



# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

July 2020



Japanese Seasons - Spring, Summer and Autumn.



## July and the easing of 'lockdown' in England.

People are gradually resuming 'normal' life as the lockdown is eased and people return to work, but there is a real lack of confidence amongst the older members of the community. To leave home to shop, travel on public transport or meet other people is still a source of anxiety to many of my readers who have obeyed the instructions to 'stay safe'. Hobbies have been a lifeline to many and will continue to give a sense of normality and security, but it concerns me that the hobby itself can sometimes cause undue stress.

### Keep it simple!



There is nothing complicated or difficult in working a piece of blackwork, or even a free style embroidery. It is all about careful planning first.

1. When you have a new design or needlework project study it thoroughly first and actually **read the instructions**.

You would be surprised how many times I am asked what the size a piece is and how much material would they need? Everything is stated in the instructions along with alternative fabric and threads where appropriate.

2. Choose a fabric and colour you can see to work on easily and a needle you can see to thread. Working on dark fabric is not for the faint hearted. If there are new stitches try them out first on a spare piece of fabric.

3. Select the threads and if necessary, test them for colourfastness, especially space dyed thread. No thread is totally colourfast despite manufacturer's assurances!



4. Lay the threads on the fabric and walk away. Come back later and look. Do you still like them? Will they work? If using one strand of floss does it show up on the fabric?

5. If the design has to be traced onto the fabric use a water-soluble pen or an HB pencil and trace lightly. Where possible, start from the centre point and work outwards unless the pattern says otherwise.

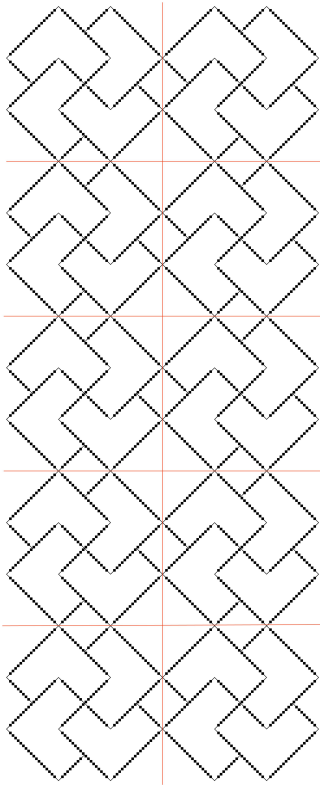


*In the 'Techniques' section of Blackwork Journey there are PDF's on 'Transferring a design, Fabrics and Equipment' and many other aspects which will help.*

*TQ0014 is an Introduction to Blackwork as a guide to readers just starting to work on a new technique.*

These PDF's are there as a guide to help you.

## Blackwork Journey Blog, July 2020



*Framework for EB0008 'New Stitches' was divided into sections. Find the centre point and work from the centre motifs outwards.*

6. If a framework is involved do not stitch the whole frame. There is a good chance you will miscount and have to unpick.
  7. If a filler pattern is proving too difficult, walk away from it and work on another part. When you come back to it you will usually have a clearer idea how it works.
  8. If in doubt, don't struggle and please ask! That is what I am here for and if I can help I will. I stitch all my Blackwork Journey designs, so I know how they work.
- All the charts and projects in Blackwork Journey come with full instructions, stitch details and photographs to make it as easy as possible for you to produce a beautiful embroidery.
9. Don't be afraid to try something new. You will surprise yourself and at what you can do! Confidence grows with experience and most of all, enjoy your work. Time is precious and if you are not enjoying it, work on something that gives you satisfaction.

**Remember that embroidery is for pleasure and should not be stressful!**

Since March 2020 and the outbreak of Covid-19, I have put a number of free projects on the Facebook groups and I am gradually adding them to the website in 'Freebies'. They were designed to encourage people to try something different during this difficult period and I am delighted to say that many people have stitched them!



*Covid-19 Projects*

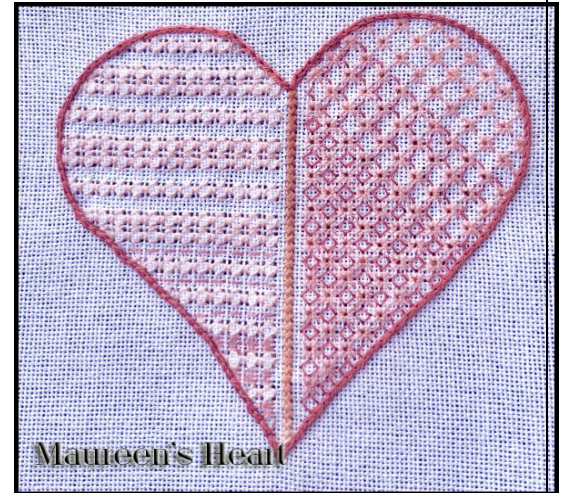




Hearts are always popular and there are three different variations of the heart design to be added to 'Freebies'.

FR0181 'Do what you love. Love what you do!' was the first heart design and this month I am adding a pulled thread work and blackwork heart.

*Maureen in Montreal has taken the design and adapted it in her own style. I especially like the way she has worked the cobber stitch. Leaving spaces between the rows has given it a lighter effect. Maureen has used a much heavier stitch for the outline and altered the direction of the blackwork.*



What is pulled thread work?

Pulled thread or pulled stitch work, also known as drawn fabric is a counted embroidery technique, worked on a loosely woven evenweave fabric. It does not involve cutting the fabric threads.

Stitches are worked around groups of threads in the fabric and pulled, using the tension of the stitches to form gaps, creating lacy, open fillings, bands, border and hems. It is usually worked in white thread on white fabric, but can be worked with coloured threads.

Drawn thread also work where fabric threads are cut and the threads withdrawn leaving a hole.

If you have never worked this technique it is an opportunity to try it out on a small project. The final stitched piece can be made into a picture, card or a small bag.

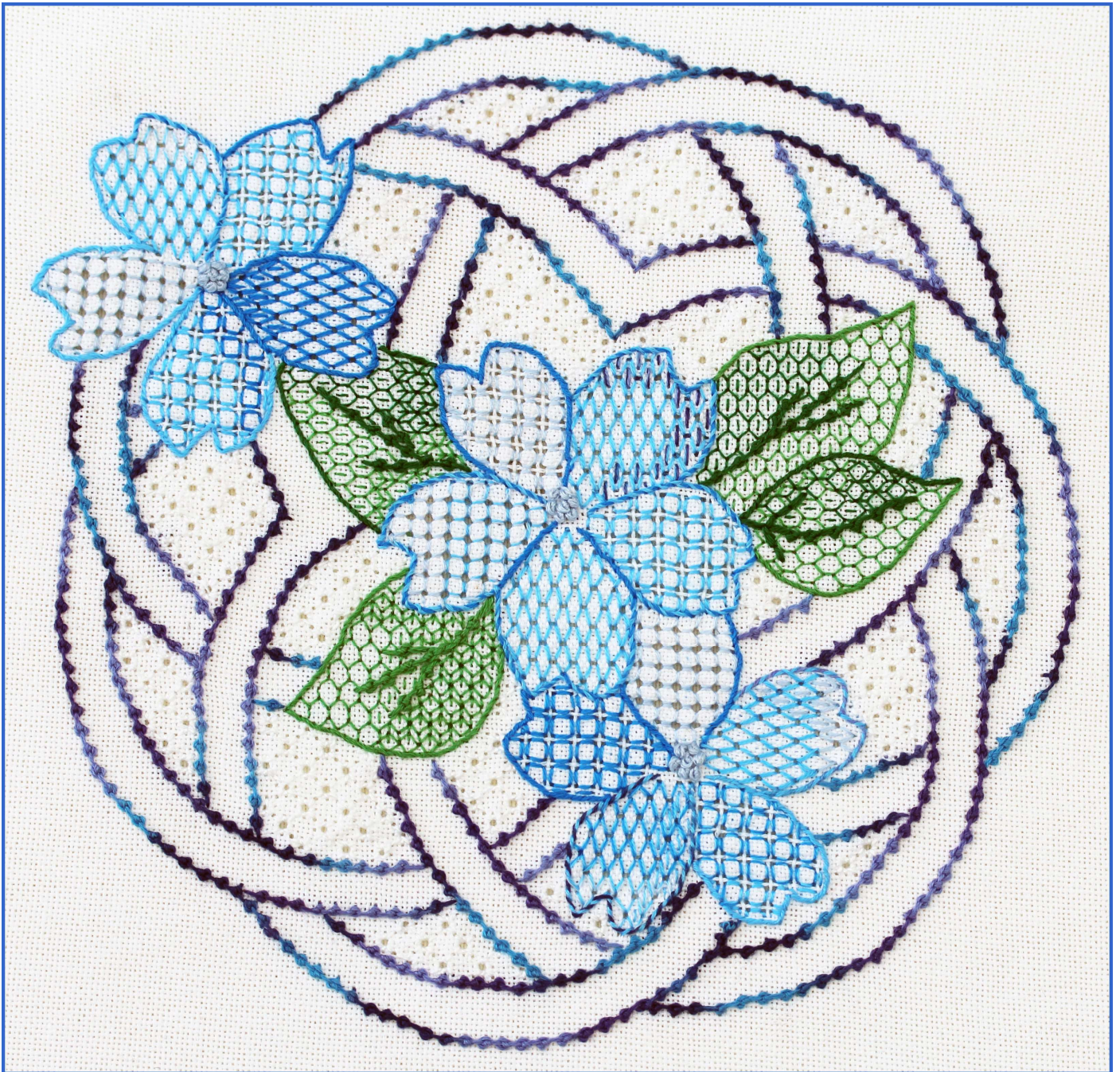
Note: Many techniques and stitches are referred to by more than one name.

*New design FR0182 Pulled Thread Work Heart*



## New designs for July

The final chart in the 'Japanese Seasons' series has been added this month. It is a combination of blackwork, embroidery stitches and pulled thread work.



*PR0052 Japanese Winter*

This design and the rest of the series can be found in 'Projects' on the Blackwork Journey website.



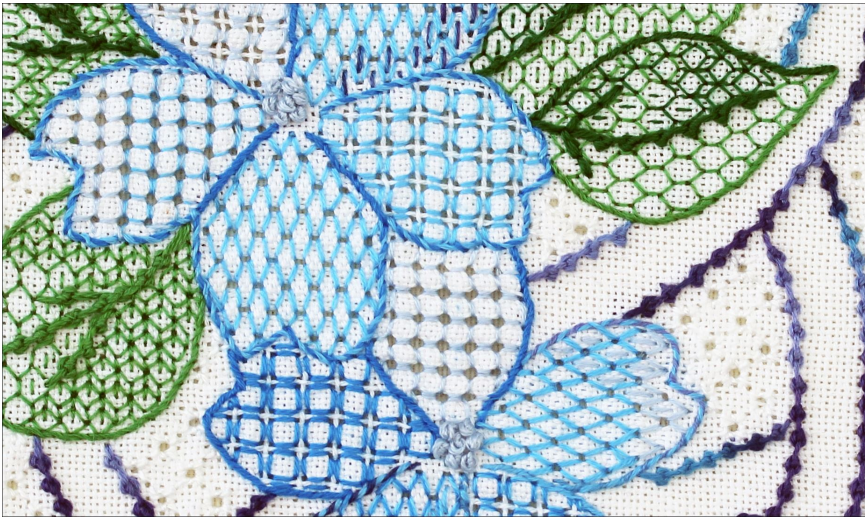
### Where do I start?

Laurel asked a question on Facebook which I think is very relevant!

*Hi Liz - hopefully not a silly question! When you are doing a pulled thread pattern, say mosaic stitch (as in Flight) within a curved area, where do you start the pattern? In the centre and work outwards towards the outline or at one side and work across, fudging what is left over? Some patterns like squares are easier to place, but others like coil or wave don't seem to matter so much. I'd like to learn the correct way from the beginning rather than alter my skill later!*

It is not a silly question, but a very important one and not always an easy one to answer. With blackwork fillers, start in the middle and work outwards adding the part stitches round the edge. With pulled stitches, if possible, start at the bottom of a shape and move across from side to side rather than starting in the middle and moving outwards.

This is because the tension needs to be even across the whole width of the pattern and this is much harder to do when you start in the middle and come back.



The flowers in this extract are all pulled. I started near the centre where the colonial knots are and worked across and up. Large areas are much easier than small areas, but if you think it through before you start it will work.

This is my method of working, other people may do it in a different way, but with practice you will find what works for you.



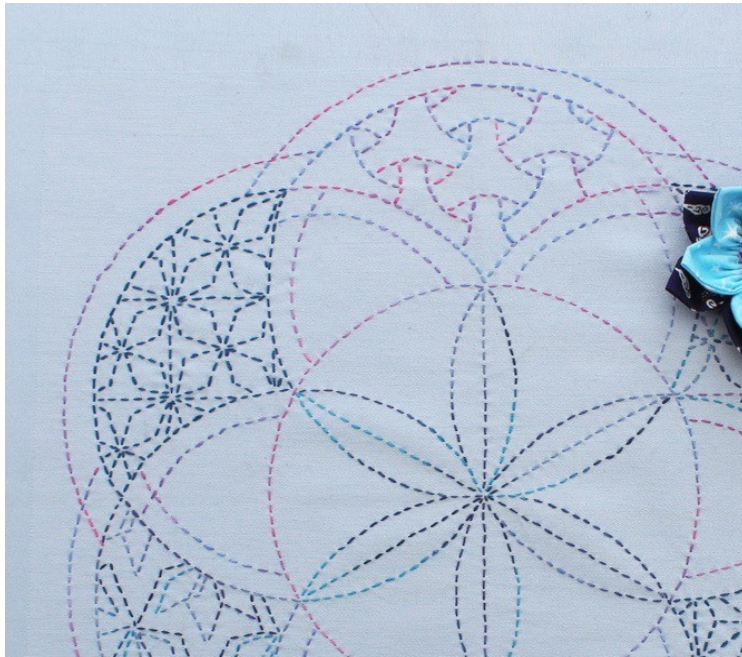
### A wonderful gift!

Towards the end of June I received a large box from my friend Val who was one of the first people I taught over 50 years ago when I was a very young geography teacher at a secondary school. Val subsequently went on to teach geography and whilst we lost touch over the years, I was delighted when we got in contact once again through my Facebook group.

Val quilts and also makes these beautiful Japanese fabric flowers. I asked her if she could kindly make me two to go on a calico bag and this is what I received!

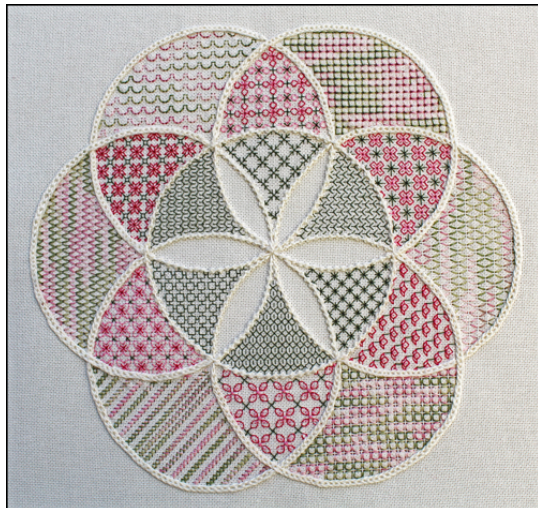
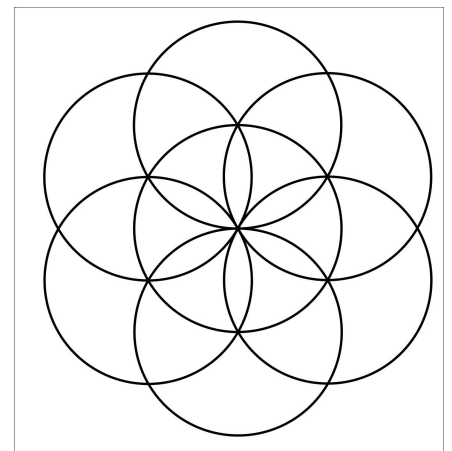
Thank you so much Val for your kindness and your friendship!





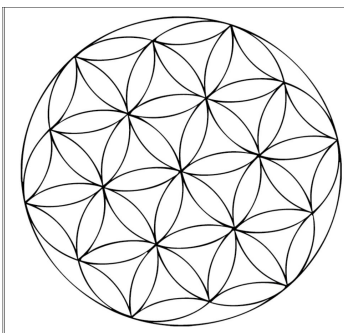
I have been looking at using circles in embroidery and this small sashiko style tablecloth consists of seven interlocking circles.

Patterns of seven overlapping circles appear in historical artefacts from the 7th century BC onwards and became a frequent ornament during the Roman Empire period, surviving into medieval artistic traditions both in Islamic (girih decorations) and Gothic art. "Flower of Life" is the name given to this design.



Circular designs are easy to draw in any size and fascinating to stitch.

This new pulled stitch and blackwork design I have been working on is part of a new series called 'Sacred Geometry' which will be added in August. It is a textured piece of embroidery and involves some new stitches for the outlines.



This design is sometimes used in jewellery. I bought this silver pendant in Turkey.

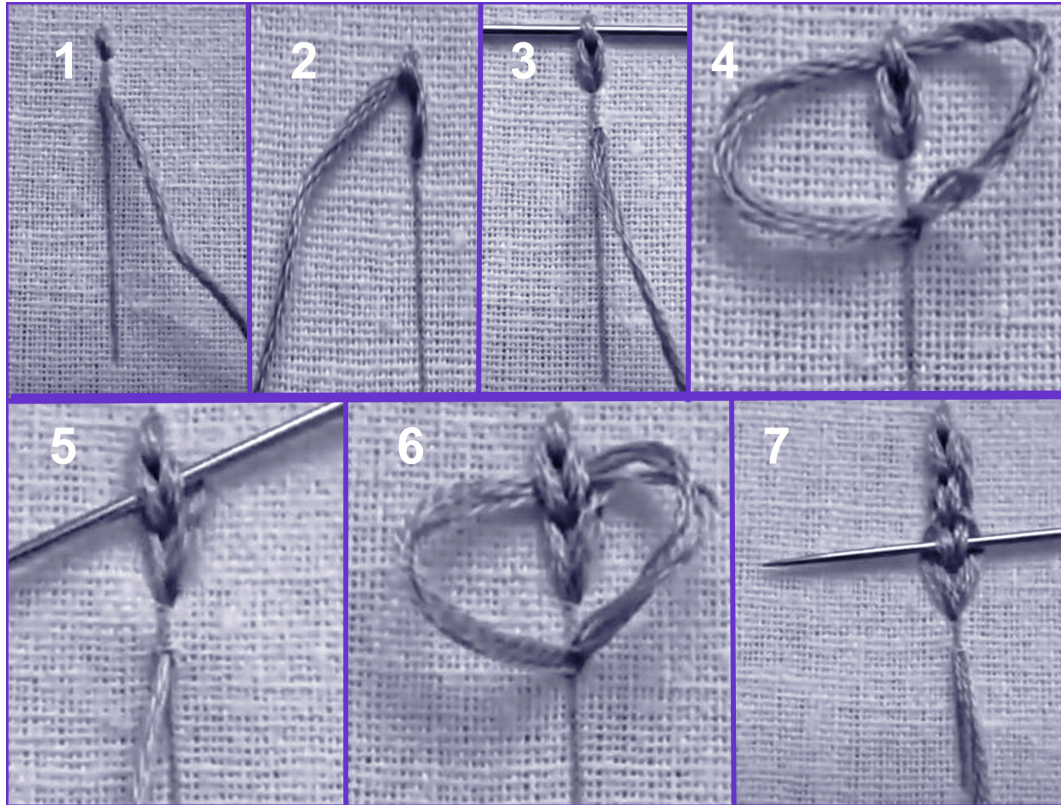
The sashiko style calico bag pattern is also based on interlocking circles and is found in many variations in Japanese designs where the patterns go back a thousand years. The traditional sashiko design used is a variation of Shippo tsunagi, also known as linked Seven Treasures.





### Learn a new outline stitch – Hungarian Braided Chain Stitch

Working circle designs gave me the opportunity to look at different embroidery stitches that could be used for outlines. I needed a wide flat stitch, rather than a raised textured stitch and Hungarian Braided Chain Stitch was ideal. It takes practice but once the stitch has been mastered it gives a neat wide edging.



#### Instructions:

Use either 4-6 strands of floss, cotton Perlé No 8, or crochet cotton. Experiment to find the weight of stitch needed and the thread that you are most comfortable with.

1. Make a small horizontal stitch working down the line towards you.
2. Working from right to left, slide under this stitch without entering the fabric. Complete the chain stitch
3. Come up on the line and slide under the small top stitch.
4. Open the threads out in a 'butterfly and pick up the two threads from the previous chain.
5. Pull the thread and close the loops over the needle.
6. Take the needle down through the fabric and come up again on the line.
7. Continue down the line repeating each step.

There are several video clips on YouTube for this stitch. I have added a link for one:

[https://youtu.be/0EyM\\_0feVNo](https://youtu.be/0EyM_0feVNo)

*Hungarian braided chain stitch and Festoon stitch*





**SIR HUGH STARKEY, GENTLEMAN USHER TO HENRY**

**V111**

**MY FIRST PIECE OF BLACKWORK CREATED IN 1986**

I was recently asked what was the first piece of blackwork I ever did?

It was in 1986 and I was doing a City and Guilds embroidery course at college as a mature student. I knew very little about blackwork embroidery so I bought a book, a large piece of blue linen and started learning as I stitched.

My subject was Sir Hugh Starkey and the design was taken from a church brass that my husband and I rubbed. It was a large brass and perhaps not the ideal starting point for a new technique.

I have attached the pdf about Sir Hugh and the project to this Blog. I hope you enjoy his story.



Happy stitching and stay safe!

Liz

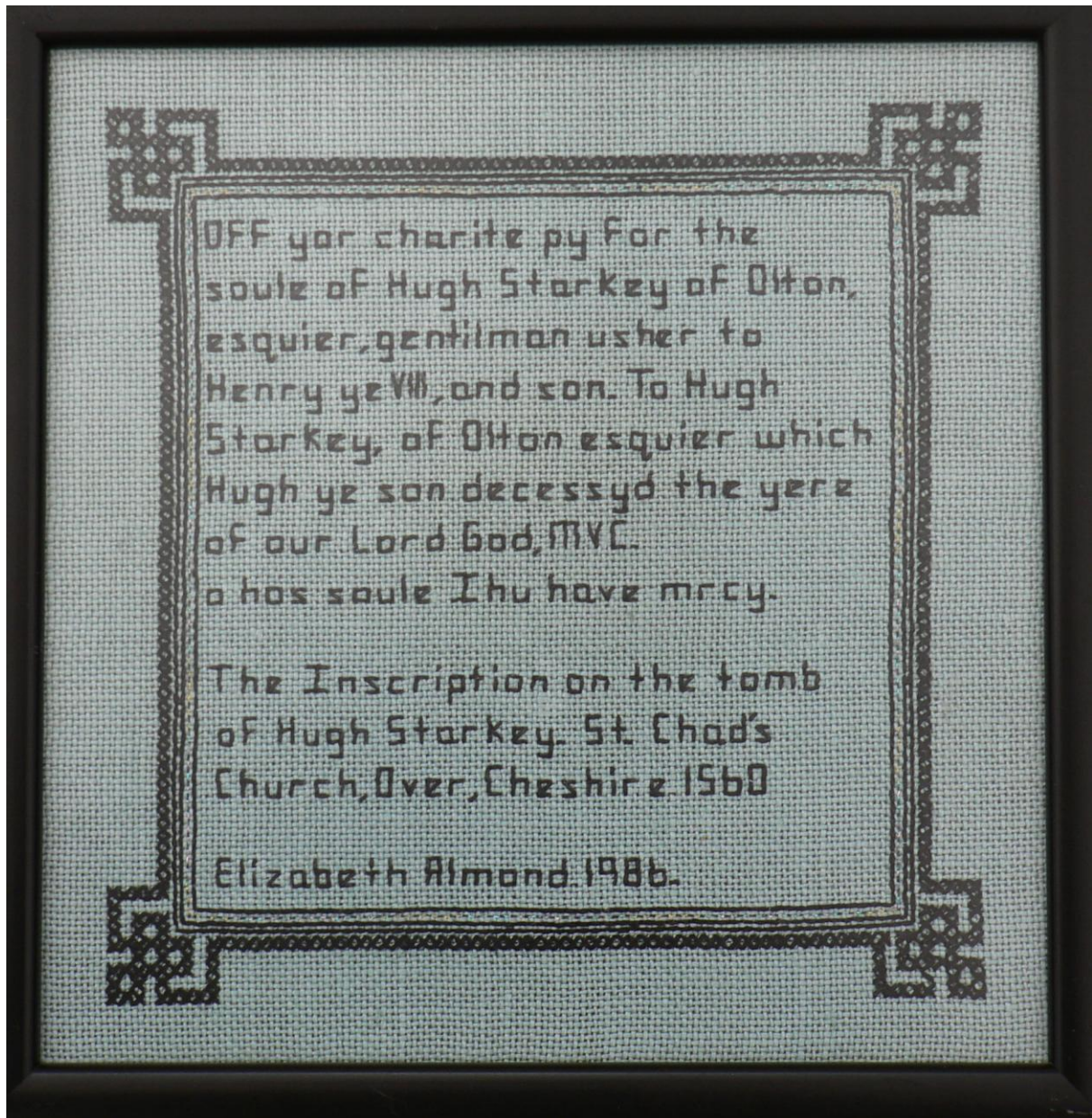


SIR HUGH STARKEY, GENTLEMAN USHER TO HENRY  
V111

MY FIRST PIECE OF BLACKWORK CREATED IN 1986







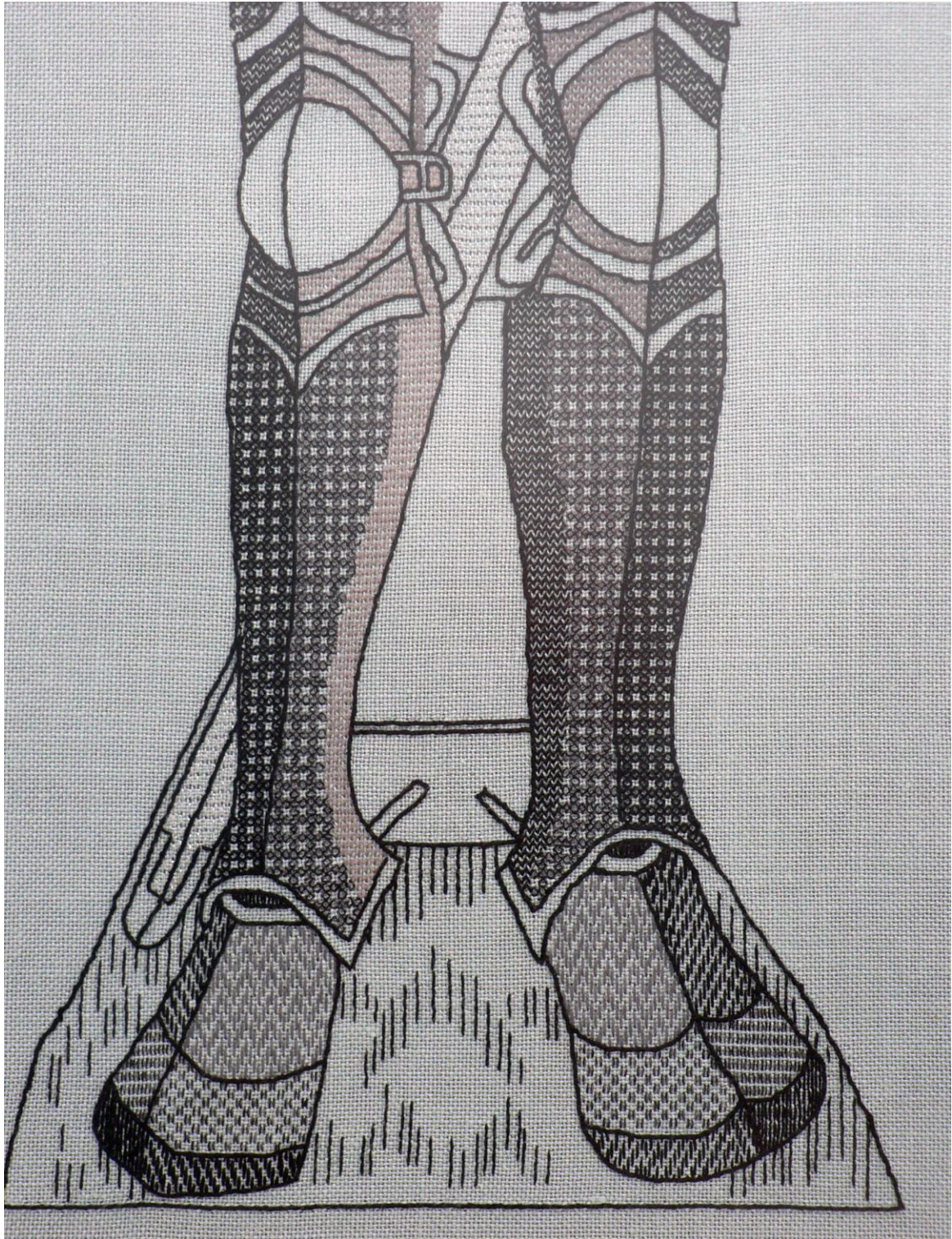
## INSCRIPTION ON HUGH STARKEY'S TOMB





DETAIL OF ARMOUR





WORKED IN STRANDED COTTON ON LINEN



Sir Hugh Starkey was my first attempt at blackwork. His brass image was in St Chad's, Over in Cheshire which is in England. I knew very little about the technique of blackwork! I did a rubbing of the original brass, bought some pale blue linen, embroidery cotton and a book on blackwork stitches and taught myself by trial and error!

The design was traced onto the linen using an HB pencil. I started with the face, thinking that if the face looked correct the body would be simple. The shading was created by imagining where the light would fall and working in one or more strands of thread to create the depth. The closer the stitches the denser the pattern would be. The outline was back stitched and whipped to create a cord effect.

Having completed Sir Hugh it was 2008 before I returned to blackwork and Blackwork Journey was born. The rest is history.....

*Liz Almond*

[www.blackworkjourney.co.uk](http://www.blackworkjourney.co.uk)

## ST CHAD'S CHURCH, OVER, CHESHIRE







Sir Hugh Starkey's Tomb

There is a monument to Hugh Starkey in the chancel with a brass effigy. The letters HS can be seen above the arch above the recess. The inscription reads as follows but the date of death was not completed. He died in 1555.

"Off yor charite pray for the soule of Hugh Starky of Olton, Esquier, gentleman usher of King Henry ye VIII and son of Hugh Starky of Olton, Esquier, which ye son deceessyd the yere of our lord God MV.....  
On his soule Jhu have mercy"

St. Chad's is the parish church for the town of Winsford although the hamlet of Over is outside the town. Churches dedicated to St. Chad are usually associated with a water feature such as a well or spring and St. Chad's at Over has two wells. There is a well-dressing ceremony in June.

The church was owned by the Cistercian Abbey of Vale Royal from the time of the abbey's foundation by Edward I until the Dissolution of the Monasteries. There is a small amount of masonry dating from the 14th century in the west end of the south aisle and the south doorway. However, the main structure has been much altered over the centuries. The 74 feet high tower, dating from the early 1500s is one of about 50 of this type in the county. The



church was restored by Hugh Starkey in 1543 and he added the south aisle and the two storey porch. Access to the upper room of the porch is by a spiral wooden staircase in the nave. The embattled parapets date from this period.



The Nave and the Lady Chapel

In 1870 the church was restored by Ewan Christian and W Milford Teulon. The north aisle was widened in 1904 by John Douglas. The south aisle and nave were lengthened in 1926 but the 14th-century east window was retained.

### **Exterior**

The church is built of red sandstone with a lead roof. Its plan consists of a tower at the west end, a nave with aisles, a chancel, a vestry to the northeast, and a southeast porch. At the east end of each aisle is a chapel. The porch has two storeys, the upper projecting over the lower one. Most of the church is in Perpendicular style although the east window is decorated.

### **Interior**

A lavishly decorated stoup is in the porch and Hugh Starkey's tomb lies in the sanctuary. The octagonal font is dated 1641. In the chancel is a decorated Saxon stone. This consists of a sarcophagus in a recess with a brass effigy.

There are fragments of medieval and 19th-century glass in one of the north windows.<sup>[5]</sup> Three of the stained glass windows in the north aisle are by Kempe. The two-manual organ was built by Jardine and Company in 1916, and rebuilt in 1987 by Sixsmith. The parish registers begin in 1558 and the churchwardens' accounts in 1733.

### **Bells**

The church originally had four bells, dated 1513, but these were recast into five bells by Rudhall of Gloucester in 1733. It currently has a ring of eight bells, cast by John Taylor and Company in 1915, which were re-hung in 1938.



## External features



### Cross base in churchyard

In the churchyard is a cross base dating from around 1543. It consists of a stepped octagonal base supporting the lower section of a cross shaft. It is listed Grade II. The red sandstone churchyard walls and gate piers are also listed Grade II