



Blackwork Journey Inspirations

Lady Margaret 1533



***From brass to
embroidery -
the story of Lady
Margaret Bellingham***





LADY MARGARET BELLINGHAM

Circa 1500, Kendal, Cumbria,
UK

This plaque is part of the Bellingham family tomb at Bellingham Chapel in Holy Trinity Church, Kendal, Cumbria

It was originally engraved in 1553 and restored in 1860. The Bellingham country home, Levens Hall, still stands today and houses many historic treasures.

Many years ago, I made a brass rubbing of Lady Margaret with a view to creating a blackwork embroidery to become a companion piece to an earlier blackwork panel I had stitched of Sir Hugh Starkey of Olton in Cheshire. He was a Gentleman Usher to Henry V 111. He died in 1560, so it was appropriate to choose a titled lady of the same period.

*A brass rubbing of Lady
Margaret Bellingham*

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The Bellingham Family Tomb

The Bellingham tomb belongs to Sir Roger and Lady Margaret Bellingham, The brasses now seen on the top of the tomb are replicas as the originals were stolen in the 17th century.

It is a chest tomb with several brass plates and four shields sunk into the cover, along with two freestone shields on the side with the arms of the Bellinghams of Levens and Burneside. The brass at the foot of the tomb contains the following epitaph;

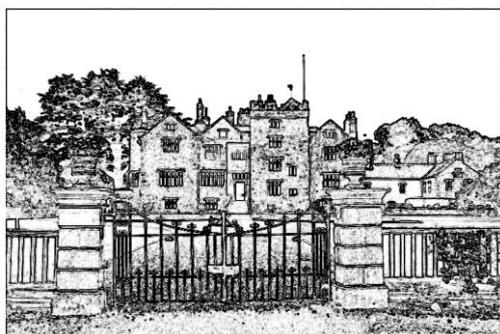
'here under lyesth Sir Roger Bellingham, Knt. (which of hos own roper costs and charges builded the chapel of or Lady within the church of Kendall), and of Margaret, his wife, daur. of Sir Robert Aske, Knight and of Elizabeth, his wife, daur. to the Lord John Clifford, now created Earl of Cumberland, which Sir Roger dies the 18th day of July, AD. 1522, and the sd. Margaret dyed the - day of- , AD. 15-, whose souls Jhesu pardon.'

The present inscription is a restoration and has been taken from the "History of Richmondshire" Sir Roger BELLINGHAM (d.1533)

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Coats of arms on the Bellingham Tomb



Levens Hall, Sketch for blackwork

*Levens Hall –
Home of the
Bellingham family*



LADY MARGARET BELLINGHAM - FROM BRASS RUBBING TO EMBROIDERY

The aim of the project was to create a 'companion' to Sir Hugh Starkey using a blockweave fabric rather than an evenweave to show the potential of Aida fabrics. Because large areas were going to be worked in traditional blackwork patterns and there were few half stitches, this was a suitable choice.

1. A rubbing was made of the brass using a traditional brass rubbing kit of paper, heelball, masking tape, scissors, soft brush, dustpan and duster.
2. Once the rubbing had been completed, a tracing was made of the main lines onto greaseproof paper.



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The rubbing was worked using heelball, working from the top of the brass downwards. The rubbing was then buffed lightly with a soft cloth. The greaseproof paper was placed over the rubbing and the main lines traced with an indelible pen.

3. The fabric selected was 16 count Aida blockweave in cream. Sufficient fabric was allowed round the design for mounting in a frame or ring and for the final panel.

4. The embroidery design area measures 10 x 34 inches based on the brass plate.

5. The design was drawn onto the fabric using an HB pencil.

6. The threads chosen were limited to DMC 310 black stranded cotton and gold and silver metallic threads of different thicknesses and manufacturers. Mill Hill glass beads in gold, copper and pewter and a haberdashery braid for the necklace were collected together. Tapestry needles No. 24 and 28, beading needle and small ring frame were used.

7. I intended to start with the head and especially the eyes. I thought if they were correct, the rest would follow. Whilst the original costume would have been very simple, I wanted to keep the face and background as outline stitches and create heavy embroidery within the garment as an exercise in pattern development rather than remaining true to the original rubbing – this was artistic licence, or possibly my excuse for wanting to work with metallic threads and beads!

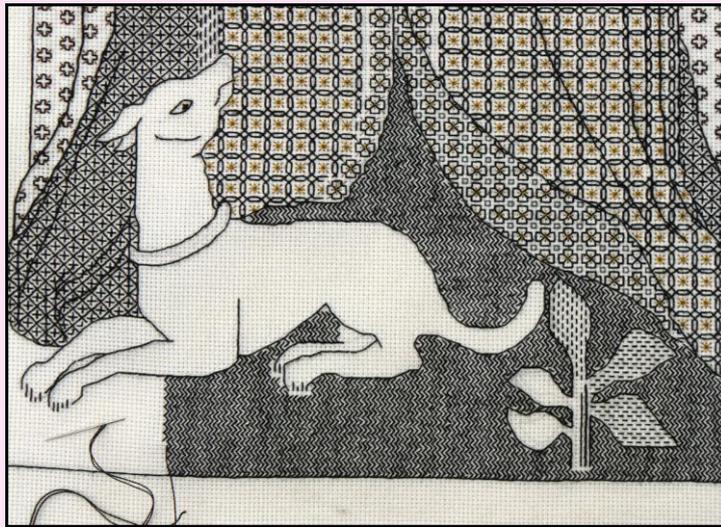


Lady Margaret's features resembled a line drawing

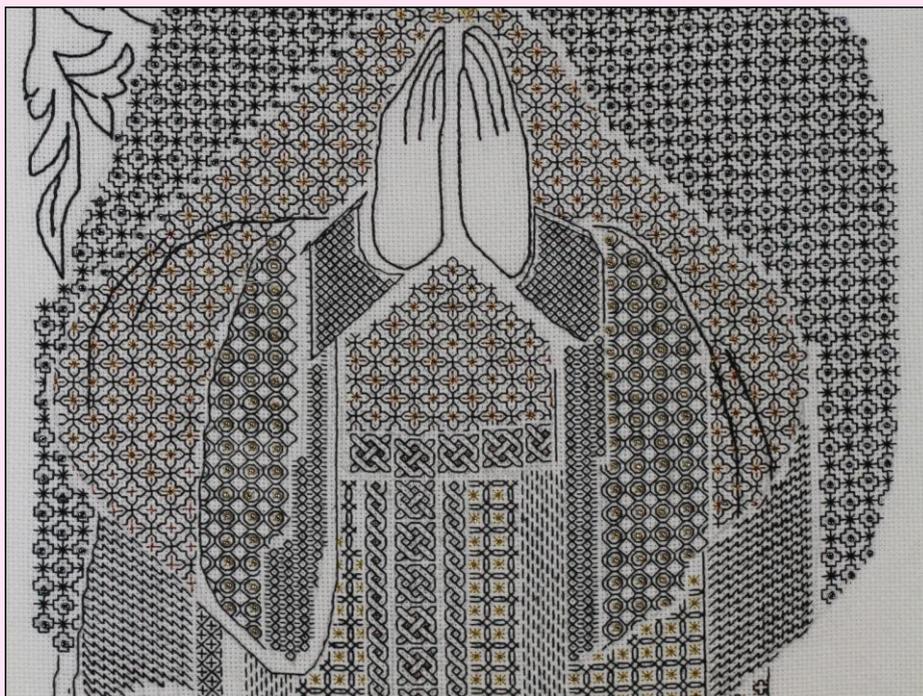
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Two strands of cotton were used to stitch the outlines and this was then whipped with two strands to create a corded effect. The leaves behind the head were worked using the same method at a later stage. I altered the eyes to look downwards and once the main outline was complete, I considered how the patterns would be added and where the light and dark areas would be placed.

8. An animal was frequently placed at the feet of a figure in 16th century brasses and in this case, a dog lay at Lady Margaret's feet. It was outlined, whipped and left plain using a closely worked background to emphasise the animal, whilst not detracting from the focus of the brass.



The dog looks up towards his mistress! One strand of thread was used with the lines of stitching packed closely together to create a dense pattern.



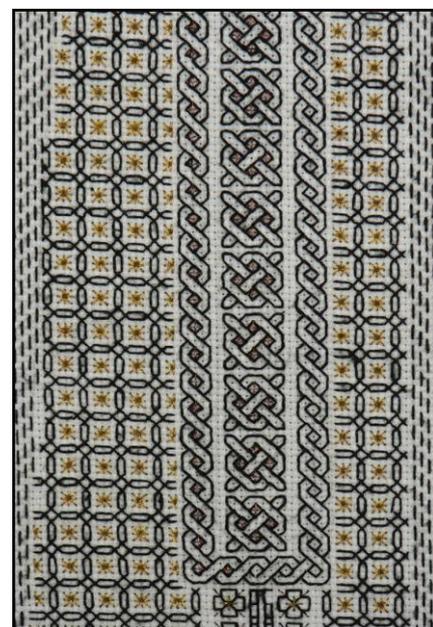
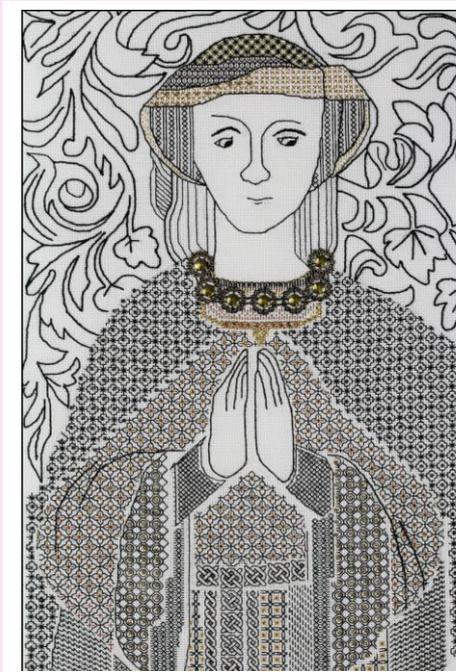
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9. Moving upwards, the hands and the patterns around the hands were stitched creating a focal point to work out from and then the other patterns were built up working outwards. Metallic threads were added, but the beads were not added until a later stage.

10. Once the body of the garments had been completed, creating the neckline of the gown was completed using metallic threads and a textured braid.



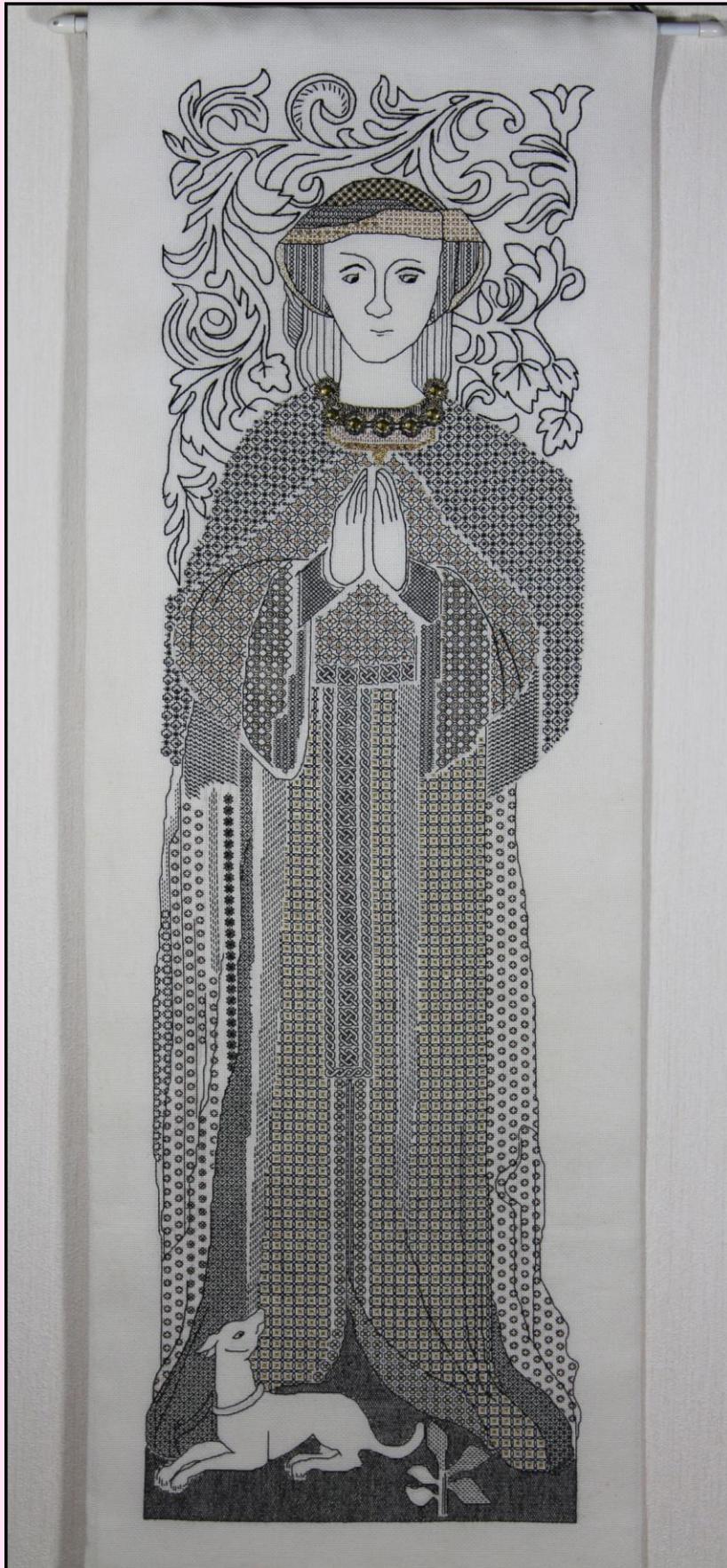
Details of the neckline of the gown



Stitch details

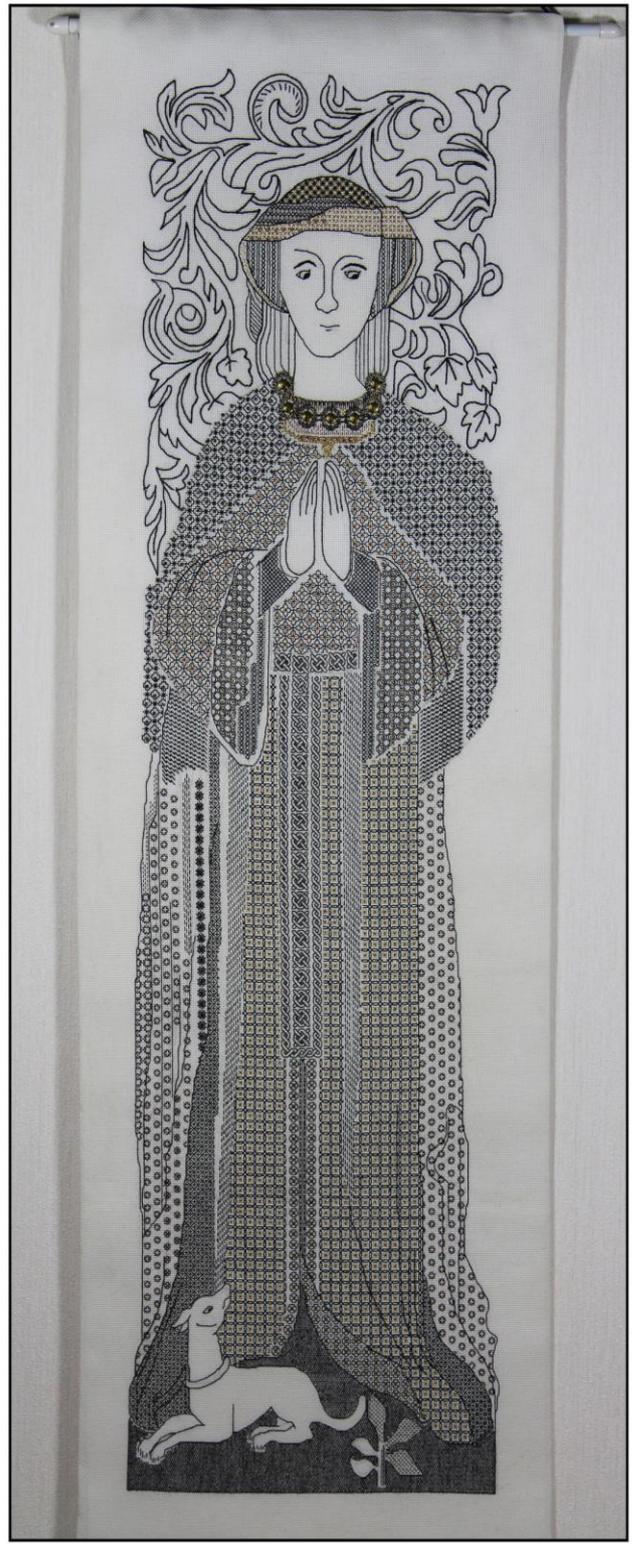
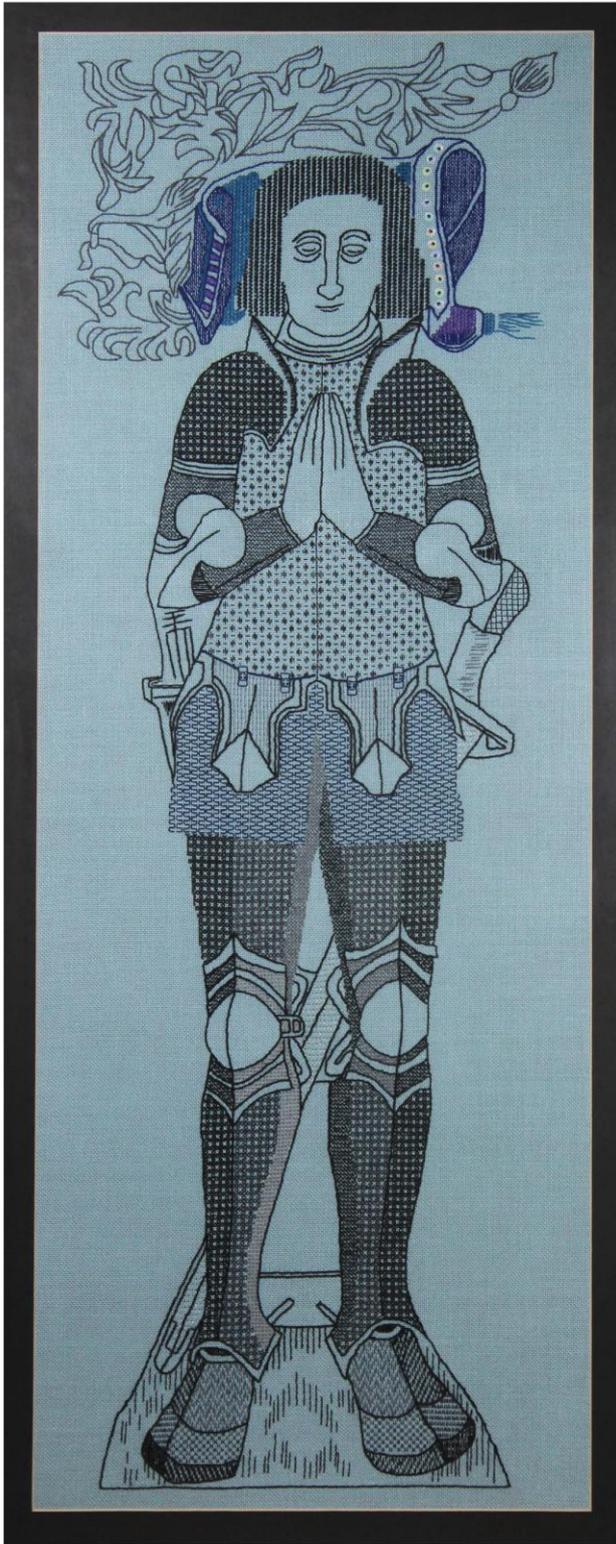
11. The finished embroidery was mounted as a panel over lightweight wadding.

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Lady Margaret complete!

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Sir Hugh finally won his lady!

I hope you enjoy the story behind the embroidery!

Liz