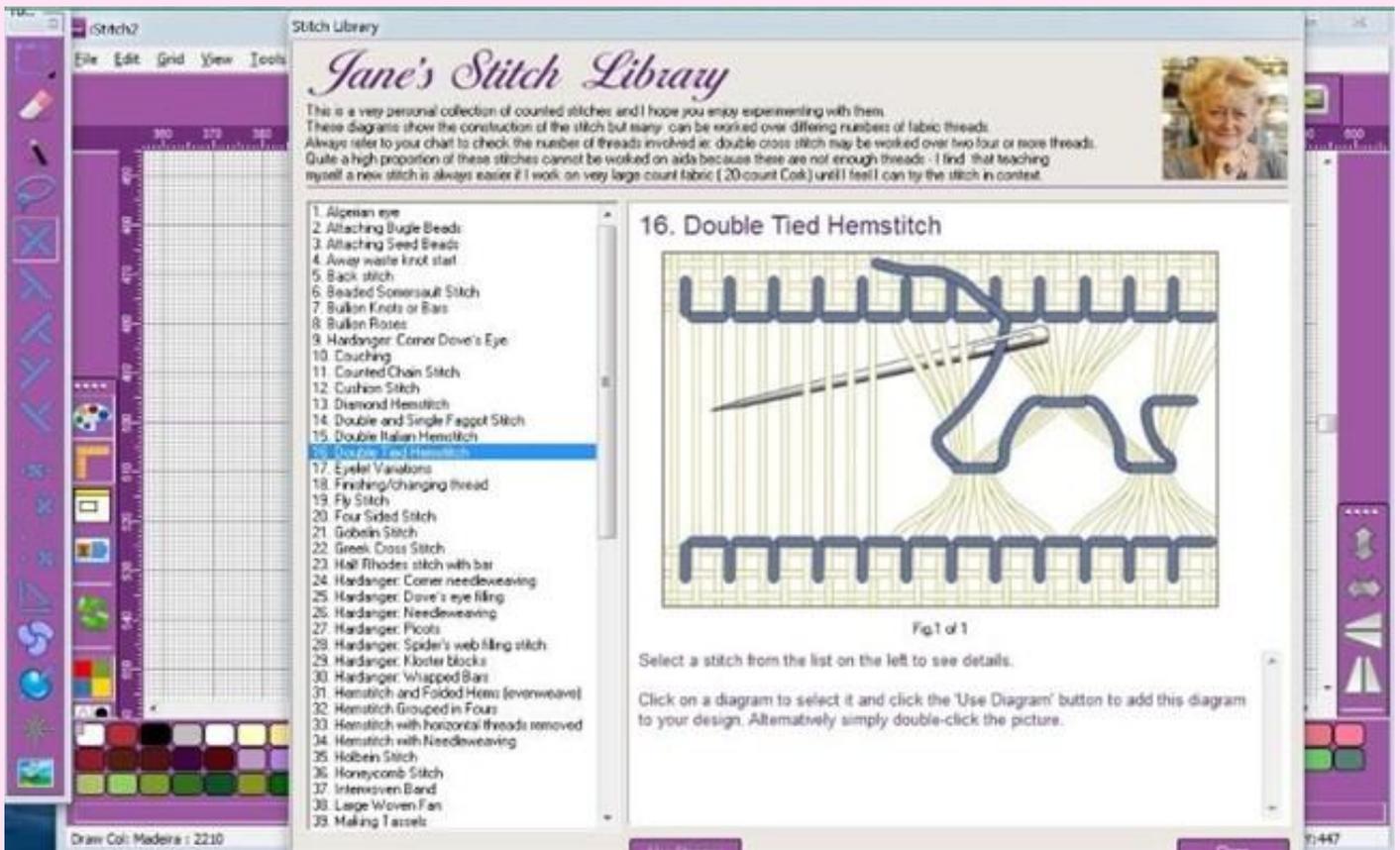The final programme I have on my computer is:
Jane Greenoff's **iStitch 2**

Jane has a very comprehensive Stitch Dictionary which I find particularly useful.

All the programmes can be used to create charts and photographs. They all need

practice, but they all are useful additions to my software library and are used daily!

If you are considering trying some design software there are other products available, but I suggest that you always look for sites that give you support and a good instruction manual.

Details from Jane Greenoff's **iStitch 2**

New Design and Photograph Software

I have a comprehensive Adobe Creative Suite which includes Photoshop, In Design, Illustrator, Dream Weaver etc., which is generally regarded as the professional designers choice of software. This is expensive and requires a certain amount of expertise to use comfortably. I have been on a number of courses over the years to explore these products and I am still learning!

A new addition I have bought recently for both MacOS and Windows is **Affinity Photo1.5** and **Affinity Designer** from:
 https://affinity.serif.com

Affinity Photo 1.5
Apple Mac App of the Year 2015

I purchased it recently for both Mac and Windows and am please with the results. I find it much easier to use than Photoshop and has great potential. I am still exploring all its different aspects.

Affinity Designer is vector graphic design software for MacOS and Windows and again, I am still exploring its potential, but so far I like what I see.

The tutorials for both Affinity Photo and Affinity Designer are excellent.

If you want to look at photo and graphic design software further, but don't want to spend a lot of money there are two **free** programmes worth investigating:

GIMP
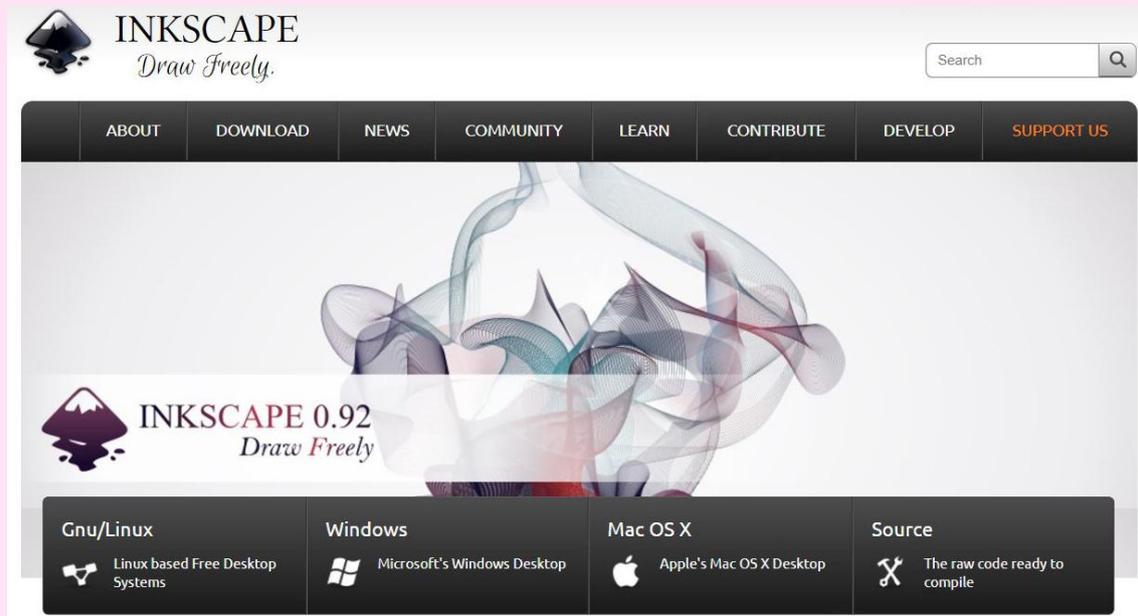**https://www.gimp.org/**
This is a Free and Open Source Image Editor

Whether you are a graphic designer, photographer, illustrator, or scientist, GIMP provides you with sophisticated tools to get your job done.

The tutorials are very thorough and will help the beginner. There are also numerous videos on YouTube for both GIMP and Inkscape to explore.

Inkscape
https://inkscape.org

What is the difference between GIMP and Inkscape?

Whichever programme you use depends on what you want to create. If you want to create logos, diagrams and illustrations (vector images), use Inkscape as it is for vector graphics which is an alternative to Coreldraw or Adobe Illustrator.

GIMP is image manipulation software which is more like an alternative to Photoshop. GIMP is a raster/bitmap graphics editor software

GIMP and Inkscale are available for both MacOS and Windows as free downloads. If you decide to add these programmes to your computer, please download from the official sites to avoid downloading any pups, viruses or malicious software which could compromise your computer.

Using the right software makes my life easier and for those of you who have expressed a desire to create their own charts, I sincerely hope this helps!

However, if you have any queries please contact me at: **lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk**

Early Christmas stitching! CH0364 Yuletide Memories

Starting stitching early for Christmas seems to be more and more popular so I have added a Christmas design for you to enjoy and a delicious recipe for chicken pâté which I always use.

YULETIDE MEMORIES
Blackwork Journey - Designs by Elizabeth Almond

Christmas Ornament and Recipe

www.blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching!
Liz