

# Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

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## From The Editor –

Summer is here and I am sure you have all filled your beach (and mountain) bags with sewing projects. A word of caution here – make sure you don't include any fabric marking pens or beeswax with the fabric. Pack these separately in well sealed zip-locked bags. It might also be prudent to pack darker colors of floss or other sewing fibers in separate plastic bags to avoid the humidity and heat from drawing out the 'over dye' and ruining your fabric.

We are delighted to have Carol Harris present her version of Children's Corner's **SUSAN** pattern. Her interpretation is wonderful and the instructions great. Carol is gracious to have included her contact numbers just in case you run into a problem, and her YouTube videos are a treat for hands on viewing. She, also, has chosen the fabulous Bear Threads, Ltd new Baby Dimity in the stripe. If you have not tried this adorable fabric, call for samples. You will love it!!

We have added another column to **Bear in Mind** which we will occasionally include for your entertainment. Everyone seems to enjoy trivia, and I suspect there is an endless supply of needle related trivia bits for our edification and useless knowledge!! I am certain you will all forever remember what 'orts' are!!

Remember that this newsletter is for YOU, so if there is anything you would like to see added, or you would like to make a contribution, we would love to hear from you. We will be taking a break this summer, also. The June and July issues are combined here. We hope you enjoy it. We will see you back in August when our guest artist will be Margaret Pierce.

Happy Stitching,

Sheila



*As the story goes Goldilocks was an uninvited guest. If she'd been wearing this precious dress by Carol Harris, even Baby Bear would think her visit was "just right!"*

*See Carol's instructions below.*

# *Susan*

*Carol's Adaptation of Children's Corner "Ainsley" is called "Susan". Come and follow the transformation.*

**Pattern:** Children's Corner "Ainsley" for dress adaptation. You may use any Children's Corner short puffed sleeve pattern.

## **Fabric Requirements:**

60" Fabric – 2 Unfinished Dress Lengths

Neckband / Cuff - 1/3 yd.

Buttons: 3/8" - 1/2" - 5 to 7

Lightweight woven fusible interfacing sewing thread and 6 strand embroidery floss to match dress fabric

## **Drafting Neckband from Yoke Patterns:**

Tape front yoke and back yoke together at the shoulder seam - be sure you are aligning the shoulder seam and not the cutting lines.

Place pattern under transparent paper and trace neckline cutting and seam lines. Decide how wide you want finished band to be - for a band that finishes 1" wide, measure and mark from top cut edge 1 1/2" (1" + 2 - 1/4" seam allowances).

Mark CB line, shoulder seam line, and CF line. Draw a vertical grain line on front band.

Label the band pattern piece as follows: Size, Cut 1, Cut 1 facing, CF on fold & Cut 2 Interfacing (before cutting out newly drafted neckband pattern).

**NOTE:** Adjust back lap / placket width according to button width (the finished placket width should be 2x the button diameter - for a 3/8" button, 3/4" finished width for back placket; for a 1/2" button, 1" finished width for back placket is correct). When cutting out neckband facing, refold fabric on the bias and place CF on bias fold to prevent the yoke from stretching along the bias edges. (See YouTube video)

## **Drafting Front and Back Dress (subtracting new neckband and adding fullness for gathering):**

Tape front yoke to blouse front at the seamline aligning the armhole curve. Trace top edges of pattern piece, around armhole curve, and down side seam a little ways.

Lay the newly drawn neckband under this pattern piece. Trace the seamline (not the cutting line) from the lower edge of the neckband onto the dress front pattern piece. Draw a line 1/4" above the traced seamline to serve as the cutting line for the dress front. The dress back will be prepared in basically the same way except that you will need to add the placket allowance. For 3/8" buttons, add 1 3/4"; for 1/2" buttons, add 2 1/4".

On this newly prepared dress front pattern piece, measure from corner of neckline to CF line and multiply 2 - 2 1/2 times (depending on fabric thickness) - this is the new width of the

front skirt pattern piece along the lower edge of the neckline. Again, prepare the back width using the same method. Example: Size 3 - 2 1/4" x 2 1/2 = 5 5/8" - this is not a critical measurement as long as there is ample fullness for visual appeal and for a child to move around comfortably.

Finish drawing pattern piece length by deciding on finished dress length and adding hem allowance. This dress will look best short - at or above the knee. The finished dress length is best determined using the high point of the shoulder.

Label the dress front and dress back: Size, Cut 1 on fold, CF or CB, and place an "x" at corner of neck edge seamline where gathers start & stop.

## **Sleeves:**

To finish lower edge of puffed sleeve, cut fabric 2" x length needed on straight grain of fabric to create cuff that finishes 3/4" wide.

## **Construction:**

Cut 2 lengths of fabric equal to the unfinished dress length. Decide on tuck placement and mark first tuck at least 4" over from selvage edge - use lines in fabric for tuck placement or use pinning board method to mark and iron folds in fabric. Tucks should be at least 4" long but may be longer for larger sizes.

Use Bobbin Tuck Technique to sew tucks (See YouTube video and refer to technique section of this article).

Check placement of tucks using dress pattern piece to decide on the number of tucks that will fit. 2-3 tucks is likely what will fit in the space allowed. If using fabric with a stripe design such as Heirloom Dimity, let the stripes dictate the spacing. Stripe fabric certainly makes the job easier!

To decide on placement of tucks on other side of dress front, measure over from first tuck stitching line to CF line and multiply x 2. Measure this distance from first tuck stitching line to position the first tuck on other side of dress.

**\*\*\* It is VERY IMPORTANT that tucks are sewn and spaced as evenly as possible to insure that front and back tucks will line up perfectly at shoulder seams!!! \*\*\***

Once all tucks are completed on the dress front, fold fabric in half on the CF line with wrong sides together, being sure to perfectly align / stack tucks. Place front dress pattern on top positioning tucks between the seam line at neck edge and the seam line at armhole edge and cut out. Stay stitch neck edge.

To stitch tucks in dress backs, measure over at least 4" from each selvage edge to make first tuck. This allows you to then cut out a right and left dress back pattern piece from each side of a width of fabric and use the center section of the width for the sleeves. Be sure back tucks will align with front tucks at shoulder seams when cutting out dress back. Stay stitch neck edge.

Cut strip of interfacing 1" wide (3/8" button) - 1 1/4" wide (1/2" button) by the length needed for back placket. Align interfacing along back placket cut edge with right sides together and stitch a 1/4" seam down placket length. Lightly press interfacing to seam allowance ONLY to secure in position and help turn the interfacing to wrong side. Turn interfacing under at seam line so wrong side of interfacing is to wrong side of fabric and fuse in place. Turn under placket width again and press.

Finish shoulder seam raw edges and stitch shoulder seams with a plain 1/4" seam. Press open. A French seam may be used instead of a plain seam but be aware that there is increased bulk that can be difficult to deal with at the neck and armholes. Run gathering threads on dress front between the x's (corner to corner) just below the lower neck edge - stitch 3 rows - 1/8", 1/4" and 3/8" from the raw edge. Gather the dress skirt backs in the same manner from the "x" to the inside placket edge. Stay stitch around all raw edges of neckband and neckband facing.

Neckband trim and method of attachment will need to be decided at this time. Depending on the trim you choose, it may be attached at this time or added later. The sample garment has a simple, narrow French lace footing which can be gathered and attached by hand or tiny zigzagged on by machine. You may use entredeaux if desired although entredeaux was not used on the sample garment due to the unusual angles at the corners of the neckline (just a personal preference).

Adjust gathers on dress front and back to fit neckband and attach lower edge of neckband to dress front and back along 1/4" seam line as invisibly as possible. On the sample garment, the neckband was temporarily held in place by "Lite Steam-a-Seam". The lace was then gathered and the lace and neckband were tiny zigzagged in place in one step.

Press lower edge of neckband lining under 1/4". Place neckband facing to neckband with right sides together. Stitch up CB around top neck edge and down other CB edge. Trim seam, clip to corner and turn facing to inside. The lower edge of neckband facing will be stitched in place by hand when all embroidery has been completed.

Stitch side seams with a French seam.

Run gathering threads in sleeves between the x's. Stitch sleeve seam in French seam and cuff seam in plain seam. Press cuff in half wrong sides together. Gather lower sleeve edges to fit cuffs. Attach interfaced cuff to lower edge of sleeve right sides together. Trim seam. Turn remaining raw edge of cuff under 1/4" and hand stitch to seam on inside of sleeve. Gather lace footing and hand stitch along cuff/sleeve seam. Set sleeves into armholes and clean finish armhole edges with a zigzag or "Seams Great".

Work buttonholes and sew on buttons. Hem to desired length.

**Reverse Bobbin Tuck Method Steps (for further instruction see YouTube video):**

Sew tucks from bottom of tuck up to top raw edge. Place needle down into fabric and bring needle back up. Pull on top needle thread to pull bobbin thread to top of fabric. Unthread machine.

Thread bobbin thread through needle from back to front (use needle threader) and reverse thread the sewing machine, leaving a thread tail at top long enough to sew one tuck.

Place needle back down into fabric in same hole it just came out of and sew tuck. Rethread machine for next tuck in same manner. Use thread tail still in needle / machine to bring up new bobbin thread; then discard this thread and rethread machine with bobbin thread for next tuck.

#### **Marking Tucks - Pins / Pinning Board Method:**

Pin fabric to pinning board aligning straight edges (selvage and top raw edge) with lines on pinning board.

Place several pins in fabric down a straight line on board 4" over from selvage and the desired length of tuck (4").

Pull fabric straight up from board so that pins remain in fabric and move to ironing board. Fold fabric along pinned edge and press crease to mark tuck (Be sure to use GLASS HEAD PINS). Carefully slide out pins and sew tucks.

Continue this method until all tucks are sewn in for the most accurate tuck placement.

#### **Embroidery:**

The embroidery along the center front of neckband was an adaptation of a design in Collars, Etc. Embroidery Designs. One strand of DMC 6 strand embroidery floss in color #775 was used. The bow was worked in a tiny chain stitch using a #11 sharp needle. A cluster of bullion roses were placed where the knot of the bow would be and French knots surround the bullion rose cluster. The roses and French knots were worked freehand.



### ***Design Options:***

Tucks can be hand stitched in a contrasting thread with a visible running stitch. A long sleeve with placket can be substituted (per C.C. "Ainsley" pattern) and featherstitching done on placket.

Sleeve band can be embroidered - featherstitching, bullion rose, etc. Could use a fun, bold print or stripe fabric and embroider tiny bullion animals on neckband. In this design option, you might consider making a wider neckband. Various trims and fabric may be used. This garment could easily be made shirt or tunic length if considering a more casual fabric and look.

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Follow links to Carol's YouTube Videos. If you have any difficulties using the direct links, just copy the path and paste it into you Internet Browser.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1NTnuxkTIA>

**Here are links to 2 more videos.**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxPfDfeKmhM>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PylibdInam0>



*Sheila's mother's Thimble Cabinet*

## **THIMBLES**

We all know that a thimble is a small hard pitted bell-shaped cup worn for protection on the finger that pushes the needle in sewing. Thimbles are found in every culture. In German they are called a 'fingerhut', literally meaning a 'finger hat'! One of the oldest thimbles in existence is an Egyptian stone thimble now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Some of the earliest known thimbles were Roman bronze thimbles and were buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79A.D. They were exhumed during the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii.

Over time thimbles have been made of everything imaginable. Metal, leather, rubber, wood, glass and china are popular. Other materials include marble, ivory and mother of pearl and many have been enhanced with precious stones including diamonds, sapphires, and rubies.

Originally, thimbles were used solely for pushing a needle through fabric or leather. Cave dwelling women were certainly the first to necessitate the need for finger protection as it was most painful pushing the bone needles through animal skins. Since then, however, they have gained many other uses. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were used to measure spirits, which brought rise to the phrase, "just a thimbleful".

Thimble-Knocking Street is said to have been the nickname of a street in an American city where ladies of the evening tapped thimbles against windows to attract passersby – (*I know this tidbit of information will be useful!*). Thimble-Knocking also refers to the practice of Victorian schoolmistresses who would tap on the heads of unruly pupils with thimbles. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century saw plastic thimbles often used for advertising a wide variety of products as well as political candidates!

Those with an interest in tracing clues to the customs of earlier times, places and situations will find collecting most rewarding. For us embroiderers and seamstresses, thimbles are a fun way to trace our sewing heritage. And they are small so as to have quite a large collection without taking up much space. I have included a photo of my late Mother's collection.

Perhaps you, too, will find this a rewarding and personal adventure to complement your love of sewing.

*Sheila Nicol*



## Finding a Thimble That Fits

A well fitting thimble will make your hand sewing and basting go much faster and with far less pain. We have all been frustrated with an ill-fitting thimble that made us remove it in disgust that it was bulky, loose or just got in the way. Without it, soon our fingers look like plucked porcupines.

Thimbles vary in whether they are open or closed at the top, the material from which they are made, the number and size of indentations they have, and the diameter of the thimble. You should consider all four to get a thimble that fits you correctly. The most obvious factor is the diameter of the thimble. Most of us just grab something at the fabric store, without really thinking about sizing. And the thimble market doesn't help all that much, because there is no standardized sizing for thimbles, the way that there is for rings.

If in doubt the best solution is to try on several. An open thimble, one with no top, the end of your finger should touch the inside top of the thimble. The fingernail should not contact the nail guard. The thimble should not drop off your finger when your hands hang at your sides, but you shouldn't be able to feel a pulse pounding in your finger either. With a closed thimble, the more common sort that does have a top, your fingernail shouldn't touch the top inside of the thimble.



It should stay on when your hands hang at your sides, but not be so tight as to allow you to feel your pulse. If you have long fingernails, the open thimble may work best for you. Alternatively, you may want to try a plastic thimble, which will be less likely to damage your nails, and is flexible enough to shape itself around your nail for a better fit. Generally metal thimbles are preferable as they provide more protection.

Considering the number and size of the indentations on the thimble is equally important. The more indentations the more control you will generally have. Two thimbles may fit on the finger or thumb equally well, but the one with more indentations will allow you to maneuver your fingers more easily, and avoid being forced into awkward positions to put pressure on the needle. The smaller the indentations the more control you will have. However, if you work with larger needles, make sure that the needle head fits snugly into the indentations. If they are too small, the needle will slip, slowing you down and possibly causing you injury.

The next time you are at you fine needlework shop, take the time to try on several thimbles. You will soon find that the right thimble can make hand-sewing infinitely more fun!

*Sheila Nicol*

## TRIVIA

What is the common seam allowance on American patterns?

- A) One-tenth foot
- B) Three centimeters
- C) Five-eighths of an inch
- D) One-half ell

See answer on last page.

## About the designer . . . . . Carol Harris

I have loved various needle related arts my entire life. My first memories of sewing were at my grandmother's knee as I learned to stitch handmade doll clothes. I soon graduated to the old treadle Singer my grandmother made the family garments on.

Although I never had any formal education in clothing design or construction, I have taken lots of classes from many different instructors, studied a multitude of sewing and needlework books, and have gotten what I'd call plenty of "on-the-job training".

From 1995 until 2008, I owned a retail smocking and heirloom sewing business and wrote a regular article for Creative Needle magazine. Since closing the business, I have become very involved in civic affairs in my hometown of Dyersburg, Tennessee. There have been a few opportunities for me to design and teach since 2008 and I hope to find more of those opportunities in the future.



Where will summer find you? Wherever you go, enjoy!



### **TRIVIA** Answer:

Five-eighths of an inch

Patterns were developed in Europe and still hold to the metric system.

1.5cm = 5/8" or 1" = 2.54cm

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