



Blackwork Journey Blog

December 2024

HAPPY
CHRISTMAS
from
BLACKWORK
JOURNEY



Wishing all the members of Blackwork Journey a happy and peaceful Christmas

May you have the gladness of Christmas,
Which is Hope;
The spirit of Christmas,
Which is Peace;
The heart of Christmas,
Which is Love.

~Ada V. Hendricks Larsen (1888–1975)

Looking back over this year and looking forward to 2025

Looking over the past year and all the challenges it has presented for everyone after the effects of Covid I do so with a sense of hope and anticipation, as groups have reformed with a new enthusiasm for sharing ideas, projects and initiatives. Many are also seeing an increase in membership with younger members, eager to learn, joining for the first time.

I am also teaching more and more practical stitch workshops where members can explore new stitches, threads and materials and expand their existing knowledge and in February 2025, I will be starting a twelve-month project for my local Bolton Stitch and Textile group based on the idea of a traditional band sampler. I had been playing with stitches on a project of my own which I subsequently took to one of their workshops where it was met with considerable enthusiasm, so I decided to design a band sampler stitched on Zweigart

14 count aida fabric or Zweigart 28 count evenweave for the more experienced embroiderer. This was the flyer that went out to the group in November.

Stitch along 2025!

Create your own unique stitch band sampler over 12 months!

Before the introduction of printed designs and pattern books, embroiderers and lacemakers needed a way to record different designs and stitches. The answer was to create a band sampler – a personal reference piece featuring patterns and stitches that the owner may have developed or copied from others, to use again in new pieces.

Follow in the traditions of the past and create your own band sampler. Every month a new colour from the colour wheel will be introduced along with new stitches and variations. By working the stitches, you will be able to expand your knowledge, use diverse types and thicknesses of threads and experiment!

Fabric and threads:

Zweigart 14 count Aida, 8 x 24 inches, or Zweigart 28 count evenweave or Zweigart 25 count Lugana, 8 x 24 inches. The fabric includes the seam allowance for the sleeve and the making up. The length of the band can be reduced if desired.

Backing fabric: cotton, 9 x 24 inches.

Method:

Based on the twelve sections of the colour wheel, twelve blocks will be added. Each block will contain three or more stitches worked in the colour of the month.

You will receive a printed sheet by e-mail with the 'Stitch of the Month'. This contains a worked photograph of the stitches, stitch variations, diagrams, chart and explanations.

Explore your stash and find all the threads, colours, types and thicknesses that you would like to use. Try thicker threads - cotton Pérle No's 5 and 8, crochet cotton, DMC stranded floss, variegated threads and tapestry wool. Check the threads are colourfast.

Beads and embellishments can also be added. Pastel tacking cotton is used for defining the outline.

Tapestry needle No.24 and tapestry needles with larger eyes for thicker threads.

Beading needle or quilters 'between'.

Small embroidery ring (optional).



The embroidery will be worked on a long strip to be wrapped round a wooden dowel for hanging or worked as a roll with an embroidered and lace edging.

Help will always be available if you need it by contacting:

lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk



Work in progress

Interested? Join us on 'Stitch along 2025'.

I am thinking about making this a project for Blackwork Journey readers as well. If you are interested in becoming part of this project, please let me know by e-mailing me.

Disaster strikes, computer meltdown!

Earlier in November and without any warning my computer failed or at least the 3-terabyte hard drive that contains all the information, charts and designs for Blackwork Journey going back over ten years failed.

None of the material was recoverable despite the efforts of the firm that built the computer for me. They spent three weeks working on it, upgrading it to Windows 11 Pro which wiped the drive which contained all my design software programmes, before installing a new 3-terabyte hard drive.

So, I have spent most of the last week reloading programmes, uploading software, finding registration numbers etc. There are nearly 500 Blackwork Journey folders, publishers' information, workshop folders containing all the teaching information, to be redone and reloaded!



Fortunately, most of the material had been backed-up to another drive, but transferring and updating the information is going to be a long and tedious process. All the personal information, family and holiday photographs were all contained on the hard drive and will need to be recovered and reloaded. As I come to reload and work with the programmes it is the little things that I find are missing such as the template for this Blog which has had to be redesigned.

Whilst the internet and modern machines are wonderful, regular back-ups are essential. As my son said, 'Why didn't you back it up to the Cloud?' I am of a generation where computers are alien beings designed to confuse, whereas this generation has grown up with the technology and take it all in their stride. Anyway. I am now in the process of uploading to the Cloud!

There is a moral to this tale – do not rely on technology alone!

Pat – an inspiration to us all!

Working with disabilities always produces challenges. Every person has a different problem to overcome and being open minded in approaching it can lead to surprising results. Pat is a case in point. Three years ago, she had a stroke which affected her arms, hand-eye coordination and confined her to a wheelchair. She spent a long time both in hospital and recuperating.

Before the stroke Pat was very creative and loved to stitch, paint and draw but had done nothing since leaving hospital. She didn't think she would ever be able to stitch or draw again but with a lot of patience, trial and error Pat is slowly picking up her old hobbies.

With lots of practice and a pencil padded out so she could hold it more easily she practised drawing circles, following lines and shapes. This was not easy, but she drew a small picture of Dave, her husband and wrote his name!

With a thick needle and floss she practised stitching on aida. We tried many different frames to hold the fabric taut before settling on a simple hoop weighted down with a bag filled with sand.



She carefully stitched the outline and even gave him hair and fingers. Once the outline was stitched, I asked her to use fabric pens to colour the jumper and trousers which she has done beautifully.

The next stage is to mount the embroidery over two old CDs, add a ribbon hanger and glue or stitch the two pieces together ready for Christmas.



Pat and Dawn, it's all about teamwork!



It takes a lot of courage to start again after such a set-back. This is just the beginning and whilst there is a long way to go the future looks bright! Look hard enough and there are ways round many health problems. It is a case of perseverance, using your imagination, looking at all the different aids available and trying them out!

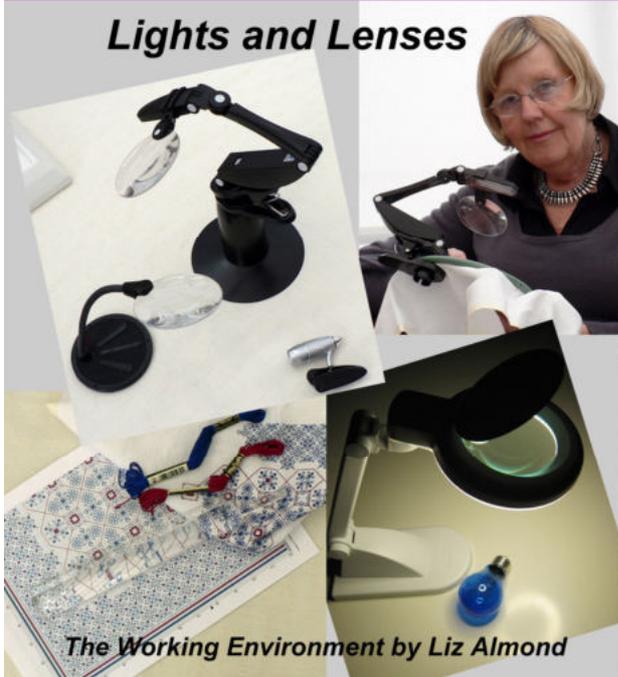
Well done, Pat!

In the 'Techniques' section on the website are PDFs on 'The Working Environment' which may be useful when choosing equipment.



Blackwork Journey Techniques

TQ0001



Lights and Lenses

The Working Environment by Liz Almond



Blackwork Journey Techniques

TQ0002



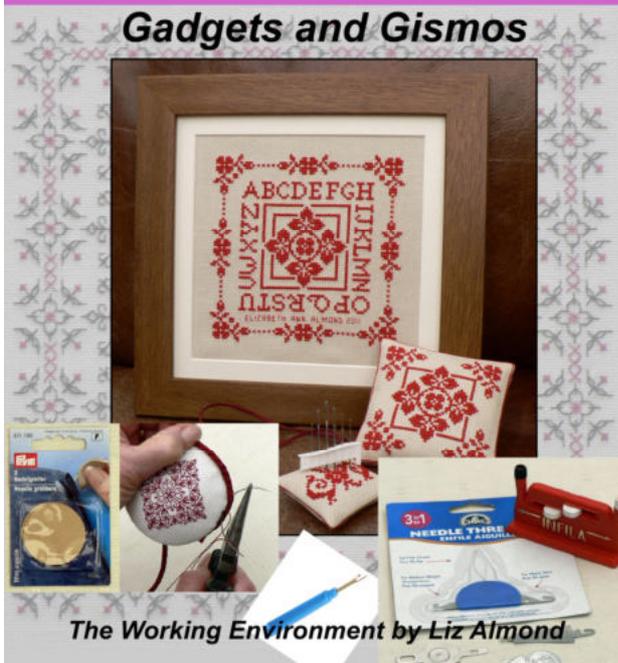
Frames

The Working Environment by Liz Almond



Blackwork Journey Techniques

TQ0004



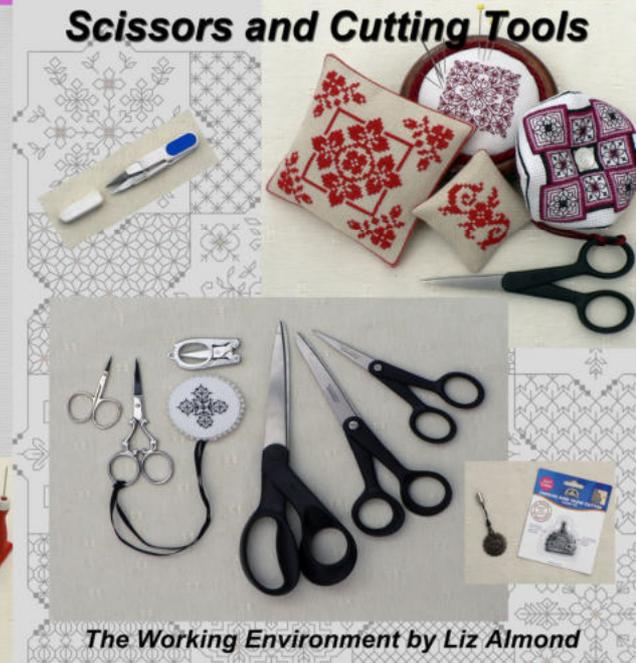
Gadgets and Gismos

The Working Environment by Liz Almond



Blackwork Journey Techniques

TQ0006



Scissors and Cutting Tools

The Working Environment by Liz Almond

Looking back over 2024

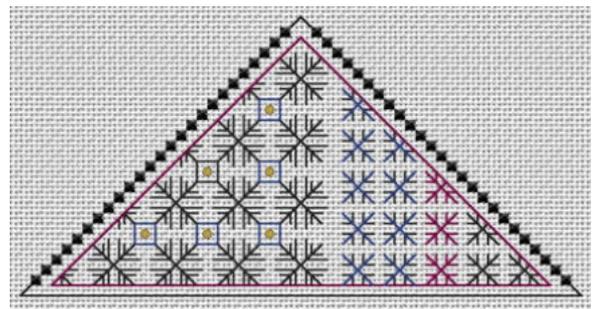
In 2024 I introduced a new Blackwork Project called EB0029 “Triangle Trail” - A Dictionary of Blackwork.

The initial idea came from looking at an antique flying geese quilt where the triangles were arranged in rows. There were many ways in which the triangles could be arranged, so I decided to make a large blackwork panel. Associated projects were launched for the website and the Facebook groups to enable members to try smaller blackwork projects with many different filler patterns.

With over 300 different blackwork patterns included it became a reference dictionary of blackwork. Each block was shown in both colour and black and white with detailed photographs of each section. The master panel consists of 65 triangles filled with 2 - 3 different blackwork patterns in each triangle, 26 quarter triangles, again with more than one pattern included and 72 individual motifs to insert between the triangles. A few alternative arrangements were included so that the embroiderer could choose a smaller project if necessary.

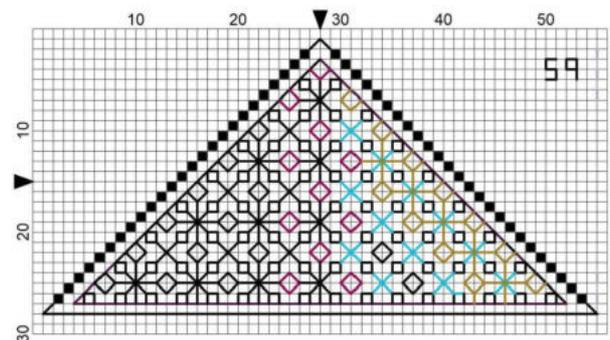
The fabrics used were Zweigart 25 count Lugana, Zweigart 28 count evenweave or Zweigart 14 count Aida. If Aida fabric is used there will be some split stitches.

The embroidery could be worked in a single colour and metallic gold or copper thread or worked in four different colours and metallic threads. Mill Hill gold beads were added and the triangle cross stitch framework was worked in Cotton P rle No.12.



One example of a triangle worked on evenweave

a. Colour b. Black and Gold



One example of a chart. The outline is worked in cross stitch and back stitch for easy counting.

I like a challenge, and this has certainly tested my creativity! Many readers are also stitching this design.

The Knitting and Stitching Show, Harrogate Convention Centre, England, November 2024

With 150+ craft exhibitors selling fabric, sewing machines, yarn, patterns, threads and young designers showcasing their work and more at Harrogate's top craft show in the north of England I always look forward to this annual event. Having fought our way through snowbound Yorkshire Dales to get there I was excited to be in such a stimulating environment. Despite the snow, the show was buzzing as buyers added to their stashes! The phrase 'Do I really need that?' was heard more than once and judging by the large number of bags, boxes and trolleys they obviously did! Whilst it is not as large as the London and Birmingham shows it has much to offer and the opportunity to see and feel the textiles is a rare opportunity in the era of online shopping.

It is also an opportunity to see the work of students from The Royal School of Needlework and to see the work of individual young designers and I was especially taken with the work of Emma Hayward Higham

Embroiderers' Guild Graduate 2024 2025 Emma Hayward Higham · First Class Honours Fashion Textile Designer Passementerie Artist ·

Emma describes herself as being a "Fashion textiles & Passementerie nerd"



Passementerie of cording and braid, embellished with beads, French, 1908

What is passementerie?

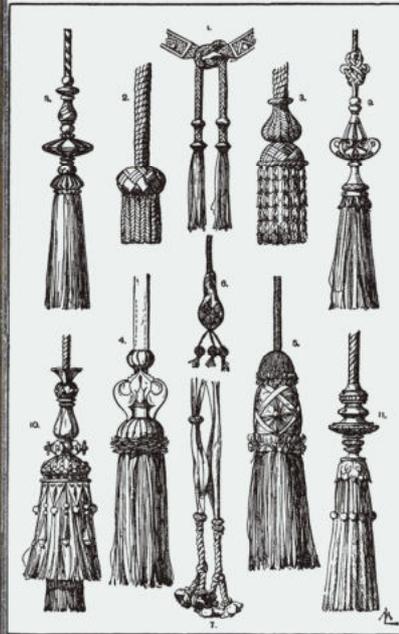
Passementerie is the art of making elaborate trimmings or edgings of applied braid, gold or silver cord, embroidery, coloured silk, or beads for clothing or furnishings. The craft goes back hundreds of years across several countries and Emma has become an ambassador for this ancient textile art.

Styles of passementerie include the tassel, fringes, ornamental cords, galloons, pompons, rosettes and gimps, as well as other forms. Tassels, pompons and rosettes are *point* ornaments and the others are *linear* ornaments.

Passementerie worked in white linen thread is the origin of bobbin lace and *passemment* is an early French word for lace. Today, passementerie is used with clothing, such as gold braid on military dress uniforms, and for decorating couture clothing and wedding gowns. It is also used in furniture trimming and in some lampshades, draperies, fringes and tassels.

In the 16th century, the Guild of Passementiers was created in France where practitioners were called "passementiers" and an apprenticeship of seven years was required to become a master in one of the subdivisions of the guild.





Handbook of Ornament 1898



Many of the braids come from Turkey and Emma carves her own wooden tassel bases



Emma is carrying this tradition forward in her own unique style. I hope you enjoy the examples of her work.

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog and have a peaceful and happy Christmas.

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

Happy stitching, *Liz*

Cover image AKphotos on Freeimages.com