



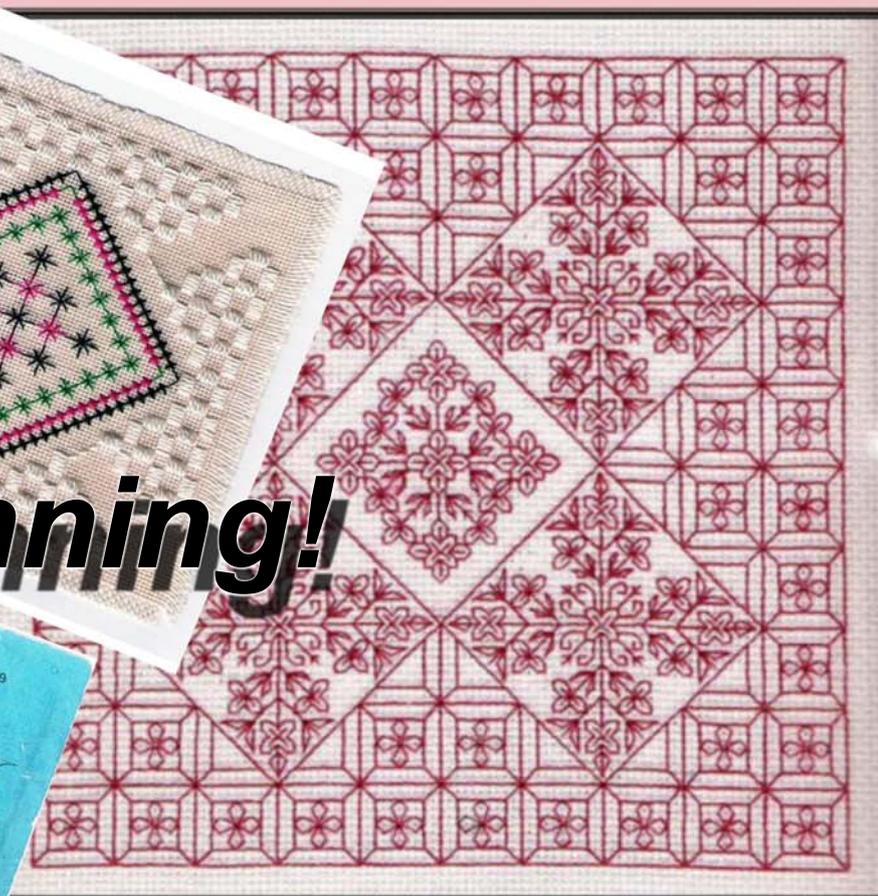
# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

2009

# 2009

## Antique SamplerStitcher

For people who enjoy making and reading about samplers



## New beginning!



Issue 6 April/May 2009

[www.antiquesamplerstitcher.com](http://www.antiquesamplerstitcher.com)

## Blackwork Journey Blog - 2009

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*December 2009*

Happy Christmas to all my readers and the many friends I have made throughout the year!

In November my design was published in "The Gift of Stitching" and I thought I would make it my Christmas gift to all of you. If you look in Freebies you will find the PDF for "Christmas Wishes."

Peace, hope, love and faith are essential if we are to understand each other and our complex world. I hope in 2010 that you all have a year filled with love and hope for the future and of course, plenty of needlework to inspire you.

Thank you for supporting Blackwork Journey through its development.

Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year!

*Liz*

*"Unknown woman, (possibly Elizabeth Seymour-Cromwell or Catherine Howard, fifth wife of Henry VIII)", 1540-41, by Hans Holbein the Younger (German, c. 1497-1543).*



*Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio.*

*November 2009*

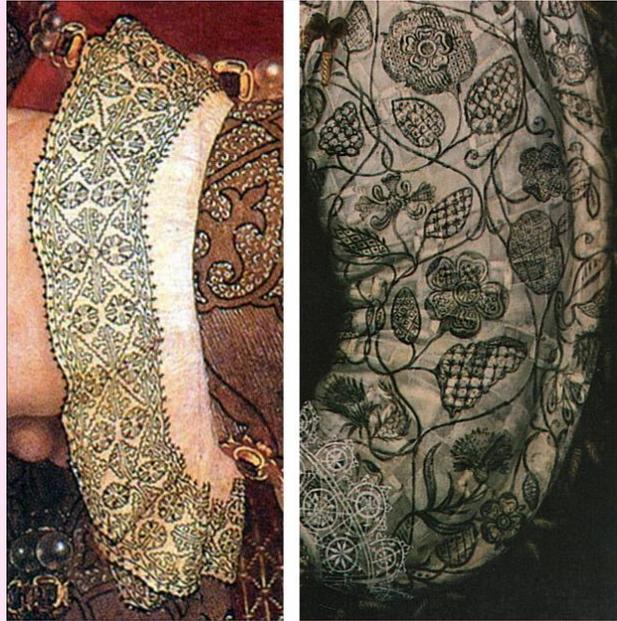
Andalucia, Spain beckoned this month with its wonderful history and Moorish architecture and as usual I came home with hundreds of photographs to be sorted and catalogued. These will provide information and inspiration for future projects.

Blackwork dates from before the time of Henry VIII and was used on shirts, chemises and smocks in England. Catherine of Aragon married Henry VIII in 1509 and brought many blackwork garments with her from Spain.

Portraits of the late 15th and early 16th centuries show embroidered sleeves, collars and cuffs. The history of blackwork is well documented but the portrait of Elizabeth I wearing hand stitched blackwork sleeves; stomacher and collar c.1590 demonstrates the beauty of blackwork. The cuff worked in Holbein stitch is a detail from a portrait of Jane Seymour by Holbein c.1537 and the third portrait is of Mary Cornwallis painted by George Gower c.1580 provides evidence that this technique was highly developed.



*Elizabeth I Jesus College Oxford 1590*



*Freestyle blackwork embroidery 1530 – 1590 worked on sleeves, cuffs and collars*

The links between the needlewomen of the past and the embroiderers of today are renewed and reinforced by paintings such as these! I hope you enjoy them as much as I have done.

Happy stitching,

*Liz*

### *October 2009*

Blackwork Journey is one year old this month! It has been a stimulating, but very steep learning curve.

I have had a number of designs published and sold through outlets around the world, with the added benefit of meeting a number of wonderful people along the way.

When I began promoting blackwork and selling my designs, I only had a limited idea of the work involved, although I knew exactly what I wanted to achieve. However, by introducing new techniques and specialist stitches within my designs, I am hoping that every month there will be something new to try.

I recently visited Prague, Vienna and Budapest and armed with a list of needlework shops, I managed to buy counted thread evenweave fabric in every city, which was quite an achievement when no one spoke English! I found that by taking a piece of embroidery along with me and showing what you would like worked wonders, especially with an unfamiliar technique such as blackwork.

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In Szentendre near Budapest, I met a wonderful lady called Judik. She has a small shop selling hardanger designs which she stitches. Her work was exquisite. She took me into her workroom and showed me the materials which came from Roumania and the threads she used. My husband sent out a search party to find me, because I was missing for so long! We exchanged e-mail addresses and I bought some of her work home as a reminder of a very special lady.



*Judik's embroidery was exquisite!*

Next month, we travel to Andalusia in Spain in search of inspiration and more needlework. Since Spain is the home

of blackwork, I am hoping to find some examples of the work in museums and meet more people who love embroidery.

Autumn is coming here in the UK, so it is time to get out the materials and threads and consider what projects you are going to start for Christmas. There are some Christmas designs on the site and a Christmas Cross for you to try in Freebies.

Thank you for your support.

Happy stitching.

*Liz*

*September 2009*

I have received a number of queries about the term "Call Out" which is used by my pattern designer programme "PC Stitch." It is an unusual term, which I have never met before. However, it represents metallic cross stitches and is shown by a square with a symbol inserted.

"Legend" is another term that has been queried and is the American term for the UK Stitch Key, which lists the symbols and silk numbers used in the chart.

Two symbols together on the "Legend" represent DMC thread and the Anchor alternative thread number.

I always use ONE strand of thread for back stitch and TWO strands for cross stitch. Metallic threads are used straight from the skein, or reel without splitting unless specified.

### Example:

## Chessboard

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**Author:** Elizabeth Almond  
**Copyright:** Elizabeth Almond  
**Grid Size:** 223W x 223H  
**Design Area:** 15.64" x 15.64" (219 x 219 stitches)

■ ■ [2] DMC-310 ANC-403 DMM- black

**Call Outs:**  
■ ■ [2] DMM-5282 Gold DMC Metallic

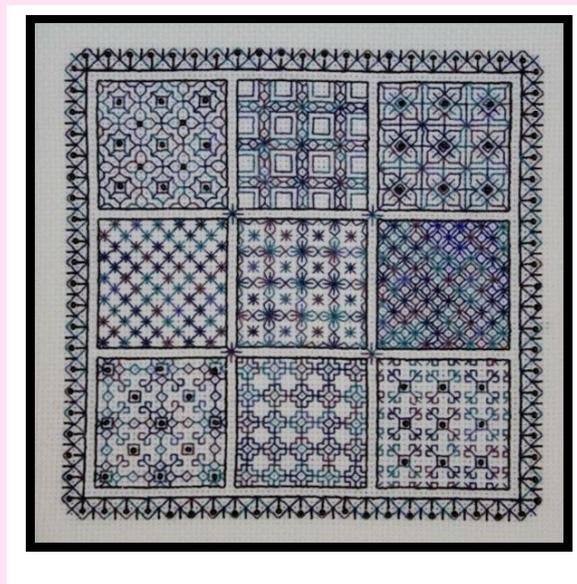
**Backstitch Lines:**  
— DMC-310 black — DMM-5282 Gold

I hope this helps to explain how the system works and removes any confusion.

Happy stitching,

*Liz*

*CH0057 Simpler Sampler  
black and blue*



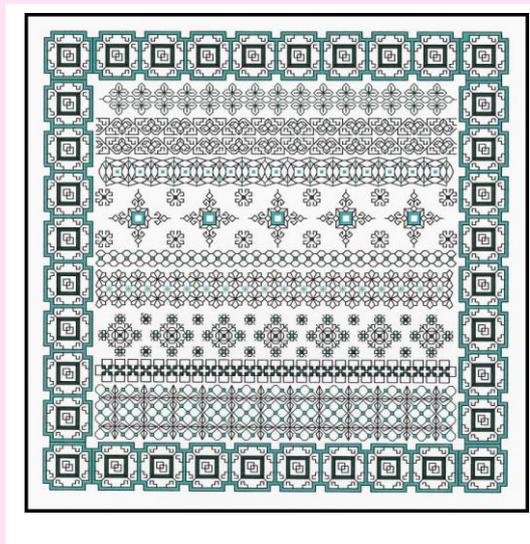
*August 2009*

Summer is supposed to be here, but as I write this, the wind is blowing and the sun is hidden behind the rain clouds. This is the perfect excuse to get my stitching out and work on a long neglected project, one of the many tucked away waiting for the finishing touches. I have little 'pats' in every room to be picked up and put down as the mood takes me. I recently came across an anthology of contemporary poetry called "Reflections" compiled by Alan Jacobs which contained a poem by June Evans that appealed to me very much.

"Free Spirit"

Oh - to be free  
Free to fly  
To glide  
To soar  
To rise with ease  
Above  
To spread my wings  
And go  
To leave behind  
My burdens and cares  
To know  
Freedom  
No limitations, no chains  
To be  
Whole.

Needlework frees me from the everyday worries and as I stitch my mind wanders, sorting through the demands of the day, planning for the week or perhaps, thinking of the next design. Peace for me is a piece of stitching!



# Blackwork Journey Blog - 2009

CH0041 Marianne and Mary

Mary proudly displays her first piece of blackwork at her "Show and Tell" in Alexandria, USA. If you have any pictures of your finished work I would be delighted to display them.

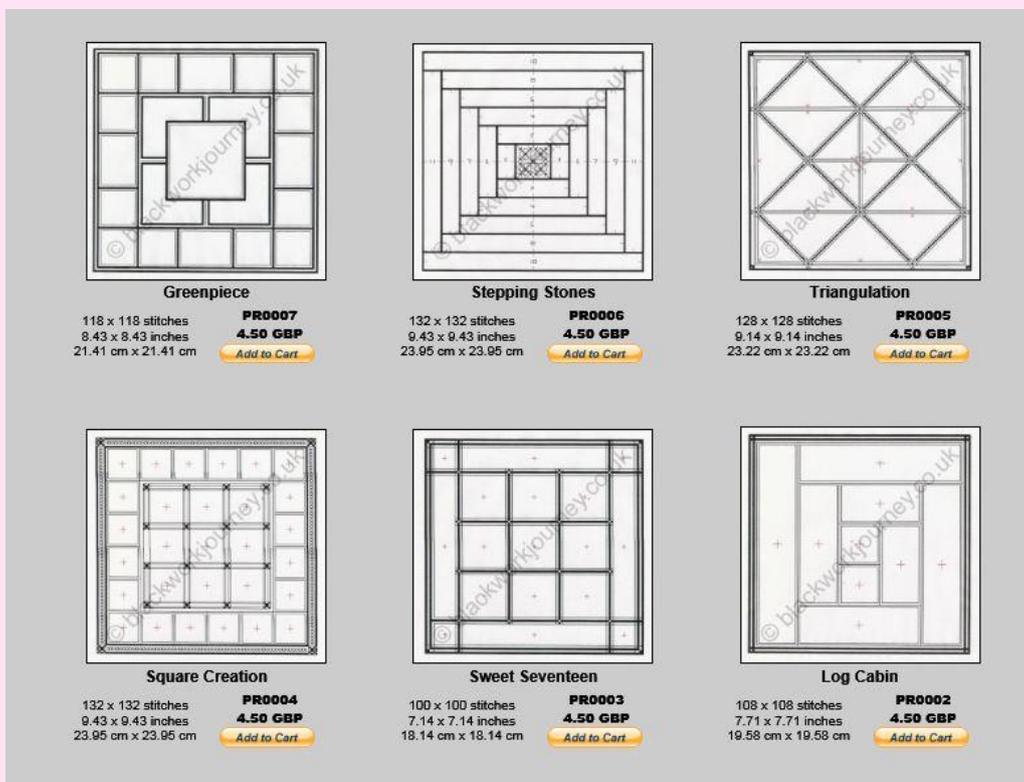
Happy stitching, *Liz*

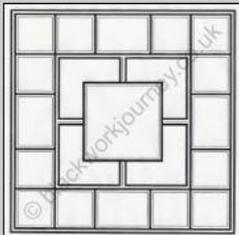
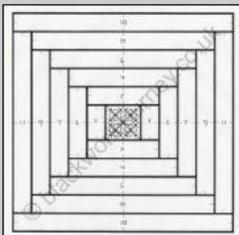
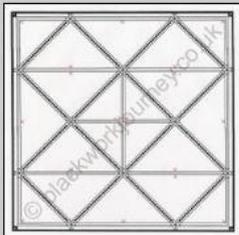
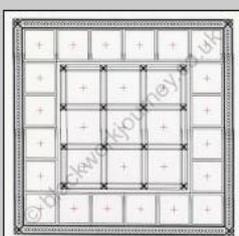
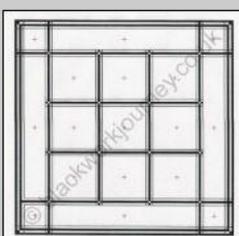
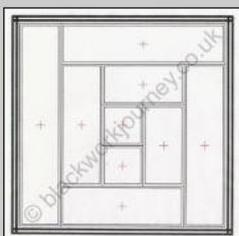
## July 2009

July marks the addition of another section to Blackwork Journey.

"Projects" is designed to encourage embroiderers to develop their own ideas within a provided framework. Instructions and patterns are included so that the needlewoman can choose where to place the different patterns, use her own colour schemes and develop a unique heirloom for the future.

Knowing where to start on a new project can be quite daunting, so this section is designed to remove the 'fear' factor. An Information PDF at the beginning of the section can be saved to your computer or, downloaded as a tutorial guide. This contains ideas that I have found very useful over a number of years. Please let me know what you think of this section and if it should be altered or expanded. I intend to add patterns to this section on a monthly basis, along with more charts in the "What's New" and "Freebies" sections.



 <p><b>Greenpiece</b> 118 x 118 stitches 8.43 x 8.43 inches 21.41 cm x 21.41 cm <b>PR0007</b> <b>4.50 GBP</b> <a href="#">Add to Cart</a></p>	 <p><b>Stepping Stones</b> 132 x 132 stitches 9.43 x 9.43 inches 23.95 cm x 23.95 cm <b>PR0006</b> <b>4.50 GBP</b> <a href="#">Add to Cart</a></p>	 <p><b>Triangulation</b> 128 x 128 stitches 9.14 x 9.14 inches 23.22 cm x 23.22 cm <b>PR0005</b> <b>4.50 GBP</b> <a href="#">Add to Cart</a></p>
 <p><b>Square Creation</b> 132 x 132 stitches 9.43 x 9.43 inches 23.95 cm x 23.95 cm <b>PR0004</b> <b>4.50 GBP</b> <a href="#">Add to Cart</a></p>	 <p><b>Sweet Seventeen</b> 100 x 100 stitches 7.14 x 7.14 inches 18.14 cm x 18.14 cm <b>PR0003</b> <b>4.50 GBP</b> <a href="#">Add to Cart</a></p>	 <p><b>Log Cabin</b> 108 x 108 stitches 7.71 x 7.71 inches 19.58 cm x 19.58 cm <b>PR0002</b> <b>4.50 GBP</b> <a href="#">Add to Cart</a></p>

*Selecting and paying for a chart is simple – just add to basket and follow the instructions.*

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Adding any chart to the basket and using PayPal is a simple and effective method of payment which works right round the world and enable you to receive your order promptly and without the cost or delay of posting.

I did find a comment on a website recently asking for an alternative translation for the word "freebies" but I rather like it!

I was also delighted to receive an embroidered card from an 83 year old lady called Ilene. Ilene works in miniature and the square which she selected from CH0028 Squares within Squares was exquisite. She has stitched the square in Madeira Machine Embroidery Threads, Border No.40 and Filling No.60 and measures 3 x 3cm. It is really beautiful and adds an extra dimension to blackwork embroidery.



Happy stitching,

*Liz*

*June 2009*

A celebration!

June marks the first six months of “Blackwork Journey” and it is now time to take stock and plan ahead and develop the site further. I owe a special vote of thanks to all those who have made a very difficult learning process for me, far less painful. My site would not be where it is today without their help.

It really has been an adventure and I have made contact with some wonderful people, so thank you all for your support!

On a serious note - I stitch most of the designs that I create and where possible, I add a name and date to the worked piece. I find it very sad that when someone has gone to great lengths to create a piece of needlework whatever it is, they do not put a name, or date to their creation. Named and dated samplers are very collectable, both here and abroad, whereas unnamed and undated samplers are far less valuable and have less meaning. Years from now, people will look back at the piece of work and say they know who created it and when!

When you work a quilt, or blackwork design or sampler, or embroider a cross stitch, you are undertaking something very personal that makes a statement about you as an individual. To find items of crochet, lace or embroidery unnamed and unloved on junk stalls, or in charity shops is sad. Someone has spent many hours working to create something of beauty and I think it is only right that their effort is recognised.

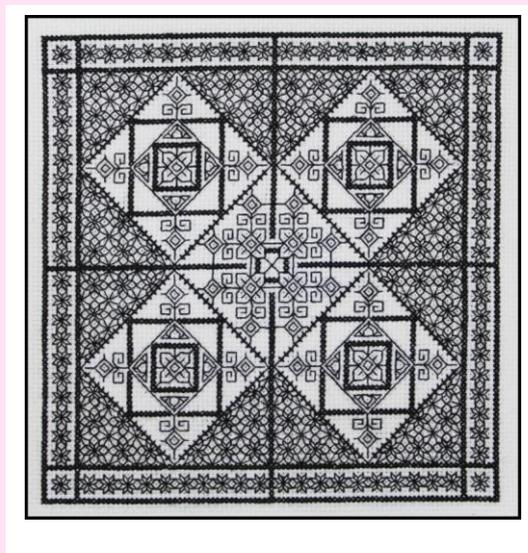
Many years ago, when I was teaching, a lady came in with a present. She handed me a bundle of dirty, very old newspaper. When I unwrapped the parcel a piece of handmade Honiton lace emerged. It was so black, I never thought it would be possible to clean it properly, but after a considerable amount of gentle soaking, rinsing and careful drying, an excellent exhibition piece emerged that had lain in a drawer for years rotting away. I like to think that it has found a new home with someone who will truly value the time and effort it took to make.

So whether you work on one of my freebies, or a masterpiece be proud of what you have created. You are making your own heirloom for future generations to admire and wonder over.

Happy stitching,

*Liz*

*CH0051 Blackwork  
Square Dance*



*May 2009*

### *To bead or not to bead, that is the question?*

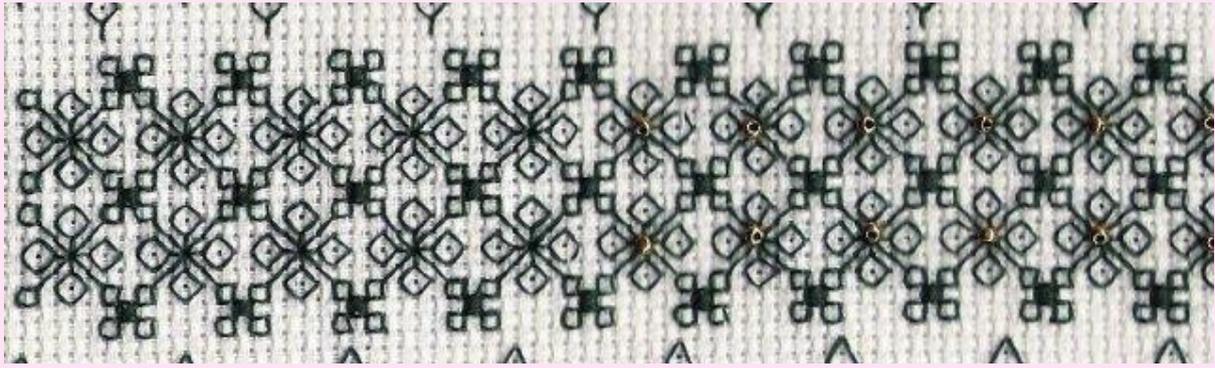
I have been asked why I use beads in a blackwork design. To bead or not to bead is a personal decision. I think adding beads in the right place can add an extra dimension and can really 'lift' and change the final appearance of the embroidery.



*Choose good quality beads that will wash and not 'shed' their coatings!*

Care has to be taken not to overdo the beading and also to choose the right size of beads for the project. I have worked a sample which is half beaded to show the different effects. You must decide what is right for you.

Using beads also adds to the density of the pattern. Use caution about the amount and position of the beads in blackwork embroidery. Too many beads can detract from the pattern. After completing the embroidery place face down on a soft towel and press lightly. Beads will melt under the heat from an iron as I found to my cost.....



*Gold beads make a special impact with their metallic glitter and can really 'lift' a design.*

I always add beads after the embroidery has been finished to avoid wrapping the silk round the beads when I am stitching and whilst I usually use Mill Hill Beads there is a wonderful range of colours and sizes available at the moment. I have a large collection of little tubes full of beautiful beads just waiting for the right design.

It is rather like being a quilter - there is always room for one more piece, or one more skein of silk, or one more packet of beads!

Threading a beading needle can be difficult if your eyesight is not quite what it should be. I often use a big eye quilting needle No.10 or a 'betweens' which come in a variety of sizes as an alternative. My rule is, if you can see to thread the needle and it passes through the bead, use it!

### Embroidery/Crewel



Embroidery needles have a long eye which makes threading the needle so much easier when using multiple strands of thread. The most popular sizes used to embroider are size 7 and 9.

Because of their large eye these needles are suitable for general sewing. They are ideal for people who have difficulty seeing the eye of a needle.

### Chenille



These needles have a large eye and a sharp point and are used in the art of crewel embroidery and ribbon embroidery. Sizes range from 13 to 26; the most popular sizes are 16 to 26. Size 13 and 14 are commonly used for heavy and coarse fabrics.

### Quilting



These needles are very short and fine with a round eye. The shorter length allows the quilter to create quick and even stitching. Sizes range from 5 to 12, we recommend a

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beginner to use a size 7 or a size 8. Big Eye Quilting needles are designed with a big eye for the ease of threading. These needles are available in size 10.

### Beading

Standard Beading needles are very fine and long, with long eyes and are available in sizes 10 to 15. These needles are suitable to use with beads, pearls and sequins and they are particularly useful in the art of threading and stringing pearls. Short Beading needles are ideal when attaching beads to fabric featuring additional embroidery.

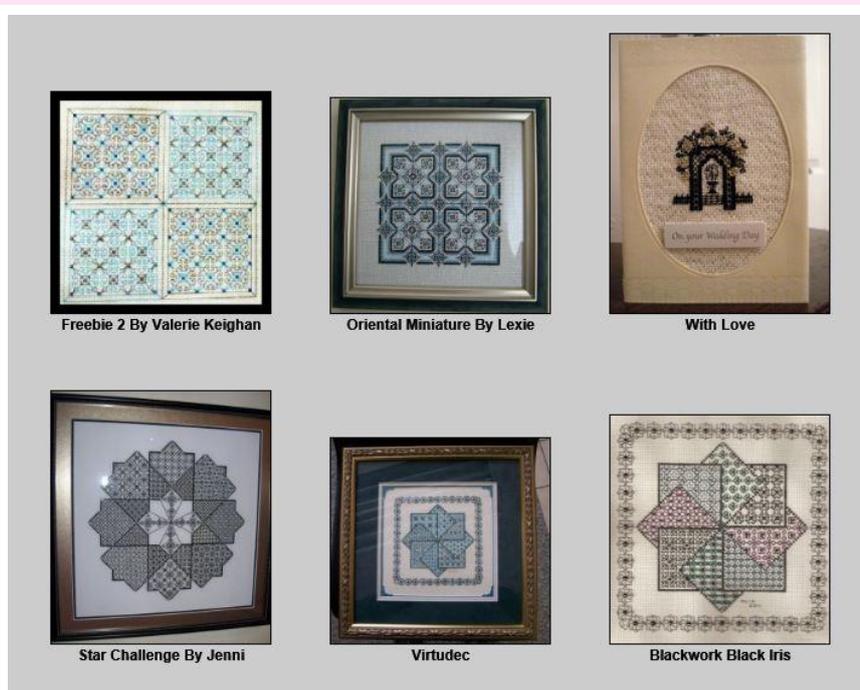
My thanks go to John James Needles for their help over the years. The firm has been established for many years and has an excellent website for further information.

[www.jjneedles.com](http://www.jjneedles.com)

### *April 2009*

Spring has finally arrived. The daffodils are blooming and the trees are coming into bud at last. It has been a cold and miserable winter but there is so much to look forward to.

A number of readers have sent me photographs of their finished work so I have opened a section in Gallery to display their pieces... It is a great thrill for me to receive their photographs and to read their comments. Thank you. Please keep sending them in!

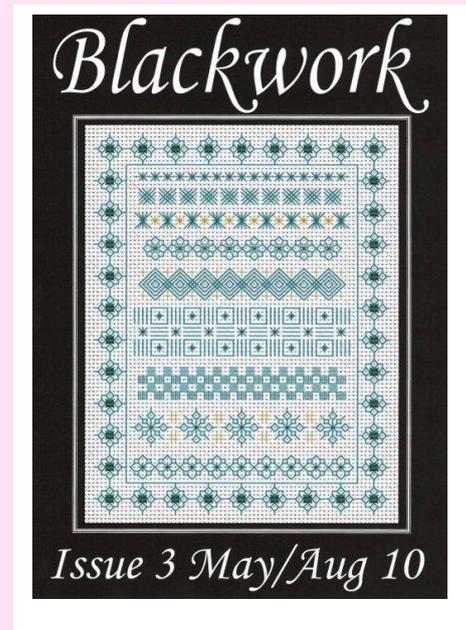
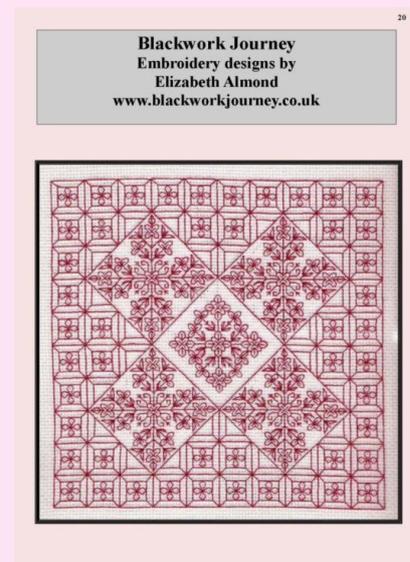
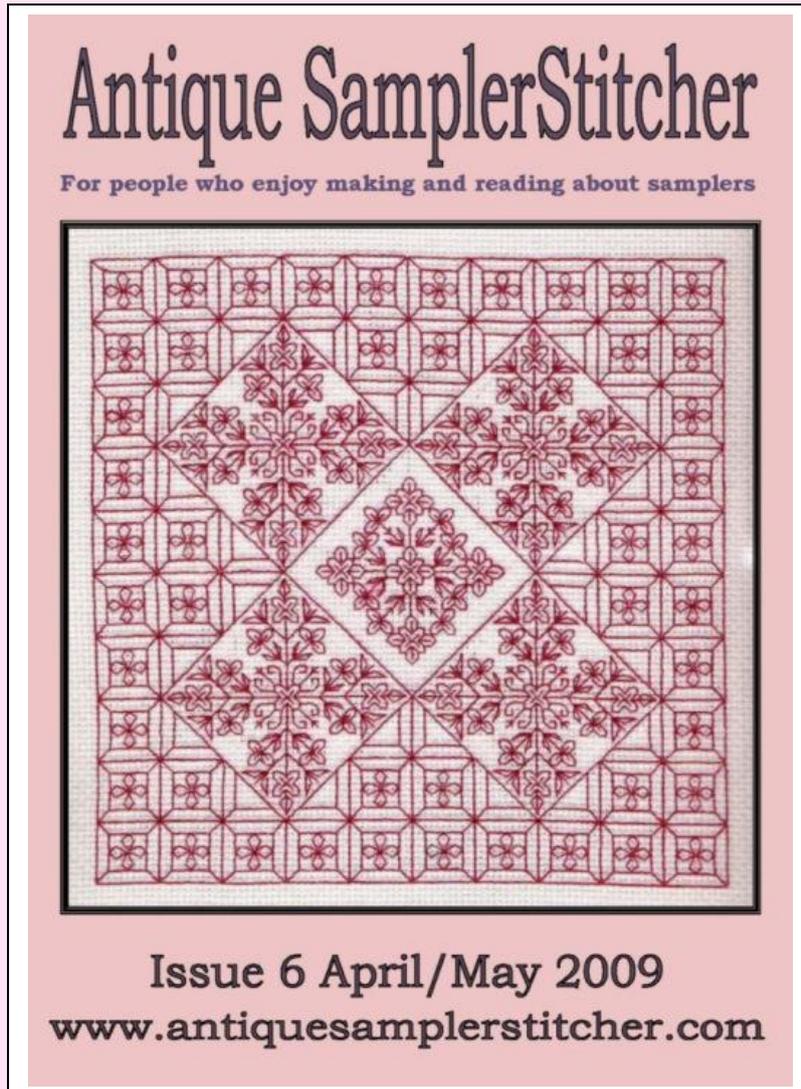


*Extract from Readers Gallery*

## *Blackwork Guild*

Lesley Wilkins from the "Antique Samplers Magazine" is founding a Blackwork Guild to bring together blackwork enthusiasts from around the world. The launch will be on 1st June 2009 and if you want further details either visit her Site or send an email.

Blackwork is a fascinating branch of embroidery which has not received the full recognition it deserves and I look forward to becoming a member and helping to spread the knowledge just a little wider.

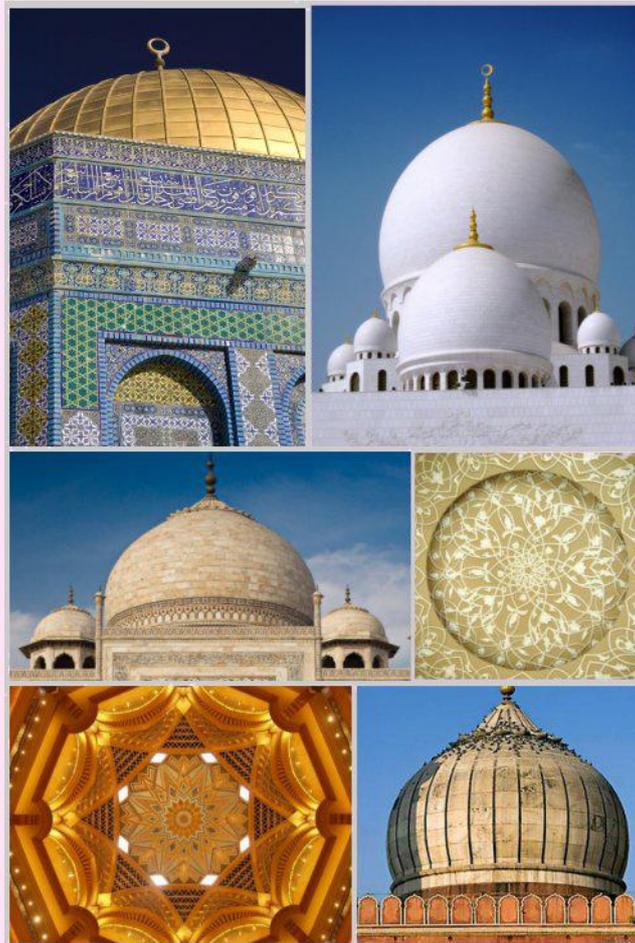


Happy stitching,

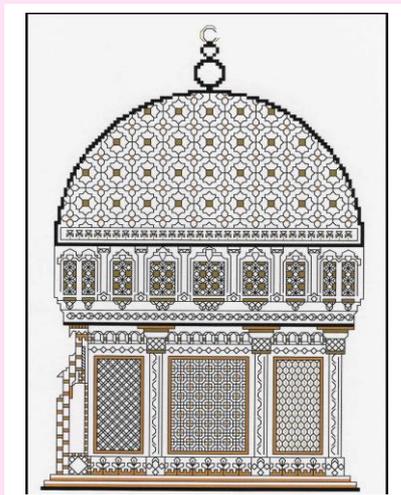
*Liz*

## March 2009

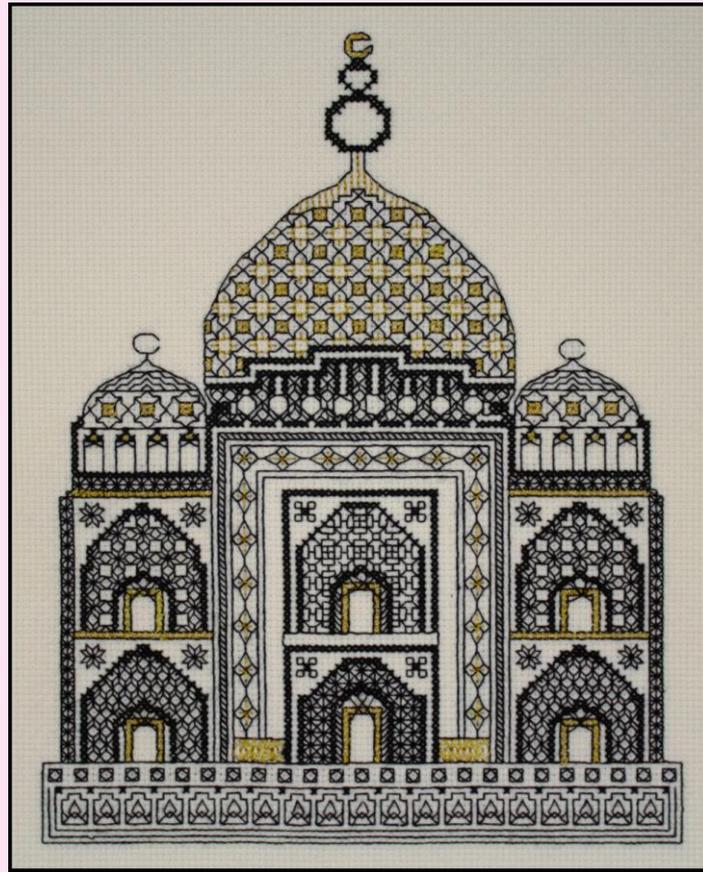
The section "Inspirations" has been added during March and I have had a very good response. Thank you for your comments! It has been great fun to create and I look forward to developing it in the future.



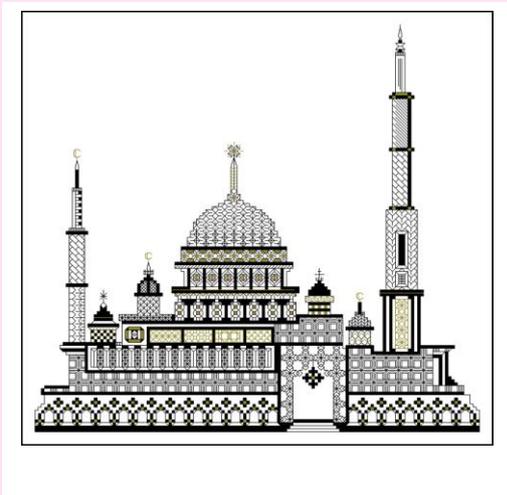
*Domes throughout the world are a special feature of architecture which can be used for inspiration for blackwork designs.*



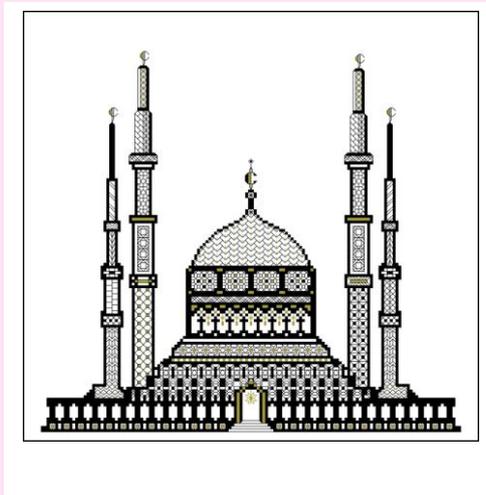
*CH0061 Mughal Mausoleum*



*CH0047 Delhi Mosque*



*CH0162 Friday Mosque*



*CH0165 Blue Mosque*

On a more serious note I have just had the unfortunate experience of having some of my designs pirated by a Chinese company. Infringements are a major problem and are now part and parcel of the designing industry.

It takes considerable time and effort to create designs and to experience such blatant disregard is frustrating and annoying. When you surf the web if you come across instances

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where designs have been copied illegally, please contact the designers involved and help to stamp out copyright theft

Happy stitching,

*Liz*

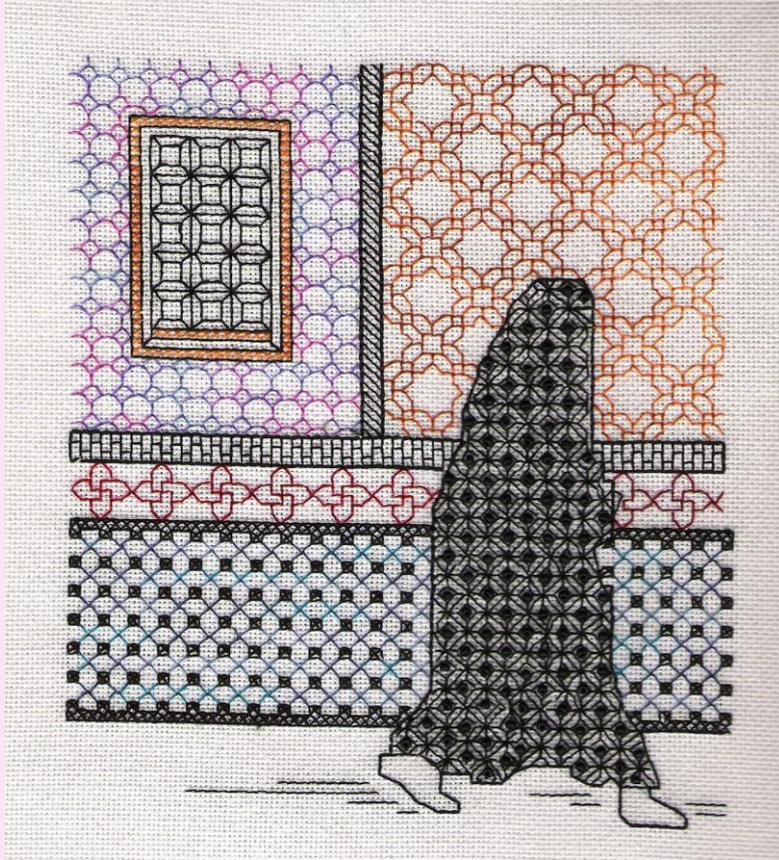


### *February 2009*

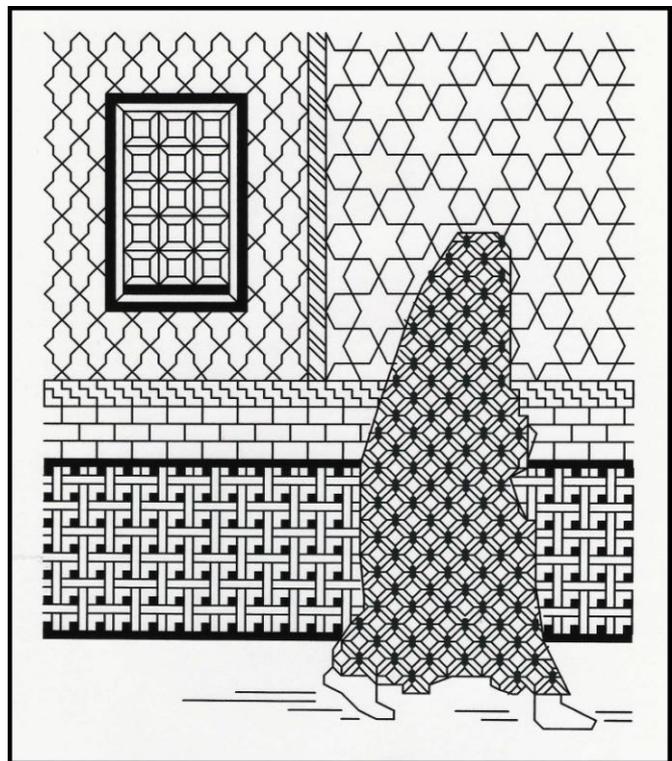
February has brought a new challenge. I have decided to add a mini travel blog outlining where some of the ideas for my designs have come from. Click on "Inspirations" to see some of the amazing people and places who have influenced my ideas.



*People throughout the Middle East and Turkey provided a great source of inspiration!*



*CH0081 Woman in Black Colour*



*CH0060 Woman in Black*

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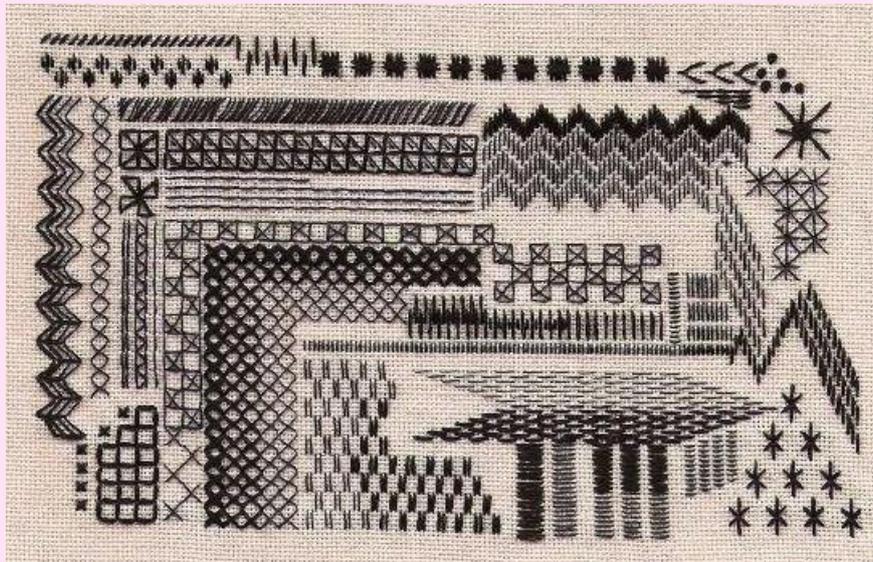
*January 2009*

2009 is here - a new start, a New Year! Time to finish all the old projects and create new ones has been my resolution for the past twenty years and I have yet to achieve it.

I found a quote which rather sums up how I feel about my needlework. It comes from Lady Roxanne's Blackwork Article which I found whilst browsing the Internet...

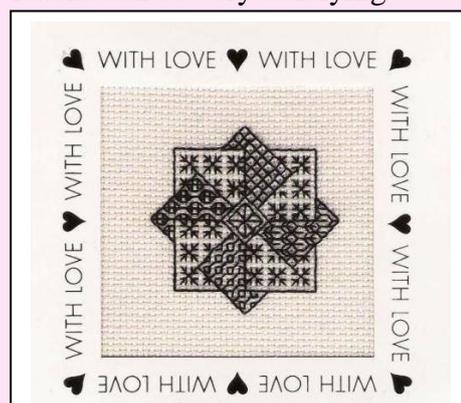
*"Blackwork is black, except when it's not. Blackwork is reversible, except when it's not. Blackwork is a counted thread technique, except when it's not. Blackwork is called blackwork except (you guessed) when it's not."*

If you are new to blackwork or find a thread that you want to try out, it is useful to work a few stitches to see how it looks. It can help you to decide whether two threads are better than one, how close to work them or whether crochet thread, perle, Sulky etc., will create the effect you need.



*Try different thickness of threads to find out how they work and the effects they achieve.*

This sample was worked on 28 count evenweave. I then used the shading effect to create "With love" on 18 count Aida using one strand of DMC 310 Black stranded cotton. Don't be afraid to experiment, the results can be very satisfying!



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Just occasionally a little tool emerges that is worth its weight in gold. Kathleen Dyer has created a Fabric Converter and given me permission to include it for you to use. It makes it very simple to calculate the amount of fabric needed to work your own projects.

The screenshot shows a web page titled "How Much Fabric" Calculators. It features two calculators. The first is the "Aida Calculator" with input fields for design size (60 stitches wide by 70 stitches high), extra fabric (2 inches), and Aida count (14 squares per inch). The result is 9 inches wide by 9 inches high. The second is the "Linen/Evenweave Calculator" with input fields for design size (60 stitches wide by 70 stitches high), extra fabric (2 inches), linen count (28 threads per inch), and X cover (2 threads). The result is also 9 inches wide by 9 inches high. Both calculators have "Calculate Size" and "Clear Form" buttons.

Just click the button in the left pane on the site to bring up an Aida and Linen/Evenweave Calculator in inches and metric.

Happy stitching,

*Liz*

### *December 2008*

Half the fun of starting a new venture is the amount of research and learning that has to be done. I never thought eight months ago that I would be publishing and selling my own patterns or designing a web site. On my journey, I have met some wonderful people who have been very supportive and become my friends.

In particular, I would like to thank Banu of [www.sebadesigns.com](http://www.sebadesigns.com) who has given me the support and confidence to fulfil my ambition.

This page is a little different from the rest of the site. I hope you will find it full of useful tips on threads, techniques and ideas that I have found helpful over the years. I have taught students from sixteen to ninety and there are ways and means to keep stitching whatever the physical problems. You just need to use a bit of imagination and try different threads,

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materials and tools! Rules are made to be broken, or at least bent a little! This is a journey of discovery.

I love the Gutermann Sulky range of threads No.12 which come in a wonderful range of colours, especially the Blendables. They are thicker than the usual threads, but give great effects. I have included the web link so you can see the range of colours, but to show you how they work together, this piece is stitched in two shades, 4030 Vintage rose and 4033 Grape wine. Sulky is 100% cotton, with a matt finish, strong, washable and dry cleanable!



[www.sulky.com](http://www.sulky.com)

Happy stitching,

*Liz*

**Cotton New!**

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*the handiest handwork thread*

**Easier, Faster, and More Fun than Floss!**

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The same great, Sulky Solid Color and Blendables® 12 wt. Cotton Thread you know and love—now on a “petite”, 50 yd. snap-end spool that is ideal for hand work.

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- Heirloom Sewing
- Redwork
- Bobbin Work
- Other Crafts