

Art and Design

Introduction

Blanket-making is a famous traditional industry of Wales. Welsh blankets have strong patterns. The simplest is a stripe. Next is plaid, where stripes cross over to make squares and oblongs. Wales is known especially for 'tapestry' blankets. These are so complicated that they look as though they have been stitched by hand instead of woven on a loom. They have repeated geometrical shapes and come in lots of designs. The tradition dates back hundreds of years.

The Caernarfon or 'portcullis' style has motifs that look a bit like portcullis gates in castles. Inside the edge pattern you can imagine it as a grid with rows and columns separated by the thick black lines with red dots.

Can you see how the pattern repeats? If you look at the main area of pattern inside the border, you can see squares made out of four different motifs of yellow on black in a grid. You could call the 1, 2, 3, 4. The squares make a grid 11 columns wide. Each row has 6 of one motif and 5 of another, which alternate 1, 2, 1, 2. Then on the next line the two other motifs alternate 3, 4, 3, 4. So if you read down the columns they are 1, 3, 1, 3 and then 2, 4, 2, 4.

How are the red shapes repeated? They seem to belong with one of the four squares. Which one?

Look at how different the pattern appears on the back of the blanket - now the thick lines are red and the dots are black! But you can see that the repeat is the same.