

Jumping backwards in time this month, so much of history is filled with tales of persecuted groups of people, and this theme is no exception.

The Puritans were a group of English Protestants during the 16th and 17th century. In this country we remember them in the same breath as Oliver Cromwell, and the beheading of Charles I and the English Civil War. Over in America they're more likely to be linked to the founding fathers, most of the early settlers in America were Puritans, who left Europe in the hope of building themselves a life according to their ideals and beliefs.

When I first came up with my list of themes for the club I tried to make sure I got a good balance of colours, shades, tones and fibre compositions. I roughly pencilled in the main colours I thought I would use. When I actually did my research for this theme I ended up having to change my main colours. When we think of Puritans we think of the portraits of men in black, with white collars. However, black dye was very, very expensive, only the rich would wear it. Even Puritans liked to show off in their portraits, as a result they donned their best clothing, and to show their wealth and status it was black. The average person wouldn't have owned black clothing, however in keeping with their ideals it would still have been very simple, and plain, and dyed using low costs dye-stuffs.

Murrey isn't a word we use to describe colours anymore, but was a common descriptive back then, and refers to a deep mulberry shade, a reddy-purple-brown colour. They would also have worn browns, and dull greens. So a somber palette, but not one devoid of colour. The resulting blend I've made for you is subtle, there are lots of colours mixed in there.

I've also chosen to use Ramie as my non-wool fibre. It's a bast fibre made from nettles. You pull up the nettles and ret them just like you do with linen, but with a little extra processing. The softer outer plant material rots away, and you're left with the long stringy bits in the middle. It was a fibre that was used far more frequently in the past than it is now, the first documented use is over 6000 years ago. Nettles would have been a common sight in households back then, though mostly as a food stuff. We're just entering the hungry gap, the period when the winter vegetables have been used up, but the spring plants aren't yet growing. Nettles start growing very early in the season, so would often have been harvested to provide a much needed boost of vitamins to a poor persons diet.