

# We're In Stitches

## (Highland)



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Newsletter of the Needlework Group of  
Distance Befriending - Befrienders Highland  
Queensgate Business Centre, 1 Fraser Street, Inverness IV1 1DW



Welcome to the first issue of the Newsletter of *We're In Stitches (Highland)* (WISH). We hope you will enjoy reading it, and will get lots of ideas and inspiration for your stitching projects as well as the opportunity to communicate with other stitching friends through this group.

Together, we can solve your stitching difficulties and share your successes.

Whether you are a complete beginner or a seasoned expert, you will find something in this needlework group for you. Please feel free to contact us and ask questions or get advice. You can also submit articles, pictures and ideas for

this Newsletter if you like. Those of you who are already skilled may wish to share stitching tips and experiences. This is your group, and the bi-monthly Newsletter is here for you to enjoy and to contribute to.

The group incorporates any sort of needlework—whether your interest is cross stitch, other sorts of hand embroidery, quilting, patchwork, knitting or crochet...

In this issue, you will find a competition, giving you a chance to win a prize of great stitching goodies. There is an introduction to finger-knitting, a how-to article, a member's experiences and a Stitching Clinic too.

Happy Stitching!

*Katherine - Editor*

## **HAVE YOU TRIED.....FINGER KNITTING?**

**Why would you want to knit with your fingers? Well... it is easy –and you can make all sorts of items, such as hats, scrunchies, toys and scarves. You need no equipment, apart from wool, of course. It is fun to do... and remember that fingers that are finger-knitting are not reaching for the biscuit tin or the cigarette packet.**

It has also been stated by neurophysiologist Professor Matti Bergtrom that: "The brain discovers what the fingers explore... If we don't use our fingers we become 'finger blind'. The rich network of nerves is impoverished which represents a huge loss to the brain, and thwarts the individual's all-round development." So, as we all knew already, knitting is good for you!

### **Let's get started... Casting On:**



1. Start with a regular slip knot, but keep the loop big enough to slip a thumb through.



2. Place the slip knot over your thumb with the tail end of the yarn lying to the left and the working yarn to the right.



3. Loosely weave the yarn between your forefinger and middle finger, in front of the ring finger and then behind the little finger.



4. Complete the line of foundation stitches, by bringing the yarn to the front of your hand to sit in front of your little finger, behind the ring finger, in front of the middle finger and behind the forefinger.



5. Bring the yarn back around to the front of the hand, placing it loosely across the front of all four fingers from left to right, ready to start your first row.



6. Now hold the bottom loop of yarn on your forefinger between finger and thumb of right hand, and pull it up and over the yarn that's lying across the fingers. Continue in this way across all four fingers.



7. Now bring the yarn back to the front of your hand and place across your fingers from right to left, ready to start your next row.



8. Starting with your little finger, bring the bottom loop over the top of the working yarn to create a stitch. Continue this all the way to your forefinger.



9. Repeat steps 5 to 8 until you have the length you require, then follow the cast off instructions. The piece of finger knitting will look like a piece of stocking stitch that will curl in on itself.

To cast off, take the loop from the forefinger and place it on the index finger, now bring the lower loop over the top loop. Continue in this manner across all fingers until you get to the last stitch. Cut the yarn and thread it through the last loop and pull it through to fasten off.

## How to Avoid Repetitive Strain Injury When You Stitch

Repetitive strain injury (RSI) is thought to be caused by work tasks which are repetitive, causing muscular strain and eventually injury. It can be defined as inflammation of the tendons round a joint caused by repetitive movements of that joint. And yes, you've guessed, poor posture, stress and overwork also contribute to the symptoms.

Repetitive movements, such as creating cross stitches, can often be responsible for this condition in some people. However, an awareness of the factors that cause the condition can be helpful in avoiding the pain and frustration that RSI can bring. RSI is not inevitable after cross stitching for long periods of time, so by bearing in mind a few simple principles, you can spare yourself the experience of RSI altogether.

The movements used in cross stitching involve the change of the needle-holding hand from the front to the back of the fabric, and also and that particular movement made in reverse, to bring the needle back through the fabric. This can be made worse for you if you hold your work in your hand, or on a hand-held frame or hoop. The larger the hoop, the larger the movement made which may even involve shoulder and elbow joints as well as wrists and fingers.

The medical remedy for RSI is rest, meaning complete abstinence of the movement causing discomfort. But if the problem is not resolved in a few days it may be worth seeking medical advice. Anti-inflammatory drugs, physiotherapy or heat treatment may be the answer.

When the pain eases, it is essential to try to have analysed the precise cause of the problem and plan to avoid the movement that is the root of the problem. This will prevent the recurrence of the pain. Also, there is little point in resting for a few days, only to return to the same habits of repetitive movement. Ideally, you should be thinking about taking a preventative approach to dealing with the problem.

To adapt the movements of your needle-holding hand, you can use a frame to secure your work, either from the floor or one your lap. This means that one of your hands is free to work on top of the fabric, and the other can work from below it. Many of the repetitive movements of creating stitches will be removed. If you tense your muscles and tendons when you stitch, this can be a contributory factor in RSI. Relaxing those muscles is therefore essential. You may be bringing your work close to your eyes to get a better view (in which case, try using a magnifier or having your eyesight checked). Make sure you are sitting in a comfortable position with your back supported and your neck bent forwards as little as possible.

Using a high-count fabric can make you tense up your hand, as it is trickier to get the needle into the right place. If you use a lower count of fabric it will be easier to see the holes. Many people find relief from the wearing a wrist support helpful.



If you use long threads when you are stitching, then it is possible that your arm may need to move upwards in a repetitive way, straining the muscles without you even being aware of the situation. Shorter lengths of thread can eliminate that difficulty. Some people find that if they keep their elbows from pointing

outwards or rest them on the arm of the chair may help to cut down on movements.

It is worthwhile to consider how you habitually stitch in order to prevent any tension building up. Try to stop every now and again to see if you can detect any tension in your arms or shoulders, and release that tension.

Warm-up exercises before you begin, stretching the arm, finger and shoulder muscles gently, can be beneficial.

Taking a short break every few minutes can also break the repetitive cycle of movements.

*Patricia.*

## **TOP TIPS**

***'Don't iron your embroidery stitches with a hot iron. Your stitches will be flattened if you do. Instead, put your stitched work between two soft towels, and gently press with a steam iron, avoiding pressing hard over the stitches.'*** Josie.

***'When you are embroidering a picture that includes water, or shiny things, try to use metallic threads mixed with stranded cotton, to give a better effect, This is especially useful for adding Christmas sparkles too.'*** Ciara.

***'Next time you have a doctor's or dentist's appointment, take a small project, such as a knitted toy, or a stitched card to work on in the waiting room. You'll make progress, and it will take your mind off why you are sitting there.'*** Keith.

## **CAN YOU HELP?**

***'Help, please! I am looking for a tapestry chart of a picture of a lighthouse. Can anyone tell me where I can get one, please?'***

*Doreen.*

***'What's the best way to use variegated threads when you embroider? I have some beautiful skeins of thread, but don't know how to use them for the best effects.'***

*Charlotte.*

***If you can help, or if you have questions, please write to Katherine, editor. WISH Newsletter, Distance Befriending, Befrienders Highland, Queensgate Business Centre, 1 Fraser Street, INVERNESS, IV1 1DW***

## COMPETITION

### CROSS STITCH WORDSEARCH

V G R D Z X D M T E Y C O L A B R B E I  
D S T X X Y X Z L O S H O N V X Y U H O  
L D A U O V F T W D B S Z M M Z A E K Y  
I R X V J B S F T Y V E R W H Z D E H F  
K L E U N B K E F G K E W U I J I A D M  
R B Q L L A L R B Z I Z Y B T W A A I W  
O A V D P B C Y O F A W I X M L C W G C  
W C X E M M J E I W T O N K H C N E R F  
K K T I A A A N T U U I M F A B R I C S  
C S H S G Q G S F S G S B H B Z W G E C  
A T R P H A N R Q O A U C D N O T F V I  
L I E K M S A I L V Z W T C H A R T J S  
B T A H H M G J E L D E E N B Y B R E S  
X C D F E H I E Q F U M K E P K F M R O  
J H C J C D A E R H T C I L L A T E M R  
V J O U A I Y H A C P J I F O M Y J V S  
Y W U C E V A E W N E V E D L V W B G D  
S A N S T R A N D E D C O T T O N J T D  
A V T E M B E L L I S H M E N T P O O H  
L P P P R K G K Z F F N P Q M Z G C U L

**AIDA; METALLIC THREAD; EVENWEAVE; FABRIC; FRENCH KNOT;  
BLACKWORK; SAMPLER; NEEDLE; HOOP; SCISSORS;  
BACKSTITCH; WASTE CANVAS; WORKBOX; THREADCOUNT;  
CHARMS; STRANDED COTTON; MAGNIFIER; FRAME; THIMBLE;  
EMBELLISHMENT; CHART.**

Can you find the words above in the square Wordsearch grid? The letters of the words can follow in any direction.

One word from the list cannot be found in the grid. When you have found out which word this is, put the word, plus your name and contact details on a postcard and send it to the address below before July 3rd 2009. All correct answers will be placed in a hat and the winner will be drawn on that date. The winner will win a bumper bag of stitching goodies.

***Katherine, Editor, WISH Newsletter, Distance Befriending, Befrienders  
Highland, Queensgate Business Centre, 1 Fraser Street, Inverness IV1 1DW.***

## Photographing your Projects: Enjoying Stitching Projects... Forever

Many stitchers create beautiful projects, only to give them away, and rarely, if ever, see their works of art again. It seems a shame not to hold on to a part of that gift for yourself as well – to remember and celebrate the hours of stitching in order to complete that project.

Memories can be kept alive if you place a photograph in a stitching-themed scrapbook or photo album of every completed work. It is easy to build up a keepsake album that will give much pleasure to look at for years to come.

It is a great idea to remember to take a photograph or computer-scanned image of every finished project and place each image into an album. It's simple. Or is it? Magazines sometimes display photos of proud stitchers holding up their creative work to the camera. Many of them do not do their work justice. Usually, it's because camera-flash reflections on the glass of their framed work ruin any photograph. Also, people holding up their newly-finished work for the camera often omit to iron their creation first – so their trophy has fold-marks in the fabric, or is crumpled. And some people even stand in front of their untidy kitchen sink or a dustbin when they are displaying their work to the camera! Backgrounds can be very distracting.

Enough criticism! Here's the checklist for taking a great photo of finished stitching:

1. The project should be ironed carefully, between two layers of a towel so that there is no scorching.
2. Many compact digital cameras have the facility to turn off the flash function. The flash facility can distort the colours by making some brighter than others too. Of course, the flash can reflect against any glass too, causing a white, or shiny mark across the photograph.
3. The best place to take a photograph is outside on a bright, dry day. A plain background surface with no shadows should be found... a plain painted wall perhaps.
  1. If a person is going to stand holding the project to the camera, it is important that this person is not squinting into bright sunlight.
  2. The camera must be held still, in order to avoid blurring when the picture is taken. A tripod is helpful here. If the photographer does not own one, then improvisation is possible, using a ladder, a table or anything that the camera can be placed on securely that will prevent movement.
  3. The composition of the picture is important. Does the photographer need to capture the picture of a person with the stitched item, or just the stitchery itself? If a person is holding the picture, is there a large thumb obscuring an essential feature of the picture? Is the person holding the picture level, or is it tipped to one side?
4. People can be very self-conscious when they are having their pictures taken – even if the picture is supposed to be all about the stitchery. So if the person holding the prized work has untidy hair or a collar turned up, it is wise to let the person know about this in the most tactful way possible so that remedial action can be taken.
5. Using a digital camera, there's no extra expense involved in taking lots of shots. So it is useful to experiment, and see what turns out best. Taking 30 shots slightly differently each time, and also using the 'bracketing' technique will give the photographer a much better chance of getting a good picture, worthy of treasuring. Good luck, everyone.

*Peggy.*

## **YOUR LETTERS AND EMAILS**

Hi Katherine

My distance friend and I are stitching the same tapestry picture of a vase of flowers. We have talked through our difficulties with particular parts of the picture, and we keep each other motivated. It is good fun. I'm hoping I shall complete my picture before my friend does. We are both quite competitive.

*Sharon.*

Dear Katherine

Here is a tale of caution for other readers. I fancied a bar of chocolate while I was embroidering a tablecloth a couple of days ago. To my horror, I got a bit of melted chocolate on my work, and try as I might, I could not completely remove the stain. But then I had a good idea. I added a few extra brown autumn leaves to the design I was stitching, and not only did I cover the stain, but I added a new dimension to my autumn-themed tablecloth! I don't recommend that anyone copies this though. I think I was lucky.

*Julia.*

Hello fellow knitters

I stopped knitting when my husband died seven years ago. I always used to knit his jumpers and I felt that I had no further reason to knit. I missed doing it though. Now I'm knitting squares for a charity that puts together quilts for children who are ill. It's good to have my hobby back.

*Beryl.*

***Do you have stitching story to share? Do you have a question, an idea, an article or comments to send us? If so, we'll be pleased to hear from you.***

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Or email Yvonne at [distance@befriendershighland.org.uk](mailto:distance@befriendershighland.org.uk)***

***The next issue will include articles: 'What is tatting?' and 'Save your eyesight!' ... and much, much more...This is your Newsletter, so if you have some articles, tips and/or questions to contribute, please do so . If you'd like to send us a photo of your stitching, too, that would be wonderful.***

***Let's Get Stitching!***