



# Embroidery Sampler Class

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## 1. Introduction

Two primary ways that embroiderers pre-17th century have recorded embroidery patterns and techniques have been through the use of model books and embroidery samplers.

Model books, also known as *modelbuchs* in German, contained patterns and motifs for all sorts of arts, including various forms of embroidery, lace-making and illumination (Historical Needlework Resources, accessed 2013). Several model books can be found published/listed online by The West Kingdom Needleworkers Guild (accessed 2013), The German Renaissance of Genoveva (accessed 2013), Mathilde Eschenbach (accessed 2013) and the Antique Pattern Library (accessed 2013). Model books are useful tools for researching period embroidery patterns, but often not stitch types or techniques.

Embroidery samplers were used for many purposes throughout history. They were known to be used as a tool (for recording stitches and patterns), decorative, and as a learning exercise (VAM, accessed January 2014). The samplers documented the ability of an embroiderer and documented not just the patterns they used, but the types of threads, stitch variables (e.g. types and lengths of stitches), the textures brought about by different techniques and they give the observer an insight into the 3 dimensional nature of embroidery.

The Victoria and Albert Museum online collections (VAM, accessed January 2014) has a collection of SCA period samplers ranging from the 14th though 16th centuries, originating from countries including Egypt, Germany, Italy and England.

Samplers were commonly made onto bands of linen and embroidered with silk in a variety of stitches. Both examples provided in the appendix of these notes have a linen base with silk stitching, though figure A1 also includes metal thread embroidery.

## 2. Sampler pattern and instructions

This sampler pattern is much smaller than an extant sampler, however, it is intended to allow users to practise each of five embroidery techniques. Please be aware that each shape could take an hour or more to fill in with embroidery.

These instructions have been divided into two categories; one for the beginner level of embroiders and one for the intermediate or above levels. Beginners are encouraged to attempt the intermediate instructions after they've followed the beginners instructions.

### 2.1 Materials and making a start

It is suggested you use a white cotton or linen fabric with an obvious and even weave (such as the material used in cross stitch) as it will make it easier to attempt the suggested stitches. I also suggest you use embroidery cotton to practise these stitches. Lightly trace the pattern (Figure 1) onto your fabric with a lead pencil or a fabric pencil. Then, mount the fabric into an embroidery hoop or frame.

Each stitch listed in the instructions below contains a link to a stitch guide, as published on my blog: [www.cearashionnach.wordpress.com](http://www.cearashionnach.wordpress.com).

### 2.2 Beginners instructions

*Strawberry motif:* complete the outline in back stitch.

*Straight line (above flower):* complete in Pekinese stitch or osenstich. There is also the option to continue with either of these stitches by outlining the inner, solid border that surrounds the other motifs (approximately half a cm in from the dashed border).

*Top left corner box:* outline the box with stem stitch and fill the box with [klosterstich](#).

*Top right corner:* outline the box with stem stitch and fill the box with Bayeaux stitch.

**Figure 1:** Sampler pattern by Ceara Shionnach (2010)



*Notes: this image was drawn by Ceara Shionnach (2010). The flower and leaf (Wikimedia commons, accessed January 2014), strawberry (VAM Figure A1, accessed January 2014) and horse (Museum of Reading (2000-2004) are inspired from period sources (as referenced).*

### 2.3 Intermediate +

*Strawberry motif:* complete the outline in back stitch and fill in with detached buttonhole (a needlelace technique).

*Flower and leaves motif:* complete the outline in stem stitch and fill with klosterstich (see example in Fig. A3).

*Horse motif:* complete the outline in stem stitch and outline in Bayeaux stitch (see example in Fig. A4).

*Inner border (solid line approximately half a cm in from the dashed border):* complete border in Pekinese stitch.

## 2.4 Finishing the sampler

Once you've completed your embroidery, remove your sampler from the embroidery frame or hoop. Cut around the outer border of the sampler pattern (solid line approximately half a cm out from the dashed border). You can either edge your sampler with buttonhole stitch (to the dashed border), or roll the edge and tack it down with running stitch or any type of hemming stitch.

## 3. References

Antique Pattern Library website (accessed 2013).

<http://www.antiquepatternlibrary.org/>

Historical Needlework Resources – *Patterns and Modelbuchs*. This page includes a description of period pattern books, which can be used to design blackwork (and other) embroidery.

[http://medieval.webcon.net.au/period\\_16th\\_c\\_modelbuchs.html](http://medieval.webcon.net.au/period_16th_c_modelbuchs.html)

Mathilde Eschenbach (accessed January 2014) *A Bibliography of Pattern Books in the 16th Century*. This site lists numerous pattern books for embroidery, lace, and other textiles.

<http://home.comcast.net/~mathilde/embroidery/bibpatbk.htm>

Museum of Reading (2000-2004, accessed January 2014). *Britain's Bayeux Tapestry at the Museum of Reading*.

<http://www.bayeuxtapestry.org.uk/>

The German Renaissance of Genova (accessed January 2014). *German Blackwork Modelbooks: Patterns, Designs, and Motifs from the 16th Century*. This page provides links to German 16th blackwork patterns.

<http://germanrenaissance.net/german-blackwork-modelbooks-patterns-designs-and-motifs-from-the-16th-century/>

The West Kingdom Needleworkers Guild (accessed January 2014)– *Annotated Booklist: Historic Model Books and Pattern Books*.

<http://wkneedle.bayrose.org/booklist/Book-Model.html>

VAM (Victoria and Albert Museum, accessed January 2014). *A History of Samplers*.

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/h/a-history-of-samplers/>

Figure A1: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O46183/sampler-jane-bostocke/>

Figure A2: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O69669/sampler-unknown/>

Wikimedia commons (accessed January 2014) *Maltererteppich, Augustinermuseum Freiburg, 14th century*.  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maltererteppich\\_complete.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maltererteppich_complete.jpg)

## 4. Appendix: Figures

**Figure A1:** Linen sampler embroidered with silk and metal, by Jane Bostock, England, 1598. Museum no. T.190-1960 (VAM, accessed January 2014).



**Figure A3:** Rose embroidered by Ceara Shionnach on linen base with wool in klosterstich with stem stitch outline.



**Figure A2:** Linen sampler embroidered with silk in double running stitch, by unknown maker, Egypt, 14th-16th century. Museum no. T.326-1921 (VAM, accessed January 2014).



**Figure A4:** Horse embroidered by Ceara Shionnach on linen base with Bayeaux stitch filling and stem stitch outline.



These (and other) class notes are available for download from Ceara's blog:

<http://cearashionnach.wordpress.com/>

