

Dear all,

Hope you are well and keeping busy during this strange time of lockdown. As you know, our meetings have been suspended for the time being and we aren't sure when we can get together again. For those of us who are "shielding" it is indeed fortunate that we share a love of needlework and textiles in general. I have plenty of projects lined up to do- I always knew that stash wasn't too big and would come in useful! Also I have lots of books to delve into should I need a refresher.

The committee have been busy thinking of ways to connect our group, and one suggestion was this virtual "show and tell". Some of us have taken photos of our work in progress or recently finished, and I feel inspired just looking at them.

We would love to see what you are working on and any ideas you have. Most of us underplay our talents and don't think our work is good enough to share, but that's really not the case. Someone else's work always gives me ideas and I do try not to touch them!

Sarah has started the ball rolling with her work in progress. She tells us

"This is the beginning of a piece depicting the inside of the atom. You can see the quarks that make up the neutron and the proton in the centre (unfinished!) and the electrons that fizz and spin around the outside of the nucleus - also unfinished!"



Hilary shares her work next. She has been working on 2 quite complicated projects to help her through the enforced stay-at-home time. The first is a goldwork kit that she bought from Golden Hinde. It is quite difficult but has very good instructions so she is enjoying it. She says "I didn't know a lot about Goldwork apart from or nue so it's all a steep learning curve."

The second is withdrawn thread work, which she had never done before. She says "I had a book by Carolyn Ambuter "The Open Canvas" for many years. It was published in 1982, and it is "an instructional encyclopaedia of open work techniques" in the form of separate lessons. Well, this does keep me occupied as I can spend half an hour just contemplating where to cut the next thread, as it is such a no going back decision. I' m glad I kept the book all these years, as it has come into its own now. It's one of those books that you think "If only I had time to do this ".

No excuse now!



Brenda would like to share her latest piece of work.

"I completed my Speke Hall project, which is a doll of the Childe of Hale from the portrait at Speke Hall. He just needs a sword, which I may make from plastic milk bottle stuff, and sword holder, probably in leather. I have been in touch with Speke Hall, at the beginning of the crisis, and at that time, they were happy to wait for our exhibition. Apart from that, no more sewing from me as yet, too busy gardening, cooking and baking, piano practise and escaping into Croxteth Park for walks. Lots of love to everyone. "



Alice has also been busy.

Here's her news from lockdown. She says "My lockdown began a little earlier than most - 12th March in fact. I learnt that I was a "vulnerable elderly person". What!! As most of the time I consider myself to be still in my forties this did not go down well.

So - what to do! I began with good intentions of a kind of spring cleaning plan but as I have never liked housework that went by the bye very quickly. Next the sewing room cum office needed sorting. Hah! This was more interesting.

Then I discovered all my UFO's. OMG!!!

With the thought of weeks of being shut up unable to go out and see friends - lunch dates down the pan- I decided this was a job that needed tackling. And to be fair - a more pleasant way to spend time.

The picture shows in the centre my crewel work piece which was intended for the exhibition at Speke Hall, completed and framed.

Next up were the Hardanger pieces. Lots of them about because I like to take a piece when travelling - it's so convenient. One piece of fabric, one needle, 2 threads and a pair of scissors. Problem being that each time I go away I take a new piece!

Lastly I found a small piece of red work, begun as a test to see if I could do it and like it. That small piece and a later workshop with Liz Almond got me into Blackwork. Talk of that is for another time.

However, all the time I have been finishing the UFO's I have been thinking about our Chairman's Challenge to do a piece on "Renewal" for a mini exhibition when we get let out again. Finally I have hit on the very thing (well I think so) but it's a secret for now. Sshh! Don't expect anything hugely fantastic tho - cos I'm strictly a hand embroidery person, and the simple things please me most.

Bye everyone, keep smiling and keep stitching."



Michele has fitted in some stitching around her day job! She says

"I have continued to slowly work on my Tudor Exhibition piece, which is nearing completion. I tend to work on it mainly in the evening, in front of the television. I struggled to figure out what to do for this piece; I had some ideas but none worked out. So in the end, out of desperation, I decided to make a large (~4-inches across) Tudor Rose. I searched around the internet and found a photo of an old Tudor stained glass window with a Tudor rose that formed the base for my piece. I decided to use a black background because the colours seemed to vividly stand out against the black. I found a scrap of old black fabric in my stash that was just the right size and texture. I drew the outline of the pattern on my computer, then transferred it to the fabric using a technique I learnt at one of the gold-work workshops that uses thread to stitch through a tracing paper pattern. I then had to decide how to fill in the rose. I chose to use satin stitch, which I almost never use so am not very practiced at it and find it hard to make it look even. Next I edged the rose petals by couching a single strand of gold Jap (T69). I then, in a mad moment, decided to use gold beads for the centre, which looked *a bit blingy* but I am hoping the gold border balances it out. I am now on the 5th and final row of the border. I got the inspiration for the "cloud filling" stitch I am using on the border from the small book we used for the group piece patterns. The problem was finding suitable gold thread for the cloud filling. I had planned to use Jap but found it was too stiff and not flexible enough. I tried lots of different thread types and finally settled on some from a spool of DMC Diamante I purchased whilst on holiday somewhere some time ago. Progress slowly continues as I am working, from home, and trying to get caught up on a plethora of jobs, so I don't have a lot of extra time, and, probably like most other MEGers, I have several other projects on the go."



Eileen has also been busy, as she tells us

“I started the lockdown finishing the last two of a set of eight flowers. These have been ongoing in between other projects for the last 2 years and all have one thing in common, at 4” square they are small enough to pack and take on holiday, so have been worked in some wonderful places and nicely filled the afternoons after very enjoyable mornings spent either skiing or scuba diving. They are stuck on card at the moment waiting to go to the framers, I even had enough time to spend 2 afternoons cutting and sticking and colouring-in a life size paper template for the frames! I then moved on to the Victorian style flower display trimmed with lace, was quite pleased with the end result but as you can see from the photo with the bank note was an absolute pig of a chart. Quite a bit of unpicking on that one and the magnifying glass worked overtime.

Finally spent a few days doing the 2 little miniatures. Have a shelf above a radiator that ends up killing any plants I put on it, even cacti, so I’ve given up on it and put embroideries there instead.

I have just started a nice blackwork design based on Celtic Knots, it’s sewn on black in cream and gold, but I’m also going to sew a little cactus for a bit of fun, there’s still a bit of space on the shelf and I’m determined it’s going to get at least one plant that’s not destined for the compost bin!

Hopefully you’re enjoying your own creations just as much. “



Pat would like to show her latest works.

The first2 are both sides of a folded book of little embroidery samples made on a course with Jan Beaney and Jean Littlejohn.

The second is her piece for MEG linked to Speke Hall. It is an Elizabethan stomacher. Machine embroidered apart from the beading and gold edging.



And I’ve been busy as well. In response to the RSN postcard from home challenge, I tried to do a souvenir of Liverpool postcard and a couple of postcards representing my garden (the lovely blue tit and the dandelion head, make of that what you will!) I then got carried away and kept making postcards, refining my technique you may think, but really just playing. I even used the markal paint sticks on a couple of them, and I liked the effect they gave. I have found the small size perfect for trying out new ideas and changing old ones and can think of loads more to do. I think I need to make a box for them next. I’ll park those ideas for now and move onto the renewal project. I find having a challenge focuses my mind, but still seldom settle on one piece of work. The other photo is ribbon embroidery on painted stitched background. The ribbons were hand dyed, then a little silk paint applied over the top. This is a technique I’ve had on my to-do list for a while and it is based on an archway covered in wisteria in a garden near Windermere-wouldn’t we love to be there now!



And of course, this newsletter wouldn't be complete without something our young embroiderers have done. They've worked hard and it is a joy to see their pleasure in sewing. While it's true that less chatter and more stitch would get the project finished, the same is also true of our workshops and one of the pleasures of sewing in company is the companionship of like-minded people, there's plenty of time to finish it afterwards.

This project was a pomegranate in applique with different hand stitches and sparkle (we like a bit of bling!) and was for our Tudor exhibition on Regional Day. We also have a joint project we're working on.



So ladies (and girls) over to you now. We would love to see what you are working on. A photograph and descriptive paragraph would be perfect. I know some of you have also been involved in making face masks and scrubs, please tell us about that and let's stay connected.

I can be contacted at youngembroiderers@megonline.co.uk

Take care and keep stitching!

Mal Ralston