



# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

February 2022



## February - the end of Winter and the coming of Spring!

Winter and spring overlap at the seams  
chilly breezes and warm green dreams!  
~Terri Guillemets

Winter is not my favourite time of the year with its cold damp days and long dark nights and so with Spring on the horizon, I look for the first snowdrops in the garden, the bulbs pushing through the frosty earth, the first green shoots appearing on the lime tree, the squirrels chasing around the trees, the red breasted robin marking his territory and the tawny owls hooting in the trees all of which makes has never been more welcome after the very difficult period that we have all been through. Very slowly life is returning to 'normal' as we begin to look forward to the coming year with hope and ideas.

Throughout the last year, I have worked to keep the Facebook groups together, to motivate its members and provide challenges and support. I have also stitched endlessly for my own wellbeing and created new designs and ideas for the coming year for the Blackwork Journey website as well as submitting a number of charts for books and magazines for 2022 and 2023. My classes are resuming in person rather than on Zoom which I find exciting and encouraging.



However, some things have changed as a result of the pandemic as things that we took for granted have been questioned. What do we really want from our lives and what do we value most? What part do family and friends play and do we value them more and has it brought us closer, or do we need to look again and rethink?

By meeting groups in person again, it has become very clear how isolated and lonely many people have felt and how difficult it has been for them. However, if we can reach out and touch just one person then we can begin to rebuild not just our lives, but support others as well. Our common love of needlework can strengthen links and build bridges for the future.

## New E-Book and a Project for February 2022

### E-Book EB0021 Celtic Knotwork

I have always been intrigued by Celtic designs, so I have spent some time over the past few months exploring Celtic Knotwork and putting together an e-book on the subject.

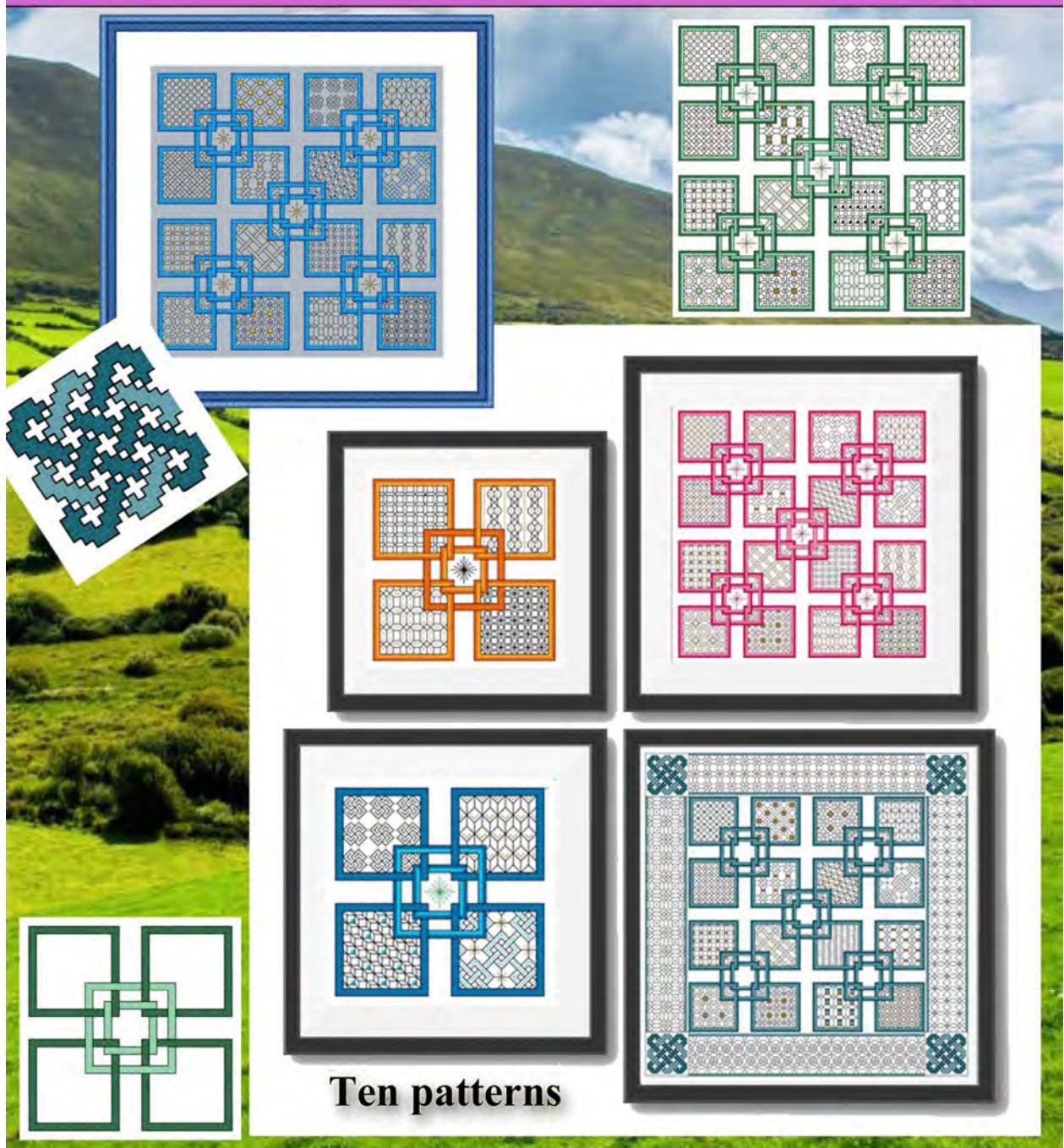
Celtic knots are stylised graphical representations of knots used for decoration in the Celtic style. These intricate designs are often complete loops that have no beginning or end and could be said to represent eternity, whether this means loyalty, faith, friendship or love. They have a long history dating back hundreds of years.

There are ten patterns in the book:

There are four designs to represent each season of the year, motifs and a large design with and without borders to explore. Each pattern is worked in a cross stitch framework which has also been included as a separate pattern for you to create your own Celtic sampler. All the filler patterns are interchangeable.



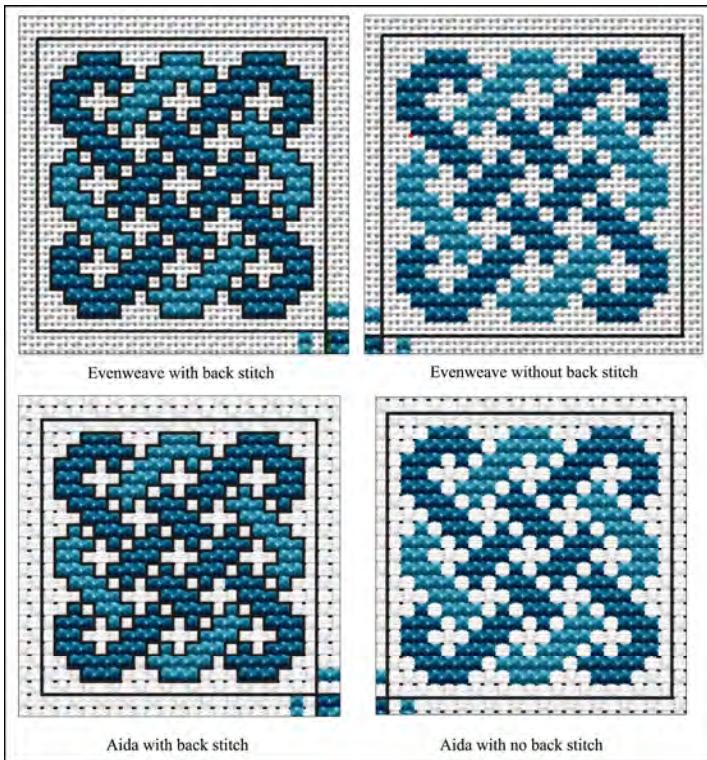
**Blackwork Journey  
Celtic Knotwork**  
*E-Book 21*



**Ten patterns**

The patterns can be worked on Zweigart 28 count evenweave, or Zweigart 14 count Aida.

# Blackwork Journey Blog, February 2022



*Explore the beauty of blackwork through these knotwork designs in stranded floss!*

## To outline or not to outline? That is the question.

All the frameworks in the patterns have been outlined with back stitch in one strand of floss.

Whilst it does take a lot of time to outline all the framework patterns it does define the embroidery clearly. If you look at the evenweave and Aida examples on the left you can decide where to outline the motifs or not.

## PR0065 Chestnut Seasons.

Two designs -Spring and Autumn and a free style interpretation of Autumn to create your own pattern using the blackwork filler patterns.

All charts, instructions and a drawing are included for the freestyle leaf.

One of the most attractive trees in the English garden is the horse chestnut. In Spring the tree produces large flowers and in the autumn the leaves turn many different shades of brown and gold and the squirrels hurry to collect the conkers and bury them for the Winter. The distinctive leaves are composed of 5-7 leaflets making the whole leaf up to 60 cm across.

Explore the beauty of blackwork in a single leaf using four different shades of floss for each season. The soft colours of spring are represented in the first chestnut leaf and the richer browns of autumn in the second design mark the changing of the seasons.

### Chestnut Spring:

**Design Area:** 6.86 x 6.64 inches

96 x 93 stitches

**Fabric:** Zweigart 28 count evenweave, 10 x 10 inches minimum

### Chestnut Autumn:

**Design Area:** 6.86 x 6.64 inches

96 x 93 stitches

**Fabric:** Zweigart 28 count evenweave, 10 x 10 inches minimum

The free style design can be enlarge to any size and filled with blackwork patterns or you can use the drawing provided.



*PR0065 Chestnut Seasons*

## To bead or not to bead?

On the charts I have indicated the position of beads, but these are **optional** and on my embroideries I decided not to add them. I backstitched along one side of the stem, but did not back stitch the leaf outlines. If the free style design is worked then the outline would be back stitched and whipped and the leaf veins worked in double knot stitch. All the stitch instructions are included.



**What can you do with all the scraps of fabric you have accumulated and don't want to throw away?**

Over the years I have collected many different fabrics and lots of small left over pieces which I did not want to throw away. They have been gathering dust and I took the opportunity over lockdown to go through them and sort them out into colours, patterns and fabric types.

*Recycle, reuse – explore your stash of fabrics and threads!*

In Japan, the practice of reworking and repairing textiles through piecing, patching and stitching has been around for generations under the name of **boro**. The worn areas are patched and old garments cut up and joined using Sashiko running stitch through all the layers of fabric. I have seen examples of this work in Japan and with the current trends to recycle and reuse I started exploring this aspect.



Japanese child's sleeping mat (boron Shikimono), late 19th century composed of several layers of indigo dyed cotton fabrics, patched and heavily stitched.

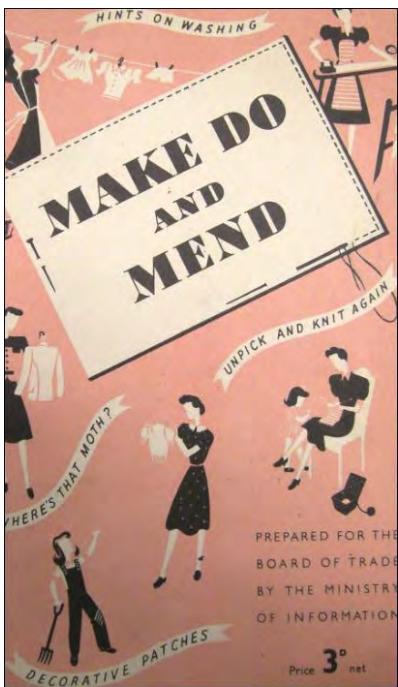
H x W: 111.8 × 59.7 cm

44 × 23 1/2 inches

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

The idea of reusing fabric is not new!

In wartime in England the idea was adopted as 'make do and mend' and in the 21st century it has reappeared as mindful stitching or 'slow' stitching, but with a different objective.



'Make Do and Mend' was a pamphlet issued by the British Ministry of Information in the middle of World War II.

It was intended to provide housewives with useful tips on how to be both frugal and stylish in times of harsh rationing. With its thrifty design ideas and advice on reusing old clothing, the pamphlet was an indispensable guide for households. Readers were advised to create pretty 'decorative patches' to cover holes in worn garments; unpick old jumpers to re-knit chic alternatives; turn men's clothes into women's; as well as darn, alter and protect against the 'moth menace'.

I remember my mother-in-law talking about the leaflet and her experiences of reusing clothes during the war when rationing was in place.

An updated version of the book was recently released to coincide with the economic recession, offering similar advice for 21st century families.

Slow stitching has been defined as taking time to slow down from a chaotic life and take pleasure in the art of stitching and not necessarily the creation of a perfect finished project. Whilst I do not subscribe completely to this point of view, the idea of slowing down and taking time to appreciate the actual stitching does appeal to me, so with that in mind I started to create my own way of slowing down through stitching and found it very therapeutic!



## Setting up a mindful scrap project

I set two different mindful projects using slightly different methods to determine which one worked better for me.

The basic method is the same for both projects, but iron-on interfacing was used as the backing fabric for the Table Centre (Project 2).

### Project 1 Cushion front

#### Materials:

Backing square: plain fabric, 14 x 14 inches e.g. Old sheeting or fabric from stash.

Scraps of fabric – squares, rectangles, circles in different sizes to cover the backing square

Pins, tacking cotton, sewing needle, crewel needle  
The needle needs to have a sharp point and a big eye so that the thread passes through easily without fraying. A thimble can be useful if the fabric is thick.

Thread for top stitching – crochet cotton, stranded floss – threads from your stash.

Tailor's chalk or water-soluble pen, HB pencil or coloured crayon to draw design onto fabric.



## Method:

- a. Collect together the pieces of scrap fabric and threads in different weights and thicknesses.
- b. Cut the backing fabric to size. This will be the base to stitch the patches to.
- c. Cut the scraps into strips, squares, rectangles, circles or any shape that you want to use. Some the edges have been cut with pinking shears. All the edges are unfinished.
- d. Lay the pieces onto the backing fabric and arrange them. Overlap and position them until you are happy with the arrangement.
- e. Place, pin and tack the pieces into position on the backing fabric.
- f. Mark the lines on the cushion front in the chosen medium. Tailor's chalk works well in dark fabric, or a yellow or white pencil.

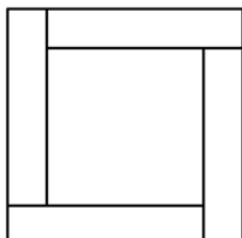
*The horizontal and vertical lines were drawn one inch apart on the cushion front.*

- g. Once the lines have been drawn they were stitched in Sashiko running stitch use a matt, white crochet cotton and a crewel needle. Cotton Pérle No's 8 or 5 could be used or a minimum of four strands of floss.

Tie a knot in the thread and stitch the first line. Try to keep the stitches evenly spaced and the same size. Think about each stitch. The more you do the more evenly and better spaced the stitches will become. More than one stitch can be on the needle at one time. Turn the work at the end of the row and continue until all the rows have been completed.

- h. Place the stitching face down of a soft towel and press lightly. Cut four strips of fabric 3 inches wide and machine stitch them round the embroidered piece in a log cabin design.

- i. Press the cushion front again and make up into a cushion case using plain fabric for the back. Insert a zip or slip stitch the opening.





## Project 2 Table centre

The table centre uses a more complex pattern of 12 circles radiating out from the centre.

### Materials:

Backing square: medium weight iron-on interfacing, 15 x 15 inches

Muslin backed iron-interfacing should be used if it is available.

Note: Iron-on interfacing is easy to stitch through and hold the patches in position.

Scraps of fabric to cover the backing square

Pins, tacking cotton, sewing needle, crewel needle, thimble

Thread for top stitching – crochet cotton, stranded floss

Tailor's chalk or water-soluble pen, HB pencil or coloured crayon to draw design onto fabric.

### Method:

a. Cut the iron-on interfacing to size.

b. Arrange and place, pin and tack the fabric shapes into position on the interfacing. The glue side of the interfacing will hold the fabric into position. Remove the pins, but leave the tacking in position until the top stitching has been completed.

c. Iron the interfacing on the back of the work using a cloth between the iron and the interfacing to prevent the interfacing melting and sticking to the iron.

d. Once the backing and patches are joined together draw the pattern of 12 circles half an inch apart onto the fabric. Stitch from the centre circle working outwards using the chosen thread and Sashiko running stitch. Remove all tacking threads. Place face down on a soft towel and press lightly.

e. Making up:

Turn the edges in 0.5 inches in and tack. Cut a square of medium weight cotton backing fabric and slip stitch into position. A decorative machine stitch was used for the edging but the edging could have been stitched in Sashiko running stitch.

f. Press the mat ready for use.

### Final thoughts:

It cost me nothing except for the interfacing as all the fabric and threads came from my stash. It was fun to think through and very relaxing to stitch. I would use iron-on interfacing again as a base.

Would I do it again? Yes, I am planning a table runner next and thinking about making a waistcoat.

Would it be suitable to do with children? Bright fabrics and simple stitching make it a practical and cheap project to work with a class or a grandchild.



**It does not have to be perfect! Relax, stitch and enjoy!**



## Copyright

I was asked recently whether it was right to change a design or a pattern and could they pass the pattern on to someone else?

As a designer I create a pattern, but as an embroiderer if you want to personalise the design by changing colours, stitches or motifs to make it your own, then I am delighted for people to do so.

Making changes takes a certain confidence and that comes through the experience knowing what will and will not work. Members who have worked the 'Sublime Stitches' project over a twelve month period have adapted the sampler for their requirements.

What does worry me is if the source of the original design is not acknowledged or someone attempts to sell my patterns without authorisation. I do sell my patterns through Nordic Needle and several other outlets worldwide, but if readers do find any Blackwork Journey patterns in places they would not expect to find them, I would like to know so I can investigate.

# Blackwork Journey Blog, February 2022

It takes many hours to design and stitch embroideries and most designers rely on the income generated by the sale of their patterns for their income and to run their sites. Misuse of charts by selling them on is dishonest and betrays the trust of the designer.

All E-books come with the following:

Elizabeth A Almond 2022

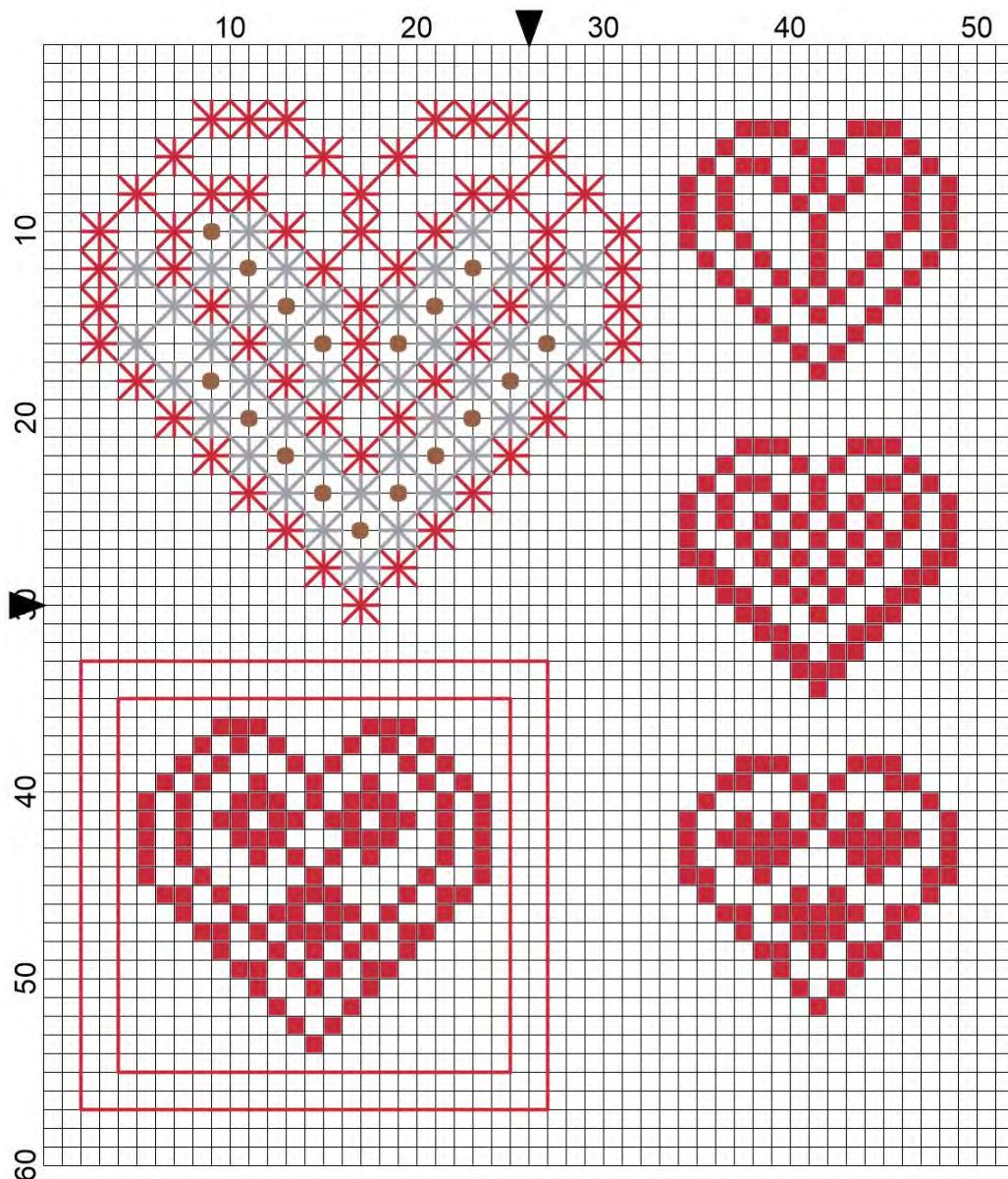
All rights to this intellectual property are reserved. It may be duplicated for personal use only. Any other use requires the author's written permission  
[lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk](mailto:lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk)

All my charts and projects have a Blackwork Journey © copyright sign on them and as such are protected.

I appreciate your help and understanding in this very complicated matter.

## Valentine's Day February 14<sup>th</sup>

Stitch a small gift to mark this special day!



## Large heart round ornament:

### Design area:

2.14 x 2.00 inches, 30 x 29 stitches

**Material:** Zweigart 28 count evenweave, or 14 count Aida, 5 x 5 inches

Backing fabric

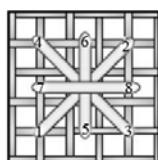
Two 3 inch card circles

Cord for hanging

### Stitches used:

DMC Red floss – Smyrna cross, two strands

DMC white floss, two strands – eyelet stitch pulled tight.



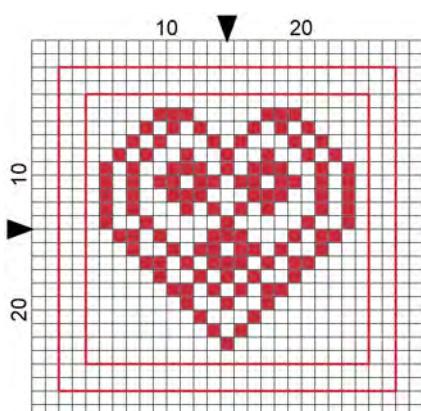
Smyrna cross over 4 threads

### Method:

1. Insert the Smyrna Cross working from left to right over 4 threads. The diagonal cross is worked first followed by the upright cross.

2. Using white floss, 2 strands, work the eyelet stitches pulling each stitch tight to create a small hole.

Make embroidery into a circular ornament. Cut the fabric into a circle. Work a running stitch round and pull tight over the card. Do this with both pieces, Stitch a cord hanger to one circle. Slip stitch two covered circles together adding a bead to the needle at each slip stitch.



### Scissor Keeper

**Design Area:** 1.79 x 1.71 inches, 25 x 24 stitches

Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count, two 4 x 4 inch squares

Hanging cord, 8inches, stuffing

### Stitches used:

Back stitch, one strand Cross stitch, two strands

### Method:

Work the cross stitch motif and the back stitch on both pieces. Turn the edges in and tack 4 threads away from the final row of back stitch. Insert the hanger. Slip stitch the two pieces together and stuff.

The small hearts can be used for a bookmark or a brooch. Beads and metallic threads add sparkle and texture.

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog.

Happy stitching, *Liz*

