



Blackwork *Journey Blog*

February 2020



Itch to Stitch



Together we make the world more beautiful one stitch at a time.

January is behind us and we can look forward to a new month and the approach of Spring. January is always a difficult month in England with long, dark nights and constant rain. There have been almost no frosts or snow this year, but it has been damp and miserable.

Contrast that with the droughts in many parts of the world and the fires in Australia which have dominated the news for so many weeks. Blackwork Journey has many readers who have been affected by the fires and we have relatives in the area, so I have watched with great concern. I have received many e-mails in connection with the fires and their effects. Our thoughts and prayers went out to all the people who have lost their homes and to the firefighters who have worked so hard to save lives and property at the risk of their own.

We have also seen many pictures of the animals affected and the efforts of people to look after them, especially the koalas.



I remember visiting a sanctuary and holding a koala when we travelled to Australia a few years ago and to see these gentle animals in such pain is very distressing.

Does needlework help in times of crisis?

Judging by the e-mails I have received from readers who have been affected by natural disasters, such as the earthquakes in Christchurch and New Zealand, fires in Australia and floods in the UK's Lake District or by personal problems from illness or family bereavement, one of the things that has helped significantly has been able to turn to a hobby for support.

I remember a reader saying she had stitched through the earthquake aftershocks in Christchurch and by concentrating on the needlework she was able to block out some of the fear. After a serious accident a few years ago, being able to stitch was my own way of coping, both physically and mentally, but the type of needlework we do in times of stress may be very different than the more intricate work we might do in normal circumstances, so just recently I have been looking very seriously at the part 'mindfulness' plays in my life and in the lives of some readers.

There are many books written on the subject, but basically it is a way of focusing your mind on your experiences such as your own emotions, thoughts and feelings. It is a form of meditation where you concentrate on your breathing, awareness of your body, muscles and mind, to relax and achieve a sense of calm and wellbeing. Mindfulness can help relieve stress, lower blood pressure, reduce chronic pain and improve sleep, which in my case is a definite bonus. I have attached a pdf at the back of the Blog that was designed to help a young lady cope with her problems. She is working on it every week. Some weeks blocks are left blank depending on her mood. Other weeks all the blocks are filled. Her name has been changed to respect her privacy.

By picking up a piece of needlework I am able to step away from the demands of everyday life, concentrate on the task in hand and gradually relax. It relieves my stress and enables me to regain perspective and face the rest of the day and I know that many of you feel the same way!

Very often we are so busy looking after the needs of the other people in our lives that we forget to take time out for ourselves and recharge our own batteries and mindfulness is a way of doing just that!

Embroidery and Mindfulness - Possible e-book?

I am currently considering writing a new e-book building on the idea of embroidery and mindfulness by taking a simple motif which can be stitched easily and repeated as many times as necessary and thereby build up a series of projects at different levels, ranging from the very simple to the larger, complex projects which I personally enjoy.

There are times when we need to stitch something very simple so that our hands are occupied, but our minds can wander and at other times, we need to be challenged. Bringing all these ideas together in one e-book will enable the reader to choose the starting level, but nevertheless, have something tangible at the end.

I have already designed and stitched the first motifs and worked out some of the projects I want to include for example:

Needlework accessory set

Gift cards

Placemat and napkins

Table runner and centre

Picture in traditional blackwork and gold

Advanced design along the lines of 'Tiny Treasures' and to include pulled thread work.

I would be very interested to know what you feel about the subject either by e-mail or through the Facebook groups. (lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk)

Itch to Stitch – Hand embroidered patchwork quilt coming soon!

Blackwork Journey focuses on supporting its members and developing their skills and ideas whilst exploring and challenging the designer. To this end, I have been working on a patchwork lap quilt consisting of 49

different designs incorporating a myriad of embroidery stitches and ideas.



The quilt consists of 49 blocks stitched together by hand or machine.

7 x 7 rows = 42 x 42 inches

Border: 3 inches

Total Size: 48 x 48 inches

Quilt may be made larger or smaller by adding or reducing the number of blocks

Wall hanging:

Each block would be mounted over a square of interfacing, 6 x 6 inches and the blocks slip stitched together.

7 x 7 rows = 42 x 42 inches

Border optional

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The designs are traced onto the fabric squares using an HB pencil or a water-soluble pen.

Fabric: cotton

Sew in medium weight interfacing for hanging

Square size: 8 inch, to work in a ring

Finished size of block: 6 x 6 inches, with a half inch seam allowance to make stitching the blocks together easier.

Threads: embroidery floss, crochet cotton, Cotton P rle, any threads from stash

Tacking cotton

Needle: Sharps 16, 17, 18

Backing fabric – buy the backing and batting at a later stage when you have decided on the size of the project.

Batting:

Cotton batting - because it's made from natural fibres it is favoured for its soft texture and comfort. 100% cotton batting is usually 1/8" thick.

Polyester batting holds its shape and thickness compared to other fibres, polyester fibres are preferred for cribs and bedding. Polyester is thicker but lighter, keeps you warm without the weight. It's non-breathable, but resists mould and mildew. Polyester batting thicknesses are 10 oz which is 1" thick, 6 oz is 1/2", 8 oz is 3/4" and 4 oz is 3/8".

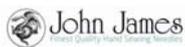
Wool batting is very lightweight and is used for its warmth. Wool batting is a natural and lofty option. Wool batting is 1/2" thick and resistant to creases. It holds its shape and it springs back. It's excellent for hand and machine quilting and can also be tied.

Cotton/Poly blends are typically 80% cotton and 20% polyester. It has the benefits of cotton, but with more loft.

Bamboo batting is made from 50% bamboo and 50% organic cotton blend batting. Bamboo batting is very breathable and ideal for machine quilting. It's machine washable with 2-3% shrinkage. Bamboo is processed into luxurious fibre using pollution-free methods with little waste.

Embroidery needle:

At the end of the January Blog, I attached a pdf by 'John James' needles showing which needles are suitable



Sharps

These are general purpose sewing needles used by dressmakers around the world. Size 16, 17 and 18 are known as Carpet Sharps and, as their name suggests, are most commonly used in the design and manufacture of carpets and rugs.

Quilting / Betweens

Specifically designed for quilters, the short length of these needles allows you to stitch far quicker than when using an ordinary sewing needle.



for different types of work. Please consult the pdf if you are not certain which needles to use for your embroidery. It is a very helpful guide.

The quilt has just been completed and there will be an octagon quilt at a later date. Now it needs to be charted and the instructions written. If you decide you would like to take part in the project take time to consider what colours you would like to use for your quilt and how you would arrange them.

If you want to use darker materials you will need Clover Chacopy Tracing Paper or similar.

5 Sheets (Blue, Green, Red, White & Yellow)

30cm x 25cm (12" x 10")

- Single-sided
- Convenient for tracing patterns on most fabrics
- Applies to any fabrics with different colours
- Test first with same colour fabric to see if the markings can be removed or not
- Wash the marked fabric with water (do not use any oil based solvents)
- Remember that it is more difficult to remove the chalk when you iron the fabric
- It may be difficult to apply to thicker fabrics such as felt, due to its elastic nature

Instructions:

1. Test first to see if markings can be removed
2. Place the fabric on your cutting mat or pad
3. Then lay the Clover Chicopee tracing paper between the fabric and the pattern
4. Trace the design lines with a tracer or ball pen



Using an I-pad as a lightbox

If you have an I-pad it can also be used as a lightbox for tracing designs onto dark cotton using a white tracing pen or a quilter's pencil by placing the drawing on the top of the I-pad and the fabric on top of that.

How to Adjust Brightness

1. In Settings open the Settings app.
2. Tap Display & Brightness.
3. Drag the Brightness slider left and right to adjust the brightness.
4. Adjust other settings such as Auto-Brightness, Text Size, and Bold Text.

Useful tools: Quilting squares

Sew Easy NL4178 Acrylic Quilting Ruler 12.5 inch

The one I use most frequently is the:

OLFA 9.5 inch transparent quilting square

OLFA's rulers are non-slip for stable and safe cutting and frosted with black grid lines for clarity on light- and dark-material.

The 9.5" squared is a great second to our larger square ruler

Use as a template and for squaring up 9" blocks, borders or backgrounds.

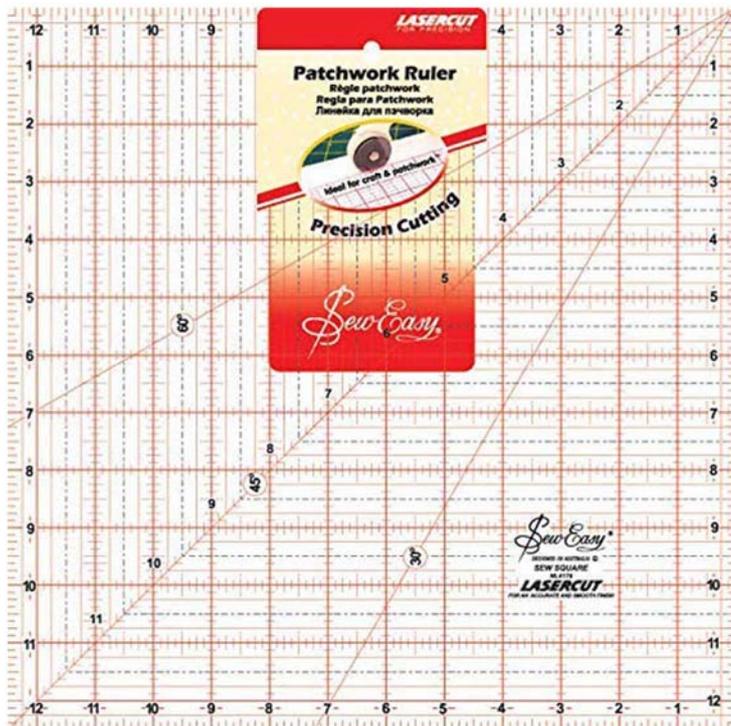
Great for cutting squares, triangles, and strips with ease and accuracy

The easy to read number and grid lines with 1" grids and 1/8" increments ensure precise measurements.

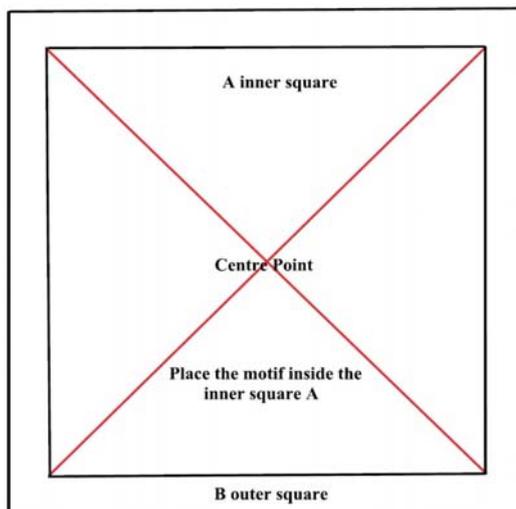
I use this for squaring up all my embroideries to make certain that the sizing is accurate

Making templates

If you are thinking about making a quilt with me, the parts will be added each month. They will contain drawings, photos, instructions and stitch diagrams for each block.



Quilting templates



You will need to cut TWO card or plastic templates

One 6 x 6 inches

One 7 x 7 inches

These must be accurate if the blocks are to join together correctly. The finished embroidered square will measure 6 x 6 inches

The fabric square will measure 8 x 8 inches



This is a long term project to be worked over a number of months. The project will be posted in Freebies and will eventually be bought out as an extended e-book. You can try all or some of the blocks and use them to make smaller projects such as cushions, wall hangings, decorations, table linen and boxes.

Work in progress



The finished design!

A different way of using an embroidery?



It is not always essential that your embroidery is made into a picture. There are many different, practical ways of using your finished work. Last month I posted a sashiko chart PR0057 Japanese Spring in 'Projects' which I really enjoyed stitching but wanted to use in a more practical way so I added a border and applied it to the front of a canvas bag.

Both the bag and the embroidery are washable, so they will be both useful and pretty!

It is just as easy to use a sashiko design on a cushion, so with that in mind I designed one for a class I am teaching later in the year. I also used a sashiko pattern on the back of the cushion to make it more interesting.



PR0057 Japanese Spring

The cushion and the small mini-quilt were worked on pre-washed calico. It is a hard wearing fabric which handles well and is loose enough to stitch through with sashiko thread or Cotton P rle No 8.



Calico bag, cushion and mini quilt are all worked in medium weight calico!



What is calico?

Calico cloth is unbleached and half-processed cotton and is less coarse than denim. It has an unfinished appearance and was originally discovered by the British during their reign and influence in India. It is a simple and cheap quality of cotton. The word 'Calico' comes from Calicut, which was a European term for the Indian city Kozhikode. It is extremely versatile and can be used in a wide range of products such as skirts, dresses, bags and as to a backdrop canvas for painting.

Be aware that cotton calico will shrink by approximately 10% after the first wash then 3% on further washes. The calico I used was pre-washed but I also washed it again before using it. I used medium weight calico for my embroidery and when I teach Calico Gardens at day schools. It creases easily, but feels soft to handle and is easy to work.



Georgina Bellamy 'That Embroidery Girl'

At a recent exhibition in Harrogate UK, I met a young designer who graduated from The London College of Fashion in 2014. Whilst her main work is bespoke, bridal and couture embroidery, she has designed a range of quirky, but delightful beaded animals and birds which attracted a lot of attention at the show. I think you will enjoy her beautifully made little creatures. Her attention to detail and the skill with which they have been created made them very memorable.



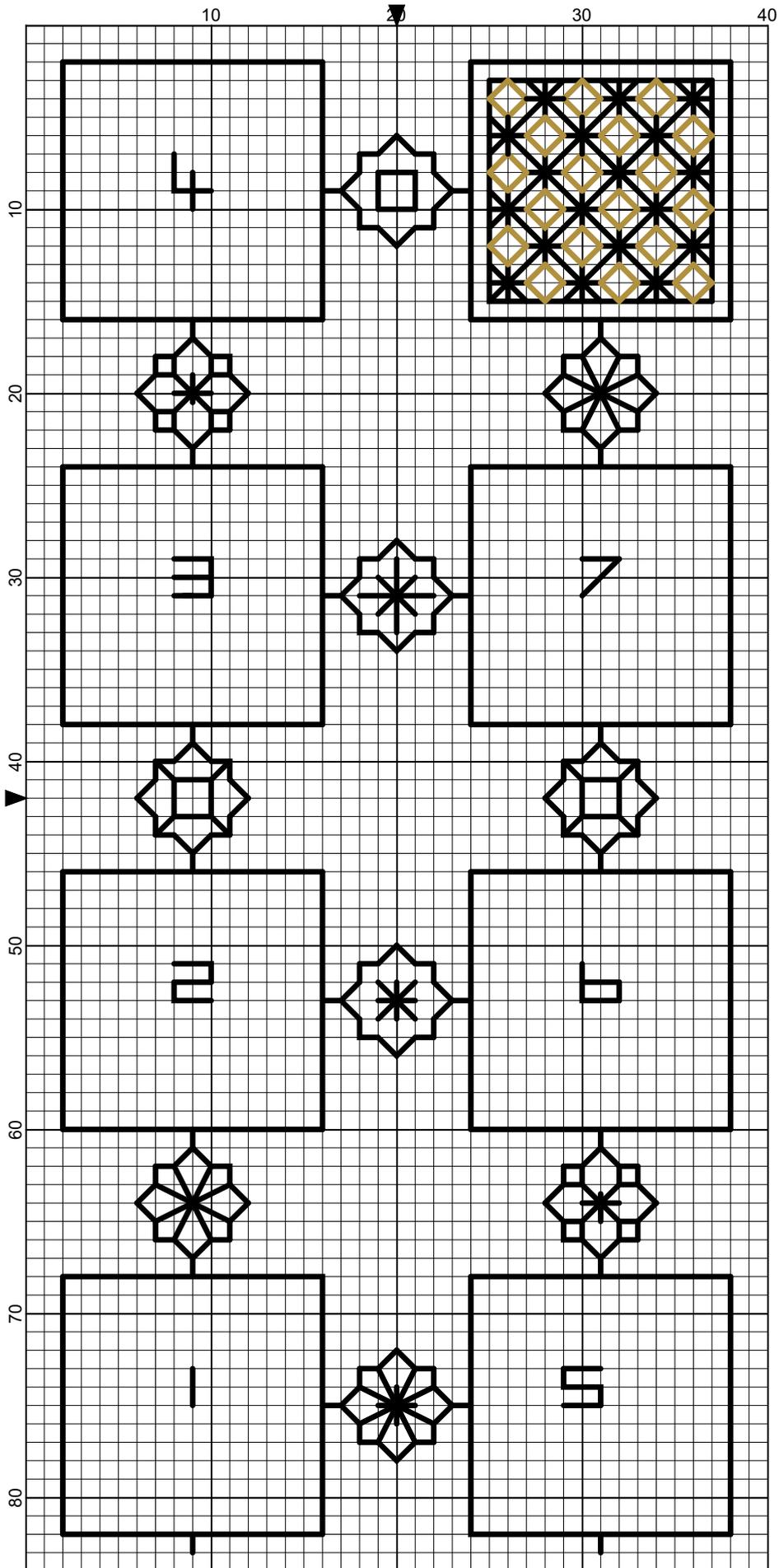
Georgina's 3D goldwork and stumpwork techniques including, hand embroidery, metal purl, thread, pearls, leather and wood. My favourite is the flying mouse! (see below)



I hope this month's Blog has given you something to think about. If you have any queries please contact: lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching!

Liz



Elizabeth Almond

Nicole's Adventure

Author: Elizabeth Almond
Copyright: Elizabeth Almond
Grid Size: 40W x 84H
Design Area: 2.57" x 5.79" (36 x 81 stitches)

Backstitch Lines:

———— DMC-310 black

———— DMC-167 yellow beige - vy dk

Dear Nicole

Thank you and your friends for your e-mail. I hope I can help you just a little. Stitch a little piece of your sampler every day! Use any threads and any colours that you like. DMC floss works best using one strand and a blunt tapestry needle No 24.

Material: narrow band of Zweigart 14 count Aida 6 x 36 inches

Work a long, narrow band using this pattern as your basic design for each week.

Every block is 14 x 14 stitches square. Separate the motifs with a flower which can be worked in any colour you feel like. This will stop the blocks running into each other and will showcase all your beautiful, positive stitching.

After week one work the next eight blocks underneath. A long narrow piece will be much easier to handle and it can be rolled up and put away after you have worked it.

There are lots of happy colourful patterns in 'Box of Delights', Pandora's Box and in the new 'Tiny Treasures' design which you will find in Freebies in Blackwork Journey. You can use any of these patterns and fit them into the blocks.

The most important thing is that you have fun and enjoy it and every bright square is a good day. As you progress you will have more good days than bad ones but life is full of ups and down so stay positive.

Liz X