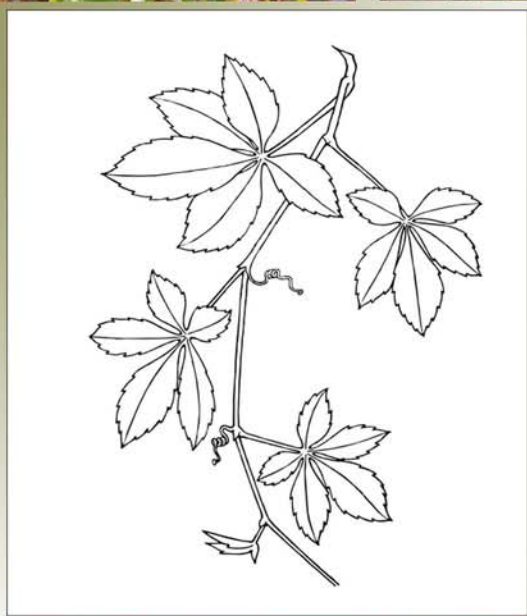




Blackwork *Journey Blog*

October 2021



Blackwork Journey Blog, October 2021

Autumn is well underway in the UK and my thoughts are turning to the events of the past last two years and the way forward in 2022. I think for many people this has been a time for reflection, reassessing the things that really matter and considering what changes we may need to make to our lives in the future. Whilst life is steadily returning to normal and people are returning to work, the spectre of Covid 19 and its legacy will probably be with us for a long time to come and some changes may be permanent.

Stitching groups are gradually coming together for the first time in 18 months and for me, October is a return to hands-on teaching which I have sorely missed. Craft shows are returning and I already have my ticket for the Harrogate show in November. I cannot wait to see the threads, feel the fabric, look at the exhibits and browse through the books. Online shopping does not have quite the same impact as any needlewoman will tell you!



Zoom, Teams, Facebook and all the other internet sites have played an important role in lock-down and even though we are now moving forward, I think that online teaching is likely to become more common, especially for those who unable to leave their homes for whatever reason..

However, the Facebook groups have grown steadily throughout the pandemic and I am pleased to say that the pictures of 'Sublime Stitches' that are being worked by members of Bordados con el Alma are really impressive and encouraging to see.

Whilst this 12 month project is drawing to a conclusion and it has been a real joy working with them.



Work in progress by Manuela, Monica, Louredes, Mercedes and Josifa.

Thank you for sharing your work with us.

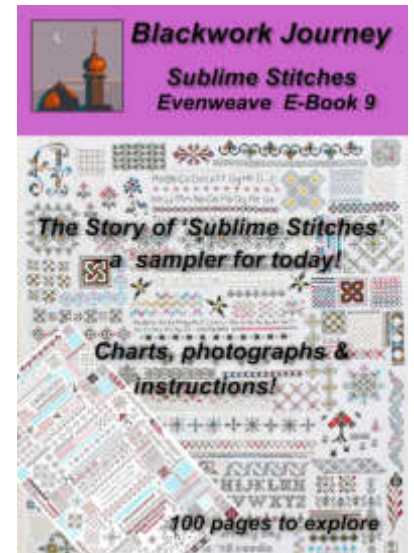


Louredes



Mercedes

EB0009 Sublime Stitches - Evenweave and EB0010 Sublime Stitches Aida can be found in E-books on the website.



Working large projects is not for everyone, but designs which can be broken down into sections are proving very popular and I am looking at a new blackwork project for January 2022 and two new Sashiko e-books. The large Mosque project will also be online next year when I have decided whether to frame it or make it into a hanging.

Continue learning whatever your age. So why hobbies are important?

One of the saddest comments ever made to me was a lady saying “*My husband tells me to do something worthwhile and not waste my time stitching. None of the family value what I do, so should I continue?*”

Needless to say my comments were positive and encouraging but.....



Much has been written about the value of having a hobby, but it was summed up very neatly for me in an article written The University of Arkansas.

There are many reasons why all of us should have at least one hobby, but here are the main advantages:

It makes you more interesting.

People who have hobbies have experiences and stories that they can share with others. They also have specialised knowledge that they can teach to anyone who also has an interest in the same topics as they do.

It helps to relieve stress by keeping you engaged in something you enjoy.

Hobbies give you a way to take your mind off the stresses of everyday life. They let you relax and seek pleasure in activities that aren't associated with work, chores or other responsibilities.

Hobbies help you become more patient.

In order to develop a new hobby, you have to learn how to do something that is brand new to you. The odds are there will be a learning curve and you will need to be patient in order to build your skills.

Having a hobby can help your social life and create a bond with others.

A hobby is something that you can frequently enjoy with other people. Whether you join a club, play in a league, or just gift others with the fruits of your labour, a hobby is a great way to meet and get closer to people who have the same interests as you do.

It increases your confidence and self-esteem.

The odds are that if you really enjoy an activity, you are usually pretty good at it. Any activity that you can excel in is an opportunity for you to build your confidence and develop pride in your accomplishments.

Hobbies help reduce or eradicate boredom.



They give you something to do when you find yourself with nothing to fill your time. They also give you an activity that you can look forward to and get excited about.

It helps you develop new skills.

A hobby that you really dedicate your time to will lead you to build new skills. As you spend more time at your hobby you will become better and better at it.

It increases your knowledge.

Along with building new skills, you will also gain new knowledge through the development of your hobby. It enriches your life and gives you a different perspective on things. No matter what type of hobby you choose, you will definitely be exposed to new ideas. Hobbies help you grow in various ways, including exposing you to new opinions and to new ways to look at life.

It challenges you.

When you pick a new hobby, you will be involved in activities that are novel and challenging. If you don't find your hobby challenging, then you also won't find it engaging, and it will be less enjoyable. That means you need to find a better hobby.

It helps prevent bad habits and wasting time.

There is an old saying that "idle hands are the devil's workshop". If you have good hobbies to fill up your free time, then you will be less likely to spend that time on wasteful or negative activities.

Talking to many members of the Facebook groups and older members of a community craft group, the overwhelming view is that hobbies have enabled them to get through the pandemic, cope with the loneliness and have a sense of worth and wellbeing. Occupying the hours with something that gives enjoyment, satisfaction and accomplishment should not be undervalued or underestimated!

Working with colour

I enjoy the challenge of creating large projects and seeing them develop, but as a designer watching the trends in embroidery and incorporating them into projects whether it is colour, threads or fabric can be daunting, but essential to keep the work fresh and not get stuck in a rut. Visiting exhibitions, browsing the internet, bouncing new ideas off my long suffering friends is very important in helping me to make the necessary decisions.

For example, I have a colour palette I am comfortable working with and stepping outside my comfort zone into uncharted areas is difficult, but can produce some interesting results. Greens are not colours I normally use, but looking at the Autumn colours and seeing how the different colours blend together in, for example, a Virginia creeper is a great challenge if it is approached logically and methodically e.g.,

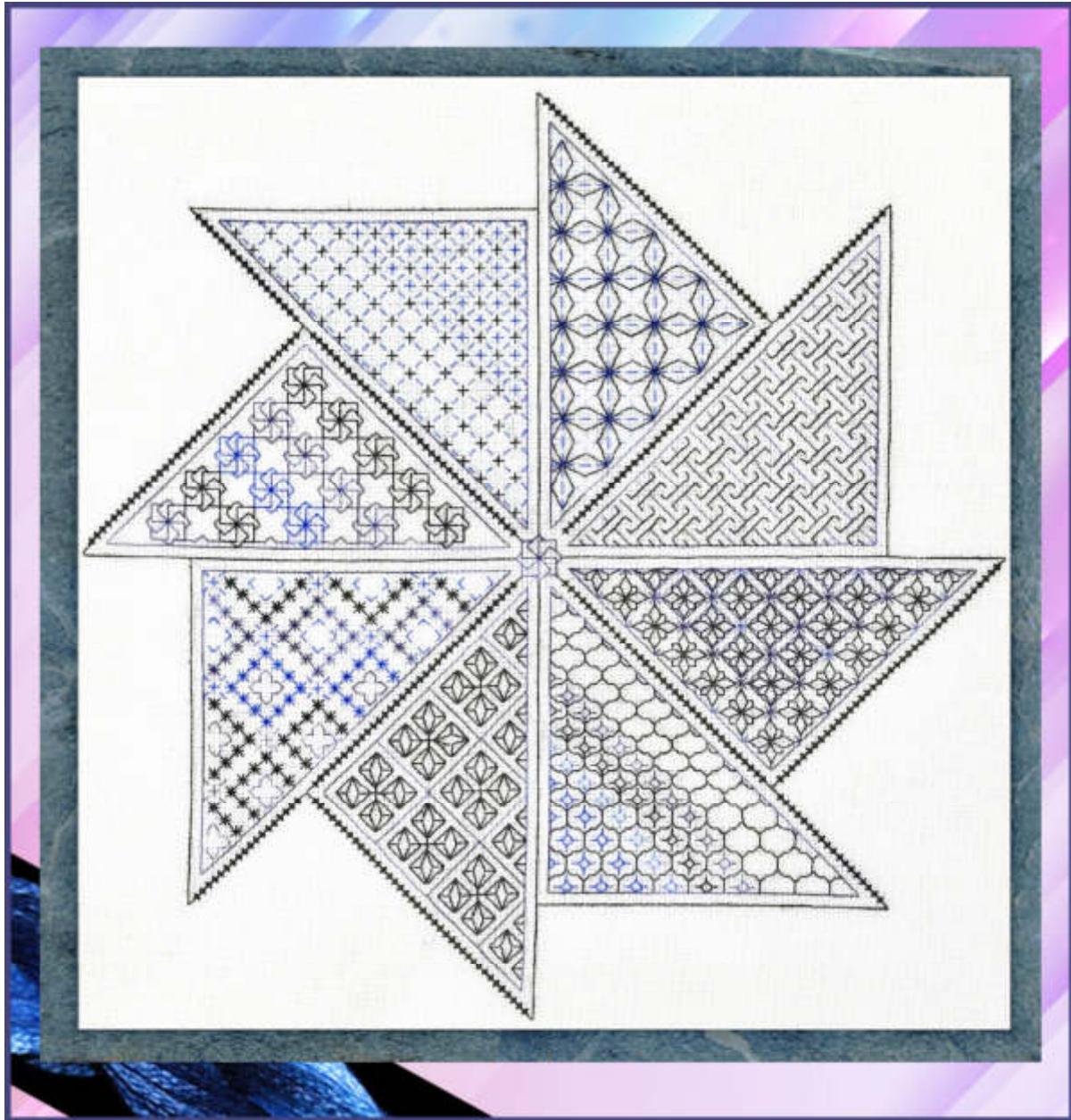
- Take a number of photographs of the leaves. Look at the way the leaves hang. What shape are they?
- How many colours are within the leaf and what is the predominant shade?
- Draw a sketch of the plant and enlarge to the size needed.
- Select the threads and fabric. Lay them out and walk away. Add or remove colours as necessary.
- Draw the creeper onto the fabric, select the stitches to be used and make a start. Use a Stitch Dictionary if necessary. Confidence will grow as the work progresses, but most of all have fun!



Possible project - Virginia creeper

Two new designs for October

CH0418 Pinwheel



'Pinwheel' or Uroko Monyo is an ancient Japanese pattern made up of eight right angle triangles which interlock. It is said to represent the scales of a fish or dragon and is now found in many different parts of the world. Blackwork, Japanese Hitomezashi and counted thread Sashiko style patterns are set within a cross stitch and back stitch framework to enhance each section. The term 'pinwheel' is commonly used in patchwork.

Design Area: 11.43 x 11.43 inches 160 x 160 stitches

Fabric: Zweigart 28 count evenweave, 16 x 16 inches

Three different colours have been used for the design - dark, medium and light. Alternative colours can be used to create a different effect.

CH0419 Celebrate Christmas

Celebrate the festive season with “Candle Christmas”, a blackwork and cross stitch design embellished with gold metallic thread and beads and three simple blackwork patterns which can be used as cards, mounted over card squares or circles or made into scented sachets.

‘Candle Christmas’ Design Area: 5.14 x 5.57 inches, 72 x 78 stitches

Round patterns: Design Area: 3.86 x 3.86 inches, 54 x 54 stitches



Making a Difference – Beautiful scenery and a famous woman in Victorian history, Grace Horsley Darling 1815 – 1834

Recently we took a few days break and went one of our favourite parts of England, the wild and beautiful county of Northumberland.

We travelled from Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland which was built by the Roman army on the orders of the emperor Hadrian following his visit to Britain in AD 122 and stretched 73 miles from the east to west coast of the country across some of the most dramatic countryside in England. We also visited the ruined coastline castles at Dunstanburgh and Lindesfarne or Holy Island which was the home of the famous Lindesfarne Gospels written by monks at the Lindesfarne Abbey many centuries before.

Hadrian's Wall



Dunstanburgh Castle



Lindesfarne





We visited the town of Bamburgh and went out by boat to the Farne Islands to see the seals who winter in the area to have their pups. It was whilst we were on the boat that we saw the Longstone lighthouse which played such an important part in Grace Darling's life.

As a child, I recall hearing the story of her heroic deeds when she and her father rescued survivors from the shipwrecked paddle steamer the "Forfarshie" in 1838 off the coast when it ran aground on the rocks in a storm, but it was not until I visited the islands and saw the lighthouse that I realised just how heroic her efforts were.

Grace Darling was born on 24 November 1815 at her grandfather's house in Northumberland. She was the seventh of nine children born to William and Thomasin Darling and when only a few weeks old, she was taken to live on Brownsman Island, one of the small Farne Islands off the north east coast of England, in a small cottage attached to the lighthouse. The accommodation was basic and as the lighthouse was not located in the best place to guide shipping to safety, the family moved to a newly constructed lighthouse on Longstone Island in 1826.



Longstone Lighthouse

The family spent most of their time on the ground floor of the lighthouse, which consisted of a large room, heated by a wooden stove. The room was their living room, dining room and kitchen in one and had a spiral staircase leading to three bedrooms above and the light at the top of the tower.

In the early hours of 7 September 1838, when a severe storm was raging, Grace, looking from an upstairs window, spotted the wreck and survivors of the *Forfarshire* on, a nearby low, rocky island. With 62 people on board the steamship had foundered on the rocks and broken in half.

Grace and her father William determined that the weather was too rough for the nearest lifeboat to put out from Seahouses, so they took a rowing boat (a 21 ft (6.4 m), four-man Northumberland coble rowing boat) across to the survivors, taking a long route that kept to the lee side of the islands, a distance of nearly a mile.

Grace kept the coble steady in the water, while her father helped four men and the lone surviving woman, Sarah Dawson, into the boat. Although she survived the sinking, Mrs. Dawson had lost her two young children (James, 7, and Matilda, 5) during the night. William and three of the rescued men then rowed the

boat back to the lighthouse. Grace then remained at the lighthouse while William and three of the rescued crew members rowed back and recovered four more survivors.



Grace Darling at the Forfarshire by Thomas Musgrave Joy

The lifeboat eventually set out from Seahouses, but arrived after Grace and her father had completed their rescue and all they found were the bodies of Mrs Dawson's children and a clergyman.



Those rescued by Grace and her father were from the bow section of the boat, which had been stranded on the rocks for some time before sinking. Nine other passengers and crew had managed to float off a lifeboat from the stern section before it also sank and they were picked up in the night by a passing ship.

As news of her role in the rescue reached the public, her combination of bravery and simple virtue set her out as exemplary and led to an uneasy role for her as the nation's heroine. Grace and her father were awarded the Silver Medal for Bravery by the Royal National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwrecks. Subscriptions and donations were raised for her, including £50 from Queen Victoria; more than a dozen portrait painters sailed to her island home and hundreds of gifts, letters and even marriage proposals were delivered to her.



Memorial window and effigy

She died of tuberculosis in October 1842, aged 26 and is buried in the churchyard of St Aidan's Church, Bamburgh, Northumberland.

Grace was the media celebrity of her day and her courage and bravery are still recognised today.

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog.

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

Happy stitching,

Liz

