

THE GUILD OF STRAW CRAFTSMEN

Countryman's Favour, Harvest Knot, Lover's Token

In days gone by it was the custom for a country lad to take an evening walk with his lass in the fields at harvest time. He would weave for her a buttonhole of plaited straw, and if they were courting, she would wear it over her heart as a token of her love. At the annual hiring fairs at Martinmas, men and women might have worn a simple plait decorated with a wisp of sheep's wool or horse hair, as a badge of their trade, ie shepherd, waggoner, etc.



The Countryman's Favour is a simple but delightful corn dolly and can be made with various plaits such as a 2-straw Plait, a 3-straw Catfoot Plait, a simple 3-straw Hair Braid, a 4-straw Compass plait or a 5-straw Spiral Plait.



For a simple single loop favour, the 4-straw Compass Plait gives an attractive chunky weave. Tie four straws together with a clove hitch just under the heads. Plait until you have about 8 cms of straw left. Bring the four straws up to meet each other, and tie firmly at the end of the plaited section with another clove hitch. Bring this tie down to meet the other tie just under the heads, to form a loop of plaited straw, and tie the two together. Spread the wheat ears out between the wheat stalks and allow to dry flat, preferably under a weight. When dry, you can clip the stalk ends decoratively, and add a ribbon bow or a small sprig of dried flowers.

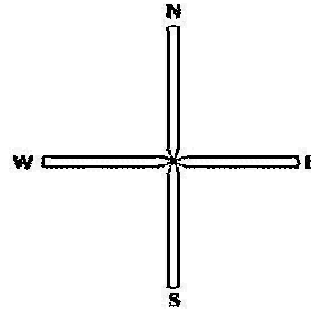
THE GUILD OF STRAW CRAFTSMEN

To make a 4-straw Compass Plait

This is an easy and very effective 4-straw plait.

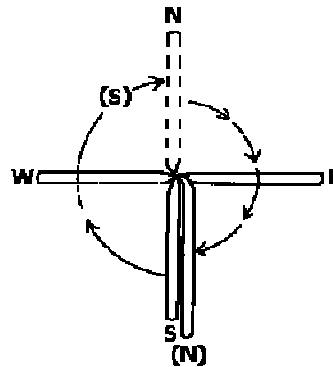
Step 1

Tie 4 straws tightly together under the heads with a clove hitch. Spread out into NESW.



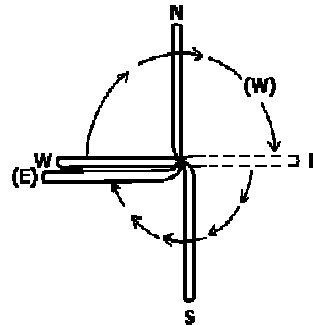
Step 2

Bring N down to lie by S. Take S up to where N was.

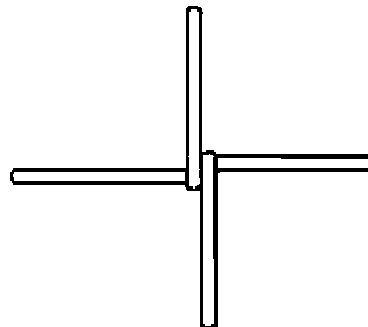


Step 3

In a similar move, bring E across to lie by W. Take W across to where E was.



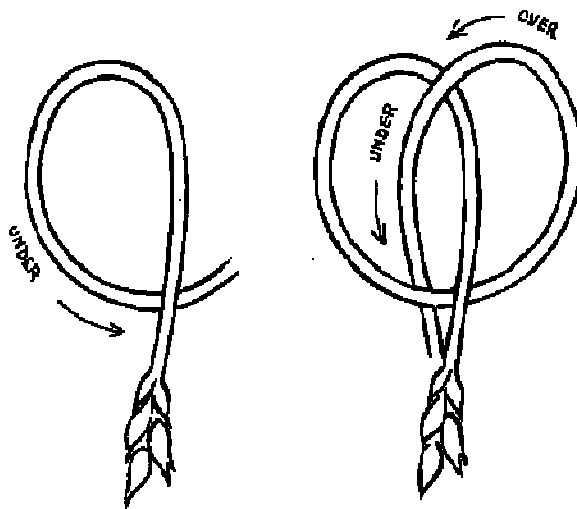
It is important to keep the straws parallel as they cross over. Looking down on your plait it should look like this:



THE GUILD OF STRAW CRAFTSMEN

When you have completed the required length of plait, bring all four straws up together and tie securely with a clove hitch.

With a slightly longer length of plait, you can make a simple looped favour. A 2-straw plait, a 3-straw hair braid, or even a Rope Plait is ideal for this. When you have completed and tied off your length of plait, again leaving about 8 cms of straw, you can intertwine the plait into a double knot following this diagram. Then take the end straws round to the back and tie to the wheat ears. Decorate with a ribbon, if you wish.



Colours of ribbons have symbolic meanings:

- WHITE is for purity
- BROWN is for the earth
- GREEN is for the germinating corn
- GOLD is the ripened wheat
- ORANGE is for the glowing sun
- RED is for warmth, and also for the poppy in the corn field
- BLUE is the colour of truth, and also the colour of the cornflower



You can make your favour more elaborate by adding extra loops, mixing plaits – use your imagination and see what you can come up with! These favours also look great on a rush hat.