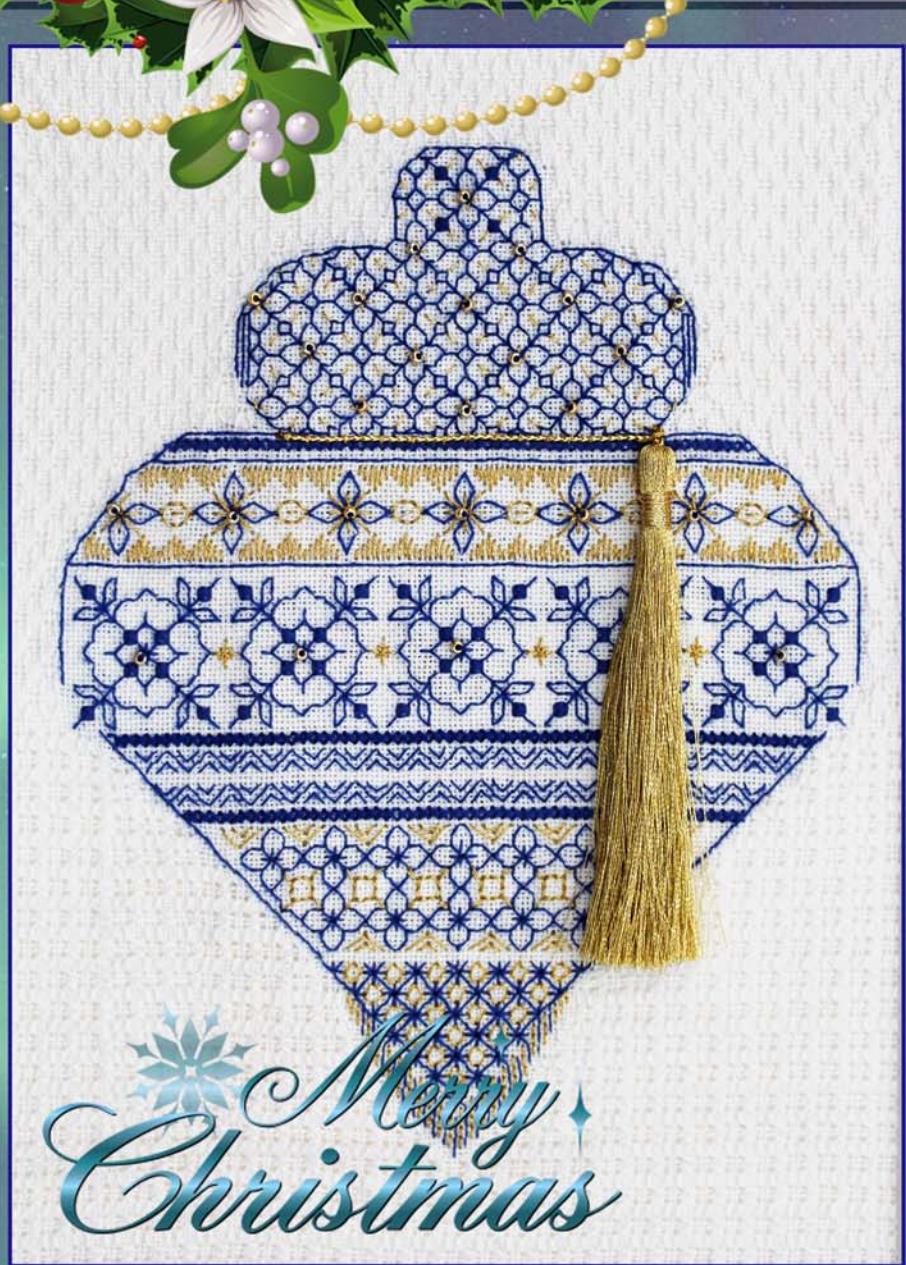
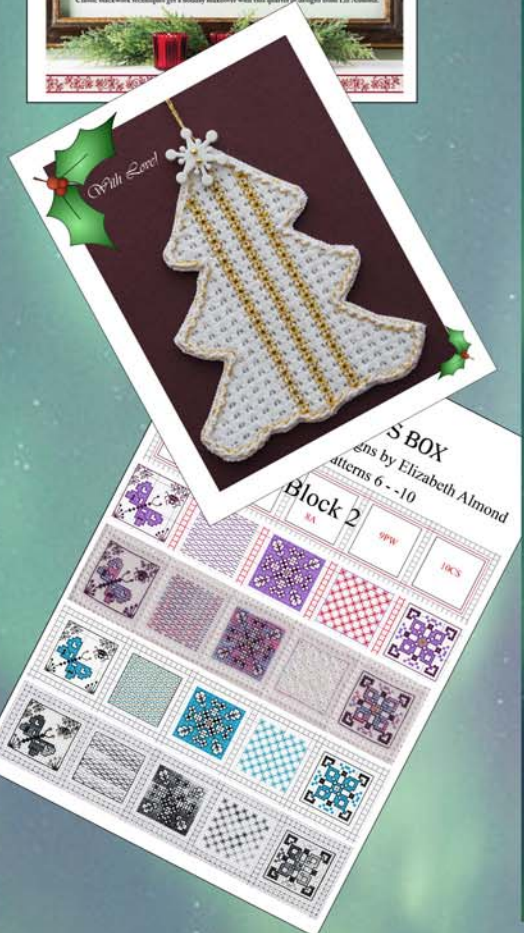




Blackwork Journey Blog

December 2015





*May I wish all my readers a peaceful Christmas and an enjoyable
and productive 2016*

Blackwork Journey Blog – December 2015

October and November have been inspirational months for Blackwork Journey, as I spent much of the time in Japan fulfilling a long held desire to visit a country that has always held a fascination for me for its art and embroidery. On my way home, I stayed over in Hong Kong for a few days and this provided me with the chance to see how it has changed and developed since my last visit some 18 years ago.

I undertook a lot of research prior to visiting Japan, as I was particularly on the lookout for new ideas and to see some of their embroideries and if possible, meet some of their embroiderers.

My journey began in the Capital, Tokyo with its population of over 30 million and unlike many international cities I found that little English is spoken and with very few street names, a good map was essential. However, I managed to find several very good craft shops and purchase a range of beads and sashiko threads and materials to add to my stock.

I then went on to investigate some of the more traditional areas of the city and temples where I found many examples of traditional Japanese symbols and decoration. Having visited China some years ago and seen their temples, it was very interesting to compare the two different cultures and finding a 700 year old bronze Buddha hidden in a quiet corner of the Tennoji Temple was a bonus!



I have seen many different Buddha's in different parts of the work and often found their expressions severe and intimidating. However, I found this one in Yanaka and later, the giant Lantau Buddha in Hong Kong made a significant and uplifting impact on me. There is a serenity in their faces which is reflected in the quiet devotion of their worshippers and provided me with a real sense of peace.

I can also relate to the craftsmen who built them, creating great beauty and ornamentation for the generations of people who worship nearby and provide a sense of peace amidst all the hustle of everyday life.

As an embroiderer and designer I find I need quiet periods in my day to think about what I am trying to create.

Sitting in a beautiful temple garden accompanied by a Buddha often helped me to stitch and contemplate in peace.



The Lantau Buddha on Lantau Island, Hong Kong sits on a mountain top. It was constructed in 1993 and is 34 metres high and faces north to look over the Chinese people.

Moving on to the more rural areas of Japan, I found some antique examples of sasiko, which is a traditional form of Japanese embroidery. It was used to mend clothes and join layers for hangings and cushions, using a running-stitch technique where the needle was stabbed in and out of the fabric. Material and threads were expensive, so mending was essential. When white cotton thread became available, this was used for patching indigo blue garments and this gave sasiko its distinctive appearance.

The oldest surviving item of sasiko stitched clothing is from the Asuka period and is a Buddhist priest's robe. It was donated to a temple in AD 756. It would be interesting to see if I could incorporate some traditional sasiko designs into blackwork, so watch this space for 2016!



Sasiko being worked in the traditional manner and an antique banner



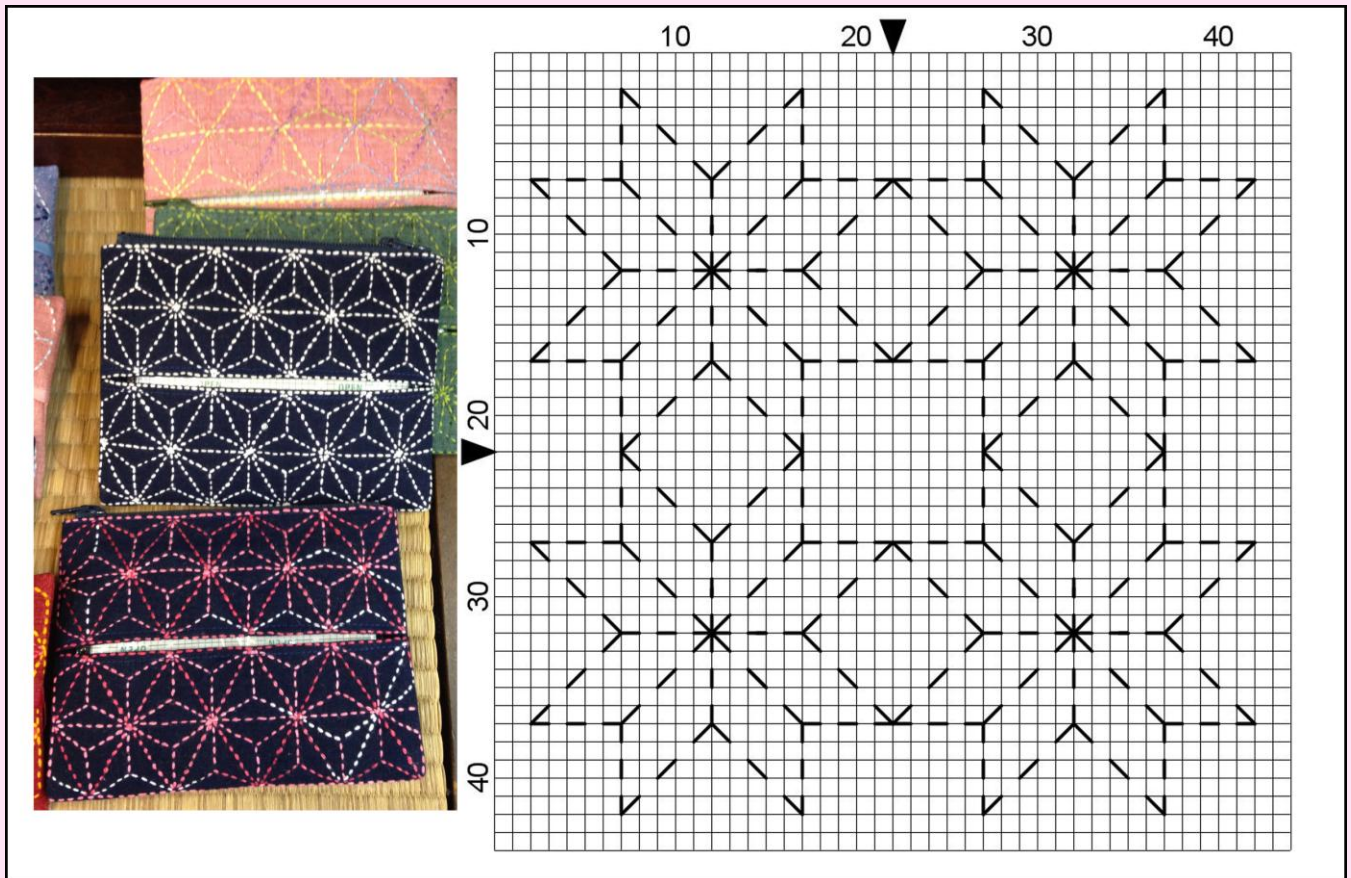
Sasiko designed for the tourists can be readily purchased, but I bought fabric and white and cream threads to create my own designs.

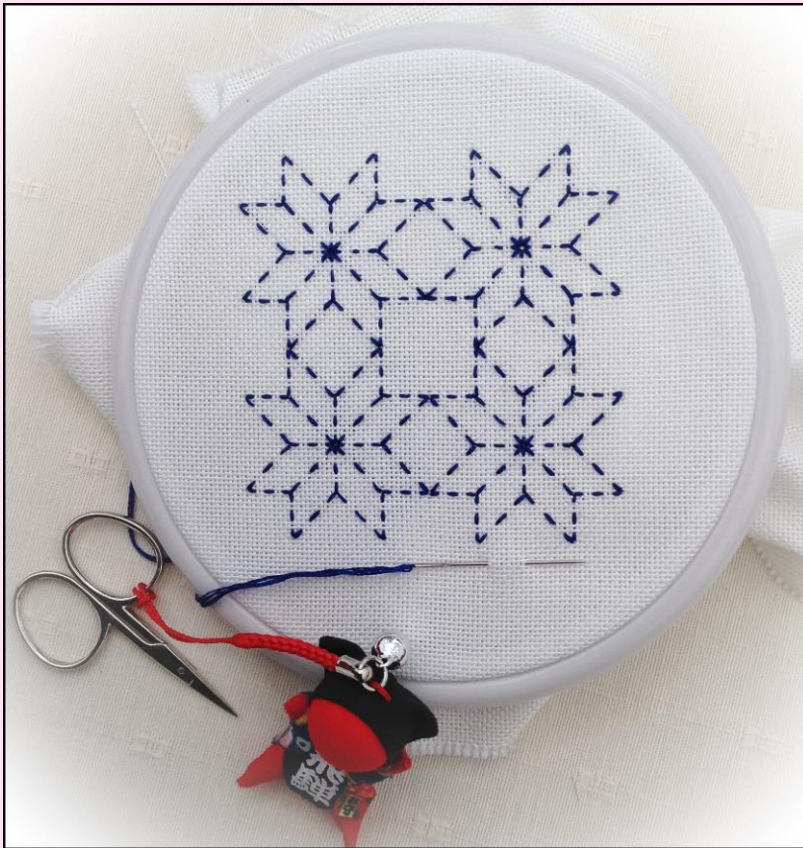
Modern sasiko used for bags, wallets and hangings were worked in a variety of bright colours and variegated threads on a heavy cotton fabric.



Many sasiko patterns were derived from Chinese designs, but equally many were developed by the Japanese. The geometry and symmetry appeals to my sense of order! These two small coasters are worked in traditional designs and pick up the leaf motif from the antique hanging.

Just for fun, try out a very simple variation of the tissue pocket design using Aida blockweave or 28 count evenweave. Use two or three strands of floss and running stitch and repeat the pattern as many times as desired. The design area is 2.86 x 2.86 inches (40 x 40 stitches).





I really enjoyed working this small sample and will definitely explore this technique further in the new year. It does take careful counting, but once the foundation lines are stitched it is easy to see if a mistake has been made. The ends must be woven in carefully otherwise they will show through on the front of the work when it is mounted.

Pandora's Box Block 2

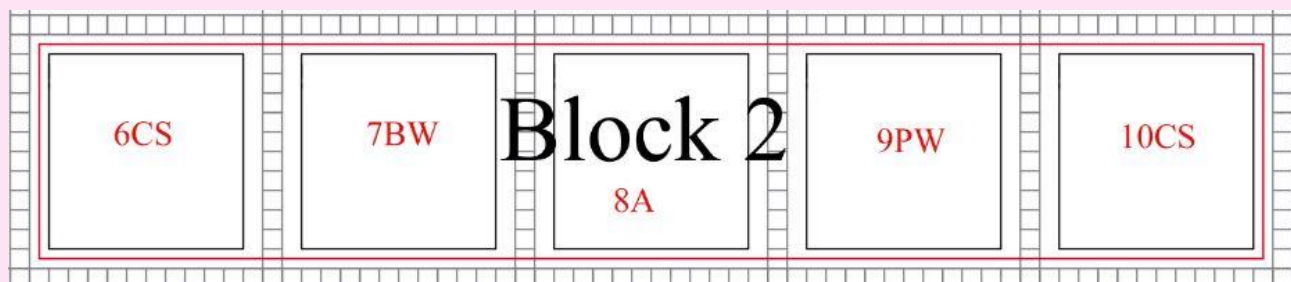
Chart and Instructions can be found in Freebies in Blackwork Journey.

Evenweave and Aida Patterns 6 - 10

Set within a border of four-sided stitch

Locate Block 2 Patterns 6 - 10 on the Master Chart.

Note: The patterns follow diagonally across the chart so some blocks will have more than one block of the same technique. (See Master chart) The two charts are NOT identical.



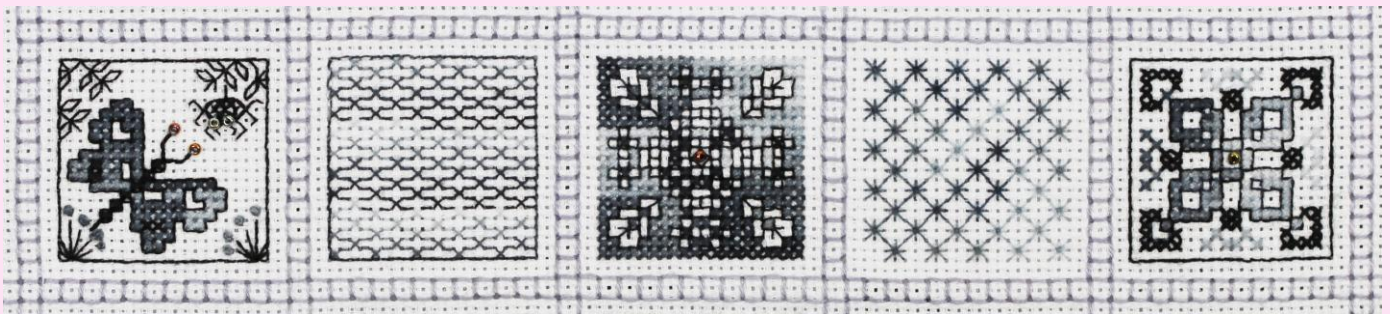
The fabric and pulled thread stitch variations have led to several patterns being placed in different parts of the chart. Please follow the chart you have selected for the fabric.

Pattern No.9 is worked as a pulled thread stitch on the evenweave but as an embroidery stitch on the Aida. The stitch is very simple to work but looks very different on the two fabrics.



Evenweave embroidery

On the evenweave the stitches are pulled very tight to create holes. On the Aida, the stitches are not pulled and create a more regular pattern.



Aida embroidery

Detached Eyelet Stitch

Pulled thread work is worked on evenweave fabric. No threads are removed, instead they are pulled together to create the stitches. The threads need to be strong enough to withstand the 'pull'. When working on Aida, do NOT pull the stitches together.

Traditionally pulled thread work was stitched in white or neutral colours but there is no reason why other colours should not be used but a pale colour palette works more effectively than a strong colour scheme.

Grid Size: 34W x 34H

Design Area: 2.14" x 2.14" (30 x 30 stitches)

Threads:

DMC Cotton P rle No 12, one ball
or DMC stranded cotton, one skein

Framework:

One strand of Cotton P rle or two strands of DMC stranded floss

Eyelet Stitch

One strand of Cotton P rle or two strands of DMC stranded floss

Stitches used:

Back stitch

Eyelet stitch See diagrams

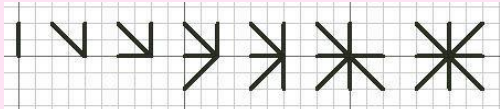
Tapestry needle No.24

Small ring or frame

Method:

1. Work the Celtic framework first in back stitch using the correct number of threads.

Creating an 8 arm eyelet stitch! Work from the outside to the centre



2. Work the eyelet in 8 stitches from the outside to the centre creating a small hole.

Bring the thread through at the top LH corner of the pattern. Insert the eyelet over 4 threads. Move from one eyelet to the next leaving four threads between each eyelet

3. Pull tight to create the holes on the evenweave fabric, but do NOT pull when working on Aida.

A back stitch border has been worked round the evenweave Block 9 but omitted from Block 9 on the Aida.

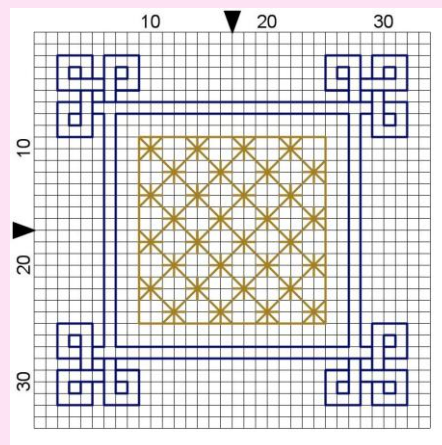
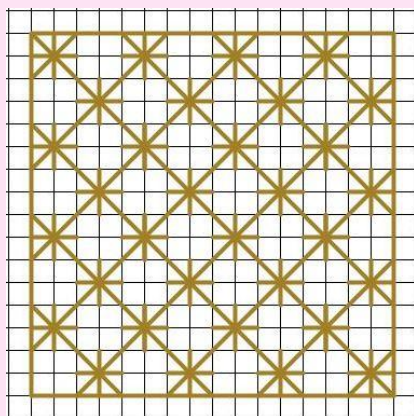
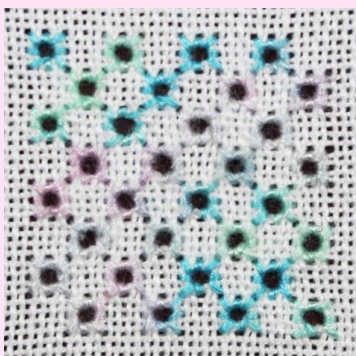
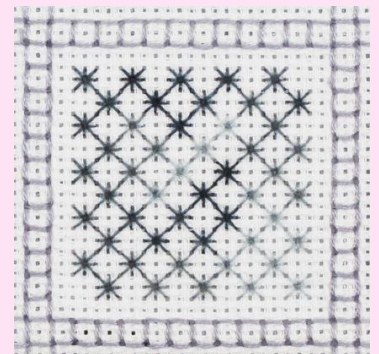


Diagram showing the placement of the detached eyelets and a Celtic Mini Motif using detached eyelets



Eyelets on evenweave and Aida



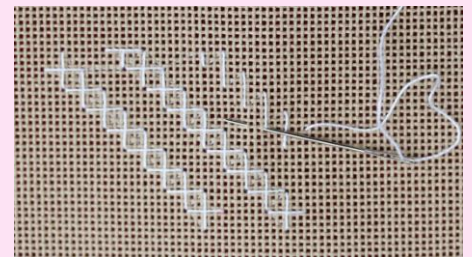
A new design!

PR0033 Japanese Christmas has been added to this site this month. The background is worked in two pulled thread stitches, Window filling and Cobbler stitch.

Christmas Ornaments



Eyelet and four-sided stitch



Diagonal raised band

Christmas ornaments using pulled thread work are both simple and effective. The two ornaments are worked on 28 count evenweave, using DMC Cotton P rle No 12. Various pulled thread work stitches have been used including eyelet stitch and four-side stitch. The edges have been buttonholed and the ornaments have been stiffened with iron-on buckram before cutting out.

If you are interested in exploring pulled thread work further and working some ornaments, a number of PDF's on pulled thread work can be downloaded from 'Files' in the Facebook group 'Elizabeth Almond, Blackwork Journey Designs'

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

Nearly 2,000 members have already joined the three Facebook groups and I would like to welcome all the new members and thank everyone for their valuable contributions. The groups are a way of providing support and help on blackwork embroidery projects and displaying their work in a way that is not possible within my monthly Blog. The Facebook button on the Home page of Blackwork Journey will take you directly to the site.



Readers 'contributions to Gallery

Every month readers send in beautiful photos of their work. Many are posted on the Pinterest boards, others in the Facebook groups. I am always amazed by the many variations that are worked from a single project. 'Save the Stitches', 'Box of Delights' and the latest one, 'Pandora's Box' is being worked by individuals and groups in a range of colours and fabrics right around the world, something I never envisaged when I designed the embroideries.

The photographs have not only widened my appreciation of their choices and talents, but enabled other people who are less confident, in seeing how different fabrics and threads work and to make informed choices. New threads that I have never heard of before regularly appear and I encourage readers to say what threads and fabric they are using.

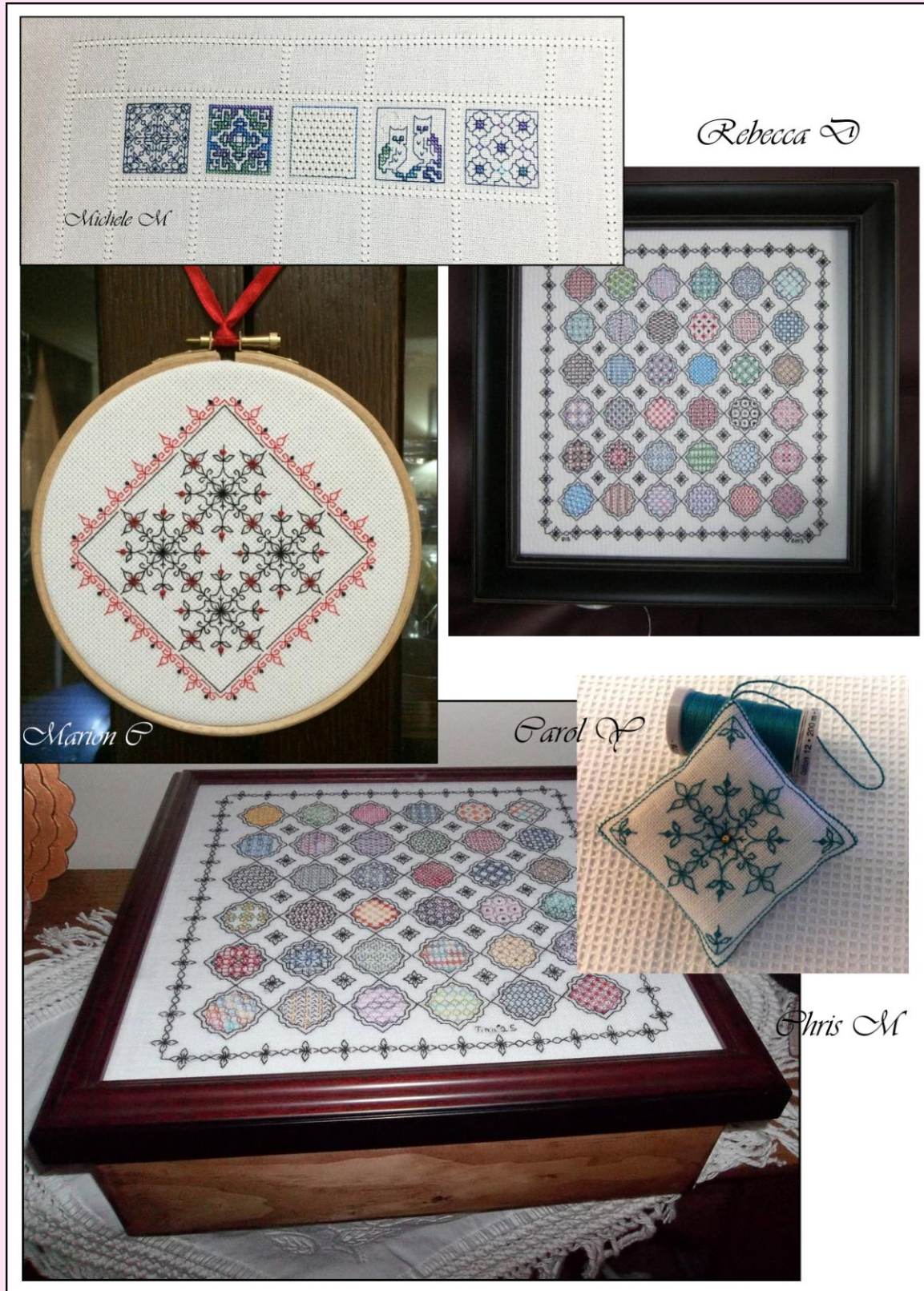


Denise and Carrie have both finished their 'Save the Stitches.' Carrie has made her embroidery into a very special Christmas present for her Mum. I cannot think of a nicer way of using a piece of embroidery that has taken many hours to create!

Next month, there is a very different version of 'Save the Stitches' to enjoy.

Readers' Gallery

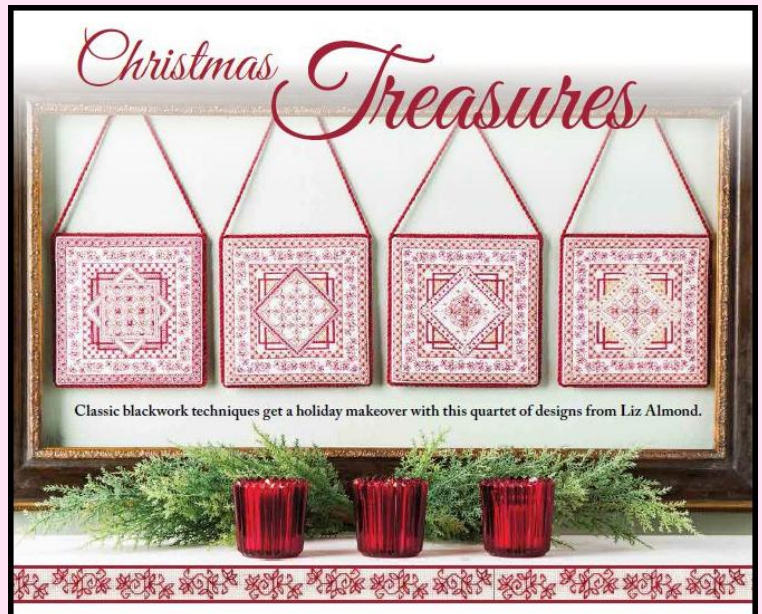
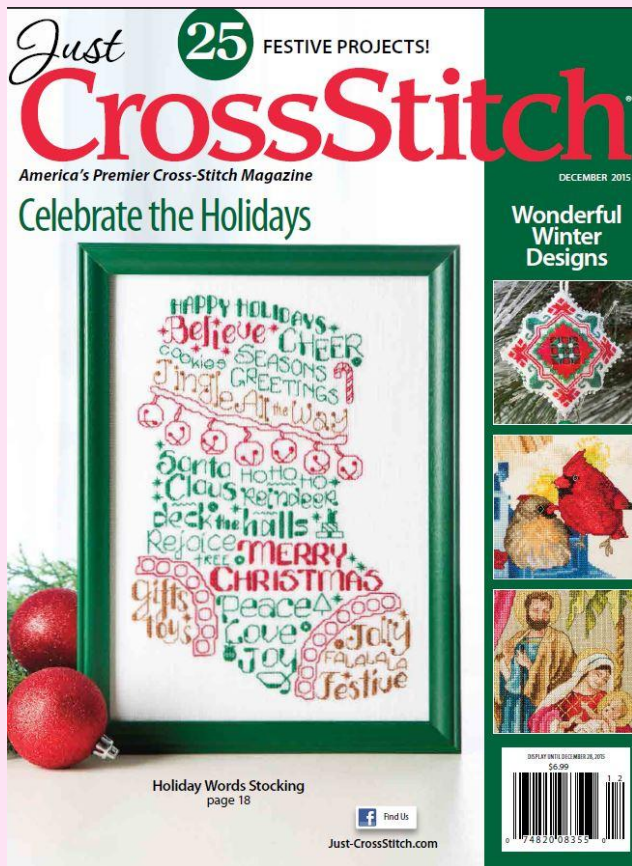
Finished pictures of 'Box of Delights' are arriving daily and Chris has mounted her design into a polished wooden box. Michele is one of the many ladies working her 'Pandora's Box.' My thanks go to everyone who contributes to Blackwork Journey. From framed photos to tiny scissor keepers, each item has obviously been worked with love and skill.





PR0034 'Winter Treasure' is a whitework and pulled thread embroidery sampler using eleven different stitches.

The colour of springtime is in the flowers; the colour of winter is in the imagination.
Terri Guillemets



Magazine articles November/December 2015

I recently designed a series of four blackwork Christmas embroideries for the latest edition of 'Just Cross Stitch Magazine'.

They were mounted individually as hangings for the festive season and on that note may I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas!

Happy stitching!

Liz

