
Wagga Star Quilt with Kathy Doughty

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- I'm a contemporary quilter, because I live now, which means I use the materials at hand, but most of the ideas that I find for my quilts come from tradition. I love to review traditional quilts, and one of the ideas that I've fallen in love with since moving to Australia, was the quintessential Australian quilt called the Wagga. The Wagga was a utilitarian quilt born out of need and necessity. Today, what we're going to do, it look at a very contemporary version of a Wagga. This project is something that you can easily make, with materials that you can most likely find in your home. Repurpose them into a treasured piece that will say very much about you and who you are as a quilter. (gentle synthesized music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- For this project, we're going to need one to two yards of a dark fabric, such as this black, or maybe you'd like to use a brown, or even one with a little bit of pattern in it would work. The same for the medium. I've selected a gray, which stands out quite nicely against the dark, and even though it's got a bit of a check on it, I'm not going to worry about whether that's lined up with my seams. I'm just gonna use it 'cause I like it. And then one to two yards also of the light, and that can be, you know, a slight step down or a dramatic step down. It doesn't matter. It's up to you. If I didn't have these fabrics that I was able to buy like that, and I was recycling fabrics, I might look at going to a tailor and asking for some suiting samples. And I have a few here. The suiting samples are generally in rectangles. They come in a variety of colors. They range from light to very dark. They often come in this shape, the rectangle, which is one of the reasons why the waggas often have a rectangle shape in them. So that's a nice option. These were little samples that I picked up in an up shop. I don't know what their original purpose was, but they would serve this purpose very well. This fabric is a commercially overdyeed plaid fabric that also has a lot of nice integrity to it. It could look great in this project if I wanted to throw that in. This is a wool felted fabric, which means that it's going to hold its shape. It's already been pre-shrunk. It's got a little bit of a mottled effect to it. These come in a variety of different colors and are readily available in shops. Or you can hand dye your own old clothing. And speaking of old clothing, I went to the op shop, and I bought an old coat, which as you can see, I've cut the arms off of it, cut the side seams. I've left the pocket 'cause I think that's quite a nice thing to add into the quilt to have a little space where you could slip in. if I was making this for one of my sons, they might want to hide something in there from me or anyone else, but I think that's quite a nice little detail to leave some of the pieces of the clothing to show that it was, in fact, recycled, and you know, just to give it a little bit of a quirky edge. And if I didn't have enough of all of those fabrics, I could always sew together lots of different scraps and make my fabric using a variety of different colors. In this one, you can see some of the edges have been left on top, so one piece of wool with another piece on top and just sewing straight across using a variety of different textures. We have plaids, we have stripes, and we have sort of a, just mostly these are plaids and stripes, but you can see that that works very well as a piece of fabric. And then I would just use that as I would the other fabrics to create the shapes that I need to make the quilt. The tools that you'll need to make the wagga. You'll need a cutting mat. I would never make a quilt

without using a straight edge ruler. And for this one, if you like, it's also possible to use a quarter square triangle, and I will show you how to use this, but I'll also show you how to make one without using that. All these templates and rulers are always quite happy for accuracy, which isn't necessarily as important in a wagga as it is in some other quilts, but it's still good to know they exist. We're going to need a sewing machine, and I've chosen a gray thread because gray is fantastic for working, get sort of the medium kind of color, so it works really well working in this kind of color grouping. Seam ripper just in case you make a little bit of a mistake, and you want to unpick it. Scissors, pins, and then when we get to the quilting part, which we'll talk about later, we've assembled a variety of different things that you might want to use to quilt, and the special thing about this is because it's such an old tradition, and it's come from people that had very little access to cities and towns and supplies, a lot of the materials that were made to make the original waggas were things that people had at hand, so we have a bit of kitchen string, and that's really something that you could just buy at the grocery store. This is another kind of string. This is a bit too thick, probably, unless you're using a really loosely woven wool. This would be very difficult to get through your needle and then to pull through, but in a pinch, you could probably struggle and use that. This one we've just found. It's actually wool. It's got a couple of different colors. Using different colors is perfectly acceptable. This is another wool. I think the only thing you have to keep in mind if you're using wool is that as you pull your cotton through it could wear out a bit, so you'd want to use shorter lengths. And then my method of quilting, I generally use Perle Eight cotton. These come in a beautiful array of colors. So I've got a couple of different rusty brown because they remind me of the earth in Australia, or if I wanted my quilting to disappear, I'd probably choose a black. If I want high contrast, I'd probably choose a white. And this is another option. This is an Aurifil wool that is really beautiful to quilt with as well. They have different sizes and different textures. It's fine to mix them all up. If you were to start with your string and run out, you could switch to your Perle Eight, or you could use your Perle Eight to make more intricate designs and use this to very roughly just define the shape of your wagga. Picking the right needle makes the process a lot nicer, and a good quality needle is something you always want to find. For this particular project, because we're using thicker, the string and the thicker wools to quilt the project, I would look for a size eight, a nine, or a 10 because they have a nice big eye. For the actual quilting process, we'll need a couple of quilting essentials. We have a chalk pencil, a good thimble, and I like to use one of these little money counters turned inside out with the nubby bits on the inside 'cause it helps particularly with the thicker cottons to pull it through the three layers of the quilt. Safety pin's for basting. The other thing that you'll need to complete this project will be the wadding and the backing for your quilt. Now, we're going to give you a specific size for this quilt, but you may end up making it a different size, so what you'll need to do is measure your quilt, the width and the length, and determine how much wadding and backing you'll need for that. For this particular project, I've used a wool wadding and preferably without scrim, which is ideal for hand quilting. And on the back, I've just put a piece of flannel. All three layers are put together with safety pins, so you'll need those as well, but we'll talk about the layering process later.

Chapter 3 - Cutting Fabric

Cutting Fabric

- Today, the pattern that we're going to be using is the waga star, so it's made completely of wool, and you can see that it's got the dark, the light, and the medium shapes in it. In order to make that clear, I often make a black and white image of the quilt that I'm using so I can see clearly as I'm

working through where my shapes are going to go. Another tool that's quite handy is to draft up the block that you're using, perhaps if I get interrupted in the process, I walk away, I come back a day or two later, if I've ticked off what I've already done, I know that that's where I'm going to start when I resume the project. Once we've oriented ourselves about what we're going to be doing, we can move these bits out of the way, and we'll start to talk about how we actually cut the fabric. It's always important to cut the big pieces first. So the first thing that I'm going to do is establish a straight edge on this piece of wool, so do to that, I'm going to bring in the straight edge ruler, and just make sure that all four edges of this folded fabric, I've folded it to a shorter length, because cutting a shorter length is much more easy to be accurate than it is if you cut long lengths. So my ruler is fully on the table, this straight line is lined up against the top of the wool and I'm going to bring in the rotary cutter, and just trim away the edge. And because there's a lot of layers, you may have to do that a couple of times. So now, I'm going to flip this around to the other side and line it up with the mat. Now because wool is rather thick, it's easy to work with, and we don't have to worry about the intense accuracy that we use when we're using, making quilts with cotton fabric. We need a 20.5 inch square, so I'd pre-marked about where that goes. I'm going to readjust that, make sure that the wool is lined up with the mat at the top. I can clearly see where my 20.5 inch, so what I'm gonna do now is bring in this ruler, take a chalk pencil, and I'm going to draw the line on the wool at the 20.5 inch mark. And I'll remove the pin. And now just take the scissors and cut along that line. There. This particular wool is quite wide, so it'll be easy to cut 20.5 inch squares from this piece, but again, I wanna fold that in half, so that I don't have that long length, so I just think that it's very difficult to stay accurate when you're dealing with long lengths of fabric. I'm just going to make sure that it sits nice and flat, line it up, bring in the ruler, measure at 20.5, draw the chalk line, and cut along that line again. Now that I've done that, I have the two big 20.5 inch squares that I need for the stars. You can just check to make sure they're accurate. 20.5. See, that one must've stretched a little bit, so I'm gonna trim that back to make sure that it's exactly the right length. So again, line that up with the 20, with the straight line, bring the ruler in, and in this case, because I've got the two layers of fabric, I'm just gonna use the rotary and run that up. So that one's perfect and I'll just check this one as well. Okay, that was very easy. Now we've cut the two squares that we need to make the two big squares, so I'll just refer back to the diagram for a second, see we've cut these inner sections, and I'll take my chalk pencil and just tick those two things off like that. The next thing that we're going to need to cut from the black are the side triangles. Now these are what we would call technically half square triangles, which means the bias in the fabric, which is going across the weave of the fabric, is this line that we have here. So we wanna protect that line, so what we need are straight grain going along here and there. So we need to cut one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 black half square triangles. So to do that, we're going to start with an 11 inch strip so we go back to our main piece of black fabric, and line it up with the edge of the mat. Then we'd get my chalk pencil again, and while I'm doing this, I'll just say that these chalk pencils are really handy. Initially they were made for, we used them for quilting, drawing our quilting designs on, but I find they really work well in a lot of different situations. So now I've drawn that line on there, and I'll use the scissors and cut this strip. And from this strip, we'll cross cut the squares that we need to make the stars look like stars. And now I just take this strip and open it up. Now, I'm pretty confident cutting. If you're not confident, you might wanna do these one at a time, but because I feel really comfortable with this, I'm just going to line that up and I've got the two layers, one on top of each other, bring in the ruler again, measure up that 11 mark, and make two squares. Which are a little bit big. So I'm just gonna trim that up. If I was using cotton fabric, I would've cut

those squares to make these half square triangles to be 10 and 7/8 inches. But because this is wool and I've got, I'm going to allow for a little bit of a thicker seam, compensating for the thickness of the wool, I'm going to just add that little bit of extra measure in there. So now to cut my half square triangles, the straight grain of the fabric is on the outside corner of the triangle and the bias will be on the inside, on the long end of the triangle. So those, so now I have four of these triangles. So I'll put them with the stars. Open out the strip again. Measure that up. Now because we've demonstrated with the scissors before, I'm just gonna use the rotary. I've only got two layers, so it's quite easy to trim that in, we're finding it's probably gonna be checking for accuracy, looks really good, so now I wanna turn this, so I've put that on point, I'm just gonna run the ruler straight through those opposing corners, bring in the rotary, and cut. So now we have eight of the 16 that we need. Let's see what's left here. This last little bit is just perfectly gonna give us one more. That's 10 triangles, continue cutting the rest of the black fabric until you have the 16 black triangles that you need. The next thing we're going to do is cut the big triangles in this piece, which are actually quarter squares, so if we look back at our diagram, the quarter square triangles are the ones that have the straight grain on the long side of the triangle and the bias edges on the inside triangles. So I've got a piece that's just about the right size, so I'm going to measure that. The size that I need for these quarter square triangles is a 21.25 inch square, so I'm going to measure that and trim this piece so that it's straight on that side. And then I'll flip it over. That's just gonna make the 21.25 inch size that we need. I'm gonna fold this in half. Make sure there are no wrinkles in the fold, line it up and trim it to be 21.25 inch square. So in order to cut the quarter squares, I'm now going to fold this in half to make a triangle. And using the ruler, I'm going to cut it in half, so I'll line up the line on the ruler so that it's on the fold of the fabric and make sure that the ruler goes right through the point at the top and cut. It's the first cut, and then just repeat that process one more time. Cutting through the point, I've made two of the gray triangles, and then we have one more of those to do. We now have enough to make one full star block. So I'd like to just lay that out and show you how that goes together. So we'll take the square and on each side, we're going to do exactly the same thing. We'll position these triangles with the half square triangle so that the straight grain runs along the outside corners, the long side is on the inside and then we'll be taking one of our gray triangles and positioning it just like that. We're well on our way to making the star now. We've got enough triangles now to make one, so we've got the center square, the two triangles at the top, and the medium placed in there. We're going to do that again. Part of the process of making this, cutting the block the way that we cut it to get these four quarter square triangles, is we needed a great big piece of fabric. But say you don't have two great big squares to accommodate that 21.25 inch square, you might need to use a scrap. So I just want to show you how we might cut that one from just a smaller scrap. We've now got a triangle the shape that we need, so we could use that as a template but also, you know, when you're doing quilts like this and you're being really resourceful, you can sometimes come up against problems. And say for example with this piece, it's pretty wonky at the top, it's not quite straight, so if I use this as a template, I can sort of position it to straighten up those stripes or the plaid that's running in there, and if I wanna do that, I can just simply use my ruler and line it up with the template, being careful not to trim off a piece of the template underneath. I'm gonna run that along that line. And then because I never want to cut toward myself, I'm just gonna carefully turn this around the other way, And use the ruler to cut my other 45 degree angle. And there's one more cut. So when I do something like this, I often imagine I'm one of those women on the homestead and I'm just trying to make do with what I've got, instead of running out to the shop and buying more, so that I can do it exactly the way the instructions say.

That's it for the large gray triangles. I'm just going to take this little map here and tick off that we cut the four big triangles from the big square, we cut our last necessary triangle from the scrap of fabric. So now we have enough to do the two big black squares and set them all in. The only other thing we need to do is to cut the white large triangles in the exact same manner from the light fabric that you've chosen, and the last shape that we need to cut would be the 10.5 inch square, which is really easy to do. We'll go back and get our strip of fabric. And for the black, if I look back here, I can quickly check, I need two 10.5 inch squares, which we can cut from a strip of fabric. So I've lined that up with the line on the mat, I'll measure to 10.5 inches, and use the rotary this time to be quick and cut the strip. Then I'll open that up, you know, I think I might just straighten this edge up a little bit. Because you can see that there's a little bit of a wonkiness to that, I'm gonna just trim those bits off so that's a nice, straight edge. Flip that back around, and line it up. Now I have the 10.5 inch square that I needed, and we need two of them. For this one, this is another scrap. We need one light square, and you can see that it's bigger than 10.5 inches, so what I'll do is line up the straight edge and trim away the excess on each of the sides, so that I have one really nice 10.5 inch square of the light. So because I'm going to trip the right hand side, I'm just going to leave a little bit extra on that line there to give myself a straight edge here. And each time I do this, I wanna make sure that the line on the ruler is matching the fabric, as opposed to matching the lines on the mat, because the fabric is gonna give, that'll give me a more accurate cut. Trim away that. Okay, we've cut a few of each of the shapes that we're going to need, we'll just go back to this. The next thing that we'll be doing is the really fun part, which is putting the whole quilt together on the design wall. As you go along, you can just check off, you know, we've checked off all of our half square triangles, we've cut the white and the squares, now you have all the bits and pieces that you need to move on to the really fun part.

Chapter 4 - Designing

Designing the Wagga Star

- The design wall is a great tool for taking the smallness of the design to the format that it will actually be in the finished quilt. So when we look at this, we get a nice broad stroke of what we're going to be doing, but when we look at it on the quilt, we can see, or when we look at it on the design wall, we can actually see what the quilt will look like, we can figure out the best lines for sewing it together in an orderly fashion, and do a last final check on whether the balance of the light, the medium, and the dark is actually working to make the design show. I'm going to lay this out in the same order that we'll be sewing it together. We're going to start with the flying geese blocks, which are made from one of our large, gray triangles, and two of our small black triangles. Because the weight is heavy, you might find that it doesn't actually stick to your design wall, so I'm just using a few pins to hold these in place. So these are the first three pieces that we're going to sew together. We have our quarter-square triangle that had the bias on the two short ends, and we have our two half-square triangles with the bias on the inside. These are going to be the stretchiest seams, so we want to make sure that we get them exactly right, and pin them when we sew them, so that they end up maintaining this exact same length that we want, rather than stretching out of shape. And the next two shapes that we'll add into that will be the squares on either side. Now, if you were making this quilt, and you weren't using wool, you'd have to pay a lot more attention to whether or not you're getting the right side or the wrong side of the fabric together. I'm just checking as I put these up. So the most important part of using the design wall is that it's going to make the perspective correct and accurate for what we're doing. We can step away from the design

wall, get a long shot, and make sure that the light and darks are working the way that we want them to work. This will be the first three sections. We'll sew the flying geese section together, then we'll add the squares on either side, and that will give us the top row of the first star. The next piece that we're going to put in will be the center, the big square in the center. And then we'll add the flying geese units to both sides, and the bottom as well. Oftentimes in a home setting, we use a bed or the floor in order to gauge the perspective of the quilt, and to get the overall view, but it's much better if you can make some kind of a design wall in your home. If you lay your quilt out on the bed, or even on the floor, or in bits on the table, the perspective skews. The pieces that are further in the distance become diminished compared to the pieces at the front. So you often can misinterpret how your lights and darks are working together. This quilt, and with a lot of contemporary quilts that we're doing today, the pieces are big, and the impact is quite strong, so you can gauge it more easily, but if you're using small pieces or making more complicated blocks, it's essential that you look at them on the design wall. It's a great way to figure out if your quilt's going to look the way you think it does in your mind, because the difference between what we see in our mind and what we see in reality is often very different. So this is our last. I might get down here to do this part. And then the last two squares on the outside. So if you're already making quilts, you've probably made a lot of these Ohio star blocks. It's the exact same procedure that you would do for your small blocks, only this one's much bigger. Okay, so that's our star laid out on the design wall. If I was to notice at this point that there was something wrong, it would be a great opportunity to stop, walk away, spend a little time looking at it, come back, and if there are corrections that need to be made, make them then before you sew them all together and have to unpick them. So the next thing that we'll be doing is taking this top row, and we're going to sew these two triangles to the big triangle, and then we'll join the two squares onto the top, and that will create that whole row. From there, we'll move to the big section, we'll follow the exact same procedure that we followed with the large triangle and the two small, and do the two side and the bottom, and then put it together in three bits, the left side, the center, and the right side, and repeat the same as the top for the bottom, the square, the flying geese unit, and the other square. Then when all three of those units are finished, we'll join the long seams, and the star will be done.

Assembling The Wagga Star

- We've established the order for sewing, with the last step being joining these three sections in the middle. But now we have the situation where we need to get it off the design wall and over to the sewing machine, which in some cases can be quite tricky. The first thing that we'll do is our flying geese block here at the top. So I'm just gonna take this and flip it over onto the triangle, releasing the other pieces. I'm also gonna need these two things, but the less pieces I take to the machine at this point, the less chance there is that I'm gonna make a mistake and have to unpick. I've positioned these black triangles at the design wall, but now I wanna tidy them up a little bit for sewing so that we sew them in exactly the right place. And to do that, I'm just gonna line up the straight grain edges, which would be the short one on the black and the long one on the gray. And make sure that the little ears on the triangles just come up a tad over the point of the gray triangle. And then I'm gonna put the pins in so that they're ready to be in position for sewing. I'm pretty comfortable not using a lot of pins when I sew, because I feel like I have a good grip of the fabric and I know where I want it to be. But if you're not, put lots of pins in this seam, because it is the stretchier side. That having the bias means that's a bit stretchier than this being the straight grain, which is a lot tighter. As long as they seem to match up, three or four pins or more if you need them are fine. I'll just put a

few extra in. So now before I pin the other side, I'm going to take this bit to the sewing machine. When we sew this, whenever you're sewing a triangle to a 45 degree angle, you need to be sure that you have a little bit of an ear. And that ear indicates where the needle needs to go into the fabric. I'm gonna drop my needle into that spot. Now this machine doesn't have a 1/4 inch foot. But I've allowed for a little bit of extra in my cutting, so I think this will be fine. (machine hums) And just start sewing. Now I would recommend that you pull the pins out. You should actually never sew over a pin. If the needle were to hit that, it would be a bad outcome. (machine hums) If you have trouble following a straight line, it's often good to keep your eye on the line on any of the lines on the machine that match up to where you wanna be sewing. And you keep your eye on where the fabric is going in under the needle. Now if you're gonna go wrong sewing your triangles together, this is the point where you go wrong, at the very end. So just position your finger, and gently hold those two ends of fabric together. (machine hums) And then you can remove it from the machine. So that's our first seam done. We're gonna take it back to the mat now, so we can position the other one in the right place. So that piece's set. So now we're gonna take that pin out. Now if you're fussy about your points, this is the most important place. So we wanna pin that corner section first, and we'll just drop that pin in at the 1/4 intersection, and then line up the other end. And now we know that those lengths which we cut are equal. And we can just throw some more pins in. And go back to the sewing machine. (machine hums) But now even though these are big blocks, if there's any point you wanna pay attention to where it's going to be sewn together, it's now. So I'm gonna remove that pin, but I wanna make sure that the needle sews right between that junction where those ears meet. And when I pull it out, I just wanna check to make sure that opens up and I get a nice 1/4 of an inch seam right there. Okay, we've sewn the two triangles onto the big triangle now. The one thing that I would insist though, is you take your scissors and snip these ears off, so that it's much easier to sew at the next step. And again these little ears on the end here. If you do iron with the wool, you might wanna put a little piece of cotton over the top, and just press down with the iron on the seam so that they flatten out. You don't wanna be pushing your iron back and forth and pressing in any kind of a bias or a wrinkle into your wool. The next step is to add a square either side of this particular unit. These are the same fabric on both sides, so it doesn't really matter. We don't have to be too particular about where we place them. So to sew these on, I'm just going to line them up. Put a pin through the top, and then it'll go right through the seam on the other side. Line up the other corners. Just put three pins in that side. And then I can pin this side as well. You could see it's very forgiving when you work with wool, but it sort of sticks to itself, so it's not much of a drama. I'm just checking to see. Okay, I want my seams to go to the outside. So I'm gonna put that pin so that comes right up through the other seam. And that'll hold that bit together there, and now I'll just sew that together. Okay, so these seams are really easy to sew, 'cause they're quite straight, and they're on the grain of the fabric, so they're not likely to stretch or swerve. (machine hums) That's one done, and this is the other one, and then this unit will be complete. Get those pins out of the way. (machine hums) Okay, so we'll put this back up where it goes. And we'll start working on the middle section. So for that, we'll repeat the exact same process that we had in the top section, where we have the two triangles and the big one. And we'll do the, for position, pins. And this is the same process that will happen for all the flying geese units all around the star. We'll take this back to the sewing machine. (machine hums) (machine hums) Okay. So now we have our single flying geese unit done for this side. And then we would repeat that process for this side. Okay, so the next thing that we'll be doing is joining this piece to this piece to that piece. There aren't many points in this quilt where you need to be very particular about how you're working, but when we wanna join

these side pieces to the main square, we kinda wanna capture the point of those medium triangles. So what I'm gonna do first, is find the middle of this section by folding that in 1/2, and identifying exactly where the middle of the black square is. And now that I've identified that, I'm gonna make sure that I line that up with where the two sewing lines cross. So that that's exactly in the middle. And then I can take the other two corners. And once they're the correct length and they're matching the middle, I know that this is gonna fit together perfectly. So I can just whack some more pins in there. And it's ready to sew together. (machine hums) We've now finished the middle section. Which was really easy, just like the top section. And the next thing that'll need to be done is to repeat the process for the top section with the bottom pieces. So you'll start in exactly the same way. Position your black triangles on the middle, and then add your two squares at the end. And when those three sections are done, we'll join these long seams.

Assembling Multiple Blocks

- We've now finished the third and final section of the complete star unit. So, our next job will be to join the top section to the middle section. And then the bottom section to the middle section. And that will give us the complete star. And will look at how we go about the rest of the quilt shortly after that. So again, we'll just take this strip down and position it so we know where it goes. We don't end up sewing them on upside down. And then release the big section. We'll take it over to the sewing machine. Okay, we can put this down now. And to join this, it's quite simple. Cause we've already got a lot of seams to match up. So, we can match up where the corners go to the seam. So we'll slide one set of seams to the dark side and the other in the opposite direction. And pin through that seam to the other side. And bring this pin up so it's still in the seam. And that will give us a nice clean join. And we'll do the same thing on this side. Fold the black bits over to the dark side and the outside to the gray side. Pin through the seam. I'm gonna pin right straight through the middle of the join there to the top. And repeat that process where we matched the ends. And the end on this side. And we're ready to sew it. I'll just throw a couple of pins in there. (sewing machine) - [Instructor] And again, where this seam is, I wanna make sure that the bottom ones are flipped going towards me and tops ones are going away. (sewing machine) - [Instructor] And then just help that through under the foot. (sewing machine) - [Instructor] Done. Okay, now that we've sewn that top section to the middle section, we can start to see how the star is going to look. Now, all that pinning through those joints was really worth it because we've got nice neat points there. And they look really nice and tidy. But I know one of the things that upsets people a lot when they're making quilts is whether or not they get their points. So, I say, don't sweat the technique. With a project like this, it's just a lot of fun. It's very relaxed. And if your points end up being a bit blunt, well that just adds to the character of the project. And it's really not something that you should worry about too much. So, if we were to take this quilt over and look at the finished project that we have here, the border of this quilt is comprised of two flying geese units. We have one at the top and one at the bottom. They're both using the lighter fabrics that I've chosen to make it originally. And this one has the dark triangles. And this one is using contrast slightly in a more mild manner with the medium gray fabrics. These squares here are actually finishing the stars that are only in your mind's eye. They are the stars that are floating off in space some place else. So we've got the illusion that there's a star there. And enough familiarity with the shape of that, that it looks like it's there and the same in the bottom. Now if you have more fabric, and you wanna make this quilt bigger, you could quite easily continue adding the star using the same elements that we used before, the big square and the triangles and the corner triangles. Or, you could add a border across the top. Or, you could

add another partial border across the side. The interesting thing to me, is that it plays a trick on your mind. You can see enough elements that you recognize what's happening. But, it's not so obvious that you have the complete star as you do here. This one sets the tone for the entire quilt. Then we have the partial without the top half. And then we have just the sides. So it's got a lot of flexibility for you to interpret this quilt on your own and to make it the way you see fit or the way it fits your home. Personally, a quilt like this is fantastic for the young man in your family. It's very rugged. It's nice sophisticated colors. It's a great throw quilt in your house. It also looks nice if you just hang it on the wall. The order of assembly for this quilt is really quite simple. Once you've made the stars, you can start with the complete star if you like. You make that entire star shape. Then you can make your partial star shape. And just sew quite simply across to join those two shapes. That would be the body of your quilt. To add the borders, you'd start with your flying geese unit and your square. The next unit is the same as what we had done when we were constructing our full star. You have your flying geese unit in the square on either side. So, the flying geese unit and the square is joined to the flying geese unit with the two squares. And then, you just sew the long seam. All of these seams are quite simple. You have very simple easy to find matching points. So you pin through the corner squares here all the way down. And then it'll have a nice smooth look to it when you're finished.

Applique Wagga Star

- There are a lot of great things about using wool to make waggas. It's a very nice source of comfort and warmth in the winter. It's easy to sew with. You don't have to be particularly particular about how your blocks go together. But one of the disadvantages of using wool is if it sits around for a long time, sometimes you might find there's a little bit of a moth hole in their wool. And that's exactly what happened with this quilt. I got the whole thing put together and then noticed that somebody had been nibbling at the wool, so I thought if I go right back to where waggas come from and knowing that they would be using materials that they had in their home that probably was something that happened a lot. And in that case, they probably want to do something creative to mask that problem that they have with their piece of fabric, so all I did was get a bit of suiting sample and cut out a little bit of a star and then loosely applique down onto the quilt before I actually sewed it all together and started quilting it. So we decided that we'd show you a little bit of how that was done. And we've got a couple of different samples. Here, I like to audition everything before I actually cut into a piece of material just to see how it looks. So I took a few of the different samples that I had, some of the things that you could possibly use. These are really loosely woven, colorful bits of fabric. This one's very loosely woven as well. It tones in very nicely with the colors in the quilt. It's got a little bit of black, little bit of gray. And then I started looking at some of these suiting samples, all of which would kind of work. They're a little bit more blue. This one had some great color. That one would stand out against the gray, 'cause I'm gonna pretend that there's a little moth hole in that. And the other gray. But the thing is, I also look at what I have available, and I have this really nice pearl 12 that I'm gonna use to sew this on. And I quite like the look of this red with this darker gray just because it tones in very nicely with the pinkish stripes that are in there. Now, when I say don't sweat the technique, this is how easy I like to do my things. I'm gonna draw a little star on this piece of wool using this chalk pencil. So to draw a star, I usually start with the corner. Make the V. Make another corner. And then continue around the shape until I get what looks like a star. Now, they're not all the same size, but that doesn't matter to me, I quite like that. It's a little bit irregular, a little bit hand-drawn, definitely looking handmade. So now I'm gonna take my scissors

and just cut along those chalk lines to reveal the star. Just about there with our star. If you're not game to do a star, you could just do a square or you could make some other shape, you could cut out a bird, but for the purposes of this exercise, we're just gonna do that. Gonna secure this in place with a few pins. If you have applicate pins they would be great for this but it's not a very big project, and it's not gonna take us very long, so we're just gonna throw these big pins in to hold it in place on each one of the points. Now, I'm gonna take one of the needles, because I'm using the thinner option of all the cottons. I'm just gonna neaten up that end. When you're using pearl 12, it's actually a little bit thinner than the pearl 8 that we normally use for quilting. You don't want to take more than the length to your elbow. So we're just gonna snip that off. And because all thread has a memory, we're just gonna give that a little bit of a yank to take some of the curve out and that'll mean it'll knot a bit less. And I'm just gonna tie a knot in here. Just a simple circle and then just pull a little loose knot so that it stops the thread from running out at the end. I have the option of starting on the top and leaving my knot on top, but for this particular one I'm just gonna come up from underneath, and I'm just gonna do a bit of a running stitch, because I really like this to look rustic and old. And I think if I was doing this to protect my wagga in the days gone by, I probably wouldn't take a lot of time or have enough light in order to be able to be very fussy about what I'm doing. So I'll just keep running those stitches all around the shape of the star. Just in and out. The points are the places where we want to make sure that we can anchor that down. And then just keep moving it so that you have an angle where you can sew across yourself. Again, this isn't a place where you wanna worry too much about having perfect stitches. It's just purely a functional relaxed, kind of an approach to embellishing. Having said that, if you are a needle woman and you do like using lots of different stitches this is a time where you could, perhaps, decorate more elaborately. But the wool is great because it doesn't fray as much as other fabrics, so it does allow us to play a little bit. So just straight lines right until you get to the corner. And then angle up to the points. This is the kind of thing that I might not have taken the time to do in the beginning, because I thought, when I was first learning how to quilt, I thought I had to do exactly what I read in an instruction or what a teacher might have told me, or I just liked doing what I was told, but as I've become more experienced, I've realized that telling my story is the most important thing. So I always take an opportunity to personalize the projects that I'm working on by changing something in the pattern to make it more personal, to make it more expressive, so it might be the colors that I choose, the stitches that I choose, or the way that I approach the project. And in this case, just throwing a little wonky star here pretty much encapsulates my style. I just wanna make sure that it's nice and flat. I'm gonna grab a little piece of the piece that I'm applicating with the needles. I've got a little bit of a stitch there. And I've made a loop, which I'll go through, and I've formed a knot. And just because I'm gonna leave this knot on top I'm gonna do that again, so it looks obvious and not like a mistake. Now it's a nice big knot. And I'm just gonna snip that off. OK, so we have now mended the hole in our quilt, added a little piece of our own personality, this wonky star that sits on there. For me, that's always sort of a little symbol of how I like to do things. I don't fuss too much about anything, but I could see this being something that you might be interested in taking a little bit further. You could add one star, a hundred stars, put them all around, layer them on top, cover up any mistakes you made, layer them, use different textiles or add any kind of stitching. Whatever you have or you enjoy doing, bring to your project to make it more your own.

Chapter 5 - Quilting

Quilting

- When the quilt's all sewn together, we arrive at one of my favorite parts, and that's the quilting part. I know in this day and age that it's quite popular to machine-quilt your project, or to send it off and have somebody else machine-quilt your project, but it's always nice to have at least one hand-quilting project on the go at any given moment. For me, it's always the best time of day when I sit down in the evening and I pick up my quilt and start quilting away on the project. It's quite nice, the way the day just sort of starts to sift through my mind, and I find a nice quiet place where everything goes where it should go, and before you know it, your quilt will be finished. And especially a quilt like this, which you can see from the designs that there's lots of big open spaces in this. The fabric is quite firm, so it doesn't need a ton of quilting on it, and so what I've done in regard to the design is I just took my chalk pencil and used the design of the star, and I would have just, at the beginning, just drawn my stars onto the quilt using the chalk pencil and then selected a color. In this case, I used a really nice pearl 12, looks like that. I liked the fact that it was just a little bit off the gray and the black so it would make it stand out a little bit, but not too much. And I would just follow the chalk lines with the stars in some places and then, in other places, I followed the line of the pattern itself. So there's lots of angular lines, lots of places where I just turned in another direction. I used that 45 degree angle in quite a few places just to sort of add stability to the design of the quilt and to keep it reflective of what was happening with the different fabrics. One thing you might notice here is, um, the backing that I chose for this. In fact, the wagga feed sacks were where we originated with the name. So when I saw this particular one that said feeds for all, I thought that was a perfect kind of fabric to tie it all together and still have it feel like it came from the land. So just like the quilters of eras gone by, this is a great opportunity for us to look around and find bits and pieces of fabric, maybe some old blankets, maybe some flannel sheets, the kinds of things that you fold up and put away for someday, make that someday now, pull them out of the cupboard and use them in your wagga. It'll make you feel really special to have repurposed something that you have lying around, and it'll add a lot of character and personality to the wagga that you're making. Now for the purposes of talking about the quilting, we've made just a little bit of a sample. I've pin basted a small piece of this quilt together so that I could put it in the hoop and show you how to go about quilting. But I will say, basting a quilt is the one chore that we all hate, but it is a necessity. If your quilt is not basted properly and you don't have all three layers of your quilt joining together in the right places, when you get done, it'll be lumpy. When the original settlers were making their waggas, their quilts were often really lumpy because they might have filled them with whatever they had around. And urban myth states that some of the things that they would have done, perhaps, an outgrown cardigan from a child, maybe somebody's old underwear, socks, jackets, jeans, whatever they had, they'd stuff inside some of these old quilts so they were really heavy and really lumpy. That's probably not something that I would want to continue in my quilts, 'cause I do like them to be a little bit flat. So in order to get started with quilting this, I'm going to pick a needle that has a nice big hole in it so that it'll be easy to thread and take some of the same cotton that I used when I sewed the applique star on. Thread the needle and cut it off. Here, let's just make a little knot. So it's not a very big knot, it's just enough to stop the cotton from pulling through. And you can see that I'm wearing my thimble that often goes on your middle finger, and you hold the needle between your thumb and your forefinger. So I'm just gonna put my hand behind the quilt, and you can see where my index finger is there, and here's my middle finger on my underneath hand. So that's creating a little bit of a space where I can put the needle in. So what I might do now is just draw with my chalk pencil a bit of a line around this star. I'm gonna create an echoing quilting line around the star. It's that simple. And now I'm gonna start, just put the needle in just a little bit away

from where I'm gonna start sewing. And when the knot gets to there, I'm just gonna pop it through, and later I'll cut that off with a pair of scissors. So now I'm gonna push the needle straight down into the fabric, and as soon as I can feel it with my finger at the back, I'm gonna push up and drop the needle into my thimble finger, drop my thumb to the front, and push through. I'm gonna use big stitches on this one because I want it to look really rugged. And just slide the needle in and out until I've got a couple of stitches on my needle. So I can see those stitches are all fairly regular in size. Then I'll drop my thumb down and push it against my index finger underneath the quilt, and use the thimble to push the needle and then pull it through. For the next line of stitching, I'm going to turn it so that the stitching lines are going to come toward me, 'cause it's always important to quilt towards yourself. So again, I'm dropping the needle down straight, and as soon as it gets through, I'm rocking it back and pushing it up with my other finger. So my finger underneath is forming a bit of a hill. If I wanted smaller stitches, I would push my finger harder and create a smaller surface on the top, and if I want a bigger stitch, I'll maneuver that underneath to make a bigger stitch. So you can see quite simply that I'm just maneuvering that needle until I find where I'm happy, and then I just start repeating that stitch. It may be tempting to do a little bit of quilting and leave it at that, but what I've learned over the years is that the more quilting you do, the more beautiful your quilt is in the end and the more pride you take in your project. So it's quite simple and easy to pass it off and have somebody else do it, or, and I'm not saying there's anything wrong with doing that, either, because there's a time and a place for everything, but it is nice to have a project that you work on, because every stitch that you take puts a little bit of yourself into that project. So what I'm gonna do is just demonstrate a little bit of what would happen if I just echo this line. Now these aren't the chalk lines that I had drawn previously, but they're not always necessary. I think quilting is fairly organic and especially in a project like this. So I'm heading back in the direction from whence I came, and when I get to that center section, I'm just gonna drop the needle and change direction and head back toward myself again. And every line that I add will continue to enhance the star shape and add great texture to the quilt. When I get to a point where I've had enough of this cotton, I may want to change the color of pearl that I'm using, or I may want to try a different texture or a different pattern. I'll just get to a certain point, and in this case, because I've already started leaving the knots off, I can leave a knot on top by just grabbing a little piece of the wool, making that loop, going through the loop and making a knot, and making sure it looks like we did that on purpose, we'll just go twice and snip it off. And this is where we started, I'm not gonna leave that one there, I'm gonna snip that off, but you wanna be careful 'cause you don't want to cut the quilt top. I knotted it off over here, and now I'm just gonna do a little bit of echo quilting, so here's where my seam is. I'll start, actually I'll leave the knot on the top this time, and I'll start right at a diagonal from that corner and start stitching. It's quite thick right there where all those seams join, and I'll just start stitching along the line of the star on the inside this time. The thing about quilting is you might start out with really big stitches when you're just new at it. That's perfectly okay. You don't want to be able to get your finger in there, because if you or someone else using the quilt puts their finger in, they might loosen that stitch or break it off, so you wanna make sure that they're, sort of, you know, a quarter of an inch or smaller. And as you get more experienced, you can start to taper that size of your stitch down to something a little bit smaller than where you started. But a quilt like this is a great place to start if you want to do some hand-quilting, because you don't have to be terribly fussy about what you do, where in some of the more traditional quilts, quilting needs a little bit more concentration. So I'll just keep going like that. And you can see, then, in this quilt, what that might look like when you're finished. The possibilities for quilting are endless. You can do a lot or a

little. You can use a variety of different colors, you can use a variety of different size cottons and threads. The one thing that I would recommend that you do is that what you start in the middle of your quilt, the intensity and the consistency of the quilting, you carry through to the outside. You don't want it to be over-quilted in one area and not in another, because it won't sit exactly flat. So make sure you start in the middle and you don't lose interest before you finish the project. I've brought in a couple of other examples. This one's done by someone that I quilt with regularly, named Cat Babbage, and she has used lots of different size suiting samples and sewn them with the raw edges on top and then used a variety of different stitches to enhance the star patterns. I think, actually, if you look at it like this, it looks a little bit like a flag. She's made a bit of a star pattern in the corner and then quilted stars into these little random patches all over. Some of this is done with machine-quilting, and some of it's done by hand. This one really exemplifies the style of quilt, the original style of wagga quilts. The center is a medallion made up of rectangles, in this case, they're tailors' suiting samples, which was really what most of the women were using. It started out with the saleswoman at the end of the road, but in the 1930s, just like in America, where when they were suffering through the Depression, women found it harder and harder to find the kinds of materials that they wanted to use to make quilts, so they got more resourceful and they did head into their local tailor's, if they lived in town, and used those suiting samples to make the medallion. They did incorporate a bit of pattern, as you can see, like I did in this one, using some light and some dark, so that you get a little bit of a play in the fabrics that you're using so it doesn't all sink in and become just one consistent color. Um, the other thing about this quilt that is very reminiscent of the original waggas is the fact that the outside is made of larger remnants, so it might have been a blanket, or, in this case, it was a very large piece of suiting sample. I purposefully used the markings from the tailor, because I think that adds a lot of integrity to the project. The wagga, whether you choose to make a contemporary version, like the wagga star pattern that we chose today, or a very traditional medallion-style quilt, or even something, a very personal interpretation like this one, is a fantastic way to look at the foundation of tradition that's been given to us over the decades. It's tried and true and made with things that resonate with all of us as we look back and look forward at the same time. So I would highly recommend that this is a project that you take on board, experiment as you will, recycle your materials or buy some new ones if you need a little bit of a push, but it's a great way to express yourself and have a project at the end that says something about you and the quilter that you are today.