

Embroidered Patchwork



The following article is an extract from the book [“Embroidered Pictures and Patchwork”](#) by [Priscilla M Warner published in 1950](#). I have been unable to find out anything at all about Priscilla Warner herself, but I do own two of her books from the mid-20th century - this one and another called “Embroidery Mary” which aimed to encourage girls to take up embroidery. I know that she had published at least two other books at that time, and if anyone knows anything about her I would love to share in a future issue of the magazine.

Meanwhile, I thought it would be fun to take a look at Priscilla’s embroidered patchwork - she used hexagons and the paper piecing method, incorporating embroidered hexagons into the printed fabric ones to create what must have been the most beautiful nursery quilt.

Although today we would probably choose different colours, and I know that I at least would make the pictures a little smaller - to me they seem a little squashed within the hexagons - I still think this is a great project to take a look at, and maybe incorporate some of her designs into our own work...

The book [“Embroidered Pictures and Patchwork”](#) has been out of print for many years, but second hand copies do occasionally appear both on Amazon Marketplace and Ebay.

ADVANTAGES OF HOARDING AND THE DELIGHTS OF PATCHWORK

If you are the kind of person who has never been able to throw away even tiny cuttings of material - in case they come in useful - then this will be your hour of triumph (*note from Helen: "At last!!"*); though if any of your patchwork friends get to know of this foible, it may also be one of trial, for they will probably pester you to see what you can spare for *them*.

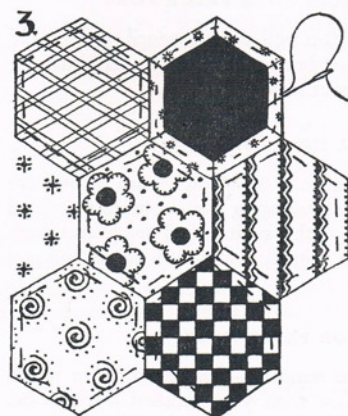
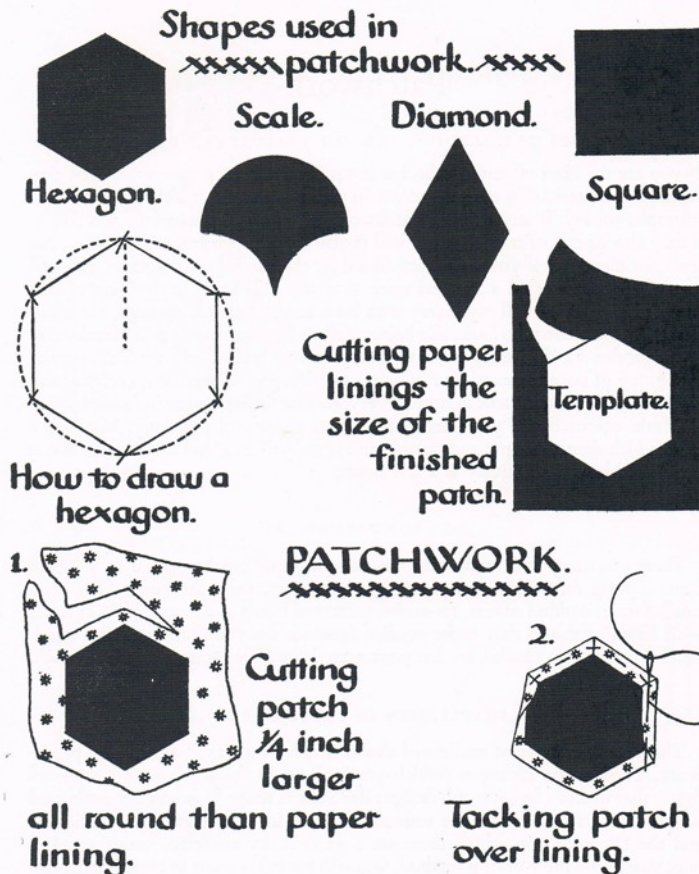
But if you have been bitten by the patchwork bug too, you will be so delighted to find a kindred spirit that you will share out willingly - just as the true gardener will give away with both hands, flowers, cuttings, roots and seedlings to anyone who looks like being a fellow lunatic. For there is a fascination about patchwork that really seems to "get" people; it is partly the thrill of creating

something of use and beauty out of scraps so trifling as to be almost nothing, and partly the bit of artist latent in nearly everyone that finds pleasure in manipulating the little coloured and patterned patches into order and harmony.

But it is a craft which demands time and trouble, and some patience and is *not* work that is done quickly and effectively in a few hours.

USES FOR PATCHWORK

There are many uses to which you can put your patchwork; if you shrink from starting off with a bedspread or cot cover, there are possibilities on a smaller scale; cushion covers, tea cosies, patterned bands to decorate plain curtains - all kinds of things that make smaller demands on your time and for which smaller patches are needed, so that your material will be used up to the last inch.

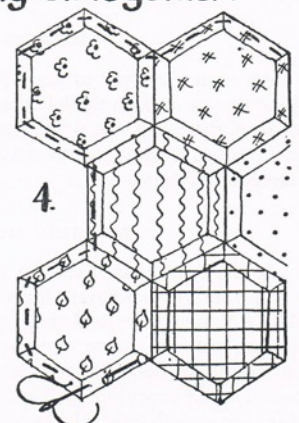


3. Oversewing patches together.



4. Herringboning over joins.

Re-tacking outer edge of patches after sewing all together.



5. Featherstitching over joins.

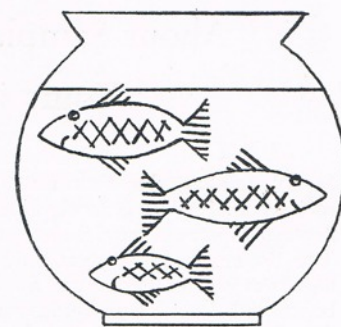
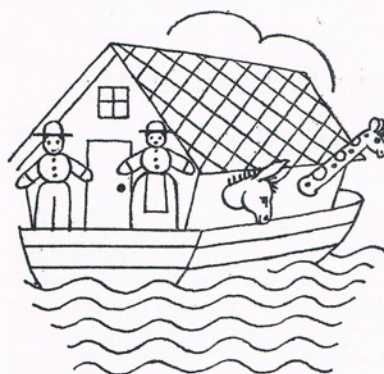
SHAPES USED IN PATCHWORK

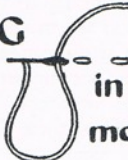
There are a number of traditional shapes that have always been used in patchwork. There is the Hexagon, a six-sided figure that makes a honeycomb design; the Scale, a shape based on the circle, and which takes its name from the scale effect given in the design; and the Square and the Diamond, on which there are a great many attractive variations. But once you know the working method, you will probably want to experiment with shapes for yourself, so I will give details only of the Hexagon.

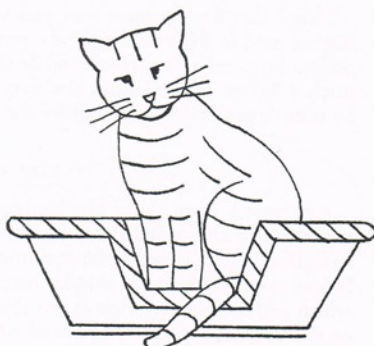
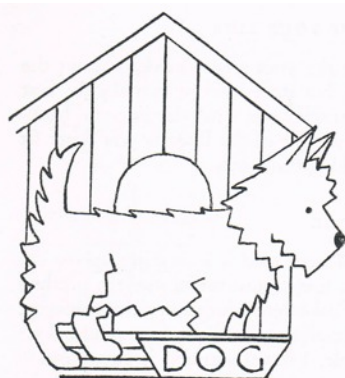
(Note from Helen: I have omitted how to draw a Hexagon as these templates are now readily available - though I guess they weren't 60 years ago!).

WORKING METHOD FOR PATCHWORK

Use a thin piece of card to make your template - the pattern from which to cut your paper linings - the size you want your finished patch to be.



RUNNING STITCH,  in one row or more, is worked from right to left.



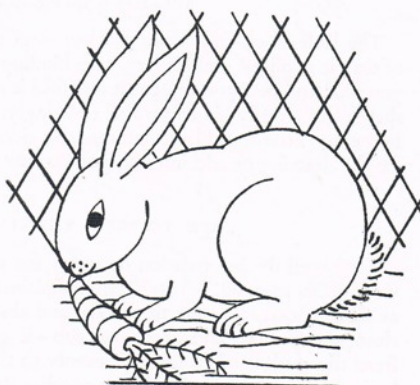
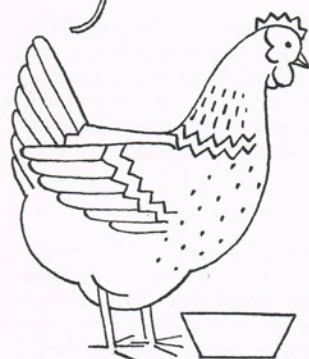
Make a number of paper linings by placing your template on the paper and drawing round it and cutting out the resultant shape. Next cut a corresponding number of patches from your scraps of material, making them $\frac{1}{4}$ inch larger all round than the paper linings.

Tack your patches over the paper linings, place them edge to edge with right sides facing, and oversew them neatly and firmly together.

BACK STITCH is worked from right to left.



Here is **THREADED BACK STITCH.**



KIND OF MATERIAL TO USE

In any piece of patchwork it is advisable to have all your pieces of material of one kind, that is to say, all linens, cottons and the kinds of rayon that are similar in weight to cotton and linen, or all silks, velvets and possibly nylons. *(Note from Helen: nylon - no, I don't think so. But I guess things were different then!)* It is also wise, when cutting the patches, to try to have the "weave" of the material going the same way in all of them - either up and down, or from side to side and not diagonally. If you do this you will bet a better "set" and there will be less likelihood of uneven "pull."

REMOVE LININGS AND USE AGAIN

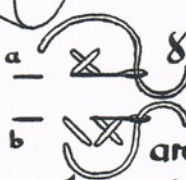
When a patch is completely surrounded with other patches sewn onto all its six sides, you may take out the tacking and remove the lining for use again. And when all your patches are sewn together, the linings removed, and the other edges of the patches re-tacked to prevent the material from fraying before it is sewn down onto the lining, you are ready to begin your feather-stitching or herringboning over the joins. This final stitching is not essential, but it has decorative value, and helps to reinforce, that is why the two stitches most often used are those which go from side to side, or from one patch to another, thus strengthening the joins.

LINING OR BACKING

Lastly, the whole thing must be backed or lined, either with a larger piece of material, so that a border is provided, or it can be slip-stitched invisibly to a piece of material cut to the same size and shape.



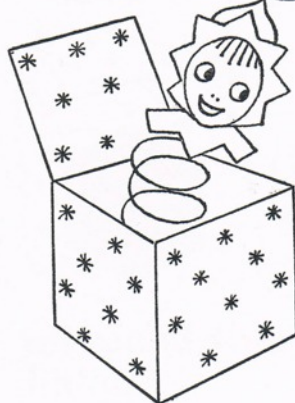
CROSS STITCH



DOUBLE CROSS STITCH



are worked from right to left.



But, whichever method is used, the feather stitching or herringboning must be worked round the *outside* edge *after* the lining has been added.

TRACING THE PICTURES

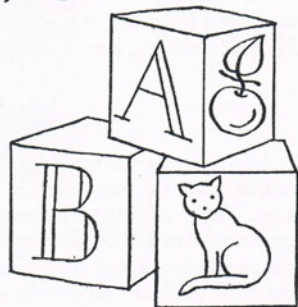
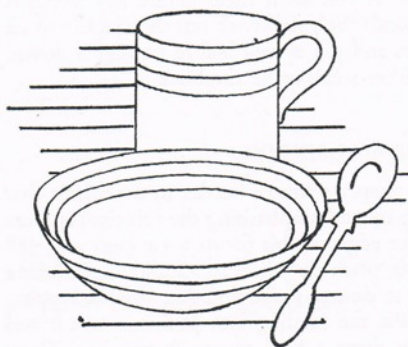
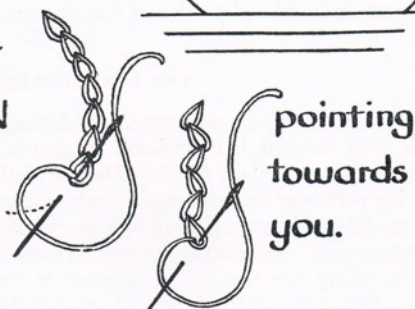
Now, if you are setting out to make the cot cover, your first job will be to trace the designs from the book and transfer them to the embroidery material. As you will need your hexagons *clearly* marked, so that you can place each design correctly in its enclosing shape, I would advise setting out a number of hexagons on your embroidery material, then tracing the designs, one by one, each in its own hexagon.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

The designs given here may suit your purpose just as they are, or you may not, at this stage, feel competent to adapt or alter. But if by changing a little girl's "hair-do" in one of the pictures, or by giving her another pattern on her dress, or by substituting another dog for the little sitting up Cairn,



CHAIN STITCH & ZIG-ZAG CHAIN
are both worked with the needle



you can establish a personal connection between the cot cover and its future owner, I hope you will do so, for it will add enormously to its value. Better still, include some patches of your own designing.

HAVING A PLAN OF ACTION - OR NOT, AS THE CASE MAY BE

You will probably have your own ideas about the order in which you tackle the various parts of this piece of work. You can begin by preparing a good supply of the embroidered pictures; or you may prefer to do a bit of one or a bit of the other as the mood takes you. One of the charms of this particular project is the variety of work in it, and another is that a good deal of the initial work must be done while it is in small pieces, making it ideal for taking about to friends' houses or on holidays.

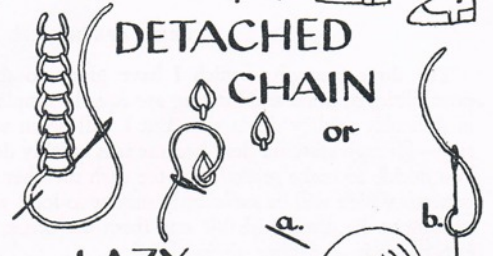
I suppose some method is desirable, as you could embroider *all* the pictures and



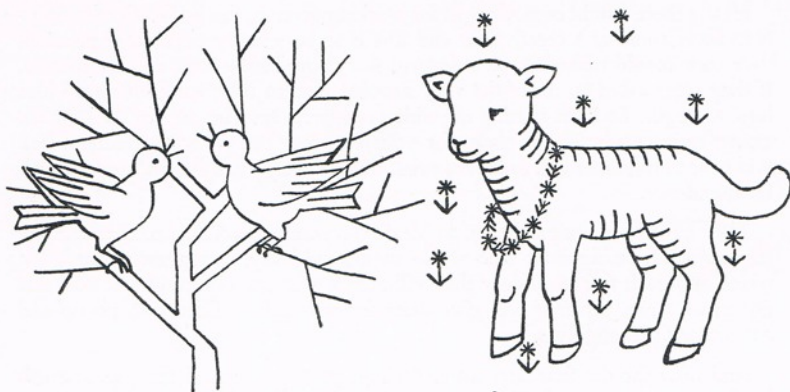
OPEN CHAIN.
Both are worked with the needle pointing towards you.



DETACHED CHAIN



LAZY DAISY.



SINGLE THREADED RUNNING



DOUBLE THREADED RUNNING

prepare *all* the patches before you began joining up, because you would then arrange them to the best possible advantage. I began intending to be strong-minded, but the desire to see "how it would look" was too strong, so when I had embroidered half a dozen or so of the pictures, I pressed them and began sewing them up with the coloured patches. I don't think much harm was done; I had a few regrets afterwards about placing, but it was worthwhile not having to wait for my fun.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NEAT STITCHING OVER JOINS

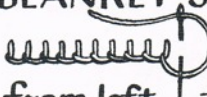
There are not many directions that I can give for the final stages of the work; it is a matter of common sense, and of methods varying because of differences in kinds of material used. But I will assume that you have now done all the embroidery and sewing up and have herringboned or feather-stitched over the joins. Whichever you choose, see that it doesn't sprawl. It should be a close, compact band of stitching, otherwise it will encroach on your embroidered patches or detract from the value of the patterned ones.

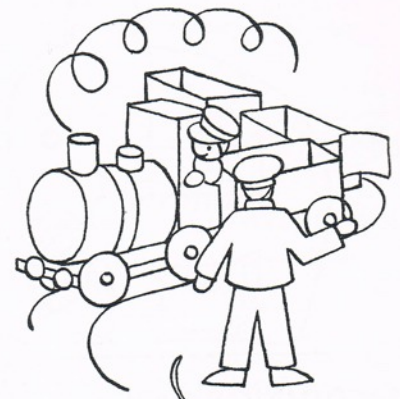
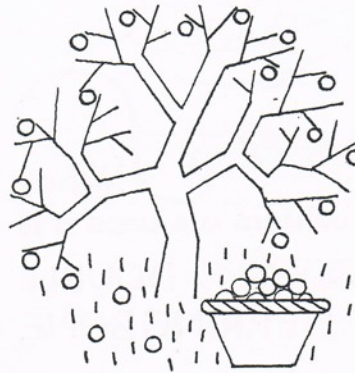
THE PENULTIMATE PRESS


Now your work is ready for mounting, and although it will need a final pressing when it is quite finished, it is advisable to give it one at this stage too, before you stitch it down onto the backing.

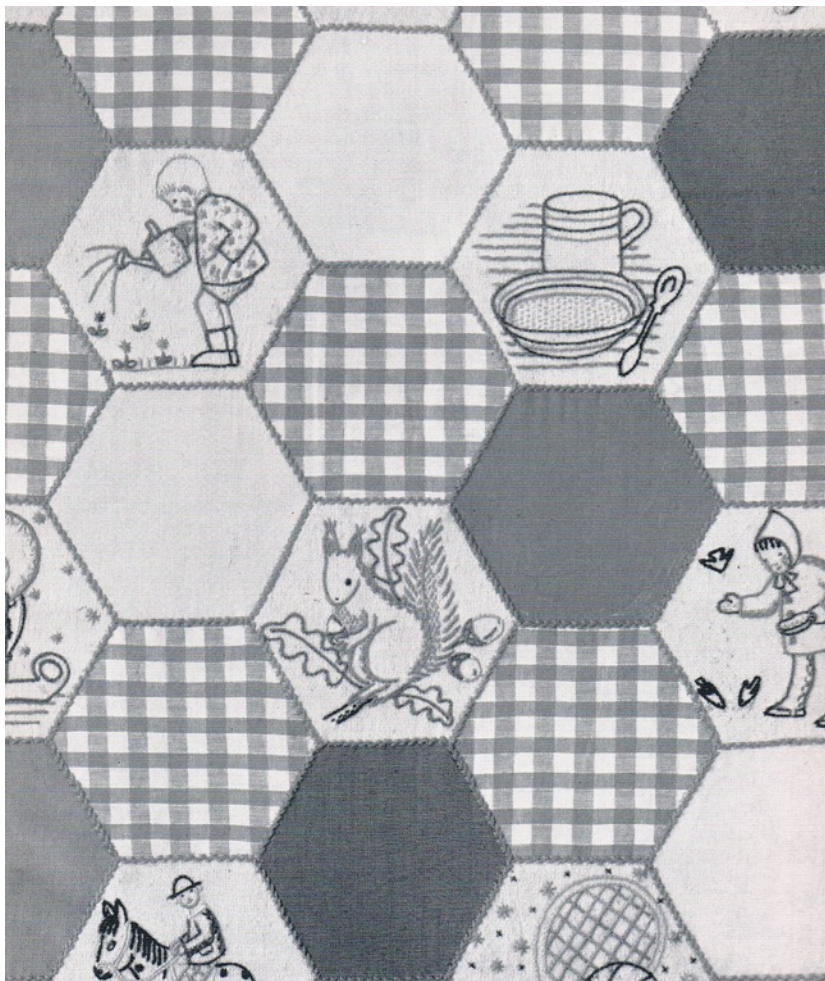
Pay particular attention to the embroidered patches, and if necessary, give some of the plain ones an extra smooth-over if wrinkles are obstinate. Now spread out your piece of mounting material on some flat surface and place the patchwork on it, taking care that the margins are as you want them before any fixing is done. When it is correctly placed, smooth the patchwork out thoroughly in all directions from the centre to the edges and pin it well before tacking it down. Having tacked it, hem it, then feather-stitch or herringbone it before putting on the bias binding.



BLANKET STITCH is
 worked
from left to right &



FLY or Y STITCH
 from right to left.



Note from Helen:

Strangely there was no photo showing the whole completed project - just a couple of black and white images of part of the completed work. You can see part of one of these images on the left.

I hope you've enjoyed this extract from Priscilla M Warner's book though - and that you might find a use for at least some of her lively designs.