



# Blackwork Journey Blog

April 2018



## Happy Easter

**Blackwork Journey**  
 Sublime Stitches  
 Evenweave E-Book 9

**The Story of 'Sublime Stitches'**  
 a sampler for today!

Charts, photographs  
 instructions!

100 pages

**Blackwork Journey**  
 Sublime Stitches - Aida  
 E-Book 10

**The 'Story of Sublime Stitches'**  
 - a sampler for today!

Charts, photographs and  
 instructions

Aida Fabric  
 120 pages to explore

**Create a Chatelaine!**  
 Part 3 Pin cushion



## Blackwork Journey Blog, April 2018

March was a very busy month catching up on all the work that had been left until we came back from Kenya and Abu Dhabi. Collating the photographs made me realise just how much we had done in a few short weeks and how many ideas are bubbling away waiting to be designed and stitched.

Meeting so many new people and listening to their ideas about needlework and working with them was inspiration in itself and I was delighted when Vicky sent me some photographs of the work that the ladies had done since I left. I look forward to seeing the pieces finished and their next projects.

Whilst in Kenya, I had the opportunity to visit the Masai people in one of their villages in the Masai Mara to see their craft work. I also visited the craft market in Nairobi which was full of handmade items from jewellery and beading to paintings, wooden animals and weaving. The noise, atmosphere, bustle and vibrant colours made it fascinating and in between being hassled to buy something, I spoke to a number of stall holders about the beads and their history.

**African Trade Beads** come in many different colours, shapes and sizes and whilst modern shops sell replicas to the tourists, the old strings of beads were made of brass, bone, amber and coins, thought to have medicinal and healing powers. Each bead was designed individually, irregular in shape and were often hand painted. They were frequently used as currency or bartered and were a symbol of wealth. Old glass beads from Europe were included Certain colours were thought to ward off evil, especially white beads and the



bead jewellery itself marks rite of passage, stages in both men and women's lives.

**Modern 'trade' beads** – everyone is different, handmade and hand painted. Contrast the modern interpretation with the original trade beads from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

*Bought in the Village Market, Nairobi – hand painted beads, bone, amber and a coin!*



**Original Trade beads**  
Victoria & Albert Museum, London  
Search the Collections.

These glass beads are of the kind known as 'trade', 'aggry' or, sometimes, 'slave' beads. They are usually associated with West Africa, but were originally created in Europe, particularly Venice, Bohemia and the Netherlands.

<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O125991/beads-unknown/>

The history of trade beads dates to the 15th century when Portuguese trading ships arrived on the coast of West Africa to exploit its many resources, including gold, slaves, ivory and palm oil. At that time, beads were a major part of the currency exchanged for people and products. Over the following four centuries, millions of beads were traded to Africa and by the 19th century European bead makers were producing a wide variety of designs specifically for the African trade. Some designs were particularly popular, such as the millefiori ('thousand flower') form seen here, which reinvented an ancient technique from western Asia to produce colourful beads formed of many small cross-sections of multi coloured canes fused together or embedded into a matrix.



There is more information on the V&A website  
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/trade-beads/>

### Masai Beadwork

As an embroiderer I love using beads in my designs and revelled in the quantity of beadwork displayed both in the markets and being worn as simple bangles or more ornate ornaments. Both men and women frequently wore beadwork bangles often in the colours of the Kenyan flag.



*Bracelet in the  
Kenyan colours*



More ornate necklaces such as the one I am wearing above were used for weddings. Metal discs suspended on chains were a feature of many of the men's ornaments and the beads were woven into intricate patterns which would translate well into cross stitch or bead embroidery. The necklaces are heavy and not really comfortable to wear, but they are well made and very intricate.

I bought a large bag of mixed beads from the market with a view to creating a beadwork design! Unlike Mill Hill beads every one is a different size, so extra care will be needed when planning a design.

In the Masai culture only women are allowed to bead. The women work together often in pairs, deciding on the colours and patterns to use. The patterns and colours have meaning so if they use white beads they symbolise milk, red for blood, black for skin and orange for generosity. The idea of using colour with meaning really appealed to me and I bought a bag of mixed beads with the intention of creating a bead design. Unlike Mill Hill beads these beads all differ in size, but that is part of their beauty and character. The vivid colours both in the beadwork and the textiles can be seen everywhere, but especially in the village markets. The Masai shuka woven shawl/blanket in vibrant red tartans and stripes can be seen everywhere.



*Vibrant colours in textiles and jewellery are an integral part of Kenyan life!*

### New E-books:

#### EB0009 'Sublime Stitches' Evenweave and EB0010 'Sublime Stitches' Aida

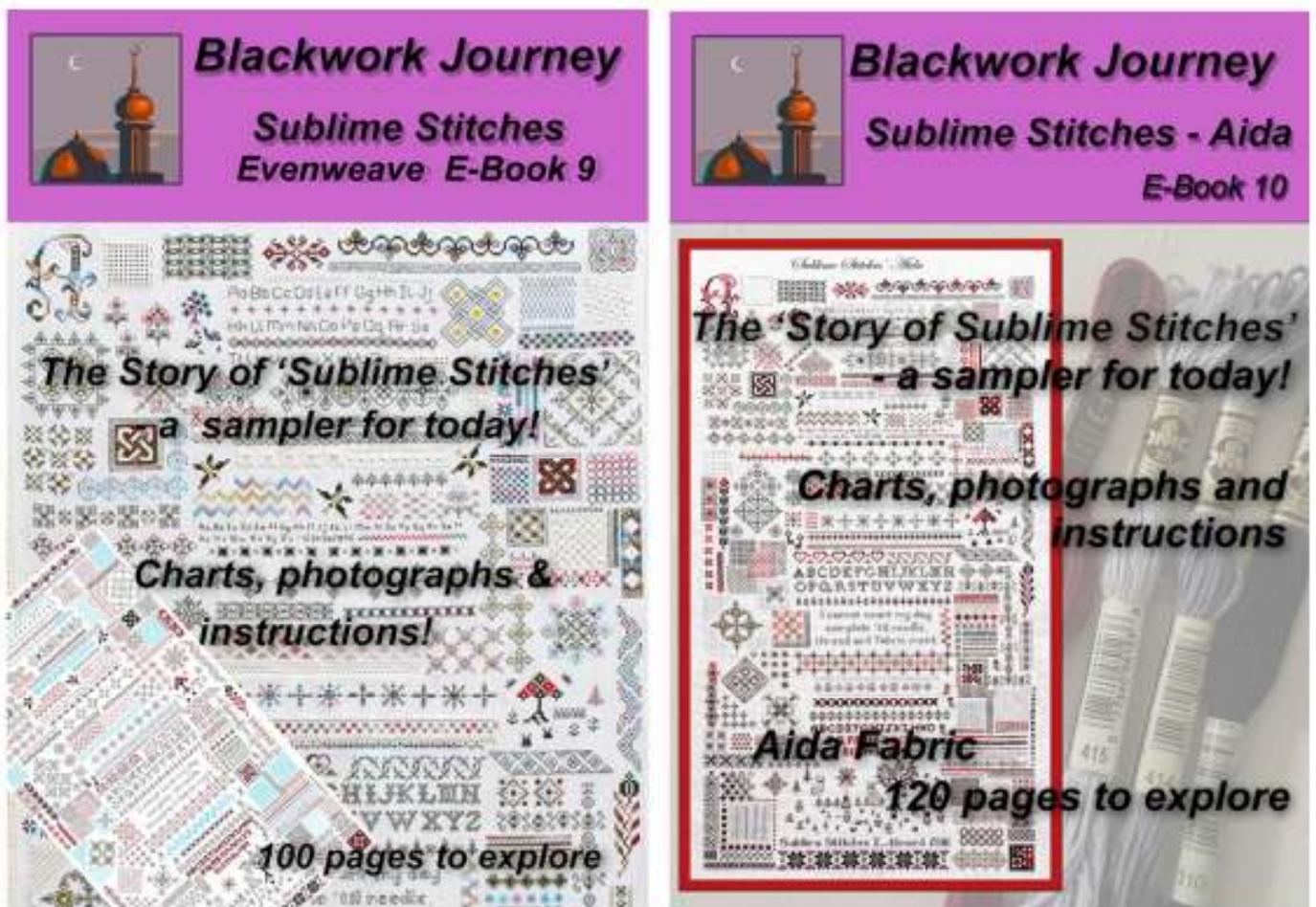
'Sublime Stitches' reflects my personal journey exploring stitches and techniques. The patterns are scattered across the fabric as 'spot' samplers and would have been popular during the Elizabethan era. The alphabets reflect the school room of the 18th century and a reference to some old samplers in my collection and the different techniques which I have explored and developed over my years of teaching.

**EB0009 'Sublime Stitches Evenweave'** has been designed for evenweave fabric only.

**EB0010 'Sublime Stitches Aida'** has been designed for readers who are more comfortable working on Aida fabric.

Both books are over 100 pages long, with 160 patterns, stitches, designs, photographs and instructions to enable you to create and personalise your own 'Sublime Stitches'.

Print the chart in full and join the 12 pages of chart together to create one large chart. Only print the instructions as they are needed. Keep the bulk of the book on the computer as an e-book to read at your leisure.



*EB0009 'Sublime Stitches' Evenweave and EB0010 'Sublime Stitches' Aida can be found in E-Books Blackwork Journey.*

**Another new chart:**

**CH0373 Star Turn – blackwork and pulled thread work unite in this design!**



‘Star Turn’ has been worked in teal greens and black but can be worked in many different colours including variegated threads. The four-sided stitch pulled thread work border has been worked in a very pale green. The fabric used was Zweigart antique white 28 count evenweave but the design is also suitable for Aida fabric. Many pulled thread work stitches can be worked on Aida if they are not ‘pulled’ too tight!

### Bernarda' Story

Bernarda is a member of my Facebook group and posted a story and photographs which I think you will all enjoy. I find it fascinating to see my designs appear in so many different guises, but this one is unique!

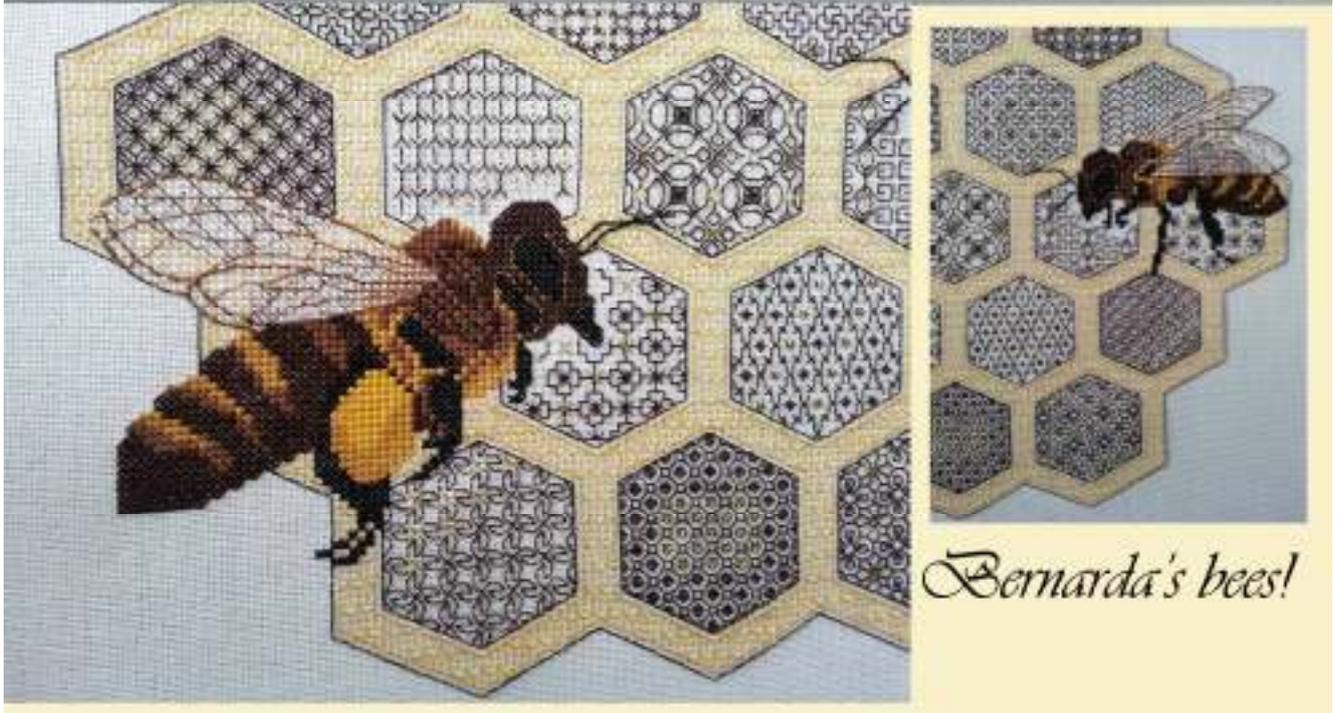
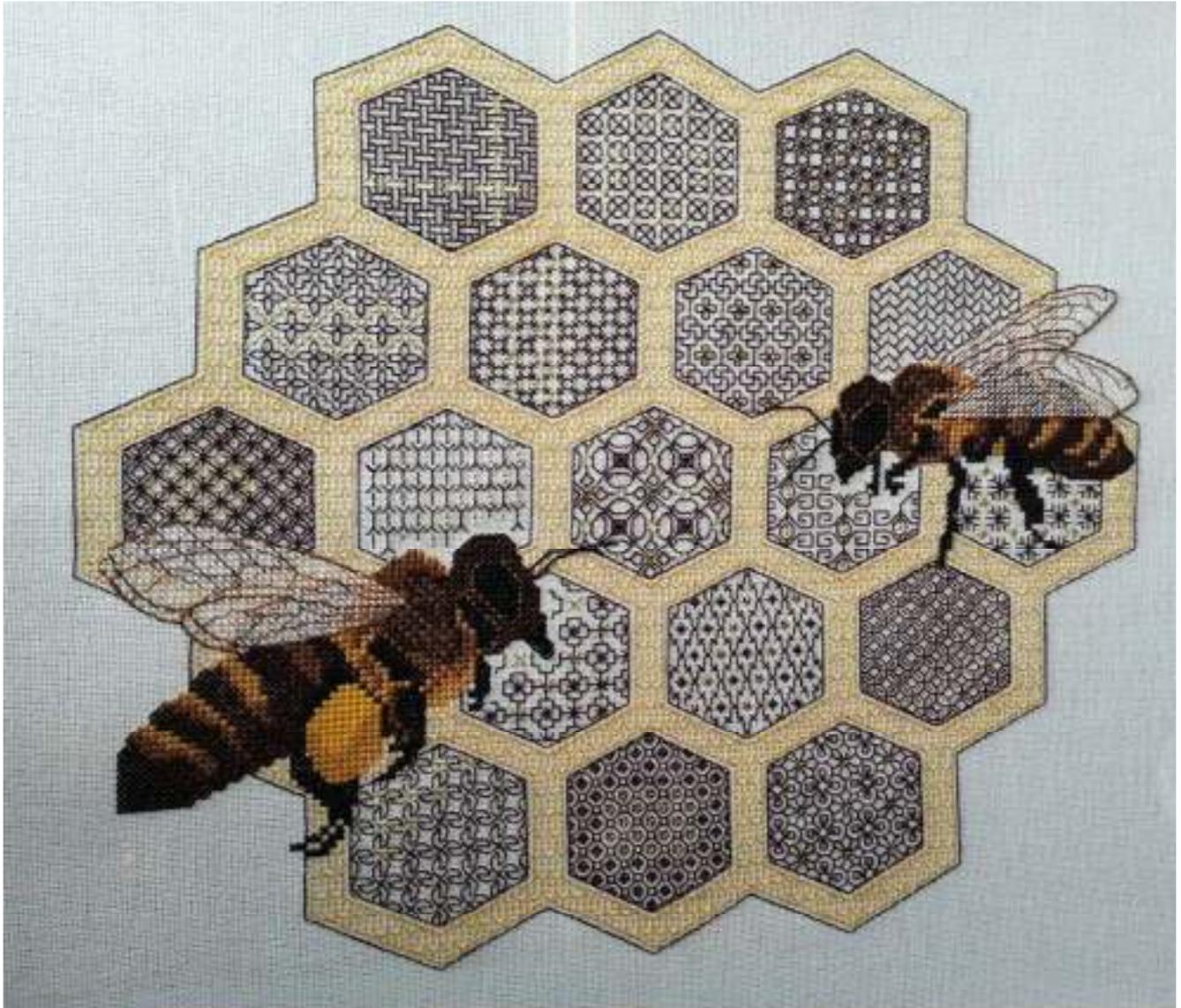
*“To the honour of the coming World Bee Day celebration for the first time, I made the embroidery of Carniolan honey bees in their honeycomb, for which different Elizabeth's patterns were used. The story behind:*

*Bees, as pollinators, play an important role for humankind in terms of providing food, food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, climate change mitigation, and a healthy environment. Raising public awareness of the importance of bees and apicultural products and protecting bees and beekeeping sector, the Slovenian Beekeeper's Association launched the proposal that World Bee Day be celebrated. After over three years of efforts a resolution to declare 20 May World Bee Day was unanimously adopted in the end of last year. May 20th is the day when Anton Janša was born (1734 - 1773). He is known as a pioneer of modern beekeeping in Slovenia and one of the greatest world experts on bees of that time. Beekeeping is an important farming activity in Slovenia and one with a long and rich tradition. Slovenians are a genuine beekeeping nation and beekeeping enjoys a status equal to that of other types of agricultural activity. Apis mellifera carnica, also known as the Carniolan honey bee, is famed for its docility, hard work, humility and excellent sense of orientation. A symbol of hard work and practical wisdom, this breed of bee is regarded as the second most widespread in the world and is protected as an indigenous subspecies of bee in Slovenia.”*

*Bernarda Valenčič*



Bernarda has taken different elements from ‘Save the Stitches’ and graphed out her ideas, first creating a honeycomb which she has filled with diaper patterns and then adding two cross stitch bees which have been graphed in colour. The careful planning of this project has produced a good working diagram and the embroidery is outstanding!





I have received some wonderful photos this month and a special one from Alice aged 11!  
Thank you Darcey, Cheryl, Devin and Alice for your lovely contributions.

### Maureen's Mini "Sublime Stitches"

Most of the larger charts can be adapted and altered to suit the needs of the embroiderer. Maureen, a friend of mine from Lakeshore in Ontario regularly used my designs for teaching her small needlework group. Not only has she completed a large version of "Sublime Stitches" but she has adapted it to produce a small version using stitches from the main chart and also from some other designs. Her thoughtful interpretation and her workmanship is impressive.

*"This is my mini version of Sublime from which I selected my favourites and invented and/or added a few of my own and from some of your other charts. Interestingly, about this mini piece, I started at the top left corner with absolutely no plan in mind. I just stitched and invented as I went along. Actually I am quite pleased as to how it turned out - it ALMOST looks "planned".*

Maureen S



*Maureen's samplers, small and large!*

Both the designs make good teaching samplers because they contain many different techniques and over 160 different patterns. Maureen's design is worked on evenweave fabric, but EB0010 Sublime Stitches Aida provides an alternative fabric

### Using a pattern as a group sampler

Rosemary P is using her “Pandora’s Box” as a group sampler for each person to add their own section. It will then be returned to her for finished off

*“My Pandora's Box is out visiting the people in our small RR Group. I provided the fabric with the outlines done, and some of the whitework, plus a couple of the motifs in colour also done. I have provided a list of the colours I want used - going for spring like. I will finish the whitework when it returns. Right now it is in Metcalfe, Ontario, near Ottawa. Next it will be in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, then on to Edmonton, Alberta, then back to 2 places in Ontario - Hanmer and Chelmsford, then back to me here in Guelph.*”

*We always provide stitching instructions and in mine I included the link to the Blackwork Journey Website so people could download their own copies of the design. I love it, my Mom loved it and was eager to see it completed; unfortunately she is no longer with us. Such is life. It will be back here later this year and I will post a picture of it when it returns. I expect there will be plenty left for me to do, although a couple of our members tend to do a lot on projects like this one.”*

I think this is a great idea Rosemary and look forward to seeing the finished work. Most of the samplers can be worked as group projects and many groups round the world are selecting a project such as “Box of Delights” or “Pandora’s Box” and the each member is working their own version and posting pictures in the Facebook groups so I can see their work.

### Greetings to Deirdre’s Needlework Guild in Harare, Zimbabwe

The guild has been working for 25 years and at the moment they are stitching CH0053 “Wandering Star” a group project. I am looking forward to seeing the pictures. Happy stitching Harare!

If any other groups would like to work a group project using a Blackwork Journey design, please contact me. I am very happy to work with you and to add your group to the Facebook groups

### Value of craft skills for young and old!



Many branches of the Embroiderers Guild in the UK have Young Embroiderers groups as part of their branches. Guides and Brownies, youth groups and Sixth form colleges all do their part in working with students to teach some textile skills, but with increasing demands on the curriculum, less time is available to devote to the subject and it becomes more important for parents and grandparents to pass on their skills and knowledge to the younger generation.

Vicky, has spent time with her young eleven year old niece teaching and encouraging her to stitch and I was delighted to receive a picture from Alice of her first blackwork embroidery. I hope it is the start of a lifelong love of needlework. Well done!

The Guardian newspaper said some traditional crafts were now “in the hands of an ageing population” and at risk of fading away in the next five years.



*Some of the ladies from 'Knit and Stitch' – you really are amazing*



**Friendship**



**Knitting**

**All ages**



**Knit & Stitch**

*Each member within the group has different interests and skills which are enjoyed and shared by all.*

Pat Reynolds, co-coordinator at the Heritage Crafts Association, said centuries-old crafts would die out unless younger people made a concerted effort to learn them.

“We have an incredible range of craft skills in the UK and some of the best craftspeople in the world,” she said. “These skills will only survive if they live in each generation. They provide a link to our roots and they are part of our shared heritage.”

In life, ‘knowing how’ is just as important as ‘knowing that’. Art, craft and design introduces participants to a range of intellectual and practical skills. It enables learners to use and understand the properties of a wide range of tools, machines, materials and systems. It provides children, young people and lifelong learners with regular opportunities to think imaginatively and creatively and develop confidence in other subjects and life skills.

<http://www.educationbusinessuk.net/features/importance-and-value-art-craft-and-design>

However, over the past few years there has been a renewed interest in crafts from all age groups and knitting and crochet has seen a revival amongst younger women who are learning and enjoying new skills.

I attend a ‘Knit and Stitch’ church group every Tuesday and the ages range from the 20’s into the 90’s. All are welcome and it is wonderful to see how everyone helps each other. If someone has a problem with a knitting pattern there is always someone there to assist. If a member is struggling with crochet, a willing pair of hands resolves the problem. A number of members are working various Blackwork Journey designs and I am there to help and encourage. Other members paint or draw, whilst one lady is finishing off a very large quilt. Baby quilts, soft toys and other projects have been completed for charities and for the sales table at church.

Much research has been conducted over the years into the value of craft skills and I know from teaching for many years and the reactions from the Facebook groups, how valuable these groups can be for people. They provide a support network for many members who are widowed, suffer from ill health, who are older or carers and many who are lonely and need a point of contact.

Whilst members will drop in and out of the groups as their needs vary, they grow in confidence with encouragement and support and many achieve new goals and targets they never thought they could. Too often women undervalue the work they have done and the praise from the other members of a group can really boost their self-esteem. Long may these groups continue!

I hope you have enjoyed this month’s Blog.

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

Happy Easter,

*Liz*

