

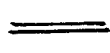
Old House Types. - The oldest house type, one which no longer exists, I have reconstructed conjecturally in sketch no. 1, from descriptions given me by some of the old men on the island. This type would seem to have been circular on plan and built of stone on the corbelled principle till a height of about 5' was reached. There was then a conical roof of thatch held down with grass ropes weighted with stones. It is not clear what the exact arrangement of roof timbers was but there was not a central post. The lower ends of the timbers rested on the top of the wall, and the upper ends were crossed & bound with grass rope. A layer of "scrags" was then lapped on and the roof finished outside with rye-straw thatch. There was no window or chimney. The fire was built on the centre of the floor and the smoke found its way out thro' the door. These houses were, according to the tradition, in general use 250 to 300 years ago, but a very few of them survived in use as pig & hen-houses to a time within the memory of at least one old man (Thomas O'Malley, Keel). Their roughly circular plans can, however, be traced on some of the older "booley" sites, Buncagh, Shive-mone etc.

The Older Rectangular Houses. - How the people came to build the first rectangular houses is not known. Not a great many of them are now left and no more than a very few retain their original internal arrangements. The plan given in fig. 2 (not to scale) shows the original layout. One or two houses in the deserted village of Shive-mone and a house beside the Amethyst Hotel in Keel retain these characteristics. The walls are of stone plastered on the inside tho' not always on the outside. There is one door near to one end. At this end the cattle are kept (2 or 3 cows) tied by the head to the end wall with their rumps toward the fire. Running across the floor behind their tails is a drain to carry away the dung. This drain runs out at one side of the door. All the rest of the floor space of the single room is occupied by the humans. The fire is on the ground against the opposite gable wall with a low stone hob on each side (fig. 5). On the left of the fire is a stone slab seat under which is the ash pit, while on the other side is the 4-poster bed surrounded by cloth curtains hung from the superstructure of the bed. The "roof" of the bed is of boards and on this are stored many odds & ends, (fig. 6). For suspending pots etc a very simple iron hook hangs from a peg in the wall over the fire. There is no attempt whatever at a chimney but near the point of the gable is a square hole thro' which some of the smoke finds its way out. Needless to say, ~~most~~ most of it stays inside. There is only one

small window, but as the door is open at all times the interior is not too dank. The furniture usually comprises a table, dresser and a few chairs.

On the outside the gable walls are stepped, the steps rising above the thatch level. The roof timbers ^{Fig. 3.} are of very simple but quite effective arrangement. A number of "couplers" support a ridge-pole and purlins. All joints are dovetailed together with wooden pegs. Over the purlins are placed fairly close together bog-deal strips. On these are laid "scraws" stripped from the field or bog. These are usually 2' wide and from 5' to 10' long. When cut from the field they are rolled up like a carpet and then unrolled into position on the roof. They remain in position on the roof by their own weight. Over them is put a layer of rye thatch. Rye is extensively grown and is considered the best type of thatching material. The thatch is held on by a network of rope, the verticals having large stones tied to their ends while the horizontal cords pass over the gable steps and are tied to pegs on the face of the gable wall. The ridge outside is not sharply pointed as in southern Ireland, but is smoothly curved as this "flat-curved" roof is less easily damaged by the wind, (see Fig. 4).

The Modern House. - This is a very comfortable structure of stone and concrete with a slate roof which is quite often covered over with a 2" layer of cement to keep the slates from being blown off and ~~out~~ to make it entirely watertight and warmer. The walls and roof are coated with a snow-white lime wash.



Manure Huts - When the visitor is strolling over the open bogs he may see small huts here and there and wonder what they are for. Sometimes, smoke is pouring out of the open door but there is no other sign of life. Two or 3 of these structures may also be seen near every cottage. They vary somewhat in size and in minor details but in essentials all are the same. The walls to a height of about 2' are of stone, the gables a little higher, and built without mortar. On these are placed one or 2 couples of rough timbers which support purlins, these in turn supporting rough bog-deal strips. Outside is a very thick roof of "scraws" usually cut from the bog. A typical hut measures outside 12' x 9' and inside about 8' x 5'. The door is usually on the gable end. It is about 2' wide by 2' 6" high. After the harvest a light thatch of rye-need is sometimes put on the roof.

A slow turf fire is lighted inside on the floor and left to smoulder all day. This is sometimes done every day but more usually only twice or three times a week. The smoke fills the interior and penetrates right thro' the screws of the roof. In spring the roof is pulled off and broken up finely and is then used with some sea-weed as a manure for potatoes. Early in summer a new roof is put on and the smoking process continued till the following spring. The same walls and roof timbers are used each year. When the huts are near the dwelling house fowl are sometimes kept in them at night, the fire being put out before they go in, but the primary purpose is to provide the smoked rod manure. This practice is referred to by Evans: Irish Heritage, (1942), 93. The thatch of the Hebridean black houses was used in the same way and indeed the ~~the~~ old houses of Shevmore village are re-thatched each year for the same purpose. See Fig. 7.

Implements - The turf spade is the short handled type with winged blade and the garden spade is the two-eared type. Curragh oars are different from those of Donegal. The oar works between two thole pins and at the point have the oar fits between these, timbers are nailed on. In the Donegal oar only one thole pin is used and this passes thro' a hole in a lug of wood attached to the oar. (Fig. 8).

Land Tenure - Originally the land was held in rundale - a system of unfenced tillage fields with a common pasturage on the mountain side. After the harvest the cattle were allowed to wander over the tillage fields as well. This system has now largely broken down but many evidences of it still exist - the long narrow "strip" fields separated only by very low banks or ^{MEARINGS} mearings. These fields are now slowly being fenced in but the common grazing ground on the mountain slopes persists. Crops rotation is usually potatoes followed by rye or sometimes oats. Tillage is done entirely with the spade and almost all the carrying is done by ^{CREEL} creel-horses and donkeys. The old rundale system led to the practice of "boolying." Once the crops were sown in spring the cattle had to be kept off the fields so the families and the cattle ~~was~~ moved to the hill pastures where were summer dwellings. The cattle were herded here till autumn when all again returned to the permanent winter dwellings. The Dooagh people went to booly near Shevmore and also to Annagh, while the shevmore people came to Dooagh and

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keel which eventually brought about the foundation of these two villages as they exist today. This practice has almost ceased now. Tho' the people still take the cattle to the hill pastures they rarely if ever move themselves, one member going morning & evening to milk the cows. However at the various booty sites the visitor may see the foundations of the many summer dwellings erected there. Some of these are circular as in sketch 1 but others are rectangular.

It is interesting to note that the father never divides his land among the sons. It is always given entire to one son. When the others get married (the average marriage age for both boys & girls is about 20 yrs) each is given a strip on the commonage which he has to set to work on and reclaim. During the first year of marriage the young couple finally stay in the parents' house. During the winter of this year he marks off his "strip" of land on the bog and collects stones on it to build a house. Drains are made on the land and sand and seaweed spread on it. Much work is necessary over a period of years before the land is properly reclaimed and able to produce crops. During the second winter the house is built usually with the aid of a land commission grant nowadays. The grant is sufficient to buy the necessary timber, roofing material & cement and the owner then does the building himself with some local voluntary assistance. Almost every man does his own handy work & carpentry and it is never necessary for him to employ tradesmen. As soon as the house is habitable the young pair move in and gradually complete the work. After he has planted his potatoes and rye in spring, he migrates to Scotland for summer & autumn work, the wife remaining at home to look after the crops and carry on the work of reclamation. It is this migration in summer & autumn to Scotland which has replaced the older custom of the summer booting.

Home Crafts.

Spinning is still practised in most cottages. The type of wheel is the hand operated one, tho' the treadle wheel is not unknown. Spinning is now slowly

dying out. The wool is sent to a falway factory where it is spun and woven as desired. There are, however, a number of weavers still working on the island but the weaving is now mainly a winter occupation. The cloth was also formerly dyed at home. Vegetable dyes were manufactured from various lichens and plants. Chief among these was a deep russet-brown colour made from a lichen collected from the rocks on the mountain sides. This practice has now ceased as cheap dyes are available in the shops.

Basketry - Almost every house still makes its own varied supply of baskets and creels. The most usual type of basket for general use is a very shallow oval type. This is about 3' x 2' and only 4" to 6" deep. It is used for potatoes, turf, carrying the fish nets to and from the boats etc.

The horse and donkey creels usually have a band of open work around the centre of the sides and the bottoms are often hinged to facilitate emptying the load without removal of the creel. Home made mats of plaited oaten straw form a lining for the wood straddle from which the creels are suspended.

Lobster pots are of a spherical shape with the entry hole for the lobster on top. These unlike the other basketry types, are made from heather stems very cleverly woven. Heather is supposed to stand up to the sea water better than withies. This spherical shape is native to the island but the pots used for trapping cray-fish are entirely different and are of French origin. The basket in this case is cylindrical in shape and is made from split withies. The circular ends are of specially woven net cord. The entry hole is on top or on the side, but never on the ends. The fish are taken out of the pots thro' the entry holes and not thro' specially provided door as is the case in Co. Waterford

Erragles are constructed of light plankening on wooden ribs covered outside with tarred canvas. Elsewhere they are constructed in basket fashion of strong withies and covered as here with canvas tarred over. Most

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men still build their own curraghs but it is slowly becoming a reserved trade being practised by a few specialist curragh builders in each village.