



February 2016 Newsletter

Dear All,

I thought that I would start this months newsletter with a bit of an update on a couple of the projects I am working on at the moment.

I have been taking photos and painting the backgrounds of memorable buildings in the town for the sampler project "Stitch Wantage 2016". I hope that anyone can take part in the stitching even if it just with a running stitch to outline the windows, door etc. of course there is also lots of scope for embellishing with more adventurous hand stitching if that is what takes your fancy. I will also be charting some cross stitch patterns which will form the borders and divisions of the piece.

I am updating the [webpage](#) with all of these background pieces as they are painted, how they are stitched, together with details of the workshops and general project information. I am really excited to see how they are treated by those who work on them.



I haven't started my classes with the Alzheimer's suffers yet, but I have been down to the care centre and met a few of the people who will be taking part, one lady was stitching some beautiful work while we chatted. It is a lovely group full of some very individual characters! We have decided to start off by making some twiddle blankets, these are small blankets which have different textured fabrics, buttons, zips and generally things that patients can play with to keep their hands occupied. The main objective of the workshops however is the process of engaging with the patients and providing a happy and stimulating time for them rather than the production of any end product. This is a completely different way of working for me but I am really looking forward to getting started in the next few weeks.



As well as these projects, I have updated the web page with a number of [classes](#) that I will be teaching in Oxfordshire and

Berkshire in the next few months, there is Machine Embroidery at Mill Arts in Banbury and the National Needlework Archive in Newbury, Handmade Books, Image Transfer and Soluble bowls at Newbury and two textile transformation workshops at Ardington School of Arts. All these classes need to be booked with the appropriate centres, but if you have any questions or are coming then do get in touch and let me know.

I am just thinking about packing up the samples and materials for Cornwall this week, I can't believe it is 5 years since I ran the first residential week on the beautiful farm at Bodrugan Barton. Once again we will be taking [Gardens and Flowers](#) as our inspiration and I am looking forward getting started - I know that people have some ambitious plans for creating fabrics for garments as well as books, seed packets using transfer paints and dyes in combination with hand and machine stitch. I will try and update my [facebook](#) page every day as I know some of you will be keeping in touch.

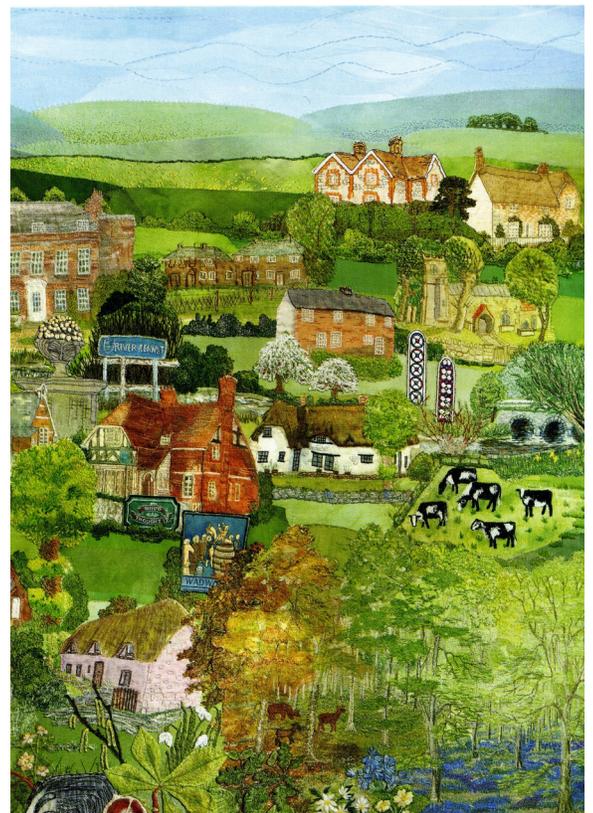


There are a couple of Distance Learning Units that you won't have seen before, from [Jane Hyde](#) who has finished Unit One and a very big congratulations to [Susan Cobby](#) who has finished the final unit of the course and made this lovely panel for the front of a bag and her second assessment piece. Well done Susan and good luck with all your future projects.

Before I move on the wonderful exhibitions I have visited in the last couple of months I would just like to say a very big thank you to [Marlborough Embroiderers Guild](#) for making me so welcome and providing such a wonderful lunch when I went to give my 'Diamond Stitches' talk at the end of January. It is such a vibrant and active group and so exciting to see so much work going on for a variety of exhibitions and events.

I was reminded of the Ashbury map project I was working on this time last year when I saw the exquisite work hanging in the Kennet Valley Hall a section of which is shown here. Marlborough and District Embroiderers Guild, Young Embroiderers and local residents have produced this map showing Fyfield, Lockeridge Dene and Lockridge, in a snapshot of the landscape between 2006-2010.

I must also confess that as a result of browsing their very informative website, I found information on



[Timmerous Beasties](#) who have an exhibition at the Winchester Discovery Centre until 16th March. This is a company I have been following for some years now and I am excited that I will be able to see some of their work for real at last.

The other upcoming exhibition I am excited about is [Botticelli Reimagined](#) at the V&A, I think this will be one of the highlights of the year it has had some very good reviews after it's first showing in Berlin. In preparation for the Botticelli Reimagined, well in truth because I mistook the dates and went to town a week early, I found that the Courtauld Gallery is showing 30 of [Botticelli's illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy](#). The exhibition is wonderful, you can take a magnifying glass in order to study the etched lines of the drawings he chose not to ink into the final images. Together with these illustrations, is the most wonderful set of illuminated texts from the Hamilton Collection. I am not sure if it was due to the way these were lit, but I don't remember seeing examples of manuscripts before where the gold stood out so vibrantly, it was a real treat.

My New Year began with a few wonderful days in Paris absolutely packed with exhibitions, my favourite I think was [Splendour and Misery. Pictures of Prostitution, 1850-1910](#) at the Musee D'Orsay an interesting foray into the social and cultural lives of the women who worked as prostitutes and the artists who were compelled to paint them time and time again.



Works ranged from the post-impressionist paintings and prints of Toulouse-Lautrec who was fascinated by the lifestyles of the 'urban underclasses' with whom he felt a certain affinity, to the Picasso's proto-Cubist "*Les Femmes d'Alger*" original titled "*Le Bordel d'Alger*" but renamed to soften the scandalous impact of its subject matter. Manet's portrait of Valtesse de la Bigne, the woman who was immortalised by Emile Zola in his novel "*Nana*" was also exhibited. Coincidentally I had just finished reading the biography, "*The Mistress of Paris: The 19th-Century Courtesan Who Built an Empire on a Secret*" by Catherine Hewitt. This is an intriguing insight into the glamorous life of Émilie-Louise Delabigne who became a street prostitute when she was little more than a child and through her beauty, determination and self education, became a high class courtesan amassing a portfolio of property and a vast art collection. I would certainly recommend this as a really interesting read.

Another, unexpected treat were six tapestries, 'Ode to Creation' created by Benedictine monk Dom Robert (1907-1997) and displayed in [Notre Dame](#) as part of the Convention on Climate Change hosted by Paris at the end of 2015. Although he began his monastic life at the Abbey of Calcut in Dourgne Dom Robert spent the years between 1947 and 1958 at Buckfast monastery in England. It was after his return to Calcut that he created the designs for these superb works which took inspiration from the surrounding flora and fauna and were woven in Aubusson at Tabard and Suzanne Goubely. I am sure there is much more to know about this fascinating man, and if anyone knows anything, please get in touch. It is a shame that the website is only in French, but do have a look at the images and you will see how appropriate they were to the conference.

I will end with a quote from Dom Robert which is particularly pertinent at this time of year when spring is slowly emerging and new life is beginning again "There is one thing that never fails, it is nature. Nature is the true reality."

Until next time -

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'A' being particularly large and stylized.