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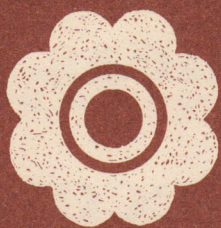
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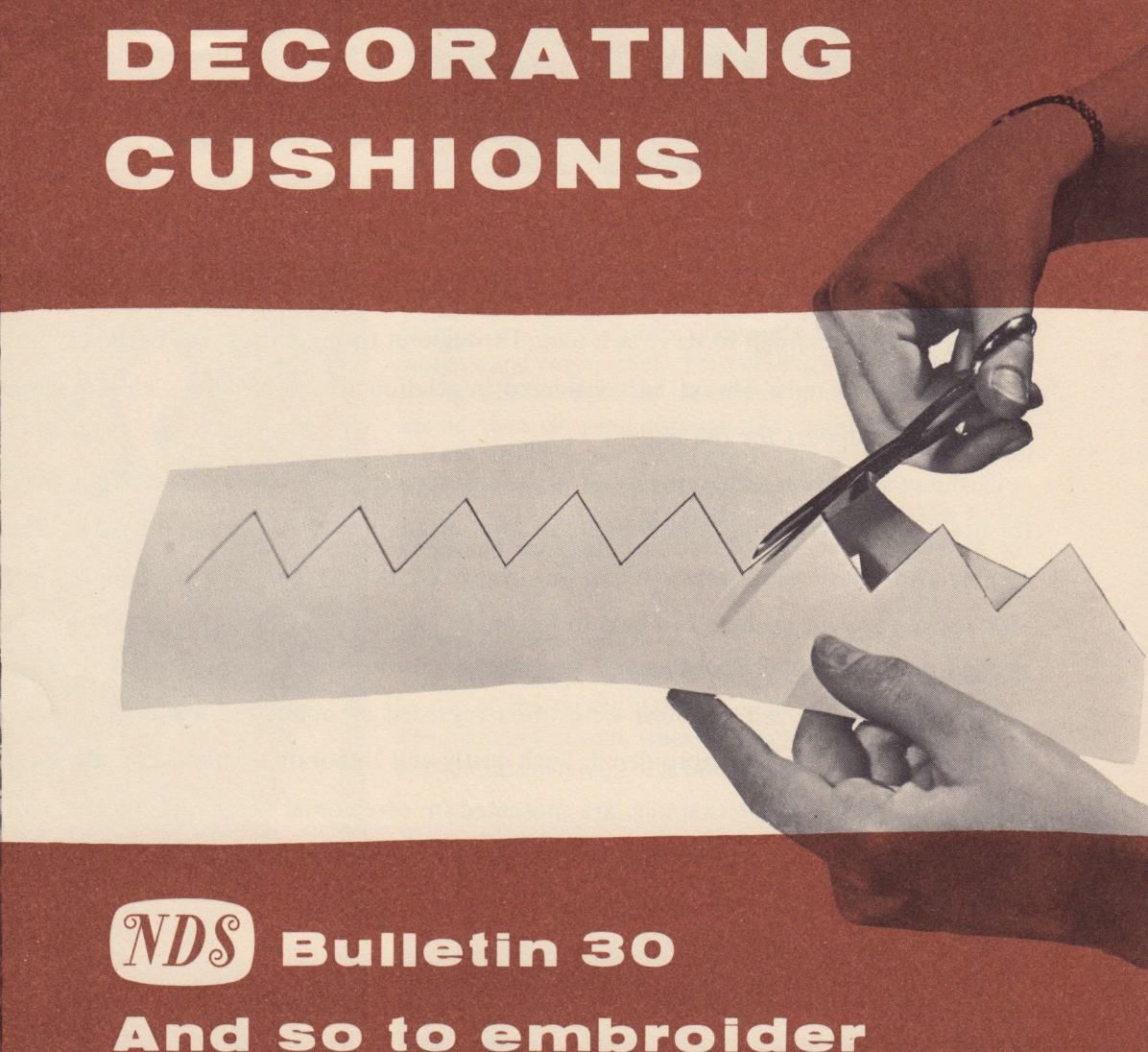
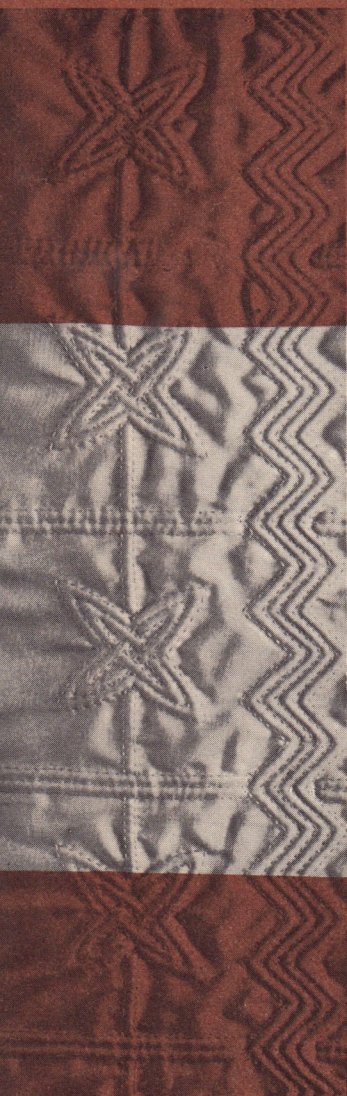
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DECORATING CUSHIONS

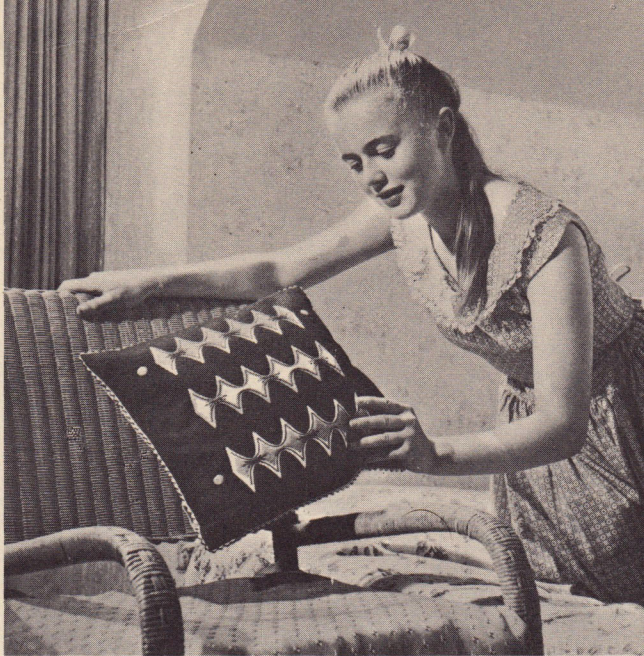


Bulletin 30

And so to embroider



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Ideas for Decorating Cushions

Square Felt Cushion

Cushions have been in use since ancient times. They are frequently mentioned in the inventories of the contents of palaces and great houses in the early middle ages. At that period they were often very large, covered with leather, and firm enough to serve as a seat. Throughout the ages there has been very little change in their basic shape, since this must always be considered in relation to the cushion's chief purpose which is to provide comfort and support for the body.

Cushions now form an accepted part of the soft furnishings in every home. While they are primarily intended for use, the modern trend in interior decoration means that they can often have an important decorative part to play also, when colour schemes and furnishings are being planned. For example, the correct choice of fabric and design for your cushion can help to introduce just the right vivid note of colour against a restrained background or perhaps add a cool neutral contrast to a room already bright with gay colours.

In earlier times when cushions were often regarded as objects of luxury and wealth, they were made of sumptuous fabrics richly embroidered. Such costly and elaborate cushions are now used only when the Crown or the keys of a city, for example, are presented on ceremonial occasions. Today, a wider range of fabrics is available and we are more practical in our approach, realising that well-spaced, simple decoration can be both effective and suitable in the right setting.

English Quilting

English quilting is one of our traditional cottage crafts and is fundamentally a decorative way of stitching together layers of fabric or padding to obtain extra warmth. Many lovely patterns have been evolved in the process, and the craft is still practised today, particularly in County Durham and Wales. Designs are handed down from mother to daughter and given names which often vary according to the district. Household articles such as a cup or wine-glass have long been the basis for many of the templates, while others are obtained by using cut-paper shapes. See diagrams showing the use of some typical templates.

The effect of light and shade on the quilted fabric can be seen clearly if pale shades are used for the background. Silk, cotton and poplin are all suitable fabrics for quilting.

Materials which can be used for padding are wadding, with the paper skin removed, domette, sheep's wool or flannel.

The quilt consists of three layers — a backing fabric, the padding and the surface fabric — which are carefully basted together. The use of an embroidery frame is advisable for large undertakings. The quilting design is marked on the surface fabric, a portion at a time, by scratching

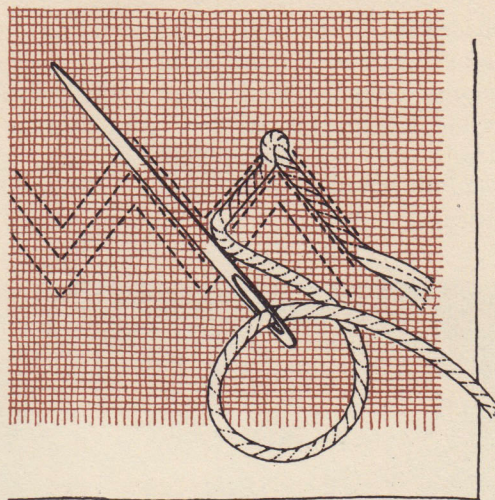
round the template with a fine needle or by using tailor's chalk. The outline is then worked in Running Stitch through all three layers of material.

For articles which are not reversible, Back Stitch or Chain Stitch can be used, if preferred, instead of Running Stitch.

Italian Quilting

This method of quilting is intended to be purely decorative, unlike English quilting which was originally planned as a means of obtaining extra warmth. The design is composed of a series of double lines and this is transferred to a piece of butter muslin which is then securely basted to the back of the fabric to be quilted. Working from the wrong side in a matching thread, the design is outlined in fine running stitches taken through both thicknesses of fabric. When the whole design has been outlined in this way, the padding is

Italian Quilting. Method of inserting padding (wrong side)



Examples of Templates used in English Quilting



drawn through the channel formed by the running stitches, between the two layers of fabric. The padding can be soft quilting wool, or cotton sufficiently thick to make the design stand out in relief. The padding is worked from the wrong side by piercing the butter muslin with a blunt needle then drawing through the quilting wool fairly loosely, to allow for shrinkage in the wash. Where the design makes it necessary to bring the needle out, at a corner for example, it is inserted again in the same hole, and some slack left when the wool is drawn through to avoid puckering the fabric.

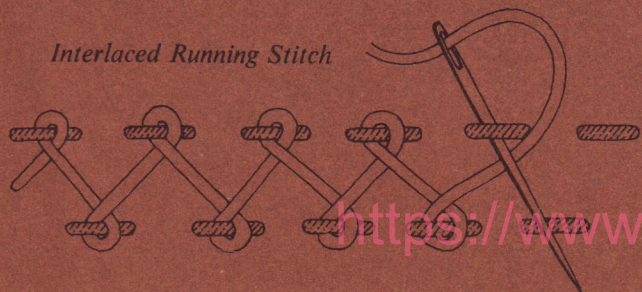
English Quilted Cushion

The feather template used to decorate this grey silk cushion is one of the typical designs found in County Durham. The diamond pattern, which fills in the background, helps to show up the design to greater effect.

When planning the cushion, remember to allow an extra 6 in. on the length of the back for the housewife opening. This is fastened with two hand-made buttons.

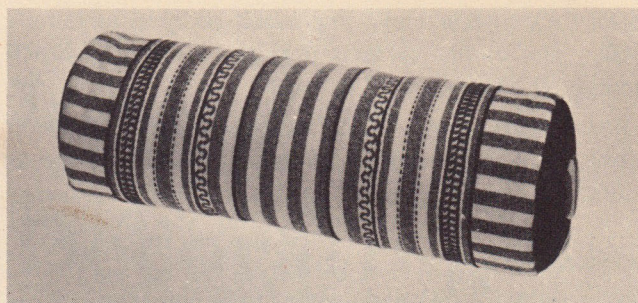


Interlaced Running Stitch



Italian Quilted Cushion

Maize-coloured poplin has been chosen for this cushion. It is divided into sections by vertical and horizontal lines of quilting, which are broken by the main design of interlaced motifs and broad bands of zig-zag lines. Notice that by varying the number of lines used together, added emphasis is given to the pattern. The running stitches which outline the design are worked in a matching mercerised sewing cotton.



Bolster Cushion

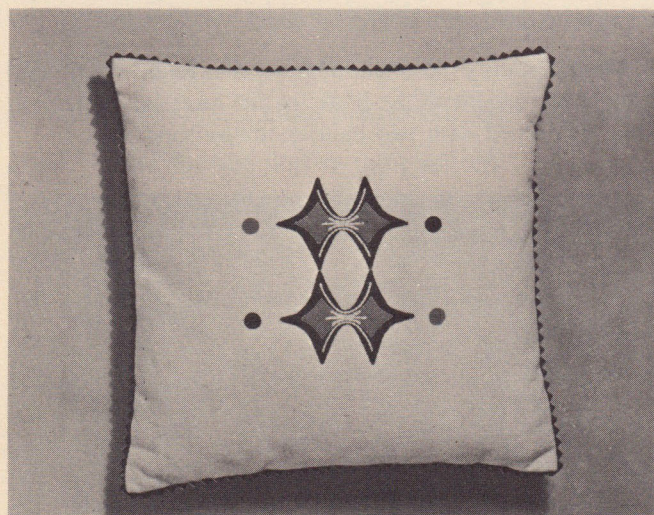
Black and white striped woollen fabric is used to make this bolster cushion. It is 16 in. long and the circular ends of black felt are 5½ in. in diameter. Each end is decorated with a large button covered with the woollen fabric.

Notice how the stripes have been used to make a design. The fabric is cut and arranged to form a wide centre section of encircling lines, while stripes set at right angles are joined on at each side.

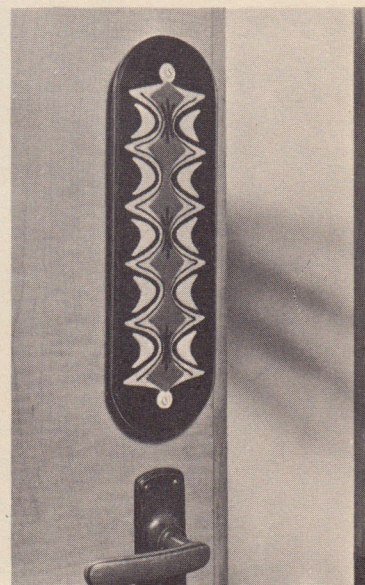
The embroidery is worked in black, cream and dull green in a thick, soft, cotton thread and the stitches used are Couching, Running, Threaded Running and Interlaced Running Stitch. See diagram for method of working Interlaced Running Stitch.

Square Felt Cushion

This unusual design has been planned by using cut-paper shapes. The cushion is 13 in. square and has one side of black felt and the other of white felt. The motifs are worked in felt appliqué in a counterchanged design of black, white and pink. Detail is added with lines of Couching, and the pointed edge is made from cut felt.



(Back of Felt Cushion)



Finger Plate

An adaptation of one of the motifs from the cushion has been used to decorate this finger plate. Notice how the design is planned to incorporate the shape of the screws which will be used to secure the plate to the door.

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Bulletin No. 31 will contain ideas for decorative borders.