



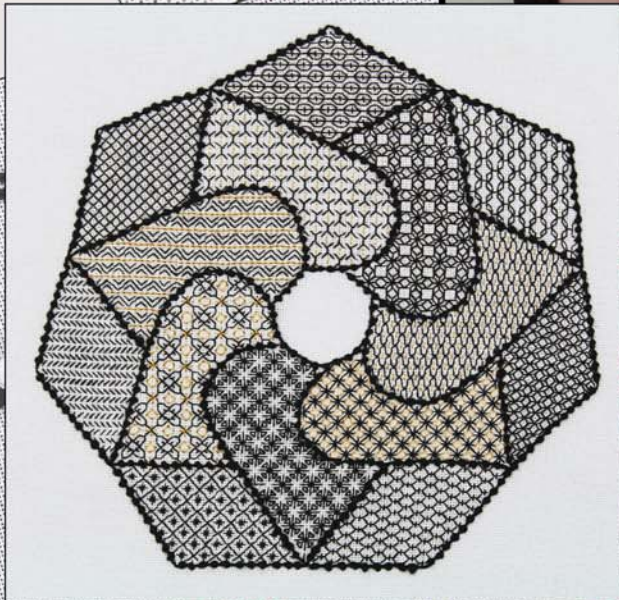
# Blackwork Journey Blog

September 2015

NEW!

Projects, charts, ideas

Choosing colours



Reader's Gallery





## Blackwork Journey Blog – September 2015

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I cannot believe that Autumn in the UK is just round the corner and I have already stitched and posted designs for Christmas 2016 to several magazines. Where this year is going, I just do not know!

As many of you are aware, I started 'Box of Delights' in March and I am so thrilled at the number of people who are participating in this project and the variety of materials, threads and colours schemes that are being used.

Many of the people who have participated in this project are new to blackwork and without fail, they are producing some really interesting and skilful work which they have been proud to display through the Pinterest - Elizabeth Almond 'Box of Delights' board and the dedicated Facebook group. Please use the button on the site to have a look at the work readers have sent me and enjoy both the work in progress and the finished embroideries.

New members from countries such as South Africa, Russia, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada along with the UK are joining the project all the time and along with the 'Save the Stitches' project, blackwork is proving to be a challenging and addictive technique for both individual embroiderers and groups.

I am very proud that so many of you want to stitch my designs and want to thank you for sharing your work with me. It is a really good feeling to know that there is a little part of Blackwork Journey in so many different parts of the world and I hope you will continue to enjoy this beautiful technique.

Through the Facebook group, I have been able to develop and explore reader's questions and requests in a way that is not possible through this Blog. I love the interaction between the members and the support and information that they share with each other. If you would like to be part of this closed group, you can access it through the Blackwork Journey site or by following the link:

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

There is no pressure to complete any of the projects within a given time frame. The PDF's for all the designs will remain online in both e-book extended format for purchase and for monthly download in my Freebies section.

To date, there are four extended e-books available:

EB0001 Butterfly Ball – mixed techniques

EB0002 Save the Stitches – blackwork

EB0003 Floral Fantasy – an Introduction to blackwork

EB0004 Box of Delights

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Eventually, the e-book series will be extended to cover a wide range of techniques and stitches through specific embroidery projects.



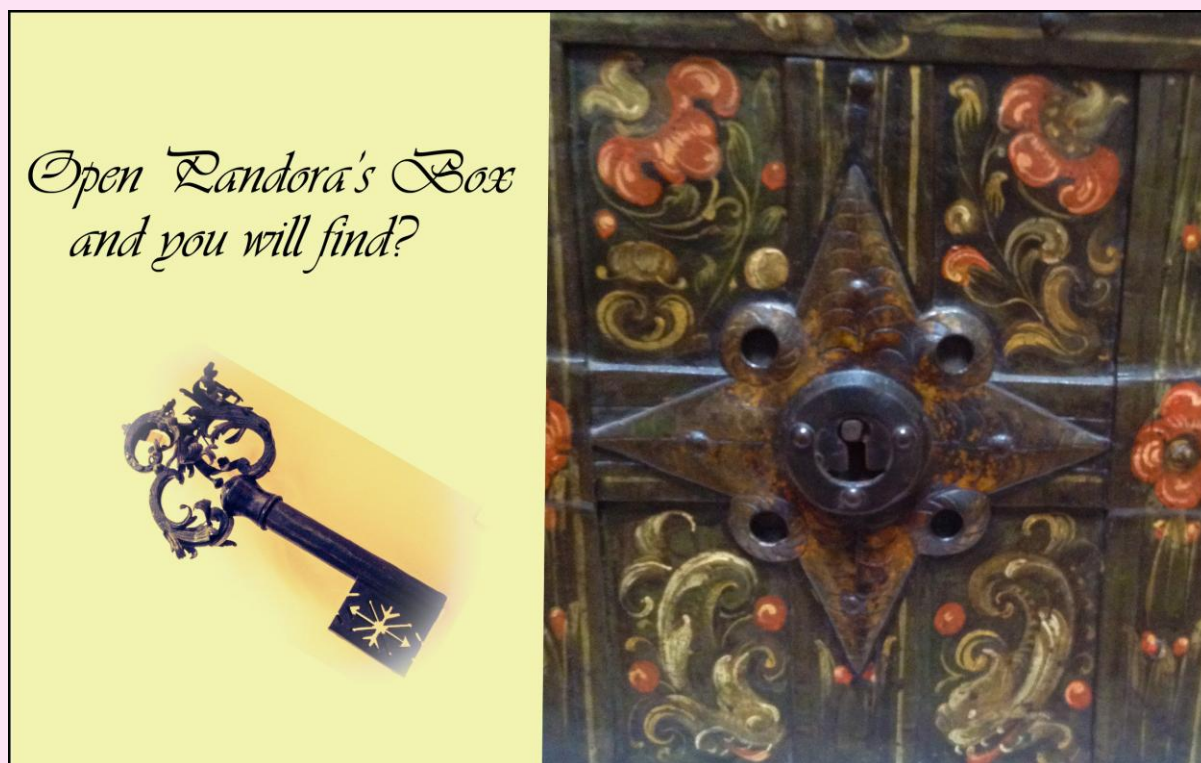
*E-books extended 1 -4*

*Butterfly Ball  
Save the Stitches  
Floral Fantasy  
Box of Delights*

### *Pandora's Box (New project)*

It is challenging to explore a new technique, but it is also very rewarding to stretch boundaries and develop new skills and with this in mind a new, free project called 'Pandora's Box' will be starting on October 1<sup>st</sup> and run for a period of nine months.

This project will involve five different techniques combined together to create a unique sample. The techniques will be Assisi work, Blackwork, Cross stitch, Pulled thread work and Pattern Darning and will be explored in the monthly downloads which will be found in the Freebies section of Blackwork Journey.



The project will be available in two different materials, Evenweave and Aida blockweave as well as two different colour schemes. This will enable readers who prefer working on Aida to participate in the project.

Because it is not possible to work all pulled thread work patterns on Aida blockweave, alternative patterns will be substituted where necessary. Next month, I will post the Introduction, the list of materials and the first chart for the framework which everyone will need to stitch, using a pulled thread work stitch.

Four-sided stitch will be used to create the borders and separate the different blocks. It is not a difficult stitch, but does require a little practise which is where the 'doodle cloth' would come in useful!

If you are working the stitch on evenweave, then you will pull the thread tight. If you are working on Aida, then you will work the stitch without pulling it tight.

I have already set up a Pinterest board for 'Pandora's Box' and there will be a dedicated Facebook group from October 1<sup>st</sup> for the project, so all the information, readers' photographs and stitch details will be in one place.

If you would like to practice the pulled thread work stitches in advance, I am posting some PDF's for each stitch in the closed Facebook group, which can be accessed from the site.





*'Pandora's Box' worked on Zweigart 25 count Lugana. The stitch between the blocks is four-sided stitch.*



*'Pandora's Box' worked on 28 count Aida blockweave. The stitch between the blocks is four-sided stitch.*

## Why not try some of the stitches in Pandora's Box just for fun?

### 1. Mini Motif Four-sided Stitch

Pulled thread work is worked on evenweave fabric. No threads are removed, but the threads are pulled together to create the stitches. The threads need to be strong enough to withstand the 'pull'.

Traditionally, pulled thread work was stitched in white or neutral colours although there is no reason why other colours should not be used, but a pale colour palette usually works more effectively than a strong colour scheme.

**Grid Size:** 34W x 34H

**Design Area:** 2.14" x 2.14" (30 x 30 stitches)

#### **Threads:**

DMC Cotton P rle No 12, one ball  
or DMC stranded cotton, one skein

#### **Framework:**

One strand of Cotton P rle or two strands of DMC stranded floss

#### **Four-sided Stitch**

One strand of Cotton P rle or two strands of DMC stranded floss

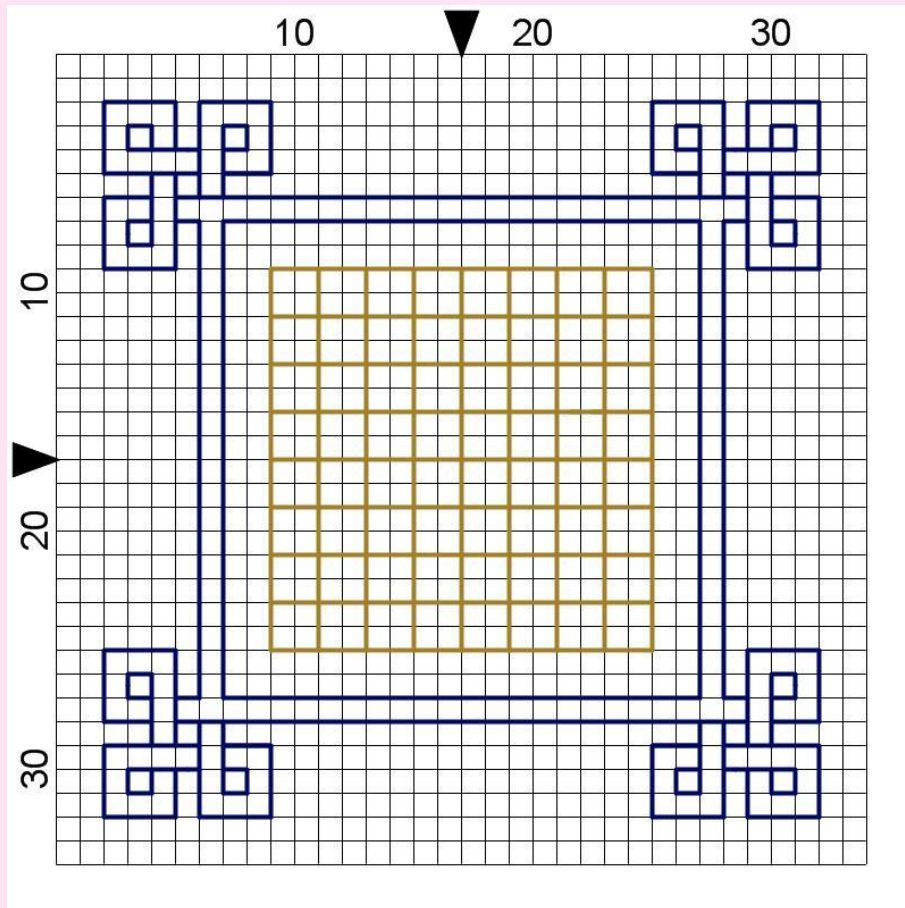
#### **Stitches used:**

Back stitch  
Four-sided stitch (See diagram)  
Tapestry needle No.24  
Small ring or frame

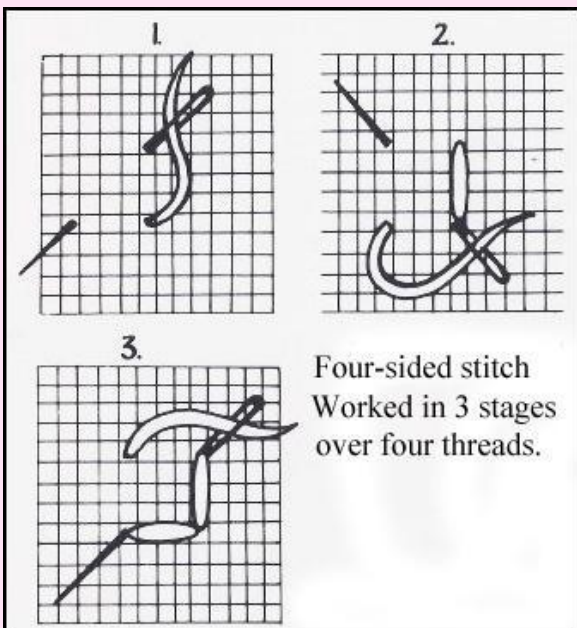
#### **Method:**

Four-sided stitch may be used in a line or repeated as a filling.

1. Work the Celtic framework first in back stitch using the correct number of threads.
2. This consists of 3 straight stitches, to form the end, the middle and the top of the 'square'. Work from right to left over 4 threads. Always put the needle in at one corner and come out at the opposite one. Follow diagrams 1- 3. For Row 2 turn the work 180 degrees and work the second row in the same way as Row 1.
3. Pull tight to create the holes. The rows of four-sided stitch are worked backwards and forwards until the space is filled.
4. Weave all ends into the back of the work carefully.  
Place the embroidery face down on a soft towel and press lightly.

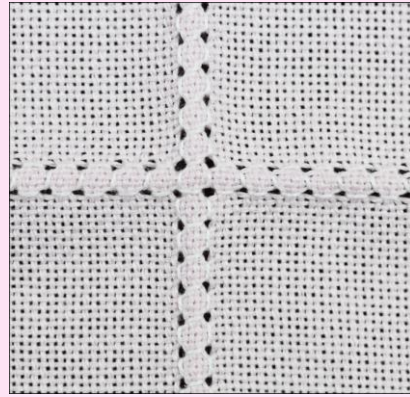
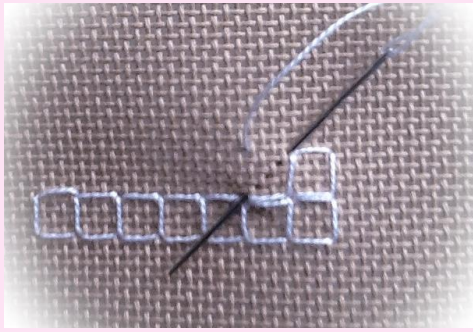


*Celtic frame for pulled thread work stitches*

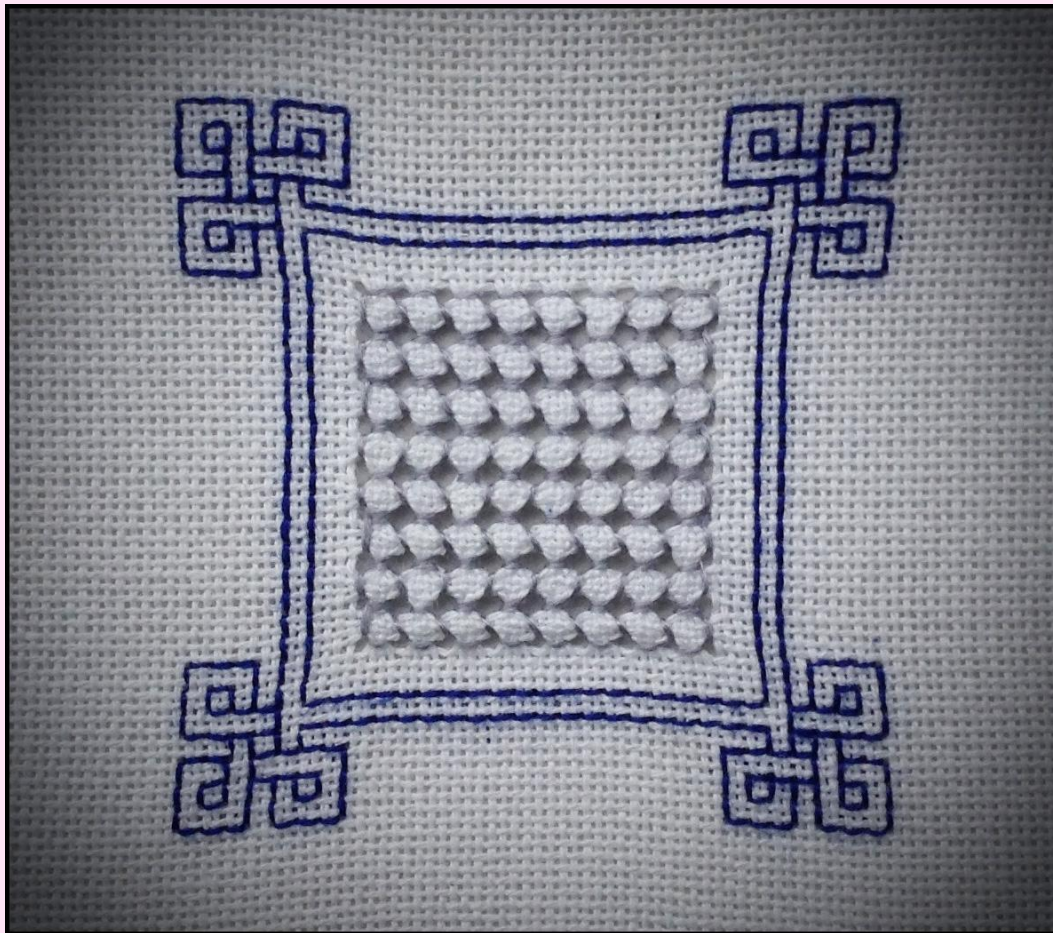


*Four-sided stitch, an extract from 'Pandora's Box'*





*Mini Motif – Four-sided stitch in a Celtic frame 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida and Four-sided stitch worked on evenweave  
(Extract from Pandora's Box)*



*Example of Four-sided stitch*

Pulled thread work does distort the fabric. When the motif is finished, damp the embroidery and pull it back into shape carefully.



## History of Blackwork

Museums worldwide hold textile collections which can be accessed on-line. This Panel of Blackwork is from The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

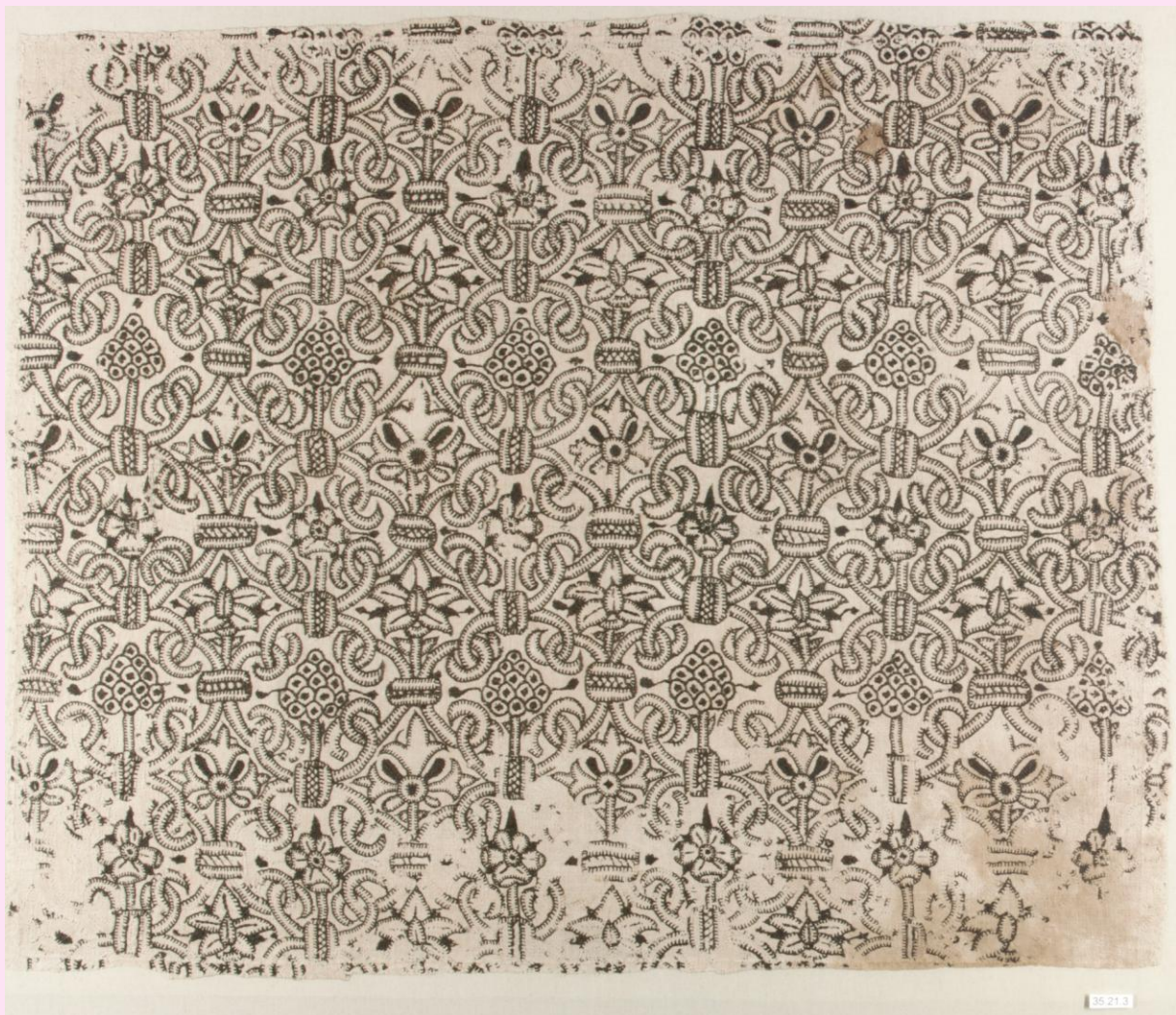
"Blackwork" or monochrome silk embroidery on white linen was a fashionable embellishment for dresses in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The repeating pattern on this panel displays flora typical of embroideries of the period: honeysuckle, pansies, borage (starflower) and grapes.

**Date:** 1580–1620

**Culture:** British

**Medium:** Linen worked with silk thread; buttonhole, cross, outline, and herringbone stitches

**Dimensions:** H. 17 1/4 x W. 21 in. (43.8 x 53.3 cm)







*Detail from the panel showing the stitches and some of the floral motifs. These could be used for modern blackwork motifs in counted thread techniques.*



*Blackwork detail*

*Queen Elizabeth I 1533 - 1603*

*National Portrait Gallery, London*

*This portrait of Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> of England showed blackwork embroidery on the ruff framing her face.*



### Organising Fabric and Threads for an Embroidery Project

Assembling fabric and threads for a new project, especially when the embroiderer has to make the choices, is not an easy thing to do, especially if you find selecting colours difficult.

#### 1. Choosing the right fabric

The starting point should be the choice of fabric. If the design is worked in evenweave or Aida blockweave, then the choice of fabric is relatively straightforward taking into consideration eyesight, cost, amount required and the weight of fabric. If the embroidery is to be laundered frequently, then the choice may be different from a design which will be framed.

Choose a fabric you can see to work on easily and that handles well.

My personal preferences are Zweigart evenweave:

28 Count Jazlyn for Cross Stitch and Needlecraft. 52% cotton 48% moda

28 Count Cashel Linen Cross Stitch Evenweave. 100% linen fabric for cross stitch, needlecraft and needlepoint and

Zweigart 25 Count Lugana which is a blended needlecraft evenweave for cross stitch. 52% Cotton 48% Modal

There is a good range of colours in the Cashel and the Lugana and they are widely available.

Embroidery on evenweave fabric is worked over TWO threads unless otherwise stated.

For free style embroidery, a firm cotton or linen is ideal. Some examples are 95 count Batist by Zweigart which is a surface embroidery fabric for freestyle embroidery made of 100% Cotton.

Normandy half linen free style fabric by Zweigart surface embroidery fabric  
55% Cotton 45% Linen

Krystal by Zweigart is a surface embroidery fabric for freestyle embroidery  
55% Cotton 45% Viscose

Mountmellick fabric, damask, heavy cottons or even serviettes can be used as a base fabric for a design. If in doubt, work a small sample piece and see how well the fabric works.

Space dyed fabrics come in a wide range of colours, but be aware that they are seldom colourfast and choosing the correct threads takes more care than usual. Some fabrics do leach colour into pastel threads and it is not ideal if pristine white suddenly turns into beige!

Don't skimp on fabric. It is better to allow a little extra than find you have not got enough and don't compromise on quality. A cheaper fabric can be used for a doodle cloth, but if time and money is being invested in a design, then buy the best quality of fabric you can afford. Cheaper fabrics, especially even weave may not be easy or accurate to work on.

Threads:

The choice of threads is enormous and can be very daunting. There are ranges of threads available for every taste and price range, but few of them are guaranteed colourfast! Collect shade cards of actual threads where possible. A colour wheel will help when sorting colours into groups.

Note: On-line charts may not represent the colours with 100% accuracy. The resolution of a computer screen will sometimes distort the actual colour of threads and beads and it has been found that thread shade cards provide the most accurate guide

The Internet is useful for purchasing thread colour charts, conversion charts and thread checklists, including specialist threads such as Dinky Dyes and Caron Threads.

Check out printable lists of the thread ranges from manufacturers and use them to list your own supplies and identify items which need replacing.



*Consider metallic threads carefully, since they all have different properties! Use short lengths of thread and a larger needle than usual to reduce fraying!*





*The choice of colours and brands is very tempting and readers who have worked 'Box of Delights' have used a range of brands and colour combinations*



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Once the fabric and threads have been chosen, over lock the fabric to prevent fraying, mark TOP and BOTTOM and find the centre point. Where possible, work from the centre point outwards, unless the pattern states otherwise. This will help to place the design in the correct position on the fabric.

Make a note of the threads used in the project and use threads from the same batch as there may be slight variations. Kerry (below) has recorded her threads using a photograph of each section of her 'Box of Delights' project giving her an instant record of what she has used and where, which can be very helpful for future projects.



*This extract is from Kerry's 'Box of Delights' listing all the information necessary to complete Block 3 and is an excellent example of good practice!*

I hope you find this month's Blog interesting and helpful. If you have any queries, please contact me through Facebook or by e-mail through this site.

Happy stitching!

*Liz*

*Miniature by Jacqueline 6 x 6 inches*

