

Making Paper Decorations

Everyone likes to join in making decorations, the most talented and the most fumble fingered can all contribute their best efforts. In Poland homemade decorations take the form of intricately cut out paper shapes and complicated, light as air, mobiles of straw, paper and feathers. In Denmark they go so far as to have a special 'cut and stick' day when friends, adults and children, get together with supplies of paper, glue, scissors and paint and join forces to make their Christmas decorations, each one contributing according to their experience or expertise.

Usually the first decoration English children learn to make is the humble paper chain, often from rather dreary ready-cut and gummed packs. Using the same simple principle of looping and sticking you can achieve much prettier colour schemes by buying your own selection of coloured paper and cutting it into strips approximately 4 by 24 cm and securing the loops with a dab of glue. More decorative paper chains can be made by cutting the strips from crêpe paper and either fringing the edges before looping, painting on a pattern in glue and sprinkling with glitter, or frilling the edges of the crêpe by gently stretching the edges between thumbs and forefingers for a fluted effect.

Card, or stiff paper cut-out shapes strung on thread are another very easy decoration to make. Cut a card pattern of a star, heart, tree, snowflake, Santa Claus or angel and using this cut a pile of similar shapes. If you wish to suspend these horizontally from a thread cut the pattern with a small tab which can be folded and glued over the thread. If you prefer to hang the shapes vertically glue them together in pairs with the thread passing straight down through the centre between them. You could also thread the shapes on cotton with a darning needle and suspend them from a mobile.

Garlands look very complicated to make but are well within the ability of most people. First draw out a pattern in strong card. Four examples of suit-

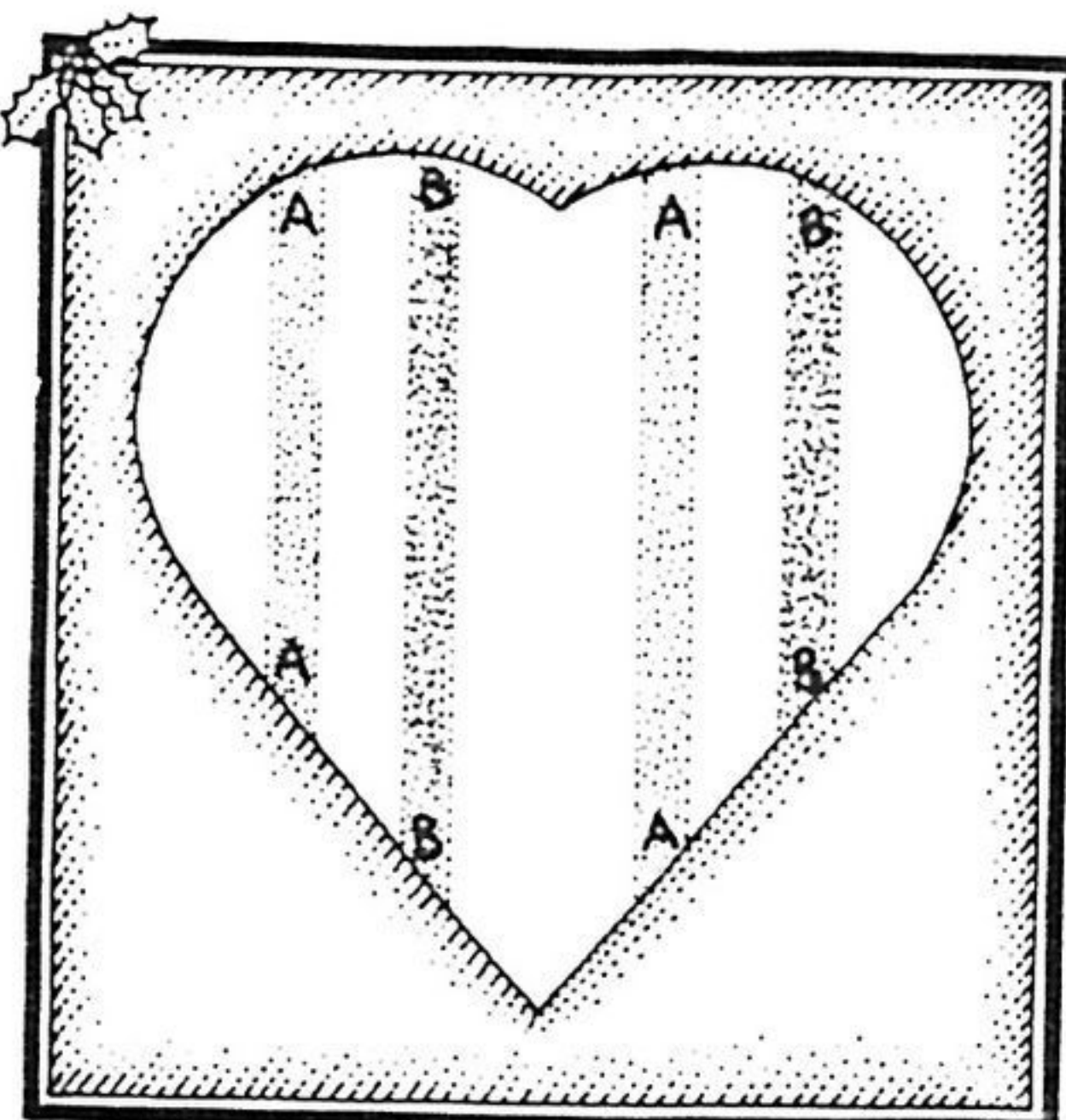


fig 1

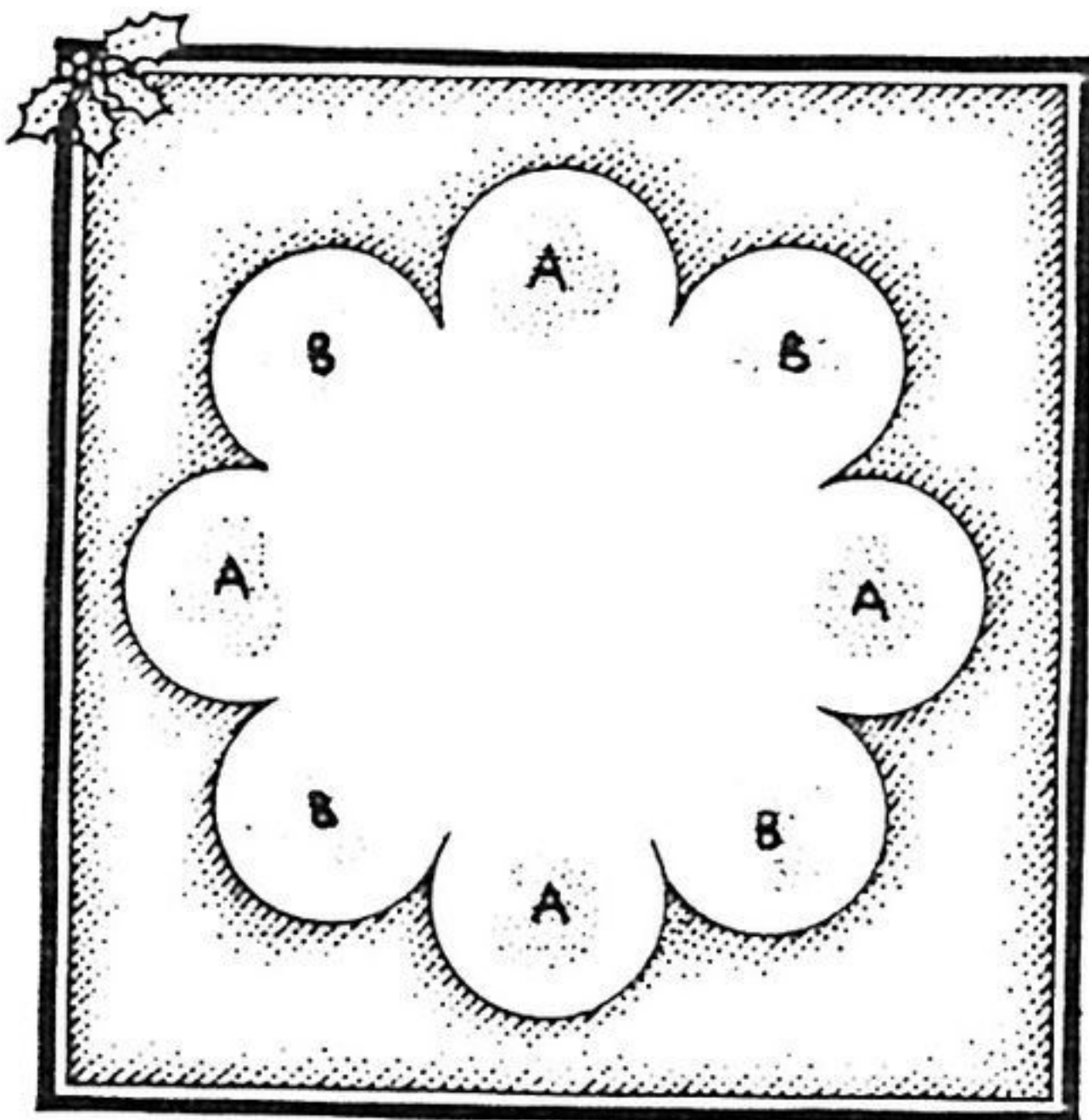


fig 2

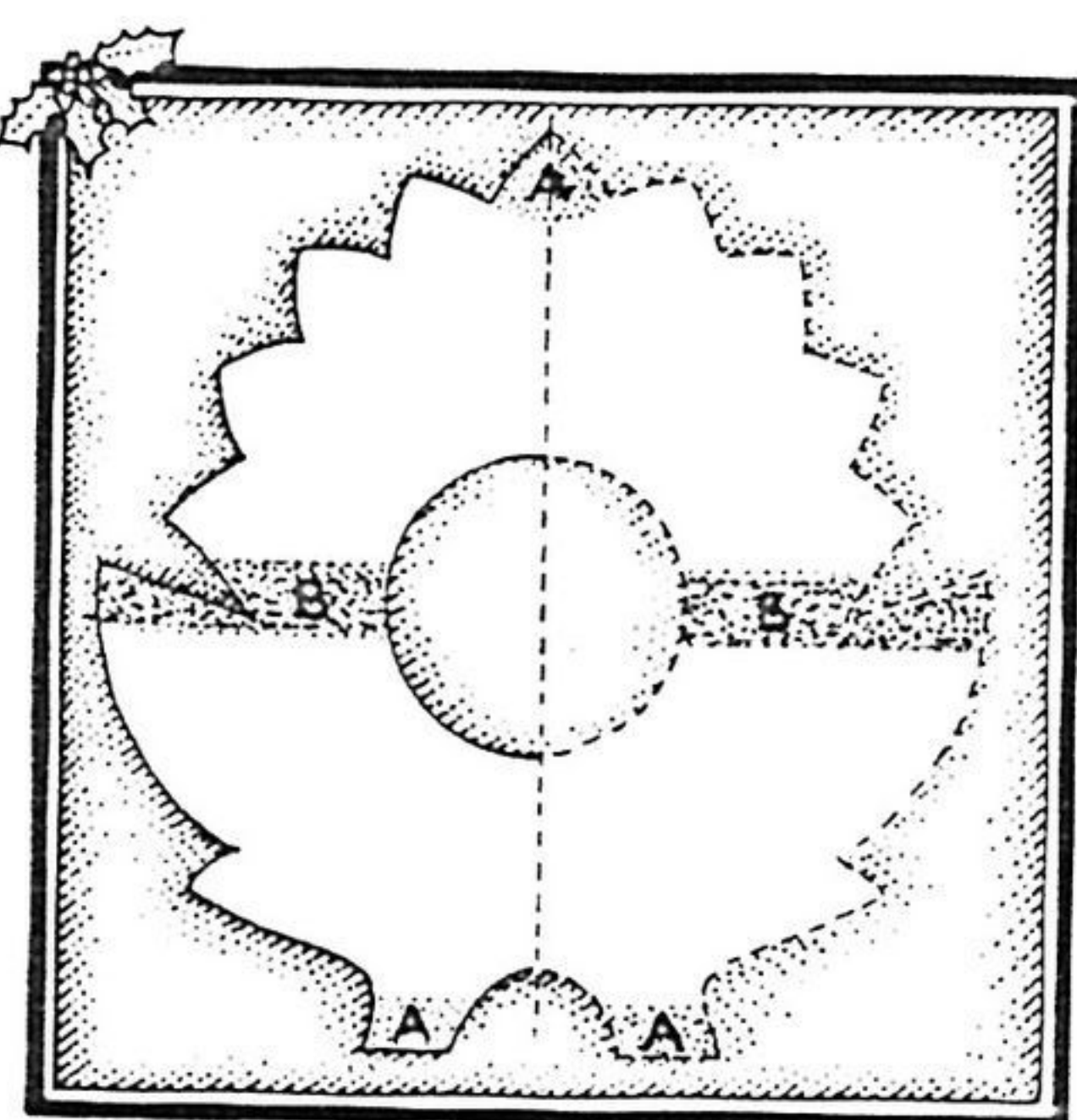


fig 3

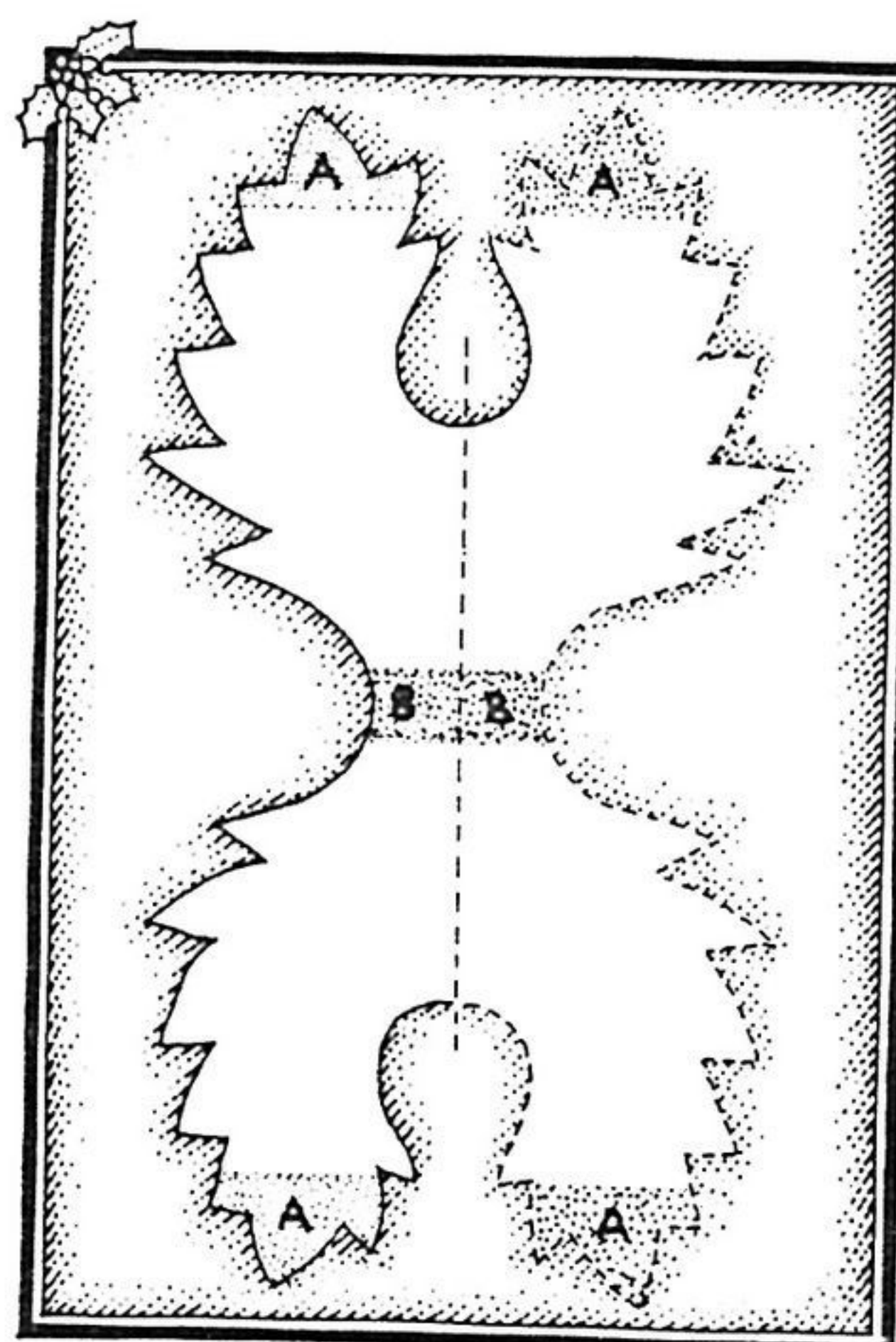


fig 4

card since they will need to be cut on folded tissue to make the more complicated cut-out shapes easier to achieve (figs 3 & 4). With the first two shapes cut a pile of tissues, hearts or flowers to the pattern. The half shapes must be cut from folded tissues with the indicated edge of the pattern lying along the fold. These half shapes are then opened out and pressed flat before assembling to make the garlands. The technique for making garlands is similar whatever the basic shape. First glue the shapes together in pairs at the points marked A. When these are dry glue together the pairs at the points marked B. Use a stick glue or one which will not soak through more than one layer of paper. To hang the decorations cut card shapes and glue at each end of the garlands, cutting out a small tab to be threaded with twine or fine string.

An eye-catching decoration for the centre or the corners of the room is a giant bunch of holly. Cut oversized holly leaves in glossy surfaced stiff dark green paper. Pair the leaves together and glue securely sandwiching a length of green gardening wire between the two to form a central rib. Taking two leaves at a time twist the ends of the wires together adding small

shiny red baubles as holly berries. When you have a pile of wired and berried holly leaves tie all the ends together in a big bunch with an enormous red ribbon bow and let the ends hang down through the leaves.

If you are energetic enough to tackle a whole ceiling, perhaps in a dark hallway or a small child's room, you could cut out a pile of fluffy white cloud shapes, gilded card stars and snowflakes and hang them on different lengths of thread from the ceiling with small tabs of adhesive tape.

The following group of decorations can all be used to decorate the Christmas tree or to hang from mobiles.

The method for making the cut-out heart and three dimensional Christmas tree is similar but both take a very steady hand. Cut out a basic heart or tree shape in stiff card. Draw the outline again twice inside the shape with 1 cm space between (fig 6). Cut round each of these with a sharp craft knife. For the cut-out heart shape

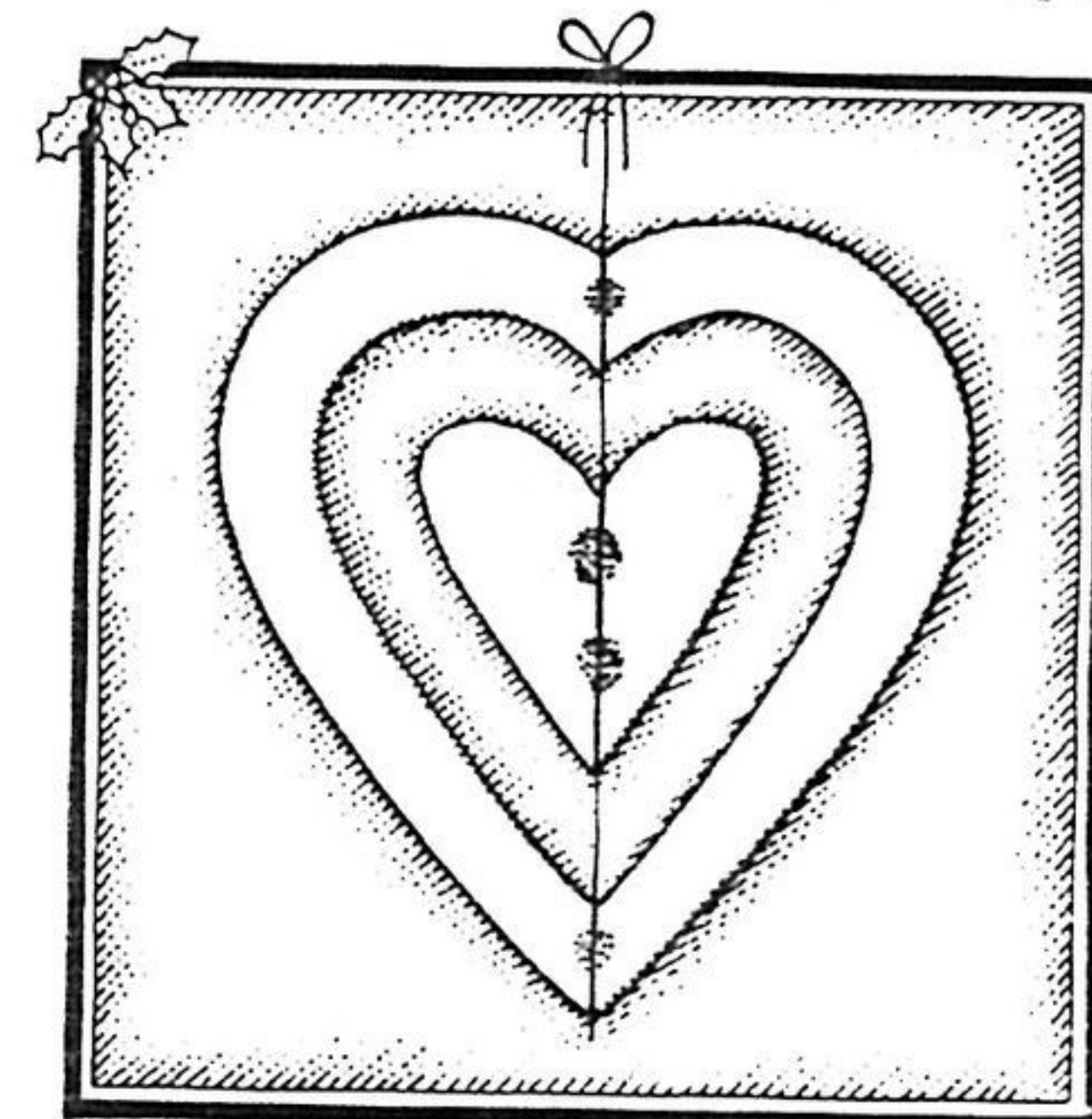


fig 5

remove the centre outline leaving outer and inner shapes (fig 5). Glue strong fine thread down the centre of each decoration leaving enough spare thread to attach other decorations for a mobile, or to form a loop to hang the decoration on the tree. When the glue is dry the central heart will move gently in its frame. To finish the tree, carefully push the three shapes out and round until they form the three dimensional shape (fig 6).