

Blog #118 - Stitch & Stitch and Stitch Some More ..
 January 2022

*A new year begins. I wonder what it will hold?
 Joys, sorrow, changes, tragedy, opportunities, adventures, new beginnings.
 There are times in my life when I have felt like I was too late as if I had
 missed out on something, especially now that I am old ... er.
 But I am encouraged when remember and read in God's Word
 about others who experienced their dream or achieved an amazing feat
 in their old age -
 a childless woman (Sarah) conceives in her old age
 and a fearful, self-conscious shepherd (Moses) became a leader of millions. It's never too late for a new beginning.*



January is also our 'Sampler Blessings Challenge' month instigated by Gigi. In last month's blog I showed the eight choices of samplers for this years challenge (last year most of us chose to all stitch the same piece but in our favourite colour). Consequently this month my needle was constantly in my hand and needles were 'flying' in many homes.

My choice was 'Elizabeth Precious 1817' - a reproduced sampler from GigiR.

Design Title: Elizabeth Precious 1817
 Code: GR:EP
 Design Price: \$36.50

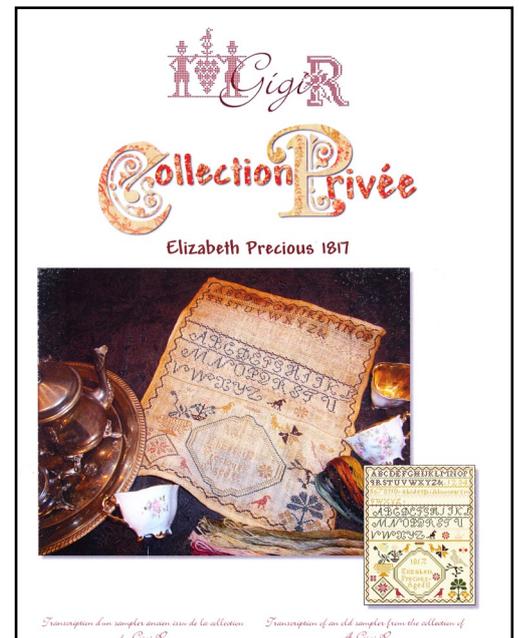
Enjoyed stitching it and it didn't take too long.
 Pictures below show my progress.



In one area of Elizabeth's sampler she had no stitching on it. *
 Did she intend to add something else and then forget to do so? I wonder?

And so, in this unworked area I placed my name and the year in which I stitched it.

I encourage you to also add your name and the date in which you stitched a reproduction sampler so that in years to come your piece is not mistakenly thought to be the original sampler.



Transcription of an sampler ancien issu de la collection de Gigi R. Transcription of an old sampler from the collection of Gigi R.



Besides Elizabeth's sampler I liked two of the other sampler challenge choices and so decided to stitch these two pieces as well.

'Floral Alphabet' and 'Floral Alphabet II' - original samplers by Judy of JBW Designs - and decided to stitch both designs with the same coloured thread but each on a different coloured Permin linen fabric - a pale blue/grey (French Lace) and a pale green (Waterlily). It was amazing to see the difference made due to the fabric colour choices.



Floral Alphabet
\$ 21.50



Floral Alphabet II
\$ 26.50

LOVE the thread colour!

Sampler Thread : 0980 - Lagoon by **The Gentle Art**

Managed to completely stitch both pieces before the end of the month with the exception of adding buttons to Floral Alphabet II. I want to add tiny Mother-of-Pearl buttons but I haven't found any local shop that sells them. I used to sell them in the Needlework Gallery but I've sold out and cannot get any more as my supplier/manufacturer is no longer producing them. Really disappointed. I may have to add an alternative type of button.

Pictured below are both samplers and the fabrics they were stitched on are noted beside each sampler -



Permin Linen
- 32 count -
French Lace
(#110)



Permin Linen
- 32 count -
Waterlily
(#203)

And too, I also stitched and finished this month 'A Little Chintz Sewing Set'.

A **Limited Edition** kit from Judy of JBW Designs which are companion pieces to Judy's 'Chintz Alphabet' design.

Kit includes fabric, a patterned cotton fabric for backing, plus threads for creating the fob finishing cord and ric rac trim for finishing the pin cushion. Threads for stitching the design are **not** included.

Pictured below are all three pieces. Aren't they lovely?!



JBW : LE

A

Little Chintz

Sewing Set

\$ 40.00



Not done so as yet but think I will finish the alphabet piece with a Hem Stitch edge rather than frame it.

During the month many of the sampler challenge participants sent me progress pics of their samplers. These I will show to you in my next blog plus pics of their finished samplers.

Sunday, 14 October 2019: Stoke-on-Trent -

And now to Melissa's and my final day of exploration in our beautiful ancestral homeland/country of England. I have loved every moment being in such an awesome place so steeped in history that is and has been cherished and preserved. So many other countries of the world also cherish their history as after the decimation of their historical buildings during the second world war they restored them to their original glory. So different to our country which has no qualms about tearing down a historic building and replacing it with a modern, hideous, architecturally designed building which has no heart and soul.

After more than 10 years our historical and iconic Christchurch cathedral is still lying in ruins after the devastating earthquake but a huge new sports stadium, at the cost of millions, has been built to worship the god of sport.

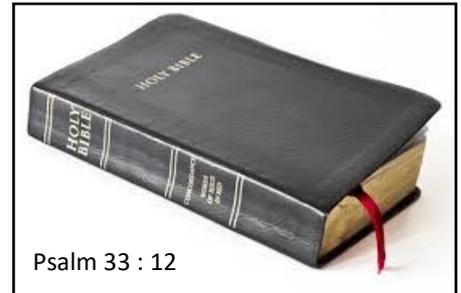
When will the so-called powers of this nation realise that a country that honours God will be blessed.

When we did, and we were known throughout the world as a Christian country, the country and people were happy, prosperous, thriving and respected.

We were always rated as one of the top ten countries for education, life style, etc.

Now that we no longer honour God, we are one of the lowest ranking.

Our stats for suicide, child abuse, education, poverty, etc. are abysmal.



Enough negativity. Melissa and I spent the day at a wonderful location - Middleport Potteries - the home of Burleighware.

One of their well recognised ranges of patterned pottery is 'Calico' and this is Melissa's chosen and favourite style of china. Our wedding gift to her was a complete 8-piece dinner setting and for many years I've never been at a loss to know what to give her for her birthday and Christmas gifts - platters, plates, dishes, jugs, mugs, teapots, etc. to add to her collection.



A little history. To begin, a couple of their statements -

"At Burleigh Pottery, our skilled team of craftspeople have been producing Burleighware at The Middleport Pottery since 1889. It takes many pairs of hands to create a single piece of Burleigh pottery, and each pot is meticulously hand-finished. Creating something good, something that lasts, something that is above fashion and trends, something timeless, can't be hurried.

Burleigh is a brand of Burgess and Leigh Ltd. All rights reserved"

"Recognised for our dedication to fine craftsmanship and traditional manufacturing, we have been making our iconic blue and white ceramics, using the same techniques for generations. We are the last pottery in the world to use the traditional and timeless skill of underglaze tissue printing, which is an English process dating back over 200 years"

To read a full account of their history, visit their website - www.burleigh.co.uk

A condensed version of their history:

In 1851, Messrs. Hulme and Booth started an earthenware business in the central pottery in Burslem, Stoke-On-Trent.

The business moved to Middleport Pottery by the Trent and Mersey Canal in 1889, where it is located today.

Following difficult conditions in the 1990's and early 2000's, Re-Form Heritage bought Middleport Pottery in 2011 to save and restore it.

The Prince of Wales stepped in to help with the emergency repair work needed – his charity, HRH The Princes Regeneration Trust, offered the £9 million support that was needed to keep production going.

The Re-Form Heritage charity has regenerated the site so that it can function as a pottery and visitor destination, showcasing the history and heritage and the building itself.

The business of Burleigh remains a separate entity and continues to make iconic ceramics as tenants of Middleport Pottery.

How Burleighware is made:

Traditional skills and techniques and the highest-quality raw materials are used, plus a dedicated team of craftspeople.



How Burleighware is made continued:

The beginning of their unrivalled process begins in 'The Slip House', where raw ingredients are interspersed in large containers called blungers. Liquid clay is then transferred below the ground to the mixing ark. This underground container keeps the clay cool, and the clay which is now referred to as slip is kept constantly moving by means of a large automated paddle. Once this liquid clay has reached the correct consistency, it is pumped upstairs to the casting shops and 'The Caster' uses a flexible hose to fill the moulds. Each mould is made of plaster of Paris [Gypsum] and is therefore porous and draws in the moisture from the slip which dries from the outside in. The layer of dry clay becomes thicker. When it has reached the correct thickness the excess/waste clay slip is tipped away to return to the slip house to be mixed back into the system and reused. The remaining clay is left inside the mould until it is dry enough to remove. At this stage in the process the ware is very delicate and requires expert handling to remove it from the mould. Once removed it is still quite damp and so is left on a drying rack for a couple of days until it is dry enough to be fettled.

'Fettling and sponging' - that is, the join lines (*that are created by the two mould halves*) and any other blemishes are removed. The fettler removes the seams and rough edges using a fettling knife and each item is sponged to smooth any imperfections. At this stage the clay is known as 'green' meaning it has not been fired. If enough water was added it would return to slip. Until it is fired for the first time it can be recycled.

The ware is then dried in the drying room and 'The Placer' then places the ware onto kiln trucks which are manoeuvred into the kilns using rails and a trolley. The pottery is fired in gas fired intermittent kilns.



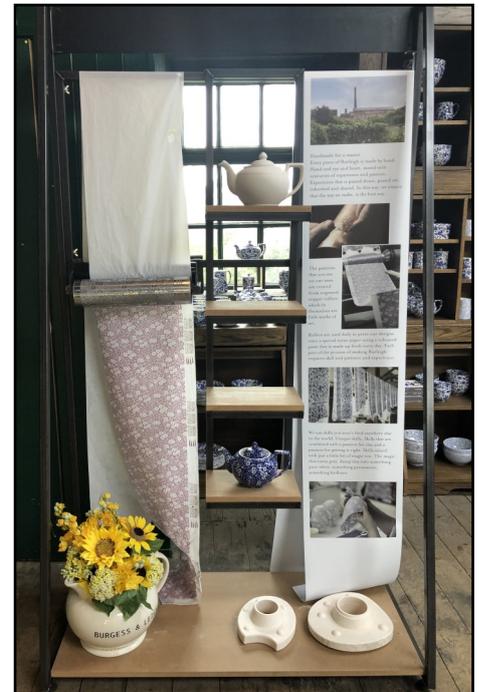
Once fired a piece can no longer be recycled. It has also now shrunk to the required size, but is still porous. Each piece runs through rigorous quality checks. If there are no faults, it goes on to be decorated in the famous Transferring Printing Shop.

Burleigh Pottery is now the only English pottery company that still continues this traditional and highly skilled hand decorating process. This process was once widely used in the pottery industry but Burleigh is now the last remaining potbank to use this skillful technique, making Burleigh pottery highly prized around the world.

Each of Burleigh's traditional patterns were hand engraved onto copper based cylinders. The printer fixes the cylinder to the printing machine, spreads on a thick oil based ink which melts as the machine heats up. The cylinder rotates and the ink flows into the engraved lines of the roller. Tissue paper is drawn carefully beneath the cylinder creating a continuous stream of pattern. The printer deftly rips the tissue into lengths and hangs them on the line for the transferrers to use.



The transferrer cuts out the tissue in the shape to fit the ware and applies it to biscuit pottery. She rubs it down with a brush and soft soap, pressing the design into the pottery and softening the tissue which is then washed off. The ink is oil based and therefore water resistant so remains when the tissue is washed away. The item is then fired for a second time to fuse the pattern onto the ware.



This is done in the electric hardening-on kilns at different temperatures depending on the pattern colour.

After this firing, the products are cleaned and checked over to ensure the quality is acceptable.

Finally into the Dipping House. This used to be the most dangerous place to work in Victorian times because the glaze contained lead and the people had little idea of the effects this had. Now, 'The Dipper' dips the ware into a vat of glaze (liquid glass) . It is coloured using food dye so that the glaze is a luminous pink colour, this is essential to ensure that no piece of ware is unglazed. The pink colour burns away during glost firing. Plastic tubes are worn on the dippers fingers so as not to leave finger marks in the glaze and each piece is moved in a swirl like motion to get an even coat before the excess glaze is shaken off and the piece put on to a conveyor which passes through a dryer.

When it comes out of the other side the glaze is dry.

Once dry, 'The Footwiper' takes glaze off the bottom of the ware so that it doesn't stick to the kiln truck during the final glost firing.

All ware is finally checked in the glost warehouse and the ware will be graded best, seconds or lump (rejects)!

The products are then packed into cartons and dispatched to customers throughout the UK and the world.

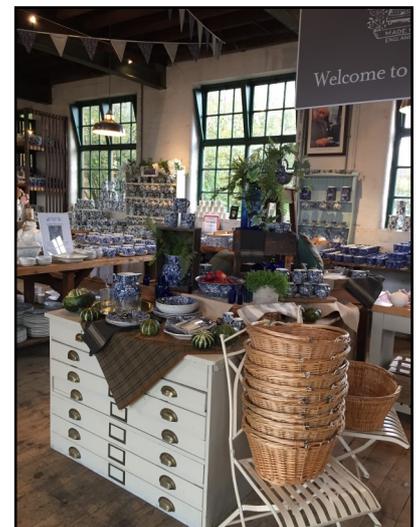
Melissa had a wonderful time buying all sorts of different shaped pieces that she did not already have. So much so that she had to organise for everything to be shipped back to NZ. In the huge downstairs showroom was table after table laden with stacked pieces of slightly second grade or discontinued pieces of pottery and in the same sized area above on the first floor was all the first grade pieces. Each area was beautifully decorated. Melissa was in her element!



The
Upstairs
Showroom

~

Maybe
you can spot
Melissa
at the back
of the room



The Downstairs Showroom & one of the many displays



Two more beautiful displays

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We would have loved to have been able to do a tour of the factory and watch the manufacture of this beautiful pottery as described on the previous pages but due to our visit being on a weekend tours were not being conducted.



However, one could visit some of the historical areas.

Pictured below is one of the old warehouse rooms where one could see rows and rows of shelves holding moulds of all different shapes and sizes that have been used to create all the awesome pieces over the past 130 odd years.



And too, in another room one could see all the different patterned and coloured tissue paper that is fixed/added to the greenware after its first firing to create each distinctive piece.



Between our times of buying and looking at all the historical displays, etc. we had lunch in the pottery tearooms (housed in the original packing house) where all the delicious food was served on Burleigh dinnerware. The tearooms opened out to a courtyard and to which the Trent & Mersey Canal runs alongside and where canal boats that cruise the canal can stop and moor.



The Tearooms Courtyard & the light fitting in the tearooms.

Had the light fitting been blue, I think Melissa might have been tempted to ship one home!

We spent a lot of time at this amazing place looking out all of the windows of the display areas to the cobbled pathways between all the old brick factory buildings and wondering how many had walked on those cobbles, how many persons had worked in the buildings, the working conditions that they had to work in, the family and home-life of the workers, their living conditions, etc.

So many thoughts.



As we walked out of Middleport Potteries, just across the road was the beginnings of rows and rows and streets and streets of empty, derelict buildings that once would have housed and been the homes of many of the families who no doubt worked at the factory during its heyday and the beginnings of the factory. What stories the walls of these buildings could tell!

How sad to see the state of them now. We were told that there is plans for some of these buildings to be restored. I do hope so.

And so our final day to immerse ourselves in the history and wonders of this lovely country of England drew to an end and we headed back to our hotel to pack our bags in readiness for our trip to the Manchester airport the following day to begin our long plane journey home to NZ.

My unexpected and awful ordeal of having a slight stroke in the UK halfway through my Lady Anne's Needlework Tour resulted in a wonderful time of visiting and experiencing unexpected places -

Hever Castle, London, Hampton Court, Harrods, Grantley Hall, Harewood House, Ackworth School, York and the potteries at Stoke-on-Trent -

with two of our precious family - daughter, Melissa and granddaughter, Ashleigh.

I can truly say ... "all things work together for good to those who love God ... "

As began this blog - a New Year and I wonder what it brings.

In closing, for me, I have made the decision to do whatever God leads me to do and with my trust in Him and with His help I will keep going, never give up, and believe God has something new in store for me this year.

You too may have a dream - something in your heart that you have longed to do, even if you buried it a long time ago.

I encourage you ... it's not too late go for it.

Bye for now.

