



# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

February 2013

**Flower design**



**Mountmellick  
embroidery**

*Trust*

**New designs**



### *February 2013*

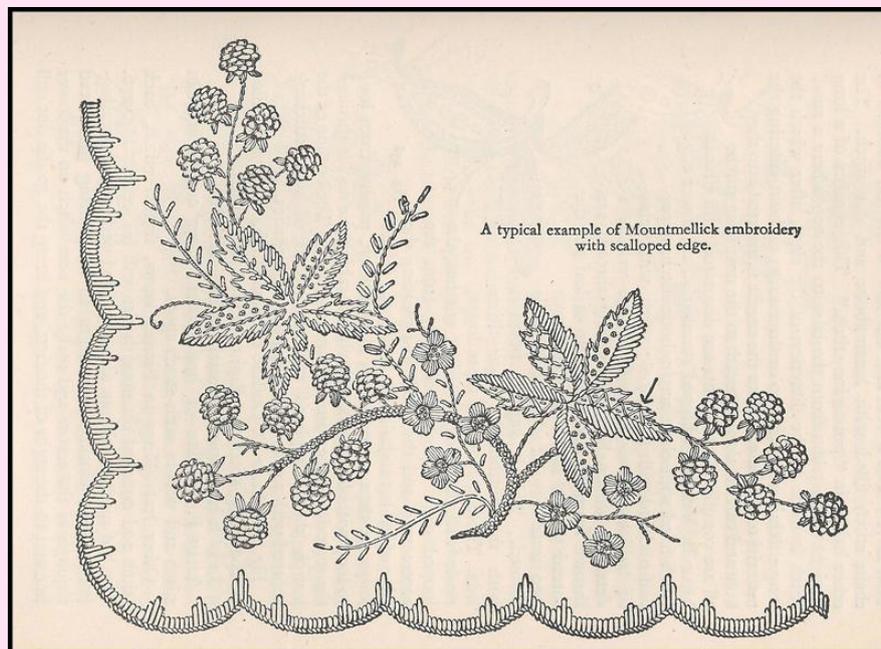
Many years ago before I started Blackwork Journey, I designed and sold white embroidery on white linen to a number of London stores and recently, I decided to revisit this technique. Returning to a technique after a long absence has been very satisfying, as this time I have adopted a different approach.

I enjoy working with texture and I find whitework, especially Mountmellick embroidery tactile and satisfying, so this month I thought I would introduce you to this traditional style of white embroidery.

### *Mountmellick embroidery*

Mountmellick embroidery was developed around 1825 by Johanna Carter, who taught it to a group of women and girls. It uses matt white cotton threads on white cotton sateen fabric with a slight sheen. There are no open spaces, eyelets, drawn or pulled areas in this style of embroidery, but dense areas of embroidery created by a wide variety of threads and stitches.

The plants featured in the design, were those that were found around the town of Mountmellick in Ireland and included blackberries, oak, fern, dog roses and shamrocks. This textured embroidery contrasts with many of the other whitework techniques, such as Ayrshire work, which is densely embroidered whitework on very fine fabric



*Mary Thomas 1936 "Mountmellick Embroidery".*

Finding suitable material and threads for a new project such as a Mountmellick flower design can be difficult, especially if the materials used are rather obscure. I wanted to use traditional threads and materials which I obtained from Empress Mills, Colne, Lancashire, UK.

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They are an old established English company from an area that once produced the finest cotton in the world and they still serve clients worldwide. ([www.empressmills.co.uk](http://www.empressmills.co.uk))

**Materials:** Use Mountmellick fabric, which is white, matt cotton sateen, or Zweigart Satin Royal 3211, or firm white fabric with no visible pattern.

The fabric needs to be heavy enough to support the weight of the stitching and to withstand frequent washing, which white embroidery on white requires. I would use a medium weight fabric and pre-wash it before drawing the design with either a water soluble pen or an HB pencil.

**Threads:** White Mountmellick threads, No.2 fine (4 ply), No.3 medium (6 ply) and No.4 thick (7 ply). Do not divide the thread. Use it as it comes from the skein or cone or, matt white soft embroidery or knitting cotton.

Cotton á broder, candlewicking cottons and cotton floche may be used as alternatives, but they would not have been used in traditional Mountmellick work. Do not use twisted, mercerised threads if you want create an authentic appearance. Check that the whites are all the same tone as they can vary considerably.

**Needles:** Chenille needle No.22. Crewel needle No.20 Darning needle (large eye for thicker threads).

Tapestry needle No.24.

**Embroidery ring or frame:** Mount fabric drum tight to support the weight of the stitches. Remove the ring at the end of every stitching session to avoid marking the fabric

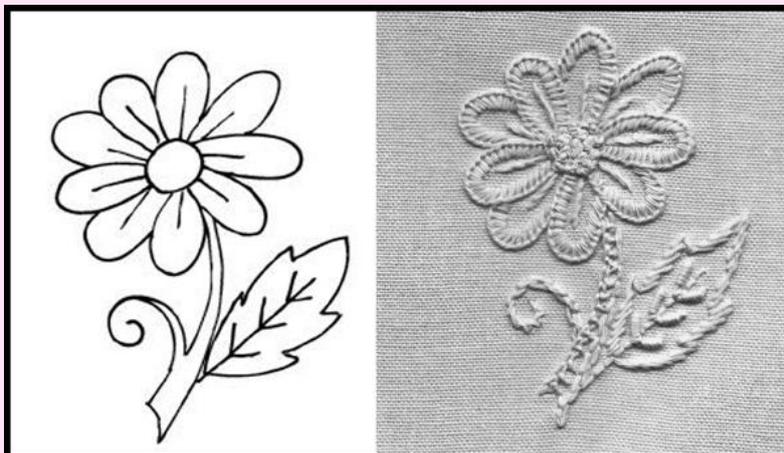
### **Mountmellick Flower**

Design area: 3 x 3 inches

Material: 7 x 7 inches

Trace the design lightly, using either an HB pencil or a water soluble pen. Test the pen on a spare piece of fabric before drawing the design. Water soluble pen should disappear in cold water.

(See "Techniques" Part 8 and 9 for further transfer details.)



FR0078 Mountmellick Flower.

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Many traditional embroidery stitches are used in Mountmellick embroidery:

Stem - Mountmellick, Stem, cable or chain stitches No. 3 thread

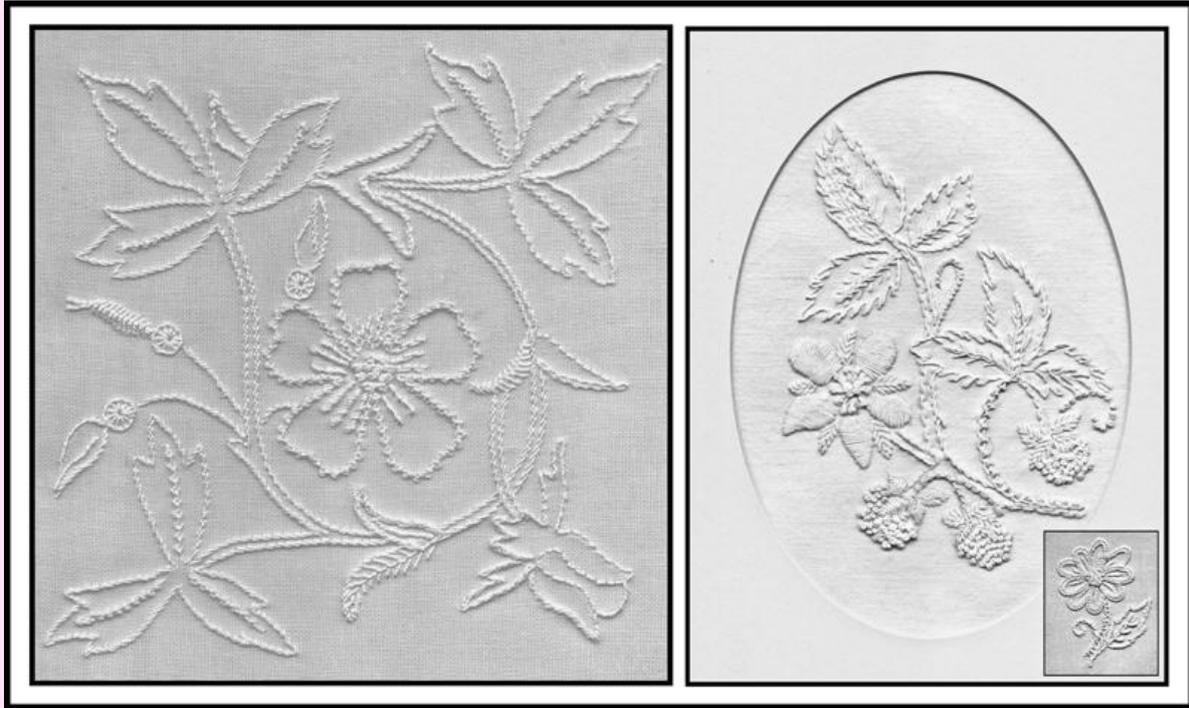
Leaf outline - Stem stitch or back stitch whipped No. 3

Leaf veins - Main vein back stitch whipped, finer veins bullion knots No. 2

Flower petals - Buttonhole stitch outlines or satin stitch, unpadded. No. 3

Flower centre - French or colonial knots No. 4

The design for Mountmellick Flower can be found in the "Freebies" section as FR0078



*PR0013 "Floral White" and PR0014 "Brambles"*

Two more whitework designs "Floral White" and "Brambles" have been added to the Projects folder. I hope you enjoy stitching these designs as much as I have enjoyed creating them.

Be creative and place the stitches where you think they will be most effective. My embroideries are a guide to help you explore a new technique.

Happy stitching!

*Liz*