

The Thatched Roofs of County Galway

Díonta Ceann Tuí na Gaillimhe

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Preceding page;

Patie Kelly harvesting reed at Ballindereen

Patie Kelly ag baint ghíolcaí i mBaile an Doirín

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council





Foreword

A thatched roof is a kind of manuscript with the layers of materials as its pages, a record of the economy and culture of those under its protection, a diary of the inhabitants' everyday lives. The year of the household can be read in the type and quality of each layer of thatch, whether it is a patched parchment or a new page. One page when the household was flourishing is expertly written; the next page tells of the bad weather and the poor harvest. The page's character is defined by the variety of cereal used, the length of the straw, the cuts of the scythe, the bruises of the flail or thresher, the marks of trimming, clipping and dressing with crafting hands. All this can be learned from careful reading of a thatched roof. Yet, in Ireland, thatch is generally not seen for what it is. It has tended to be viewed as a symbol of the past and as something synonymous with misery and poverty. Fortunately, the perception of thatch is changing and when we understand more about its materials and methods, it will be seen for what it is: an efficient bio-matter solar panel.

The craft of thatching represents an ancient way of covering the roofs of buildings, ricks of corn or stacks of turf. From earliest times it has been used all over the world where leaves, wild grasses, heathers, straws and water reeds, to name but a few materials,

have been used for thatching. The Irish word for a thatched roof - *ceann tuí* - implies that the thatched roof in Ireland became synonymous with the use of straw. Thatch is one of many understudied and undervalued aspects of our historic buildings. In Ireland today we have little or no archaeological information on thatching even from periods as late as mediaeval times when the majority of buildings, including abbeys and churches, were thatched.

Fragments of the old landscapes persist. Vestiges of former cultures, whether they survive as broken pieces and fragments or as intact vernacular buildings in the hills and fields, along the fading paths, by the roadsides or on village streets, are worthy of attention and care. The lack of awareness of the cultural value and of the social and economic potential of vernacular buildings represents the greatest threat to their survival.

The scale of the loss of vernacular structures over the past thirty years is overwhelming. Those structures that have survived have an anachronistic resonance in the landscape. This publication is intended as a modest contribution to raising awareness of the importance of vernacular buildings and the traditional skills that shaped them. The highlighting of the rich legacy of building traditions, as evidenced in the thatched roofs of Co. Galway, will pay a small tribute to the people who, by their know-how and skill, left the delicate traces of their lives on the landscape.

Thatched roof landscape, Aran Islands

Taobh tíre le díon ceann tuí, Oileáin Árann

Focal Brollaigh

Cineál lámhscríbhinn atá sa díon ceann tuí ina bhfuil sraitheanna ábhair mar leathanaigh, iad ina gcuntas ar ghustal agus ar chultúr na ndaoine a bhí faoina chosaint, dialann de shaol laethúil an dream a bhí ina gcónaí sa teach. Is féidir bliain an teaghlaigh a léamh as an gcineál agus as an mianach a bhí i ngach sraith tuí, bíodh sin ina píosa paisteáilte nó ina cóta nua. Scríobhadh leathanach amháin go paiteanta nuair a bhí cúrsaí go maith ag an teaghlach; insíonn an chéad leathanach eile faoin drochaimsir agus faoin drochfhómhar. Bíonn carachtar an leathanaigh tuí sainithe ag an réimse arbhair a úsáideadh, fad an tuí, gearradh na speile, na marcanna a bhíonn fágtha ag an súiste nó ag an mbuailteoir, an bearradh, an scealpadh agus an chóiriú a rinne lámha an cheardaí. Is féidir sin ar fad a fhoghlaim má léitear an ceann tuí go cúramach. Mar sin féin, ní hiondúil go mbreathnaítear ar cheann tuí ar an mbealach sin. Breathnaítear go minic air mar chomhartha

den sean-aimsir agus mar rud a bhain le cruatan agus bochtanas. Ach dea-scéala é go bhfuil athrú ag teacht ar an mbealach a bhraithimid an ceann tuí agus nuair a bheidh tuiscint níos fearr againn ar na hábhair agus ar na modhanna a bhaineann leis, feicfead go díreach cad atá i gceist ann go bunúsach: painéal éifeachtach gréine de bhith-ábhar.

Modh ársa is ea ceird na tuíodóireachta chun clúdach a chur ar dhíonta foirgneamh, ar chruacha arbhair nó ar chruacha móna. Ó thús ama, bhí sé in úsáid ar fud an domhain agus feidhm bainte as duilleoga, féar fiáin, fraoch, luachair, tuí agus giolcach, gan a lua ach cuid de na hábhair. Léiríonn na leaganacha Gaeilge – *ceann tuí* agus *tuíodóireacht* – gur tuí a bhí in úsáid go forleathan ar dhíonta in Éirinn. Tá an tuíodóireacht ar cheann de na gnéithe is lú dár bhfoirgnimh stairiúla a bhfuil staidéar déanta air. In Éirinn faoi láthair, is fíorbheag eolais atá againn, má tá aon eolas, faoin tuíodóireacht ó thréimhsí chomh deireanach leis an meánaois, tráth a mbíodh ceann tuí ar fhor mhór na bhfoirgneamh ar

a n-áirítear na mainistreacha agus na séipéil.

Tá rianta de na seanthírdhreacha ann i gcónaí. Is fiú aird agus cúram a thabhairt do lorg na seanchultúr, bíodh siad sin ina bpíosaí briste nó ina n-iarsmaí den tógáil áitiúil, ar chnoic agus i bpáirceanna, le taobh seanchosán, le hais an bhóthair nó inár sráidbhailte. Easpa tuisceana faoin luach cultúrtha agus faoin acmhainn shóisialta agus geilleagrach atá i bhfoirgnimh dhúchasacha an chontúirt is mó dá marthain.

Tá líon ollmhór de struchtúir dhúchasacha cailte le deich mbliana fichead anuas. Na struchtúir sin atá fágtha, is féidir a rá go bhfuil siad mí-aimseartha leis an tírdhreach mórthimpeall. Iarracht bheag atá san fhoilseachán seo chun aird a tharraingt ar an tábhacht a bhaineann le foirgnimh dhúchasacha agus leis na ceirdeanna traidisiúnta a mhúnlaigh iad. Trí dhírú ar an oidhreacht shaibhir de thraidisiúin foirgníochta, mar atá léirithe ag díonta ceann tuí Cho. na Gaillimhe, léireofar ómós do na daoine sin a d'fhág rianta míne a saoil ar an tírdhreach lena gcuid eolais agus a scileanna.





Hazel rods for thatching, pointed by Seamus Conroy / Slata coll géaraithe don tuíodóireacht ag Séamus Conroy





Corrandulla area / Ceantar Chor an Dola

The Thatched Roof

The thatched roof is an important element of the vernacular architecture of Co. Galway where styles and materials vary from one end of the county to the other, from the Aran Islands in the west to the banks of the Shannon in the east. There are approximately six hundred thatched buildings in the county at present of which approximately one third may be considered as having historic thatched roofs.¹ The farming economy, and cereal cultivation in particular, that supplied thatchers in the past has changed dramatically over the last fifty years resulting in a situation today where the traditional materials required to maintain historic thatch roofs are not easily available. The arable farming economy of former times provided several varieties of each type of straw, whether wheat, oats or rye. The diversity of colour and texture in the landscape was echoed in the diversity of thatching materials and styles on vernacular roofs. The absence of this richness thus represents a double loss to the landscape, reflecting the recent reduction in the wealth of biodiversity.

An Díon Ceann Tuí

Gné thábhachtach d'ailtireacht dhúchasach Cho. na Gaillimhe is ea an díon ceann tuí a bhfuil éagsúlacht ina mhodhanna agus ina ábhar ó thaobh amháin den chontae go dtí an taobh eile, ó Oileáin Árann san iarthar go dtí bruach na Sionainne san oirthear. Tá suas le sé chéad foirgneamh ceann tuí sa chontae faoi láthair agus is féidir glacadh leis gur díonta stairiúla tuí atá ar aon trian díobh sin.¹ Tá an geilleagar feirmeoireachta, agus fás arbhair ach go háirithe, a rinne soláthar do na tuíodóirí san am atá caite, athraithe go mór le leathchéad bliain anuas agus dá bharr sin níl fáil go héasca anois ar na hábhair thraidisiúnta a theastaíonn chun díonta stairiúla ceann tuí a choinneáil i gcaoi. Bhíodh geilleagar arúil feirmeoireachta an tseansaoil ag cur cineálacha éagsúla tuí ar fáil, cruithneacht, coirce nó seagal. Bhíodh éagsúlacht datha agus uigeachta na tírdhreacha le sonrú in éagsúlacht na n-ábhar tuíodóireachta agus na stíleanna sna díonta dúchasacha. Mar gheall air sin, tá dhá easpa ar an tírdhreach agus iad ina léiriú ar an laghdú atá déanta le tamall anuas ar an saibhreas bithéagsúlachta.

Roof Form

The roofs of vernacular dwelling houses in Ireland generally consist of hipped or gabled forms, with a combination of both types in some instances where a house has a single gable with a hip at the opposite end. Where the roof is gabled, the end walls rise up to ridge height with the roof carpentry and its covering extending over the front and back slopes only. In the case of a hip roof, the walls rise to side wall height and the carpentry framework and covering extend over the ends and sides to provide a four-sided roof. An examination of the distribution map of roof forms in Ireland in the 1940s shows that the hip roof was dominant throughout Leinster, most of Munster and south-east Connaught. The hip roof form was also dominant in Connemara at this time, with a figure of 40-80% hip roofs as far west as Indreabhán at least.² Only a small number of historic thatch roofs with hip ends were located in Connemara during the recent survey indicating that this vernacular feature has all but disappeared from the area in less than sixty years. There are, however, many fine examples of thatched hip roofs to be seen throughout other parts of the county.

An Cineál Dín

Díonta gabhail éadain nó beanna a bíonn ar thithe cónaí dúchasacha in Éirinn i gcoitinne, agus an dá leagan i gcásanna go mbíonn binn ar thaobh amháin den teach agus gabhail éadain ar an taobh eile. Nuair a bhíonn an díon beannach, téann na beanna suas go dtí mullach an tí, agus ní bhíonn adhmaid an dín agus a chlúdach ach amháin ar fhánaí tosaigh agus cúil an tí. I gcás dín ghabhail éadain, bíonn na ceithre bhalla ar chomhairde agus bíonn adhmaid an dín agus an clúdach anuas ar na sleasa chun díon ceithre thaobh a dhéanamh. Léiríonn scrúdú ar an mapa dáiliúcháin de chineálacha díonta in Éirinn sna 1940adaí gurbh é an díon gabhail éadain ba thréine ar fud Laighin, sa chuid ba mhó de Mhumhan agus in oirdheisceart Chonnacht. Bhí an díon gabhail éadain le fáil go tréan i gConamara ag an am sin freisin, agus figiúr de 40-80% de dhíonta gabhail éadain i gceist chomh fada siar le hIndreabhán ar a laghad.² Ní bhfuarthas ach líon beag de dhíonta stairiúla ceann tuí le gabhail éadain i gConamara sa suirbhé a rinneadh le gairid, rud a léiríonn go bhfuil an ghné dhúchasach sin imithe as an gceantar ar fad, geall leis, taobh istigh de thrí scór bliain. Ach sin ráite, tá neart samplaí breátha de dhíonta ceann tuí gabhail éadain le feiceáil go fóill ar fud cheantracha eile den chontae.



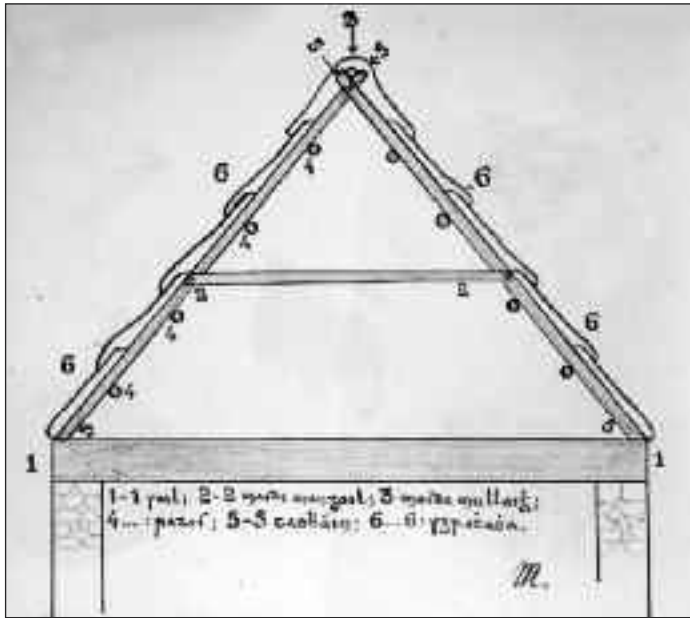
Kinvara area / Ceantar Chinn Mhara



Stone gables / Beanna cloiche, Cois Fharráige (1935)



Hip roof, Cloonboo / Díon gabhail éadain, Cluain Bú



Roof framework / Creat dín (1934)

Sod layer

The vast majority of historic thatch structures identified during the recent survey, including houses and outbuildings, have a sod layer. This layer is usually referred to as 'scraw' from the Irish word *sraith*.³ It was cut in areas of poor land where tough and wiry grass sod with matted roots was easily sourced. The sod was laid on the roof timbers, grass side upwards, usually in long strips. As well as providing insulation, the 'scraw' acted as an underlayer for the thatching material laid over it. All of the replies to the Irish Folklore Commission (IFC) questionnaires pertaining to thatch in Co. Galway noted the use of a sod layer:

... a layer of bog or heather 'scraws' each about 4 to 6 ft. long x about 2ft. wide x 2in in thickness. ... The 'scraws' for putting on the roof under the thatch were generally cut a month or so before putting on so as to be lighter and tougher. After cutting they were each rolled up and put standing on end to dry. In putting them on the roof (rafters 4ft. apart, ribs 10in to 12in) two ladders were used, a man on each ladder, a light pole being passed through the scraw which is still rolled, each man holding an end of the pole till they reach where the scraw is to be placed and so on.⁴

An Sraith

Tá sraith de scraithreacha sa chuid is mó de na struchtúir stairiúla ceann tuí a sonraíodh sa suirbhé is deireanaí, tithe agus cróite san áireamh. An sraith a thugtaí ar an tsraith seo go hiondúil.³ Gheartaí í in áiteanna a raibh fáil go héasca ar fhéar garbh le tranglam rútaí. Leagtaí an sraith ar adhmad an dín, in strácaí fada go hiondúil, agus taobh an fhéir in uachtar. Chomh maith le hinsliú a chur ar fáil, bhíodh an sraith ag feidhmiú mar fhoshraith don ábhar tuíodóireachta a leagadh anuas air. Luadh úsáid scraithreacha sna freagraí ar fad a tugadh ar cheistneoir Choimisiúin Béaloideasa Éireann i dtaca leis na díonta ceann tuí i gCo. na Gail-
limhe:

Sgrraith a baineadh de uachtar an phortaigh agus í dhá thriugh ar leithead, agus a shínfeadh ón maide droma go dtí an buntsop.⁴



Thatching needle, Addergool / Snáthaid tuíodóireachta, Eadargúil (1935)

Outbuilding roof carpentry with remaining pieces of scraw on ridge, Caiseal (no date)
Adhmad dín sciobóil agus blúirí den sraith ar an mullach, Caiseal (gan dáta)



Straw lining, Ardrahan / Líneáil tuí, Ard Raithin

A carefully observed account of the laying of the sod from the Corr na Móna area in the 1930s describes the removal of the clay from the sod prior to laying it on the roof, a practice no longer mentioned and not noted on any roof during the recent survey:

*Sods (scraitheacha), two feet broad and four feet long, are cut (those of a turf-nature are best for the purpose). Then they are completely cleared of all clay, so that the rough root-layer forms the underside. These sods are then laid on the timber roofing, and well pressed on it. The edge of the wall at the inner gable corner is taken as a starting point and a line of sods (stráca) is laid as far as the ridge pole. Similarly on the opposite side of the roof another line is laid. Over the ridge pole one sod is laid which extends a little way down on both sides. The sods are laid in such a manner that the upper overlaps the other by about half a foot (thar a chéile ceithre ordlaighe). In such a fashion, line after line of sods is laid, until the whole beam-work is covered. Every line laid on overlaps its neighbour a little so no space is left uncovered.*⁵

A sod layer was always used under thatch on the Aran Islands even though the scraw was not available locally and had to be brought in from Connemara. In some parts of the country a decorative lining made from straw was sometimes used as an underthatch. This practice does not appear to have been common in Co. Galway but some examples were noted during the recent survey.

I gcuntas géarchúiseach as ceantar Chorr na Móna ar leagan na scraitheacha sna 1930adaí, tá cur síos ar an gcaoi a mbaintí an chréafóg den scraith sula leagtaí ar an díon í, cleachtadh nach luaitear a thuilleadh agus nár nótáladh i gcás aon dín sa suirbhé is deireanaí.

Bhaintí úsáid as scraitheacha i gcónaí faoin tuí ar Oileáin Árann cé nach raibh fáil ar an scraith go háitiúil agus go mbíodh orthu é a thabhairt isteach as Conamara. In áiteanna sa tír, bhaintí úsáid in amanna as líneáil tuí mar fhoshraith. Ní léir go raibh an nós sin fairsing i gCo. na Gailimhe ach nótáladh roinnt samplaí sa suirbhé is deireanaí.

Wheat straw scollop thatch, Tuam area / Tuíodóireacht le scoilb agus tuí chruithneachta, Ceantar Thuama





¹ This publication is based on preliminary observations drawn from the inventory of thatched structures carried out for the Heritage Office, Galway County Council, as part of the *Galway County Heritage Plan 2004-2008*. The inventory was achieved in three phases between 2004 and 2007. Over 600 thatched structures were recorded and it is estimated that more than 50 thatched buildings remain to be identified. For the purposes of the survey, where there was only one new, or relatively new, layer of thatch on the roof, it was generally regarded as modern-style thatch. A structure was considered to have an historic thatched roof where a number of historic features were extant such as the original or early timbers, a sod layer, and a number of layers of thatching materials.

² The distribution map of roof forms was published by Caoimhín Ó Danachair in an article 'Some distribution patterns in Irish Folklife', *Béaloideas*, 25 (1957-'59), 108-123. In 1945, Ó Danachair plotted the distribution of the main thatching styles in Ireland from information he collected through a *Roofs and Thatching* questionnaire, sent from the Irish Folklore Commission to correspondents throughout the country. The questionnaires collected information on many aspects of thatching including the roof form, underthatch, thatching materials, the frequency of thatching and the thatching methods. On the basis of 452 responses to the questionnaire, of which 31 were from Co. Galway, the main thatching methods, as practiced on the roofs of dwellings in the 1940s, were identified and mapped. Ó Danachair published these distribution patterns in an article entitled 'The Questionnaire System: Roofs and Thatching', *Béaloideas*, 15 (1945), 203-217. This material is now in the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin, henceforth referred to in this publication as NFC.

³ 'Sraith: a green sod, a scraw, a layer of lea surface, a sward, a layer or coating of anything; gan de dhíon air acht scraith, only roofed with sods', P. Dinneen, *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla*, 1927.

⁴ Michael J. Lyons, Trasternagh, Moylough, Co. Galway. NFC 1079: 45-6 (1945).

⁵ Dr. Ludwig Muhlhause, 'Contributions to the study of the tangible material culture of the Gaeltacht', *Journal of the Cork Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol. 39 (1934), 43-44.

¹ Tá an foilseachán seo bunaithe ar na réamhthorthaí a baineadh as an bhfardal de struchtúir ceann tuí a rinne an t-údar d'Oifig Oidhreachta Chomhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe, mar chuid de *Phean Oidhreachta Chontae na Gaillimhe 2004-2008*. Rinneadh an fardal ina thrí chuid idir 2004 agus 2007. Rinneadh taifeadadh ar bhreis agus 600 struchtúr ceann tuí agus meastar go bhfuil breis agus 50 foirgneamh ceann tuí fágtha le n-aithint go fóill. Chun críocha an tsuirbhé, i gcás nach raibh ach sraith amháin nua, nó cuíosach nua, de thúí ar an díon, glacadh leis mar cheann tuí de dhéanamh nua-aimseartha. Glacadh leis gur ceann tuí stairiúil a bhí ar struchtúr ina raibh cuid de na gnéithe stairiúla ar marthain, ar nós bun-adhmad nó céad-adhmad an díon, an sraith, agus roinnt sraitheanna de na hábhair tuíodóireachta.

² Ba é Caoimhín Ó Danachair a d'fhoilsigh an mapa dáiliúcháin de na gcineálacha díonta in alt dar teideal 'Some distribution patterns in Irish Folklife', *Béaloideas*, 25 (1957-'59), 108-123. I 1945, leag Ó Danachair amach an dáileadh ar na príomh-stíleanna díonta tuí in Éirinn ón eolas a bhailigh sé trí cheistneoir, *Tuíodóireacht*, a seoladh ó Choimisiún Béaloideas Éireann chuig comhfhreagróirí ar fud na tíre. Bhailigh an cheistneoir eolas faoi chuid mhór gnéithe den tuíodóireachta, ina measc an cineál díon, foshraitheanna, ábhar tuíodóireachta, minicíocht na tuíodóireachta agus na modhanna tuíodóireachta. Ar bhunús 452 fhreagra ar an gceistneoir, arbh as contae na Gaillimhe 31 díobh, ainmníodh agus mapáladh na príomh-mhodhanna tuíodóireachta, mar a dhéantáir ar dhíonta tithe cónaí sna 1940adaí. D'fhoilsigh Ó Danachair na patrúin dáiliúcháin sin in alt dar teideal, 'The Questionnaire System: Roofs and Thatching', *Béaloideas*, 15 (1945), 203-217. Tá an t-ábhar sin coinnithe anois i gCnuasach Béaloideas Éireann, Coláiste na hOllscoile Baile Átha Cliath, ar a dtabharfar CBÉ as seo ar aghaidh san fhoilseachán seo.

³ 'Sraith: a green sod, a scraw, a layer of lea surface, a sward, a layer or coating of anything; gan de dhíon air acht scraith, only roofed with sods', P. Dinneen, *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla*, 1927.

⁴ Micheál Ó Conaill, Dún Doighre, Baile Locha Riach, Co. na Gaillimhe, CBÉ 1079: 61 (1945).



Materials

The thatched roof directly reflects the cultivation practices, or indeed their absence, in the local farming economy. Just as the farmland consisted of a patchwork of colours, textures and patterns, thatched roofs too reflected this diversity. Indeed, the most striking aspect of the responses to the IFC questionnaires was the variety described in the materials used for thatching. The rich biodiversity of natural and farmed landscapes provided roofing materials of wild and cultivated materials such as rye, wheat, oat and barley straw from the farmland, rushes from the poorly drained fields, heather from the bogs, and wild grasses from the mountains and sand dunes.

Stooks of corn / Stucaí arbhair (1946)





Ábhair

Léiriú díreach atá sa díon ceann tuí ar na cleachtais saothraithe, nó a n-easnamh go deimhin, a bhíodh sa gheilleagar áitiúil feirmeoireachta. Díreach mar a bhí réimse de dhathanna, de chomhdhéanamh agus de mhar-canna ar thalamh na feirme, bhí an éagsúlacht chéanna le sonrú sa díon ceann tuí. Go deimhin, ba í an ghné ba shuntasáí faoi na freagraí a tugadh ar cheistneoirí an CBÉ ná an réimse ábhair a luadh le haghaidh tuíodóireachta. Bhí nádúr saibhir bithéagsúil na dtírdhreacha in ann ábhair dín a chur ar fáil trí ábhair fhiáine a bhailiú agus ábhair saothraithe a shábháil, cosúil le tuí sea-gail, cruithneachta, coirce agus eorna ón bhfeirm, luachair ó na páirceanna boga, fraoch ó na portaigh, agus féar fiáin ó na sléibhte agus ó na dumhcha gainimh:

*Cíb ba mhó fadó nó fraoch. Tuighe choirce nó cruithneacht anois, nó luachair. Cíb dhubh nó luachair. Deachair an tuighe maith cruithneachtan a bhualadh.*⁵



Among the wild grasses such as *cíob*, *seisc*, and *fiontarnach*, the latter was the preferred grass for thatching in Connemara.⁶ The former diversity of materials is contrary to the trends noted in the recent inventory. Only a very small number of houses thatched with *fiontarnach*⁷ were located but over fifty outbuildings were noted as being thatched with wild grasses. This finding confirms the importance of outbuildings as repositories of historic thatch as it is mostly on these roofs that a variety of thatching materials and methods has survived intact.

Currently, thatched roofs with a covering of *fiontarnach* or rushes are found in association with roped and pegged thatch. This also appears to be the case historically although two descriptions, one from 1934,⁸ the other from 1938,⁹ mention another type of sedge, *fiadhtail*, used with scollop thatching as opposed to roped or pegged thatch. During the recent survey, very fine reed thatched roofs were noted where the reed was sourced from local marshes, rivers and lakes. It would appear that water reed was not very much in use as a thatching material in Co. Galway in the 1940s and it only began to be used on a significant scale from the 1970s onwards.¹⁰



Grass roof, near Clifden / Díon fiontarnaigh, in aice leis an gClochán

Combing straw for thatch, Aran / Cíoradh tuí le haghaidh tuíodóireachta, Árainn (1946)



As na féara fiáine ar nós cíb, seisc agus fiontarnach, ba í an cháb an féar ab fhearr le tuíodóirí Chonamara:⁶

Cuirtear díon ar an tigh, tuighe bhán⁷ nó le fionntarnach agus coinnuighítear go dlúth é le “net-wire”. In aimsear m’athair mhóir, is le súgán a choinnuighíte é. Is é an tuighe bhán nó an fionntarnach is fearr le h-aghaidh díon mar ní itheann na luchain é mar a itheann siad díon eile. Nuair a chuirtear cóta maith suas, seasann sé ceithre bliadhna. Cuireann fear an tigh suas an díon é féin.⁸

Tá an éagsúlacht ábhair sin a bhí ann fadó i gcodarsnacht leis an nósmaireacht a nótáladh san fhardal is deireanaí. Ní bhfuarthas ach líon an-bheag de thithe a raibh díon fiontarnaigh⁹ orthu ach ní mór a nótáil go bhfuarthas breis agus leathchhead cró a raibh díon cíbe orthu. Léiríonn sin an tábhacht a bhaineann leis na cróite seachas na tithe féin mar fhoinsí den tuíodóireacht stairiúil, mar gur ar na cineálacha sin díonta atá réimse d’ábhair agus de mhodhanna tuíodóireachta fós le fáil. Faoi láthair, faightear díonta ceann tuí a bhfuil clúdach fiontarnaigh nó luachra orthu i dtuíodóireacht ina n-úsáidítear rópaí agus pionnaí. Is cosúil gur mar sin a bhí an scéal go stairiúil freisin cé go bhfuil dhá chuntas ann, ceann ó 1934,¹⁰ agus ceann eile ó 1938,¹¹ ina luaitear cineál eile cíbe, fiataíl, a bheith in úsáid i dtuíodóireacht le scoilb seachas tuíodóireacht le rópaí agus pionnaí. Le linn an tsuirbhé is deireanaí, nótáladh díonta breátha giolcaí déanta as giolcach ó aibhneacha agus locha áitiúla. Is cosúil nár baineadh mórán úsáide as an ngiolcach mar ábhar tuíodóireachta i gCo. na Gaillimhe sna 1940adaí agus níor tosaíodh á úsáid ar scála suntasach go dtí na 1970adaí ar aghaidh.¹²

Sedge roof, Connemara / Díon cíbe, Conamara





⁶ ‘Cíob: coarse mountain grass, sedge, osiers, twigs; cíob dhubh, black sedge’; ‘seisc, a coarse grass or sedge that grows in a marsh, used for making grass ropes (súgáin), and thatching’; ‘fiontarnach: coarse brown sedge-like grass that grows on mountains and swamps, sometimes used for thatch’, P. Dinneen, op. cit.

⁷ Also referred to as *fiontanach*

⁸ ‘The best material is wheat-straw (*tuighe cruithneachta*); somewhat comparable in quality is white sedge (*tuighe bhán*); other kinds of sedge are also used, *fiaghtaghail* “coarse sedge” and *cíob dhubh* “black sedge”, Muhlhausen, op.cit. 44. Muhlhausen was describing the scollop thatching method as he observed it in Corr na Móna. ‘Fiadhghail, vetches, clumps of long grass, wild clumps of vegetation generally; *al. fiaghtaghail* or *fiadhtghail* (coarse sedge, *Connaught*.)’, P. Dinneen, op.cit.

⁹ ‘The thatch is made of a kind of sedge (*Fiadhtail*) and is secured in the orthodox method by scollops’, Seán Mac Giolla Meidhre, ‘Some Notes on Irish Farm-Houses’, *Béaloideas*, 8 (1938), 197.

¹⁰ There is no mention of reed as a material in the 31 replies from Co. Galway to the questionnaire from the Irish Folklore Commission referred to above.

⁵ Séamus Mac Donnchadha, *An Aird Thiar*, Carna, Co. na Gaillimhe. CBÉ 1079: 15 (1945).

⁶ ‘Cíob: coarse mountain grass, sedge, osiers, twigs; cíob dhubh, black sedge’; ‘seisc, a coarse grass or sedge that grows in a marsh, used for making grass ropes (súgáin), and thatching’; ‘fiontarnach: coarse brown sedge-like grass that grows on mountains and swamps, sometimes used for thatch’, P. Dinneen, op. cit.

⁷ Cineál seisce is ea an tuí bhán.

⁸ Dalta scoile gan ainm, *Cloigcheam*, An Mám, Co. na Gaillimhe, CBÉ 1079: 26 (1945).

⁹ Also referred to as *fiontanach*.

¹⁰ ‘The best material is wheat-straw (*tuighe cruithneachta*); somewhat comparable in quality is white sedge (*tuighe bhán*); other kinds of sedge are also used, *fiaghtaghail* “coarse sedge” and *cíob dhubh* “black sedge”, Muhlhausen, op.cit. 44. Bhí Muhlhausen ag cur síos ar an tuíodóireachta le scoilb mar a chonaic sé i gCorr na Móna é. ‘Fiadhghail, vetches, clumps of long grass, wild clumps of vegetation generally; *al. fiaghtaghail* or *fiadhtghail* (coarse sedge, *Connaught*.)’, P. Dinneen, op.cit.

¹¹ ‘The thatch is made of a kind of sedge (*Fiadhtail*) and is secured in the orthodox method by scollops’, Seán Mac Giolla Meidhre, ‘Some Notes on Irish Farm-Houses’, *Béaloideas*, 8 (1938), 197.

¹² Ní luaitear an ghlóicach mar ábhar in aon cheann den aon cheann déag is fiche de fhreagraí a tháinig as Gaillimh ar cheistneoir Choimisiún Béaloideasa Éireann atá luaite thuas.



John Brereton with oat staw and thruster / John Brereton, tuíodóir, le tuí coirce agus sáiteoir

Thatching Styles

Two main thatching styles were identified in county Galway in the 1940s with roped thatch predominating over the western section of the county and scollop or pinned thatch in the eastern part. Passing reference was made to a third method, pegged thatch, which was noted in the Casla-Lettermore area.¹¹ No example of a fourth method of thatching, thrust thatch, was noted from Co. Galway in the replies to the IFC questionnaire, although descriptions of it are found in other sources as discussed below.

Modhanna Tuíodóireachta

Léiríodh dhá phríomhmhodh tuíodóireachta i gCo. na Gaillimhe sna 1940adaí, an tuí súgáin nó tuí le rópa a bhí go fairsing in iarthar an chontae agus tuíodóireacht le scoilb sa taobh thoir. Déantar tagairt fhánach don tríú modh, tuíodóireacht phionnáilte nó tuíodóireacht le scibhir,¹³ rud a nótáladh i gceantar Chasla-Leitir Móir.¹⁴ Níor tugadh faoi deara aon sampla den cheathrú modh tuíodóireachta, tuíodóireacht sháite, i gCo. na Gaillimhe sna freagraí ar cheistneoir an CBÉ, cé go bhfuil cuntais de ar fáil i bhfoinsí eile mar atá pléite thíos.

Thrust Thatch

Despite the absence of a mention of thrust thatch in the questionnaire replies from Co. Galway in the 1940s, it may have been widespread in the county, not only previously, but also at the time the information was collected for the questionnaire. It is possible that it was not recorded because thrust thatching, or a variation of it, was done in combination with ropes in Co. Galway, and the questionnaire descriptions of roped thatch tended to concentrate on the method of putting on the ropes and not the method of putting on the thatching material.

Thrust thatch had however been noted in Co. Galway in the early nineteenth century, where it was mentioned without being associated with ropes. It was noted again at the end of the century, this time in conjunction with ropes. It is of particular interest that it was also recorded, both with and without the presence of ropes, in the recent thatch survey.

Thrust thatch, also known as spliced thatch, consists of thrusting handfuls of straw into the existing thatch. In this method, the first layer of thatch is generally sewn to the roof timbers with a thatching needle and all subsequent layers of straw are thrust into the existing thatch using a small, two-pronged fork named variously as a 'thruster' or 'spurtle'. When it is used in conjunction with ropes, it is put onto the existing thatch in handfuls, without the use of a thrusting fork. Thrust thatching is generally completed in 'strokes' similar to the scollop thatching method, the main differences between the two methods being the absence of fixings¹² in thrust thatch, except at the ridge and possibly the eaves, and the fact that the straw is dampened and beaten down after thrusting to provide a smooth finish to the slope. The following account from Co. Galway, written by Hely Dutton in the early nineteenth century, describes the thrust thatch method exactly as it continues to be practiced in Co. Galway in the twenty-first century:



Tuíodóireacht Sháite

In ainneoin nár dearna aon tagairt don tuíodóireacht sháite i bhfreagraí na gceistneoirí as Co. na Gaillimhe sna 1940adaí, d'fhéadfadh go raibh sé forleathan sa chontae, ní amháin roimhe sin ach ag an am ar bailíodh an t-eolas don cheistneoir. Tharlódh nár tugadh faoi deara é mar mhodh tuíodóireachta ann féin, mar go mbíodh tuíodóireacht sháite, nó leagan de, á dhéanamh i gcomhar le tuí súgáin i gCo. na Gaillimhe. Bhí an cur síos sa cheistneoir faoi thuíodóireacht le rópaí ag díriú ar an modh a bhí ann leis na rópaí nó na súgáin a chur i bhfostú agus ní ar an modh a gcuirtí an t-ábhar tuíodóireachta féin ar an díon.

Ach sin ráite, nótáladh tuíodóireacht sháite i gCo. na Gaillimhe go luath sa naoú céad déag, tráth a luaitear í agus gan aon chóras rópaí ag dul léi. Nótáladh arís í ag deireadh an chéid, ach i gcomhar le rópaí an t-am sin. Díol spéise ar leith gur tugadh faoi deara freisin í, le rópaí agus dá n-uireasa, sa suirbhé tuíodóireachta a rinneadh le déanaí.



Tugtar tuíodóireacht spladhsáilte ar an tuíodóireacht sháite freisin, rud a dhéantar trí dhornáin tuí (ar a dtugtar fainneal i gCúige Laighean) a sháitheadh isteach sa tuí atá ar an díon cheana féin. Leis an modh seo, is iondúil go mbíonn an chéad sraith tuí fuaite ar adhmaid an dín le snáthaid nó biorán tuíodóireachta agus sáitear na sraitheanna eile isteach sa tuí sin le forc beag nó gabhlóg ar a dtugtar sáiteoir, nó *thruster* i mBéarla. Nuair a dhéantar é sin i gcomhar le rópaí, sáitear isteach an tuí nua sa seantuí ina dhornáin, gan aon ghabhlóg a úsáid. Is iondúil go ndéantar tuíodóireacht sháite ina strácaí, ar nós an tuíodóireacht le scoilb. Is í an phríomhdhifriocht eatarthu nach mbíonn aon fhosuithé¹⁵ sa tuíodóireacht sháite, seachas ar an gcóir agus sa bhuntsop b'fhéidir, agus go bhfliuchtar agus go mbuailtear síos an tuí chun an fána a dhéanamh mín. Sa chuntas as Co. na Gaillimhe a scríobh Hely Dutton i dtús an naoú céad, déantar cur síos ar an modh tuíodóireachta sáite go díreach mar atáthar á chleachtadh go fóill sa chontae.¹⁶



The general mode of thatching in this province, with a neatly twisted ridge of straw, is much superior to that usually practiced in the county of Dublin where mortar or road dirt are substituted, and occasions the thatch to decay very soon. ...

The rafters are generally about six feet asunder; across these are ribberies stretched, consisting of branches of trees, on these smaller sticks (wattling) which support scraws (sods cut thin) into which the straw is thrust with an iron implement, and neatly smoothed with a rake; sometimes the scraw is fastened on with scollops, or with ropes stitched to the ribberies. Frequently the roof is covered with heath or potato stalks, which very soon decay, and there is very seldom an eave stone, and the thatch does not project far enough over the wall, the rains are admitted and in a very short period the wall either tumbles or is propped.¹³

This account is exceptionally interesting in that the thrust thatch method was described as the common mode of thatching in Connaught. The roof carpentry and sod layer are described exactly as can be seen on numerous thatched roofs in Co. Galway to the present day. Dutton's mention of the use of potato stalks probably applied in instances where the occupants were unable to access a better quality material for thatching. The account leaves no doubt that the method described is thrust thatching as he uses the term 'thrust' and he refers to the thrusting fork and the smoothing of the straw with a rake. Furthermore, the use of bobbins to complete a ridge is a feature commonly associated with the thrust thatch method. The completion of a ridge with bobbins is still practiced in Co. Galway, more commonly now on scollop thatch roofs. The finishing of the ridge of a thatched house with a coping of clay or mortar as described above does not appear to be currently practiced in Ireland.

The distribution of the practice of completing a ridge with bobbins in association with thrust thatching has changed geographically since Dutton's time. The practice is now most commonly found in Leinster.

The distribution map of thatching methods, drawn up in 1945, shows that the thrust thatch method was found, at that time, only at a considerable distance from Co. Galway, in an area extending throughout most of Leinster and some parts of east Ulster. However, three examples of thrust thatch, without ropes, were located during the recent inventory of thatched structures in Co. Galway and all examples were located close to each other in the east of the county, in the Tynagh district. In 2006, this method was also noted on a roof at Meelick under a layer of scollop thatch, and the thrust method was recently employed to replace the outer reed layer of scollop thatch at Killimor. However, its most interesting distribution may be the one where it is found tied down with a network of ropes.



Hidden scollop thatching with reed changed to thrust thatch with straw, Killimor

Tuódóireacht ghiolcaí le scoilb i bhfolach, athraithe go dtí tuódóireacht sháite le tuí, Cill Íomair

Tá an cuntas sin thar a bheith suimiúil sa chaoi is go labhraítear faoin tuíodóireacht sháite ann mar ghnáthmhodh tuíodóireachta i gConnacht. Déantar cur síos ar adhmaid an dín agus ar na scráitheacha díreach mar atá siad le feiceáil ar chuid mhór de na díonta ceann tuí i gCo. na Gaillimhe faoi láthair. Seans go mbaineann an tagairt a rinne Dutton d'úsáid gas fataí do chásanna nach raibh lucht an tí in ann ábhar tuíodóireachta níos fearr a fháil ag an am. Níl aon amhras ón gcuntas ach gur tuíodóireacht sháite a bhí i gceist mar úsáideann sé an focal *thrust* agus tagraíonn sé don ghabhlóg agus don slíocadh a rinneadh ar an tuí le racán. Lena chois sin, gné a bhaineann go hiondúil le tuíodóireacht sháite is ea úsáid na 'mbábógaí' chun cíor an tí a chríochnú. Baintear úsáid go fóill as 'bábógaí' nó boibíní i gCo. na Gaillimhe chun mullach an tí a chríochnú, cé gur i dtuíodóireacht le scoilb is minice a úsáidtear anois iad. Ní léir gur nós in Éirinn faoi láthair mullach an tí a chríochnú le cóipeáil de láib nó de mhoirtéal. Tá athrú tagtha ó aimsir Dutton ar dháileadh na nósmaireachta go gcríochnaítí cíor an tí le 'bábógaí' mar chuid den tuíodóireacht sháite. I Laighean is mó a fhaightear an cleachtas anois.

Léiríonn an dáileadh de mhodhanna tuíodóireachta ó 1945 nach raibh an modh tuíodóireachta sáite le fáil ag an am ach in áiteanna a bhí i bhfad ó Cho. na Gaillimhe, i gcuid mhór de Laighean agus in áiteanna in oirthear Ulaidh. Ach sin ráite, fuarthas roinnt bheag shamplaí den tuíodóireacht sháite, gan rópaí, le linn an fhardail a rinneadh le gairid ar struchtúir cheann tuí i gCo. na Gaillimhe.

Bhí na samplaí ar fad lonnaithe in aice lena chéile in oirthear an chontae, i gceantar Thíne. I 2006, tugadh an modh seo faoi deara freisin ar dhíon i Míleac faoi shraith tuíodóireachta scoilb, agus baineadh úsáid as an modh sáite chun sraith nua de thuí coirce a chur in ionad an ghi-olcaigh sa tuíodóireachta le scoilb i gCill Íomair. Ach is dócha gurb é an dáileadh is suimiúla an ceann ina bhfaightear é agus é ceangailte síos le gréasán de rópaí.







Scollop thatch

Scollop or pinned thatch was identified from the IFC questionnaire replies as the most widely used method in Ireland with examples found in almost every county. It was recorded as the only method for some counties such as Limerick and Tipperary. Traditionally, wheat, oat and rye straws were employed for scollop thatching throughout the country and wild grasses or rushes were not generally found in conjunction with this method. Reed appears to have been used more recently as a material for scollop thatching in areas adjacent to estuaries, rivers and lakes such as the Shannon Estuary, and the Blackwater and Suir rivers. In Co. Galway, reed was harvested for thatching, predominantly in the 1960s and 1970s, from a number of places, including Lough Corrib.

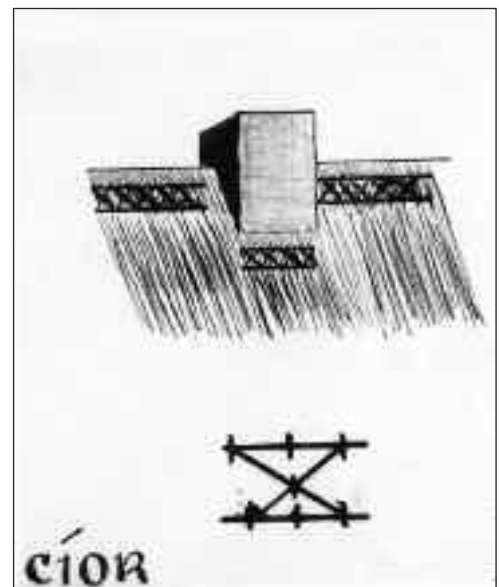


Hidden scollop reed thatch, Inishmicatreer / Tuíodóireacht le scoilb i bhfolach, Inis Mhic an Trí

Tuíodóireacht le scoilb

Léiríodh sna freagraí ar cheistneoir an CBÉ gurbh í an tuíodóireacht le scoilb an modh ba mhó a bhí in úsáid in Éirinn agus samplaí de faighte i ngach contae, geall leis. Bhí sé taifeadta gurbh é sin an t-aon mhodh amháin a bhí in úsáid i gcontaetha mar Luimneach agus Tiobraid Árann. Go traidisiúnta, baineadh úsáid as tuí cruithneachta, coirce agus seagail don tuíodóireacht le scoilb ar fud na tíre agus ní minic a fuarthas féar fiáin ná luachair i gcomhar leis an modh sin. Is cosúil gur baineadh úsáid níos deireanaí as gíolcach mar ábhar don tuíodóireacht le scoilb i gceantair a bhí in aice riasca, lochanna, inbhir agus aibhneacha, ar nós Inbhear na Sionainne, An Abhainn Mhór agus An tSiúir. I gCo. na Gaillimhe, baineadh gíolcach le haghaidh tuíodóireachta as roinnt láithreacha sna 1960adaí agus sna 1970adaí ach go háirithe, Loch Coirib san áireamh.

Comb on thatched roof / Cíor ar an díon tuí (1934)



Hidden scollop thatch in wheat staw, Tynagh area

Tuáodóireacht le scoilb i bhfolach agus tuí cruithneachta, ceantar Thine



In the scollop thatch method, reed or straw is laid on the roof in bundles, in strips known by various names such as *stráicí* and 'strokes' that extend up the roof slope from the eaves to the ridge. The width of a 'stroke', approximately 50cm, usually consists of two bundles of straw or reed laid side by side. The laying of the bundles adds a 20cm section of thatch, approximately, to the roof slope as it extends from the eaves towards the ridge. The reed or straw is secured with a hazel or sally rod known as a 'stretcher' or 'band' placed across the two bundles of material. The scollops, also known as 'sprays' and 'keepers' in some places, are most frequently made from hazel or sally rods also, and when twisted, have a hairpin shape. Two to three scollops are driven into the bundles of reed or straw to secure the stretcher and tapped with a mallet to ensure that the bundles are tightly held in place. The scollops are pushed upwards into the thatching material to prevent rainwater running down the scollops and into the thatch. The thatcher places the bundles of thatch so that they overlap the bundles below them and conceal the stretchers and scollops. For this reason, this thatching method is often referred to as hidden scollop thatch.

The ridge is finished in different ways depending on the thatcher's skill and preference. Straw thatchers frequently complete the ridge with a line of bobbins. Each bobbin is made by twisting a handful of straw to create a knot or head through which a long rod is inserted. It can hold several bobbins along its length for placing on the ridge. The reed thatcher generally finishes the ridge by butting together the ends of the reed from both sides of the roof apex to provide a flush ridge secured with two or three lines of stretchers, sometimes laid in a decorative pattern and held in place with scollops.

Sa tuíodóireachta le scoilb, leagtar gíolcach nó tuí ar an díon ina stráicí a théann suas fána an dín ón mbuntsop go dtí mullach an tí. Thart ar 50 cm ar leithead a bhíonn an stráice ina mbíonn dhá bheart tuí nó gíolcaí leagtha le hais a chéile. Nuair a leagtar na bearta cuireann siad suas le 20 cm de chlúdach ar an díon, le fána an dín, ón mbuntsop go dtí an cíor. Daingnítear an gíolcach nó an tuí le slat coll nó sailí a bhíonn leagtha trasna an dá bheart ábhair. Is iondúil gur as coll nó as saile a bhíonn na scoilb nó na sáiteáin déanta agus nuair a chuirtear casadh iontu bíonn cuma bioráin gruaige orthu. Tiomáintear dhá scolb nó trí isteach sna bearta gíolcaí nó tuí chun an tslat sailí nó coll a dhaingniú agus buailtear le máiléad iad chun a chinntiú go bhfuil na bearta daingnithe go maith. Brúitear na scoilb suas agus isteach san ábhar tuíodóireachta ionas nach rithfidh an bháisteach anuas ar na scoilb agus isteach sa tuí. Leagann an tuíodóir na bearta tuí ionas go mbeidh siad ag forluí ar na bearta atá fúthu agus ag clúdú na slat agus na scolb. Mar gheall air sin, tugtar tuí scoilb i bhfolach ar an gcineál seo tuíodóireachta.

Críochnaítear an cíor ar bhealaí éagsúla, ag braith ar scil agus ar rogha an tuíodóra. Is iondúil gur le líne 'bábógaí' a chríochnaíonn na tuíodóirí an tuí ar an gcíor. Déantar gach bábóg trí dhornán tuí a chasadh chun snaidhm nó cnap a dhéanamh trína sáitear slat fhada. Beidh sé sin in ann roinnt bábóg a choinneáil ar a fhad le go bhféadfar iad a shocrú ar an gcíor. Is iondúil go gcríochnaíonn an tuíodóir an cíor trí cheann na ngíolcach a bhutáil le chéile ó dhá thaobh chíor an tí chun mullach mín a dhéanamh, daingnithe le dhá líne nó trí de shlata a bhíonn leagtha i bpátrún maisithe amanna agus iad daingnithe le scoilb.

Bobbins at ridge secured with hazel rods and scollops, Tuam area
Bábógaí ar an gcíor daingnithe le slata coll agus scoilb, Ceantar Thuama



Fintan Morrin thatching with straw in the hidden scollop style / Fintan Morrin ag tuíodóireacht le tuí ar mhodh an scolb i bhfolach







Thatched chimney and roof tied down with ropes, Teernakill / Simléar le tuí agus d'ón ceann tuí ceangailte síos le rópaí, Tír na Cille, An Mám (1935)

Roped thatch

Roped thatch was once the most common style of thatching along the west coast of Ireland from Kerry to Donegal and was previously more widespread throughout other parts of the country. In this method, the thatching material, whether straw, flax, rushes or wild grasses, is laid on the roof over a sod layer and secured with a network of ropes tied to pegs inserted close to the gable and sidewall heads. The ropes that extend over the ridge and down the roof slopes are put on first. The horizontal ropes that stretch across the roof from gable to gable are then woven into the vertical ropes.

In a description of roped thatch from the Clifden-Slyne Head district, it appears that the straw was put on in 'handfuls' as opposed to being shaken or scattered over the roof, and this method of putting on the straw may be a form of thrust thatching:

Díon súgáin nó tuí le rópaí

Bhí an tuí súgáin ar an modh tuíodóireachta ba choitianta tráth, le cósta thiar na hÉireann ó Chiarraí go Dún na nGall, agus roimhe sin bhíodh sé níba fhairsinge i gcoda eile d'Éirinn. Leis an modh seo, leagtar an t-ábhar tuíodóireachta, tuí, líon, luachair nó féar, anuas ar scraitheacha an dín agus daingnítear é le gréasán rópaí ceangailte do phionnaí a bhíonn sáite in aice leis an mbinn agus leis an mbuntsop. Ar dtús, socraítear na rópaí a théann trasna mhullach an tí agus síos le fána. Ansin, fitear na rópaí a shíneann trasna an dín isteach leis na rópaí sin:

Cuirtear suas an tuighe 'na stráicí in aghaidh a chéile ar an dá thaobh den teach. Tá maide croise nó cleith fada leis an rópa nó téad a chur trasna an tighe oibrighthe ag duine de na tuigheadóirí ó bharr an tighe agus ceangluighítear an rópa ar phionna faoi an mbun t-sop. Coinníghtear mar sin go mbeidh an teach críochnuidhe. Bíonn daoine eile ag cur na rópaí trasna ar fad an tighe in dhiadh na tuigheadóirí. "Ag ceangal" a thugann siad ar seo. Ins an mbealach seo deantar mar bheadh líon de na rópaí ar thaobh an tighe. Bíonn ceirtlíne beaga déanta de na róipíní le haghaidh na hócáide seo. 'Coidhiní' a tugtar ortha sin annseo.



The dornáns¹⁴ are loosened and shaken up; then the straw is again made into sheaves to be thrown up to the thatcher. He lays handfuls of straw overlapping like in slating in a 3 or 4 ft. wide strip from eaves to roof. Another strip and so on till the roof is complete. Generally there is a man on both sides. When the straw is all laid, it is tied by súgáns right across the roof (top to bottom). The súgán (straw rope) is then run along the eaves from gable to gable and about a foot or 14" above the eave. The súgáns, which are usually 4" apart, are fastened to this horizontal eave rope and having a stone, 3 or 4 lbs, fastened to their free end and the stones are left resting on the thatch just below the eave rope and of course tightening everything by their weight. As well, there may be several extra fastenings by means of short lengths of rope tying the eave rope down to "pegs" inserted at various distances into the wall below the eaves. One or two or more horizontal ropes may be then fastened and a diagonal rope in very exposed places.¹⁵

Tá siad fada caol le dul isteach faoi na rópaí treasna go héasca agus déanamh uibhe ortha. Nuair a bhíonn an tuighe curtha gearrann daoine punteálta an bun t-sop i gcaoi 's nach mbeadh aon ruibe tuighe ar shliobar agus dá mbeadh an aimsir feileamhach cuirtear aol ar na ballaí. Cuirtear tuighe annseo sa bhfóghmhar tar-éis an tuighe a bhaint agus a bhualadh.¹⁷

Sa chuntas sin de thuí le rópaí ó cheantar an Chlocháin agus Cheann Léime, is cosúil gur leagadh an tuí ina dhornáin¹⁸ seachas a bheith croite nó scaipthe ar an díon, agus tá cosúlacht ann freisin gur cineál tuí sháite a bhí sa mhodh tuíodóireachta sin.¹⁹

The ropes for tying down the thatch were formerly made from twisted bog deal fibres, sedge, hay or straw depending on the local preferences, with all of these materials gradually being replaced by manufactured natural fibre rope:

Rye straw cut while still green and left to 'season' is supposed to make the toughest súgán, but generally the oat straw is used. Sometimes "Indian weed rope" (coir yarn) is used instead of súgáns. The súgán is made some days before the thatching begins by the man of the house with a helper "twisting" the straw into ropes with a twister specially made for the occasion.¹⁶

The sedge when brought home is drawn between the hands and is then put on with the hands. Ropes made of the same material are used in tying it down, wooden pegs are driven into the walls and the ropes are fastened to these. The ropes are twisted with the reaping hook and on fine nights the person twisting backs out the door to the street outside and when long enough it is rolled into a large ball. The hook is prevented from cutting the hand by holding a small portion of sedge where the hook revolves.¹⁷

Twisted straw ropes are no longer made and even the later hemp ropes are difficult, if not impossible, to source in Ireland today. Where roped thatching is still practiced, the thatch is secured with wire netting, natural fibre or nylon fish netting, and cotton or nylon ropes. A roof covered with roped thatch was renewed every four years at least and more frequently where rushes and wild grasses were used. The roped thatch method is not now generally associated with straw on the Co. Galway mainland but it is invariably associated with rye straw on the Aran Islands. Throughout the mainland areas where roped thatch was noted during the survey, it was generally found in association with *fiontarnach* or rushes.

Fadó, b'as snáithíní giúise, cíbe, féir nó tuí a dhéantaí na súgáin a bhíodh ag ceangal síos na tuí de réir nómhaireacht na háite, ach de réir a chéile cuireadh rópa nádúrtha monaraithe in ionad na n-ábhar sin ar fad.

Ní dhéantar súgáin fuinte tuí a thuilleadh agus fiú na rópaí cnáibe a tháinig ina ndiaidh, tá sé beagnach dodhéanta iad a fháil in Éirinn anois. Cé go gcleachtaítear tuíodóireacht rópaí go fóill, coinnítear an tuí le líontán sreinge, le líontán snáithín nó nólóin iascaigh, agus le rópaí cadáis nó nólóin. Dhéantaí athnuachan ar thuí rópaí gach ceithre bliana ar a laghad agus níba mhinicí ná sin dá mbeadh luachair nó cíb in úsáid. Tuí a bhíonn in úsáid anois don tuíodóireachta rópaí ar mhórthír Cho. na Gaillimhe agus tuí seagail a úsáidtear ar fad beagnach ar Oileáin Árann. Ar fud na gceantar mórthíre ar fad inar nótáladh tuíodóireacht le rópaí i rith an tsuirbhé, is féar nó luachair a bhí in úsáid ar fad, geall leis.



Pegged thatch / Tuíodóireacht phionnáilte, An Cheathrú Rua (1958)





Pegged thatch

Following on the above discussion, it is difficult to decide where pegged thatch belongs as a thatching method. It can be considered a thatching method in its own right but it also has been described as a variation or hybrid of the scollop and roped thatching styles.¹⁸ In this method, the thatch is tied to the roof by means of wooden pegs inserted into the thatch and attached to horizontal lines of rope that overlie the roof. The end of every peg inserted in the thatch is secured with rope tied around it as the rope stretches along the roof between the gables. The rope can be tied around the peg or it may be driven through the line of rope into the thatch. The pegs noted in Connemara during the recent survey are made from bog deal and vary between 30 and 45cms in length. They are still referred to as 'scibhears' in the Carraroe district echoing a description recorded from Leitir Móir sixty years previously:¹⁹

*In this district the thatch is secured by means of straw ropes and wooden pegs. In this case other straw ropes are put across the top of the house and attached to the upper straw ropes on the side.*²⁰

Tuíodóireacht Phionnáilte nó Tuíodóireacht le Scibhir

Ag leanúint ón bplé thuas, is deacair a shocrú cén áit ina bhfuil an tuíodóireacht phionnáilte mar mhodh tuíodóireachta. Is féidir breathnú air mar mhodh tuíodóireachta ann féin ach d'fhéadfaí a rá freisin gur éagsúlú nó hibrid atá ann de na modhanna scoilb agus súgáin.²⁰ Sa mhodh sin ceanglaítear an tuí don díon le pionnaí adhmaid, nó scibhir, a sháitear isteach sa tuí agus iad ceangailte do línte comhthreomhara de rópa a bhíonn ina luí ar an díon. Bíonn barr gach scibhir a chuirtear sa tuí daingnithe le rópa a bhíonn ceangailte thart air agus é ag síneadh feadh an dín idir na beanna. Is féidir an rópa a cheangal timpeall an scibhir nó is féidir an scibhear a thiomáint tríd an súgán isteach sa tuí. As giúis a rinneadh na scibhir a nótáladh san suirbhé is deireanaí i gConnamara agus iad idir 30 agus 45 cm ar fhad. Scibhir a thugtar orthu go fóill i gceantar na Ceathrú Rua, ar aon dul leis an leagan a fuarthas i Leitir Móir trí scór bliain ó shin:

*Is iondamhail gur le sgibhears (wooden pegs) a daingnítear tuighe ar thighthe san áit seo agus le súgáin a chur ar fhad an tighe. Nuair a dhéantar é sin cuirtear súgáin treasna mullach an tighe ón súgán is uachtairaidhe ar gach taobh den teach.*²¹

Pegged thatch / Tuíodóireacht phionnáilte, An Cheathrú Rua (1958)





Pegged thatch differs from roped thatch in that the ropes that are sometimes laid over the ridge in the pegged method extend only from the uppermost *súgáin* line on each side of the roof. In the roped thatch method, the cross ropes extend from eave to eave over the ridge. The IFC reply quoted above is one of two accounts from the thirty-one responses to the questionnaire from Co. Galway that refer to the pegged thatch method.²¹ The restricted distribution of this method in parts of counties Derry and Antrim is regarded as a remnant distribution and this is probably also the case in Co. Galway.²² A preliminary examination of photographic evidence shows that the pegged method was formerly practiced more extensively in the county, including on the Aran Islands. This thatching method is still practiced on the roofs of outbuildings in Connemara. Interestingly, the recent survey of thatched structures noted the presence of pegged thatch in the Casla-Lettermore district and further afield, particularly in the Carraroe area.

Tá sé de dhifríocht idir tuí phionnáilte agus tuí le rópaí nach mbíonn na rópaí a leagtar thar mhullach an tí i gceist leis an tuí phionnáilte, nó má bhíonn, síneann siad ón líne súgáin is airde ar dhá thaobh an dín. Sa tuí súgáin nó tuí le rópaí, bíonn na súgáin ag dul ó bhuntsop go buntsop, trasna mhullach an tí. Is iad freagraí CBÉ atá luaite thuas an t-aon chuntas ina dtagraítear don mhodh tuíodóireachta phionnáilte as an aon fhreagra déag agus fiche a fuarthas ar an gceistneoir as Co. na Gaillimhe. Meastar gur dáileadh iarsmach atá sa dáileadh teoranta atá ar an modh sin in áiteanna i gcontaetha Dhoire agus Aontroma, agus d'fhéadfadh gurb é an cás céanna é i gCo. na Gaillimhe.²²

Léiríonn réamhscrúdú ar an bhfianaise ghrianghrafadóireachta gur baineadh úsáid níos fairsinge as an modh pionnáilte sa chontae, agus Oileáin Árann san áireamh. Tá an modh tuíodóireachta seo fós in úsáid ar chróite i gConamara. Is suimiúil gur nótladh sa suirbhé is deireanaí go raibh tuíodóireachta phionnáilte ar struchtúir cheann tuí i gceantar Chasla-Leitir Móir agus níos faide ó sin, go háirithe i gceantar na Ceathrú Rua.

¹¹ Ó Danachair, (1945), 212.

¹² The scollop is the most common type of fixing used in traditional thatching.

¹³ Hely Dutton, *Statistical Survey of County Galway* (1824), 343. Dutton is probably referring to Connaught when he mentions 'the general mode of thatching in this province'.

¹⁴ 'Dornán, a fistful; a handful of corn, four times the bulk of a *teadhall*, which is the quantity a reaping-hook will cut at a time', P. Dinneen, op.cit.

¹⁵ John O'Donnell, Calla, Ballyconneely, Clifden, NFC 1079: 9-10 (1945).

¹⁶ Ibid. 9-10.

¹⁷ Michael Heffernan, Letterfrack, Co. Galway, NFC 1079: 7-8 (1945).

¹⁸ C. Ó Danachair, (1945), 212.

¹⁹ 'Scibhéir, a skewer, P. Dinneen, op.cit; 'scibhéar, skewer. *Var*: scibhear, scibhéir', Niall Ó Dónaill, *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla*, 1977.

²⁰ Miss Nellie Staunton, Leitircaladh, Leitir Móir, Co. na Gaillimhe, NFC 1079: 14-15 (1945).

²¹ Both descriptions appear to come from the same source.

²² In the IFC *Roofs and Thatching* questionnaire, the presence of the pegged method was also noted in north-west Co. Antrim and Co. Derry in an area between scollop and roped thatching distributions. Alan Gailey in *Rural Houses of the North of Ireland* (1984), using photographic evidence, shows that this 'distribution of pegged thatch in the nineteenth century was more extensive than that reported in recent times', 103.

¹³ 'Scibhéir, a skewer, P. Dinneen, op.cit; 'scibhéar, skewer. *Var*: scibhear, scibhéir', Niall Ó Dónaill, *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla*, 1977.

¹⁴ Ó Danachair, (1945), 212.

¹⁵ Is é an scolb an daingniú is coitianta a úsáidtear i dtuíodóireacht thraidisiúnta.

¹⁶ Hely Dutton, *Statistical Survey of County Galway* (1824), 343. Is dócha gur do Chonnacht atá Dutton ag thagairt nuair a luann sé 'the general mode of thatching in this province'.

¹⁷ Pádraig Ó hAichir, Cill Rónáin, Inis Mór, Co. na Gaillimhe, CBÉ 1079: 3-4 (1945).

¹⁸ 'Dornán, a fistful; a handful of corn, four times the bulk of a *teadhall*, which is the quantity a reaping hook will cut at a time', P. Dinneen, op.cit.

¹⁹ John O'Donnell, Calla, Baile Conaola, An Clochán, CBÉ 1079:9-10 (1945).

²⁰ C. Ó Danachair, (1945), 212.

²¹ Bhí dhá cheistneoirí inar luadh an tuíodóireacht le scibhir. Is cosúil gur tháinig an dá fhreagra ón duine céanna: Eibhlín Ní Standúin, Leitir Caladh, Leitir Móir, Co. na Gaillimhe. CBÉ 1079:14-15 (1945).

²² I gceistneoir an CBÉ, *Tuíodóireacht*, nótladh an modh pionnáilte freisin in iarthuaisceart Cho. Aontroma agus i gCo. Dhoire i gceantar idir na dáil-iúcháin scoilb agus rópaí. In *Rural Houses of the North of Ireland* (1984), tugann Alan Gailey fianaise grianghrafadóireachta chun a thaispeáin go raibh 'distribution of pegged thatch in the nineteenth century was more extensive than that reported in recent times', 103.



Pearse's house, Ros Muc / Teach an Phiarsaigh, Ros Muc



Recent trends: changes in thatch and the challenges ahead

The size and scope of this publication does not allow for a full discussion of all of the changes in thatch and the many issues raised by owners and thatchers during the recent survey of thatched buildings in Co. Galway. The main issues raised were in relation to the cost and availability of insurance for thatched roofs, the lack of adequate support for owners and occupiers of thatched dwellings, the problems encountered in changing from one thatching method to another and the availability of quality thatching materials. As the two latter issues appeared to be the most pressing ones raised, they will be briefly discussed. In time, the publication of comprehensive analysis of the survey data would be very useful.

Na treochtaí reatha: athruithe sa tuíodóireacht agus na dúshláin romhainn

Ní cheadóidh méid ná scóip an fhoilseacháin seo plé iomlán faoi na hathruithe ar fad i gcúrsaí tuíodóireachta ná faoin iomad cúinse a d'ardaigh úinéirí agus tuíodóirí le linn an tsuirbhé is deireanaí ar fhoirgnimh ceann tuí i gCo. na Gaillimhe. Bhain na príomhchúinsí a ardaíodh le costas árachais agus fáil a bheith ar árachas do dhíonta ceann tuí, easpa tacaíochta cuí d'úinéirí agus d'áitritheoirí foirgneamh ceann tuí, na fadhbanna a bhaineann le hathrú ó mhodh tuíodóireachta amháin go dtí modh eile agus fáil a bheith ar ábhar ceart tuíodóireachta. Os rud é gur cosúil gurb iad an dá chás deiridh na cinn ba phráinní, déanfar beagán plé fúthu sin. In imeachta ama, ba mhór an chabhair é dá bhféadfaí anailís chuimsitheach de shonraí an tsuirbhé a fhoilsiú.

The descriptions of thatching materials and methods as outlined so far gives an idea of the former richness of the thatching tradition in Ireland and in Co. Galway specifically. The dramatic decline over the past thirty years in the wealth of thatching materials and methods, and especially in the numbers of thatched roofs, has had a major impact on the county's vernacular landscapes. The noting of the enormous loss of vernacular structures over the past thirty years remains the abiding memory of the recent survey of thatched roofs. The discovery of a good number of extant vernacular buildings was something of a surprise however. In time, the completion of the inventory of thatched structures and the full analysis of the data recorded will provide fascinating detail that will inform future generations and the way they see and use their vernacular buildings.

Tugann na cuntais ar ábhair agus modhanna tuíodóireachta atá imlínithe go dtí seo tuairim éigin faoin saibhreas traidisiúin a bhaineann leis an tuíodóireacht in Éirinn, agus i gCo. na Gaillimhe ach go háirithe. Mar gheall ar an laghdú thar cuimse atá tagtha ar an saibhreas ábhair agus ar mhodhanna tuíodóireachta le deich mbliana fichead anuas, go háirithe an laghdú atá tagtha ar líon na ndíonta ceann tuí, tá athrú ollmhór tagtha ar thírdhreacha dúchasacha an chontae. Is é an caillteanas ollmhór d'fhoirgnimh dhúchasacha le deich mbliana fichead anuas an rud is mó a théann i bhfeidhm ón suirbhé is déanaí ar dhíonta ceann tuí. Ach sin ráite, cúis iontais a bhí sa líon d'fhoirgnimh dhúchasacha ar marthain a fuarthas. Nuair a bheidh an fardal d'fhoirgnimh cheann tuí críochnaithe agus anailís iomlán déanta ar na sonraí taifeadta, beidh mioneolas iontach ar fáil chun na glúine atá le theacht a threorú faoin dóigh leis na foirgnimh dhúchasacha a úsáid agus meas a bheith orthu.



Thatched house at Thoor Ballylee / Teach ceann túí ag Túr Bhaile Uí Laoigh

Tuíodóireacht le scoilb i bhfolach agus giolcach na Sionainne, ceantar Mhaigh Cuilinn, ceantar an Spidéil

Hidden scollop thatch with Shannon reed, Moycullen and Spiddle areas



In relation to thatching materials, the results of the thatch survey indicate a major decline in the use of straw over the past thirty years. The use of Irish reed, whether from estuaries, lakes or rivers in the county or from the Shannon Estuary, became particularly prevalent towards the south of the county, probably from the 1980s onwards. Interestingly, there are still a number of important clusters of thatched roofs where the outermost coat is completed in straw. This is the case in areas where, for example, thatchers provide straw from their farms as part of their thatching services. The tradition of growing and processing materials for use in buildings, a fundamental factor in defining vernacular architecture, is becoming increasingly rare.

The change from straw to Irish reed is currently being replaced by a growing trend in the use of imported straw and water reed. The progression from locally grown straw to Irish reed and later from Irish reed to imported materials, whether reed or straw, represents not just a progression from one type of material to another but quite often it precipitates changes in the thatching method, in roof pitch, and in ridge, eaves and barge details. Should this trend continue in Ireland, non-native thatching materials will soon predominate. As the very nature of vernacular buildings is defined by the locality of practices, these changes, therefore, will alter and undermine the character of thatched vernacular structures. The increasing use of imported materials in the thatching trade thus represents one of the most difficult challenges for the conservation of thatched vernacular buildings, not just in Co. Galway, but throughout the whole country.

Maidir le hábhair thuíodóireachta, léiríonn torthaí an tsuirbhé tuíodóireachta go bhfuil laghdú mór tagtha ar úsáid na tuí le deich mbliana fichead anuas. Ó na 1980adaí ar aghaidh is cosúil, díriodh ar úsáid a bhaint as giolcach na hÉireann i ndeisceart an chontae, giolcach a tógadh as riasca, inbhir, lochanna agus aibhneacha. Ach is suimiúil go bhfuil grúpaí tábhachtacha de dhíonta ceann tuí fós ar fáil ina bhfuil an cóta amuigh críochnaithe le tuí. Sin an cás, mar shampla, nuair a chuireann tuíodóirí an tuí ar fáil óna bhfeirmeacha mar chuid dá seirbhís tuíodóireachta. Ach tá an traidisiún go bhfásfaí agus go bpróiseáilfí ábhair d'fhoirgnimh ag éirí an-ghann go deo anois, agus gné bhunúsach den ailtireacht dhúchasach a bhí ansin.

Tá an t-athrú ó thuí go giolcach na hÉireann á mhalartú anois le nósmaireacht ina mbaintear úsáid as tuí agus giolcach a thugtar isteach ón iasacht. An t-athrú seo ón tuí a d'fhástaí go háitiúil go dtí giolcach na hÉireann agus ansin ó ghiolcach na hÉireann go dtí na hábhair iompórtáilte, giolcach nó tuí, tá sé ina léiriú ní amháin ar an athrú ó ábhar amháin go hábhar eile, ach is minic go gciallaíonn sé athrú sa mhodh tuíodóireachta féin, sa bhfána atá leis an díon agus sna sonraí a bhíonn i gcóir, i mbuntsop agus i mbeanna an fhoirgnimh. Má leantar den nósmaireacht seo in Éirinn, ní fada gurb iad na hábhair thuíodóireachta ón iasacht a bheidh le sonrú go forleathan. De bhrí go bhfuil bun-nádúr na bhfoirgneamh dúchasach sainithe ag na cleachtais áitiúla, déanfaidh an nósmaireacht nua seo athrú agus bainfidh sé an bun ó charachtar na bhfoirgneamh dúchasach ceann tuí. Dá thoradh sin, tá úsáid na n-ábhar iompórtáilte i gceird na tuíodóireachta ar ceann de na dúshláin is mó atá le sárú má tá caomhnú le déanamh ar fhoirgneamh dúchasacha ceann tuí, ní amháin i gCo. na Gaillimhe, ach ar fud na tíre go léir.

Wheat straw scollop thatch, Corrandulla area / Tuíodóireacht le scoilb i bhfolach agus tuí chruithneachta, ceantar Chor an Dola



Scollop thatch was noted as the thatching method for just under half of Co. Galway in the 1945 distribution. Just as reed has become the dominant thatching material, scollop thatching has also become the predominant thatching method. The current predominance of the use of water reed as a thatching material, and scollop thatch as a method, is clear from the recent survey. The outer coat of thatch on three hundred and forty-five roofs, out of a total of five hundred and sixty-five roofs where the materials were identified, was done in the hidden scollop style with either native or imported reed. Many of these roofs are thatched with reed brought in from Turkey. Where once the miniature replica of the Irish thatched house was made in China as tourist merchandise, the material itself for the Irish thatched roof is now imported from that same country, as well as from Poland, Romania and several other countries. This dramatic change has occurred within the space of thirty years, and while reed can be considered as a local material when harvested in the vicinity of the roof it will cover, its use in conjunction with one thatching style, scollop thatch, creates a kind of monocultural landscape. In other words, it results in a situation which is the very opposite to that which defines the vernacular landscape, not to mention the cost to the environment of the 'roof miles' clocked up in the name of the conservation of vernacular architecture.

Nótáladh gurb í an tuí scoilb i bhfolach a bhí mar mhodh tuíodóireachta ag leath de Cho. na Gaillimhe, geall leis, i ndáileadh 1945. Díreach mar atá ceannasaíocht bainte amach ag an ngiolcach mar ábhar tuíodóireachta, tá ceannasaíocht bainte amach freisin ag an tuíodóireacht le scoilb mar mhodh tuíodóireachta. Tá úsáid forleathan na gíolcaí mar ábhar tuíodóireachta agus úsáid na tuíodóireachta le scoilb mar mhodh tuíodóireachta, an-soiléir ón suirbhé is deireanaí.

I gcás an chóta deiridh tuí a bhí ar thrí chéad ceathracha a cúig dhíon as iomlán de chúig chéad seasca a cúig dhíon inar aithníodh na hábhair, rinneadh é leis an modh tuíodóireachta le scoilb i bhfolach, agus gíolcach Éireannach nó iasachta a úsáideadh. Gíolcach a tugadh isteach ón Tuirc a bhí ar chuid mhór de na díonta sin. Bhí tráth ann gur mionsamhail den teach ceann tuí Éireannach a bhíodh á dhéanamh sa tSín, mar shuaitheantas turasóireachta, ach anois tá an t-ábhar dín féin á tabhairt isteach as an tír céanna sin, mar aon leis an bPolainn, an Rómáin agus roinnt tíortha eile.

Tá an t-athrú ollmhór seo tagtha in imeacht deich mbliana fichead, agus cé gur féidir breathnú ar ghiolcach mar ábhar áitiúil nuair a bhaintear í thart faoin gceantar ina bhfuil an díon atá le clúdach, cruthaíonn sé cineál taobh tíre monachultúrtha nuair a úsáidtear an ghiolcach iompórtáilte i dtuíodóireacht le scoilb. Lena rá ar bhealach eile, is é an toradh air sin gurb é a mhalairt ar fad den thírdhreach dúchais a bhíonn agat, gan trácht ar an tionchar agus ar an gcostas iompair a bhíonn ar an timpeallacht in ainm chaomhnú na hailtíreachta dúchais.

While the roped method is now almost redundant as a style of thatching for roofs of inhabited dwellings in Co. Galway, it is still used in Connemara as the predominant thatching method on outbuildings, such as field shelters for animals, cart sheds, byres, hen houses and turf sheds. The owners of the structures, predominantly farmers and not professional thatchers, continue to thatch their outbuildings in the roped thatching method using many of the same styles and materials as used over a hundred years ago. The traditional craft of roped thatching has been maintained in the modest buildings that continue to serve the needs of small and part-time farmers. While it may be difficult to include such structures in a *Record of Protected Structures*, the heritage value of these buildings is nonetheless significant. For the most part, the roped thatch roofs of dwelling houses are long gone, replaced with slate, tin and tile, or with a different thatching method, most often scollop thatch. Within a few years, should this trend continue, only one thatching style, the hidden scollop method, and one thatching material, imported reed, will prevail in Co. Galway.

The ambition of conserving the variety of thatching materials and styles represents one of the biggest challenges facing the building conservation industry. The choices made by house owners and thatchers when conserving a thatched roof must take note of the overall trends in the conservation of thatch in Ireland today. Considering the richness of the Irish thatching tradition as outlined above, it is important that the owners of thatched dwellings, thatchers, suppliers of materials, and those who provide conservation grants and advice for thatching, are aware of the knowledge, techniques and skills embedded in the layers of a thatched roof.

Cé go bhfuil deireadh ar fad anois beagnach, leis an díon súgáin nó an tuíodóireacht le rópaí mar bhealach tuíodóireachta ar thithe i gCo. na Gaillimhe, tá sé fós in úsáid i gConnamara mar phríomh-mhodh tuíodóireachta ar chróite, ar nós ionaid foscaidh d'ainmhithe sna garrantaí, seideanna cairr, cróite ba, cróite cearc agus sciobóil mhóna. Tá úinéirí na struchtúr, feirmeoirí a bhformhór nach bhfuil ina dtuíodóirí gairmiúla, ag leanúint orthu ag cur tuí ar na cróite le modh na rópaí agus úsáid á bhaint acu as an modh agus as na hábhair chéanna a bhí in úsáid breis agus céad bliain ó shin. Tá ceird traidisiúnta na tuíodóireacht súgáin nó tuíodóireacht le rópaí coinnithe beo ar na foirgnimh shimplí atá in úsáid go fóill chun freastal ar riachtanais na bhfeirmeoirí beaga nó páirtaimseartha. Cé go mbeadh sé deacair struchtúir den chineál sin a áireamh sa *Taifead Struchtúr atá Faoi Chosaint*, fós féin tá luach suntasach oidhreachta sna foirgnimh sin. Den chuid is mó, tá deireadh le fada an lá le díonta ceann tuí súgáin ar thithe cónaí, agus ina n-ionad tá sclátaí, stáin agus tíleanna, nó modh difriúil tuíodóireachta, tuí scoilb go hiondúil. Laistigh de chúpla bliain, má leanann an treocht seo, ní bheidh ach modh tuíodóireachta amháin – an tuí scoilb i bhfolach – agus aon ábhar amháin tuíodóireachta – giolcach ón iasacht – in úsáid i gCo. na Gaillimhe.

Tá an mian go gcaomhnófaí an réimse d'ábhair agus de mhodhanna tuíodóireachta ar cheann de na dúshláin is mó atá roimh an tionscal caomhnaithe foirgneamh. Agus roghanna le déanamh ag úinéirí tí agus ag tuíodóirí in obair chaomhnaithe ar dhíon ceann tuí, ní mór aird a thabhairt ar na treochtaí iomlána a bhaineann le caomhnú na tuíodóireachta in Éirinn faoi láthair. Nuair a chuirtear san áireamh an saibhreas traidisiúin a bhaineann le tuíodóireacht na hÉireann mar atá léirithe thuas, tá sé tábhachtach go mbeadh eolas faoi na teicnící agus na scileanna a bhí ag na ceardaithe a d'oibrigh ar na díonta sin ag na húinéirí tithe ceann tuí, ag na tuíodóirí agus ag na húdaráis a thugann deontais chaomhnaithe agus comhairle d'athchóiriú tuíodóireachta.

Rope thatched outbuildings, Aran Islands / Sciobóil agus tuíodóireacht le rópaí orthu, Oileáin Árann



Michael O'Halloran harvesting wheat with reaper and binder at John Costello's farm, Belclare / Michael O'Halloran ag baint chruithneachta le gléas bainte agus ceangail, Béal Chláir







Many experienced thatchers consider the characteristic features of Irish reed as superior to those of imported reed, as Irish reed is grown in the climate where it will be weathered and is highly adapted to facilitate water run-off. In the absence of the use and management of reed beds, where reeds are not harvested annually, their quality will decline and they will quickly become unsuitable as a thatching material. Twenty to thirty years hence, the reed cutters will be gone, the craft of harvesting forgotten, and the abandoned reed beds no longer capable of producing a quality thatching material.

The real challenge for the supply of Irish reed is not to replace it with imported materials but to create the proper physical conditions to ensure adequate supply of high quality materials by improving the water quality in the reed habitats and increasing the demand for it as a thatching material. In this way, a viable industry can be established where the quality of the reed is further secured by proper harvesting and storage facilities. Increasing the demand for locally sourced reed will help maintain high quality reed habitats. The management of reed beds requires the cutting of the reed annually, between November and March, to ensure that the reeds are satisfactory for thatching and to promote the successful regrowth of reed for the following harvest. In the case of Co. Galway, the renewal of the Lough Corrib reed beds is not as difficult as it might sound as it could be achieved as one of a number of strategies to raise water quality, an ambition that has been successfully achieved in other European countries.

Deir na soláthróirí go mairfidh an ghíolcach iompórtáilte suas le deich mbliana fichead cé nach dtugann siad aon bharántas léi. Más fíor, chiallódh sin nach gá aon iarracht a dhéanamh go ceann fada chun soláthar áitiúil ábhair a chruthú sna ceantair áitiúla ina bhfuil na ndíonta ceann tuí sin. Má chuirtear cóta de ghíolcach iompórtáilte ar gach teach ceann tuí i gceantar ina bhfuil leaba ghíolcaí, agus má mhaireann an ghíolcach iompórtáilte sin idir scór agus deich mbliana fichead, is beag rian den leaba áitiúil ghíolcaí a bheidh le fáil nuair a chaithear tuí nua a chur ar na díonta máguaird. Is leor an cás sin ann féin chun argóint a dhéanamh gur cheart ghíolcach na hÉireann a úsáid nuair a bhíonn athchóiriú á dhéanamh ar dhíonta stairiúla ceann tuí. Mura mbainfeadh úsáid as leapacha ghíolcaí agus mura mbainfeadh an ghíolcach gach bliain, ísleoidh an caighdeán agus ní fada go mbeidh sí mí-oiriúnach mar ábhar tuíodóireachta. Fiche nó tríocha bliain ón am seo, beidh na gearrthóirí ghíolcaí imithe, beidh a gceird ligthe i léig, agus ní bheidh na leapacha ghíolcaí in ann ábhar tuíodóireachta d'ardchaighdeán a chur ar fáil a thuilleadh.

Measann cuid mhór de na tuíodóirí a bhfuil seantaithí acu ar an ngíolcach, go bhfuil saintréithe níos fearr sa ghíolcach Éireannach ná mar atá sa ghíolcach ón iasacht, mar go bhfásann ghíolcach na hÉireann in aeráid ina ndéantar síonchaitheamh uirthi agus tá sí thar a bheith oiriúnach chun uisce a scaoileadh di.



Binding wheat sheaves, Belclare / Gleás Ceangail, Béal Chláir

It should also be possible to return to the use of locally grown straw as a common thatching material. Such a strategy would bring to the fore issues surrounding the growing of high quality straws and their proper harvesting and storage to provide a sufficient supply of a long lasting, high quality product. This would, among other indirect positive consequences, increase the biodiversity of the rural environment. The introduction of biodiversity schemes to encourage the provision of straw for thatching would at the same time increase the number of natural habitats, thereby encouraging a rich variety of wildlife. This is but one example of a thatch conservation strategy that would help to promote a diversity that is local in origin and carbon footprint appropriate. The compulsory tillage scheme introduced by the Irish government in 1939 was successful in ensuring crop self-sufficiency in a time of crisis. The impact of global warming is without doubt a crisis on a much bigger scale and the former tillage scheme could be used as model for a voluntary, carbon footprint appropriate, state sponsored initiative to ensure the future diversity of thatching materials and methods.

The global warming crisis could provide the context within which historic thatch roofs could be conserved, not as a nostalgic, return to the past throw-back, but as an imaginative, informed and contemporary vision of the environment, local knowledge and skill, wherein thatch can be successfully used as one type of natural roofing material through the twenty-first century and beyond.

Ní ábhair iompórtáilte ba chóir a bheith mar leigheas ar an easpa soláthair de ghiolcach Éireannach, ach coinníollacha cearta timpeallachta a chruthú chun soláthar cuí d'ábhair ardchaighdeán a chinntiú trí chaighdeán an uisce a fheabhsú agus méadú a chur ar an éileamh ar ghiolcach na hÉireann mar ábhar tuíodóireachta. Ar an mbealach sin, bunófar tionscal inmhathanach ina ndéanfar daingniú breise ar chaighdeán na giolcaí le buainteoireacht chuí agus le saoráidí cearta stórála. Má mhéadaítear an t-éileamh ar ghiolcach áitiúil cinnteofar go gcothófar giolcach d'ardchaighdeán. Chun bainistiú a dhéanamh ar leapacha giolcaí, ní mór an ghiolcach a bhaint go bliantúil, idir Samhain agus Márta, chun a chinntiú go mbeidh an ghiolcach ceart don tuíodóireacht agus chun athfhás torthúil giolcaí a chothú don bhliain dár gcionn. I gcás Cho. na Gaillimhe, ní bheadh athnuachan ar leapacha giolcaí Loch Coirib chomh deacair agus a bhreathnaíonn sé, mar go bhféadfaí é a dhéanamh mar cheann den iomad straitéisí chun caighdeán an uisce a ardú, mian atá bainte amach go sásúil i dtíortha eile san Eoraip.

Ba chóir go bhféadfaí filleadh freisin ar an tuí a fhástar go háitiúil mar ghnáthábhar tuíodóireachta. Thabharfadh straitéis den chineál sin cásanna chun cinn faoina bhféadfaí tuí ardchaighdeán a fhás, a bhaint agus a stóráil i gceart, chun dóthain de tháirge buanseasmhach agus ardchaighdeán a sholáthar. Ar na hiarmhairtí indéacha deimheacha eile a bheadh ar a leithéid de straitéis, bheadh méadú ar bhithéagsúlacht na timpeallachta tuaithe. Trí scéimeanna bithéagsúlachta a thabhairt isteach chun soláthar tuí a spreagadh don tuíodóireachta, dhéanfaí méadú ag

an am céanna ar líon na ngnáthóg nádúrtha, rud a chuirfeadh borradh faoi éagsúlacht bhreá fiadhúlra. Níl ansin ach sampla amháin de straitéis chaomhnaithe tuíodóireachta chun éagsúlacht a chinntiú a bheadh áitiúil agus oiriúnach mar lorg carbóin.

D'éirigh leis an scéim éigeantach curaíochta a chuir rialtas na hÉireann i bhfeidhm i 1939 chun ár ndóthain barra a chinntiú in am an ghátair. Níl aon dabht ach gur gátar i bhfad níos mó atá sa téamh domhanda agus d'fhéadfaí an tseanscéim curaíochta sin a úsáid mar bhunús do thionscnamh deonach státurraithe a bheadh in oiriúint do na díonta ceann tuí, agus a bheadh feasach ar chúinsí carbóin chun a chinntiú go mbeadh éagsúlacht d'ábhar tuíodóireachta agus de mhodhanna ar fáil amach anseo.

Tharlódh gurb é an téamh domhanda an comhthéacs ina bhféadfaí díonta stairiúla ceann tuí a chaomhnú, ní mar iarsmaí ón tseanaimsir, ach mar léiriú ar fhís chruthaitheach, eolach, nua-aimseartha de scil, ceardaíocht agus timpeallacht áitiúil ina bhféadfaí an ceann tuí a úsáid mar cineál amháin d'ábhair nádúrtha dín san aonú céad agus fiche, agus i bhfad i na dhiaidh sin.







Agencies providing grant support for thatched roofs

Gníomhaireachtaí a thugann tacaíocht deontais do dhíonta ceann tuí

Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Gaeltacht areas only).

An Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta, Na Forbacha, Co. na Gaillimhe (Ceantair Ghaeltachta amháin).

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Government Buildings, Ballina, Co. Mayo.

An Roinn Comhshaoil, Oidhreachta agus Rialtais Áitiúil, Foirgnimh an Rialtais, Béal an Átha, Co. Mhaigh Eo.

Galway County Council, Prospect Hill, Galway (Conservation Office).

Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe, Cnoc na Radharc, Gaillimh (An Oifig Chaomhnaithe).

The Heritage Council, Church Street, Kilkenny.

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta, Sráid an Teampaill, Cill Chainnigh.

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Tíreolaí í Fidelma Mullane atá ag obair mar speisialtóir i gcaomhnú na bhfoirgneamh dúchasach. Cuirtear fáilte roimh eolas a bhaineann le foirgnimh thraidisiúnta.

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