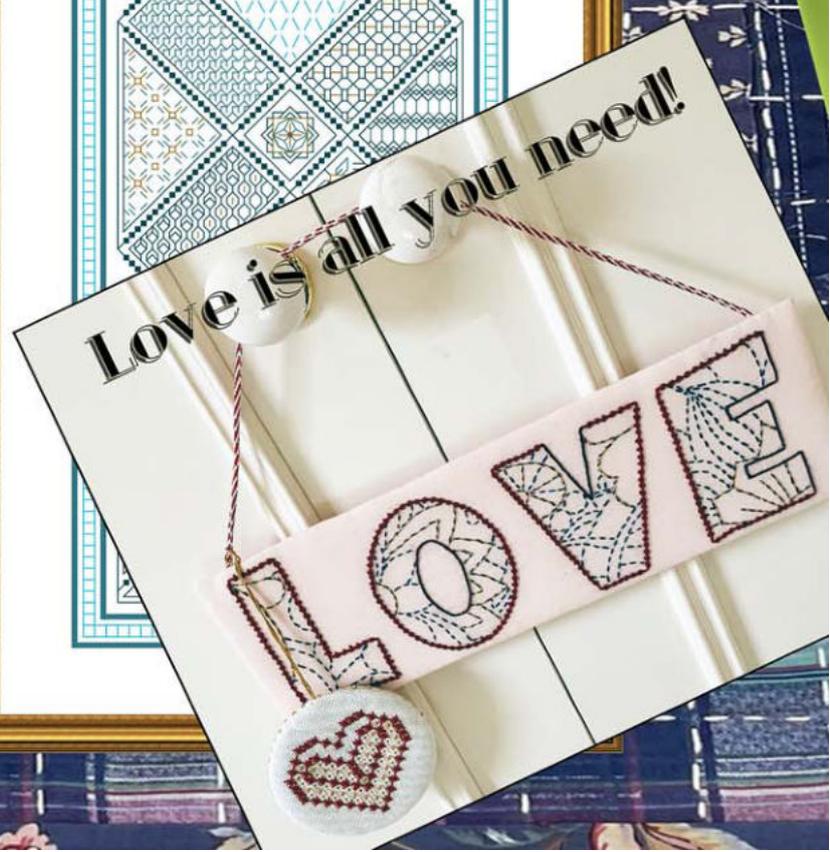
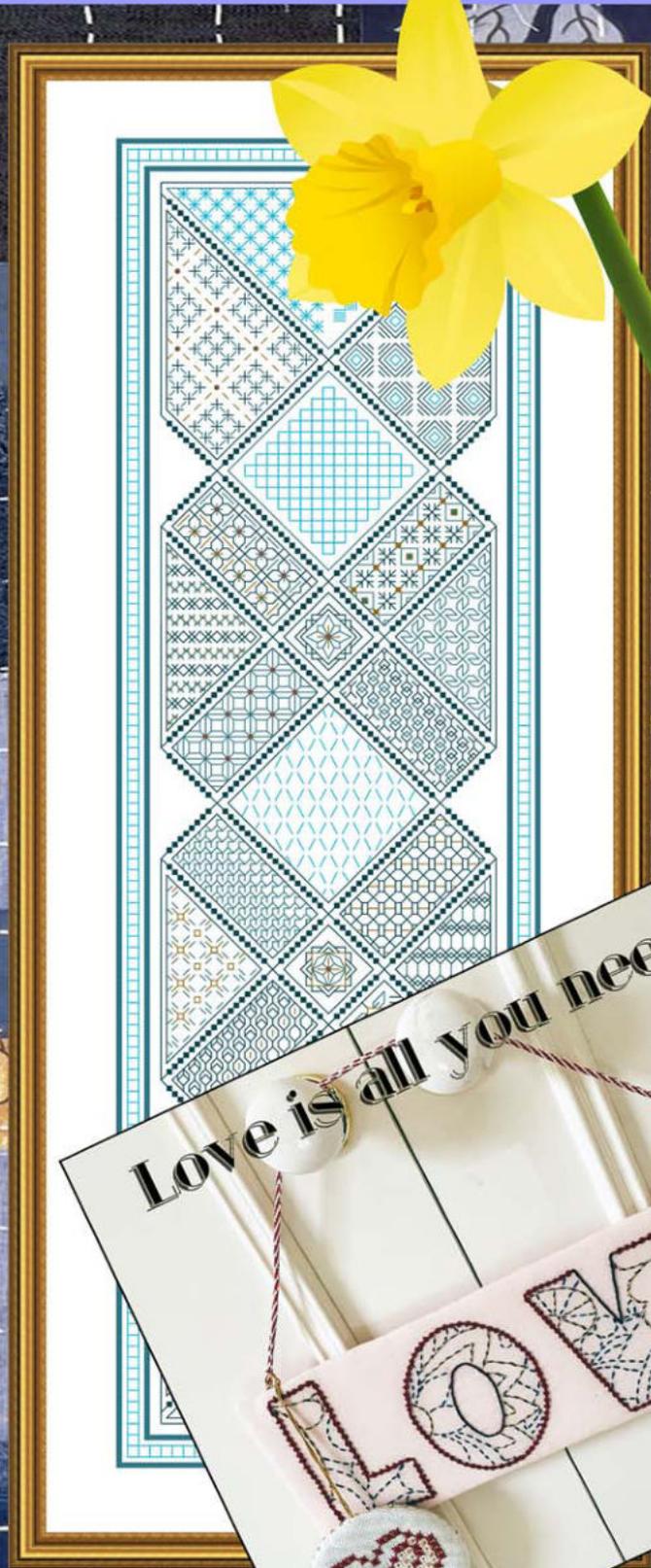


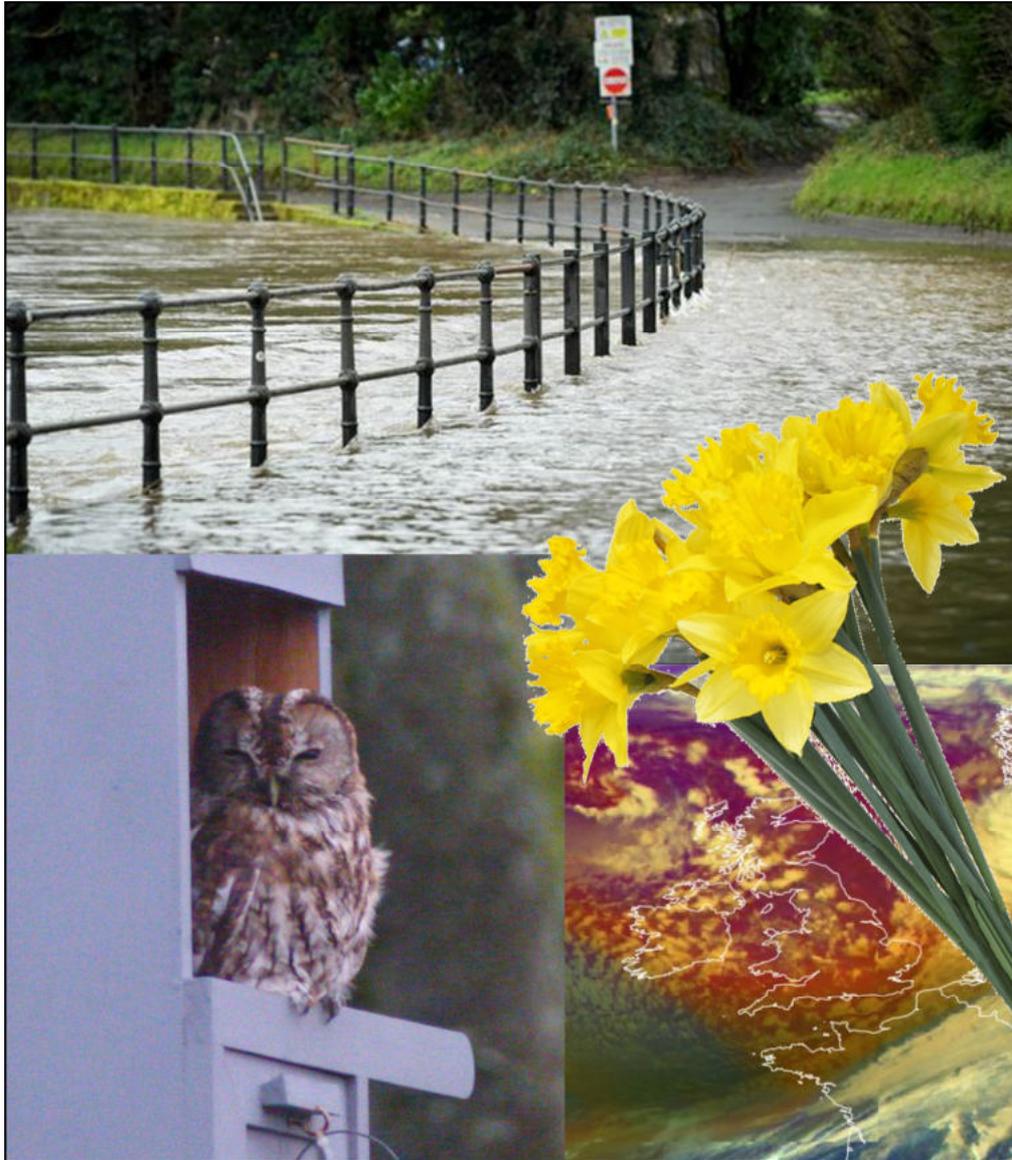


Blackwork Journey Blog

March 2022



March, a new month and the coming of Spring?



Seldom have I been so glad to see the end of February with its storms, high winds, rain, flooding, snow and travel disruption! It did have some consolations though. The heavy owl box that we hauled into the lime tree in January has a resident. When I awoke early in the morning before it was daylight to my great delight I spotted a tawny owl in our new nest box. Because the box was new I thought that we were unlikely to have a resident this year, but there she was!



Only one clutch of 2 -3 eggs is laid, usually around the third week in March. Incubation lasts for approximately 30 days. Fledgling occurs at around 5 weeks of age, although young tawny owls tend to leave the nest earlier than this during their 'branching' phase. They are dependent on their parents for food for up to 3 months after leaving the nest and they will sit around on the branches of nearby trees and beg for food once darkness falls. Hopefully, we will get to see more of them in the coming months.

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Daffodils appear in the shops and the gardens and for me, they are a welcome touch of colour after the drabness of the winter garden. Under the right conditions – good drainage and some sun during the day, the bulbs stay in the ground and they will bloom year after year and multiply in numbers, squirrels permitting!

Talks and Workshops

With the end of Winter, the day schools, talks, exhibitions and teaching start in earnest and I am surrounded by charts, kits, fabric and threads as I prepare for the coming months. There is a lot of thought and planning goes into every day school or talk and it is quite exciting to go through my boxes and select the embroideries for the displays and groups I am going to meet.

Covid19 has hit all the groups hard over the past two years and many have reorganised themselves and chosen different venues. The return to normal hands-on teaching has been welcomed by everyone and whilst the Zoom and Facebook have played a major role in keeping people together, actually meeting friends and sharing ideas and information is essential.

I travel all over the UK with my husband, a car full of boxes, kits and a display unit and am looking forward to another very busy year. If you are a member of a group that would be interested, please contact me for more information at:



lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Husbands are really helpful at driving, putting up displays, carrying boxes, taking exhibitions down and driving home again. They can even be persuaded to tack quilts together!

Something from nothing!

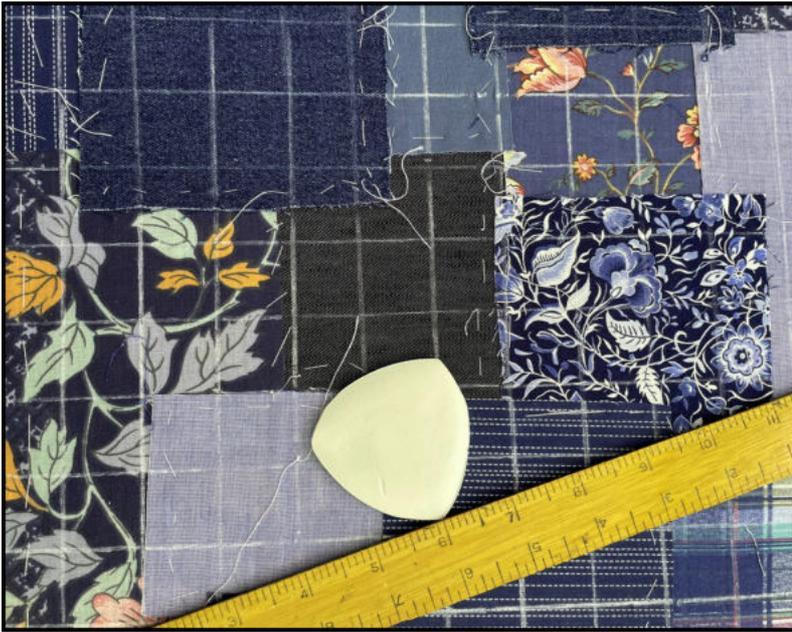
Last month, I introduced the Japanese, practice of reworking and repairing textiles through piecing, patching and stitching under the name of Boro. The worn areas are patched and old garments cut up and joined using Sashiko running stitch through all the layers of fabric. This technique has been around for generations and I find it really restful to do as a contrast to the detailed blackwork designs that I spend most of my time designing.

There were still a lot of scraps left over from the last project, so I cut a rectangular piece of cotton 24 x 13 inches to make a runner for a long narrow table.

1. Arranging and pinning down all the scraps is one of the most interesting parts. Once they are all in place tack them down well and remove the pins.



Fig.1



2. Once the pieces are tacked down the stitch lines need to be drawn. They can be diagonal to create diamonds, squares or circles or Sashiko or quilting templated can be used.

Because most of the fabric was dark I used tailor's chalk to draw the lines. A white of yellow pencil could also be used. If the fabric is light coloured I suggest a water-soluble pen.

Fig.2 Thread for top stitching – Sashiko thread, 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.



Fig.3

3. Matt crochet cotton and a Sashiko needle was used to work the running stitches through all the layers. A Sashiko thimble helps if the fabric is thick. More than one stitch can be on the needle at any one time.

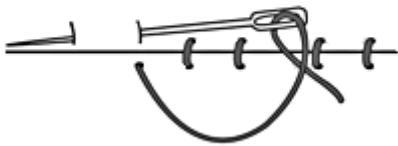
4. Cut a backing piece and four strips of fabric three inches wide to finish off the runner.

Fig.4

5. Tack the backing fabric into position. Press well before attaching the strips.

Machine the stripes in place round the mat:

- a. Machine the two long ones first, fold and slip stitch.
- b. Machine the two short strips into position, fold and slip stitch.
- c. Press well



Slip stitch

If corners of the fabric that have not been anchored down by the crochet cotton stitch them down with several small stitches.

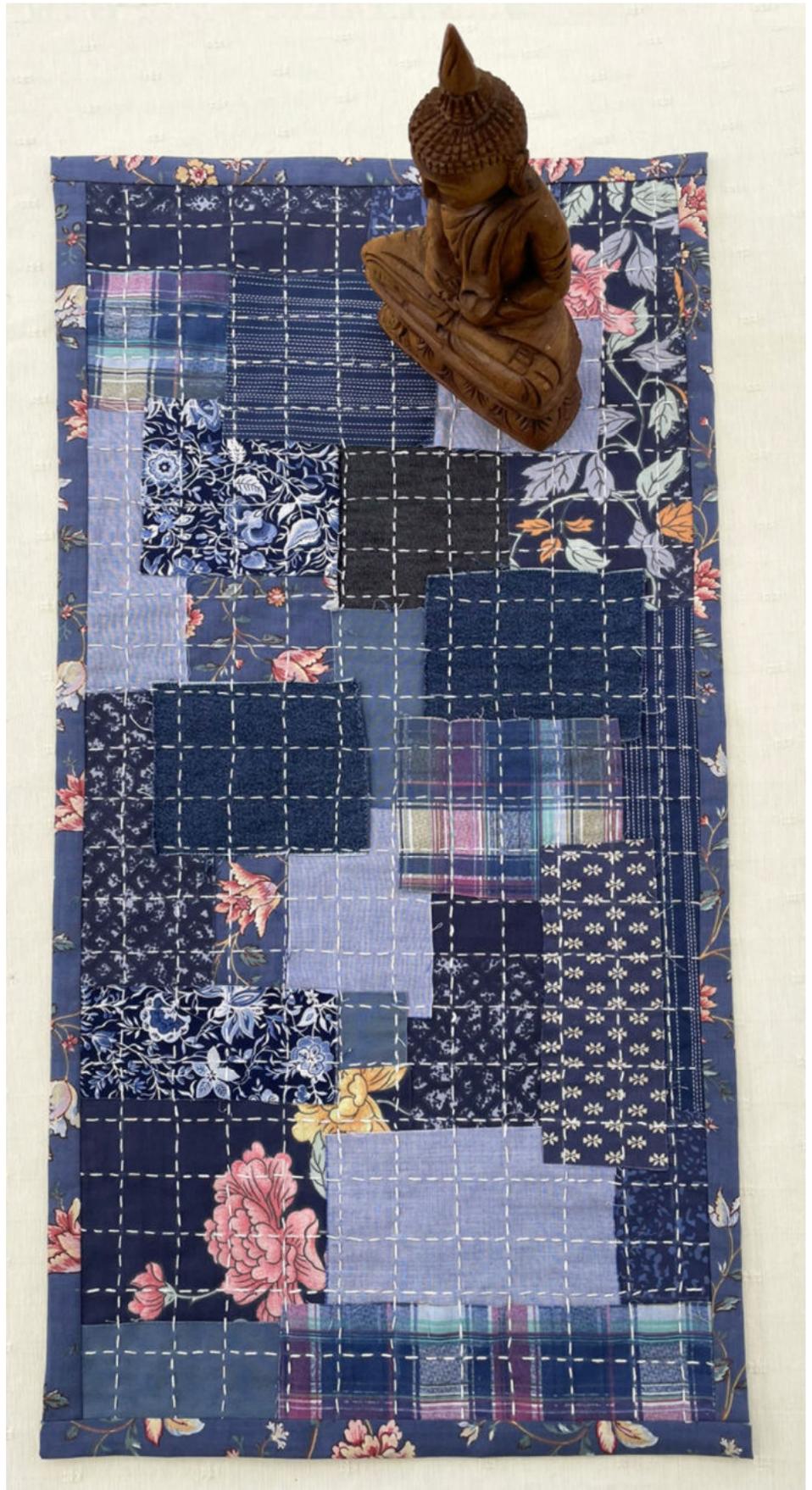
6. Completed runner

Fig.6 Stitched and pressed

"The life of inner peace, being harmonious and without stress, is the easiest type of existence." –

Norman Vincent Peale

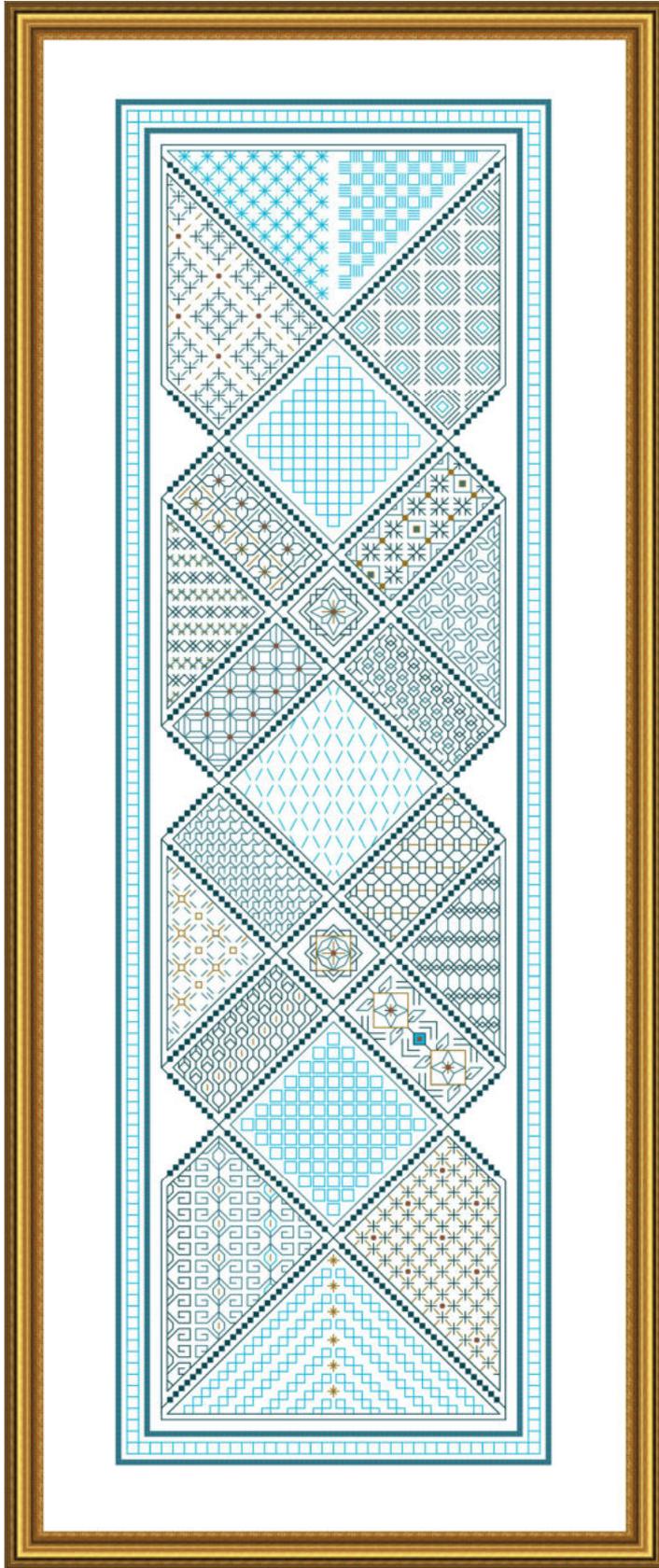
Enjoy!



What's new for March?

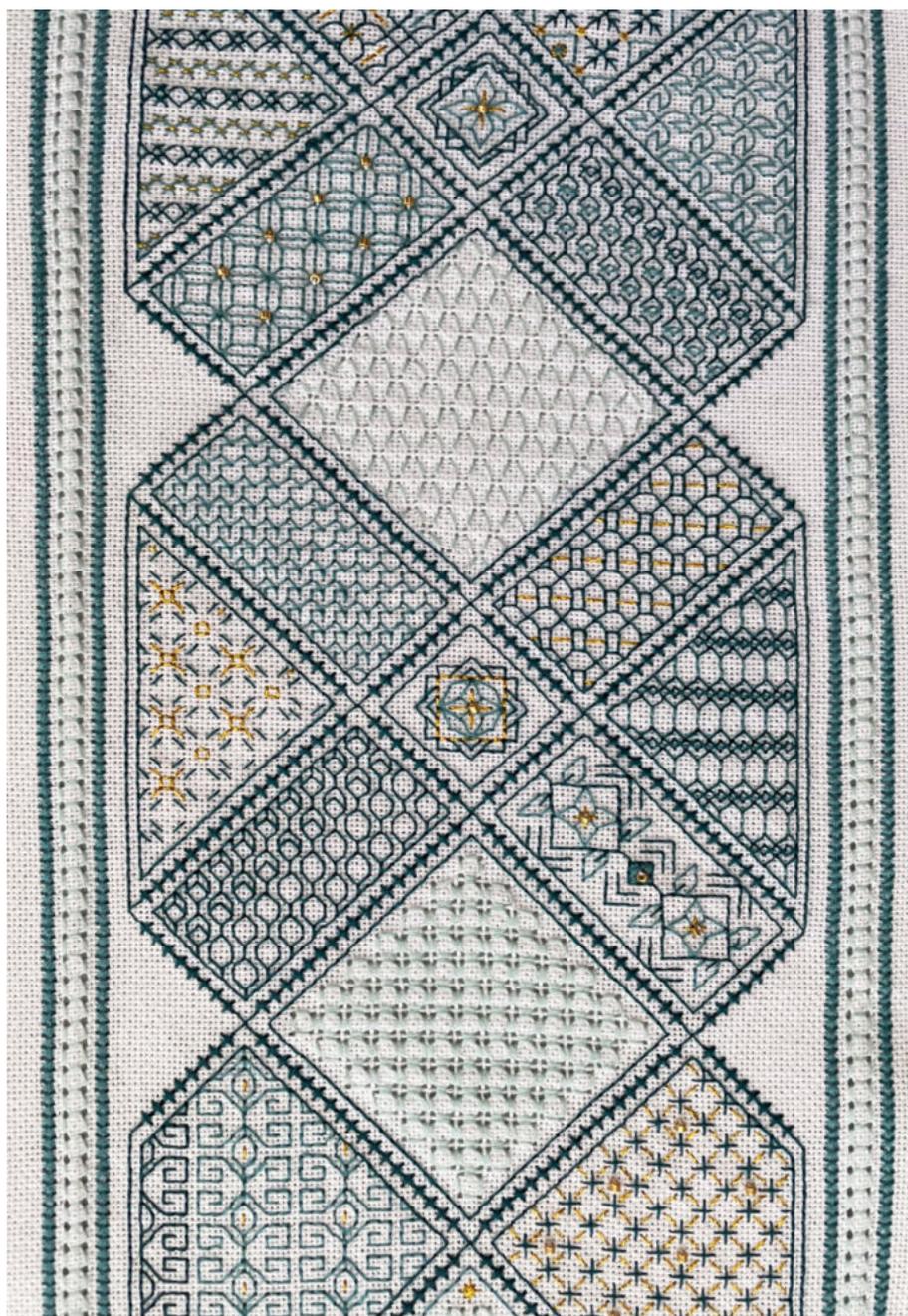
PR0072 'Latitude' and PR0072 'Longitude'

These two embroideries can be worked as bell pulls or framed as long narrow pictures.



PR0072 'Latitude' is a pulled thread and blackwork sampler worked in three different shades of teal floss on Zeigart 28 count evenweave.

This is a modern interpretation of a traditional band sample which was long and narrow.



There are 25 different patterns to explore in 'Latitude'- 18 blackwork designs and 7 pulled thread work patterns

Design Area: 5.43 x 17.14 inches

Stitches: 76 x 240

Fabric:

Zweigart 28 count evenweave, 10 x 22 inch

Pulled thread work is a counted embroidery technique, worked on a loosely woven evenweave fabric. Stitches are worked around groups of threads in the fabric and pulled, using the tension of the stitches to form gaps, creating lacy, open fillings, bands, border and hems.

It is usually worked in white thread on white fabric, but can also be worked with coloured threads.

Extract from PR0072 Latitude showing some of the areas of pulled thread work. Any colours can be used but pastel or white threads are most suitable for the pulled areas.

PR0073 'Longitude' is the partner to this design to be worked on evenweave or Aida fabric but with **no** pulled thread stitches.

Design Area: 5.43 x 17.14 inches

Stitches: 76 x 240

Fabric: Zweigart 14 count Aida or Zweigart 28 count evenweave, 10 x 22 inches.

Threads: The design was worked in DMC floss in three shades of teal. Different colours can be substituted.

There are 25 different blackwork patterns to explore in this modern band sampler.



PR0073 'Latitude'



PR0073 'Longitude' work in progress on Zweigart 14 count Aida

There are many different types of bell pulls available on the internet from simple wooden rods to decorative brass fittings.

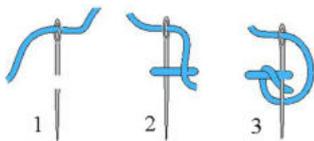


Work in progress

I am continuing to work on the e-book 'Little Book of Alphabets' and decided to take some of the letters and experiment with them before making a cushion for my granddaughter's 18th birthday.



The letters were traced onto the cotton using a water-soluble pen. The outlines were worked in double knot stitch using four strands of floss to create a textured outline the filler patterns were worked in running stitch using three strands of floss. Some of the lines were whipped with metallic thread to add sparkle.



There are so many different ways in which the letters can be used to create different projects. The letters can be enlarged or reduced, embroidered or appliqued.

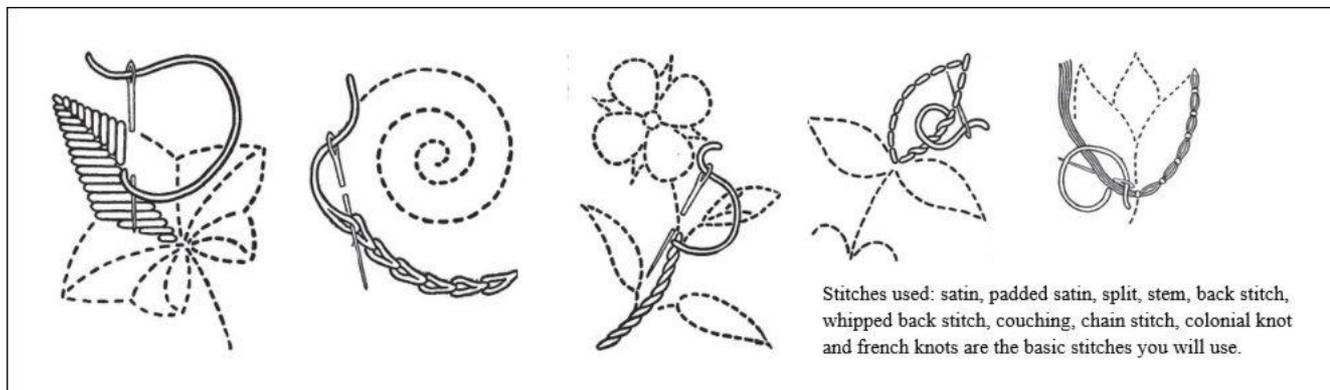
A **Monogram** is a motif made by overlapping or combining two or more letters to form one symbol. A **Cypher** is considered to be two or more letters that are not overlapped or combined.

Transferring design onto fabric – seven possible methods:-

- Trace with water erasable blue pen or HB pencil (lightly)
- Trace onto freezer or greaseproof paper. Turn letter over and redraw on reverse side with iron on pencil DO NOT PRESS with hot iron.
- Use dress maker's carbon.
- Trace onto tissue and tack through material. Tear tissue away.

- e. Trace design and couch onto surface.
- f. Cut shape out of interfacing and tack down.
- g. Most effective method for complex designs – prick and pounce.

Letter outlines



Whilst I used double knot stitch there are many line stitches that could be used. Even simple back stitch whipped with a different colour can be very effective.



Letter 'A'

Back stitch whipped
Colonial knots
Padded satin stitch
Double knot stitch

Worked on white cotton with a thin layer of wadding and made up into a small cushion as a gift.



If the letter outline is complicated simple couching works well if the couching stitches are evenly placed.

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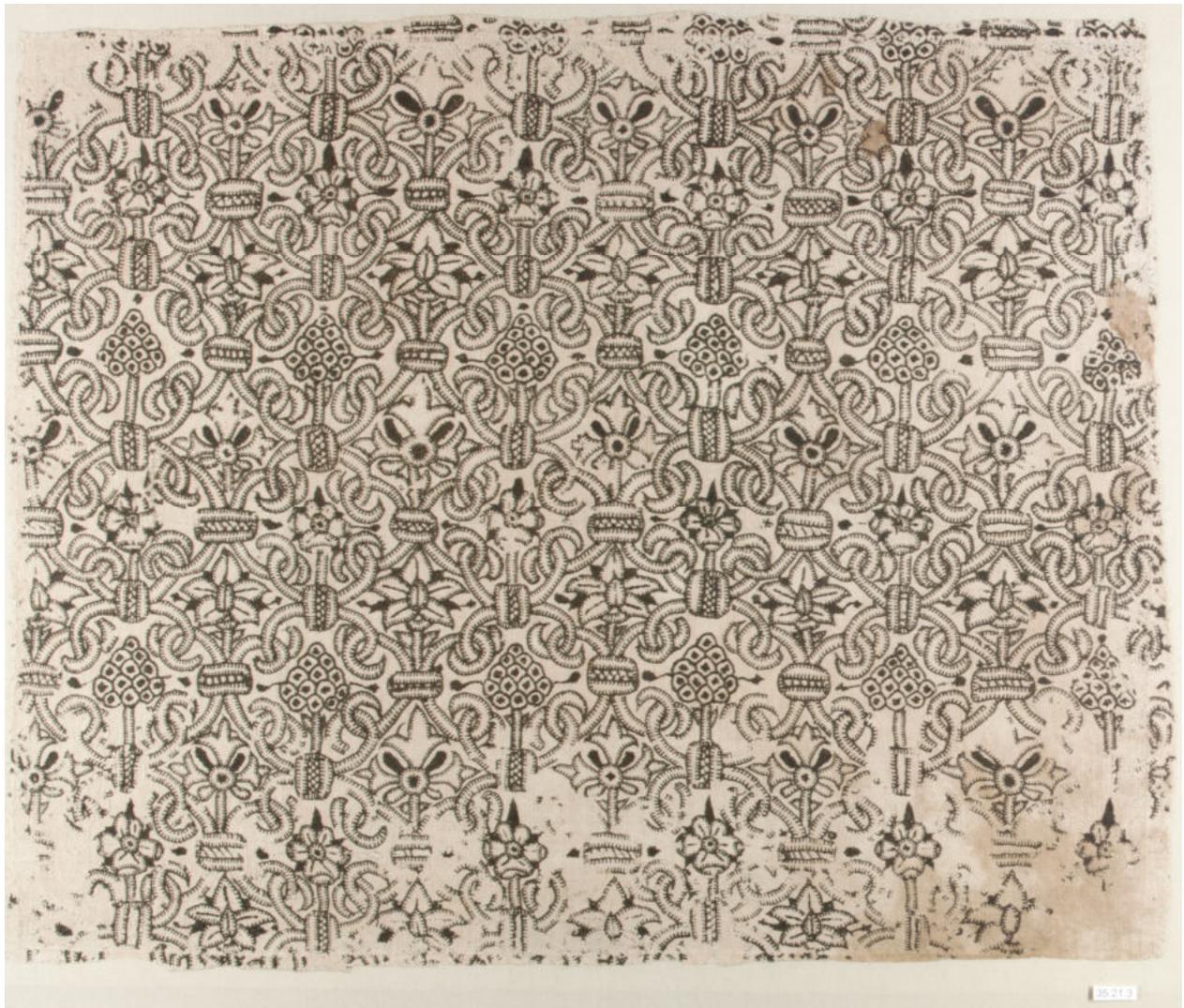
Finally, looking at the historical aspects blackwork is always interesting and there are many examples to be found in museums worldwide. This is often the only way in which we can see historical pieces and we owe a debt of gratitude for the museums that make their work available through their catalogues.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York City, colloquially "the Met", is the largest art museum in the Western Hemisphere. Its permanent collection contains over two million works, divided among 17 curatorial departments

<https://www.metmuseum.org>

These two examples are taken from the Met Museum.

"Blackwork" or monochrome silk embroidery on white linen was a fashionable embellishment for dress in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The repeating pattern on this panel displays flora typical of embroideries of the period: honeysuckle, pansies, borage, and grapes



Title: Panel of blackwork

Date: 1580–1620 Culture: British

Medium: Linen worked with silk thread; buttonhole, cross, outline, and herringbone stitches

Dimensions: H. 17 1/4 x W. 21 in. (43.8 x 53.3 cm)

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Classification: Textiles-Embroidered

Credit Line: Rogers Fund, 1935 Accession Number: 35.21.3

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/120040717>



Title: Fragment of Blackwork

Date: ca. 1590 **Culture:** British **Medium:** Silk and gilt-metal-wrapped threads on woven plain weave linen foundation

Dimensions: Overall: 8 1/2 × 1 ft. 2 1/4 in. (21.6 × 36.2 cm)

Classification: Textiles-Embroidered **Credit Line:** Purchase, The James Parker Charitable Foundation Gift, 2013

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/120040717>

I hope you have enjoyed exploring this month's Blog

Stay safe and happy stitching!

Liz