



Blackwork Journey Blog

September 2023



Stitching in the Dales



Journey to Hawaii

The month of September is not turning out to be quite as planned. We were going to visit the beautiful island of Maui and several of the other islands in Hawaii, but readers will, no doubt, be aware of the tragic events which unfolded on August 8th when a wildfire swept through the historical town of Lahaina in West Maui with devastating consequences for the residents and an extremely high loss of life.

Lahaina is a tourist town, home to 12,000 people and many historic buildings dating back to the 1700's. The buildings were made of wood and the community has been completely destroyed. The death toll continues to rise and many people are still unaccounted for which is extremely distressing.

These indigenous, historic and beautiful communities will take a long time to recover. Displaced people may not be able to return to their homes for many months or even longer and as a popular tourist destination, jobs and businesses have been lost.

Since tourism is Hawaii's main source of income, tourists including ourselves, have been relocated to other islands, but our thoughts and prayers must be for the people of Maui.

Hibiscus embroideries for September in 'Charts' on the Blackwork Journey website



*Yellow Hawaiian Hibiscus or Pua Moa
Hau Hele*

A simple tribute to all the people in Hawaii who have been affected by the fires.

The hibiscus is the state flower of Hawaii, so I have designed and stitched the hibiscus flower using two different techniques - blackwork and whitework as a tribute. I hope you like them, not just as embroideries but what they represent.

CH0436 Blackwork Hibiscus

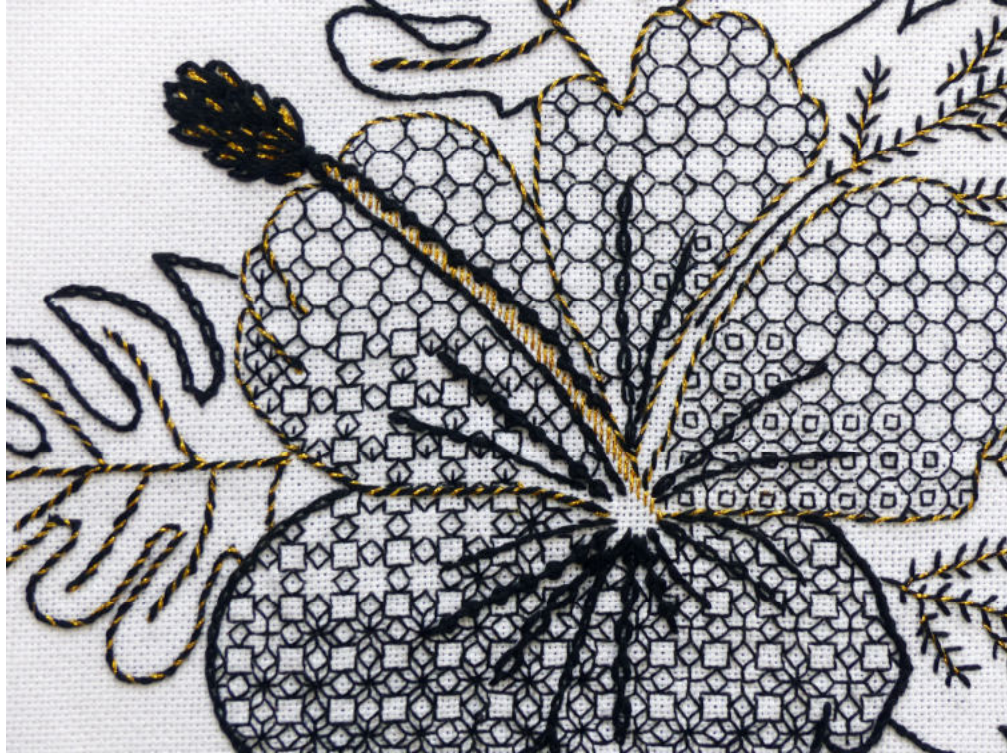
CH0436 Blackwork Hibiscus

'Blackwork Hibiscus' is worked on Zweigart 28 count evenweave, Zweigart 25 count Lugana or 14 count Aida to create a textured free style and counted thread embroidery.

Note: If working on Aida many of the blocks will have to be split.

Design Area: Embroidery 8 x 8 inches designed to fit a 10 x 10 inch frame.

Its unusual shape makes it an attractive subject for embroidery. The design is traced onto the fabric using a water-soluble pen or an HB pencil. The outlines are worked first and the filler patterns added.



Extract from Blackwork Hibiscus

Same design, different technique!

Whitework embroidery is a single colour, typically matching that of the base fabric, where design and skill is defined, primarily by texture, so the threads should be chosen with care. Traditional embroidery stitches and some specialist stitches are used in this design. If the stitches are unfamiliar, please work them on a spare piece of fabric first before you proceed. This technique allows the embroiderer to experiment with different threads and thicknesses and explore new ideas from the delicate to the chunky.

A general guide to whitework embroidery

Styles of whitework embroidery include most drawn thread work, broderie anglaise, Hardanger embroidery, Mountmellick embroidery and Reticello, which is a form of needlemade lace.

Material: Medium/heavy weight evenweave, cotton, cotton drill or linen, pre-washed white calico.

Threads: A wide variety threads can be used for this type of embroidery.

DMC stranded cotton two skeins, Cotton P rle No.12, Nos.5 and 8, Mountmellick threads, No.2 fine (4 ply), No.3 medium (6 ply), and No.4 thick (7 ply), white soft embroidery or knitting cotton, cotton   broder Nos.12, 16, 20. Crochet threads are available in various thicknesses No 10 is especially useful. Collect a variety of thicknesses and types. (Check that the whites are all the same tone as they can vary considerably.)

Needles:

Crewel needle No.20, Chenille needle No.22, Darning needle for thicker threads, Tapestry needle No.24.
Choose a needle you can see to thread and one that takes the thread easily!



CH0437 Whitework Hibiscus

Unlike CH0436 Blackwork Hibiscus which combines free style and counted embroidery techniques this is a freestyle embroidery design using specialist embroidery stitches.

*CH0437 Whitework Hibiscus
Worked on white pre-washed calico*



Design Area: The embroidery will fit into a 10 x 10 inch frame

Material: Medium weight fabric such as cotton, cotton twill, linen or pre-washed white calico, 12 x 12 inches

Embroidery stitches used:

1. Back stitch whipped
2. Cable chain stitch
3. Chain stitch, (stamen head) – filled with chain stitch, gold
4. Double knotted stitch
5. Leaf veins – Double knot stitch and reverse chain stitch
6. Mountmellick stitch
7. Reverse chain stitch
8. Wheatear stitch



Working free style designs:

Stitch with confidence! Use your imagination to place the stitches where you feel they are most appropriate.

Experiment with different weights and textures. Match the weight of the thread to the weight of the stitch.

My designs are a guide to help you create your own unique piece of embroidery. There are many stitches to choose from so each design will be different.

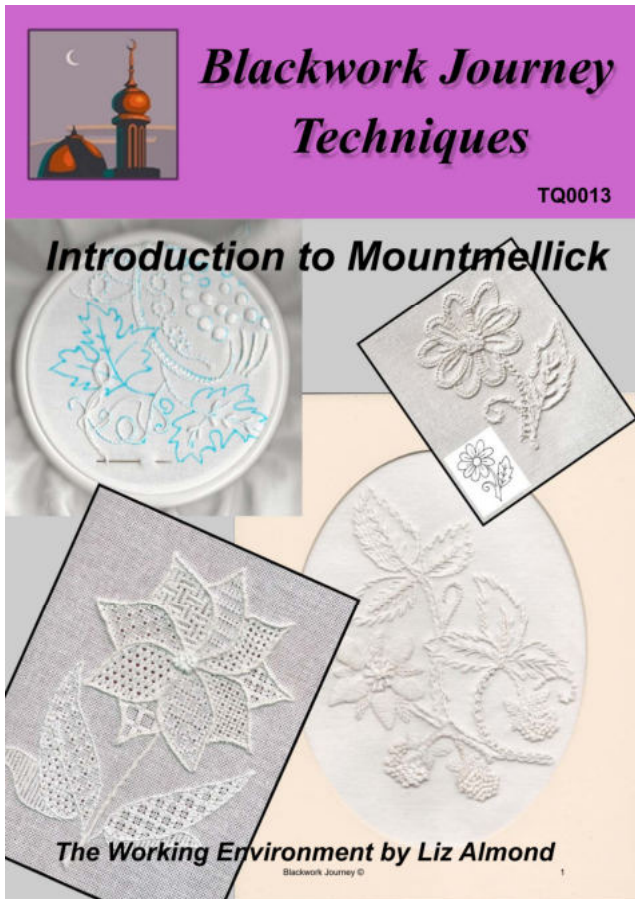
Most of all enjoy the experience!

Adapting a design - Colour Hibiscus

Take the whitework design, but embroider it in colour using the same stitches. No two embroideries will be the same.

Extract from Colour Hibiscus





Techniques TQ0013 and TQ0017

If you would like to explore some traditional Irish whitework in “Techniques” on the Blackwork Journey website there are two free pdfs on Mountmellick embroidery.

TQ0013 Introduction to Mountmellick with a history of the techniques, suitable fabrics, stitches used and ideas for applying the technique.

TQ0017 Weldon’s Practical Mountmellick Embroidery

Taking time out!



I recently had the opportunity to spend ten days in the heart of the North York Moors National Park in the UK looking after a cockapoo called “Rosie” who belongs to my daughter and her family who were away on holiday abroad. Rosie is eight years old and has very definite ideas about what she wants to do and where she wants to go.

It was ten days well spent as I had time to catch up some unfinished projects and work on some designs for a book and magazine and do some serious thinking.

However, sitting at the computer or sewing in the garden came with certain limitations i.e. Rosie! After a certain amount of time Rosie decided that she needed a cuddle and plonked herself down on my knee or next to me on the seat, hence no sewing.

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Working on the computer caused the same reaction. She not only climbed onto my knee, but put her head down on the keyboard, hence no typing!

However, the break did allow me to slow down and think things through. Where do I want to go with Blackwork Journey after 16 years? How do I manage the associated Facebook groups? What new areas of embroidery do I want to explore and how do I pace myself in the terms of workload, teaching etc. I have teaching commitments into 2025 and there is a lot of planning and practical work that goes into each talk and workshop. Whilst I enjoy meeting new groups and working with them, it is always a pleasure to return to groups that I have visited before and see how they are developing.

Over the years the way I approach designing has changed significantly and work that I enjoyed 20 years ago does not necessarily appeal to me now. It is so easy to get stuck in a rut and not explore the many different techniques available. To keep my ideas fresh and interesting I took time to explore some different websites that had been on my “To Do” list, read some needlework books and do some serious thinking and what better way to do it than relax stroking Rosie in a 16th century cottage in spectacular countryside!

My conclusions at the end of the ten days:

I still enjoy what I do and my stitching and teaching still gives me as much pleasure as it did when I started 45 years ago.

Designing and seeing the designs in print is both challenging and enjoyable. Having a brief to follow and a specific colour scheme focuses the mind.

Moving forward, I need to think “outside the box” more to put different techniques together and be less rigid or formal in my work which goes against the grain, since I am very disciplined with my needlework.

Slow stitching has become important to me. Usually I design and stitch with the Blackwork Journey website or publications in mind. Slow stitching gives me freedom to explore, develop my ideas and contemplate what I am doing. It does not have to have an end product, although in my case it usually does.

My final conclusion after ten days is that I need to take my time, to enjoy what I am doing and learn to say “No”!



Rosie and me near Grassington in North Yorkshire UK

Needlework Shops to visit in the north of England

With so many needlework and craft shops closing after the Covid lockdown it is a pleasure to support ones that have survived and not moved totally online.

Amble Pin Cushion Cross Stitching Northumbria's Highlights.

I had the pleasure of meeting the owner of the "Amble Pin Cushion" at a workshop recently and to hear of her plans to safeguard the shop into the future.

I was also interested to hear of their charts designed for people with poor eyesight by working on 11 count Aida fabric. Using Aida 11 count is something I have done for a long time with my students, but this is the first time that I have heard of kits being produced with poor eyesight in mind.

Amble Pin Cushion, a craft and alterations shop in coastal Northumberland, was disappointed when the supplier of their favourite embroidery kits, announced his retirement early in 2020. Managing Director, Norma Arthur, sensing a good opportunity to expand, approached Nigel Cross of Picrosso, with a proposal to acquire his company, which was felt would be a good fit alongside the shop's existing range of DMC fabrics, threads and kits. The acquisition eventually came about in August 2020.



Nigel is pictured at the hand over meeting with Norma, holding his original design for "Craggside". His wife had dearly wanted to embroider the historic National Trust house near Rothbury, but had been unable to find a kit. With his engineering background and family members with a strong interest in counted cross stitch, Nigel set about designing just such a kit and the Picrosso range was born. Their business gradually added kits covering icons and major tourist sites of the kingdom of Northumbria, which originally encompassed Northumberland and County Durham. Miniature pictures for entry-level cross stitchers were added to the range and four samplers amalgamating designs from Hadrian's Wall, Durham, Tyneside and Northumberland, gave experienced

stitchers a challenge. Because the whole body of work used a cohesive palette of colours, it encouraged stitchers to build up a collection of work, as they all sat together so well. This is ably demonstrated with a look at the framed Picrosso collection on the wall of Amble Pin Cushion's staircase!

Re-launching the range as Northumbria Knit and Stitch, other items have been added by APC, such as Northumberland flag cross stitch coasters, award-winning modern Guernsey knitting kits based on sights around Amble harbour, and make-it-yourself adult and child Northumbrian aprons. The kits are all made up in-house from quality materials, and are the perfect souvenir of the region. It is expected that 2022 will be a busy year for the company, with both Hadrian's Wall 1900, and the Lindisfarne Gospels returning to the North East, creating a great deal of interest in commemorative kits. The NK&S range can be viewed and purchased in store at 20-22 Queen Street, Amble NE65 0BZ, or online at <https://amblepincushion.co.uk/>.

2023 UPDATE Northumbria Knit and Stitch are looking to expand their cross stitch range to help stitchers whose eyesight has deteriorated, or for those trying cross stitch for the first time. Their new range of small Northumbrian images on 11 count (as opposed to their usual 14 count) should be available by August.

Why not make a point of visiting Amble Pin Cushion on your next visit to Northumberland?

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For further information, or to request a Northumbria Knit and Stitch brochure, contact info@amblepincushion.co.uk
Telephone. 01665 714584

Spinning Jenny, Grassington North Yorkshire

The Coach House, 25-27 Main Street, Grassington. BD23 5AD

Tucked away off the main street in Grassington is a little jewel! It is located down a ginnel between Robert Bunney's Outfitters and the Rustic Rabbit Gift Shop.

Grassington is a thriving town situated at the southern edge of the Yorkshire Dales and currently doubles as 'Darrowby' in the most recent adaptation of the ever popular “All Creatures Great and Small”.

“We are a small, independent business, owned by two friends. We try to be as helpful and friendly as possible to stitchers of all ages and abilities. We remember not being able to thread a needle, and we admire greatly some of the work produced that we can't even attempt.

We're open to people browsing, calling or emailing us with any questions or orders or just stopping by for a chat and to show us the work you produced, so we can go green with envy...”

Stephanie & Jacquie

Telephone number: 01756 753484

e-mail address: info@spinningjenny.co.uk



The ginnel transformed for the second series of the TV series “All Creatures Great and Small”

Looking ahead to October - quilting in Hawaii

When I travel to any unusual destination I do some research into the types of embroidery I may encounter. I am familiar with Hawaiian quilts from years ago, but have not really created anything new for many years. Next month I will show you a piece I am working on and include a pattern and instructions for you to create your own piece of quilting.

A Hawaiian quilt is a distinctive quilting style of the Hawaiian Islands that uses large radially symmetric applique patterns. Motifs often work stylized botanical designs in bold colours on a white background.

Hawaiian quilt applique is made from a single cut on folded fabric. Quilting stitches normally follow the contours of the applique design.



A Hawaiian quilt

I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog.

If you have any queries please contact:
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Happy stitching,

Liz

