



Blackwork Journey Blog

May 2015

Back to Basics!

Knots v beads

Embroidery fabrics

Beading

New designs

Block 3 Box of Delights



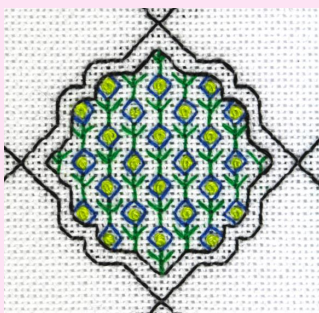
As I sit here writing the Blog for May the sun is shining, the daffodils are blooming in the garden and the birds are making their nests in the tree outside my workroom, but I know that for many of my readers in the USA and Canada that they have experienced a really long, cold, snowy winter and I understand that ice is still thick on the St Lawrence river and whilst readers can continue to stitch, the weather can make life really difficult. However, Spring is just around the corner and we have put our clocks forward to British Summertime, so it is time to think about taking our needlework out into the garden and soaking up the warmth of the sun and working the next stage of 'Box of Delights'.

Block 3

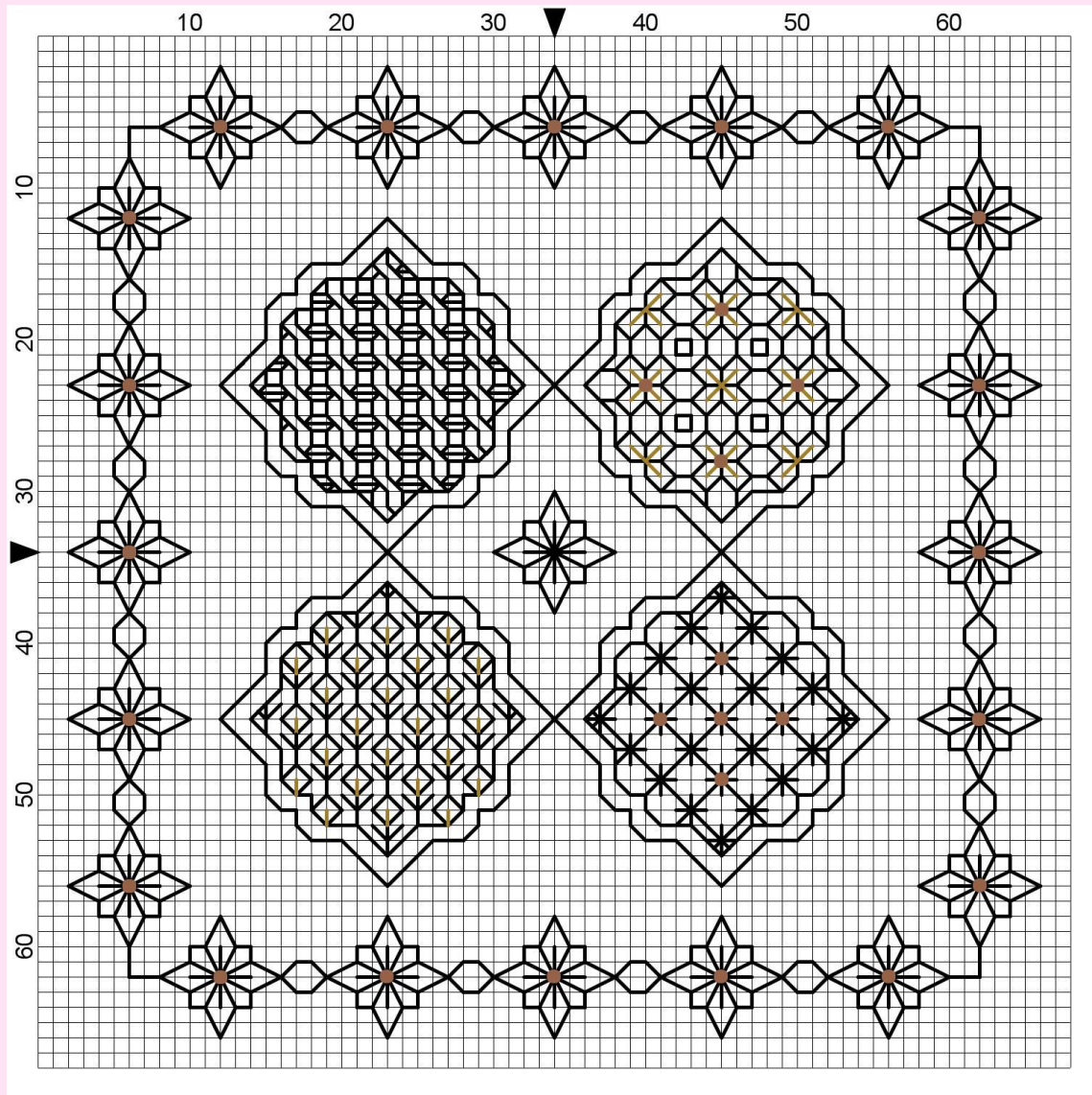
Block 3 brings you six more chocolates to enjoy and also a small box of four which can be worked as a box top or just for fun!



Chocolates 18 – 23



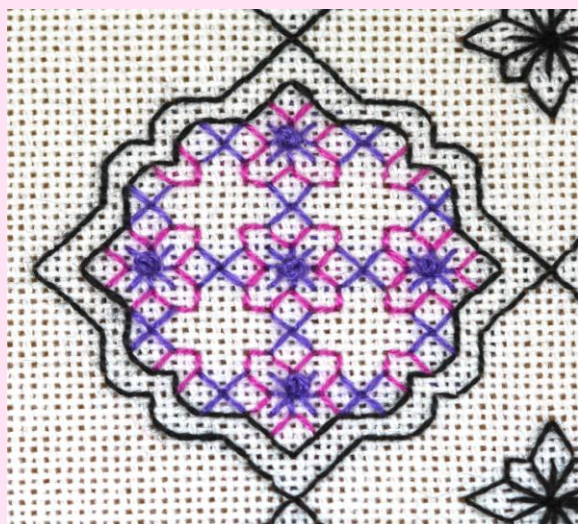
Colonial knots have been used to fill the sweet rather than using beads!



'Four Delights' worked in traditional blackwork colours of black and gold.



The sweets themselves can indicate colours for the silks to be used!



Taking a step back!

I have been asked a number of questions about stitching on evenweave fabric, beading and the use of knots on ‘Box of Delights’ and ‘Save the Stitches’. With the addition of Block 3 and ‘Four Delights’ in this issue, it seems an appropriate time to recap my thoughts on the subject.

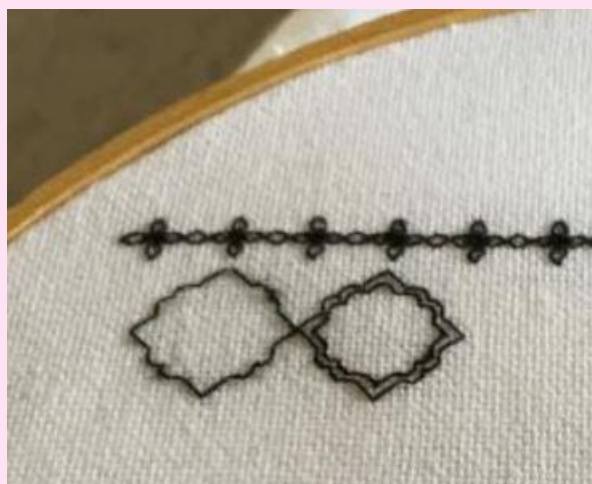
Working on evenweave fabric:

Understanding the nature and construction of different fabrics will help you to identify the ones with which you most enjoy working, but until you reach that stage, I suggest you keep an open mind and experiment with different fabrics

Start by considering any physical limitations you may have, especially your eyesight, as not all the fabrics recommended for embroidery are easy to use and whilst lights and lenses will eliminate some of the problems, dark fabrics or ones with a high thread count may prove difficult and frustrating. If you are new to counted thread techniques, I suggest you use a fabric where you can see the threads clearly!

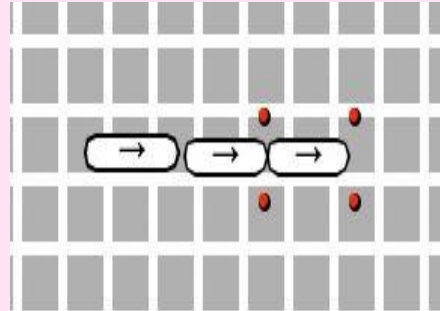
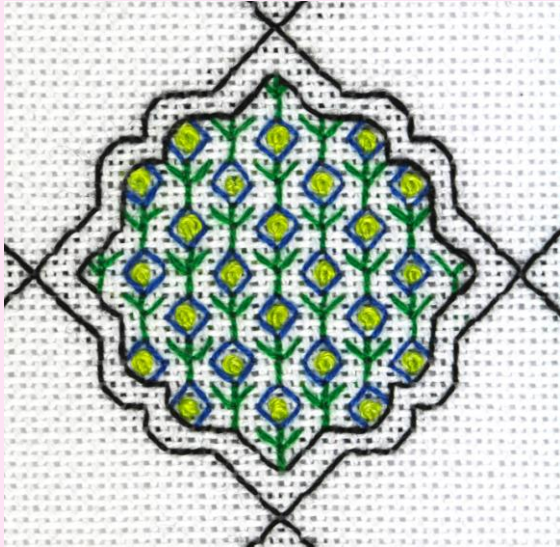
The technique you intend to use can often determine the most suitable fabric to use, for example, hardanger, requires specialist 22 count fabric. The weight of the fabric is also important. If the embroidery has buttons, ribbons or beads added, the fabric must be able to support the embellishments without causing distortion.

The size of the thread and needle you propose to use needs to be in proportion to the weight of the fabric and be able to pass through the fabric smoothly, without rubbing or damaging either the thread or the fabric.



This example has been worked over one thread of fabric using back stitch. It is very small and the stitching is dense. It would be very difficult to insert the diaper patterns into a shape this small.

Back stitch should be worked over TWO threads of the fabric unless otherwise stated in a pattern. If it is worked over ONE thread, the design is very small and split stitches cannot be used.



This example has been worked correctly over two threads of fabric in back stitch. Each stitch sits in the same hole as the last stitch. The fabric is 28 count evenweave.

The thread count of a fabric is the number of threads per inch. If the fabric is evenweave, the count will be the same, both horizontally and vertically. It is available in a range of widths, stitch counts and colours. The most popular is 28 holes per inch. Stitches are usually worked into every other hole over two threads.

The fabric may be made of pure linen, linen and cotton mixes or pure cotton, for example, Zweigart 28 count Quaker Cloth is 55% linen and 45% cotton. The linen/cotton combination has very even threads which are much easier to count than 100% linen.

Working half or quarter stitches is much easier on evenweave and many charts specify which type of fabric is most suitable for the design.

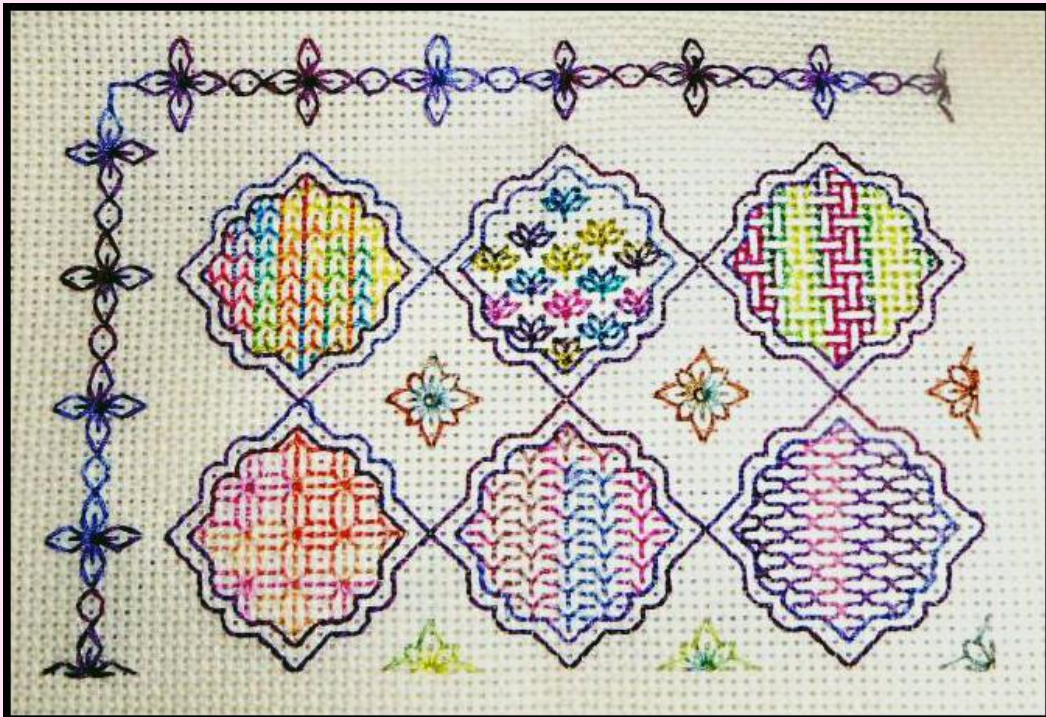
For further information there is a PDF in my 'Techniques' section TQ0011 Fabrics for Embroidery

Working on Aida blockweave

Aida is woven in blocks with the stitches worked in every hole. It is available in a variety of counts i.e. holes to the inch. The most common are 11, 14, 16 and

18. The higher the thread count, the smaller the design. A wide range of widths and colours are available made of a mixture of cotton, linen or synthetic material. 22 count hardanger can also be classed as a block weave and used very successfully for blackwork.

The only problem in using Aida for a design such as ‘Save the Stitches’ or ‘Box of Delights’ is that there are half and quarter stitches which means that the ‘block’ has to be split. If the design has very few split stitches then the fabric is easy to use.



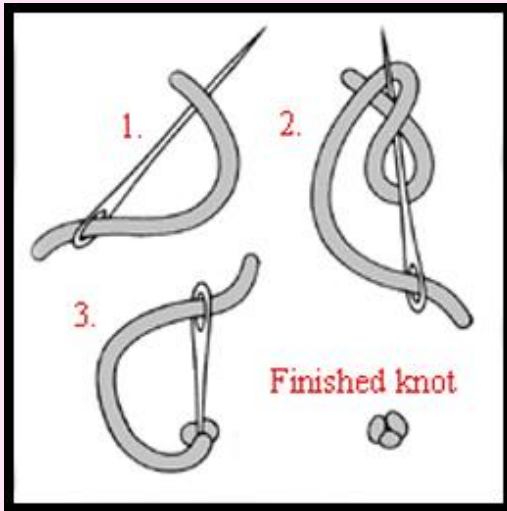
Theresa is working her embroidery on 14 count Aida blockweave

Knots v Beads!

Rather than use beads in all the chocolates, Colonial knots make a good alternative and where only small numbers are needed it avoids the expense of buying beads. French knots can be used, but they are not as accurate or ‘sit’ as well on the fabric as Colonial knots.

The Colonial Knot is worked in three stages:

1. Bring the needle up through the fabric as you would a French knot.

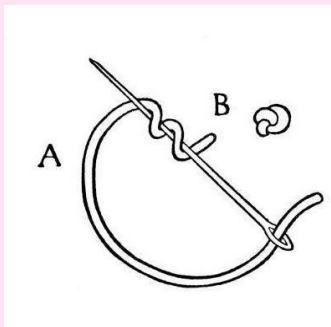


2. Push the thread away from you towards the RIGHT. Wrap the thread round the needle in a figure of eight. Use your thumb to control the thread.

3. Keep the needle as upright as possible and push the needle downwards into almost the same spot as you came up.

4. Pull the thread gently and you will have a perfect Colonial knot every time!

The French Knot



1. Bring the needle up through the fabric.

2. Wrap the thread round the needle twice. Use your thumb to control the thread.

3. Keep the needle as upright as possible and push the needle downwards into almost the same spot as you came up.

4. Pull the thread gently and you will have a perfect knot every time!

My thoughts on beading in Blackwork Journey



Beading worked on 16 count Aida blockweave and 28 count evenweave

Beading is very personal and I follow certain rules, with which you may or may not agree.

When I design I include beads in the pattern, but I seldom add them until the embroidery is finished and then I take stock. I decide if it needs beads, what size and where to place them, but I am very happy to leave them out if I think it would be too much, especially when using metallic threads.

I always use good quality beads such as Mill Hill. They are more expensive, but they are consistent in size and quality. Cheaper beads may not be consistent in size, colour or strength!

When I attach the beads I use a ‘betweens’ quilting needle which I find easier to handle rather than a beading needle and I use a thread that matches the bead, usually one of the threads from the pattern.

I think you have to look at your stitching and then make a decision. It is your piece and you decide what and where you need to add embellishments. Trust your judgement. If it looks right to you, then go with that!

If obtaining beads in a specific colour or only a small number is required, then try Colonial or French knots in place of the beads. Three strands of floss make a substantial knot.

New designs for May!

Two new patterns have been added to my site this month. One is a pulled thread work and blackwork design called PR0027 Rebekah and the other is a freestyle blackwork design called CH0333 Inception.

I enjoy working outside the established boundaries and combining different techniques or looking at patterns in a different way. The Islamic arabesque style of architecture lends itself to creating blackwork designs and I have used this idea in Inception.

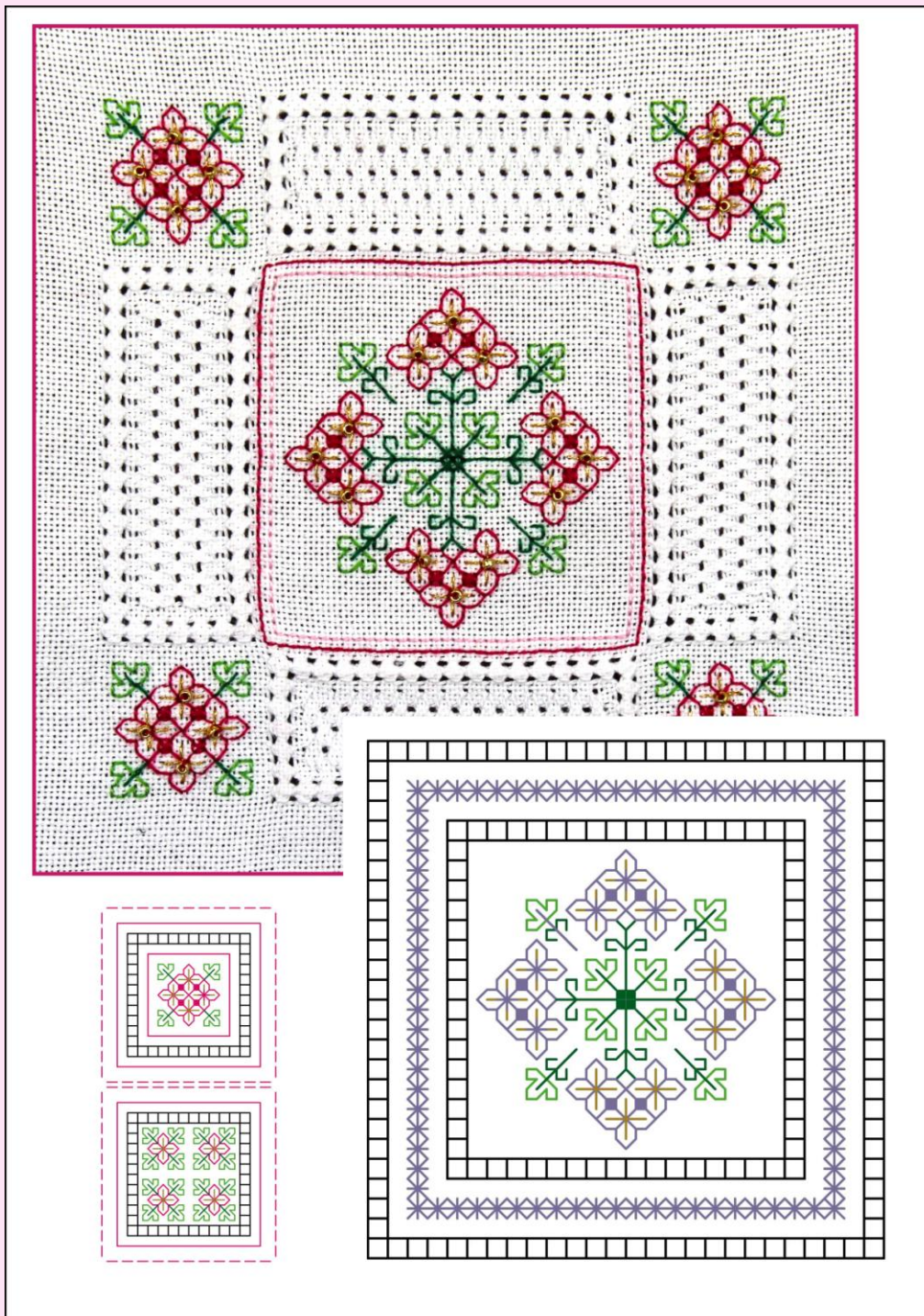


Detail from ceiling Sheik Zayid Grand Mosque, Abu Dhabi

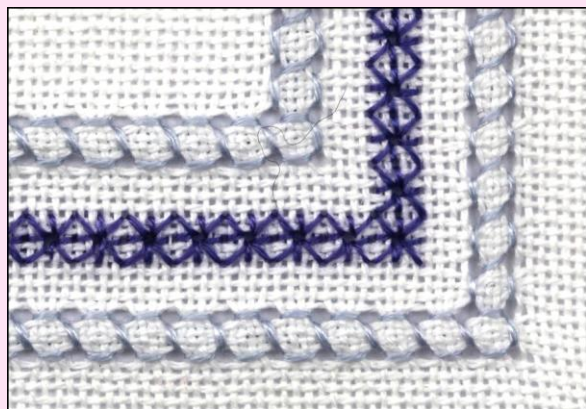


CH0333 Inception is a freestyle Islamic blackwork design worked in variegated threads. It was used to create a small evening bag.

Rebekah introduces the reader to two pulled work stitches and traditional cross stitch, back stitch and eyelet stitch in two variations. The contrast in texture between the stitches makes an interesting design which can be used in many different variations. The design is worked on 28 count evenweave using Cotton P rle No.12 for the pulled thread work and DMC stranded cottons for the blackwork.



PR0027 Rebekah



Extract from Rebekah illustrating the four-sided stitch and the eyelet border

The choice of names for designs is always a challenge and it is interesting to know the meaning of the names chosen.

Inception means the beginning of a project or an idea, a first part or stage of subsequent events. The design has been inspired from a shape seen in an Arabic mosque and has been introduced into a number of different projects.

Two charts are included, small and large.

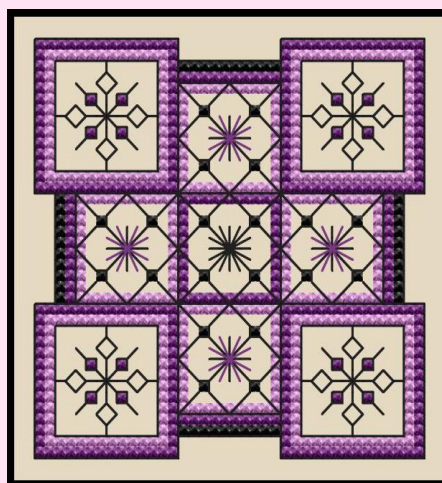
Small design area: 7.5 x 7.5 inches

Large design area: 10.5 x 10.5 inches

The name Rebekah, the wife of Isaac in the Old Testament of the Bible, is a Hebrew baby name meaning: Captivating, connection, tie or join.

Unusual uses for Blackwork Journey designs

Readers frequently send me pictures of their finished work and it is especially pleasing when I see what the item has been used for, but Charlotte's mouse mat was a really novel idea!



The design is FR0024 Lilac Time from my Freebies section

Hot off the Press!

I have recently been contacted by two groups of ladies in opposite parts of the world who are working on Box of Delights!

They are the ladies of the **Stitchery and Quilting Guild in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada** and the members of **Port Elizabeth Embroiderers' Guild in South Africa**.

I am delighted to welcome you all to Blackwork Journey and also to welcome all the members of the Facebook Group. There are now 300 members working this project and posting photographs.

I am delighted to see that there are a wide range of threads and fabrics being used and it is wonderful to see all the different variations.

Extract from 'How to join the Box of Delights Facebook Group'

The Box of Delights is a free six-month stichalong of a blackwork design that looks like a box of chocolates. Parts are released one per month: March - September 2015

All information on how to participate in this Stitch-A-Long can be found in this blog post ; <http://www.crossstitchreview.com/box-of-delights-blackwork.../>

You can obtain the parts for the design free from Elizabeth Almond's website: <http://www.blackworkjourney.co.uk/freebies1.shtml>

The Box of delights Introduction PDF on her website details all the relevant information on sizing, release dates and styling ideas.

To get the most out of your stitching experience beyond this Group.

Pinterest account; look for her account Pinterest Elizabeth Almond Box of Delights. There is a board just for this SAL that you are encouraged to add your work to.

Instagram; using the #boxofdelights join the Insta community or you can send an email via my website

Thank you so much for your brilliant contributions. Please keep sending them to me as they are always very much appreciated.

Happy stitching! *Liz*