



■ **TRADITIONAL FLAVOUR:** Sally Lane, left, and John Letts, right, with baker Geoff Coleman, of the Cornfield Bakery, Wheatley

A FORMER thatcher has created a new bread from old forms of grain grown in Oxfordshire.

And the bread, made from grain developed by archaeological botanist John Letts, who lives in Grandpont, is being sent to 170 members of a new co-operative called the Oxford Bread Group, founded by Mr Letts and his wife Sally Lane.

Mr Letts developed the grain in frustration at the type of straw produced in

Bread group revives taste of the past

the UK, which was too short for roofs, and scoured gene banks and traditional farmers across the world to track down tall varieties similar to those used in medieval times. The grain is being grown in Faringdon and Wheatley, producing 1.3 tonnes of

crop per acre plus the same weight in thatching straw.

The bread is available at the Cornfield Bakery, Wheatley, East Oxford Farmers' Market and various farm shops.

A **SPECIALIST** firm dedicated to producing better British bread has gained one of the first awards from a special fund set up by Prince Charles.

Heritage Harvest, together with the Oxford Bread Group, has won £25,000 — one of only six grants awarded to organisations nationwide which help preserve the biodiversity of Britain's crops.

The Oxford-based company grows hundreds of varieties of organic wheat. Many of these grains have not been grown in the UK for hundreds of years.

Heritage Harvest director John Letts said: "This grant is a godsend for us, and comes at a time when British farming is facing many challenges.

"Preserving the biodiversity of our crops is the key to food security in a period of climate change and it's very important we pass on the knowledge of how to grow them to the next generation."

The cash comes from the Prince's Countryside Fund.

The Oxford Bread Group,

run by Mr Letts and his wife Sally Lane, is a co-operative which supplies flour for loaves baked at the Cornfield Bakery in Wheatley.

Restaurants, including The Vaults and Garden Cafe at St. Mary's Church in Oxford's High Street, buy the local flour and bake their own bread.

Will Pouget, director at the Vaults, has sponsored a field at Collings Hanger Farm, near Great Missenden.

He plans to invite customers to take part in this year's harvest.

Thatchers working in Oxfordshire are also able to use the straw from ancient wheat varieties.

Matt Williams, of the Rumpelstiltskin Thatching Company in Witney, said: "Wheat straw is sustainable, renewable, and meets the strictest insulation criteria.

"The Prince's grant will invigorate the thatching industry by encouraging more farmers to grow these old varieties and improve the durability of our thatched roofs."