



# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

October 2019



The seasons are what a symphony ought to be: four perfect movements in harmony with each other.  
Arthur Rubinstein



## Blackwork Journey Blog, October 2019

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September has been a somewhat difficult month because I had two cataract operations which means that I have been unable to drive or stitch comfortably for weeks and whilst I am now able to see better and colour looks so much brighter, it has made me realise how much I value my independence and just how much I have taken for granted.

I didn't realise just how much my eyesight had deteriorated until I started to take a fresh look at my threads for a new project. Different shades of red, green, blue and yellow now look very different and 'fresh'. My husband's red tie (that he was given!) looks lurid. I know that the ability to see colours deteriorates slowly as you age, but because the change is gradual I didn't realise just how much it had altered. Certain diseases and medicines can also affect vision, so if you think you have a problem head to your optician for an eye check!

Now all I need is two new pairs of glasses, one for general work and a specialist pair for my needlework and I am good to go!



*Happiness is a large box of threads in every colour of the rainbow!*

I pack threads for teaching classes and when the postman arrived this morning with a large box of DMC and Anchor cones I was in heaven. Other people spend their money on clothes or fine dining, but for me the joy

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of seeing all the colours together, just waiting to be used is exciting. All those new ideas, a new piece of fabric and I am really happy and I am sure many of you know where I am coming from!

### **What do you gain from being part of a needlework group?**

Amy asked on one of the Facebook groups where we all live and I replied that Blackwork Journey has members in almost every country in the world. I have been teaching for many years especially with older members of the community. I have been very concerned about the isolation which many people experience whether through illness, unemployment, location, being widowed or separated from family and friends.

Younger members can also experience many of the same problems or are caring for children or older relatives which in turn, can lead to isolation and depression. This got me thinking and posing myself the question – “What do you gain from being part of a needlework group?” My response is as follows;

*“I would like to feel that we provide a support network, whether for medical, family reasons or location as well as a platform to display work, ask questions, learn and just enjoy. On a serious note though, I keep in touch with them through three closed Facebook groups which were set up to help and support members who wanted to work Blackwork Journey designs.*

*Just by sharing an interest we are passionate about, a connection is formed which can become a lifeline, give confidence and the feeling of not being quite so isolated. I love to hear about readers who are starting their Blackwork Journey and are just gaining in confidence, as well as the experienced members of the groups who are so willing to share their expertise.*

*The world we live in is so fragmented that from my point of view I feel we need to be part of and to share something that is special to us with other people.*

*Needlework has taken me to some amazing places and I have met many wonderful dedicated embroiderers. I gain as much from you as I do from all the planning and designing. I have experienced this 'give and take' over 40 years of teaching, but I did not expect to find the same impact from working with the Facebook groups and this has been a real joy for me.*

*Does being part of a needlework group play a part in your life?”*

*Liz,  
Blackwork Journey*

These are just some of the comments I received from my Facebook members:

Rebekah A – Yes, being a part of a needlework group has made a huge impact on my life. I joined a group in 2014 and many of the members are more like family to me, which means more to me than words can express. I am truly thankful for all of them.

Carolyn K - I enjoy being part of various Facebook interest groups. I knit, quilt, hardanger, cross stitch and am starting blackwork. I live in the country so belonging to groups in town requires a time commitment and fees - which I'm trying to reduce as I'm retired and on a fixed income. I appreciate all the positive feedback that all my groups provide to all questions asked. I leave any group that has drama. Life is too short for that.

Mary W T - I belong to the Simcoe County Embroidery Guild, Barrie, Ontario, Canada. We have about 37 members.....the most beautiful group of women. We've become very close friends and everyone is so willing to help each other...in everything, not just stitching. Lots of laughs and we go on little outings. I'm alone now and would be lost without my stitching friends

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Tina C- Needlework groups have helped me in my confidence. I never thought of trying blackwork until I saw some in a different group and loved the look of it. Now I am working on my 3rd project this year. I enjoy the support, especially when I have a question.

Christine E - Absolutely! The folks I stitch with are the friends I have made since moving to South Florida 13 years ago. I have learned many things in that time, needlework related and non- needlework related.

Giuliana Del C - It does because of two things. One it motivates me. Seeing all the beautiful stuff people do is inspiring. The second is seeing all these new ideas makes me want to go and try new patterns. Thank you for that.

Sandie K - Since finding groups on FB (and other forums) I no longer feel that I'm the only stitching person in England! It's a pace of inspiration, support, ideas, friendship and encouragement. I now have friends all over the world who have supported me through a couple of difficult years, friends who I know share many of my hopes and dreams and manage to keep me motivated day to day. Thanks for being a part of my extended family.

Sheila M - Yes I've made a few new Facebook friends and admired many different types of stitching and added to my stash way too much.)

Sunday L - Absolutely it does. I enjoy hearing from everyone about all their projects and questions they ask. But just reading everyone's post from beginners to pros. Always learning new ideas, opinions about new products. I appreciate it all.

Alice B W - Well said Elizabeth. Being part of a group provides a sense of belonging, of knowing there are other like- minded people out there and that the world is made up of lots of good people contrary to all the bad stuff we hear in the media.

Diane S S Absolutely, Elizabeth - we have several groups here and it is a wonderful community. I love to travel, but I definitely miss my stitching peeps when I do! 😊

Debbie K - Yes, thank you Elizabeth, it does especially when someone as knowledgeable as you is also part of the group. We receive correct answers.

Sue M - It's made a huge difference in my life. Before Facebook and stitching groups I only for the most part cross stitched. I'd done some specialty stitches and difficult projects but I have learned so much from this group and other stitch groups. I've not done one of your designs yet but know in time I will. I work full time and have limited amounts of stitching time but I do make the best of it. 😊 Everyone is so helpful and encouraging!

Joycelyn M - For me too. I have been a member of the Canterbury Embroiderers' Guild (Christchurch, New Zealand) for almost 40 years and would be lost without their friendship and encouragement. Worldwide groups are interesting and encouraging too. Just fascinating that so many of us from such varied places are interested in the wonderful art of embroidery.....in all its forms.

Wendy Gottlieb Carolyn has basically told my story 😊 I love seeing everyone's work (experienced & newbie). It gives me inspiration to try new techniques, and I just LOVE the colour combinations used here! I'm in several different craft groups and feel more inspired than I have in years. I go freely between knitting, crochet, and embroidery - sometimes all in one evening, when I need a break! I love how supportive all the craft groups are, I also scroll or leave any dramas.

Thank you Elizabeth and all your members ♥

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Barbara SC - I live in South Africa, but out on a limb at St Lucia Estuary, basically a holiday resort, stitching keeps me sane. Only downside no stitching/craft shops so online shopping is a necessity. I really appreciate these groups.

Elenore J B - It keeps me motivated as there are always beautiful work being shared and wonderful assistance when needed. I am always learning new things Thank you 🙏👩🏻🧵

Angelique J - Yes, definitely! The looks I get when I try to discuss my needlework with the people I see and speak to every day makes me think I'm totally and utterly Mad. But then I look at my Facebook app, or on de Wednesdays my face-to-face group and I know I'm not the only one!

Susan JC - I joined because I don't know anyone else who does this kind of needlework. A few people I know sew, but no-one else knows what I am talking about when I mention blackwork! They also think it HAS to be done in black or white thread!

Leila B - It's always interesting to get to know others with similar interest and learn about their sometimes completely different life and approach to art

Jenny P- The various groups in belong to have been a godsend these last two plus years when I have been in and out of hospital almost on a monthly basis. When o can't stitch I love seeing progress on others' work, seeing their colours and interpretations and hearing their stories. Thank you!!!

Rose McC - I am in different needleworks from different reasons. In my region exist very few people who love to stitch or with whom I could talk, ask questions even on the net. In other groups I made stitchy friends for whom I feel great affection, they are great friends. In this group I always find, inspiration, new charts to add to my wishlist. My questions were always answered, I was helped, given advice by group members and even by Liz Almond. I am very grateful to everyone from this group. Thank you

Fran V- Yes, this group has inspired me tremendously to try new forms of needlework and to encourage others.

Christine W - I love been able to share my work with people who understand the time and effort that has been put in it. Also love the help that is given when I ask a question 😊

Fily V-W Absolutely yes. Being connected to my fellow stitchers all over the world, and sharing a special interest with them, keeps me from feeling isolated. And keeps my spirits up. I recently lost my 95-year-old aunt in December, and my 92-year-old mother in April. Both of them lived with us and the empty space they left behind is enormous. I love learning about other cultures, and other embroidery techniques from this group and others. My time spent embroidering helps keep me centered. ❤️

Friendships develop through the groups, and the projects have bought family members together!

Loes E - Exactly Fily. I have many friends because of the groups. I learn much. It gives me ideas and my world is so much broader. Thanks for your friendship. 😊Fily V-W, Loes I am so grateful to have "met" you on FB and for the friendship we have developed!

Gillian Z L - Yes, it really does. When we all have one passion to share it makes us a family in a way!

Bethany A C I - Yes it does, it helps me to know there is someone else is passionate about crafting. I feel it is becoming a lost art on younger generation.

Heather H - I had a class today with Elizabeth and came away in absolute awe of her work. I don't know if I'll be able to contribute much to the group, but I love looking at all your beautiful projects.

Of all the comments that I received I really liked this one from Sharon C:

Inspiration - seeing everyone's lovely work

Distraction - it helps me forget about my issues.

Focus - time out from normal life to focus on something for a few hours

Pride, satisfaction and achievement - on finishing an embroidery, getting it framed up and reverting positive comments.

Health - I find this is good for my mental health!

Oh, and meeting new like-minded friends! ♥

I appreciate you taking the time to add your comments and for allowing me to share your thoughts. It helps me to focus on what I am doing and whether I am giving the support that is needed. The internet is a force for good if it is used wisely!

### **The Lost Dress of Elizabeth I**

I have always been fascinated by the Tudor monarchs of England because embroidery, especially blackwork was a fundamental part of the social history of the period, so when I came across a video on YouTube about the Lost Dress of Elizabeth I thought many of you would appreciate seeing it.



“For years, an incredibly rare Tudor treasure lay tucked away in a church in the rural hamlet of Bacton. This altar cloth has long been associated with Elizabeth I through Blanche Parry, her long time servant who was born in Bacton. Now, new research has uncovered that this is in fact part of a dress worn by someone of the highest nobility at the Elizabethan court. Evidence points directly to the wardrobe of Elizabeth I, making it the only known surviving example of Elizabeth's clothing.”

See the Lost Dress of Elizabeth I in a new exhibition at Hampton Court Palace from 12 October 2019 - 23 February 2020: [bit.ly/TheLostDress](https://bit.ly/TheLostDress)

<https://youtu.be/mjai9PoRMo8>

### Good planning

**Before starting any new project it pays to take time thinking it through, especially if you are planning on working your own design.**

1. First, make a simple drawing and decide how to interpret it in embroidery using your imagination and considering different techniques!
2. Study the design carefully. For example, I want to embroider a tree. The tree consists of three parts: trunk, leaves and flowers. Which part is the most dominant – is it the trunk or the leaves? Which part do I want to emphasise most?
3. What technique do I want to use?

Will it be a calico garden style in creams and browns, a whitework design or a simple embroidery using traditional colours of greens and brown?

Are any of the stitches new ones that have never been worked before? Spend time trying the threads and stitches out first on your doodle cloth to get the feel of them and see how they look on the fabric.

4. Finally, what do I want to use the design for and does it need to be made larger or smaller? Does it need to be washable or will it be mounted and framed?

Thinking a project through carefully first can eliminate mistakes and possibly a lot of unpicking!



This tree was worked in three sizes, small for a purse, medium for a clutch bag and large for a shopping bag. The ground fabric was calico and the threads varies in thickness from embroidery floss to thick matt cotton.

*Small tree with simple leaves and a textured trunk.*



When I planned EB0009 'Sublime Stitches' Evenweave I had three different patterns pinned to the wardrobes for weeks before I was finally happy with the design. I even made alterations as I stitched it and then re-charted it before I presented the final version for the Blackwork Journey web site.



*Planning stages!*

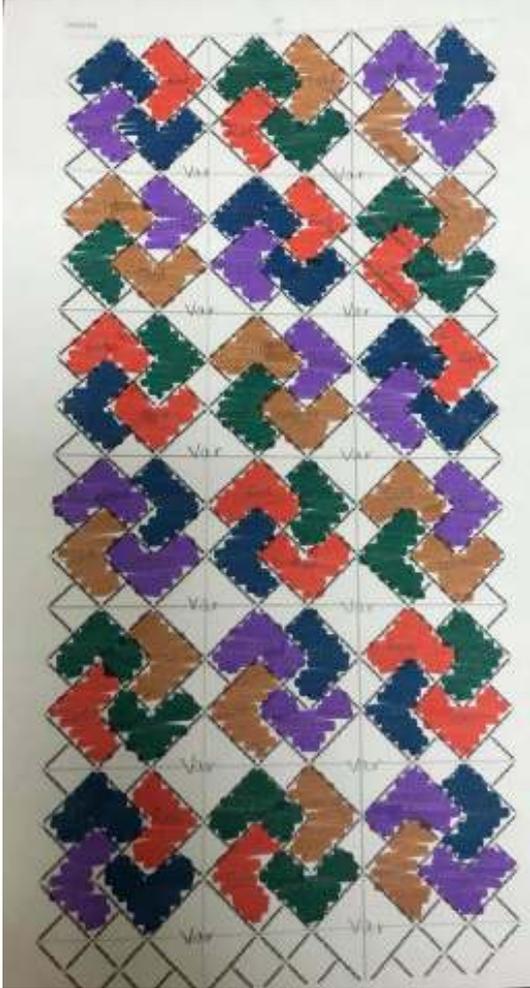
### *EB0009 Sublime Stitches Evenweave*

The same process was used to create EB0010 Sublime Stitches Aida, but the stitching was approached from a different perspective because the construction of Aida fabric is different to evenweave.

Aida is worked over blocks, whereas evenweave is worked over threads and whilst it is easier to see because you are working over blocks, if there are part stitches the blocks will have to be split with a sharp needle and this can be difficult. Not all stitches can be worked on Aida fabric because of its construction, so alternative patterns had to be substituted for the pulled thread work.

### *EB0010 Sublime Stitches Aida*





Kim Aucoin planned her 'Save the Stitches' colour scheme in great detail before she started to stitch.

Working a large design becomes so much easier, so well done Kim!

### New for October

#### CH0385 Kogin Conundrum.

I have been busy teaching over the past few months in different parts of the UK and meeting some groups for the first time and others for the second, third or fourth times.

It is always fun to see how they approach new subjects such as Kogin and in October there will be another new Kogin design with 32 different small patterns all capable of being developed into larger designs.

If you haven't tried Japanese Kogin pattern darning yet have a look at the photos in 'Charts' and 'Projects' on the Blackwork Journey website just to get an idea what is involved in this unusual technique.



## CH0386 The Seasons

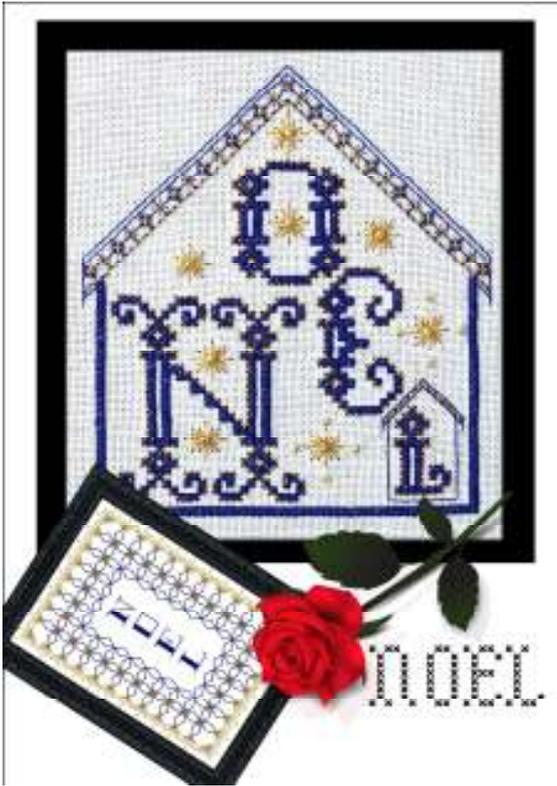
Autumn is well on the way here in the UK and the leaves are already changing into their autumn hues. I remember visiting both Canada and the Eastern States of the USA and following the 'fall' maps in the newspapers, which follows the path of the changing leaves and indicates where the best sights could be seen. This is rather like cherry blossom time in Japan. To mirror this change there is a new seasonal blackwork sampler on line.

*New Hampshire in the 'Fall'*



*CH0386 The Seasons*





**CH0397 Noel**

Two small Christmas designs for cards, book marks or Christmas gifts.

I hope you enjoy working these new designs!



**EB0006  
Pandora's Box**

**Readers Work**

I have great pleasure in sharing with you some recent photographs of readers work.

Lyn and Sue have made their embroideries into cushions , a very practical use for their work.

EB0006 Lyn O'Flaherty Pandora's Box  
CH0270 Susan Robinson Black Beaumont

Shemsi and Nicky have worked the woman in black. She was walking barefoot past a mosque in Delhi, but she could equally have been in Turkey or Abu Dhabi!

I hope you have enjoyed my Blog this month.

Thank you for all your contributions and for sharing them with us.

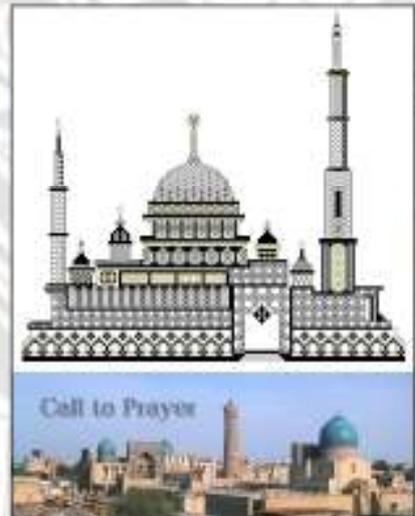
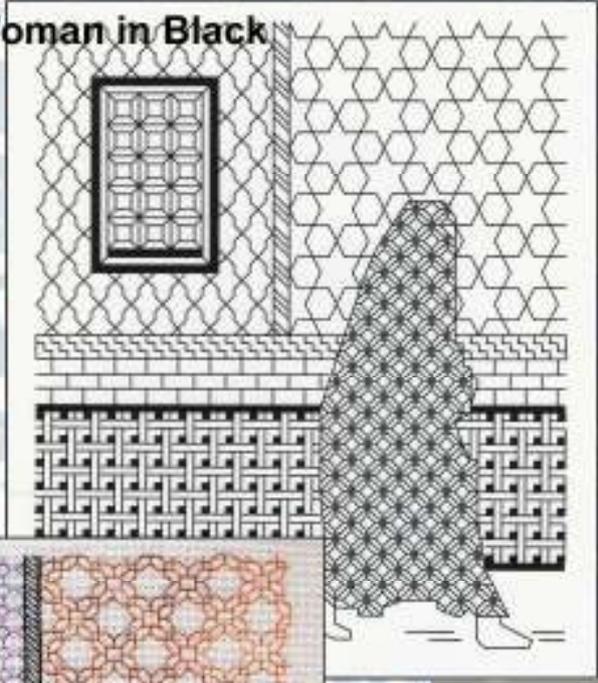
Happy stitching!

*Liz*

Two beautiful cushions by  
Lyn and Susan  
CH0270 Black Beaumont



**CH0060 Woman in Black**



**CH0162 Friday Mosque**



**Shemsi A and  
Nicky E**

**Woman in Black**

