



Blackwork Journey Blog

March 2014

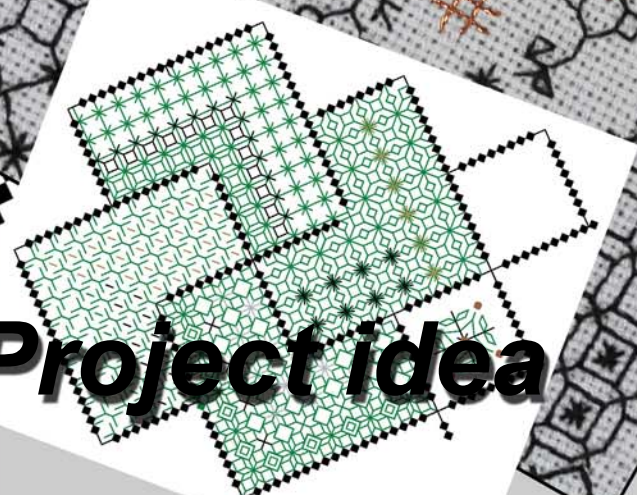
Save the Stitches Blocks 4 & 5



Metallic Threads Readers questions



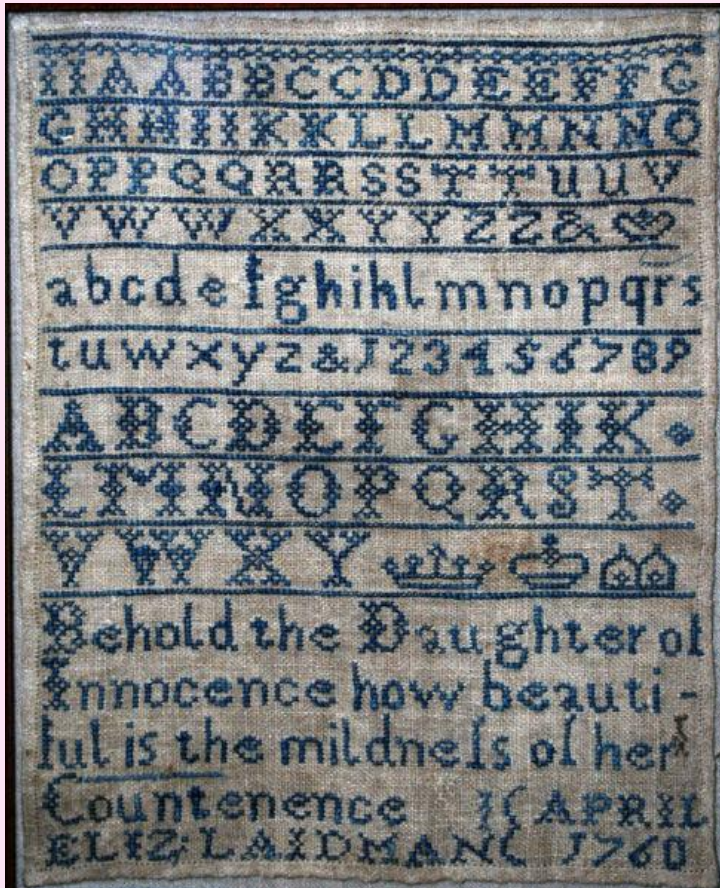
Project idea



‘Save the Stitches’ project

As part of this project, which seems to have captured the appeal of so many embroiderers, I have been thinking about how people could personalise their work, as I have always considered that any piece of work is very special to its creator and as such, should be identifiable.

Part of the charm of the early samplers was that we can usually relate to the people who stitched them, often in less than ideal conditions! Just think of sitting stitching on a cold winter's night with just a few candles for lighting!



A mid-eighteenth century English sampler in monochrome, with the alphabet in uppercase and lowercase (omitting "J", which then, was not considered a separate letter), some crowns and the text:

Behold the Daughter of Innocence how beautiful is the mildness of her Countenance.

ELIZABETH. LAIDMAN APRIL 1760

This makes the study of old samplers of especially interesting when considering how and where to name and date your project.

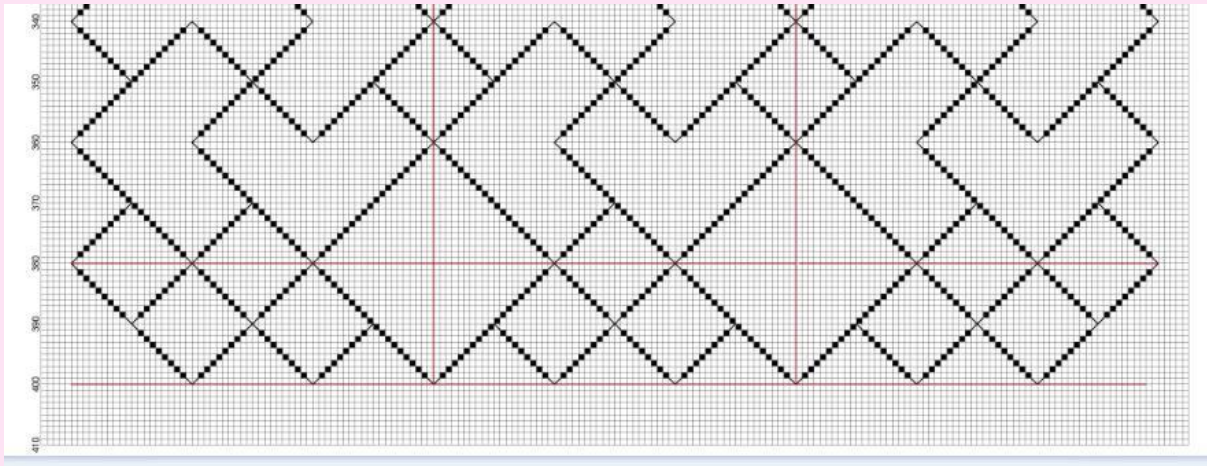
Initially, I wasn't certain where to personalise the 'Save the Stitches' embroidery as it would not look right to have the name or date near the middle or underneath. It had to have a special place of its own, but where?

When I designed the chart, I left the bottom rows rather vague. I then started stitching the blocks to get the feel of the design, because seeing it on paper is very different to looking at the actual embroidery, hoping that at some point I would find a solution.

Then one night at 2.30am, I had an idea.... If I altered the arrangement of the blocks on the bottom row, I could create two diamonds, one to put 'Save the Stitches' in and the other, to house the initials and date.

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So with this in mind, I tried it out on my computer and it worked perfectly. The additional small blocks added extra weight to the bottom of the design and the larger diamonds supplied the space for the information.

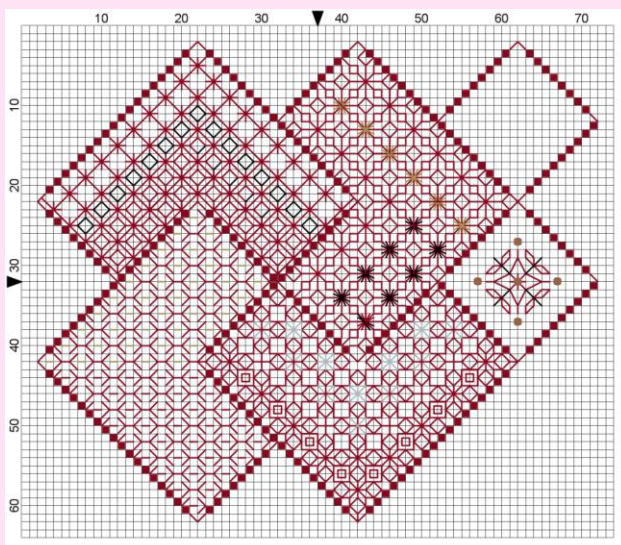


Bottom rows of chart with spaces for naming and dating sampler

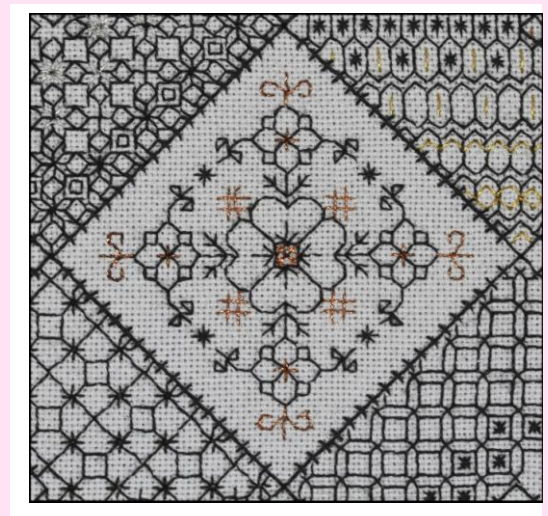
I would like to think when the project has been completed, it will become an heirloom and years from now, someone would look at it and think about the person who stitched it. If you are embarking on this project, you too will be creating an heirloom, so why not name and date it for future generations to enjoy?

There will be other points for you to consider, but we will look at these as the project develops.

Susi decided to work 'Save the Stitches' in DMC815 Garnet, black and gold, but before using a different colour scheme it is sensible to work a small sample to see how the colours appear when they are stitched. Large areas of one colour can look very 'flat' unless there is something to break up the design. Motifs in the larger diamonds add this extra touch and open up the design area.



Garnet, black and gold!



Diamond detail!

'Save the Stitches' Questions and Answers

There has been considerable interest in the project and a number of readers have asked questions about the charts, as well as sending in photographs. Selecting colours and materials other than those I have specified, has also raised some interesting points.

My project is a starting point to be developed by the reader. Sharing ideas can help to make the decisions simpler and it is fun to see how other people approach a challenge!

Can I use metallic threads other than those you have specified?

Yes, you can substitute your own choice of metallic threads, or you can use stranded cotton. I frequently use DMC stranded 680 Old gold in place of metallic gold.

What is DLE?

DLE stands for DMC Light Effects

This is available throughout the United States.

The numbers shown on the chart 'Save the Stitches' are Light Effect numbers i.e.

DLE - E415 Pewter

DLE- E301 Copper

DLE- E3852 Old gold

This is sold in a skein like normal DMC threads

"DMC Light Effects thread is a glistening metallic thread that will add reflective qualities and sparkle to any needlework or craft project. Made from 100% polyester fibers, Light Effects Floss is comprised of 6 size 25 easily separated strands. Light Effects uses a color numbering system that easily corresponds to the popular cotton DMC Embroidery Floss. You can add a subtle highlight to your stitching by combining one strand of cotton Floss with one strand of Light Effects. Or for a more vibrant look, you can substitute Light Effects for its matching shade in Cotton Floss."

"**Precious Metals (6 colours)** Silver, gold and bronze effects for the traditional metallic thread effect of enhancing with a subtle sheen."

Product description from: www.dmc-usa.com

DMC Diamant is not easy to purchase in the United States at the moment although it is available via the Internet. I always specify threads that are widely available, reasonably priced and good quality, but if new threads are introduced that I think are interesting, I will let you know.

The colours are similar and it is sold on a reel. I find it is easier to use and doesn't fray so much.

Kreinik very fine #4 is a similar weight to Light Effects. It is a premier metallic thread for cross stitching because it is so soft and easy to use. Use the very Fine #4 Braid in 'Save the Stitches.' It is sold in 12 yard spools.

DMC Light Effects to Kreinik Conversion Chart
www.kreinik.com

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You will also see the word 'Call outs' on some of the charts. This is the term the software uses for metallic cross stitch. Why they use such an illogical term, I have never been able to find out but...

A number of people have chosen different metallic threads. Two strands of the silver Bijou has been suggested as an alternative to DMC Lights Effects silver. I rather like pewter but it depends on the fabric colour. A number of people are using garnet rather than copper metallic and black and garnet seems to be a popular combination on ecru fabric

Beads – a question from Marilyn

“Hi Liz, I'm working on your Save the Stitches blackwork piece and I have a question. What thread should I use to sew on the beads? A thread to match the fabric, a thread to match the beads?”

Beads - my thinking!

If I add beads to 'Save the Stitches' I will use black DMC310 thread throughout, for continuity. Using metallic thread to attach beads is not a good idea and I don't want to introduce any other threads into the design.

So far I have waited to add beads for two reasons:

- a. I always tie my thread up round the beads so I tend to add them after I have finished the embroidery, and
- b. I may, or may not add beads!

Some people love beads and add them to everything. There is a lot of detail within the diaper patterns so I am a little more cautious and will wait to see how the embroidery develops. You will be able to decide where and if, you require beads when you have worked part of the design.

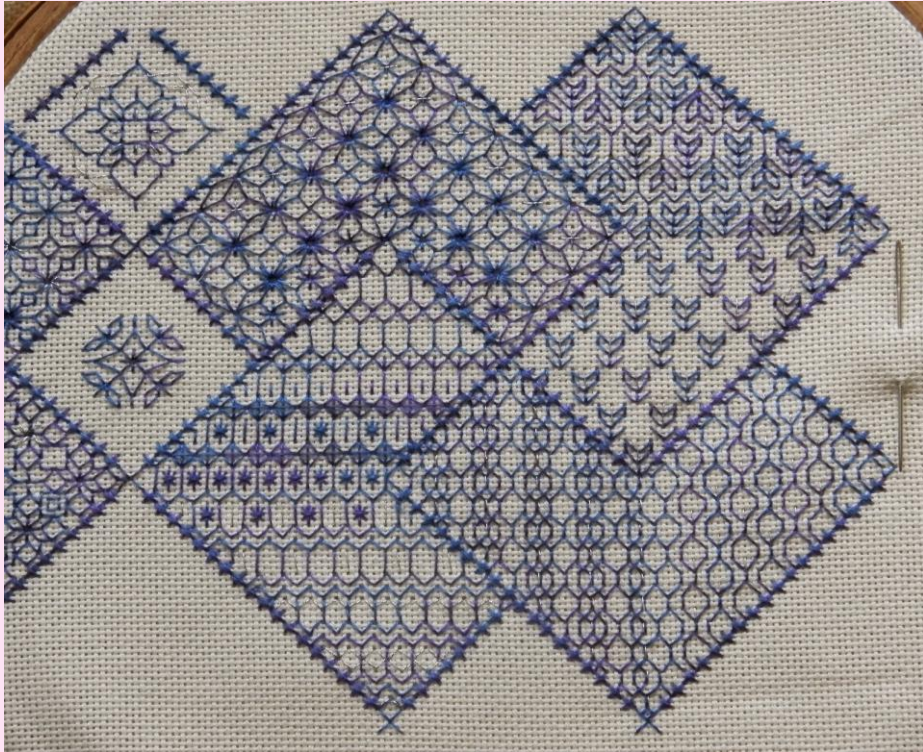
This is your unique sampler, so make it special by adding or taking away different elements or, just follow my charts if you are new to blackwork.

It is a challenge but I hope you enjoy it. Block 4 is very different and you may decide just to put your beads there!

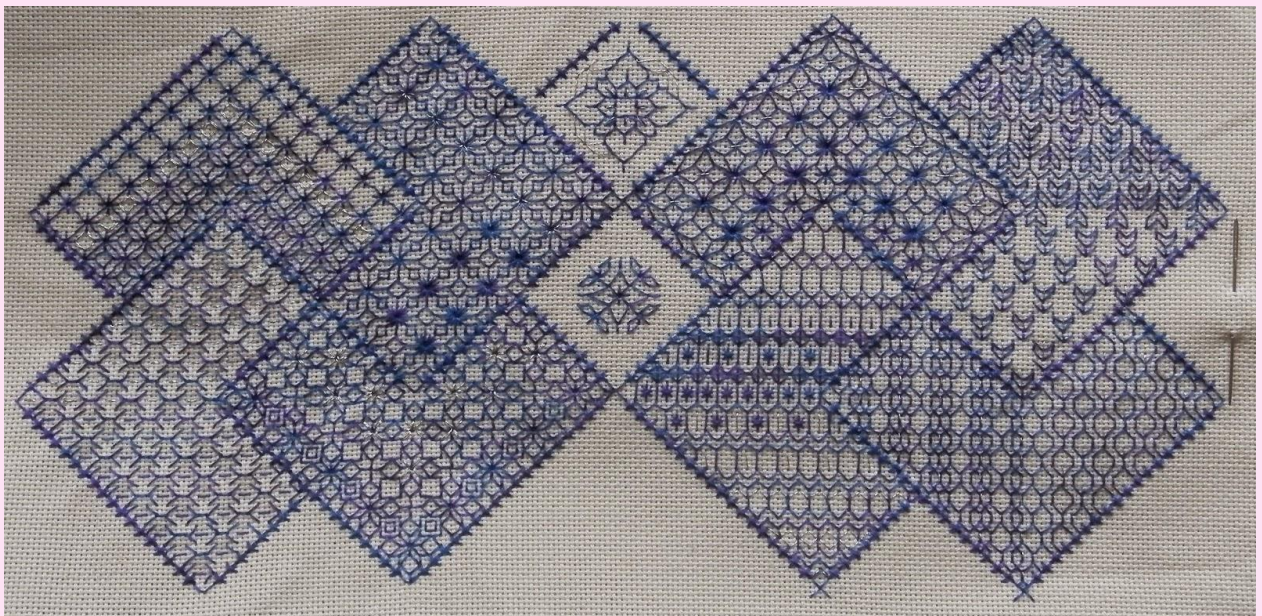
Choosing colour?

Esther of Brodeuse Bressane, France is a very talented embroiderer, who is creating a beautiful sampler using a variegated blue/purple thread by DMC (4240) and a silver thread from the Mettler metallic range.

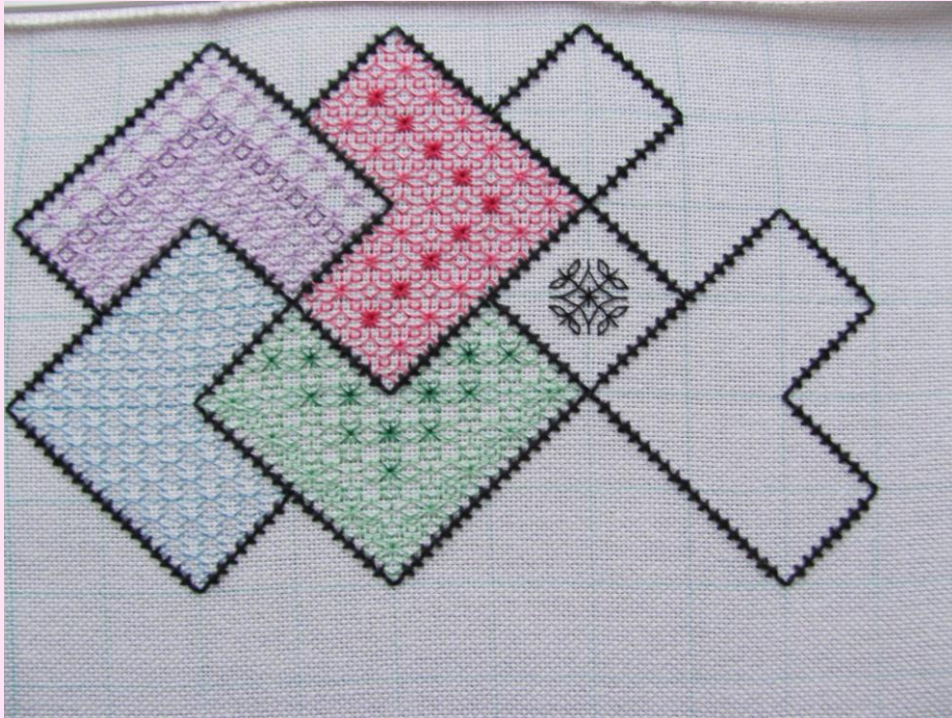
<http://brodeuse-bressane.blogspot.fr>



Block 2 Esther's Embroideries



Blocks 1 and 2



Block 1 'Save the Stitches' by Tracy

Tracy has worked the first block in a variety of colours. She has decided on 13 pairs of colours for the pinwheels and the diamonds are going to be worked in black & gold. This is going to be really interesting to watch develop. I like the grid markings on the material. It will make counting more accurate.

Rose Mary

“Whatever combo each person chooses will be beautiful because the pattern has 'good bones'. Royal blue and silver, medium blue and silver, green and silver or gold, Christmas red and gold or silver. All one colour. A different colour for each unit within each block. Each block in a different colour. Each block in a different colour family. The possibilities are endless.”

Kell...”silver goes best with blue. It picks up on the cool, where gold picks up the warm of reds. Now I'm thinking about using a pale green iridescent fabric I have on hand, with dark green and other earthy colors instead of metallic since the fabric is sparkly.”

Maureen in Canada has tacked grid lines first and then worked the outlines of the first three blocks before filling them.

Val decided to do a trial piece and work on some different colour combinations before launching in. This is a good idea because it is a big project and you need to be comfortable with your choices from the beginning.

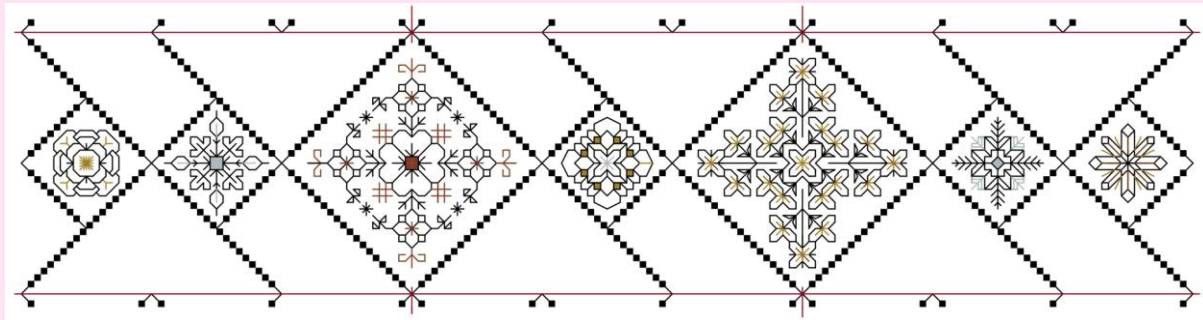
Please keep sending the comments and the pictures. If you have any queries I will do my best to answer them.

lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

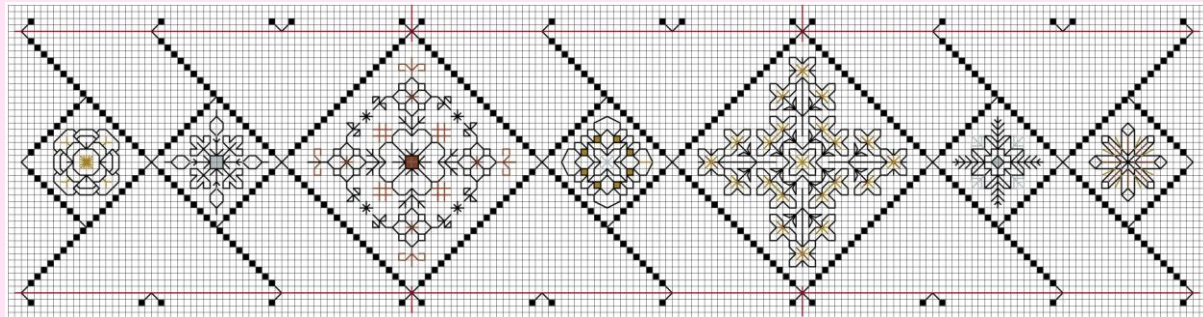
Blocks 4 and 5 – new additions for March 2014

Two more parts of ‘Save the Stitches’ are added to Freebies this month. Block 4 consists of seven motifs which stretch the full width of the pattern. They are designed to produce areas of pattern that are less dense. The motifs can be used individually for other projects such as cards and gift tags. Often they can be merged to create larger patterns.

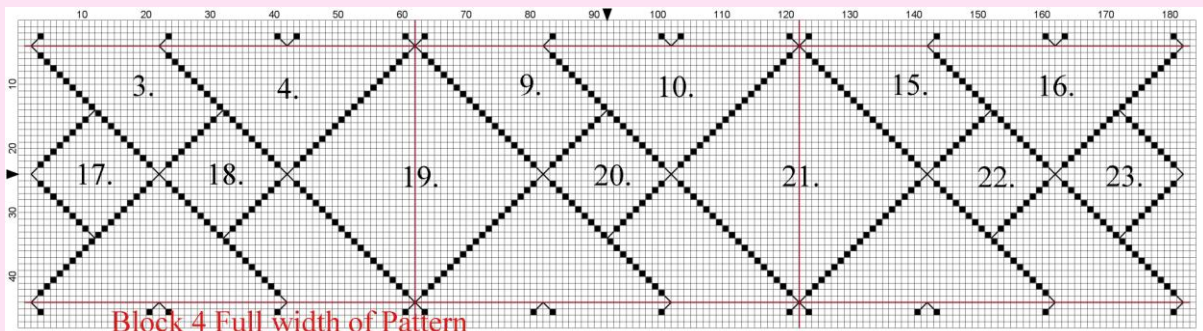
Block 4



Seven motifs set into the pattern contrast with the other diaper patterns



Block 4 Grid lines



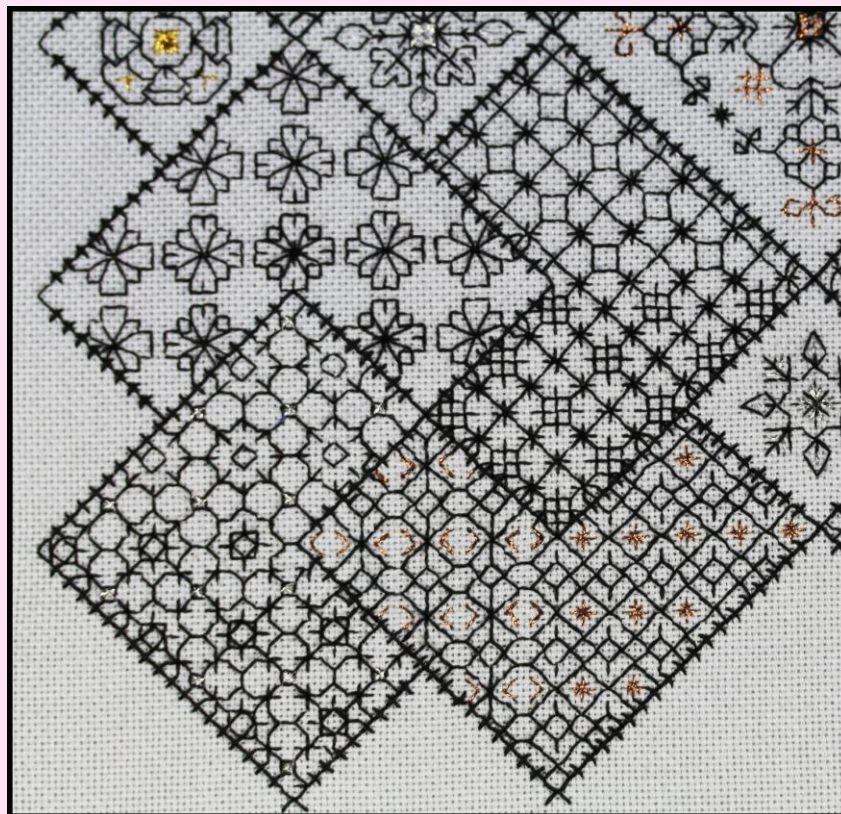
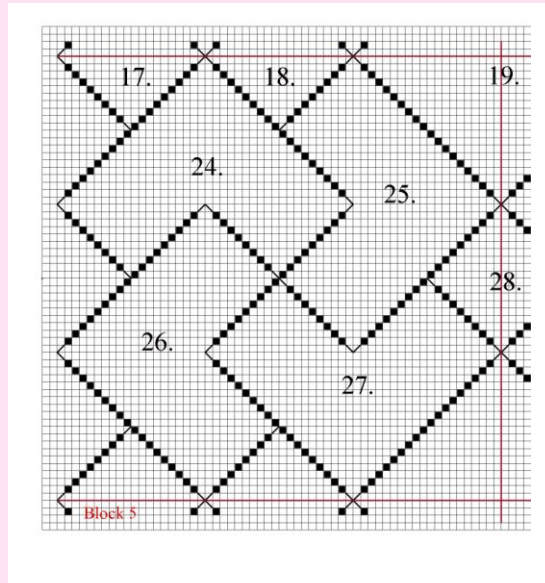
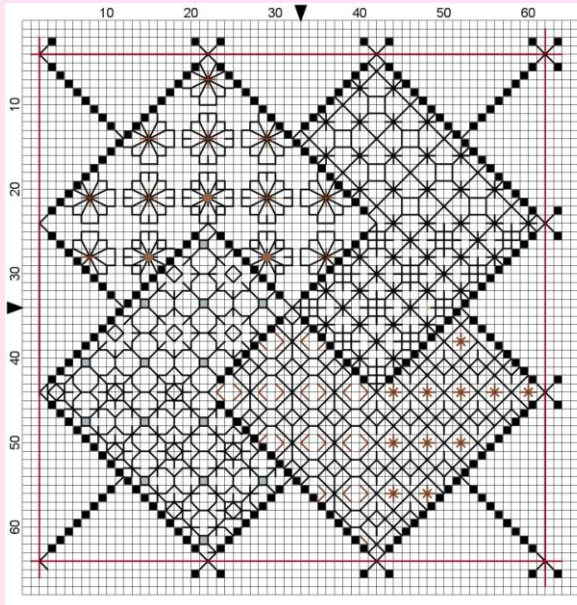
Block 4 Full width of Pattern

Block 4 Full width of pattern



Block 4 Embroidered

Block 5



Block 5 chart, numbers and embroidery

Please keep in touch and let me know how you are getting along. Sharing thoughts and ideas becomes part of the fun, especially if you know there are other groups and individuals doing exactly the same thing!

Creating a special 'Thank You'

Maureen, an avid embroiderer living in Canada, wanted to thank her doctor who has helped her with some serious health issues and rather than buying the usual bottle of wine or making a donation to the neurosurgery research foundation, she chose to create a unique gift which was a really wonderful idea.

With the help of her doctor's secretary she researched the doctor's family background, found the details of all the grandchildren and created a set of maple leaves each with a different diaper pattern and included the names of the children.

Why maple leaves? Because the family has a country house up in the Laurentian Mountains, north of Montreal which they very much enjoy and especially the colours of the autumn leaves.

The piece was framed in a simple wood silver frame and the result was an item to treasure.



*Maureen's embroidery
Thank you for sharing your beautiful work!*

I hope you enjoy this new style Blog. Just download it and keep it on your computer for reference.

Happy stitching,

Liz