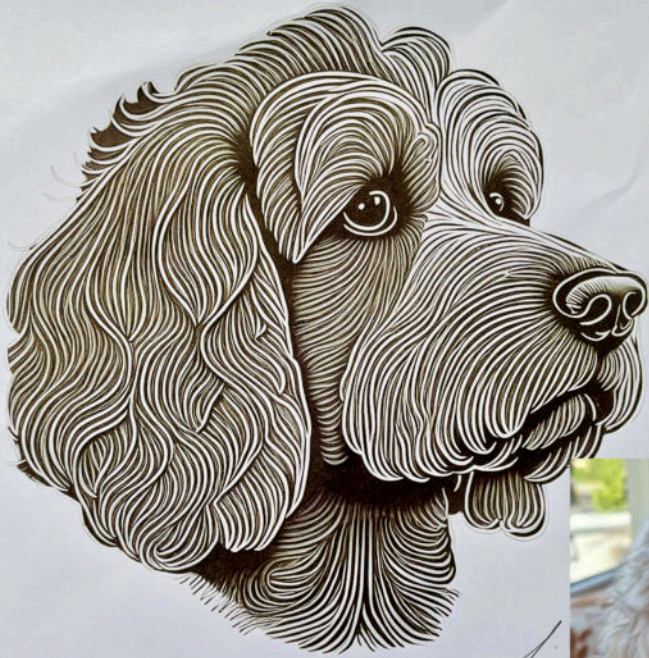




Blackwork Journey Blog

April 2025



**Block 3
& 3a**



**AI?
Lysander**



Blackwork Journey Blog, April 2025

Looking forward!

With more drier days this month, I not only intend to spend time in the garden clearing up after a very wet winter but also tidy up my workroom and declutter. I suspect these are familiar words to most people who have an all-consuming hobby which takes up space and seems to increase by the day! Much of my workroom is taken up with materials and charts for kits for different types of day schools which take a long time to prepare and I try to work well in advance.

If any members of my workshops have special needs such as eyesight problems or mobility issues, kits are prepared individually. Using the right equipment can make life much easier and there are usually ways to cope with most issues to enable people to stitch for longer and with less stress. Whilst this can be challenging, it can often produce unexpected results and encourage people back into stitching.



Apart from day schools I work with individuals within groups such as Pat (left) who has just finished her second embroidery which she has coloured and stitched helped by Dawn. After many years of serious health issues this is a wonderful step forward and I am very proud of her and look forward to seeing her next project. She has already drawn the design she wants to stitch.

Holding a pencil or pen can be difficult for people who have limited grip, but padding out the handle with foam grip tubing or using rubber bands and zip ties to secure items can often make a big difference.

Pen and pencil holders can also be used to increase the diameter of most pens or pencils. These make useful aids for people who have finger strength issues and restrictions and simply slide onto the body of a pen to provide better control and stability.

Padded handles can also be used with crochets hooks which can be difficult to grip and are now commonly available.



The internet can be very helpful and often provide answers to common problems making it easier to continue your hobby.

Mounting an embroidery in a free-standing frame can also be helpful as it leaves both hands free to work the embroidery. There are many different types of frames on the market, look for one that will suit your needs.



Eyesight problem?

I have spoken many times over the years about the importance of having the right equipment for stitching from lighting and frames to the correct glasses for deteriorating eyesight.

In my opinion, your best friend is your optician. If you want to stitch and really cannot see what you are doing, I suggest you take your embroidery to your optician and show him or her what you want to do and ask for their help. Whether it is making a new pair of glasses specifically for embroidery or looking at other options, expert advice can often provide an answer.



Finding specialist fabric and threads

It is more difficult now to obtain the correct threads and fabrics since many local fabric and haberdashery shops have closed in the UK and it is necessary to use the internet which is not ideal as I prefer to see and feel the fabric first.



I am fortunate in that I live in an area in the north of England which has a long history of textiles and weaving and tucked away in the backstreets fabric outlets often exist from the mills where there are treasures to be had you have the strength to pull the bales of fabric out of overfilled shelves and root in hidden corners.

My idea of heaven!

Immanuel Fabrics in Burnley, Lancashire UK is my idea of heaven! You never know quite what you are going to find. For example, I discovered a roll of white cotton twill with a sateen finish which was perfect for Irish Mounmellick whitework.

Empress Mills Craft and Sewing Centre Mill Shop

Glyde Works, Byron Road, Colne, Lancashire UK.

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Empress Mills is one of the few places in the UK where it is possible to buy the correct threads and fabric for Irish whitework called Mountmellick embroidery. The thread is sold on cones, and I have listed below the different thicknesses.

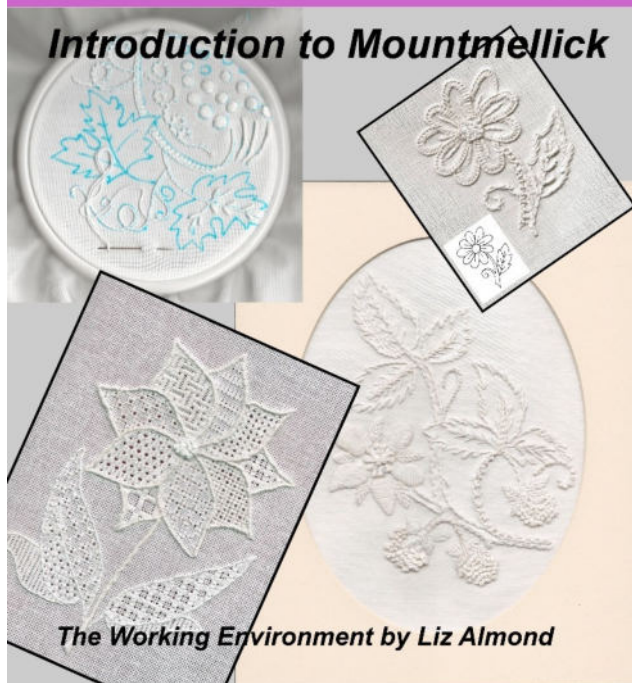
Mountmellick Thread Thickness Guide

- Type 4 - Fine (50gm cone)
 - Type 3 - Finer (50gm cone)
 - Type 2 - Finer Yet Again (100gm cone)
 - Type 1 - The Finest (50gm cone)
- With Type 4 being the heaviest and Type 1 the lightest/finest.

As a guide, Types 3 & 4 tend to be the most popular as they allow you to build the body of your work more quickly than in relation to the finer options.

Mountmellick Fabric

100% Cotton Sateen fabrics - ideal for Mountmellick embroidery. Densely woven with a mercerised finish.



If you are interested in the history of Irish whitework there is a pdf in 'Techniques' TQ0017 'Weldon's Practical Mountmellick' and if you want to create your own Irish whitework TQ0013 'Introduction to Mountmellick' outlines the threads, fabrics required.

There are also a number of whitework projects in both 'Charts' and 'Projects' on the Blackwork Journey website.



CH0437 Whitework Hibiscus



PR0036 Whitework Ring Pillows



PR0039 Whitework Iris



*PR0051 Mountmellick
Snowdrop*



Using AI

A friend of mine has an adorable cockapoo dog called 'Lysander' who is a very important part of her life. Recently Margaret has had to stop doing fine embroidery because of eyesight problems and needed to consider other options so I created a special project for her.

Lysander

From the AI created line drawing of Lysander, I traced some of the lines onto a pre-washing calico as a basis for simple line stitches. Reverse chain stitched whipped, back stitch, back stitch whipped, stem

stitch running stitch are all suitable and easy to stitch. Once the basic lines are stitched additional lines can be added as required so the design can be as simple or as complicated as the embroiderer desires.

I selected different coloured threads that matched Lysander's coat, printed off the design and gave it to Margaret to stitch. I am looking forward to seeing how the embroidery progresses. It was fun to create and was a practical application of a new technology.

AI the future?

There are real implications for designers in the future and Mary Corbet from Needle n Thread looked at the issue in some detail on October 28th 2024

I Am Not Real: Artificial Intelligence in the Needlework World

<https://www.needlenthread.com/2024/10/i-am-not-real-artificial-intelligence-in-the-needlework-world.html>

I echo many of the points that she has made and since it will become more recognised and accepted in the future I think we need to look carefully at the implications it has for us as creative individuals. If the work that is being created by AI is being sold for embroiderers it can lead to levels of expectation that are unrealistic.

'Stitch Along' 2025 Block 3 and Block 3s Simple Stitches

Many new members are participating in 'Stitch Along' 2025 including 61 members of my local needlework group Bolton Stitch and Textile Group. They all collected their fabric last Tuesday and spent the evening adding the tacking lines and working on the first block. Lots of photographs are being posted on the Facebook groups and it is fun to see which countries the members come from.

Blackwork Journey and the associated Facebook groups cover all countries and religions from war zones to isolated areas such as the outback of Australia and the wilds of Alaska and brings us closer together in a shared love of embroidery. For example, Maureen in Montreal is working with a small group of five ladies all from different parts of the world sharing their knowledge and love of needlework.

Block 3 and 3a can be found at the end of the Blog and also on the Facebook groups:

Blackwork Journey - Elizabeth Almond Designs

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/blackworkjourneydesigns/>

Sublime Stitches - Elizabeth Almond Designs

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1695785137378480/#>

I hope you have enjoyed the Blog. If you have any queries, please contact:

lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

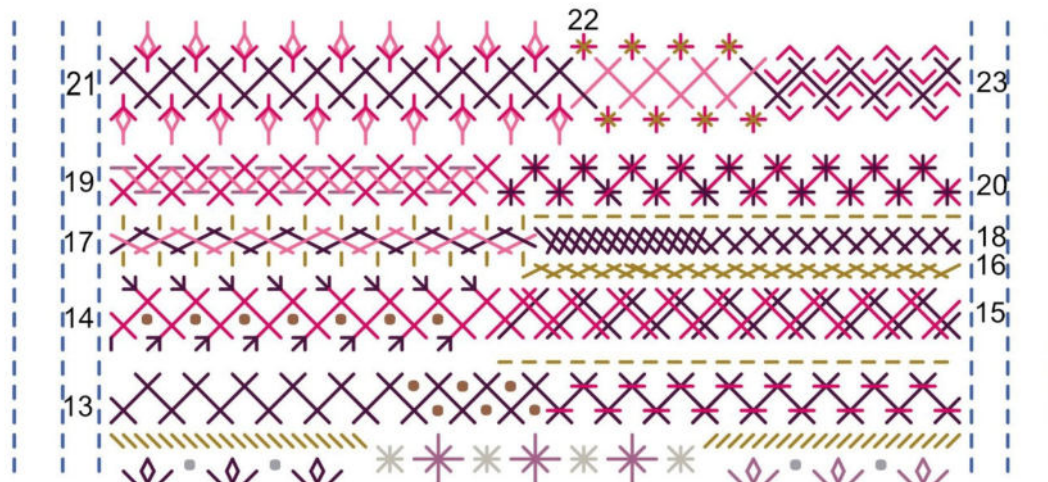
Happy stitching, *Liz*



Block 3. Herringbone stitch and variations.

Threads: Shades of purple, plum, red and pale pink, or colours of choice. Silver metallic thread and beads.

Tapestry needle No.24. Small embroidery ring or frame.



Block 3 Numbered



Block 3 Embroidery There are numerous ways to embellish this simple stitch.

Method: Start from the left-hand corner **Row 13.** Herringbone over 4 x 4 blocks (2 strands) beaded (optional) and tied.

Row 14. Herringbone embellished and beaded (optional).

Row 15. Double herringbone (2 colours).

Row 16. Narrow herringbone metallic 2 x 1 block.

Row 16. Narrow herringbone metallic 2 x 1 block.

Row 17. Two colour herringbone. **Row 18.** Herringbone open and closed.

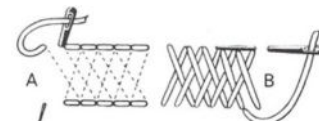
Row 19. Herringbone with interwoven band (3 colours).

Row 20. Herringbone tied with a cross (vertical and horizontal stitches).

Row 21. Decorated with fly, lazy daisy and straight stitches. **Row 22.** Star stitch. **Row 23.** 'V' stitches



Herringbone stitch



Herringbone open and closed.

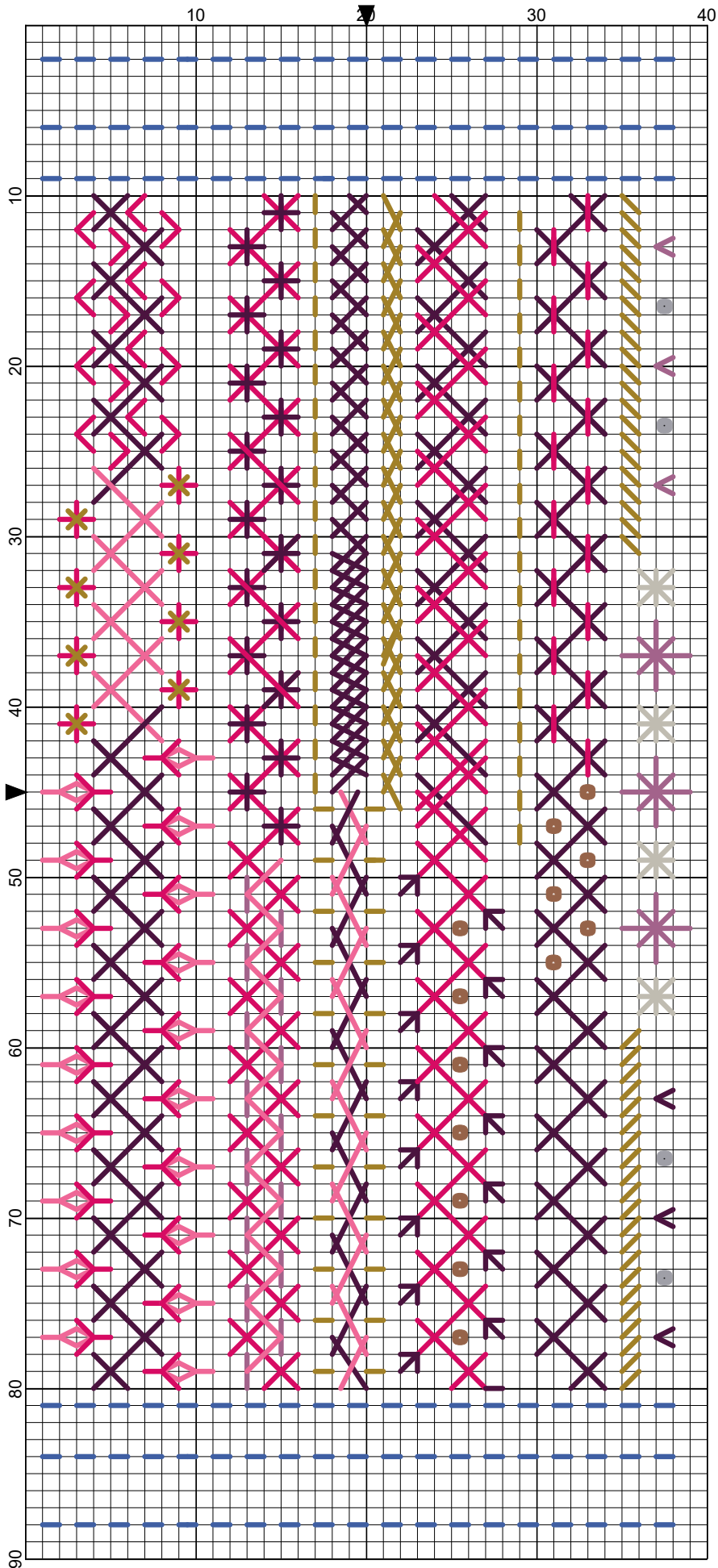
Single fly



<https://rsnstitchbank.org/stitch//herringbone-stitch>

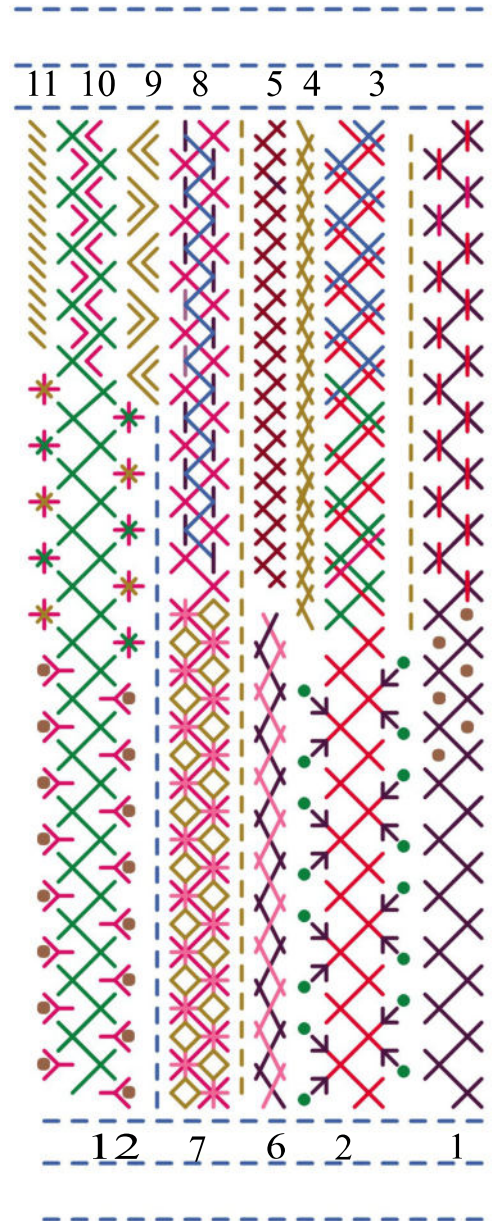
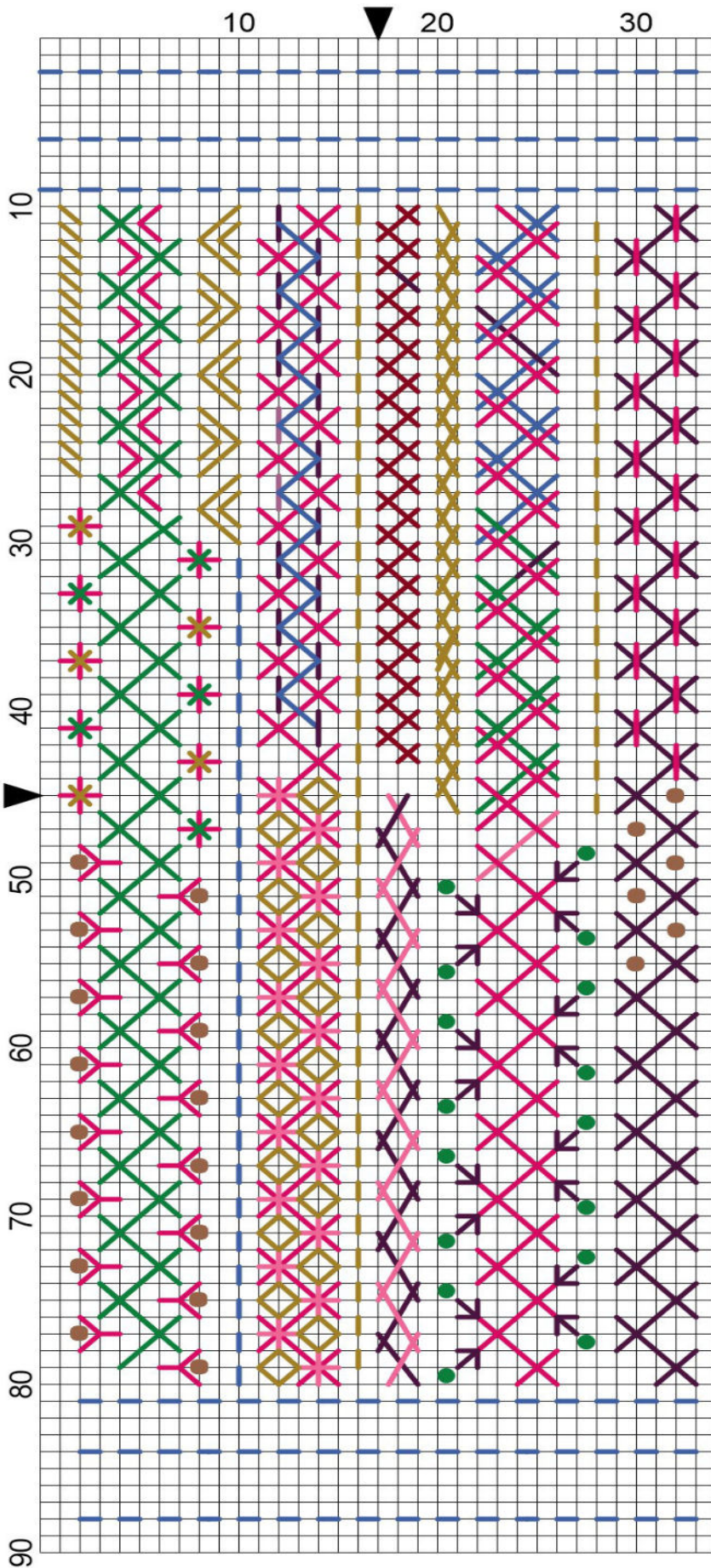
Mary Corbet Needle n Thread. www.needlethread.com Individual stitch techniques

Block 3



- Backstitches:
- DMC-798
 - DMC-550
 - DMC-553
 - DLE-E168
 - DMC-603
 - DMC-600
 - DLE-E3852
- Beads:
- MHG-557
 - MHG-2022

Block 3a Simple Stitches



Herringbone stitch variations

- Row 1.** Herringbone beaded and tied.
- Row 2.** Herringbone embellished.
- Row 3.** Double herringbone.
- Row 4.** Narrow metallic herringbone.
- Row 5.** Herringbone 2 x 2.
- Row 6.** Two colour herringbone.
- Row 7.** Herringbone tied plus diamonds.
- Row 8.** Herringbone interwoven band.
- Row 9.** Half diamonds.
- Row 10.** 'V' stitches
- Row 11.** Diagonal stitches.
- Row 12.** Herringbone, fly and star stitch.

Block 3 and Block 3a Simple Stitches

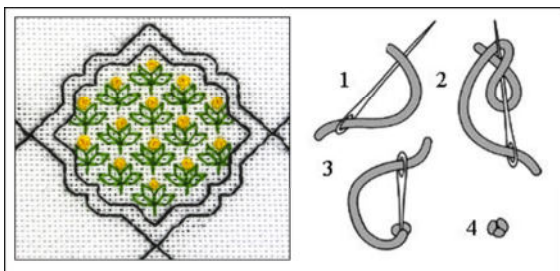


Block 3



Block 3a

Simple changes make all the difference to the patterns. Colonial knots or beads can be added to herringbone stitches. Metallic diamond stitches or a row of small metallic herringbone stitches adds sparkle.



The patterns are interchangeable between Block3 and 3a so you can make changes to your sampler both in colour and stitches. Use the photographs as a guide.

Colonial knots