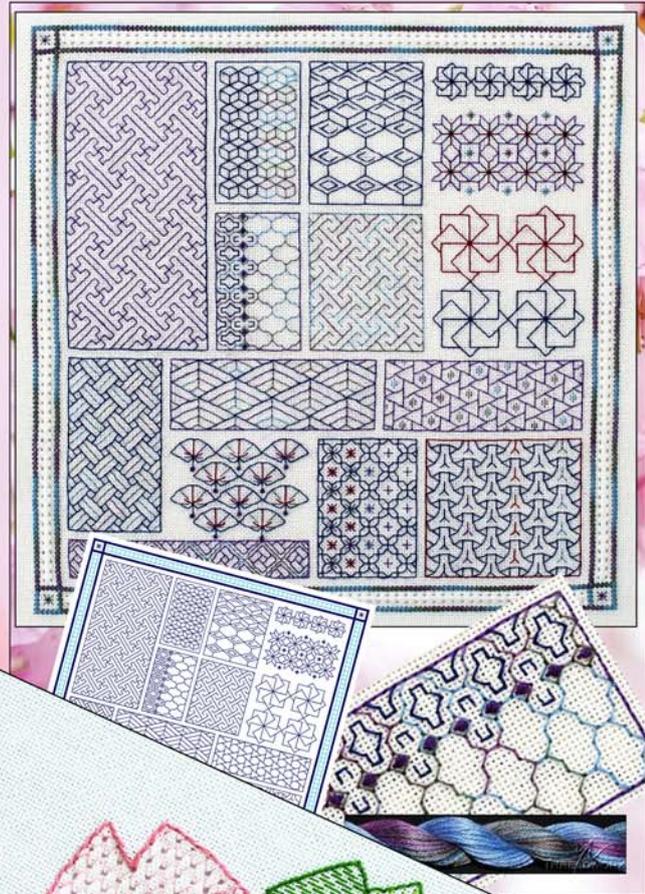




Blackwork Journey Blog

September 2021



PLAYING WITH STITCHES - CELTIC SPIRAL
 Keep Covid-19 at bay!
 Take time out and relax with a simple, but very pretty design and new stitches to explore.

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Threads: Two different colours stranded floss, or Cotton Pire No 8
 Crewel needle (big eye, sharp point)
 Small embroidery ring

Stitches used: Fly stitch, Colonial knots, Whip stitch



Celtic spiral - use the same technique on other line designs



Looking towards autumn and future projects!

Once the month of August draws to a close my thoughts turn towards Autumn and planning designs for Christmas. Many readers like to start their Christmas stitching early, so I have been thinking of different ideas for some time. As I am often invited to contribute to a number of books, calendars and magazines, I am quite used to designing Easter patterns at Christmas and Halloween designs in April, but I still find it odd to be designing two years in advance! However, this year I am thinking of doing something a little different so watch this space over the next few months!

Whilst many parts of the world are still on lock-down, we are gradually opening up in the UK and I spent a very happy few hours this morning in a fabric shop looking at the new threads, patterns and fabrics. Shopping online has become the norm, but I find actually handling the fabrics and revelling in the colours is far more satisfying. I bought a few different fabrics to put in my stash knowing that there will be project for them in the future. Feeling the different weight of cotton and examining the different waddings to find just the right one cannot be done easily online. I am sure many of you will know exactly what I mean!

Three new designs for September

Mindful stitching has become important to me over the last very difficult 18 months and I have often turned to Japanese Sashiko for relaxation. Once the design has been drawn onto the fabric and the threads chosen, I have found the sashiko running stitch is satisfying and restful.



I stitched a Japanese Sayagata and Sakura cherry blossom runner for my coffee table which created a lot of interest on the Facebook groups so I have designed a double-sided cushion called 'Meditation Sashiko' which combines both patterns.

This is the coffee table runner which was worked on medium weight cream cotton and stitched in four strands of DMC floss for the sayagata patterns and Cotton P rle No 8 was used for the sakura cherry blossom. Note: Medium weight sashiko thread could also have been used for this design.

A 2.5 inch blue cotton border was added, a fine wadding was used as the filler and the backing was cream cotton.

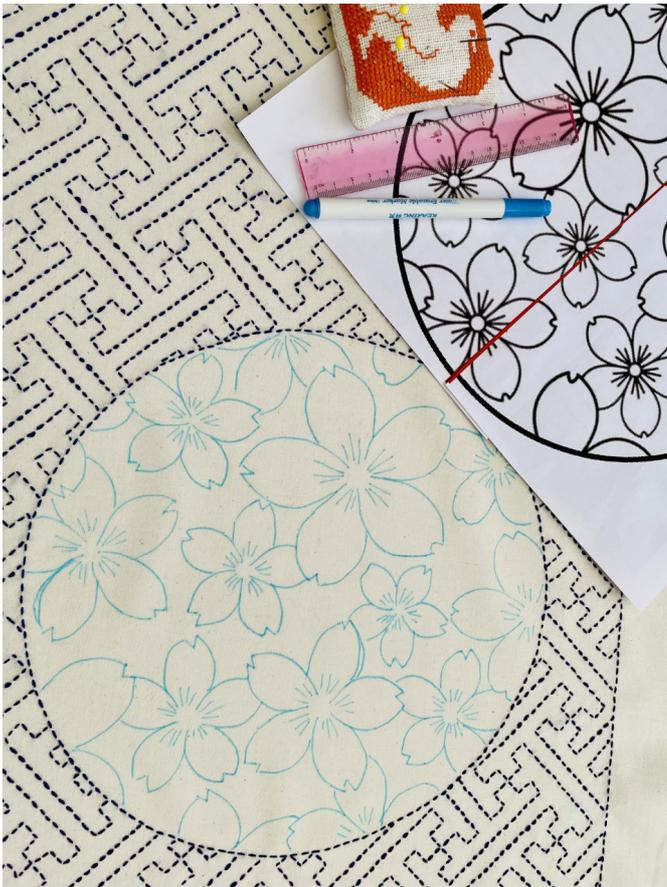
All the fabric for the runner and the cushion was pre-washed to remove any 'size' and to allow for shrinkage. If you want to make a table runner from the cushion pattern, you can always enlarge the pattern to the size required and match the background pattern carefully.

Blackwork Journey Blog, September 2021

Materials:

The ideal fabric for this type of work is one that is not too tightly woven because Sashiko thread is thick and a fabric that is too tightly woven will pucker, or show the holes. The traditional fabric or 'kofu' is usually made of silk, cotton or linen. Any evenly woven fabric that does not have too tight a weave can be used.

Kona Cotton comes in a wide range of colours, is readily available and is 100% cotton. Always pre-wash the fabric. Cotton woven especially for Sashiko is available. This has a looser weave and is softer than the Kona Cotton. I have also used medium weight calico for a number of Sashiko projects.



*Work in progress -
The design was traced onto the fabric using a Clover water-soluble pen. An HB pencil could also be used.*

Sashiko running stitch

Keep the stitches even. Work several stitches on the needle at any one time. To start your stitching, leave a tail at the back and work the tail into the stitching at the back after some stitches have been worked. Where the lines meet do NOT cross over them, but leave the junction clear where the stitches meet. Only pick up a small amount of fabric between each stitch. To finish, weave the tail in and trim the end.

Sayagata – a variation of the Japanese 'saya' brocade pattern

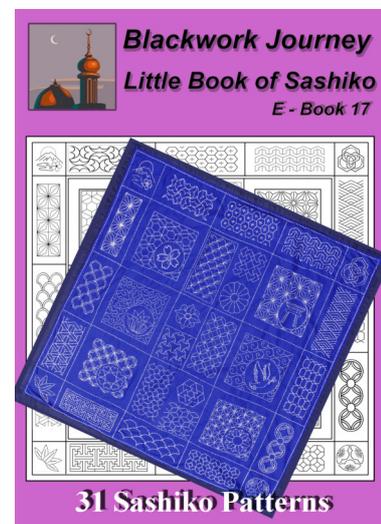


If possible use a sashiko or a crewel needle. Sashiko needles are long and sharp and more than one stitch is on the needle at any one time. A Sashiko thimble is optional, but I find it helpful. Sashiko is worked in the hand, not in a ring.

Sashiko thimble



PR0069 Meditation Sashiko can be found in 'Projects'



EB0017 Little Book of Sashiko

There are many sashiko designs in 'Charts', 'Projects' and E-Books to explore on my website. It is a very satisfying and relaxing technique and can be adapted and used for many projects from placemats to cushions and quilts to waistcoats, jackets and blouses.

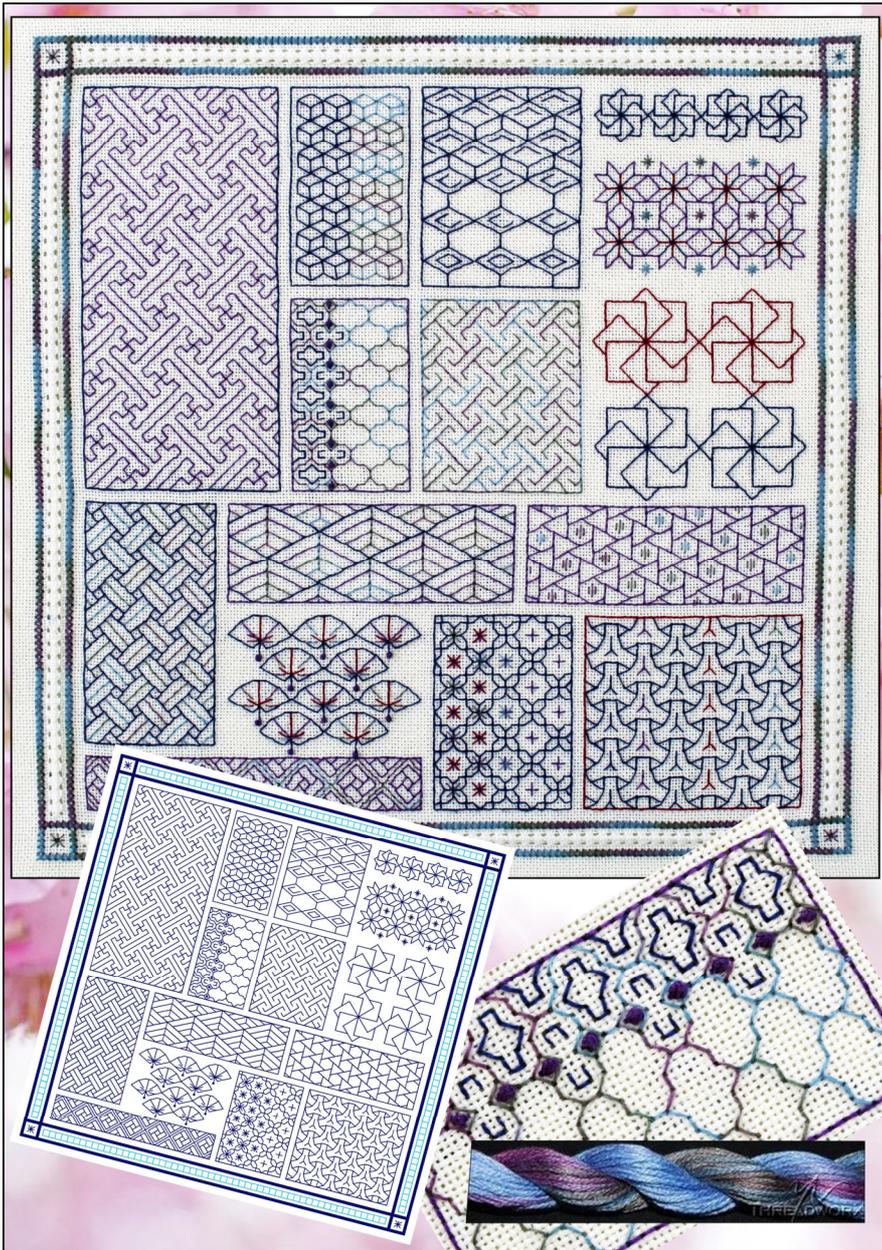
Two new Counted thread work designs:

The next design added this month is **CH0417 'Moonlight Sashiko'** which is the fourth in the series of Japanese counted thread designs.

Taking traditional Japanese patterns and translating them into blackwork embroidery requires a leap of the imagination, but in no way does it undermine the centuries of history and tradition behind the patterns. Stitch this unusual sampler using colours of your choice on evenweave or Aida and take time out to relax and enjoy the rhythm of the needle!

Enjoy the beauty of the designs and their origins!

It consists of 14 different traditional patterns translated into blackwork with a four-sided and cross stitch border. The sampler is the same size as the other three in the series to complete the set.



Japanese patterns:

1. Sayagata – key pattern
2. Yosegi
3. Yosegi mosaic variation
4. Variation of Asanoha
- 4a. Ishiguruma – stone wheel
5. Ogees
6. Koi kuzushi
7. Ajiro wickerwork
8. Hishi seigaiha – diamond blue waves
9. Musubi kikkō
10. Fans
11. Jujihanabishi - blossom
12. Maru bishamon
13. Kumiko lattice variation
14. Four-sided stitch and cross stitch border.

Design Area:

9.00 x 9.00 inches

126 x 126 stitches

Material:

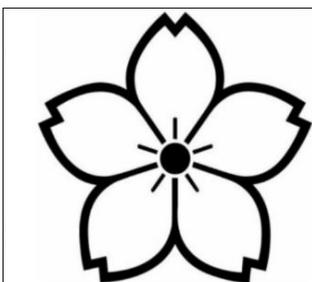
Zweigart 28 count evenweave or 14 count Aida, 12 x 12 inches minimum.

Note: If using Aida there are some split blocks.

CH0417 'Moonlight Sashiko' can be found in 'Charts'.

PR0068 Cherry Blossom

The third design added this month is a free-style blackwork and pulled thread design based on the Japanese sakura cherry blossom.



Kageyama Sakura is a Japanese Kamon crest. The flower is frequently used in kamon crests in Japan. It is used to denote one's origins; that is, one's family lineage, blood line, ancestry and status from ancient times.

It is also referred to simply as “Mondokoro” or “Mon”. There are many different shapes and sizes so I have taken the idea of the Kamon crest and the sakura to create a modern interpretation of the flower.

Cherry blossom makes a wonderful subject for embroidery, not just for the colours and the beauty of the flowers, but its place in Japanese history.

This is a free style embroidery design using simple, but effective stitches to build up each petal in turn.

Blackwork Journey Blog, September 2021

The pattern is traced onto the fabric, the outline worked in back stitch whipped in a combination of threads and textured stitches are used for the veins and the centre.

Wave stitch has been used at the point of each petal to provide continuity across the design.

Using a limited number of threads: Take one strand of one colour and combine it with another strand from a different shade to make up a new range of colours. Use these combined threads to stitch the outlines, centre and veins.

Use the photographs to see how the colours have been used and the patterns placed. Your design should not be exactly like the sample, but your own unique sakura flower.



PR0068 Cherry Blossom

Fabric:

Zweigart 28 count evenweave, 10 x 10 inches minimum. If Aida fabric is used there will be some split blocks.

Threads: DMC stranded floss

Talks and Day Schools 2022

Blackwork Journey Blog, September 2021

Over the last 18 months I have kept in contact with many groups around the world and in the UK through Zoom, Facebook and Teams. I will still keep in touch with the overseas groups as before. However, in October I hope to return to hands-on teaching and day schools which I am very much looking forward to. I have missed the contact and the buzz that comes from interacting with students and the immediate feed-back. Kits are prepared, charts are printed and new additions to the displays have been created ready to share.

I understand that many of the Embroiderers' Guild groups in the UK have re-established themselves as independent groups and I am looking forward to working with them again in their new capacity.

If any other groups would like information about my talks and day school, please contact me by e-mail for further details at lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Simple Stitches

Whilst many embroideries may look complicated, they are generally based on stitches that most needlewomen are familiar with.

Take a small example, this letter 'E' taken from my 'Calico Gardens' day school was worked in back stitch in two strands and then whipped with two strands of different cream.



The leaves were worked in fly stitch in a crochet cotton and the flowers in lazy daisy stitch. The circle was worked in pairs of lazy daisy stitch with a straight stitch inserted inside each petal and the pairs are separated by a Colonial knot. The small fabric flowers have been coloured with indelible pens.

Find a letter on the internet and create your own initial.

If you would like to try a small embroidery design, I have attached one for you based on the Irish Celtic Spiral.



I hope you have enjoyed this month's Blog.

Stay safe and happy stitching! *Liz*

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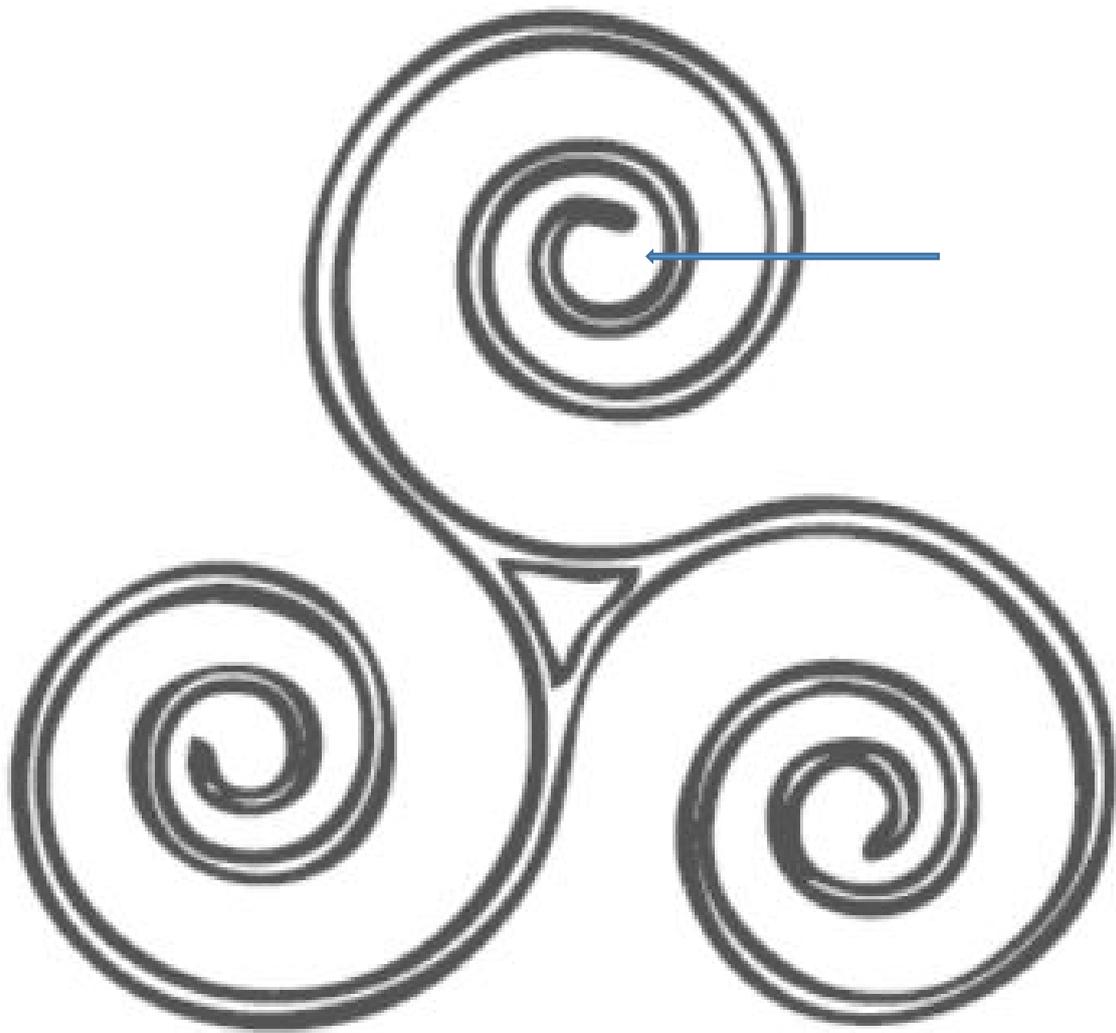
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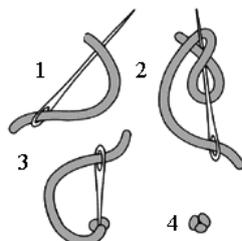


Celtic spiral – use the same technique on other line designs

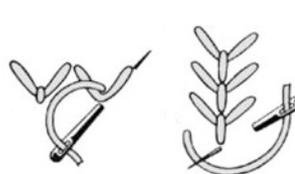


Method:

1. Trace the design lightly onto the fabric using a water-soluble pen or an HB pencil. Tip: The double line helps to keep the width of the fly stitch even.
 2. Using three strands of floss work fly stitch round the spiral, starting at the beginning and working in towards the centre (see arrow). Pull each stitch gently. Once the fly stitch spiral has been worked whip the central 'spine' of the fly stitch with three strands of floss in the second colour.
 3. Once the spiral has been completed add 15 Colonial knots or beads following the shape of each curve.
 4. Place the finished square face down on a soft towel and press lightly. Use the shape to make a small bag, as part of a quilt or a small picture.
- Enjoy!



Colonial knot



Fly stitch



Whipping stitch