



# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

November 2021



## Blackwork Journey Blog, November 2021

Looking forward to the month of November and a return to 'normal' life is not proving to be as easy as we first thought. Whilst society is opening up cautiously, the cases of Covid19 in the UK are still rising and there is still a feeling of insecurity amongst many groups that I work with. Building confidence will take time, but meeting together and sharing thoughts, ideas and news is an important part of the recovery.



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For the first time in 20 months I had a hands-on workshop with 15 ladies from the 'Scarborough Stitches'. It was a joy to work with such an enthusiastic and lively group. We achieved a lot in a short space of time and I look forward to meeting them again in 2022. Thank you Lis for making it possible!

### **New groups, new start!**

As a result of changes to the UK Embroiderers Guild, many groups are starting again as independent groups and moving in different directions which offers new opportunities and I look forward to working with many of them in the coming months. New members are joining and older members are coming together, with enthusiasm and knowledge, to support their local needlework communities.

Zoom and Facetime have been very useful tools when personal contact has not been possible and I think they will continue to be used for many groups now that they have become accustomed to the technology, but it not as easy to support each member or to develop the special feeling of meeting face to face.

As needlewomen we have faced a significant challenge over the past two years and it has been encouraging to see how much interest has been shown in the Facebook groups. It has been useful to have a platform where ideas can be shared and needlework problems discussed. Blackwork Journey has grown significantly and there are now over 13,000 members worldwide in the associated Facebook groups. Supporting them has been a challenge and at times I have received some very sad e-mails, but members have supported each other and also helped me. Lori and Banu have helped to co-ordinate the groups and I have appreciated all that they have done.

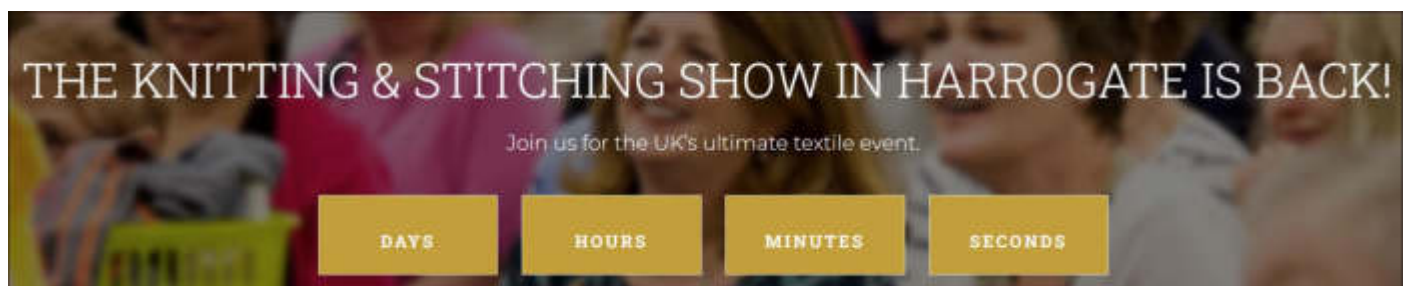
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/blackworkjourneydesigns>

### **Craft shows are returning in the UK!**

Like many people, I have really missed visiting the craft shows and have my ticket ready for the next show at Harrogate in November.

Buying threads and fabric though the internet is not the same as feeling the fabric, looking at the different threads and new books and deciding do I really need another skein of floss or do I need another book on embroidery?

Looking at the exhibitions, joining in with the demonstrations and lectures is part of the fun so yes, I really am counting down the days.....





### REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

#### Upcycling and Recycling – can you help your local community?

**The 3 'R's** Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – these are an important part of sustainable living, as they help to cut down on the amount of waste we have to throw away and with the emphasis on climate change and saving precious resources, recycling and reuse is the way forward.

We have all collected items that we will never use, or have new ideas that we want to explore and it can be very therapeutic to sort through our stash of books, magazines, fabric and threads. Whilst my excuse is that I use a lot of materials when I am teaching, tastes change and there are things that I will never use, but someone else would find useful.

When our local “Emmaus” opened up a new enterprise recently, I found the perfect place not only to donate my unwanted materials, but also to volunteer and support a good cause. It is an international charity that offers a home, family and work to formerly homeless people in a residential community setting.



People can live and work, sharing a life together, but retaining their own dignity and independence. At Emmaus, everyone is accepted for who they are now, not judged on what they might have been in the past.

There are no rules about how long someone may stay at Emmaus, provided they abide by the principles of Emmaus and the spirit of the community.

Work is an integral part of community life. Our social enterprise, that involves the sale of new and refurbished furniture, bric-a-brac and clothing, generates the revenue which keeps the community self-sustainable.

My husband has been involved with Emmaus for over 20 years and when they recently opened “The Scrap Store” in Bolton where I live, not only was it the perfect place for me to volunteer, but a great place to take unwanted craft materials.

“The Scrap Store” is bursting with ideas for your next craft project. Whether it’s sewing, knitting, crocheting, paper crafting, die-cutting, painting or printing, the store is a one-stop shop for numerous craft needs. One of the volunteers at the store is Damien Wilton who was one of the contestants on BBC One, “The Great British Sewing Bee” and who has made several items from the recycled material.

Most towns have charity shops where books and materials can be donated and with the current trend to recycle, they can be the perfect place to find the pieces you need for your next patchwork or boro projects. It is great fun to look through the boxes and bookshelves and what may be unwanted by you, can be someone else’s treasure!

## Two new charts for November:

I am always being asked for small patterns as many people stitch Christmas designs all year round.

This year **CH0420 Quick Stitch Christmas** has eight designs suitable for cards, small gifts or ornaments for the tree. They can be worked on 28 count evenweave or Aida and are ideal for using up small pieces of fabric and scraps of thread.

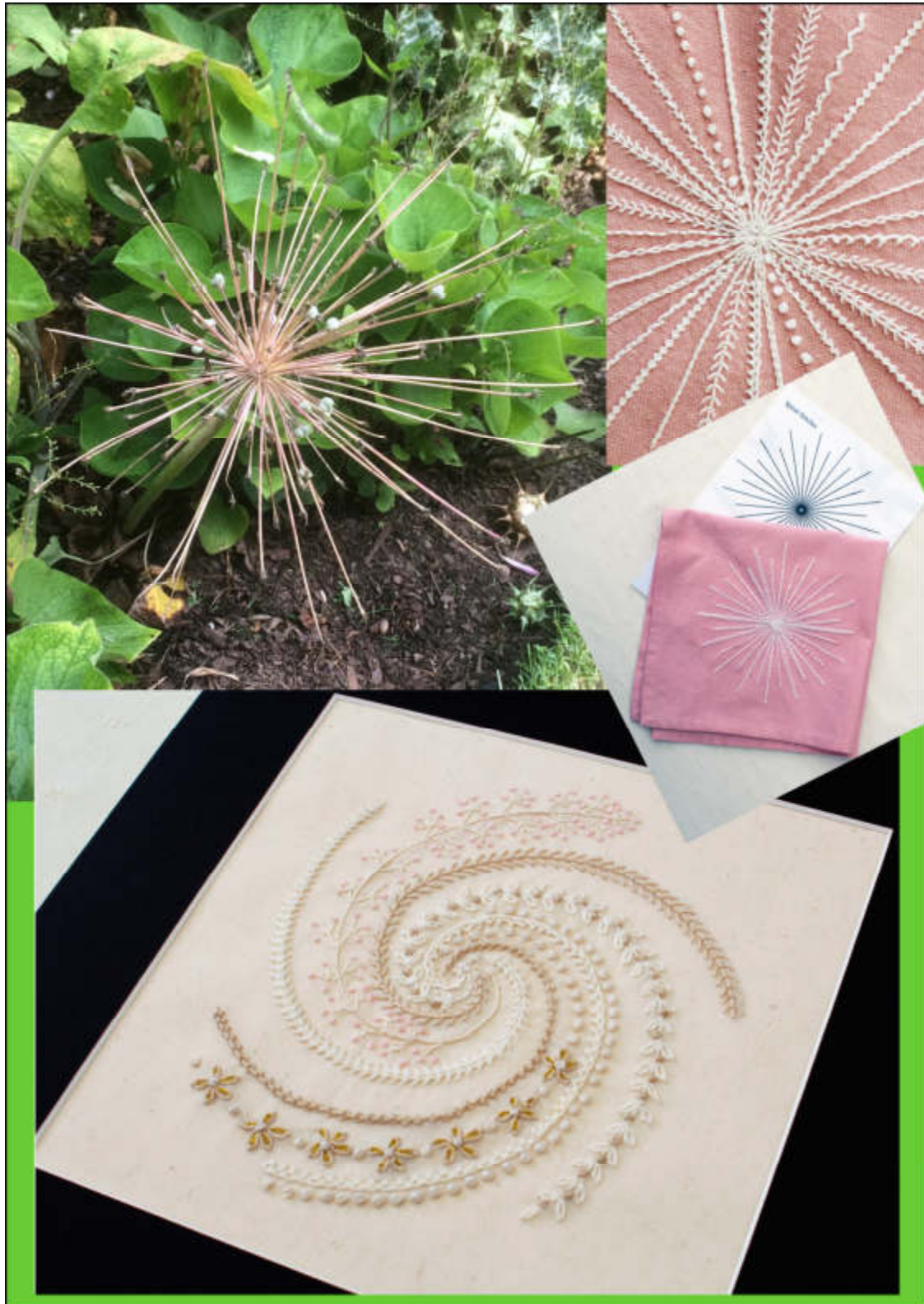


### Just an idea –

A friend stitches an ornament for each of her grandchildren every year. She includes the date somewhere in the design so that when her grandchildren grow up and have their own celebrations they will have a very special set of tree decorations to treasure.

**CH0420 Quick Stitch Christmas** is in 'Charts' on the website.

PR0070 Inspiration From Nature - Exploring line stitches



Two free style embroidery designs!

Taking an idea and developing it into embroidery is both challenging and satisfying. It just takes one idea to spark the imagination. The allium seed head has been used for two free style stitch sampler designs using line stitches.



*The same design in whitework using a variety of threads from crochet cotton to floss*

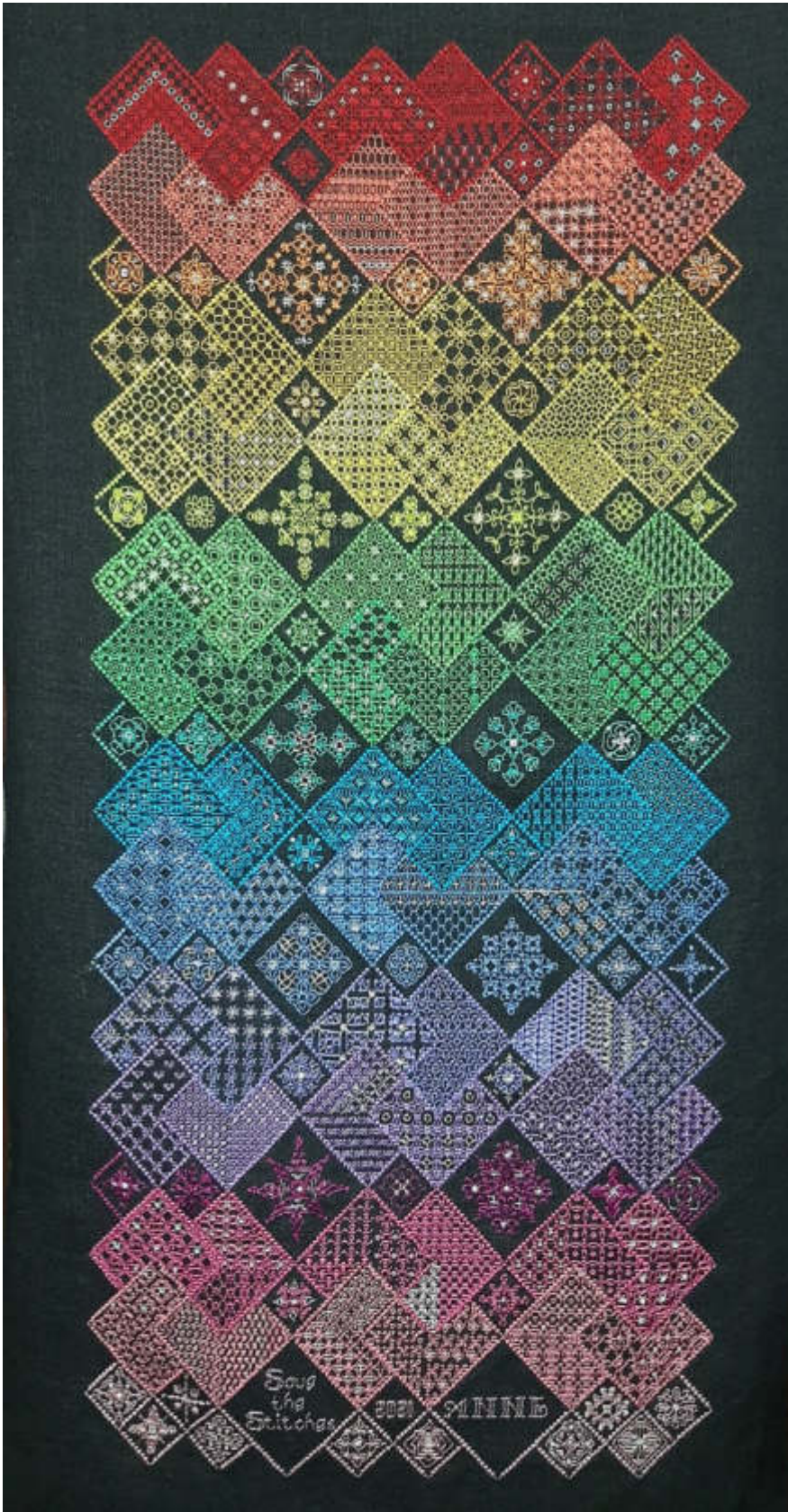
Learning different stitches is part of the fun of embroidery. ‘Spiral Stitches’ sampler uses 15 different linear stitches to add texture. ‘Spiral Twist’ allows the design to be developed in a different way by adding your own stitches.

Investigate the threads already in your stash or use Cotton P rle No 5 and 8 or three + strands of embroidery floss. Experiment using different thicknesses of thread.

**Fabric:**

The ideal fabric is one that is not too tightly woven because the threads are quite thick. A fabric that is too tightly woven will pucker, or show the holes. Cotton twill, pre-washed calico, damask, linen or medium weight cotton are suitable fabrics. 11 x 11 inches minimum.

Instructions and diagrams for all the stitches are included in a Stitch Dictionary. This design can be found in ‘Projects’ on the Blackwork Journey website.



**Star**

**of the Month - Anne Chua**

Many pictures of finished embroideries are uploaded to the Facebook groups every month, but this month Anne uploaded her first blackwork embroidery of EB0002 'Save the Stitches'.

Not only has Anne chosen to work a very large and complicated design as her first piece, but she has stitched it on black Zweigart 32 count black linen working over two threads.

Working on black fabric is very hard on the eyes and not for the faint hearted. 32 count is much finer than the original 28 count fabric that I used and she has also worked out an interesting and dramatic colour scheme.

Many congratulations Anne on a really spectacular piece!





## Blackwork Journey

### 'Save the Stitches'

#### E-Book 2



*'Save the Stitches' extended - additional designs, project ideas and information!*



*Create a unique blackwork sampler containing 134+ designs, full instructions, photographs, and charts*



### Thinking of Christmas or that unexpected gift?



Personalised Blackwork Journey Gift Tokens for charts are always available.

Please contact me by e-mail for further details:

[lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk](mailto:lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk)

### Where does inspiration for a design come from?



Look around and there are ideas everywhere, you just need to look from a different perspective.

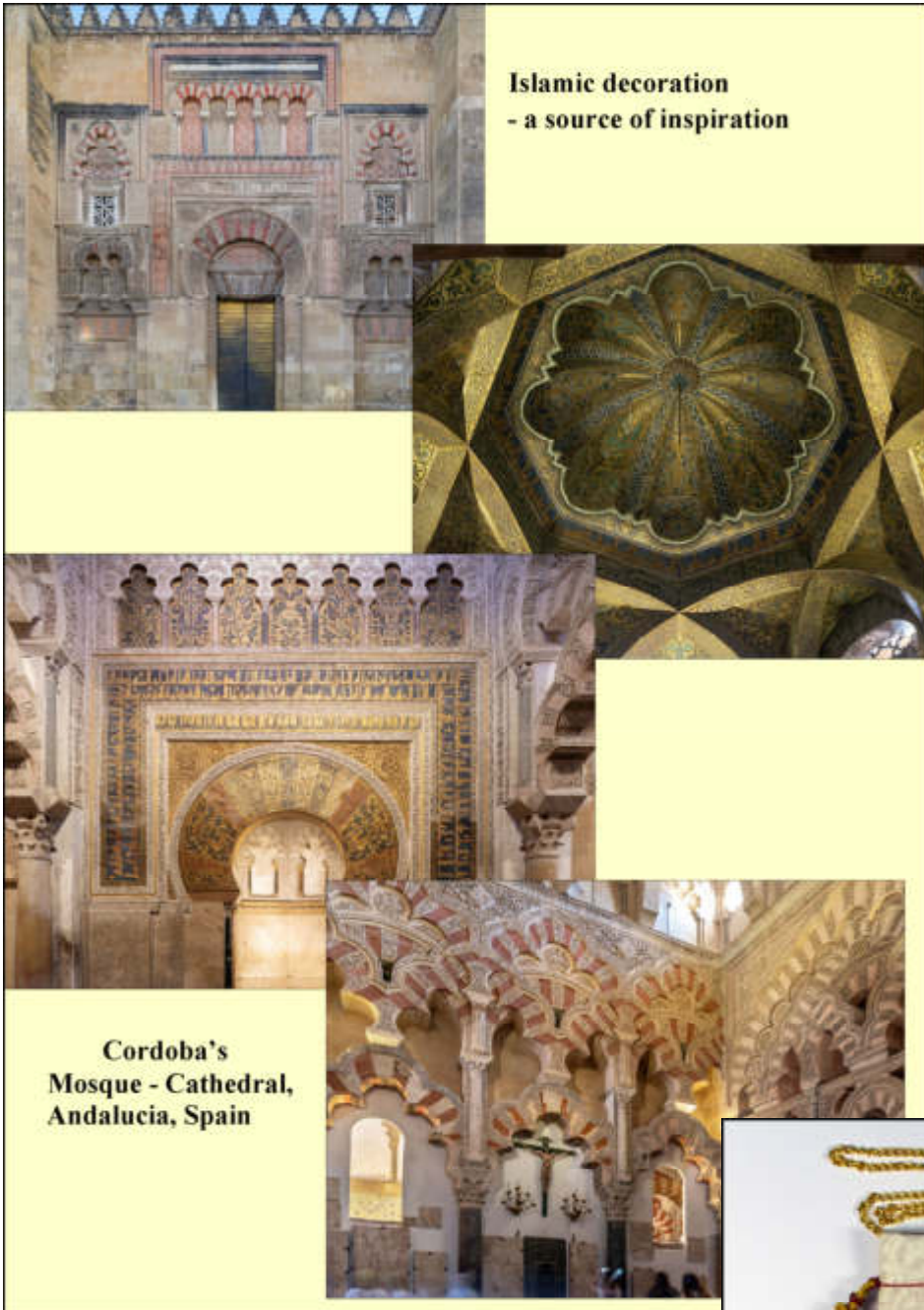
I find looking at architecture and nature through the eyes of an embroiderer helps. How can I stitch it? Do I want to focus on one area or a total building or one flower or a whole plant?

Ask yourself what do you want to achieve and what materials and threads will be needed.

Pattern is everywhere but knowing how to take it into embroidery comes with experience and the more you stitch the easier it becomes.

CH0096 Andalucia developed from some photographs of Cordoba's Mosque/Cathedral in Andalucia in Spain. Areas of dense pattern were offset with lighter designs and patterns were repeated.

Have the confidence to try new ideas and techniques. If you make mistakes you will learn from them. Experiment with different threads and fabrics and just enjoy the art of stitching!



Islamic decoration  
- a source of inspiration

Cordoba's  
Mosque - Cathedral,  
Andalucia, Spain

### Translating ideas into practical objects

Clutch bags and totes, scarves and clothing can be suitable backgrounds for unusual embroidery both free style and counted thread work.

The background for the shoulder bag was taken from a photograph of a ceiling in the Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain.

The material was printed on the fabric using an ink jet printer and the design was drawn onto the fabric with a water soluble pen and then embroidered.



### Creating a Line Drawing out of a Photograph

Changing a photograph into a sketch for use in embroidery is a simple process if you have the correct software.

I use Adobe Photoshop to turn my photographs into ink style drawings, but if Adobe Photoshop is not available, there is a free programme called Gimp.

[www.gimp.org](http://www.gimp.org)

This can be downloaded and works in a similar manner to Adobe Photoshop.

Tutorials for both Gimp and Photoshop are widely available on the internet on:  
[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

### **How do you make a start on changing a photograph into a line drawing?**

- a. Import the photograph into Photoshop or Gimp
- b. Using the toolbar at the top of the screen go to Layer > Duplicate layer. Work on the duplicate layer to keep the original image intact.
- c. Next to the Layer button is the Image button.  
Click on: Image > Adjustments > Desaturate and the photograph will become black and white.
- d. Next go to Filter > Stylize > Fine edges. This will create a “pencil drawing”.
- e. Now improve the effect by going to: Image > Adjustments. Go to Brightness/Contrast
- f. The next stage is to adjust the Brightness to 20 and the Contrast to 80+  
Filter > Sharpen > Sharpen More

Move the slider to create the effect required. File and save the line drawing.





The thatched cottage by the babbling beck in Thornton le Dale is one of the best-loved sights in the whole of Yorkshire, UK and could be a suitable subject for embroidery.

Focus in on the areas of special interest such as the door and the window with the hanging baskets. Crop the size of the photograph and make a tracing of the main lines or use Photoshop or Gimp to translate it into a line drawing.

Use a simple line drawing, decide on your fabric and colours and stitch a basic outline. Build up the embroidery layer by layer using a variety of stitches and threads to add texture. Enjoy!

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog. If you have any queries please contact:

[lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk](mailto:lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk)

Happy stitching,

*Liz*

*PR0059 Japanese Autumn*

