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Bring Home the Harvest: Winner 2015

By Laura Silverman

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One Saturday this autumn, carhorses and pagan goddesses paraded through the streets of Peterborough to the jingle-jangle of folk music. The city was celebrating the harvest for the first time in hundreds of years. The weekend event, led by Metal, a cultural organisation that transforms neglected spaces in the area, also featured a barn dance, a meal for 500 guests in the Cathedral Square, and a food market.

It took 224 people 1,318 hours to arrange, and involved more than 1,800 musicians, artists, singers, bakers, farmers and craftsmen. The organisers' dedication and the enthusiastic response of the community paid off. "It exceeded expectations," says Mark Richards, the director of Metal. We are delighted to announce Peterborough as the winner of The



Peterborough was a worth winner of the Bring Home the Harvest Award

They gathered 10 artists from around Britain – as well as members of the community, from farmers to crafters – to generate ideas, and devised an impressive programme. Eloise Moody, one of the artists, baked origami packs of questions about where our food comes from into loaves of bread served at the meal.

She also made gold replicas of a 12th-century coin, buckle, thimble and key that had once been found in the square when it was a market, hiding the objects in the dough. Arianne Churchman, another artist, recreated the traditional Harvest Wain Procession, when the last cut of corn would have been brought into the village. Folk musicians were also enlisted to busk throughout the city, while Morris dancers were called on to perform over the weekend.

Yet events aren't quite over, almost two months later. An exhibition by Lucy and Jorge Orta will be held at Peterborough City Museum and Gallery next September, featuring aluminium casts of loaves made by guests at the harvest meal, and there's also talk of the square being used for a more regular food market. "People have said it's the best event that has ever happened in Peterborough," says Richards. "I think we've made a difference."



MORRIS DANCERS WERE THE ORDER OF THE DAY AT THE CELEBRATIONS

Sunday Telegraph's Bring Home the Harvest Award 2015, run with Love British Food.

The judges, who include Raymond Blanc, the chef; Chris Collins, the television gardener; and Elizabeth Truss, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, found this year's entries stronger than ever. "Having to judge these awards has been a difficult task," says Blanc. "What we are witnessing here is a revolution. We are reconnecting with food as part of our culture and our everyday life." Peterborough is the ideal place to reunite the two, says Richards. "Agriculture and food production have played such a huge part in the city's history.

We are surrounded by the Fens, which grows a third of the vegetables produced in England and enough wheat to make 250 million loaves of bread a year. So many people have come here to work on the land. Yet our relationship to the seasons and our understanding of where food comes from is being lost." Metal wanted to bring people together to celebrate the city's heritage and explore ideas of seasonality and localism.

Richards and his team commissioned Lucy and Jorge Orta, performance artists based in Paris, to host a huge meal in the main square in Peterborough, and made it the centrepiece of the weekend.



A lunch en masse was held in the Cathedral Square