



Blackwork Journey Blog

December 2025

HAPPY
CHRISTMAS
2025





Happy Christmas from Blackwork Journey!

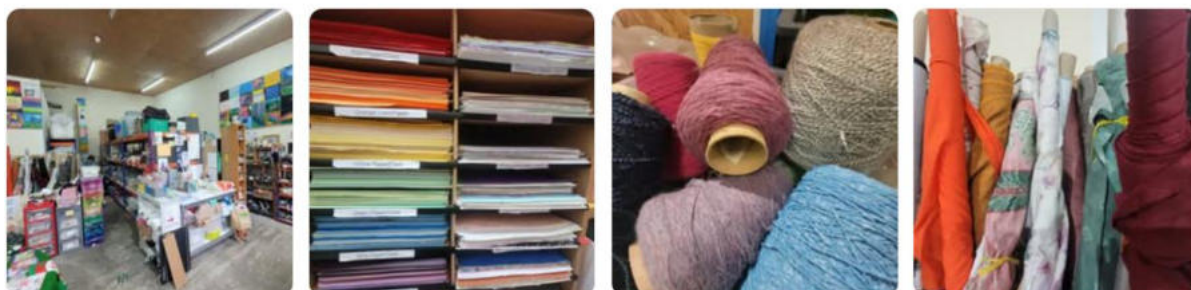
The spirit of Christmas

December is always a busy time. Excitement is in the air, but also a sense of reflection for friends and family who may no longer be with us or for people who find the Christmas period difficult. Hobbies can be particularly important to fill long hours and give a sense of purpose. Many of my readers work as volunteers for charities involving crafts such as making clothes, hats and gloves for the homeless or easing the problems of others in other ways. Knowing that you can contribute in some small way to the problems in society can bring satisfaction and a sense of worth and make a real difference, not only at Christmas, but into 2026 and beyond.

Can you use your craft skills to make a difference this Christmas and beyond into 2026? Towns and cities worldwide invariably have community groups who welcome volunteers and reaching out to others can be truly satisfying.

For example, one of my readers lives in sheltered accommodation and works with members of staff to pass on her needlework skills which they in turn, pass on to other members of the community. She enjoys the teaching which makes her feel really valued.

Emmaus Bolton UK



The Scrap store at Emmaus Bolton UK

We all need to declutter our stash at some point and donating unwanted craft supplies to charity shops or groups can be a positive way of supporting other members of the community. I work with a charity called “Emmaus” which provides a home, work and support for the homeless. As part of this we run a Scrap store where members of the public can buy craft items that have been donated, ask for advice on their work and

look for new ideas. Community groups, university students and schools regularly come in looking for supplies for their projects or just a “rummage” to see what they can find or simply for a chat! Donations range from brand new items from shops to vintage and pre-loved items. As you know, craft supplies can be expensive and most people love a bargain!

Personalising clothing

Taking an unused item of clothing and personalising it can be both fun and challenging. I have a number of workshops in 2026 on “Embroidery into quilting and clothing” and wanted to create some new examples so in a summer sale I bought a green cotton/linen mix blouse for £4.00 thinking that it would be suitable for embellishment. I wanted to use textured stitches and a simple repetitive design. The threads were a mixture of embroidery floss and matt variegated crochet cotton. I drew the dragonfly design onto the blouse using a blue water-soluble pen so I could see the lines clearly. Here is the result.



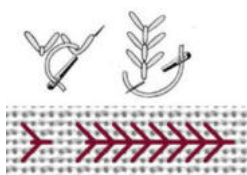
My green blouse with embroidered dragonfly embellishments

Embroidered blouse - Stitches used:

Outlines - Reverse chain stitch whipped, back stitch whipped. Wings - fly stitch whipped, cable chain stitch. Body - Wheatear stitch embellishments - copper “flower” beads.



Cable
chain



Fly stitch



Wheatear stitch

Portraits including Blackwork embroidery.

When I travel round the country, I often visit National Trust properties and always look to see if I can find portraits displaying blackwork embroidery. The “Vyne” in Hampshire has a selection of portraits displaying Elizabethan costumes and amongst the collection was a portrait of Chrysogona Baker painted in 1579.



Chrysogona Baker, Lady Dacre (1572/3 - 1616) as a child aged 6

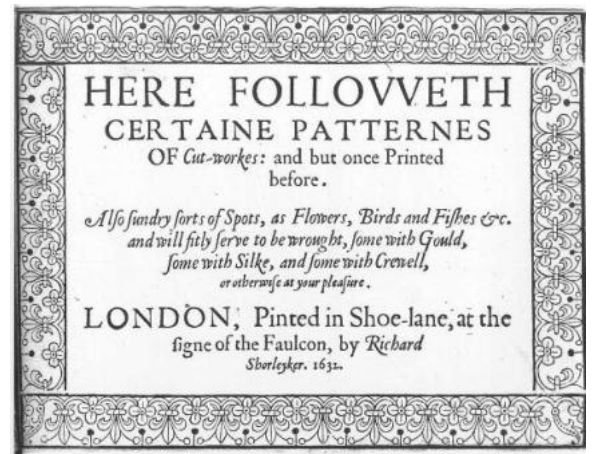
A three-quarter-length portrait, as a small girl in ornamental headdress, white dress with embroidered sleeves, a rose in her right hand. Baker family crest (top right) includes swan's heads. Painted when she was aged six.



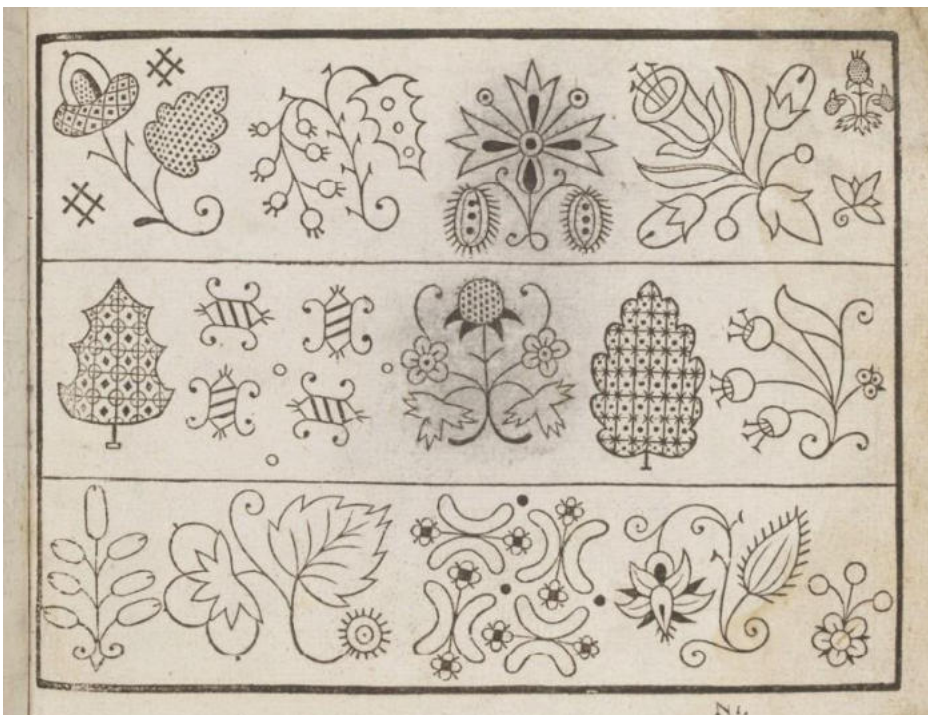
British (English) School, artist unknown.
Date: 1579. Materials: Oil on panel.
Measurements: 660 x 495 mm. Place of origin: England.

Freestyle blackwork embroidery on sleeve

The details on the sleeve reminded me of the drawings in "A Schole-House for the Needle" First published by Richard Shorleyker in 1632.



I was able to obtain a copy for the book from John and Elizabeth Mason and have been recreating some of the embroideries for my own pleasure.



A page from the original book.

The drawings copied from the book and reproduced as individual embroideries.

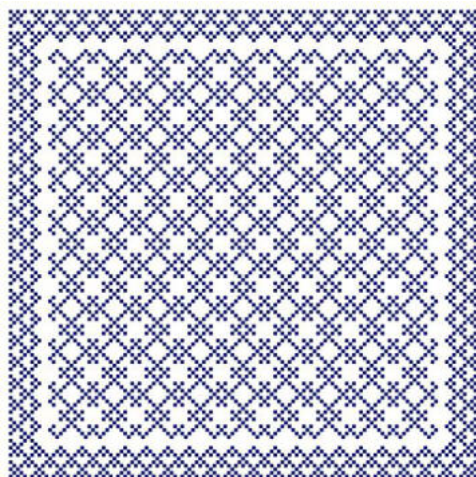




"Honeysuckle" and "Acorns" recreated from "A Schole-House for the Needle" worked on pre-washed calico in DMC stranded floss.

CH0435 Elizabethan Blackwork

This Elizabethan counted thread blackwork design can be worked in Aida or evenweave fabric.

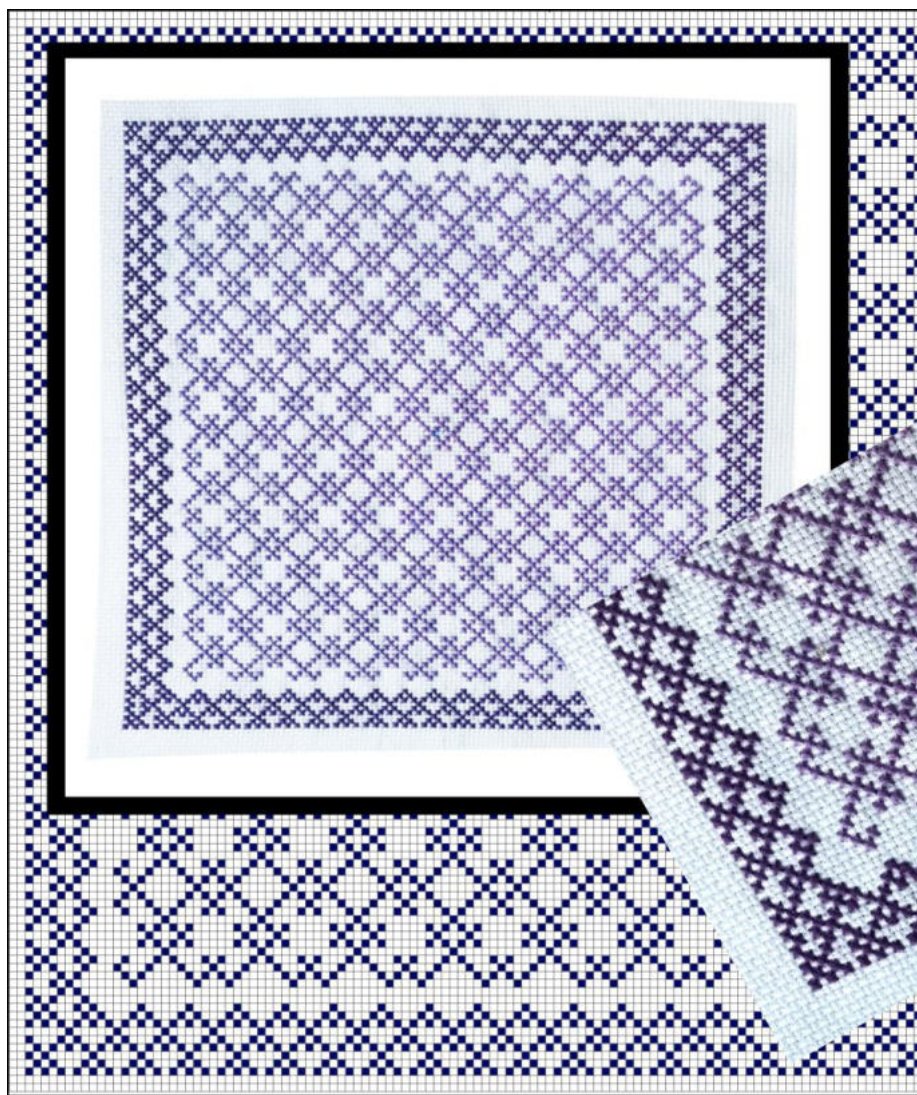


New pattern CS0013 Tasukimon Diamonds

Deteriorating eyesight is an unpleasant fact for many people and combined with specific eye conditions such as macular degeneration or cataracts, it may be necessary to rethink how you work.

This is the second chart in the series of Japanese style cross stitch designs. Repeating a pattern with slow, careful stitching is restful yet produces a satisfying result. It can be worked in one colour or two. The colours can be changed to suit the individual but avoid pale colours as they can be difficult to see.

Choose an antique white rather than a bright white fabric to avoid the glare. Sit comfortably under a good light and stitch!



CS0013 Tasukimon Diamonds

'Stitch Along' 2025 Block 11 Borders

The pdf for the two borders can be found at the end of this Blog and on the Blackwork Journey Facebook groups.

Decide now how you are going to make up your design and work the borders accordingly. The final part will be added in January 2026.

Marilyn has created her own border and added it as she worked through the different blocks. I love the colour scheme she has adopted. Blues and copper threads make it a unique piece.

Well done, Marilyn!
Bolton Stitch and Textile Group

Finally, can I thank Lori and Banu for all the help they have given me during 2025. I could not run the Facebook groups without their help.



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



Happy stitching, *Liz*

Block 11 Choice of two borders.

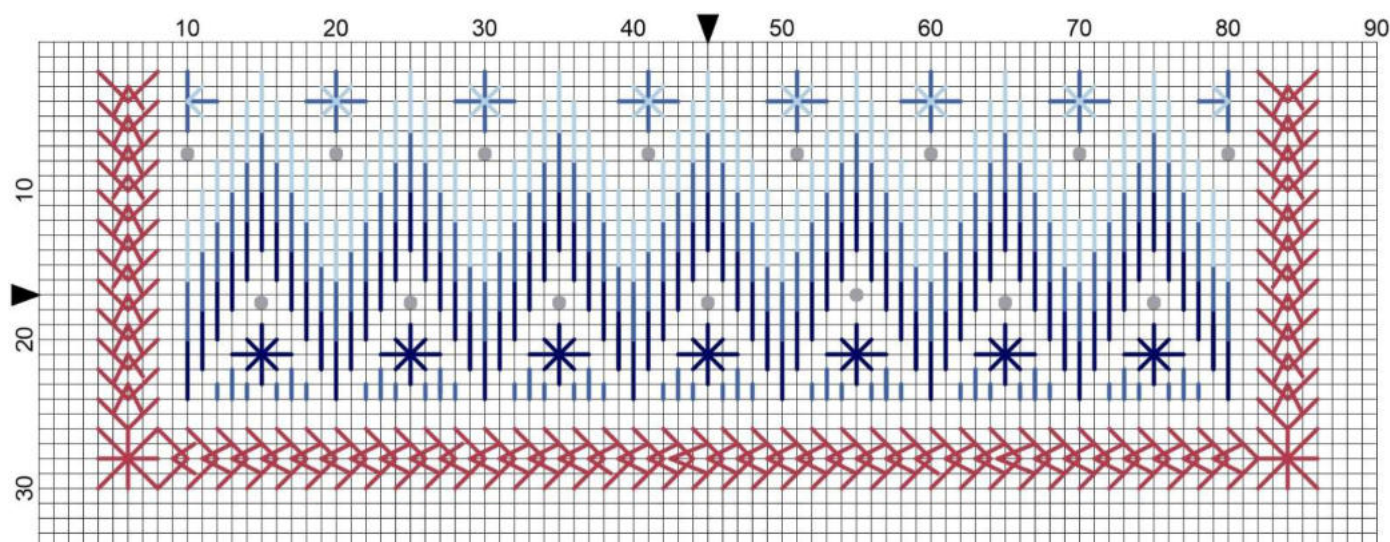
There is a choice of two borders to work round the embroidery. However, before working either border place the embroidery face down on a soft towel, press lightly with a steam iron and pull gently into shape. Leave to dry.

Method:

1. Decide at this stage how the panel is to be completed - as a wall hanging, bordered with fabric to make a runner or framed as a picture. It will determine how the border is finished at the top of the panel.
2. Since readers might have altered the pattern, the borders need to be adjusted to align with the top of the panel.

Border 1 Wheatear stitch and eyelet corners.

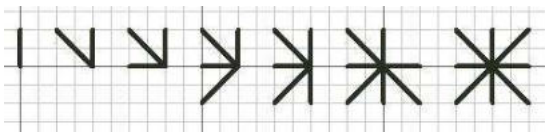
1. Start at the bottom left-hand corner, counting two blocks away from the embroidery. Using white, or pastel thread (matt crochet cotton, floss (4 strands) or cotton P rle No 8, follow the chart and work the bottom border in wheatear stitch with eyelet corners over 4 blocks first. Look at the photo to help with placing the pattern correctly. Work the side borders from the top to the bottom. Use the tacking lines to keep it straight. After the borders have been completed remove the tacking stitches.



Border 1 Wheatear & eyelet corners



2. Add the side borders. If the piece is a wall hanging **stitch the border the full height of the fabric**. If the piece is framed or mounted as a table runner stitch the border round all four sides of the embroidery.



Eyelet stitch over 4 blocks

Wheatear stitch



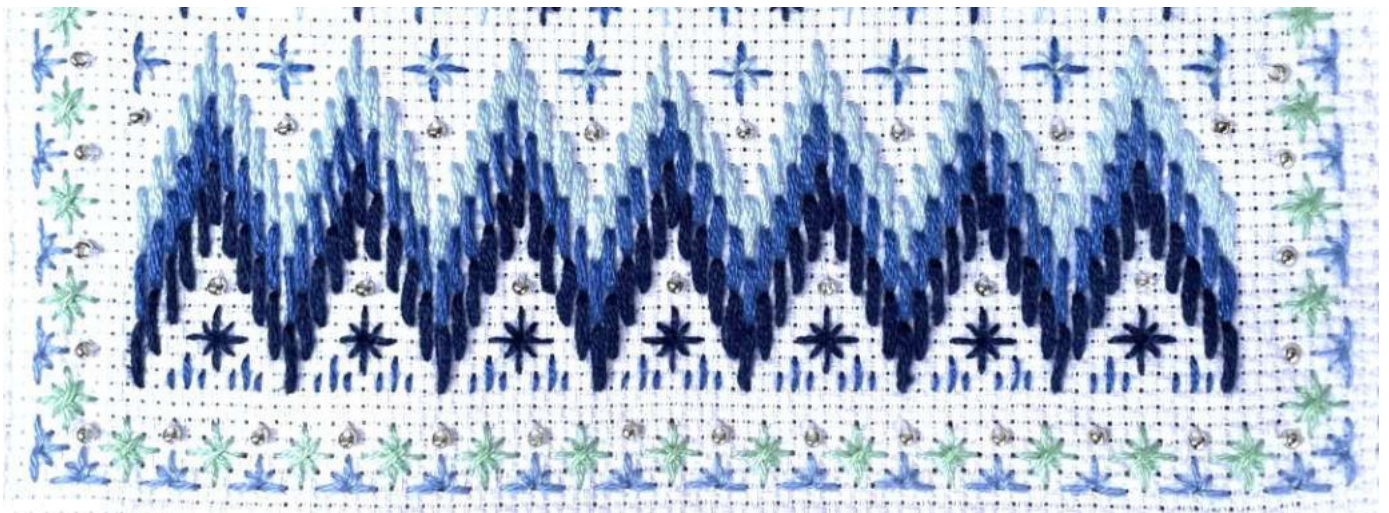
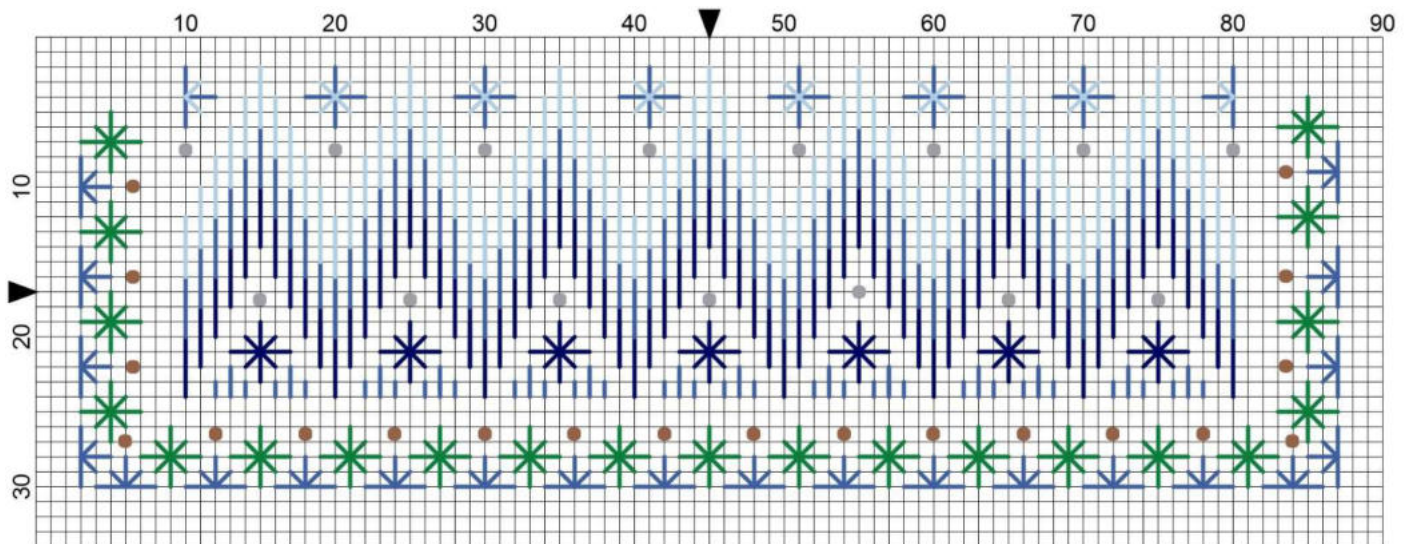
Border 2 Smyrna cross over 4 block and half cross

Choose two pastel colours for the border and Mill Hill glass beads in colour of your choice. Colonial knots can be substituted for beads.

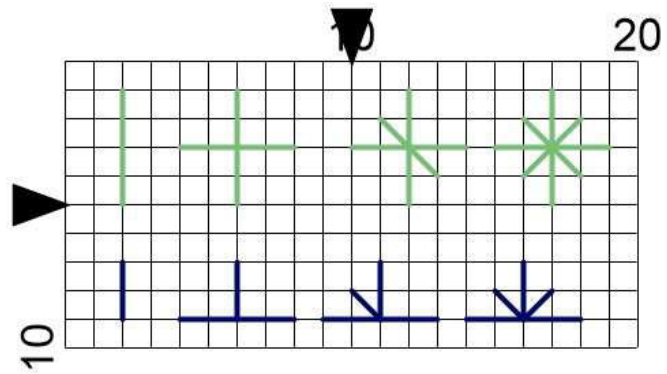
1. Decide at this stage how the panel is to be finished – as a wall hanging, bordered with fabric to make a runner, wall hanging or framed as a picture.

Method:

1. Start at the bottom right-hand corner counting 2 blocks (bottom) x 3 blocks (RH side) blocks away from the embroidery. **Work the border round all four sides of the embroidery.** Refer to the photo to place the border correctly.

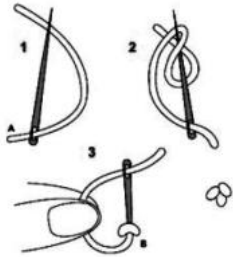
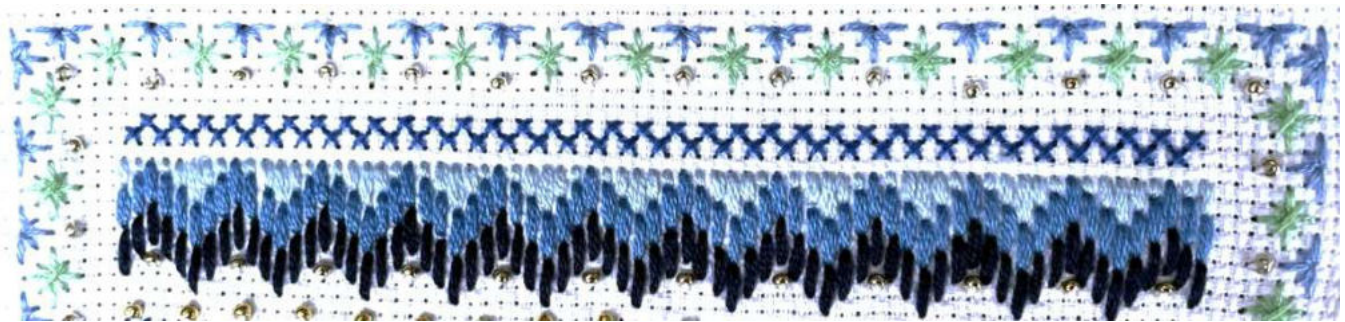


Simple counted thread border worked in one strand of floss



Smyrna cross over 4 and half cross.

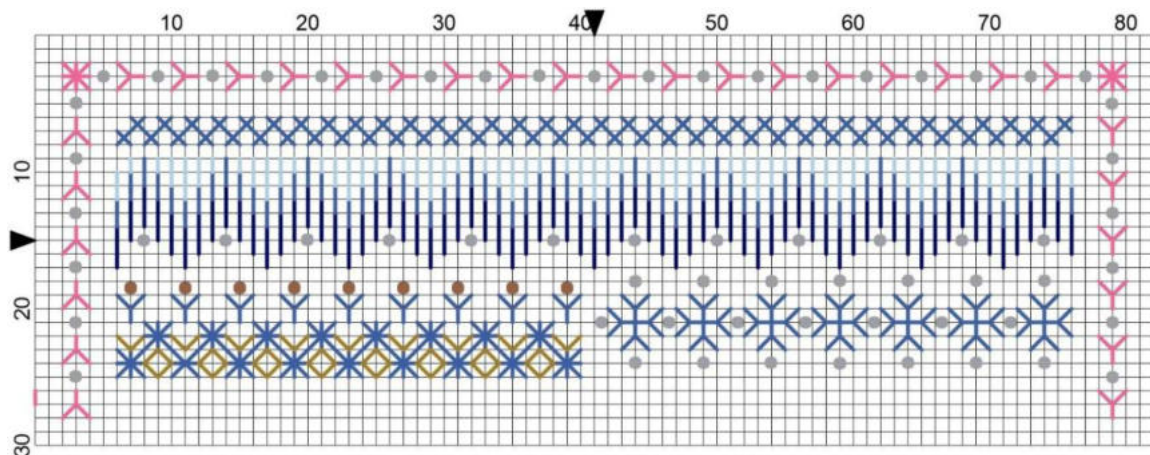
2. Embroider the sides and across the top of the design for all types of finishing. Add the beads or use colonial knots after the embroidery has been completed.



Border 2 – embroider round all four sides.

Colonial knot

3. Add the beads. Remove the tacking threads and check for loose ends. Once the border has been completed, place the embroidery face down on a soft towel and press again lightly with a steam iron. Pull the embroidery gently into shape and leave to dry naturally.



Consider designing your own border, for example, fly stitch and beads.

The final block will consist of different methods of completing the panel.

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