

THE LEITRIM BASKET PROJECT – TEEMING THE POTATOES

An Intricate Tradition Woven Through Time

BY HELENA GOLDEN, 2023



Clár Éire Ildánach
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Programme



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This project has come to fruition as a result of the collaborative efforts of numerous people and organisations giving of their time and sharing their memories, skills and information in order to bring this treasured Leitrim practice back to life.

One of the crucial factors were the individuals who have first-hand experiences, as their personal narratives have provided important insights into the historical context, cultural significance, and overall value of the project. By imparting their memories, these individuals paved the way for an authentic revival, rooted in genuine recollections. In that respect, particular thanks to **John Gerard Reynolds** of Mohill, **Eileen Golden** of Manorhamilton, the members of **The Kilgar Centre**, Manorhamilton and the **general public** who got in touch through social media and email.

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INTRODUCTION

Basketmaking in Ireland holds a significant place in the country's rich cultural heritage. This age-old craft, passed down through generations, reflects the deep connection between the people and their natural surroundings.

Rooted in practicality, basketmaking and the daily use of baskets was a crucial part of social fabric and contributed to economic development of rural Irish communities. One such example cited from the 1940's refers to the Travelling Shop in rural Leitrim; the woman of the house would have a basket of eggs ready to exchange for the weekly household shop. The Shopkeeper would count out "the score of eggs" from the basket as payment for the goods purchased, and the eggs in the basket would be replaced with the items purchased from the Travelling Shop.

This project explores the historical context, techniques, materials, and the enduring cultural significance of basketmaking in the 1900's with particular emphasis on the daily use of willow baskets for teeming (draining the water off) boiled potatoes throughout County Leitrim. Two baskets of this nature, from County Leitrim, are held at The National Museum of Ireland.



TYPE OF BASKET USED TO TEEM POTATOES THROUGHOUT LEITRIM IN THE EARLY 1900'S.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The practice of basketmaking in Ireland dates back centuries, with evidence found in archaeological remains and ancient texts. It emerged as a craft that harnessed the abundance of locally available materials, such as willow, (of the Latin genus *Salix*, and commonly referred to as Sally), hazel, briar, rush, and straw. The craft initially served practical purposes, with baskets being used for carrying produce, storing goods, feeding animals and also as fishing traps and baby cradles. Many farms had an area designated for the growing of Willow for Basketmaking, commonly referred to as “the rod field” or “the sally garden”, while less sophisticated methods would involve harvesting suitable rods at random from the hedges.

While baskets were used for similar purposes throughout Ireland, regional variances resulted in differing shapes, styles and names i.e. The Creel or Cliabh (pronounced Cleeve) was hung across a donkeys back and used to carry the turf from the bog. Creels with a hinged opening bottom, referred to as Pordogs or Bordogs were used to release a load of potatoes or to release manure in the fields that would then be spread using a grape or pitchfork.

The Basket used for teeming (straining) the water off the pot of boiling potatoes was referred to as a Sciob, Ciseog or the simply “the basket” depending on the region. This basket centred around the kitchen in rural Ireland and the focus was primarily on practicality and functionality as opposed to aesthetics. Many of these baskets were multi-purpose and according to both John Reynolds in South Leitrim and Eileen Golden in North Leitrim, “the basket” that was used to teem the potatoes would be left upturned on the hedge after dinner and in the evening, it would be used to bring in the turf to keep the fire lit overnight. The basket would then be kept in the kitchen overnight, hung on the dresser or left sitting on the rungs of the kitchen table, until it was needed again the next day.

Over time, basketmaking grew to encompass more creative and artistic expressions, enriching the tradition with intricately woven patterns and designs.

TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS

Basketmaking in Ireland exhibits a great diversity of techniques and materials. Willow was commonly used due to its strength, flexibility, and availability along riverbanks. Rush, hazel, heather, straw and briar were also used in various regions, each imparting distinct characteristics to the baskets.

The Rods Willow rods were cut during the dormant (winter) part of the year when growth had stopped, the sap was down and the plant was without leaves. The rods were stored for a few weeks and basketmaking took place in the early months of the year, while the rods were semi dry, yet still flexible. This time frame coincided with the “quiet spell” in terms of farming before the Springtime activity commenced.

Preparation The willow rods were occasionally boiled and stripped of their bark to reveal a light, white colour. Additionally, rods that were stored for a considerable time and had dried out, had to be soaked in water to regain flexibility for weaving.

Craftmanship The craftsmanship involved in basketmaking entails a complex set of techniques. These include weaving patterns and techniques such as waling, slewing and randing, all executed with precision and skill (Appendix 1). Master basket makers having honed their expertise were known to have weaved more complex techniques in private, thus preserving the mystery, while basic weaving techniques could be readily viewed.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE



THE EASON PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS "BRINGING HOME THE TURF" . DEPICTS AN EARTHIER IMAGE OF RURAL LIFE EARLIER IN THE 1900'S.

Basketmaking in Ireland goes beyond mere functional craftsmanship; it is embedded in the fabric of Irish heritage. The skill of basketmaking has historically been passed down through families or within close-knit communities, creating bonds and fostering a sense of identity, as the locally sourced, natural materials are selected, prepared, and worked with.

In December 2015 Ireland ratified the **2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**. In order to promote, protect and celebrate our living cultural heritage, Basket Making has been formally recognised on Ireland's **National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage**.



THE ICONIC JOHN HINDE POSTCARD IMAGE OF 1960'S IRELAND SHOWING 2 CHILDREN LOADING THE CREELS WITH TURF IN CONNEMARA.

THE TEEMING BASKET IN LEITRIM

Based on the transcripts from National School pupils in Leitrim between 1937 and 1939 (**Appendix 2**) and supported by those with living memory of this period, (**Appendix 3**), a comprehensive understanding of the use of baskets for farm and household use in Leitrim has been established. Particular focus is dedicated to the daily practice of teeming the potatoes into a basket throughout the 1st half of the 1900's.

Within the basket collection at The National Museum, there are 2 "**Teeming Baskets**" from Leitrim, one being entirely flat and the other a deep oval basket.

REPLICAS OF TEEMING BASKETS FROM LEITRIM HELD AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

Based on the museum notes and the personal narratives of those who shared their first-hand experience of the Teeming Baskets, we have surmised that the flat basket is an older version of the basket used to teem the potatoes, perhaps dating back to the late 1800's. In the museum notes, the "deep basket" is recorded as being a "purely modern one" and it is this type of deep oval or round basket that is recalled by our interviewees as they shared their memories and stories from the 1920's-1940's.



MEMORIES

Throughout the first half of the 1900's, a large pot of potatoes was boiled on a daily basis with enough potatoes to supply the household, including the pigs / hens.

Each rural household grew its own potatoes, and John James Gilroy (Manorhamilton) listed the most popular varieties grown in Leitrim including the Aran Banners, described as an early "soft type of potato" that would be dug in early July. The Kerr Pinks stored well over the winter and were "hard bet" while Irish and English Queens as well as Epicures, which had a blueish skin were all common varieties grown in Leitrim.

Reclaimed bogland, "as black as soot" was often used to grow potatoes, carrots and cabbage, but according to John James, the problem with the black ground was the proficient growth of weeds. By the time you would be finished weeding an acre of ground, you would have to start again.

Bluestone, a form of copper sulphate, was sprayed onto the potato crop twice a year to prevent blight. The potatoes were harvested in October and usually transported in Creels back to the house where they were built in a stack, commonly referred to as "the heap" throughout Leitrim.

John Reynolds (Mohill) spoke of the importance of building and thatching the heap of potatoes on a "crisp October day". Wet potatoes would result in rot, so it was important that the potatoes were dry when the heap was built.

A trench was dug around the heap with a drain leading away to a nearby ditch or "sioch" to ensure that the rainwater flowed away from the potato heap. The sods that were dug out to form the trench were then used to thatch the heap of potatoes along with straw or rushes.

The heap was opened once or twice a week and sufficient potatoes taken out to keep the house going for a few days at a time. It was imperative that the thatch was closed back carefully to prevent frost damage.

The daily routine involved the washing and boiling of a large pot of potatoes, enough to supply the household, while also ensuring a good supply of leftovers that would be used to make "brock", a mixture of leftover potatoes and potato skins, mixed with Indian Meal or Clarendon (flaked maize) which would be fed to the hens and/or pig. Buttermilk was sometimes added to the mix for the pigs.



LEFTOVERS AND POTATO SKINS WERE USED TO FEED THE HENS AND PIG

MEMORIES

Eileen Golden (Manorhamilton) recalled that a bucket with holes in the bottom was ideal for washing the potatoes. The bucket of potatoes would be taken to the river and as the water flowed through the bucket, a pounder (wooden stick) would be used to swirl the potatoes around and take the dirt off. The washing process was completed with a porringer (small bowl with handle) of water being thrown into the bucket for the final rinsing.

Back at the house, the potatoes would be placed in a large, lidded pot that was suspended using pot-hooks, from the crook, over an open turf fire. When the potatoes were boiled, the woman of the house would take the pot down off the fire using a pot-cloth (oven-glove) to protect her hands from the heat. The pot-cloth was generally an old Indian Meal bag that was cut up for various uses in the home. The heavy pot was carried outside for teeming.

The basket would be placed on the ground and the excess water from the pot tipped into the basket. The pot would then be lifted, and the remaining water and potatoes tipped into the basket. The daily surge of boiling water onto the yard or cobblestone was an effective method of weed control as the basket would be left sitting on any visible weeds as pot was teemed.



POTATOES IN THE BLACK POT WITH POT HOOKS ATTACHED TO HANG THE POT OVER THE OPEN FIRE AND BASKET READY TO TEEM THE POTATOES.

MEMORIES

The basket of potatoes was then brought into the house and placed on the table if dinner was ready or left by the fireside to keep warm. Mollie O'Hagan (Manorhamilton) described a large floury potato whose skin was split as "a big laughing potato" while the "poiteens", the small potatoes, were left behind for the hens and pigs or saved as seed potato for the following year.

Eileen Golden recalled her childhood memories in Meeneymore National School, where the school children paid a daily visit to a neighbouring house at lunchtime. The basket of potatoes was always sitting by the fireside and the school children would take a hot potato from the basket to warm their hands. The potato was then eaten, before the children made their way back to school.



"A BIG LAUGHING POTATO"



EILEEN GOLDEN, SITTING AT "JOHNNYS LOFT", DIRECTLY OPPOSITE MEENEYMORE NS, AS SHE SHARED HER CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF HER SCHOOL DAYS. JOHNNYS LOFT WAS USED AS A DANCEHALL, AND AS EILEEN EXPLAINED, THE CATTLE HAD TO BE PUT OUT OF THE BYRE UNDERNEATH BEFORE THE MUSIC COMMENCED AND BECAUSE OF THE LOW ROOF IN THE LOFT, YOU COULD ONLY STAND UP STRAIGHT WHEN DANCING IN THE CENTRE.

MEMORIES

John Reynolds recounted the Meitheal on the day of the thresher when 8 or 10 hungry men would come in for the dinner of bacon and cabbage, and plenty of new potatoes left in the centre of a big kitchen table in a teeming basket. Most men would eat 3 or 4 potatoes and peel them with their thumbs and throw the skins back into the basket; no need for side plates.

After dinner, the empty basket would be upturned on the hedge and used again in the evening to bring in turf to put on the fire overnight after which it would be kept on the dresser or left sitting on the rungs of the table overnight. Traces of potato starch were found on some Teeming baskets held at The National Museum.

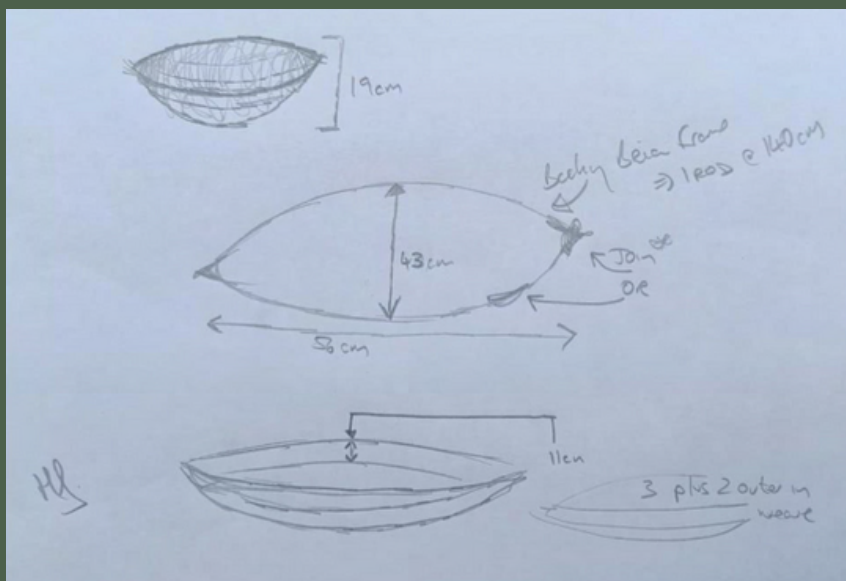
The same basket was often used on a market or fair day for eggs. Eggs were regularly exchanged against the weekly provisions from the travelling shop or brought to town on a market day. The men traded cattle while the women traded eggs and butter. The eggs would be transported to town in a box and put into the basket for display and sale. The women's trading was a significant contribution to the day-to-day running of the household.



POTATO STARCH ACCUMULATES ON THE BASKET WITH REGULAR USE

THE STRUCTURE AND MAKING OF THE LEITRIM TEEMING BASKET

The deep oval Potato Teeming Basket from Leitrim, held at The National Museum measures 56cm in length, 19cm high and 43cm in width. The outer hoop or rim of the basket is made using 1 long thick rod of Sally / Willow or a "Bucky Briar" which is a strong thick stem of Dog Rose / Wild Rose with thorns removed. The Basket has 5 longitudinal ribs or "staves", spaced approximately 11 cm apart at the widest part and the middle 3 converge at the apex at both ends of the basket and protrude a little. The outer 2 ribs are placed well up the sides of the basket. Thin unpeeled rods form the weft of the basket and these are weaved over and under the ribs and doubled around the rim. It could take up to 100 thin rods (approximately 4ft long) to complete a basket of this size. **(Appendix 4)**



DESIGN OF THE POTATO TEEMING BASKET

THE RODS

The willow or sally rods are cut in the Winter and left for a few weeks to mellow. This is referred to as weaving with “semi green” willow. If rods are fully dried out, they are referred to as “brown willow” and they must be soaked in water to regain some flexibility.

The Duchas Schools Collection refers to the rods being boiled and peeled to remove the bark, however, those interviewed did not recall the practice of boiling and peeling the rods. Boiled and peeled rods are referred to as Buff Willow and have a white colouring and softer appearance and texture.



WILLOW IN FULL LEAF, PICTURED IN SUMMER

THE FRAME / HOOP OF THE TEEMING BASKET

If using a Bucky Briar to form the frame of the basket, the thorns must be removed and as John James Gilroy explained “they were the lads that would ate the hands off you”.

One length of Bucky Briar or Sally rod is used to create the frame shape and the ends shaped with a knife to enable them to sit against each other, before being secured together with string or a thin rod. The frame can be left to form its shape for a few days before weaving commences.



THE BUCKY BRIAR

THE RIBS

An uneven number of ribs are used in the basket, generally 3 or 5 ribs depending on the size of the basket. The ribs are thick willow rods shaped to form the hollow curve required for a deep basket.

The strongest rod is used for the centre rib and the ribs are spaced as evenly apart as possible. Three of the curved ribs or staves converge at opposite ends of the basket where they are secured, using a willow rod and they are left protruding a little at either end.



THE FRAME OF THE BASKET WITH 3 RIBS IN PLAC

THE WEAVE

Starting at one end of the basket, using one rod at a time, it is weaved alternating over and under the ribs and doubled around the frame of the basket. The butt end (thick end) of a new rod is added in as the last weaver approaches the tip end (thin part of the rod). When 5-10 weavers have been added at one end of the basket, move to the opposite end of the basket and repeat the same process.

If adding in additional ribs, these are fed into the weave mid-way between the frame and closest rib. Once the final ribs are in place, resume the over and under pattern of weaving until the entire basket is filled with a tight weave.



WEAVING THE BASKET

FINISHING Using a garden secateurs, trim off any protruding weavers at an angle to leave a smooth finished basket. Practicality and functionality was the main focus of creating this basket. The overall shape of the basket was dependent on the curvature and length of the Bucky Briar used.



THE SHAPE THE BASKET IS DEPENDENT ON THE NATURAL SHAPE OF THE BUCKY BRIAR USED

TEEM

There are multiple versions of the verb "teem" throughout Anglo Saxon, Norse, and Gaelic dialect:

The Anglo Saxon word "**temian**," meaning to empty or pour out.

Viking Norse "**toema**", meaning "to empty".

Foras na Gaeilge: **taom** Empty of Water, pour off, bail.

Bád a thaomadh to bail a boat

Tobar a thaomadh to empty out a well

Na prátaí a thaomadh to teem the potatoes

Preservation and Revival of Basketmaking While basketmaking in Ireland has faced challenges with the advancement of industrialization and changing consumer demands, concerted efforts have been made to preserve and revive this cherished cultural tradition.

Organizations like the Irish Basket makers Association, The Heritage Council, Creative Ireland, local community initiatives, and government support have played pivotal roles in supporting artisans, conducting workshops, and fostering awareness about basketmaking's historical and cultural significance.

CONCLUSION

Basketmaking in Ireland and indeed, County Leitrim, stands as a testament to the craftsmanship, heritage, and resilience of Irish culture. The precise techniques, choice of materials, and the fusion of practicality and artistry make this tradition a captivating art form.

Continuing efforts to preserve and revive this ancient craft ensure that basketmaking remains a dynamic and vibrant part of Leitrim's cultural tapestry. As times change, basketmaking in Leitrim endures, and this project has weaved together generations and re-connected people to their roots, and to nature, with a shared sense of identity.

APPENDIX 1

Weaving Patterns



RANDING



SLEWING



3 ROD WALE

APPENDIX 2

Duchas, The Schools' Collection

Approximately 740,000 pages (288,000 pages in the pupils' original exercise books; 451,000 pages in bound volumes) of folklore and local tradition were compiled by pupils from 5,000 primary schools in the Irish Free State between 1937 and 1939. This collecting scheme was initiated by the Irish Folklore Commission, under the direction of Séamus Ó Duilearga and Séan Ó Súilleabháin, Honorary Director and Registrar of the Commission respectively, and was heavily dependent on the cooperation of the Department of Education and the Irish National Teachers' Organization. It was originally to run from 1937 to 1938 but was extended to 1939 in specific cases. For the duration of the project, more than 50,000 schoolchildren from 5,000 schools in the 26 counties of the Irish Free State were enlisted to collect folklore in their home districts. This included oral history, topographical information, folktales and legends, riddles and proverbs, games and pastimes, trades and crafts. The children recorded this material from their parents, grandparents and neighbours.

A search of The Schools Collection based on Basket Making in Leitrim and the Bucky Briar yields the following results.

The Schools' Collection, Volume O192, Page 241

Basket-making is a trade which is followed in this townland. It was a very old and useful trade. It is not carried on so much now as in olden times. This trade was followed by a man named Patrick McDermott, Faughary, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim. He makes different kinds of baskets, the round basket for holding eggs, the flat basket for teeming potatoes, and the whooped basket for carrying turf. The rods had to go through a lot of processes. First of all they had to be seasoned and then they had to be peeled and boiled. Then the little hoop and [?] were got and the rods were weaved through them.

Transcribed by a member of our volunteer transcription project.

Topics – activities - economic activities - trades and crafts (~4,680) - basket-making (~471)

Language- English

COLLECTOR - John Mc Guinness

Gender - Male

Address - Faughary, Co. Leitrim

INFORMANT - Patrick Mc Dermott

Gender - Male

Address - Faughary, Co. Leitrim

APPENDIX 2 CONTINUED

The Schools' Collection, Volume 0192, Page 243

Some people make baskets yet in some districts. There is a man whose name is John Gilbride in Ballyboy who makes baskets yet. He cuts the sally rods and boils them for about an hour. He makes a white basket for two or three shillings. He used to plait a decorated handle into each basket. The people used to bring butter and eggs to town in these baskets.

Transcribed by a member of our volunteer transcription project.

Topics – activities - economic activities - trades and crafts (~4,680) - basket-making (~471)

Language - English

COLLECTOR - Frank Boylan

Gender - Male Address - Faughary, Co. Leitrim

INFORMANT - John Boylan

Relation - Parent

Gender - Male

Address - Faughary, Co. Leitrim

The Schools' Collection, Volume 0193, Page 442

Although basket-making is not so common as it was some years, it is still practised by those who are expert in the art. First, a hoop of briar is made by joining both end of the briar together to form the mouth of the basket. A number of "sally" rods are split and an odd number such as five, or seven are used to form the framework of the basket. These rods which are called "ribs" are joined to the sides of the hoop and are allowed to hang down in a curve under the hoop so as to have the basket deep. Then the other end of each "rib" is turned up and joined to the hoop at a point dramatically opposite the point to which it was first joined. When this is done all the ends of the "ribs" should be meeting at the same point on one side of the hoop and all the other ends at the same point exactly opposite. After this, the weaving of long slender sallies is begun at one end of the "ribs" and it is continued into the middle of the basket. Then the interweaving of "sallies" is begun at the other end of the "ribs" and is worked into the middle where the other weaving finished. A stronger sally "rib" is put down the middle of the framework than in the other part of the basket, because the greatest weight falls in the middle. The circular baskets are very useful about a farm-house because of their lightness. They are mostly used for carrying in turf and, hence, are locally known as "turf baskets".

Transcribed by a member of our volunteer transcription project.

Topics – activities - economic activities - trades and crafts (~4,680) - basket-making (~471)

Language - English

COLLECTOR - James Mac Grath

Gender - Male

Address - Carrigeengeare, Co. Leitrim **INFORMANT** - Mr James Clancy

Gender - Male

Age - 41 **Address** - Carrigeengeare, Co. Leitrim

APPENDIX 2 CONTINUED

The Schools' Collection, Volume O208, Page 388

John McDermot who lived up near Gowel used to earn his living by making baskets out of the long, slender sally rods the latter are called oziers. McDermott and the youngsters who lived near him used to help him gather the oziers in the evening.

The latter were boiled, peeled and twisted around a wooden hoop, when it was it was all covered with them he plaited more oziers in and out around the others. When the basket was ready for use he sold it for one shilling or one shilling and sixpence.

He makes a basket for teeming potatoes the same way although he does not peel or boil the rods.

Transcribed by a member of our volunteer transcription project.

Topics – activities - economic activities - trades and crafts (~4,680) - basket-making (~471)

Language - English COLLECTOR - Mary Bridget Lynch

Gender - Female

Address - Lustia, Co. Leitrim

The Schools' Collection, Volume O217, Page 216

Basket making is carried on in our townland in nearly every farmers house. When a person is going to make a basket he gets a lot of thin sally rods. Then he puts them in water to toughen them so that they will not break when bent. Next he gets a thick briar which he makes into a hoop. Then he splits three or four sally rods and puts them on the inside the hoop. He then gets the thin sally rods and twists them between the split ones until he gets to the end. Often times, the rods are peeled so that they would be white for clothes or potatoes.

Transcribed by a member of our volunteer transcription project.

Topics – activities - economic activities - trades and crafts (~4,680) - basket-making (~471)

Language - English

INFORMANT - Hugh Reynolds

Gender - Male

Age - 80 **Address** - Moherrevan, Co. Leitrim

The Schools' Collection, Volume O226, Page 093

This is the way the people made baskets long ago and it is continued yet. First they get the makings of a hoop. Any kind of a rod will do for that if it is long enough and thick enough. Then it is coiled into a round hoop. and four or five lubans is got and bent into the hoop in the shape you want to make the basket. Lubáns are thin pieces of sticks about the thickness of the hoop, thinned at each end and bent into the hoop in the shape you want to make the basket.

APPENDIX 2 CONTINUED

Then there is fine rods got and worked in and out between these lubáns until it is all closed up.

Transcribed by a member of our volunteer transcription project.

Topics – activities - economic activities - trades and crafts (~4,680) - basket-making (~471)

Language - English

COLLECTOR - Maggie Reilly

Gender - Female Address - Killameen, Co. Leitrim

INFORMANT - James Reilly

Gender - Male Address - Killameen, Co. Leitrim

The Schools' Collection, Volume O219, Page 193

When a basket would be needed by the people long ago, they would first get black sally rods and a thick seasoned briar from which the basket was made. The rods were first boiled or stretched across a fire so as to make them tender and easily bent. With the briar which they first curved to make a hoop, the rim is made. Then four split rods are stretched on the bottom and tied to the rim. Then with more rods woven in and out through the first four the basket is made.

Transcribed by a member of our volunteer transcription project.

Topics – activities - economic activities - trades and crafts (~4,680) - basket-making (~471)

Language - English **COLLECTOR** - Mary E. Conboy

Gender - Female

Address - Clooncarreen, Co. Leitrim

INFORMANT - Mr J. Mc Garry

Gender - Male

Age - 80

Occupation - Farmer Address - Clooncarreen, Co. Leitrim

The Schools' Collection, Volume O993, Page 158

First, he gets a long thick sally or better still a bucky briar, he bends it into the form of circle and ties it securely. Then he ties three or four staves across at even distances. Then he gets thin osiers and winds one of them twice round the circular frame and weaves it in and out through the staves and fastens it with the other side, and so on till the basket is made. These baskets are used for carrying turf etc, and in some country houses they are still used for draining potatoes. When the pot is boiled it is emptied into the basket and the water all runs away.

Transcribed by a member of our volunteer transcription project.

APPENDIX 2 CONTINUED

Topics – activities - economic activities - trades and crafts (~4,680) - basket-making (~471)

Language - English

COLLECTOR - W. Lowry

Gender - Male

Address - Graddum, Co. Cavan

The Schools' Collection, Volume O799, Page 240

Wild Rose:- Locally known as the bucky briar

Sorrell:- Locally pronounced as "Sáral". Children used look for sorrel under the hedgerows and eat it. It is sweetish in taste and was considered a tit-bit by children.

Nettles:-

Tender nettle shoots were collected and boiled along with bread and given to young turkeys. Nettle broth was sometimes prepared for the household.

Topics activities - medical practice - folk medicine (~11,815)

Language English

COLLECTOR Séamus Breathnach

Gender Male

APPENDIX 3

Meeneymore National School c1940 by Eileen Golden, Manorhamilton

"As a child going to Meeneymore National School in the late 1930's and early 1940's, the pupils made a daily visit to Mrs McTernan and her son Tommy at lunchtime. They were the closest house to the school and the group of pupils that descended on McTernan's house every day got a warm welcome. The purpose of our visit was to warm our hands at their big open turf fire and our visit always coincided with dinner time preparations.

Every day, Mrs McTernan, boiled a big black pot of homegrown potatoes over the fire. The potatoes were stored in a heap which was thatched with sods and rushes to protect them from the frost. Through a small opening in the thatch, a bucket of potatoes would be taken out and the hole closed back carefully to protect the potatoes in case of frost. The bucket of potatoes was then taken to the river and the bucket filled with water to wash the potatoes. An old bucket with holes in the bottom was ideal as this allowed the dirty water to drain off. Back at the house, the washed potatoes were put in the pot, covered with water, the pot hooks were attached to the lidded pot which was hung on the crook to boil over the fire. A good turf fire would boil a big pot of potatoes in half an hour. The potato pot was then carried outside by the pot hooks, which were then removed and using the pot cloth, usually a cut-up Indian Meal bag which saved your hands from the heat, the potato pot was teemed into the basket. The basket of potatoes was then left beside the fire to keep warm and the pot, lid and pot hooks put away for the next time.

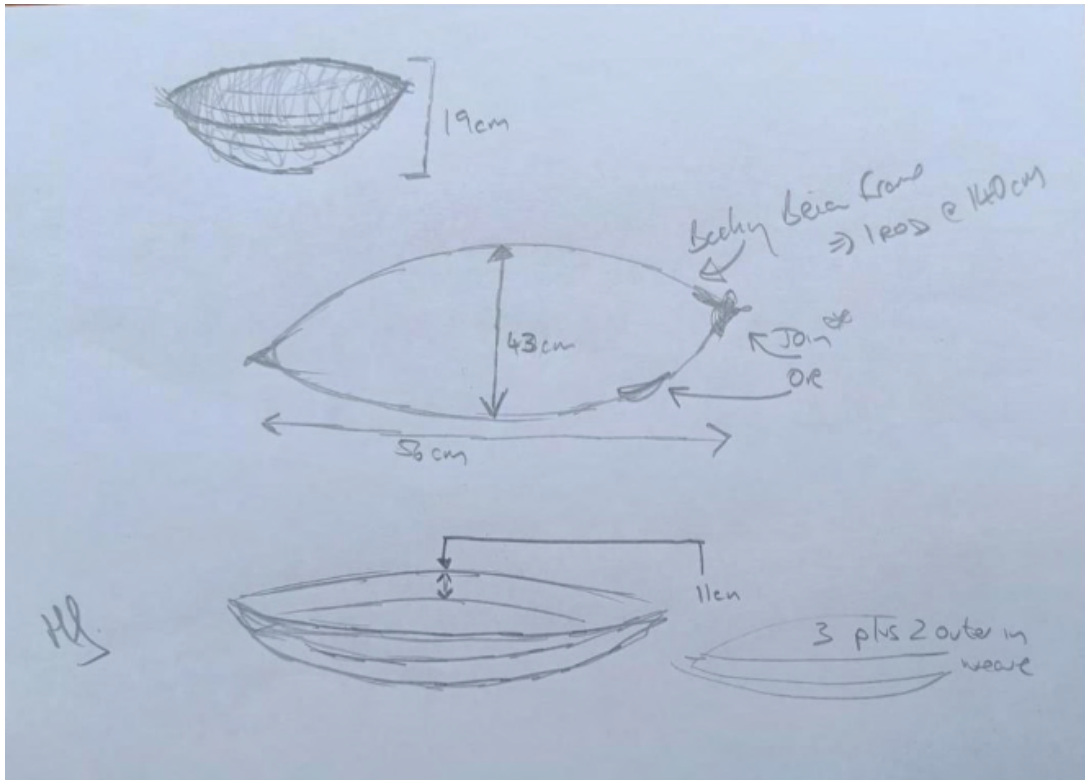
Mrs McTernan always had the potatoes teemed in the basket beside the fire when the pupils landed. It was a great treat to lift a warm potato from the basket and roll it around in our cold hands. It was a regular occurrence for us to peel a potato with our fingers and eat it. Mrs McTernan never said a word to us as we helped ourselves to her potatoes. The potato skins were thrown back into the basket and after the family had eaten their dinner, anything remaining in the basket was thrown into an iron bucket and pounded with a wooden pounder or squeezed by hand to make brock. Indian meal was added and this mixture was divided between the hens and the pig. Buttermilk was added to the pigs brock.

The hoop of the potato basket was made using either a thick sally rod or a bucky briar. The hedges were full of sally rods and bucky briars and the men could often be seen cutting them. The sally rods were used to make creels and baskets and they were also pointed to make scallops to secure the straw or rush thatching to the roof. As children, we hated the bucky briars as many the scrape we got on the legs from the thorns as we played outside.

The root of the bucky briar could be used to make a pipe for smoking tobacco. This was done by an expert. I remember the neighbouring men congregating in our house one night after a fair day in Manorhamilton, and one of the men telling the others that he had bought a Briar Root pipe in Mrs Carty's shop that day. The Briar root pipe was filled with tobacco, lit with a red hot coal from our fire and passed from one man to the next for all to try the Briar Root Pipe."

APPENDIX 4

The frame of the Teeming Basket is made using a Bucky Briar to form the hoop. 3 Staves, ribs or longitudinal rods of willow are secured to the hoop at opposite ends and left to protrude a little at each end. A further 2 are added well up the side of the basket as the weave progresses. Thin rods are weaved in an alternate over/under weave.



THE FRAME OF THE BASKET WITH 3 RIBS IN PLACE