

Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

Volume 8 – Issue 3 March 2016

From The Editor –

In spite of the cold weather and the 5 inches of snow we got at home last week, my poor jonquils were sticking their blooms above the snow. Although I resisted, I was tempted to pick the little fellows and bring them into the warm house....Pretty silly I know, but it sure made me ready for spring.



We have another packed issue for your reading pleasure. First of all, many of you have for years enjoyed the beautiful embroidery that the Australians produce. They are a very creative and talented nation of sewers. Bear Threads, Ltd. has had a distributor 'down under' for nearly 30 years, the last 22 of which has been owned by Meg and Alan Linklater. Their company is called Cotton On Creations, and you have undoubtedly seen their ads in the Australian needlework publications. They are sharing their story with our readers this month and I am sure you will find their approach to 'heirloom sewing' interesting and unique.

As an aside, you may have noticed over the years that in their magazines, they use a lot more Swiss Voile where we generally prefer Swiss batiste. Our Swiss Voile is their preferred fabric due to it's' tendency not to wrinkle as much as batiste. They claim their children are more active than ours – I don't know about that!!!!

I am also introducing you to a technique called trapunto which is used quilting, embroidery and especially the gorgeous French ribbons. I hope you enjoy learning about a method of embellishment that is perhaps new to you.

Our liquidation sale continues and you should be receiving the E-blasts every few weeks as new items are added or further reduced. IF you are not receiving the sales E-blasts (3 have been sent to date), we do not have your e-mail address. Please contact us to be added to the list and, as well, we can forward the 3 past mailings to you. Check your stock and stashes carefully so you are not disappointed! We continue to look for a buyer so that these embroidery designs and beautiful fabrics may continue.

Dreaming of spring, and Happy Stitching....

Sheila

Cotton On Creations Australia

We have been asked by Sheila and Jim Nicol to outline a brief history of Cotton On Creations, their Australian Distributor.

Cotton On Creations, is a wholly Australian business owned by Margaret and Alan Linklater since 1993 – yes, we have just passed our 20 year milestone.

During our ownership, we have encouraged our customers to continue traditions associated with Heirloom Sewing.

In those short 20 years, we have seen a transition in Australia from the “old” Heirloom to the use of our wonderful French Cotton Laces, Swiss Cotton Embroideries and our delightful Swiss Cotton Fabrics in many other applications.

Primarily due to our climate, many of the uses for our Swiss Fabrics do not correlate to that of our American partners, Bear Threads, Ltd.

It would be unusual (read never) to see our young male children wearing a Button on Suit etc. as our kids lead a very robust lifestyle. That is not to say the “Yanks” aren’t robust, just different.

I well remember an auntie of mine, way back in 1960 travelling the world and bringing back, to a then 12 year old, 2 items – the first was a wrist watch that I absolutely loved and the second was a leather pair of shorts bought in Germany, with attached front and braces.

With no options, except try these shorts on, I was to wear them only once for fear of being singled out by my friends and possibly ridiculed – Aussie boys just did not wear this style of clothing.

How did we come to buy Cotton On Creations?

Little did I know that after a 30 year gap, Margaret and I would buy a business called Cotton On Creations.

Established some years prior to us purchasing it, Cotton On has since built a reputation as a wholesaler of high quality products that is used extensively by a variety of businesses, including retailers of made up clothing, manufacturers of exclusive articles and sewing shops that run Heirloom classes.

Our background, prior to 1993 encompassed banking (both of us), advertising (Alan) and insurance (Alan).

Well may it be said that we had no experience in the Heirloom area, however Margaret’s Mum (just turned 93 years) and her Grandmother were well accomplished in the arts of sewing and Margaret’s mother even remembers some of the lace styles we still carry in stock.

Margaret was taught many sewing skills as a young (and not so young) girl and continues to use these skills regularly.

In 1993 Alan was working in the advertising business as a Finance Director and Margaret had just finished her Uni. Degree in Farm Management.

Looking to widen our area of business, I “grabbed” a local Yellow Pages and flicked through the Business Agents section.

The biggest ad caught my attention and after talking to one of the Agents, he mentioned that he had a perfect business for us to look at – at that time we had not even heard of Cotton On Creations.

Our lives were about to be changed quickly – we visited the business which was located in Bowral, NSW – about 2 hours south of Sydney.

It was an eye opener for us both and when the usual business analysis was finished, we bought it!!

This was a big decision and meant that there was a HUGE learning curve in front of us.

Enter Sheila and Jim Nicol, the owners of Bear Threads, Ltd.

Sheila and Jim were a little wary of these Aussie people with little experience, but our enthusiasm won them over.

They made the journey to Australia to meet us and it was the beginning of more than a business relationship – we have become friends.

Our first visit to Bear Threads in Atlanta came at the end of a trip to France and Switzerland where we visited our manufacturer's factories.

This was a truly amazing experience!! The owners/managers of these factories could not have been friendlier and made us feel truly welcome. It was during these visits that we realized how close Sheila and Jim were to the manufacturers – a long term, first class relationship.

Our initial visit to Bear Threads, Ltd was very informative and we found that the "Yanks" hospitality was unmatched anywhere in the world.

Several of our customers have had their work published in Australian and U.S. magazines.

With this in mind we are keen to keep up periodic contributions to "Bear in Mind", and our next article will be by one of our customers.

Thank you for showing an interest in us by reading this article.

Margaret and Alan Linklater
Cotton On Creations
Australia.

TRIVIA

What Stitch is most often used for defining a design element in embroidery?

- 1) Outline
- 2) Back
- 3) Double Running

March Fun Facts

March, the third month of the year, is normally associated with the color green. One reason is because of St. Patrick's Day, but another probably has to do with the spring equinox being three weeks away. Here are some fun facts about March:

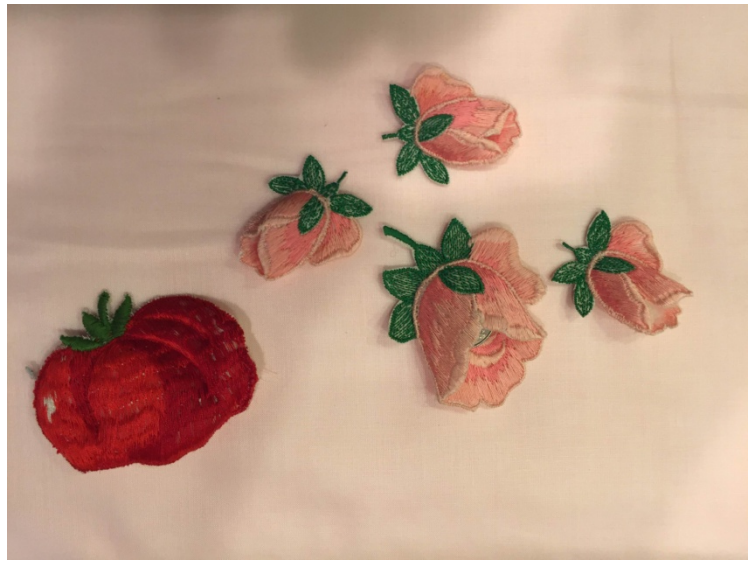
1. There are two birthstones for March: aquamarine and bloodstone. Both represent courage.
2. An ancient adage says, "March comes in a like a lion, and goes out like a lamb," which alludes to winter's end and spring's start. A subsequent phrase claims, "March is mad as a hare," which references the animals battling each other.
3. The name of the month, March, has nothing to do with its homonym. Instead, March is derived from Mars, the Roman god of war.
4. Its Women's History Month, American Red Cross Month and Fire Prevention Month. Other popular holidays are Read Across America (March 2, which is Dr. Seuss' birthday), 311 Day (March 11), Pi Day (March 14), St. Patrick's Day (March 17), Daylights Saving Day, Purim, and sometimes Easter occurs during March. In 2016, Easter Sunday falls on March 27.
5. March used to be the first month of the year until the Gregorian calendar began to be used in 1752.
6. While some say the daffodil is the "birth flower" of March, others claim it is the violet.
7. Plenty of famous people are born in March. Here are just a few: Beloved children's author Dr. Seuss, actress Jessica Biel, singer Justin Bieber, Grammy winner Elton John, theoretical physicist Albert Einstein, "James Bond" actor Daniel Craig, actress Eva Mendes, singer Jon Bon Jovi, actor Bruce Willis, and actress Reese Witherspoon.

TRAPUNTO

FROM RIBBONS TO QUILTS

Trapunto is derived from the Italian *trapungere*. Trapunto originated in Italy and in Italian means “to embroider”. The Latin translation is “to prick with a needle”. And so that is exactly what is done to create these beautiful ribbons, quilts and embroideries. Part of the design, but not all, is stuffed. Or sometimes, in quilting, part of the design is OVER stuffed to set it apart from the remainder of the design.

Trapunto is not to be confused with matelassé fabric which is a technique where the fabric appears to be quilted with batting, but in fact there is no padding involved. Quilts are made with a top and bottom fabric and batting in between. Matelassé is a thicker fabric with no padding that is stitched in a pattern to mimic the quilts produced in Marseilles, France.

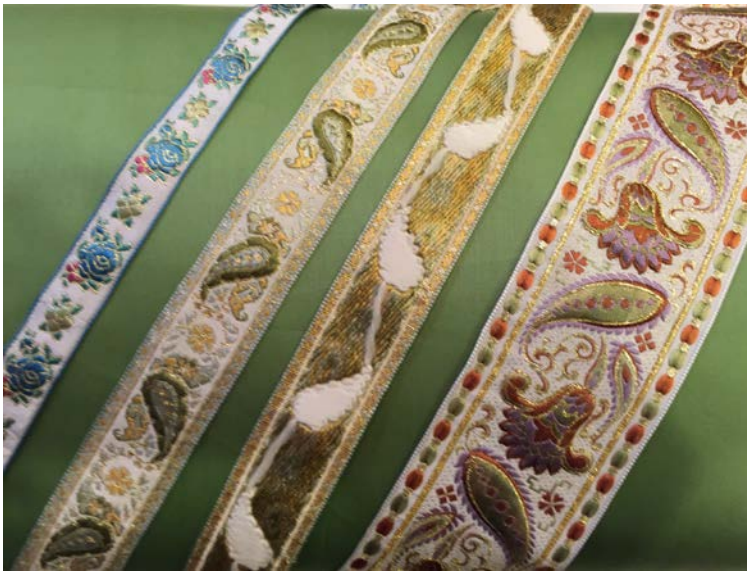


And if you look very closely, you can see a tiny bit of a dime peeking out from one of the three dimensional trapunto padded roses!

I have also photographed some Swiss Handloomed Motifs using this same technique and some exquisite French trapunto ribbons of which Bear Threads has a stunning collection.

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Sheila T. Nicol, Designs



The picture of trapunto ribbons shows the center ribbon both front and back, so you can see how part of the design is stuffed for a raised effect.

Popular patterns that lend themselves to the trapunto techniques are vines or branched, leaves, fruits such as grapes, cherries, apples, etc. See the pictures of the Swiss motifs that use this trapunto technique.



Answer – Outline or Stem

The most common stitch used to outline elements of embroidery is the outline or stem stitch. It is worked left to right, where the back stitch is worked right to left, not making a well-defined border. The running stitch leaves space between stitches, which requires you to turn your embroidery around and go back and fill in the gaps.



Notice on the pink strawberry example the vines and straight lines are stuffed by running cording through the channels. The leaves and strawberries are stuffed by slitting the back fabric and inserting batting. Toothpicks work well to get the stuffing in tight places. The slits are then whip stitched closed.



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