

Artist in residence Estella Castle presents

At Home Corn Dolly Starter Kit

with Elaine Lindsay



Learn to make an Egham Harvest Token corn dolly to be displayed in our upcoming Egham Visions exhibition in 2021 with Artist in Residence Estella Castle. Corn dollies will be returned after the show.

Share the making of your Egham Harvest Token with us by tagging us on social media, using #eghamvisions.



@EghamMuseum



@museumegham



@EghamMuseum



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



Egham Visions

The Egham Visions project, funded by Arts Council England, draws on the Egham Museum's John Hassell watercolour collection, painted in the 1820s, as a backdrop for exploring hidden stories. Artist in residence Estella Castle is working with Egham Museum and the Heritage Crafts Association to highlight several endangered crafts, including Corn Dolly making.

The Enclosures Map of 1805 lists field names that indicate wheat growing activity once took place locally. In a cluster around the Barley Mow Pub in Englefield Green, names such as 'In Three Acres Medlake or Thorpe Lammas', 'Bread Croft and Harvest Corner' paint a picture of where and how local grain was harvested.

Heritage of Corn Dolly Making in the U.K

Corn dollies come in a variety of designs made from plaited straw, sometimes decorated with a ribbon. Due to the nature of the craft, examples of corn dollies dating from before the nineteenth century are rare. We know that they were made by farm labourers but the meaning and stories behind the different shapes has been lost.

'Made at harvest time then kept until Christmas or until the first months of the new year, the token was returned to the land through burning, or feeding to the animals or by ploughing back into the field. The idea was to return fertility to the land, an ethos deeply embedded in rural folklore' (*Heritage Crafts Association*).

Today the craft is being continued by a small but varied range of people, from traditional master straw-crafters to artists, hobbyists to filmmakers, and even high end fashion designers like Alexander McQueen.

The Corn Dolly you will be making is known as a Harvest Token.

The Harvest Token gets its name from the time of year it was given as a token of love to a sweetheart. Once given, it became a symbol of the budding romance. If the recipient wore the token to church, the giver would know their affection was returned. If the relationship blossomed, the token would be displayed at the wedding and in the marital home.

Inspired by this tradition, we are asking you to dedicate your Harvest Token to a special someone in your life. It could be your spouse, your children, a friend or someone else.

If you enjoy this craft and would like to pursue it further, you can purchase straw working supplies, kits and books from www.somethingcorny.co.uk and straw may be purchased from www.simplystraw.co.uk



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Egham Harvest Token

A full instructional video is available on the Something Corny YouTube channel. Or type the following link into your browser: <https://youtu.be/9PRJYuPNEgQ>

Preparing and dampening the straw

1. Each favour requires 8 straws.
2. Wrap the number of straws required for your project in an old towel and lie in a bath or long trough.
3. Cover the bundle of straws with lukewarm water and leave for 45 minutes – 1 hour.
4. Unwrap bundle (handle carefully at this stage as the ears of wheat become quite heavy with the weight of the water in them and the straws have softened) and wring out towel, then re-wrap straw and leave in the damp towel for a further 15 minutes.



Clove Hitch Knot

It is easiest to practice this knot using a piece of thread and a stick as pictured below. Lay thread over the top of the 4 straws. Short end pointing up, long end pointing down. Anchor the short end under your left thumb, take the long end and wrap it around the straws and come up the right-hand side of the short end. (fig. 1) Wrap around again and come up the left-hand side of the short end. Feed the long end in through the piece of thread that has gone all the way around the straw (fig. 2) and pull both ends to tighten knot. Finish off with a half hitch knot to secure. (fig. 3 & 4)



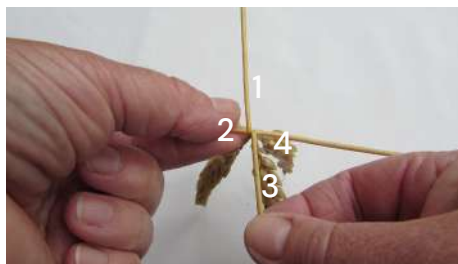
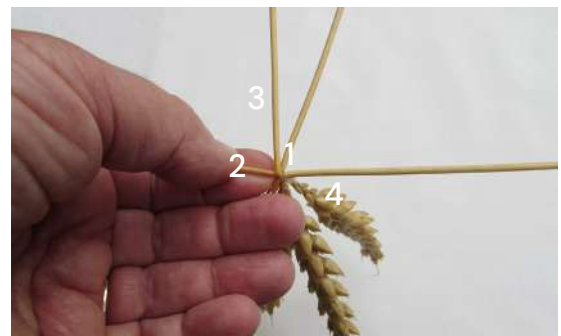
Instructions for the Compass Plait

1. Using, preferably a clove hitch knot, tie 4 straws in a bunch just under the ears with strong thread. I form the knot about 2 cm from the heads and then before pulling the knot tight I push it into place at the very top of the stems. Then take left thread over right to form a half hitch just to secure the knot.



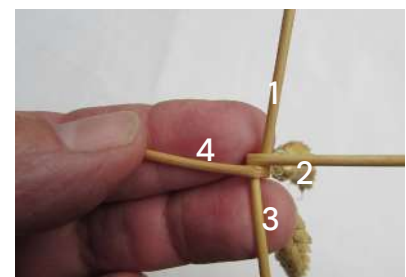
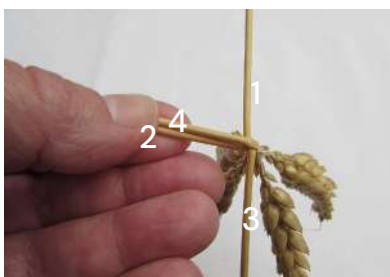
2. Fold the straws out to form a cross.

3. Start to weave by folding straw 1 over straw 4 to lie alongside straw 3.



4. Then fold straw 3 over straw 2 to lie in the original position of straw 1.

5. Do the same folding with straws 2 and 4.



6. Repeat stages 3, 4 and 5 until you have about 15cm of woven straw. Tuck the ends of this plait underneath the damp towel to make sure it doesn't unravel.



7. Follow previous steps to create a second plait of equal length to the first.

To form the Egham Harvest Token



Loop the plait over itself and then tie the end of the plait to the start of the plait firmly.



Loop the second plait through the first.



Shape them together to create a heart shape.



Firmly tie both plaits together with string.



Trim the stalks to the same length as the wheat heads.



Shape your corn dolly and pin it flat on a sheet of polystyrene or corkboard and let it dry overnight. Once dry attach a ribbon or piece of fabric and tie in a bow at the base of the heart.

Please fill out the following form and return it to the museum with your corn dolly

To return your corn dolly to be exhibited in the Egham Visions Exhibition, please fill out the following form and drop it off to the museum with your corn dolly.

Due to covid restrictions on visitor numbers please email or phone first to book a day to drop it off: visions@eghammuseum.org 01784 434483

Privacy Notice

We will only use your personal information to contact you for the purposes of the Egham Visions project. Only The Egham Museum Trust will have access to your information and we will not share your personal details with any third parties without obtaining your consent.

By signing below, you are consenting that you are happy for us to process your personal information as outlined above.

Permissions (Written Dedication)

I give permissions for my written text, dedication and name to be referenced in the 'Egham Visions' project, and to be made available in Egham Museum as part of the archive for future reference:

Name: _____ Signed: _____

Permissions (Egham Harvest Token)

I give permissions for my Egham Harvest Token to be exhibited and photographed in the 'Egham Visions' project, and to be made available in Egham Museum as part of the archive for future reference:

Name: _____ Signed: _____

Each token will be displayed in the final exhibition. To accept your harvest token or corn dolly, we require the following information;

(This will be used only for the museum to contact you about your corn dolly and also give you information for the upcoming exhibition)

Name	_____
Address	_____ _____ _____
Email Address	_____
Phone Number	_____

You will have one month after the exhibition to pick up your corn dolly, please arrange this a week in advance due covid restrictions on visitor numbers.

Name of Maker	_____
Name of the Person you would like to dedicate your token to	_____
Ten words why you have chosen this person	_____ _____ _____
Area Where You Live (ie Egham)	_____

We will be taking photographs during the exhibition for use on social media and in other Museum activities, please do not include anything you would not wish to be shared in this way. For more information please visit <https://eghammuseum.org/policies/>

Feedback

We would love to hear from you about your experience making your harvest token, please use the textbox below to tell us how you felt about this activity and (if any) your links to the local area.

