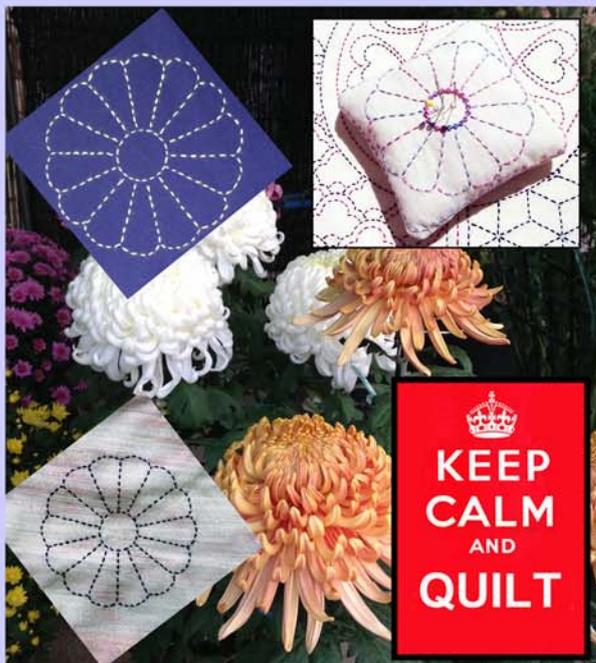




# *Blackwork Journey Blog*

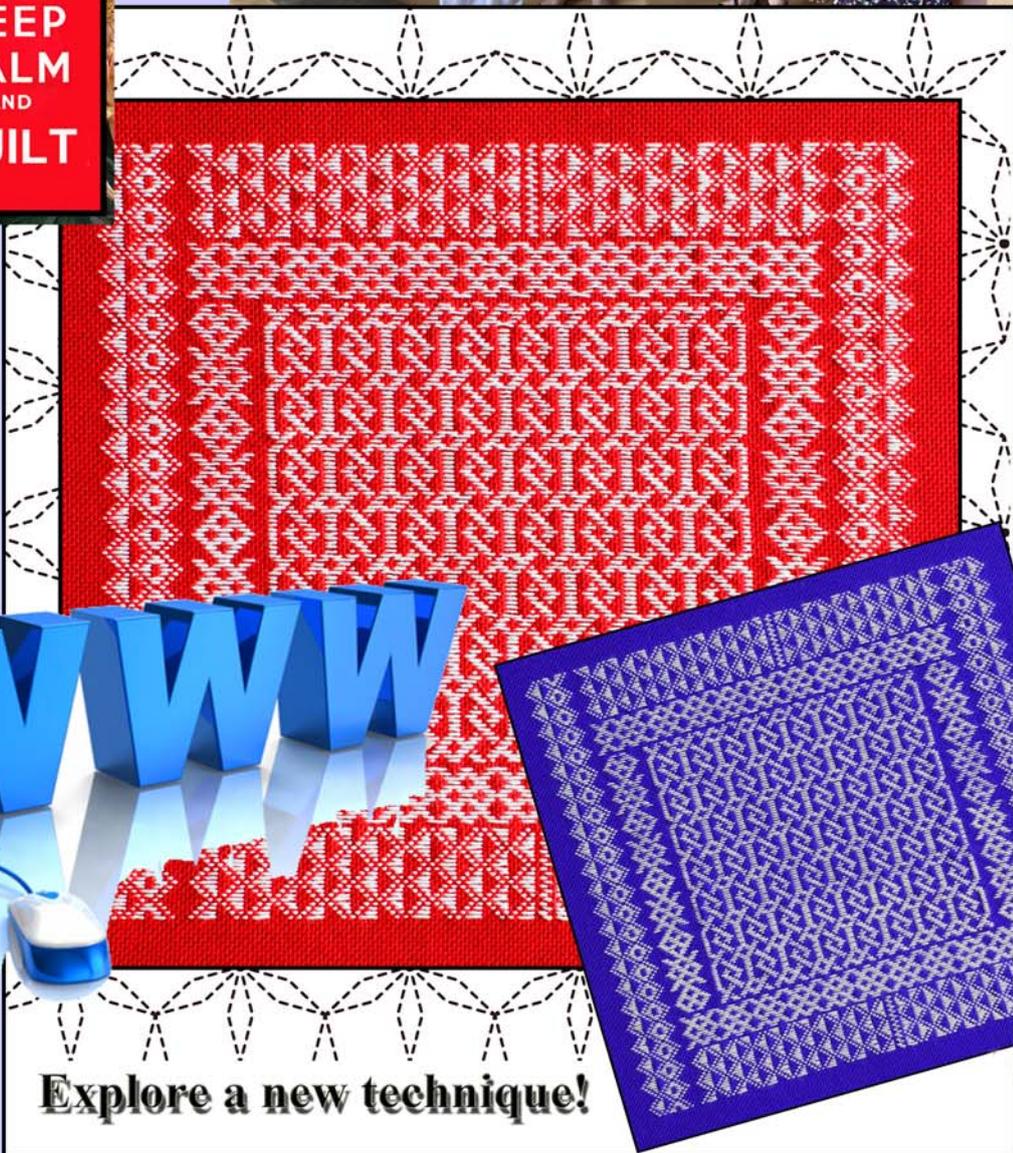
October 2020



  
**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
QUILT**



**The value of the  
Internet!  
UK to Sri Lanka**



**Explore a new technique!**

### October – time to reflect!

*I step outside and the chilly air tightens the skin on my bare arms. Summer has ended all too quickly, and some of the leaves on the trees have already started to burn with the colors of fall. Fall colors.... so bright and intense and beautiful. It's like nature is trying to fill you up with color, to saturate you so you can stockpile it before winter turns everything muted and dreary.*

*Siobhan Vivian, 'Same Difference'*

This has been such a strange year when all our emotions and lives have been turned upside down and there seems no end in sight to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is no such thing as a 'normal' routine, but throughout it all, the seasons have moved on and the Autumn colours here in the UK appeared on our trees early in September. I look for the changes in colour as eagerly as I look for the first shoots in Spring. The subtle change in colours before the full blown Autumn hues and the first falling leaves mark the end of the Summer for me. I remember seeing the 'Fall' in the States and watching the progress marked daily in the newspaper as it progressed across the country. It is not as dramatic in England, but it is still very beautiful. The Autumn colours work well in embroidery and leaves make a suitable subject to explore colour.

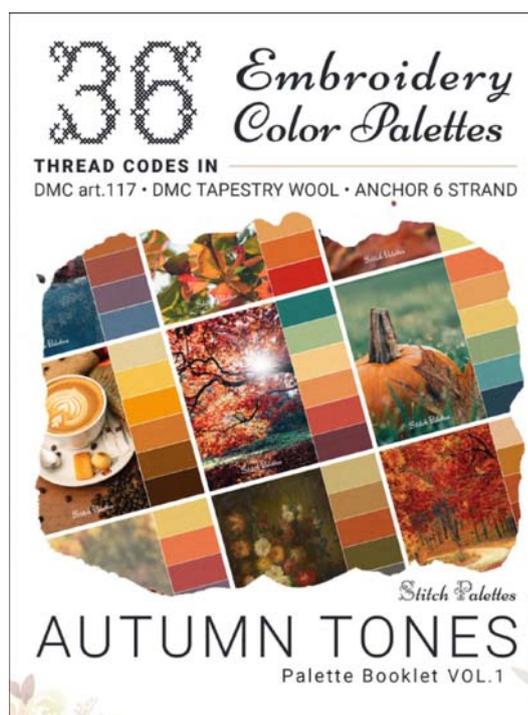
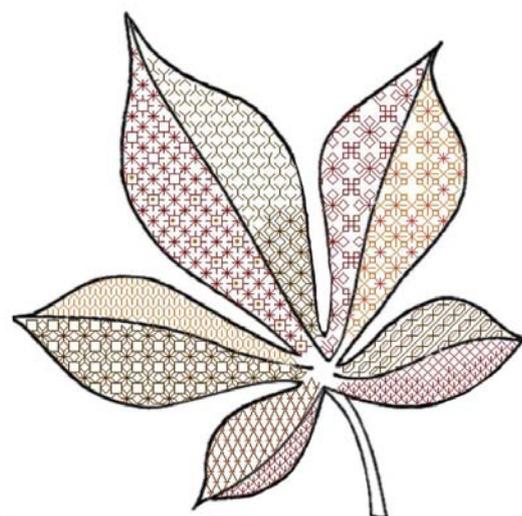
### Work in progress – Horse chestnut leaf.

One of the trees that I love in Autumn when the leaves change colour is the horse chestnut tree. The shape of the leaves encouraged me to design a pattern for a class I was teaching and I am thinking about adding it to the site in the near future. The potential for different blackwork patterns worked in different colours to represent the Seasons needs to be explored further.

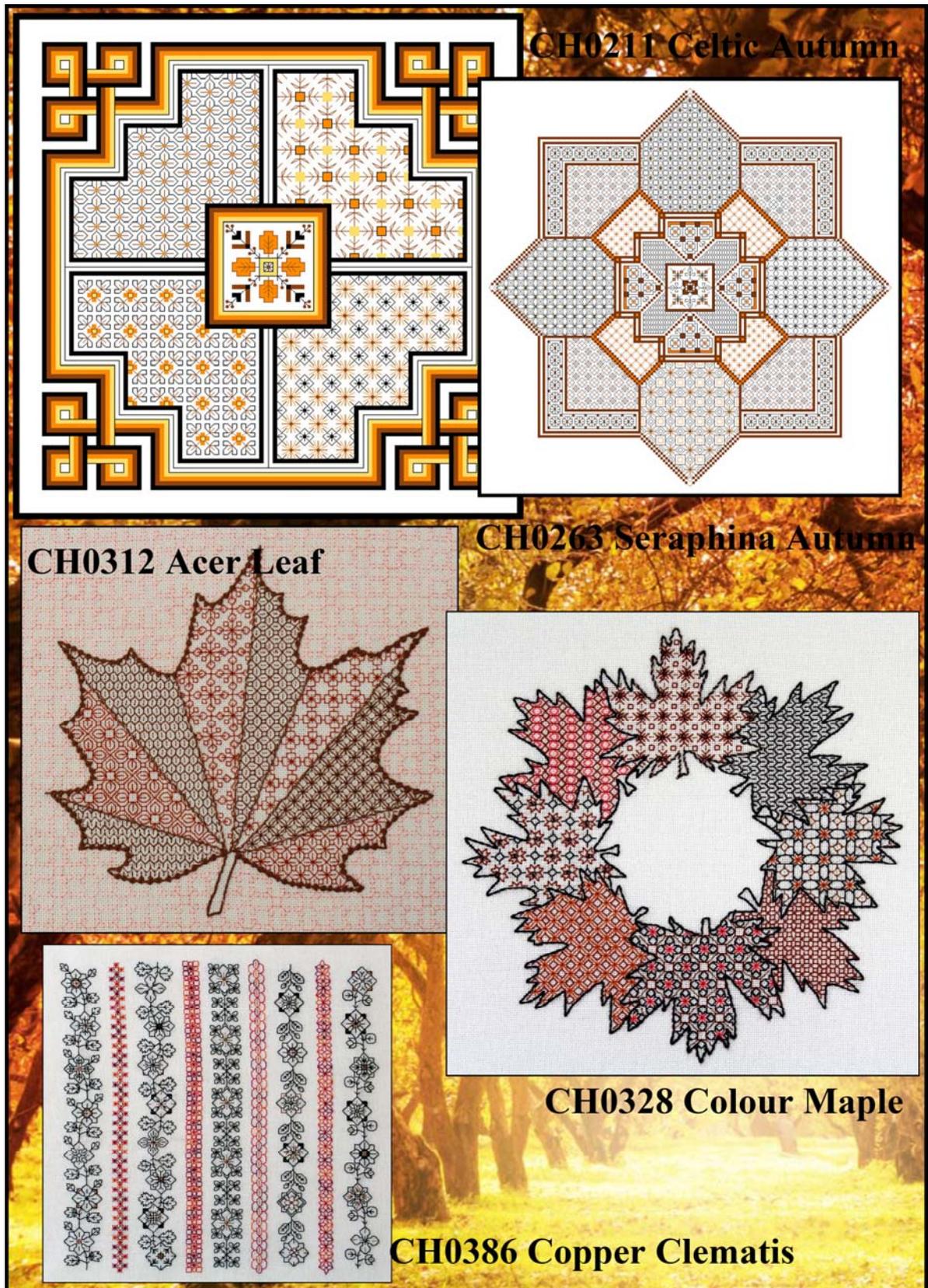


*Horse chestnut leaf*

Last month in the Blog I explored the work of Krisztina and her website 'Stitch Palettes'. She has since produced an excellent booklet 'Autumn Tones' which you may find helpful when choosing colours.



There are a number of different Autumn designs currently on the Blackwork Journey website.



“Autumn... the year’s last, loveliest smile.” – William Cullen Bryant

## Materials for embroidery - My personal opinion

A number of people are talking about working large designs such as EB0002 'Save the Stitches' on 36 count linen. Unless you are a real fan of linen, I would tend to steer clear and go for a smooth evenweave such as Zweigart 28 count evenweave, or a Zweigart 25 count Lugana which is a wonderful fabric for people who want to transfer from Aida to evenweave for the first time. In my opinion, the fabric needs to be free from lumps and bumps, not too transparent and easy to handle. Fabrics which crease all the time can be annoying.

## Thread count

Cloth for counted thread embroidery is made up of an even number of threads in both directions (the warp and weft). The size of the weave is measured by the number of threads per inch. For example, it can be written as 18 count which means 18 threads to the inch, or 32 count which is 32 threads to the inch. Evenweave embroidery is worked over 2 x 2 threads. Aida is worked over blocks so a 14 count Aida would be 14 blocks to the inch. The most common counts in Aida Cloth are 11, 14, 18 and 28. The higher the number, the smaller the stitches will be, because there are more stitches in each inch.

If the count is too high i.e. 36 count, the finer details on a large blackwork design may be too small to make the impact that I would want to see. Yes, it is fine for pulled/drawn thread work, but I would still go for a 28 count evenweave for comfort or 32 count at a pinch.

## Fabric colour



Pale pastels will work for most designs along with white, antique white, cream or ecru. If you have an eyesight problem there is less glare working on antique white or cream. Navy, red and black are beautiful, but can be difficult to work. A number of readers have worked the large projects on dark colours but you need to have very good eyesight to do this and/or a good magnifying light/lens.

The fabric colour should complement your embroidery, not dominate it. Space dyed fabrics can detract from the embroidery whereas space dyed threads can be really special. (Remember - Check they are colour fast!!)

The internet is a great source of fabric and threads, but buyer beware! Only choose good quality fabric, threads and beads from reputable makers. Cheap is fine for small projects that are less important than the very large designs where you spend hours of your time and need the best materials.

*This design is worked on 25 count Lugana.  
TQ0011 Fabrics for Embroidery found in 'Techniques' on the Blackwork Journey website will give you an overview*

## Overview:

The fabrics I generally use are as follows:

## Blackwork, cross stitch, pulled/drawn thread:

Zweigart 25ct Lugana\*

Zweigart 28ct Lugana

Zweigart 27ct Linda

Zweigart 28ct Brittany

\*Transition from Aida to evenweave Lugana 25 count is an excellent fabric to choose

## Kogin:

18 count 100% cotton kogin fabric

Zweigart 18ct Davosa

Zweigart 20ct Bellana

## Hardanger:

Zweigart 22ct Hardanger

## Aida:

Zweigart 14 ct

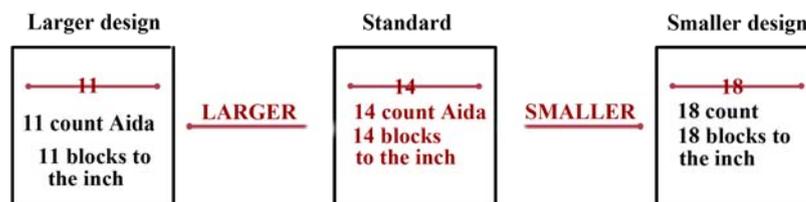
Zweigart 16 ct or DMC 14 and 16ct

## Linen:

Zweigart Cashel 28 and 32 ct



*The design is stitched on 28ct Brittany*



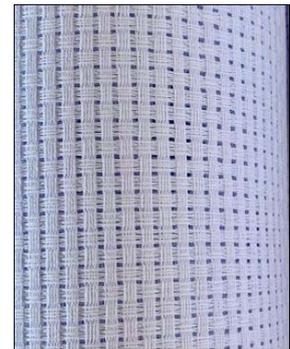
**The higher the number, the smaller the stitches will be, because there are more stitches in each inch.**

 <p>Aida Fabric</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3.5ct Turkestan</li> <li>- 6ct Binca</li> <li>- 8ct Aida</li> <li>- 11ct Aida</li> <li>- 14ct Aida</li> <li>- 14ct Vintage Aida</li> <li>- 16ct Aida</li> <li>- 18ct Aida</li> <li>- 18ct Vintage Aida</li> <li>- 20ct Aida</li> <li>- 20ct Vintage Aida</li> </ul>	 <p>14ct Aida 16 Count Aida Iridescent Aida Marble Aida Magic Guide Aida &amp; Evenweave</p>	 <p>14ct Aida 18ct Aida 28ct Evenweave 14 count Charles Craft Spring Colours Offer</p> <p>14ct Aida 16ct Aida 18ct Aida 28ct Evenweave</p>
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You will find your own favourites with experience and the ones that do not live up to expectations. Please let me know through the Facebook group what works for you. It will also help our other readers with their choices.



*Irene's embroidery*



*11 count Aida blockweave*

*Irene from, Sri Lanka is a member of the International Expatriate Association of Colombo. She has worked a section of 'EB0002 Save the Stitches' on 11 count Aida.*

*I love your work Irene!*

I have used 11 count Aida fabric with people who have serious eyesight problems. The embroidery will come out much larger than if it was worked on a 14 count. The thread needed will be much thicker to cover the blocks. Cotton Perlé No 5, tapestry wool, cotton a broder, soft knitting cotton are all possible threads as well as the usual floss.

Note: Coton A Broder is a 100% matt cotton non-divisible thread, durable and colour-fast especially suitable for delicate, intricate embroidery.



### News from Sri Lanka

I have been working with an amazing lady called Vicky and her ladies in Sri Lanka. I first met Vicky on a teaching visit to Nairobi, Kenya two years ago. She has since moved to Sri Lanka with her husband and has continued the work that she started in Kenya and earlier this week I had a “Facetime” meeting with her enthusiastic group to meet them and see their progress.

This is what Vicky subsequently wrote about her group:

*The craft group of the International Expatriate Association of Colombo was thrilled to be joined by Liz on FaceTime last week.*

*We were stitching a piece combining blackwork and pulled work on evenweave - a new technique for most of the ladies. Everyone enjoyed the class, even those who found it a little challenging and plans are being made for a follow up meeting! It made a pleasant change from our normal sessions where we make lots and lots of Christmas cards, decorations and homeware items for sale to raise money for good causes here in Sri Lanka.*

*Our lovely host country was just getting back on its feet after the bombings of Easter 2019 and is now hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, charitable giving is generally much reduced, so the need is greater than ever. Last year our proceeds went to a crèche to help destitute families, the purchase of computer tablets for the Cerebral Palsy Foundation, support for women and girls who have been victims of abuse, children’s centres for disabled children and a donation to victims of the bomb blasts last year.*

*We hope to incorporate some of the new techniques we have learned into future Christmas items, and can’t wait to learn more from dear Liz, who is always so generous with her time, designs and advice.*

Thank you Vicky and ladies for allowing me to be part of your group.

To work with any group through the internet is always an exciting experience and modern technology such as, Zoom, Teams and Facebook make it much easier to keep groups together and in contact with their members in these challenging times.

When the groups are also able to raise money for their charities and good causes through their needlework it becomes more than just a social gathering and many groups that I have contact with are working hard to help others. If I can help any of you in the same way, please contact me through Blackwork Journey.

Lori, who is an administrator for my Facebook group also runs a group raising money for charity. She enlists the help of a number of designers who supply her with charts for her different projects. Keep up the good work Lori!



*Members of the craft group of the International Expatriate Association of Colombo, Sri Lanka*



**Clare, Marian, Elaine, Irene, Lorraine, Vicky  
Prue, Josie, Rehana, Poonam, Nisha  
Thank you ladies and all the other members for your  
wonderful work!**

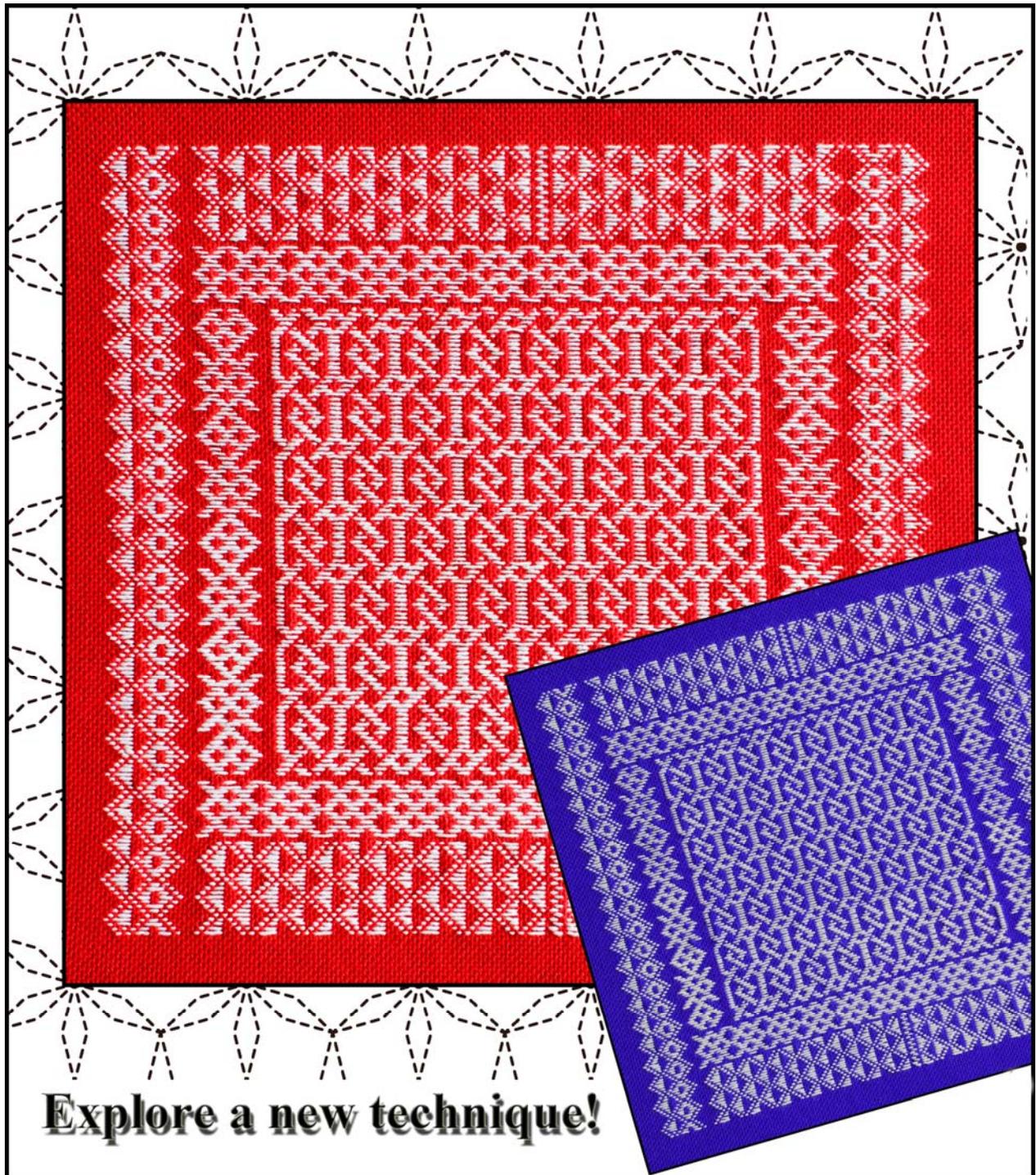
### Work in progress and new designs for October

This month I have been working on designs for magazines and preparing new ones for the coming months. I always have at least six projects on the go at any one time and I pick up the one I feel in the mood for. I have become addicted to Sashiko stitching and my Japanese style Kamon Crest hanging is making steady progress. Whereas I decided originally to use a limited number of hexagons I got rather carried away and it is much larger than I originally envisaged!



*12 more hexagons to design and stitch!*

**CH0403 Kogin Adventure**



**Design Area:** 12.50 x 12.71 inches,  
175 x 178 stitches

This design explores Japanese Kogin pattern darning. The design is worked across the width of the pattern from side to side. Full explanations, photographs and charts are included to make this a very special piece of embroidery.

This can be found in 'Charts' on the Blackwork Journey website.

### FR0184 Pin Cushion



Another week of lockdown and dealing with Covid-10, so it is time for a little gift from Blackwork Journey to help you through this difficult time. Whilst some countries are slowly picking up the pieces and moving on, other countries have yet to reach the peak and cannot yet resume normal life. I can never have too many pincushions and as I regularly scatter needles and pins round the house, I now have a pincushion in every room! If you add lavender and herbs, it can become a scented sachet or by using embroidery stitches and adding beads and mounting it on a cardboard circle it can become a Christmas decoration.

This design can be found in 'Freebies' on the Blackwork Journey website.

Finally, to end this Blog in a rather special way.

Kathryn Reeves from New Zealand has written me a poem about 'Save the Stitches' and how she felt when working the design. I have never had a poem written about my designs before and I was very touched. Thank you so much Kathryn for your thoughtful comments.

Stay safe and happy stitching, *Liz*

# Save the Stiches

*For Elizabeth Almond from Blackwork Journey*

She designed a pattern and the pattern felt good  
I collected the tools to make the pattern with my hands  
She teaches me how to live with problems like

The fine blackwork needs a single strand of black thread  
which comes in a strand of six, so when I finish a bold cross-stitch edge  
I brace myself because the potential for disaster is high

If I move too fast, the single thread gets stuck in the other five  
forms a cul-de-sac knot and creates a new pattern of stress  
But it's just a thread and couldn't be a smaller mess

If I don't take my time, when I store the still-threaded five  
so that when I next need a single thread it's no disaster,  
the thread disappears and I lose it, I lose the precious single thread

If I too quickly finish the bliss of a fine blackwork stitch,  
I dread unwinding another single thread because the recent disaster is so fresh  
so I bargain with the devil and make the next one extra long

You know where this is going  
The too-long thread forms a knot and a new pattern of dread  
I have to unpick my last stitch and everything goes haywire in my head

I put the pattern down two years ago and picked it up again today  
I solve the problems by slowing down to look at what's ahead  
I will always persevere with this pattern, with this thread

134 delicate blackwork designs within a bold cross-stitch edge  
She designed the pattern for us and she gives it away for free  
and every single thread teaches me



Kathryn Reeves  
September 2020  
New Zealand

*Pattern: <https://www.blackworkjourney.co.uk/freebies5.html>*