



Blackwork Journey Blog

March 2018



Kenya and Abu Dhabi

February was rather unusual as I spent most of the month in Kenya and Abu Dhabi which explains the delays in e-mails and dispatching charts.

Last year, I was invited by Vicky Cole, the Chair of Nairobi Embroiderer's Guild to go out to Nairobi in February 2018 for a talk and workshops on Blackwork, Whitework, Kogin and pulled thread work. I was delighted to accept and worked closely with Vicky to prepare some ideas just for the group.



Kenyan roses

If you received a bunch of roses for Valentine's Day, it is quite possible that they were grown in the area around Lake Naivasha, northwest of Nairobi. The country's flower production is attributed to its very sunny climate, which enables high-quality blossoms to be grown throughout the year without the need for expensive greenhouses.

Kenya also has excellent transport links to Europe and the rest of the world through Nairobi airport, which has a terminal dedicated specially to the transport of flowers and vegetables. This means that delicate floral cargo which is perishable in nature, can be transported swiftly from growers to consumers.

More than 500,000 people in the country depend on the trade according to the Kenya Flower Council, with roughly half of the country's 127 flower farms concentrated around Lake Naivasha, around 90 kilometres from Nairobi.

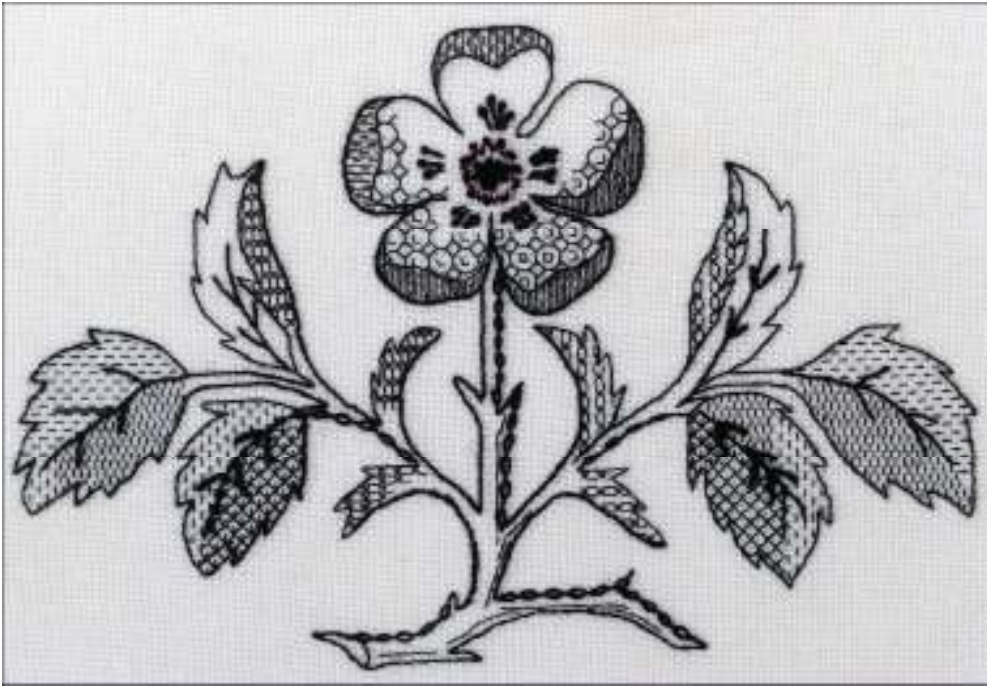
Since roses form such an important part of local life and we were visiting Lake Naivasha, I decided to design some Kenyan roses in different techniques for the group to explore.



Using a simple outline for each rose I designed a blackwork rose, a blackwork and pulled thread work rose and a whitework rose for the members to explore.

Kenya rose - whitework





Kenya rose - blackwork



Kenya rose – pulled thread and blackwork

To work with so many talented members was great fun and the ladies produced some excellent work during the week. I have left them with enough projects to keep them going for quite some time and I am looking forward to seeing their projects presented in the Facebook groups in the coming months.

I would like to thank the ladies of Nairobi Embroiderers' Guild for making me so welcome and for being such a super group to work with and especially to Vicky and Gail for all their hard work in organising the week!



The ladies of Nairobi Embroiderers Guild

Vicky's 'Save the Stitches'

I am not often lost for words, but when I was presented with a cake saying 'Karibu Kenya' in Swahili, 'Welcome to Kenya' which had been arranged by members of the group, I was totally overwhelmed and it made a memorable end to a really great experience!





Work in progress!



Behind every group are brilliant organisers -
thanks Vicky and Gail!



Stitching in the Rift Valley

We took the opportunity to visit Lake Naivasha with Vicky and then went on safari in the Masa Mara for a few days. Having had yellow fever injections, malaria tablets and inoculations and well- armed with Deet to fend off the mosquitoes, we flew off to camp.



Mara Siria Camp is a luxurious and eco-friendly safari tented camp in the north-west of the Masai Mara. It is located on the Siria Escarpment on the western border of the Masai Mara.

The idea of sleeping in a tent with animals wandering through the site was interesting, but the whole experience was magical, the colours were inspirational and the animals were beyond my expectations.



Tradition is still an important part of Masai daily life

Blackwork Journey Blog, March 2018

We also visited a Masai village on the outskirts of the Masai Mara Game Reserve. I had seen Masai beadwork in many of the local markets and was anxious to see whether their crafts were being preserved.

The beads are an important part of their culture and are worn by both men and women. It reflects their social status within the tribe. Every piece means something from marital status, strength, tradition, warrior hood etc. Beading plays an important role in the daily lives of the Masai women in the camp and before the introduction of glass and plastic beads, the women used seeds, shells, sticks and dried grasses.

Glass beads were introduced by traders in the early 1900's and these were traded for ivory, skins and semi-precious stones such as amber. I purchased a string of 'trader' beads incorporating amber, bone, glass and coins.

A wedding collar is made for the women. This collar conveys information about which boma (village) she comes from and how many houses her boma has. The beaded strings signify the dowry the bride has received. The dowry is usually in the form of cows so if the collar has ten strings the bride has received ten cows. The men can have more than one wife if they are wealthy enough to supply the dowry.

Colour is also important:

Red – blood, bravery, strength, unity

Orange – warmth, hospitality, friendship, generosity

Yellow – growth, fertility

Blue – energy, the sky

Green – growth, nourishment

White – health, purity

Black - unity, harmony solidarity

To see how I translate what I have seen into embroidery, just watch this space over the next year or so.

Recent Publications: Just Cross Stitch Magazine April 2018 'Colour Magic'





FR0155 Create a Chatelaine Part 2 Tape Measure

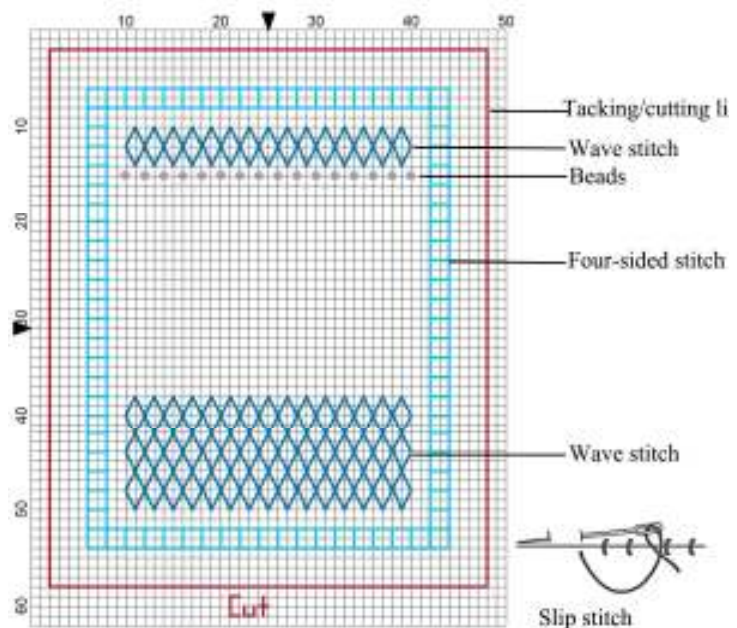
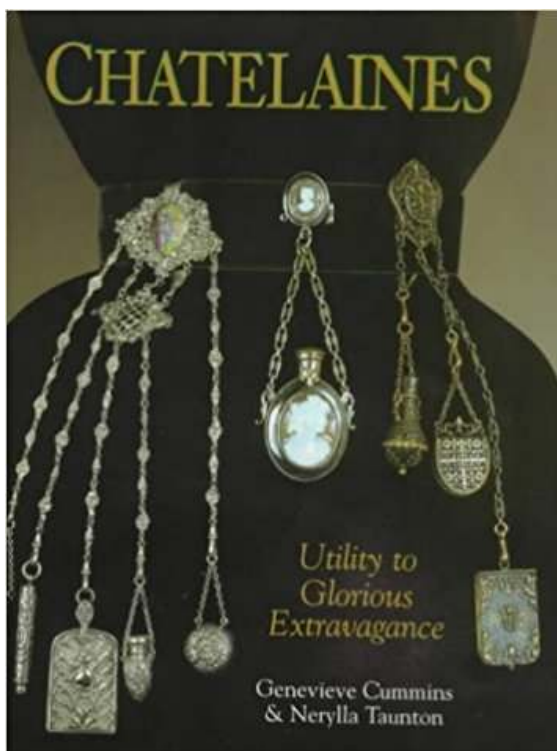
I always forget to put a tape measure in my sewing kit and this is one way of making sure I always have one with me!

Chatelaines were largely produced by popular jewellery companies such as Tiffany and Co. and Lalique, although some took to constructing their own. Almost always made of metal, chatelaines varied in material, from steel to sterling silver to gold.

"Chatelaines were worn around the waist of well-to-do middle class housewives and head housekeepers of the upper classes in the 19th and early 20th centuries. From the belt chain would hang everything a woman might need in her day, from sewing kits to keys to coin purses. The quality of your or your servant's chatelaine was an excellent indication of status."

'Chatelaines: Utility to Glorious Extravagance'
Genevieve Cummins

The instructions for these can be found in 'Freebies' in Blackwork Journey. Next month, a pulled thread work pin cushion will be added to the chatelaine!



Reader's Pictures

Jean Woodward has sent me photographs of her most recent embroideries.



Redwork Sampler 'Just Cross Stitch'



CH0194 Sarum Prayer

CH0194 'Sarum Prayer' appeared in a 'Book of Hours' in 1514 and was later published in Salisbury (Sarum) England in 1558.

This was my school hymn and has always been special to me. It is worked in two colours with metallic gold thread and gold beads to highlight part of the chart. Blues or reds are especially effective as alternative colours for the border.

CH0306 Black cornflowers

Thank you Jean for sharing your work!





Are there any alternatives to framing pictures?

Framing pictures can be expensive and is not always the most appropriate method of mounting an embroidery. CH0367 'Shoeholic' was a case in point. Rather than mounting it in a wooden frame with glass, I used a cotton fabric for the backing and white cotton lace for decoration

To stabilise the edge, two rows of four sided stitch were worked before the lace and backing was slip stitched to the embroidery. Once the backing had been slip stitched in position a 'sleeve' was added for a rod to pass through for hanging the embroidery.

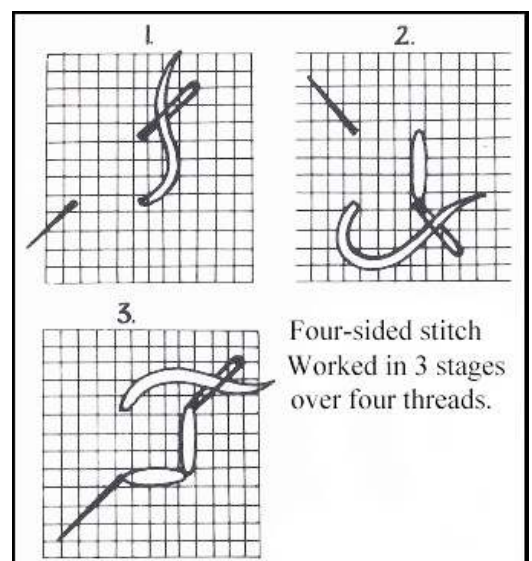
Four-sided stitch and lace were used as an alternative means of mounting the embroidery!

Four-sided stitch:

This consists of 3 straight stitches to form the end, the middle and the top of the 'square'. Work from right to left over 4 threads. Always put the needle in at one corner and come out at the opposite one.

Follow diagrams 1-3. Turn the work and work the next part of the border. Pull tight to create the holes.

This stitch is quick to execute and very effective for framing patterns, creating edges and as a filler stitch to cover large areas. It can be worked in white or pastel shades. Use a blunt tapestry needle when working pulled thread work stitches.





New charts to explore!

Two new charts have been added this month: CH0371 Interlocking Kogin which explore Japanese style pattern darning, and CH0372 Vintage Nouveau.

CH0371 Interlocking Kogin can be worked on 16 count Aida or 28 count evenweave. Adjust the thickness of the thread to suit the fabric chosen. Kogin is worked across the fabric in rows following the weft (horizontal) lines in the fabric.

Vintage Nouveau explores the techniques of Assisi work, pulled thread work and cross stitch.

The design has been worked on 25 count pink Lugana in shades of grey and pink.

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog. Abu Dhabi will feature in April's Blog along with an article by Bernarda Valenčič.

Happy stitching!

Liz

