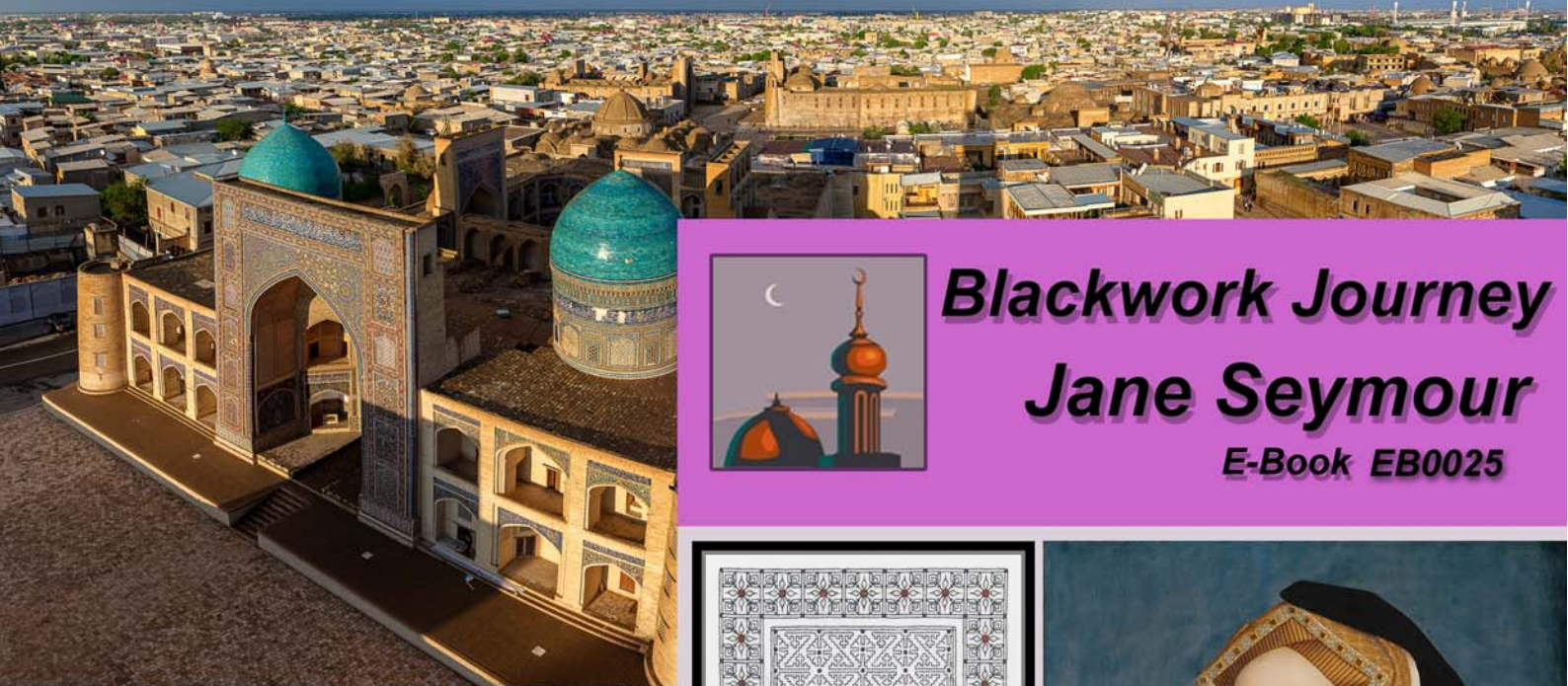




# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

October 2022

## The Silk Road - Uzbekistan



*Blackwork Journey*

*Jane Seymour*

E-Book EB0025



*Historical Blackwork  
Five projects*

## October –The end of Summer and the beginning of Autumn.

September was a really busy month with teaching, magazine submissions and travel to exotic lands made it necessary for me to start thinking about my Blog for October quite early on.



*However, all this was overshadowed by the sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II here in the UK which was not only felt by her family, but everyone across the world. Her 70 year reign was outstanding and she provided much needed stability for our nation through many difficult times. May she rest in peace.*

*I am sure our new Monarch, King Charles III will continue to provide the same commitment and devotion to duty as his beloved mother.*

## Journey of a lifetime! – The Silk Road, Uzbekistan - September 2022 - Part 1

The Silk Road is neither an actual road nor a single route, but a whole series of routes used by traders for more than 1,500 years from China to Europe. It extended over 5, 437 km or 4,000 miles across some of the world's most formidable landscapes including the Gobi desert and Pamir Mountains.

An abundance of goods were conveyed along the routes including silks, spices, gold and jade and there was often an exchange of ideas between the traders and their cultures.

Robberies were common and in order to protect themselves, traders formed “caravans” with camels and other pack animals. Over time, large inns and trading posts called caravanserais were constructed for the traders and their caravans.

The Silk Road, as it became to be known, has always fascinated and intrigued me and over the years I have travelled along sections of it in China, India and Turkey to learn more about its history and gain inspiration from the many designs and buildings I have seen.



## Blackwork Journey Blog, October 2022

My recent visit took me to the heart of the Silk Road in Uzbekistan where I visited the cities of Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent, each with its own distinct identity.

This month I will focus on the city of Khiva with its twisting alleyways, glistening mosaics and ornate minarets, a stark contrast to its brutal history of barbaric slave trading. Khiva is set inside ancient city walls where traders still set up their stalls and ply their wares just like they did centuries ago.



*Khiva is set within the city walls*

*Muhammad Amin Khan Madrasa, now a hotel in Khiva is approached through a main gate which opens up into a central courtyard. This is typical of the many mosques and madrasas in Uzbekistan.*





*The central courtyard was a feature of many of the buildings I visited. The scholar's rooms opened up off the courtyard. Each arch was decorated with symmetrical designs.*

At Khiva, I stayed in the former Madrasa or religious school shown above. The rooms were small and the beds were hard, but the sense of tranquillity, the designs and the layout of the building filled me with excitement. What else would I discover as I explored the city?



From paintings, textiles, mosaics to woodcarvings, woven carpets and fleece hats, Khiva had something for everyone, but for me the architecture and the textiles were the areas I wanted to explore in more detail and I was not disappointed.



Whilst I will take numerous photographs of the spectacular buildings, I found exciting patterns for potential projects everywhere, but where should I start?



*Many new ideas for both blackwork, cross stitch and freestyle embroidery, just not enough time!*

My objective in exploring the cities along the Silk Road was to use the information in Blackwork Journey, but if inspiration is everywhere how do you choose what will work and how do you take an idea and translate it onto fabric?

Let's see what develops as I visit the other cities and what projects will eventually be stitched.

*"To follow the Silk Road is to follow a ghost. It flows through the heart of Asia, but it has officially vanished leaving behind the pattern of its restlessness: counterfeit borders, unmapped peoples. The road forks and wanders wherever you are. It is not a single way, but many: a web of choices."*

'Shadow of the Silk Road' - Colin Thubron,

### **EB0025 Jane Seymour - A new e-book The Joys of Tudor Blackwork**

In contrast to the beauties of Uzbekistan, I have been researching and designing some Tudor blackwork and couching designs for a series of talks and workshops later in the year and for a new e-book - **EB0025 Jane Seymour** which is published this month.

I have always been interested in Tudor embroidery and especially in the clothes they wore. I did some pieces of blackwork embroidery for 'The White Princess' which was a Netflix mini-series in 2017 and whilst researching the period I came across a portrait of Jane Seymour painted by Hans Holbein the Younger circa 1536.

The portrait was full of potential embroidery designs especially her blackwork cuffs. I put the idea to one side until recently when I decided to look at the costume in more detail and see if I could create a number of blackwork and couching designs based on the portrait.

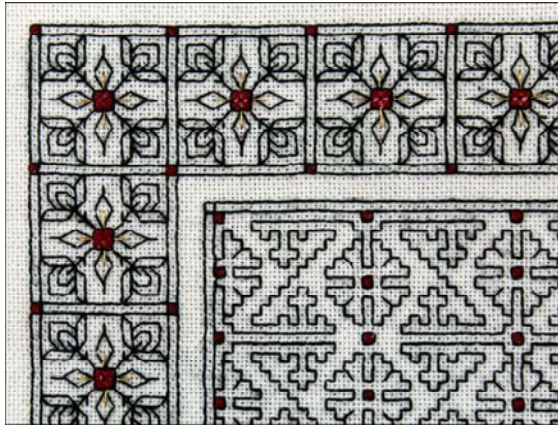


*Jane Seymour, Queen of England  
Painted by Hans Holbein (1497 - 1543) the Younger  
Circa 1536 - 1537*

## Blackwork Journey Blog, October 2022

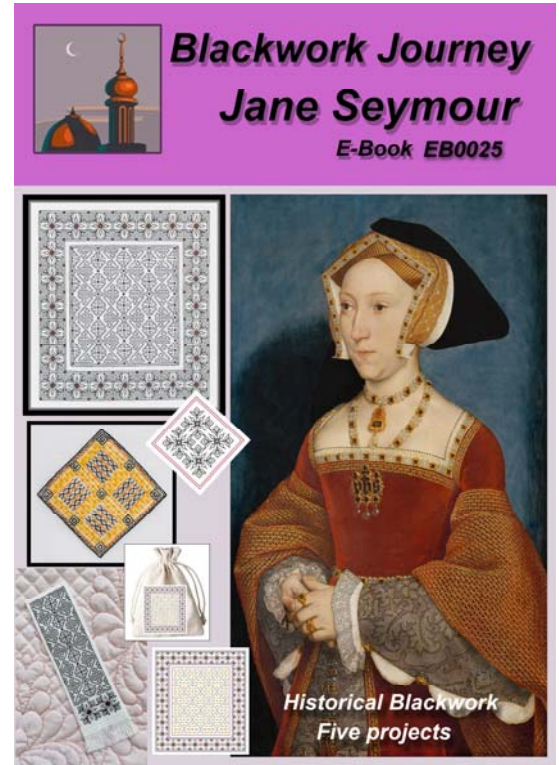
**Jane Seymour** (c. 1508 – 24 October 1537) was Queen of England as the third wife of King Henry VIII of England from their marriage on 30 May 1536 until her death the next year.

She became Queen following the execution of Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn. She died of postnatal complications less than two weeks after the birth of her only child, the future King Edward VI. She was the only wife of Henry to receive a queen's funeral or to be buried beside him in St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.



*Extract from one of the blackwork designs based on the cuff of the gown.*

*EB0025 Jane Seymour*



### Blackwork with a difference



*Extract from an Elizabethan jacket V& A Museum, London, UK*

There is a significant contrast between the styles of embroidery shown in the extract from a blackwork jacket as shown below and the formal designs on Jane Seymour's dress. The jacket designs are drawn freehand and filled with a limited range of stitches e.g. running stitch, stab stitches, or buttonhole stitch. Patterns are frequently repeated and there is often no sense of proportion as shown in the drawing below.



*One of the fourteen panels designed for blackwork embroidery. The insects on the drawing are out of proportion to the flowers, but this is typical of drawings from this period.*

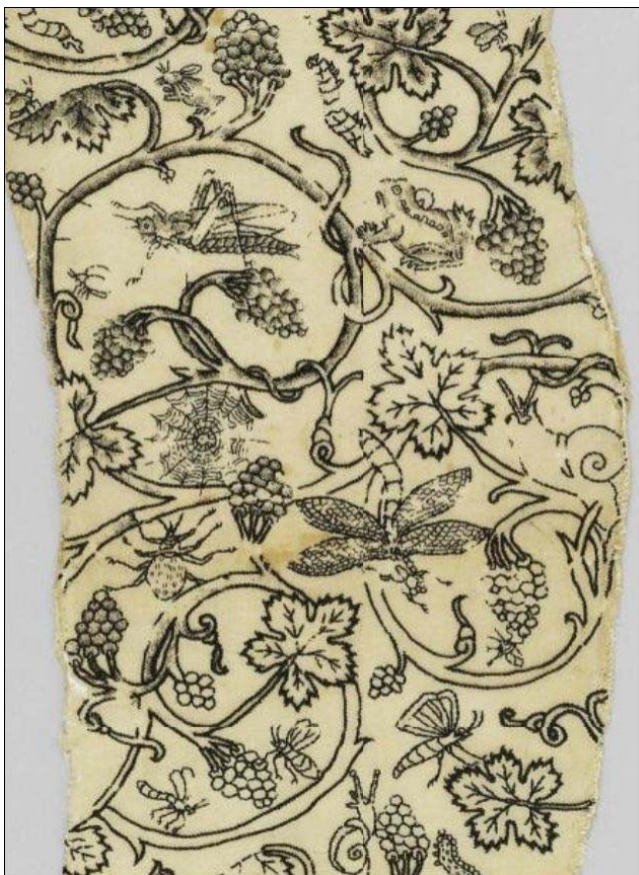
**Blackwork ca. 1600**

Artist/Maker: Unknown

Place of Origin: England Size: 23 x 23 cm approx.

Set of fourteen panels of fined bleached linen, all inked for blackwork embroidery and some worked with black silk floss in stem and back stitches, with speckling. There are four different designs, each composed of two curved and intertwined sprays of fruits and leaves: honeysuckle and acorn, vine with grapes, rose and sycamore keys, wild rose and holly, with insects such as bees, butterflies, centipedes and snails. All are enclosed by a twisted-rope border within straight lines.

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O357662/blackwork-unknown/>



**Sleeve Panel 1610-1620**

Artist/Maker: Unknown

Place of origin: England

According to the tailoring methods of the 17th century, sleeves were cut in two pieces. This panel corresponds to the right undersleeve of a woman's waistcoat.

It is worked in an embroidery technique called blackwork, with a single colour of silk, usually black, but also sometimes blue, red or, green on linen. Blackwork was particularly popular for dress accessories such as handkerchiefs, coifs, caps, shirts and smocks.

This is a very accomplished example of 17<sup>th</sup> century blackwork in the speckling style. The arrangement of tiny running stitches in black mimics the subtle shading of woodblock prints, giving a three-dimensional effect to the pattern. The design is also very skilful in its naturalism, particularly the insects depicted. Grasshoppers, dragonflies, butterflies, moths, caterpillars and beetles, along with a single spider's web enliven the embroidery.

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O319539/sleeve-panel-unknown/>



### Early pattern books

For wealthy women of the 16th and 17th centuries, embroidery was an important part of everyday life. Clothes, household furnishings and book covers were all embroidered and the more lavish and extravagant the design the better.

In some families where the women were unable or unwilling to do the work themselves, professional embroiderers could be employed, but for a lot of women embroidery provided a fulfilling and creative occupation. Embroidered gloves, books and clothing were given as highly prized gifts.

The most common way of getting a design was through pattern books. The first recorded example was published by Johann Schonsperger in Germany in 1523 and The National Art Library of the V&A in the UK holds 60 original embroidery books including the only extant copy of Richard Shorleyker's "Scholle house for the needle" of 1632.



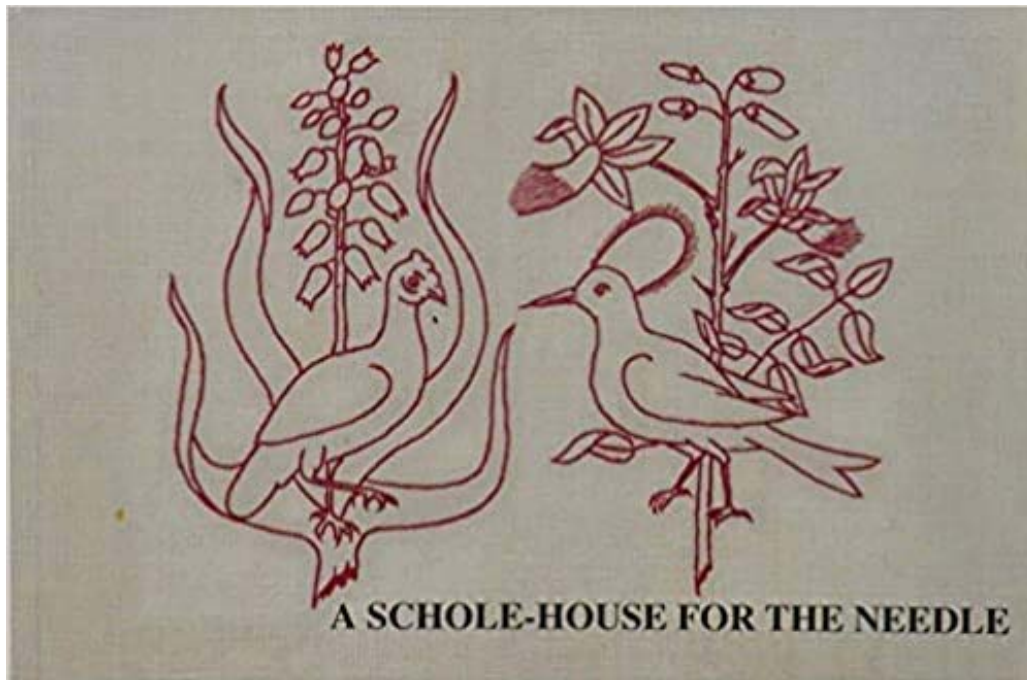
*The Needles Excellency, John Taylor, London, 1631. Pressmark 95.O.45*

**A schole-house, for the needle...**

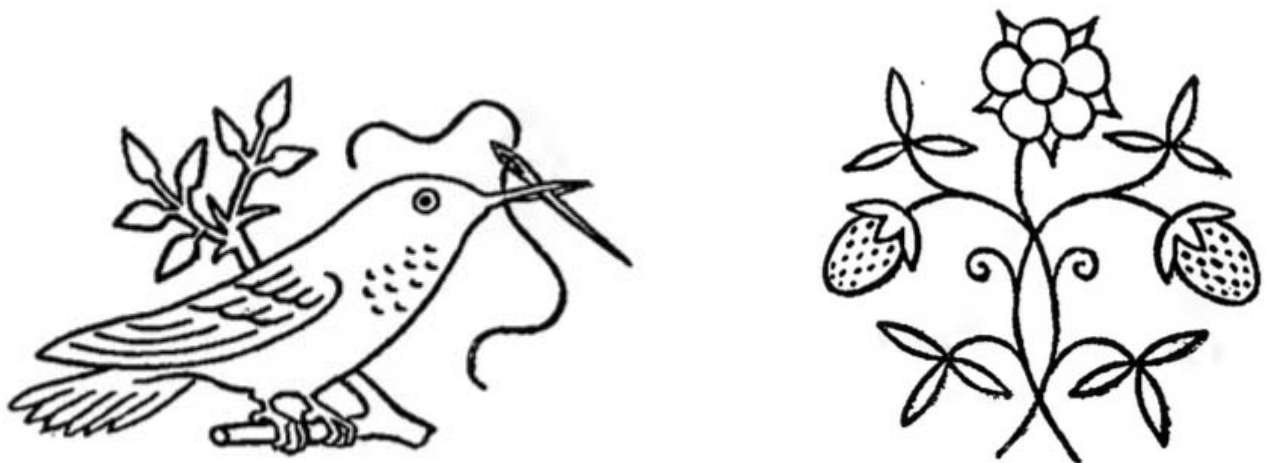
“Here followeth certaine patternes of cut-works and but once printed before. Also sundry sorts of spots, as flowers, birds and fishes &c. and will fitly serve to be wrought, some with gould, some with silke, and some with crewell, or otherwise at your pleasure”.

Author: Richard Shorleyker

Publisher: R. Shorleyker, [1632] London



Examples from the pattern book “**A Scholehouse for the Needle**” by Richard Shorleyker, can be found in a book titled **Embroidery** edited by Mrs. Archibald H. Christie and published in 1909.



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The book can be downloaded as a free PDF from archive.org:

<https://ia902901.us.archive.org/29/items/embroiderycollec00chri/embroiderycollec00chri.pdf>

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog as much as I have enjoyed creating it.

Part 2 Bukhara - The Silk Road, Uzbekistan will be published in November. I will explore the mosaic tile patterns and feature some of the craftsmen and women I met on my journey.

If you have any queries please contact:

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

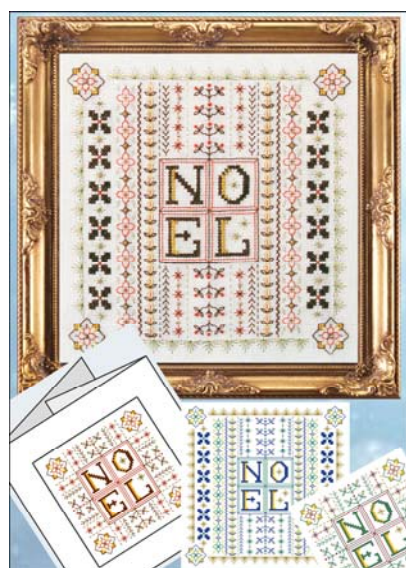
Happy stitching,

*Liz*



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