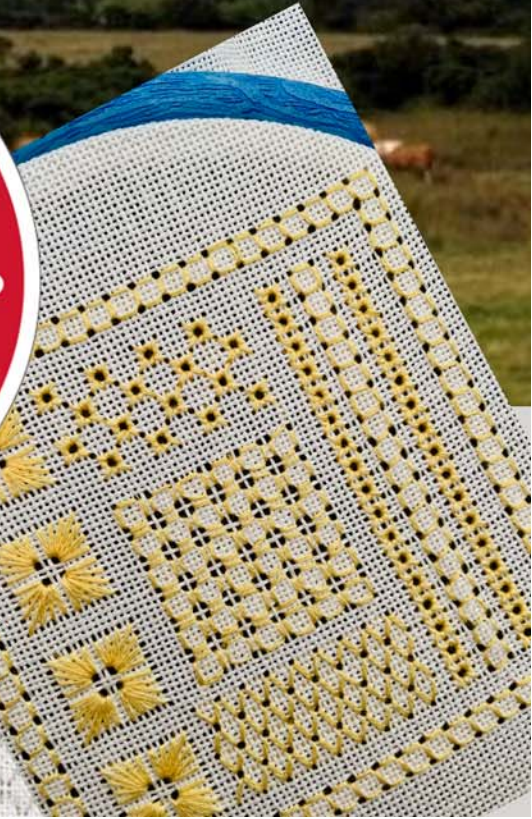




Blackwork Journey Blog

October 2024



End of the summer and welcome to Autumn!



A very wet summer in England ended as it had started, wet and cool, but the month of September ended on a high for my husband and myself as I received an invitation earlier in the year to talk to and work with the "Manx Embroiderers and Stitchers" who meet in Douglas, Isle of Man an island between Ireland and mainland England. Since neither of us had ever been to the Isle of Man I was delighted to accept their invitation to talk to and work with their group and subsequently spend a few days exploring the island which is known worldwide for its motorcycle TT event.

The Isle of Man TT is the ultimate event for motorsport fans across the globe. Every May and June the Isle of Man, turns into motorcycle nirvana as the world's greatest road racers gather to test themselves against the incredible Mountain Course - a 37.73 mile course across the island's public roads. For over one hundred years, the Mountain's siren call has drawn fans and riders to experience the unique atmosphere of the Isle of Man TT Festival.

Manx Embroiderers & Stitchers Blackwork with a Twist Guest Speaker – Liz Almond, Embroiderer



Friday 13th Sept. 2024
AGM 7:30pm prompt start
St Andrew's Church, Glencrutchery Rd, Douglas
£3.00 Admission for non-members
For further information email thewilliams@manx.net

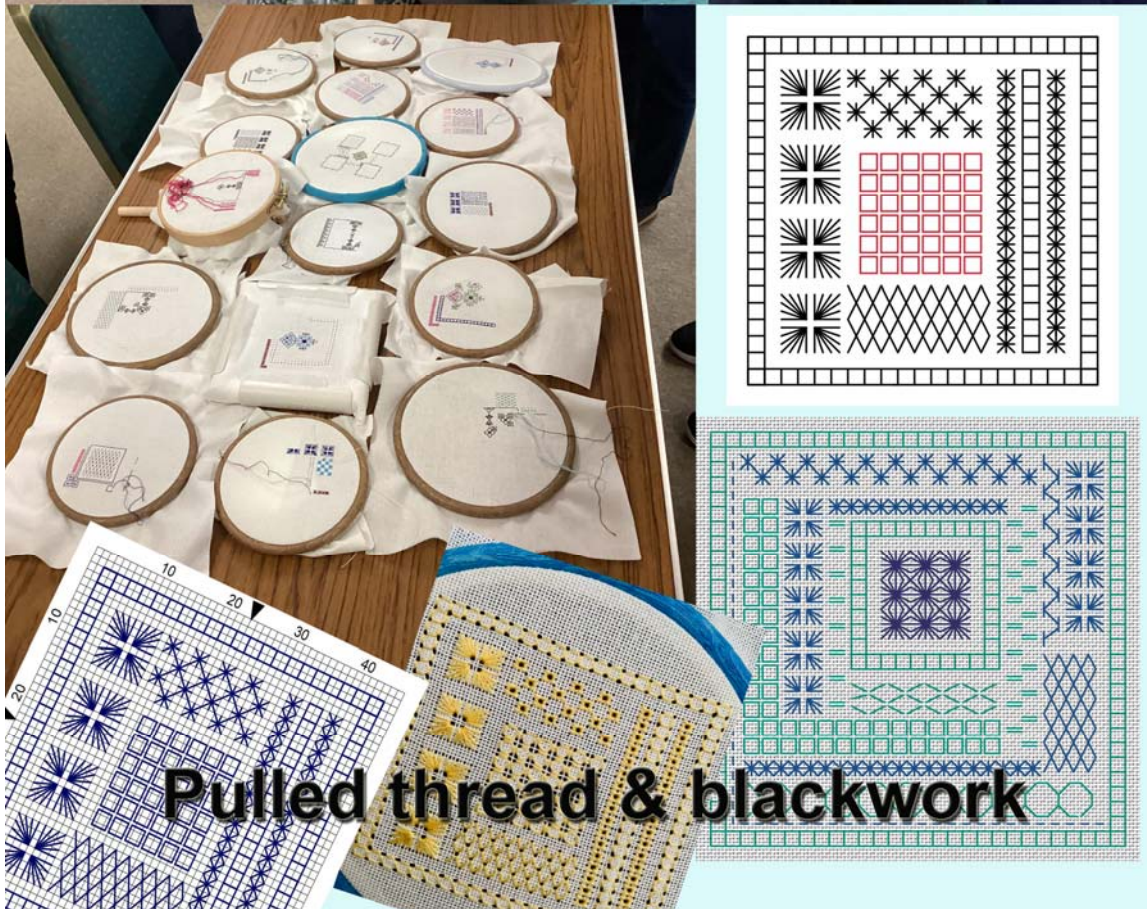


Whilst the distance from our home to Douglas is only 200 km it is across an unpredictable stretch of water. The ferry crossing takes four hours from Heysham in Lancashire and can be withdrawn at short notice due to adverse weather. However, with the ferry booked, car loaded with kits, charts, pictures etc. we set off hoping for a smooth crossing. The ferry had been cancelled earlier in the week because of the weather, but all went well.

The branch had arranged for us to stay in a small cottage outside Douglas which was ideal for exploring the island. The evening, we arrived Theresa, the Programme Secretary came down to meet us carrying a bag of goodies including Manx cheese and crackers which were delicious! This set the tone for the whole five days. The committee and the branch could not have been kinder or more welcoming and after a very well attended AGM, I gave a talk and an indication of what to expect on the workshop the following day. Five additional members joined the workshop after hearing the talk so twenty people attended.

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I designed some pulled thread and blackwork designs just for the group and included some of my favourite embroidery stitches as well. We achieved a lot in a short space of time and I hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I did.



Work in progress!

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After an evening meal at a local restaurant with members of the committee, we spent the next two days exploring the island. The landscape is known for its rugged coastline, medieval castles, and rural landscape. It is beautiful and inspiring and we explored many of the coastal towns and drove steadily round the TT circuit, but not on a motorcycle! The quaint steam trains and electric trams, the famous Laxey Wheel and the warmth of the islanders made it an interesting few days and we look forward to returning in the future.



What's new in October!

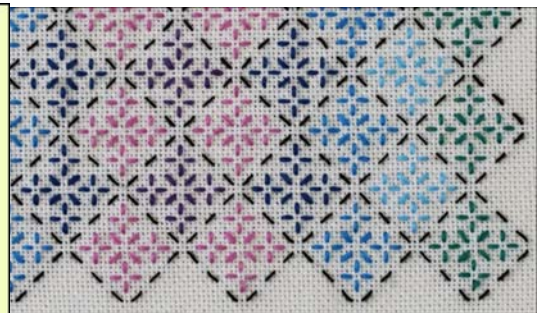
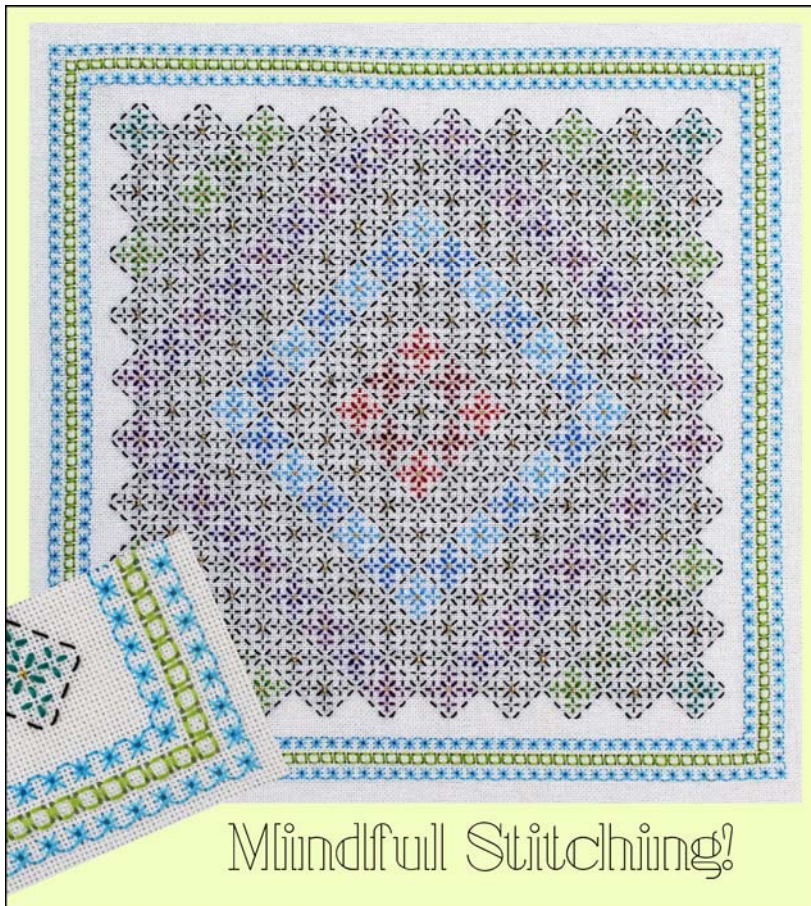
Between October and Christmas, I have a number of talks and workshops in different parts of the UK and when I look back over the years to the different countries I have visited through Blackwork Journey and the people I have met and friends I have made throughout the world through the needlework I am very appreciative of the pleasure that needlework and the people have brought me.

During difficult times in life having a hobby such as needlework can take the pressure off, if only for a short while and provide a real distraction. Mindfulness is an 'in' word now and it resonates in my own life and with many of the people that I work with on a regular basis. Working on something that occupies your mind and hands and reduces stress can act as a form of meditation which has its roots in Buddhism.

To be aware of the stresses in life and the ability to contain them and take back control is important. The more you concentrate on the task in hand, the more relaxed and in control you become. Anxiety and loneliness are lessened, tensions reduced and a sense of peace can prevail. Having had a stressful summer, I worked on two mindful pieces as a way of putting into practice what I teach.

CH0440 Mindful Stitching 1

Using a framework of diamonds, I repeated the same sashiko motif again and again working in bands of different colours. The fabric used was Zweigart 28 count evenweave. The colours were ones that I enjoy working with, but the diamonds were worked in a dark colour to link everything together.

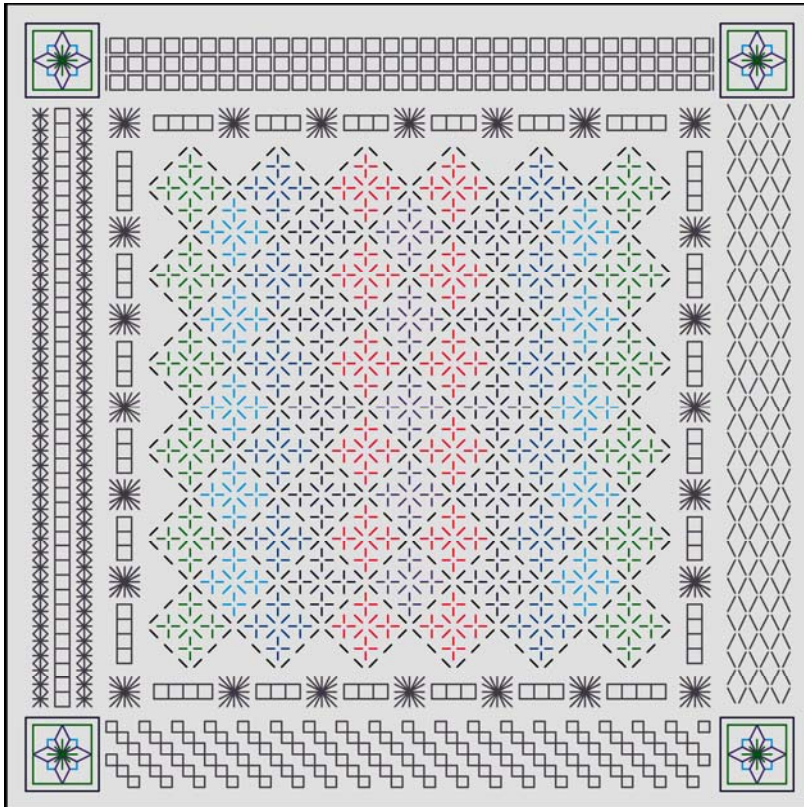


I started at the centre of the design and worked outwards.

In the centre of each motif, I inserted a bead or a gold cross to add texture and sparkle. Even stitching the beads on was therapeutic!

The repetition was soothing and the piece grew quickly. Once the centre had been worked, I added a simple border of eyelet stitches and four-sided stitch blocks in colours from the design.

Extract from PR0082 Three Techniques uses the same basic patterns but develops it further by the addition of pulled thread work bands to create the borders.



PR0082 Three Techniques

Taking the same idea of a central diamond sashiko design I added pulled thread work borders round the centre using a DMC dove grey floss. The "pulled" stitches were worked in two strands or Cotton Pêrle could be used. Working white thread on white fabric can be difficult to see. However, using a pastel thread can make it much easier on the eyes.

Simple pulled work is relaxing, and the stitches used were not difficult to execute. Again, I used Zweigart 28 count evenweave but Zweigart 25 count Lugana has larger holes and the fabric handles well.

Whilst both designs can be worked in the hand I prefer to use a flexi-frame to keep the fabric under tension.



Four-sided stitch, Algerian eyelets, window filling and Sashiko stitching are some of the stitches used.

The example demonstrates how the pulled stitches can distort the other stitching. Once the embroidery has been completed place it face down on a soft towel press lightly and pull gently into shape.

Note: These designs are not suitable for Aida fabric because blocks would have to be split.

Unusual fabric ideas

Recently I was in a hardware store and spotted a placemat made from plastic. The weave was open and regular, and it set me thinking. Would it be possible to use it for embroidery? Initially I thought about cross stitch, but looking at the placemat again Japanese Kogin designs came to mind.

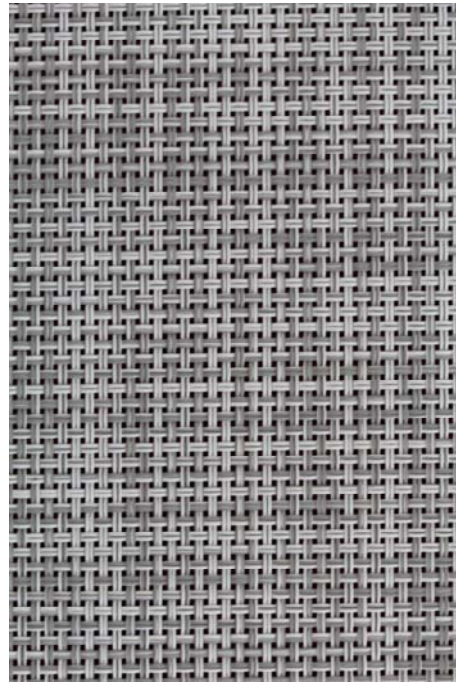
What is Kogin Embroidery?

Kogin embroidery is a form of counted pattern darning, which originated in the Aomori Prefecture of Northern Japan. This area is rural, with snow covered mountains, thick forests and rice paddies. Protective clothing for the farmers and fishermen was essential, so the fabrics were joined together by stitching and made into clothing for warmth and stability.

The patterns in Kogin embroidery are very intricate and many of the garments were very old and had been patched and re-stitched constantly with thick white cotton threads. Cotton fabric and threads were expensive, so local indigo dyed hemp cloth was often used for these garments.

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The designs were usually geometric, often diamond shaped and the running stitches which varied in length, were only worked in rows, along the weft of the fabric. It was worked in the hand without using a frame and with several stitches on the needle at any one time, making it faster to stitch.



Look at next month's Blog to see how I use this unusual fabric.

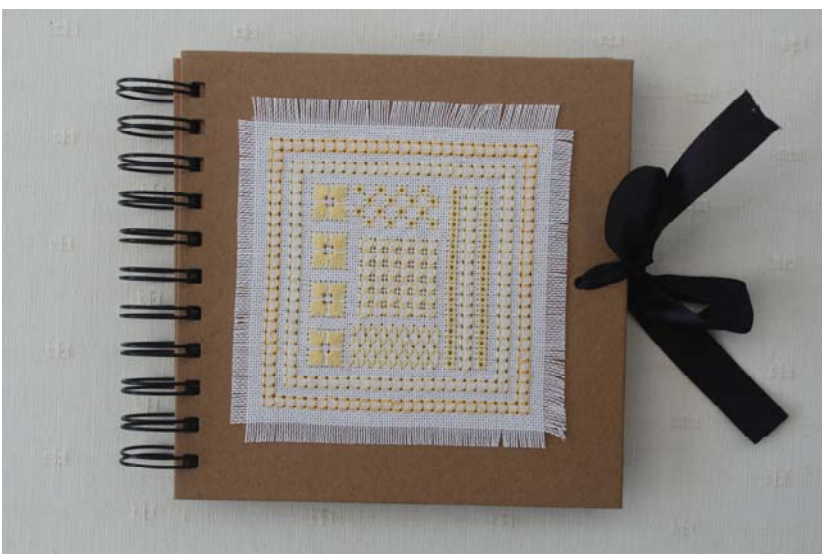
**Thinking about
Christmas?
Recycle, Reuse!**



We have all accumulated small samples from workshops that we have attended and they are often stowed away and never used. However, why not try to use these like the ones shown in these pictures?

Here I attached one piece of embroidery to the front of a small scrap book and with two other pieces I joined them together to make a scented sachet filled with lavender and personalised them with an initial.

Scented pulled thread work sachet



Pulled thread work mounted on a scrap book



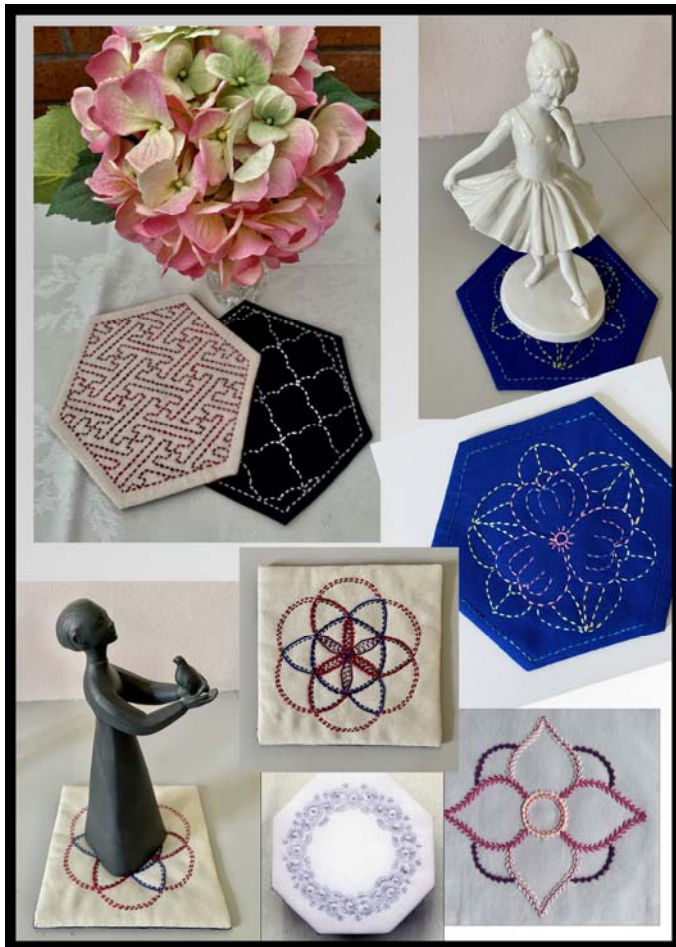
Scented sachet

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Old CD's can also be used to make personalised Christmas ornaments. Sashiko design to be used for hanging ornament.

Suffolk puffs, buttons and paper clips can be used to make bookmarks.



Scraps of fabric can also be used to make boro birthday and Christmas cards and coffee jar tops can be turned into pin cushions with an embroidered or patchwork design.

PR0066 Modern Mats and Coasters



PR0081 Explore Florentine Embroidery - small canvaswork projects

Go through your stash and see what you can make from what you already have! Please send me a photograph of your project and I will post it in November's Blog. I always enjoy seeing readers amazing creations!

I hope you have enjoyed this month's blog. If you have any queries, please contact:

lizalmond@blackworkjourney.co.uk

Happy stitching, *Liz*