



Report on the Present  
and  
Future Protection of  
Thatched Structures in  
Ireland



Volume 2:  
Supporting  
Information



August 2005

**Consarc Conservation Architects**  
in association with  
**Fidelma Mullane**  
and  
**Dick Oram**

## Contents

### Volume 1 The Action Plan

- 1 Introduction and Summary
- 2 Key Findings of the Research
- 3 Issues
- 4 The Action Plan
- 5 Implementation – Programme & Costs
- 6 Bibliography



### Volume 2 Supporting Information

#### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Summary of Survey Review
2. State of the Trade
  - Database of Thatchers in Ireland
  - Thatchers and Thatching Suppliers Questionnaire
3. Practical Information and Research
  - Regional Thatching Styles
  - Durability and Cost
4. Case Studies
  - Surveyed Buildings
  - Summary of Main Issues and Findings
5. Insurance Information
  - List of insurance companies insuring thatched buildings in Ireland
6. Training Information
7. Grant Support for Thatch
  - Summary of grant support available (Republic of Ireland)
  - Summary of grant support available (Northern Ireland)
  - Grant uptake



## 1.00 Summary of Survey Review

### 1.01 THE FOLLOWING STUDIES / SURVEYS WERE REVIEWED:

- Duchas and Department of Irish Folklore, U.C.D. - Sample Survey of Sligo and Leitrim (2000)
- FAS survey: North County Dublin/East Fingal,
- O.P.W. Surveys - Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Louth, Meath, Wexford, Wicklow (1986 - 90)
- J. Lenehen, Thatch Survey of Co. Kilkenny, 1994
- Offaly Co. Council Inventory of Thatched Structures (2002)
- Sligo Co. Council Inventory of Thatched Structures (2003)
- Galway Co. Council Inventory of Thatched Structures (2004)
- Cork Archaeological Survey (1980s) & Cork Co. Council re-survey 2001
- EHS Thatch Surveys, Colin Hatrick (1992 - 93, 2002 - 03)
- Heritage Council, Buildings at Risk Register
- Irish Folklore Commission Questionnaires - Roofs and Thatching (1940s)
- Irish Landmark Trust Cross Border Restoration Survey - Louth, Cavan, Sligo
- John Letts (incomplete) Surveys (1997 - 98)
- Limerick Co. Council Vernacular Building Inventory
- Mourne and Slieve Gullion AONB's, Dick Oram, Anthony Cranny and Harriet Devlin
- Muckcross Survey
- NIAH County Surveys - Sligo (in preparation), Fingal, Offaly, Kerry, Laois, Carlow, Meath, South Co. Dublin
- NIAH Thatched House Survey / Questionnaire (2003)
- Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and Ulster American Folk Park Archives
- Mary Sleeman: Thatched Houses of County Cork, Cork County Council (2004)
- Fidelma Mullane Vernacular Architecture in the Heritage of Ireland, edited by Buttimer, Rynne & Tuerin, page 71-79 (includes a comprehensive bibliography)

## 1.02A ANALYSIS OF SURVEY INFORMATION

	Name of Survey	Date Carried Out	Geographical Extent	Summary of brief – information collected	Surveyors	Number of Entries	Summary of Findings and Key Issues Emerging	Access to the Information
1	1940's Irish Folklore Commission postal questionnaires roofs and thatching.	1940's	32 counties	To collect information on traditional roofing, thatching and materials.	K. Danaher & respondents	452 replies relate to thatch	Valuable baseline information on materials and techniques.	Department of Irish Folklore University College Dublin.
2	Co. Cork Archaeological Survey and Cork County Council re-survey.	1988 updated 2001	County Cork	Identify and record vernacular buildings with thatched or formerly thatched roofs. Updated report was part of a plan to set up a revolving fund but this element has not progressed	Archaeological Survey of Ireland based at UCC, and Mary Sleeman for Cork County Council	187 in 1988, 47 added in 2001, total now 234	To show value of early extensive database, with many of the buildings now on the RPS.	Survey and Gazetteer available at Cork County Library. Summary publication 'Thatched Houses of County Cork' by Mary Sleeman 2004.
3	Muckross Survey (Kerry).		Barleymount townland	Baseline information for creation of a folk village at Muckross House	Patricia O'Hare		Good baseline information.	Muckross House Library
4	Thatch survey of County Kilkenny.	1994	Survey of 111 thatched structures	Survey of 111 thatched structures.	Jimmy Lenehen	111	Very good record sheet on thatched details of each structure with good photographs.	Conservation Officer Kilkenny County Council.
5	Offaly Survey.	2002	Offaly	Compile an inventory of all thatched structures in County Offaly.	Barry O'Reilly	75	Highlights the decline of thatched buildings in the county; difficulty in acquiring suitable material, thatchers, insurance, grant aid (7year cycle questioned).	Offaly County Council: Book published - <i>Living under Thatch</i> (2004)
6	OPW Surveys.	1986-1995	Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Louth, Wicklow, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, Limerick and Aran Islands	Photograph, Location, Checklist of materials. No description of plan form.	Michael Higginbotham	Dublin - 86, Kildare - 91, Meath - 55, Louth - 74, Wicklow - 15, Wexford - 232, Carlow - 6, Kilkenny - 98 Aran 47, Lim'k 145	Highlights the decline of rate of buildings surveyed	DOEHLG (NIAH) & UCD
7	FAS Survey / Dublin Heritage Group.	1993	North Co. Dublin/ East Fingal	Vernacular architectural survey of north County Dublin.	Barry O'Reilly		Highlights the poor survival rate of buildings surveyed	Booklet published by Dublin Corporation
8	<b>NI EHS surveys</b>							
A	1st – Listing Survey (All buildings).	1968-1994	6 counties	Description and photo record to form data base from which buildings were selected for listing.	Hatrick, Monroe & Oram	400 thatched roofs	Paucity of information. Buildings recorded but not listed are mainly gone	Site record cards and slide images of all recorded buildings. Information on The Monuments and Buildings Record and accessible to the public.
B	2nd – Listing Survey (All buildings).	1997 Ongoing	6 counties	Brief is to record structures both inside & out and provide extensive slide coverage. Includes thatch under tin.	Four teams under contract to EHS.	Incomplete	Difficult to compare information between 1st & 2nd survey.	Database includes exterior & interior description, historical information and detailed slide record (selected parts of NI). Information available at EHS and on the internet.
C	3rd – 1992 & 1994 Surveys (Listed thatch only).	1992 & 1994	6 counties	Basic condition reports on all listed thatched structures.	Hatrick, McFaul	120	Not all thatch under tin roofs included.	Record sheet compiled as a report and slide of exterior
D	4th – Beyond the Façade.	Nearing completion	6 counties	Includes all remaining thatched buildings & TUT. Brief was to survey the building to second survey standard. Drawings produced, extensive slide coverage, details of roof structure taken.	Hatrick	151		
E	5th – A Sense of Loss (vernacular structures, not necessarily thatch).	1998	49 townlands across the 6 counties	48 headings designed to record history of buildings. Define period 1909-1998 in terms of alterations, conservation and loss.	Boyle, Maguire, McQueen, Robinson, Hatrick, McIlhagga	909		Record sheet, slide of exterior, and plan (includes all of NI)
13	Slieve Gullion / ROSA (Regeneration of South Armagh) Survey.	2000-2001	Slieve Gullion, S Armagh designated 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.	Report and photos, plan, age, use, facilities, condition.	Cranny, Oram	4 thatch (111 in total)	Limited value	Booklet produced
14	N.I.A.H. (National Inventory).	Ongoing	Carlow, Fingal, Kerry, Kildare, Laois, Leitrim, Westmeath, Meath, Roscommon, South Co. Dublin, Waterford, Sligo.	Identify and record buildings worthy of inclusion on RPS.	DoEHLG	Carlow 1, Fingal 0, Kerry 6, Kildare, Laois 11, Lertrim, Meath 11, Roscommon, South Co. Dublin 0, Waterford.	Not specific to thatch. Provides a list of structures. Sample of thatched structures included.	On website <a href="http://www.buildingsofireland.ie">www.buildingsofireland.ie</a> DOEHLG (NIAH)

1.02A ANALYSIS OF SURVEY INFORMATION Part Cont'd.....

	Name of Survey	Date Carried Out	Geographical Extent	Summary of brief – information collected	Surveyors	Number of Entries	Summary of Findings and Key Issues Emerging	Access to the Information
15	Mourne AONB Mourne Heritage Trust.	2002-2003	Mourne AONB	Survey Sheet includes; form, materials, siting, use, condition. Doesn't describe thatch or plan form.	Devlin, Oram	4 & 1 derelict thatch (800 in total)	Limited value	
16	John Letts - Historic Thatch Survey (Joint EHS/Duchas).	1996	32 counties, not comprehensive	Buildings surveyed, photographed and samples of thatch taken.	Letts	120	Incomplete but important	P McMahon (OPW) & interim report published by EHS
17	Sligo / Leitrim/Fermanagh Survey.	1998-1999	Sligo / Leitrim / Fermanagh	Report, photos, history, plan, materials to create a database for the current exhibition at Parke's Castle and booklet on Irish vernacular architecture now in preparation.	O'Flynn, MacCarthaigh, Oram	2 on thatch	Not specifically on thatch. Encompasses all aspects of vernacular architecture	
18	Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, Cultra.	1960-1999	9 counties of Ulster	Report, photos, history, Identification of thatch type, general house type, and geographical coordinates.	Galley, Robinson	221, not necessarily thatch	Extensive but sporadic records of vernacular buildings. No active work ongoing	Archive at museum includes manuscripts, maps, photographs, exhibit buildings in the outdoor museum.
19	Ulster American Folk Park.	1980s to date	North Sligo, Cavan, Donegal, Tyrone, Fermanagh and South Derry	Photos, plans, materials, history information on thatch, thatchers and thatched buildings.	Mowatt	Not yet catalogued	Limited survey information of vernacular buildings. Not a comprehensive survey	An archive has not been created yet. Information currently stored in box files
20	County Surveys (Responses to NIAH Questionnaire).	2003	26 counties	Questionnaire prepared by DOEHLG to establish if a survey of thatched structures exists in each county.	n/a	2072, not based on up to date info	Approximately half of country has been surveyed but limited and varied information. There is great regional variation and a lack of consistent information. It is notable that those counties without a survey also have very few thatched buildings on the RPS. Eg – Donegal – no survey done – no resources cited as reason. Only 9 thatched buildings in RPS. Council recognise that vernacular is unrepresentative but have no immediate plans.	Willie Cumming DOEHLG (NIAH)
21	Irish Landmark Trust Cross Border Restoration Survey	1997-1998	Cavan, Louth, Monaghan, Sligo	Survey only deals with derelict or unused buildings	Louth by Gleeson, Sligo by Nolan, East Cavan by Gibbons	Louth – 7 thatched structures remaining, 7 thatch under tin, Sligo – 3 thatched structures remaining, all struggling, Cavan – 4 thatched structures remaining, 6 thatch under tin	Small numbers of thatch buildings but these surveys only dealt with empty or derelict buildings and was not comprehensive	Irish Landmark Trust
22	Duchas and Department of Irish Folklore UCD	2000	Sligo and Leitrim	A survey of vernacular buildings in the north Sligo / north Leitrim area: A sample Survey Report and Exhibition	Barbara O'Flynn and others	24 sites surveyed- not all thatched	High quality vernacular survey. Permanent exhibition at Parke's Castle.	Permanent exhibition at Parke's Castle. Sligo. Survey information with P McMahon. (OPW) and Department of Irish Folklore archive.
23	Sligo County Council Inventory of thatched structures	2003	County Sligo	Inventory of 64 thatched structures in County Sligo.	Jay Woods, N. Prins	75	Thatch survey of entire county, highlights decline of thatched buildings in the county.	Sligo County Council
24	Galway County Council Inventory of thatched structures	2004	Oranmore and Loughrea Electoral Areas, County Galway	Inventory of Survey of 200 thatched sites with thatched buildings.	Fidelmá Mullane	200	Detailed site record of structures and issues. Noted very high numbers of thatched buildings in County Galway.	Galway County Council
25	Limerick County Council		County Limerick	Identify thatched structures in the county.		145		Limerick County Council

1.02B SUMMARY OF NIAH THATCHED HOUSE SURVEY/  
QUESTIONNAIRE (2003) - 26 responses

County Name	Estimated No. of Thatched Buildings	No. on RPS	Inventory of Thatched Houses Carried Out	Date survey carried out
Carlow	3	N/A	No	
Cavan	30	16	Yes	1995 & 1998
Clare	30	8	No	
Cork City	None	None	No	
Cork County Council	197	116	Yes	2001
Donegal	N/A (assume 9)	9 (proposed)	No	
Dublin City Co.	(2)	(2)	No	
Dublin South	(4)	(2)	No	
Dun Loaghaire/Rathdown	1	1	Yes	1980's
Fingal	86 for all of Co. Dublin	49	Yes	1986
Galway	300	12	No	
Kerry	No Response			
Kildare	91	N/A	Yes	1997
Kilkenny	No Response			
Leitrim	10	None	No	
Limerick	236	226	Yes	1995 & 1998
Louth	74	4 (+ 42 proposed) 46	Yes	1994
Longford	No Response			
Mayo	50	7	Yes	1998
Meath	45	15	Yes	1993
Monaghan	3	None	No	
Offaly	75	4	Yes	2002
Roscommon	24	N/A	No	
Sligo	100	None	No	
Tipperary (North)	No Response			
Tipperary (South)	50	26	No	
Waterford	335	68	Yes	1991
Westmeath	20	N/A	No	
Wexford	232	N/A	Yes	2002
Wicklow	11 (+)	11	Yes	1990
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>614 + (9 N/A)</b>		
For National 'picture' add no. of listed thatch dwellings in N. Ireland				
Northern Ireland	152	120		
<b>Total</b>	<b>2164</b>	<b>734</b>		

However, it is the general belief that some of the 'estimates' are optimistic and based on out of date surveys. In our opinion the accurate total is in the order of 1300-1500.



## 2.00 State of the Trade

This database does not purport to be a full and accurate account of all thatchers currently working in Ireland. It represents the beginning of the compilation of such a list and is based on information available.

NB. Entries highlighted in yellow are those who responded to the questionnaire (see 2.02).

### 2.01 DATABASE OF THATCHERS RESIDENT IN IRELAND

Name & Company	Address	Telephone Number	Grower / Supplier	Questionnaire Sent
Mr. Gerry Agnew	23 Drumrammer Road Aghoghill Co. Antrim, BT42 2RD	028 2587 8241		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Gavin Ball Kilbarron Thatching Co.	Kilbarron, Feakle, Co. Clare	061 924265		
Ms. Susanne Boykorsky	The Cottage, Kilmore, Carremore, Co. Sligo	086 2799109		
Mr. Christopher Brereton Brereton Family Thatchers	Moods, Robertstown, Co. Kildare	045 860303		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. John Brereton Brereton Family Thatchers	Moods, Robertstown, Co. Kildare	045 860303		
Mr. Liam Broderick	12 Woodview, Killeagh, Co. Cork	024 95450		
Mr. Jim Burke	Ballysheehan, Carne, Broadway, Co. Wexford			
Mr. Brian Byrne	6 McNally Park, Castleberg, Co. Tyrone, BT81 7UW	028 8167 0479		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Peter Childs	27 Ardara Wood, Drogheda, Tullyallen, Co. Louth	087 2863602		
Mr. Gay Clark	Cuckoo's Nest, Barna, Co. Galway			<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Ernie Clyde Clyde & Reilly	The Hermitage, Roemill Road, Limavady, Co. Londonderry, BT49	028 77722166		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Stephen Coady Irish Master Thatchers Ltd.	64 Shenick Road, Skerries, Co. Dublin	01 8494252		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Murty Coinyn	Derrin Park, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, Fermanagh			<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. John Conlan	Mucknagh, Glassan, Athlone, Co. Westmeath	090 285754		
Mr. Seamus Conroy	Clonaslee, Co. Laois	0502 48156		
Mr. Stephen Coyne	Gortlemon, Woodlawn, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway	0905 75990		
Mr. John Cunningham	Carrick, Co. Donegal			
Mr. Micky Cunningham	Streel, Glencolmcille / Glencolumbkille, Co. Donegal			
Mr. Trevor Doherty The Thatch Company	Lackendarra, Ballinamult, Co. Waterford	058 47335 / 086 2433054	G	<input type="checkbox"/>



Mr. Thomas Donnelly	Dernascobe, Augher, Co. Tyrone			
Mr. Liam Doyle	Ballinorrey West, Tralee, Co. Kerry			
Messrs. Joe & Anthony Duggan	Liscaninane, Claregalway, Co. Galway	091 798094		
Mr. John Egan	Ballymorris, Cratloe, Co. Clare	061 357118		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Butch Elliot	26 Tamnaarinney Road, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone			
Mr. Martin Fanning	11 The Rise, Balrothery, Co. Dublin	01 8411185		
Mr. Anthony Fanning	Convent Lane, Skerries, Co. Dublin			
Mr. James Feeney	Fennor, Old Castle, Co. Meath	049 8541519 / 086 8143519	G / S	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Robert Feerick	84 Lower Dominick Road, Pouladuff, Cork City, Co. Cork			
Mr. Nicky Foley	Newrange, Blackwater, Co. Wexford			
Mr. Fergal Gallagher	Fintra Road, Killybegs, Co. Donegal			<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Kenneth Gamble	42 Edenmore Road, Limavady, BT49 ONG	028 77722051 / 07746514536 / 08769773454		
Mr. Frank Gilligan	Tievebunnan, Belcoo, Co. Fermanagh	028 6867 8241		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Jim Halpin	Isle Raroo, Ballysimon Road, Co. Limerick	061 446878		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Michael Hardiman	Castletown, Cross, Co. Mayo	094 9546703		
Mr. Dan Heffernan	Kilmallock, Co. Limerick			
Mr. Phillippe Homburger	Letterfrack, Co. Galway	095 41953		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. David Keane	Moneen, Castlebar, Co. Mayo	094 9022501		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Joseph Kelly	St. Christophes, Tagoat, Co. Wexford			
Mr. Mathew Kelly	Bigwood, Mullinavat, Co. Kilkenny			
Mr. Billy Kilpatrick	Habistown, Raphoe, Co. Donegal	073 45671	G	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. James Lee (c/o Mr. John Egan)	Ballymorris, Cratloe, Co. Clare	061 357118		
Mr. Jimmy Lenehan	The Thatch, Bleach Road, Co. Kilkenny	056 7775902		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Joe Leonard & Sons	Esker, Killoe, Co. Longford	043 23338 / 087 9980751		
Mr. Richard O'Loideoin	Munster Thatching Services, * Trepple Lane, Skibbereen, Co. Cork.	028 23092		
Ms. Mary Lyng	Portnahully, Carrigeen, Co. Kilkenny			<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Michael Martyn	Dunguaire, Kinvara, Co. Galway			
Mr. John B. Masters	Ballykilduff, Donegal	074 9545295		

Mr. Patrick McBrien	Crummer, New Ross, Co. Wexford			<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Tom McNally	Lullymore Heritage Park, Rathangan, Co. Kildare	045 870136		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. James Moran	Church View, Headford, Co. Galway			
Mr. Kevin Mulhern	Belleek, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh			
Mr. Patrick Mullen	Clynaeh, Carraroe, Co. Galway	091 572205		
Mr. Pat/Jim Mulligan c/o Mr. Paul Mulligan	Mountscribe, Kinvara, Co. Galway	091 637608		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Paddy Mullins	Carraroe, Co. Galway			
Mr. Thomas O'Byrne Tom the Thatcher	41 Townparks, Navan, Co. Meath	046 9071222		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Tomas O'Coileain Irish Reed Supply Co.	Knocknaskeha, Meelick, Co. Clare	061 454896 / 087 6393959	S	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Kyran O'Grady	Leon Folly, Knockrobin, Wicklow, Co. Wicklow	0404 69846 / 087 2575400		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Richard O'Liodain	Cool Mountain West, Drunmanway, Co. Cork	087 204 3237		
Mr. Hugh O'Neill	Tir an Fhia (Tiernee), Lettermore, Connemara, Co. Galway	091 551239		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Patrick Peril	Coonagh, Ennis Road, Co. Limerick	061 325783	G / S	
Mr. Pat Pettit	Ballycushlaine, Broadway, Co. Wexford	053 31258		
Mr. John Power	Portnahully, Carrigeen, Co. Kilkenny			
Mr. Dermot Redmond	Torbay, St. Johns Road, Co. Wexford	053 23797 / 087 2451479		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Paul Ripon	Ardtrasna, Ballinful. Co. Sligo	071 63376		
Mr. Brian Simpson	51 Quay Street, Skerries, Co. Dublin			
Mr. Robert Stevenson	Yew Cottage, Mullenakill, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone			<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Kevin Stockdale	Drim, Glencolmcille, Co. Donegal			<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Mark Taggart	97 Tamlaught Road, Omagh, Co. Tyrone, BT78 5BB	073 23178/ 0378 730750		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mr. James Wade	Primrose Cottage, Oulart, Gorey, Co. Wexford			
Mr. Willy Walsh	Luffany, Mooncoin, Co. Kildare			
Mr. David Whelan	6 Bullycullane, New Ross, Co. Wexford			
Mr. Matt Whelan	Libgate, Kilmore Quay, Co. Wexford			
Mr. Mark Wilson	Montshannon, Co. Clare			
Mr. Denis Wright	Rathgranagher, Kilmaine, Co. Mayo	086 6390294		
Arcspan Ltd	2 Bayview, Irishtown, Dublin 4, Co. Dublin			
Brondak Ltd.	Culfadda, Ballymote, Co. Sligo	071 9182993		<input type="checkbox"/>
Brondak Thatching	27 Templeville Drive, Templeogue, Co. Dublin	01 1904330		<input type="checkbox"/>

Cool Mountain West	Drumanway, Co. Cork	087 204 3237		
Craigmór Thatching Services	Tullynavin, Redcastle, Co. Donegal	086 3939360		
C.T.S. Ltd.	Campile, Co. Wexford	051 388022		<input type="checkbox"/>
Master Thatchers Ltd.	Fitzgerald House, Cork, Co. Cork	021 4277711		<input type="checkbox"/>
Masters and McCana	Ballykilduff, Portnoo, Co. Donegal	074 954 2595		<input type="checkbox"/>
Thatching Services	49 Oldtown Road, Bellaghy, Magherafelt, Co. Londonderry, BT45 8LQ	028 79386532		<input type="checkbox"/>
Master Thatchers Ulster	Donegal Town, Donegal	074 9723069		

## 2.02 QUESTIONNAIRE TO IRISH BASED THATCHERS AND THATCHING SUPPLIERS

A database of thatchers working in Ireland was prepared from a variety of sources. A questionnaire was sent to a cross section of those on the list relating to working practices, training, income etc. For full details of questions and accompanying letter, refer to Appendix.

No. Questionnaires sent out:	46
No. of completed replies received:	17
No. of letters marked 'return to sender':	3

2.02 QUESTIONNAIRE TO IRISH BASED THATCHERS AND THATCHING SUPPLIERS c'ont.

ISSUES RAISED		NUMBER
<b>Grants system:</b>	• Existing grant scheme in ROI does not distinguish or discern either specification or quality.	3
	• Advice is required for building owners from Conservation Officers on all grants available, the criteria for each and agreed standards.	1
	• Delays in payment of grant aid leads to thatchers temporarily bearing the cost of works, especially if building owners are elderly or not well off.	1
	• Levels of grant aid to owners inadequate..	1
<b>Availability of locally grown materials:</b>	• Poor quality and lack of available locally grown materials has prompted many thatchers to source materials from outside of Ireland. Especially prevalent is the importing of water reed from Turkey and Poland. Many thatchers feel that more work should be done to promote growth of 'bio-regionally' produced materials.	4
<b>Quality of thatching /lifespan:</b>	• Thatchers should be held accountable for poor workmanship.	2
	• No trade organisation / control. No legal definition of term 'Master Thatcher' - this title can be used by anyone.	2
<b>Adverse Publicity:</b>	• Concern was expressed about bad press for thatching profession in relation to poor quality of work in association with high costs for work.	1
<b>Insurance Costs:</b>	• Insurance costs are prohibitive. No insurance carried by the majority of respondents.	10
	• Personal Accident and Public Liability carried by a small number of thatchers. (Euro 15,000 avg.)	3
	• Competition between thatchers. This is an uneven playing field. Thatchers without insurance or tax certificates are quoting for jobs against those who do. This leads to further confusion of building owners as to what is a 'Fair Price'	2
<b>Training for young thatchers:</b>	• No current scheme for training thatchers or apprenticeships are available.	3
<b>Availability of work:</b>	• Demand for work in certain areas far outweighs the number of thatchers available leading to inflated costs which in turn promotes the poor maintenance or, complete replacement of a thatched roof.	1
<b>Historic roofs:</b>	• Advice and control required for both thatchers and owners on the care and repair of historic thatched roof so that 'vandalism' or complete replacement of all historic timbers becomes less commonplace.	2

## 2.03 SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO UK BASED THATCHERS.

A database of thatchers based on the UK Mainland was prepared from the National Society of Master Thatchers. A questionnaire was sent to each member regarding working in Ireland and the practices used. Refer to Appendix for details of information sent.

A summary of the results obtained from the questionnaire are as follows:

No. of Questionnaires sent out	83
No. of Questionnaires returned to date	27

### Breakdown of returned information:

Returned to sender	1
Thatchers who have never worked in Ireland	17
Supplier of materials only	1
Thatchers who have never worked in Ireland but who expressed interest to do so.	2
Thatchers who have previously worked in Ireland	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

### Breakdown of information from thatchers who have worked in Ireland:

	<b>Location</b>	<b>Materials used</b>	<b>Source</b>
1	Cork	Water reed	Europe
2	Wexford	Water Reed, Hook and rod	UK
3	10 locations in NI, Republic of Ireland	Water reed and screws Crooking and spar coating	Europe(wheat) and Scotland
4	Northern Ireland	Combed wheat reed and water reed.	England (reed) and Europe
5	Craigavon	Water reed Steel crooks and rods	Turkey
6	Kerry, Kilkenny, Waterford, Mayo, Ulster	Water Reed and wire	Turkey

2.04 A - SOURCES OF MATERIALS GROWN IN IRELAND

Name	Location	Telephone No.	Material						
James Feeney	Fennor, Oldcastle Co. Meath	049 8541519 086 8143519	Square Heads Master (wheat)						
Trevor Doherty The Thatch Company	Lackendarra, Ballinamult, Co. Waterford	058 47335 086 2433054	Small quantity local grown Rye.						
Billy Kilpatrick	Habistown, Raphoe, Co. Donegal	073 45671	Flax & Rye						
Bill Deagan	Co. Laois								
Dominic Gryson	Co. Meath	018 254694	Wheat, various straws, rye.  (60 ACRES)						
Tim Goodbody	Co. Tipperary								
James Nugent	Louth Village Co. Louth	042 9374243	Oats						
Michael Nicholas Seedsavers		051 643519	Large seedbank Refer to Appendix 3						
Mr. McCauley	Co. Donegal		Hazel Scollops						
Mr. Morrison	Grange Mullaghmore Co. Sligo		Rye Straw						
Tomas O'Coileain Irish Reed Supply Company	Meelick, Co. Clare	061 454096 087 6393959	Proposing the establishment of 100 acre reed bed on the banks of Shannon.						
Joe Gowran Coppice Association	Co. Sligo		Hazel Scollops						
Mr. Aiden Costelloe Reed Supplier	Clarina Co. Limerick	061 353 781	Reed						
Mr. Michael Peril	Coonagh, Ennis Road, Co. Limerick	061 325783	Grower						
<p>Note 1: There are a number of small scale local growers who do not want to be included on a 'list' due to the small area of crop available and the fact that supply is provided as needed through a local network.</p>									
<p>Note 2: Approx. rule of thumb</p> <table style="margin-left: 100px;"> <tr> <td>1 acre</td> <td>=</td> <td>1.5 tonnes thatch</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3-4 acres</td> <td>=</td> <td>1 spar coat (5-6 tonnes)</td> </tr> </table>				1 acre	=	1.5 tonnes thatch	3-4 acres	=	1 spar coat (5-6 tonnes)
1 acre	=	1.5 tonnes thatch							
3-4 acres	=	1 spar coat (5-6 tonnes)							

2.04 B - SOURCES OF MATERIALS IMPORTED INTO IRELAND

Name	County	Telephone No.	Material
Trevor Doherty	Lackendarra, Ballinamult, Co. Waterford	058 47335 086 2433054	Rye – Poland
James Feeney	Fennor, Oldcastle Co. Meath	049 8541519	Reed – Hungary, Romania, Poland, Turkey, Ukraine. Rye Straw – Poland.
Tomas O’Coileain Irish Reed Supply Company	Clare	061 454096 087 6393959	Reed – Turkey & Poland Rye Straw - Poland
O’ Keefe	Wexford		
Sean Oxenbold			Straw - England

2.04 C – NAME OF THATCH ADVISOR / SURVEYOR

Name	Address	E-mail
Brian Simpson	51 Quay Street, Skerries	Briansimpson@yahoo.ie

### 3.00 Technical Information and Research

#### 3.01 REGIONALITY OF IRISH THATCH

Central to the case of the retention of 'historic' thatch is an understanding of the value of the retention of local vernacular traditions where, by force of circumstances, the best locally available materials were used in a style that reflected local climatic conditions. It is in recognition and celebration of distinct, intensely local traditions, that the justification for insistence on matching the original is founded.

English Heritage recently published strict guidelines for use of materials and styles on listed buildings, arguing the importance of local traditional styles and stating that listed building consent was required for changes in material or style. These guidelines split the thatching trade with one significant group resorting to legal action to try and have them overturned, arguing that thatch is a living tradition which must be allowed to evolve and use the best quality (i.e. greatest longevity) materials and techniques, even if that means importing reed from Turkey or Poland.

We believe such a philosophy reduces thatch to an aesthetic roof covering, removing centuries of tradition and connection with the locality embodied in the choice of materials style and technique. In our opinion, it has no place on historic roofs and there is no justification for state aid to merely retain a visual trick as a memory. We do however firmly believe in the importance of the local diversity of Irish Thatch and that is where action is to be directed. To achieve this, it is obviously crucial to understand the diversity of Irish roofs as a basis for actions or policies to enable its preservation.

Many attempts have been made to 'classify' thatch and the following is a simplistic summary, collated from many sources. In the past, the type of thatch could be put into three categories:

'Scavenger' thatch	For the poorest houses where whatever came to hand was used, heather, broom, bracken, marram grass. All but 'dead' now outside folk museums.
'Vernacular' thatch	Used on the majority of houses and the focus of attention in most studies. Locally grown wheat, oats, rye, even barley, used with distinctive local styles and traditions.
'Landlord' thatch	Consciously romantic thatch on gate lodges etc, often borrowing English decorative styles. This is the originator of today's reed thatching, still borrowing English styles.

The actual techniques by which the thatch was fixed to the roof are many and varied. Five broad categories are defined below, but in practice there was much 'cross fertilisation' between the styles.

Roped thatch	Loose bundles of straw roped down (West coast.)
Scollop thatch	Bundles held in place with scollops on screws – most common. (Midland / Cork / Waterford and Derry.)
Pegged thatch	Ropes held by scollops or wooden pegs driven through rope. (North Antrim.)
Thrust thatch	First layer sewn to roof timbers using a thatching needle and subsequent layers (in small bundles folded and knotted at end) thrust into underlying straw by means of a small two-pronged ford – 'spurtle'. (Leinster and East Ulster.)
Stapple thatch	Straw (mostly wheat) made into tightly knotted bundles or 'stapples' which re secured to the screws with courses of mud. (Lecale peninsula of Co. Down, all but disappeared)



Most surviving historic thatched roofs today fall into two broad categories:

Scollop thatch	West coast and central areas, whole length of the county.
Thrust thatch	East coast, mostly Leinster

It must be stated that there is not yet enough detailed survey information to be absolutely definitive about regional variations, though the 1940's Irish Folklife Surveys are extremely valuable in this regard. However there is a need for detailed survey information to be able to produce a definitive map.

### 3.02 LIFE EXPECTANCY AND COST

This is a subject to be approached carefully as there are many conflicting stories and claims. Nevertheless, it is important to attempt to set down expectations for life expectancy of thatch. It is worth noting that in the 1940's Irish Folklore Surveys, responses to questions on longevity of thatch are not dissimilar to those of today, which puts claims for the poor quality of locally grown material due to high nitrogen levels etc. into context. There are many factors affecting longevity of thatch: -

- Decay Factors: Sunlight, water, vermin, birds, wind, cables, materials, thatchers, trees, local microclimate etc.
- Value of Maintenance: Annual patching, filling holes etc.
- Expected life:
 

<p>Long Straw Winter wheat (Cut with reaper binder, stooked, thrashed)</p>	<p>All factors favourable</p>	<p>25 years for full re-thatch, 15 years more likely.  7 – 10 years for spar coat and re-ridge.  Cost UK~£35/m<sup>2</sup> - €50/m<sup>2</sup> (spar coat) Cost Ireland~ €80/m<sup>2</sup> (spar coat)</p>
<p>Long Straw Oats</p>	<p>All factors favourable</p>	<p>15– 20 years  5 – 7 years for spar coat and re-ridge with patching and repair every 1 – 2 years  Cost Ireland Spar Coat~€9000 - €10,000 approx €80/m<sup>2</sup> Full roof~€17,000 approx €140/m<sup>2</sup></p>
<p>Water reed</p>	<p>All factors favourable (East &amp; West coast)</p>	<p>50 years 20 – 25 years more likely  Cost UK~ £55/m<sup>2</sup> - €80/m<sup>2</sup> full roof Cost Ireland ~ €160/m<sup>2</sup></p>
<p>Combed wheat reed</p>	<p>All factors favourable (East &amp; West coast)</p>	<p>30 years 15 – 20 years  Cost UK ~ £45/m<sup>2</sup> - €70/m<sup>2</sup> Cost Ireland ~ €140/m<sup>2</sup></p>

Thus for 'typical' Irish house 6m x 15m in plan with roof area of 126m<sup>2</sup>

Long straw	Annual Maintenance	Approx. €500 (1 man-day/year)
	Spar coat only	Approx. €9000 – €10,000 (7 – 10 years)
	Full depth re-thatch Scraws	Approx. €17,000 ( 15 - 20 years) Approx €4000
Combed wheat reed		Approx €17,000 (20 years)
Water Reed		Approx. €20,000 (20 – 25 years)

### 3.03 INFORMATION FOR OWNERS

This study has gathered together the wide range of information that is available on thatching in Ireland and UK. Most of this is aimed at 'professionals' (architects, surveyors etc.) and the thatching trade. Most of the information aimed at 'lay' owners of thatched buildings is England based.

There is little direct support for Irish owners and there is no central information source. In general, conservation officers do not know enough of the practical detail of thatch to be able to authoritatively advise and counter the widely held negative perceptions. Whilst this is true to a certain extent with all aspects of conservation, thatch presents particular problems because of the absence of fixed specification standards and detailed practical information.

In the UK, the Thatched Owners Group provides a large degree of help and support, including insurance service, grant information, VAT advice, a technical problems service and lists of thatchers and thatching materials. They publish a magazine three times a year aimed at giving practical advice.

Refer to [www.thatched-group.com](http://www.thatched-group.com) for information from Thatched Owners Group Website.

There is no equivalent in Ireland.

#### 4.00 Site Surveys

##### 4.01 LIST OF BUILDINGS SURVEYED & DISTRIBUTION MAP

County	Use	Material	Thatch Type	Scraw Layer
Armagh	Dwelling	Combed Wheat	Scollop Thatch	Scraws
Cavan	Public House	Oat Straw	Scollop Thatch	Scraws
Cork	Holiday let	Irish Reed from Shannon	Scollop Thatch	No scraws
Donegal	Holiday Home	Rye/Oaten Straw	Roped thatch	Scraws
Fermanagh	Dwelling	Rye over Wheat	Scollop Thatch	Scraws
Fingal	Dwelling	Wheat and Oat Straw	Underlayer stitched to timbers.	No scraws
Galway	Visitor Centre/ Folk Museum	Rye Straw	Roped thatch	No Scraws (new roof)
Laois	Public House	Oat Straw	Scollop Thatch	No scraws
Limerick	Unoccupied dwelling	Irish Reed from Shannon	Scollop Thatch	No scraws
Louth	Derelict House	Oat Straw	Underlayer tied to timbers. Top layers needed in to underlayer.	No scraws
Louth	Dwelling	Oat straw	Underlayer tied to timbers	No scraws
Offaly	Group of Outbuildings	Oat Straw	Scollop Thatch	No scraws
Offaly	Dwelling	Oaten Straw	Scollop Thatch	Scraws
Sligo	Poor repair	Rye Straw and Rushes	Scollop Thatch	Scraws
Westmeath	Dwelling	Turkish Reed	Scollop Thatch	Scraws (no access)
Westmeath	Dwelling	Mix of local and Turkish Reed, Rye Straw on ridge	Scollop Thatch	Scraws
Wexford	Second House	Oat Straw	Scollop (last thatch sewn on with steel rods and nylon thread)	No scraws

4.02 DISTRIBUTION MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF CASE STUDIES



## 5.00 Insurance Information

### 5.01 List of Insurance Companies Insuring Thatched Buildings in Ireland

Broker	Under writer	Special Conditions	Location
RJ JONES & ZM BIRNIE 23 Main Street, Crumlin Co. Antrim, BT29 4UP. Tel: 028 9442 2185	NFU Mutual		NI only
J MACQUEEN, C CONNOLLY & W BURNETT 16 Corcullentragh Road Portadown, Craigavon Co. Armagh, BT62 4JB. Tel: 028 3833 3569	NFU Mutual		NI only
DOWNARD, ANDERSON & GWYNNE Ulster Farmers Union Office 20 Bachelors Walk, Lisburn Co. Antrim, BT28 1XJ. Tel: 028 9266 2850	NFU Mutual		NI only
JOHNSTON & TIERNEY 62 Taylorstown Road Toomebridge, Co. Antrim BT41 3RW. Tel: 028 7965 0644	NFU Mutual		NI only
SUFFERIN & SMYTH 39 Rathfriland Street Banbridge, Co. Down BT32 3LA. Tel: 028 4062 5444	NFU Mutual		NI only
THE INSURANCE PARTNERSHIP 18 Russell Street Armagh, BT61 9BS Tel: 028 3752 3163	NFU Mutual	Dependant on other factors such as location, type of construction etc.	NI only
THATCHING ADVISORY SERVICE Tel: 01264 773820	NFU Mutual		UK (NI only)
SHERIDAN INSURANCE LTD. Offices throughout Ireland		Contact individual offices for details	ROI only
FBD INSURANCE Head Office: Bluebell, Dublin 12 Tel: 01 409 3200			ROI only
FBD Insurance (Joseph Downey) 15 Shop Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth, Tel: 041 9836384			ROI only
ALAN B. KIDD & CO. Dublin			
Hibernian General Insurance Ltd., Haddington Court, Haddington Road Dublin 4. Tel: 01 607 8000	Hibernian	Each building looked at on its own merits	ROI only
THATCHED OWNERS GROUP Hamilton House 91A Shortmead Street Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 0BB, Tel: 01767 600707		Membership offered to all owners of thatched properties inc. advice and support.	NI and ROI
THATCHOWNERS INSURANCE AGENCY 31 Hillcrest Road, London, E18 2RH		Information only	

<b>Broker</b>	<b>Under writer</b>	<b>Special Conditions</b>	<b>Location</b>
SIMPLY THATCH 14 North Street, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6RB 01787 280 338			NI only
THATCH UNDERWRITING AGENCIES LTD. Dolphin House St. Peter Street, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8BW 01962 829750		Information only	
FINSURE Bridge House Baggot Street, Dublin 2 01 660 1033			ROI only
HICKEY CLARKE & LANGAN Academy Court Letterkenny Co. Donegal 074 912 6688			ROI only

## 6.00 Training Information

**Training available in Ireland**

- for thatchers
- for professionals (architects, building control, HSE etc)
- for owners

Relevant Bodies / Organisations :

FAS ;	Interested in providing apprenticeship but none available at present.
Mourne Heritage Trust;	Awareness courses for owners, professionals, and statutory bodies.
Peter Brockett (deceased);	Formerly ran City and Guilds Course in Co. Tipperary, which made a significant mark.
John Egan (thatcher); August).	Runs weekend and week long courses in the summer (April to August).  Courses includes: introduction to reed and straw thatching for simple and complex roofs, with hands on experience of different thatching techniques, and a tour of local examples of traditional thatched cottages.
Limavady Technical College;	One-year course in practical thatching. No longer available

### Training available in the UK

The Countryside Agency;	Offers technical support and advice for qualified thatchers and training for young apprentices. Refer to Appendix for details.  Courses are run at Knuston Hall, (Northampton Co. Council residential training centre). The training scheme is based on 12 weekly modules delivered over a two-year period to achievement of NVQ Level 2.  Practical and written examinations are taken covering application of materials, crop husbandry, health & safety, fire prevention measures and conservation.  NVQ level 3 being prepared – aimed at established thatchers.
Keith Quantrill, Independent Thatching Consultant;	Runs one day thatch awareness seminars, aimed at professionals. Covers both conservation and new build.
Weald and Downland Open Air Museum;	Course in Traditional Roofing Methods including Thatch. Run by Peter Brock, English Heritage.



## **7.00 Grant Support for Thatch**

### **7.01 SUMMARY OF GRANT SUPPORT AVAILABLE (Republic of IRELAND)**

#### **❖ Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs**

- Applicant must be resident in house or house rented long-term
- Irish must be language of the household
- Applicant must furnish tax number
- House must be more than 10 years old
- Roof must have had a thatched covering on March 1990
- House must be in good repair / condition
- A minimum of 7 years must have elapsed between re-thatching applications
- 75% cost up to maximum € 7000 (mainland) € 10,500 (Islands).

Note: No conditions on thatching materials and style  
No conservation guidelines  
Dwellings only  
Conservation of rest of house to historic standards not required  
Tax certificates for thatcher not required

#### **❖ Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government**

- € 3,800 or two thirds of the approved costs maximum grant in most cases.
- 80% of eligible costs up to a maximum of € 6,350 in the case of medical card holder
- Higher level of grant on certain specified islands off the West and South coasts of Ireland
- Grant only available for buildings in use as dwelling houses. Holiday homes are not eligible.
- House must be more than 10 years old
- House must have previously had a thatched roof covering.
- Minimum of 7 years between grants (inc. Roinn na Gaeltachta scheme)
- Applicant must furnish tax number.
- House must be more than 10 years old.
- Appendix to Application form details minimum technical requirements but these are very general with no specific reference to material or fixing type.

#### **❖ Local Authority Heritage Grants**

- All Councils follow DoE guidelines regarding allocation of Local Authority Grants.
- Can pay up to 50% of total cost of eligible works or €13,000 whichever is lesser. However, most Councils do not allocate this level due to budgetary constraints.
- Grant is available to all buildings on RPS and can be applied for in conjunction with DoE Thatching Grant

#### **❖ The Heritage Council**

- 151 Thatched structures on the Heritage Council's Buildings at Risk Register. (Records date from 1998). The Number has increased significantly since the introduction of the Planning and Development Act 2000.
- Grant aid of up to 50% of the eligible costs.
- Application form is very simple and uncomplicated. Applicants must include a photograph.
- Condition of property is assessed by Heritage Council prior to confirmation of grant.
- Can be applied for in conjunction with other grants.

## 7.02 SUMMARY OF GRANT SUPPORT AVAILABLE (NORTHERN IRELAND)

### ❖ **Environment & Heritage Service**

- Building must be listed - all grades are eligible.
- Details and specifications agreed with EHS Conservation Architect.
- 'Historic' materials must be used (e.g. only reed where historically used)
- Grants are time limited – allocated to a financial year
- 75% assistance for work and professional fees.
- If owner is on specific benefits, up to 90% assistance is available.

### ❖ **NI Housing Executive**

- **Repairs Grants** are for the correction of defects that are the subject of a public health notice or a certificate of disrepair. This can include re-thatching but not new thatch.
- **Renovation Grants** relate to 9 'fitness' headings and may include alterations and extensions as well as repairs.
- House must be improved overall to agreed fitness standard.
- Maximum grant (£27,000 (for all work)
- Normally if work required exceeds this a 'replacement' grant rather than repair will be offered. However, for buildings of high vernacular quality (listed or not) repair grant will still be available. There is published guidance 'The Home Improvement Grant Scheme' (1996) detailing the special conditions

### ❖ **NITB – Invest NI**

- Recent scheme for grant aid to convert unused vernacular buildings (with a preference for thatch) for use as self-catering holiday accommodation.
- Maximum grant £40,000.
- Can be matched with EHS grant.
- House needs upgraded to NITB standards which are onerous and potentially damaging to historic character (e.g., all bedrooms must have en-suites).

## 7.03 GRANT UPTAKE

Summary of information provided by grant giving bodies:

### ❖ Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs

The Department provided figures for grant applications for the renewal/repair of thatched roofs in all Gaeltachts from 1998 to 2002. A total of 62 applications were made to re-thatch dwelling houses in this period from which a total of only 21 received grant-aid. No application was received from the Gaeltachts of Meath, Waterford, Cork and Kerry between 1998 and 2002. Six applications were made from the Donegal Gaeltacht but no re-thatching of thatched roof was completed and / or funded for the period 1998-2002. Six applications were made from the Mayo Gaeltacht but no re-thatching of a roof was funded there for the period 1998-2002. The Galway Gaeltacht, which includes the Aran Islands, had the highest number of applications with a total of 50 applications between 1998 and 2003 with a record of 18 applications received in 2000. Twenty-one applications were grant-aided between 1998 and 2002.

The Department does not have separate figures regarding Deontas chun Díon Tuí a Authnuachan for the islands prior to 2002. There has not been a grant application from a Gaeltacht island for 2002 and none to date for 2003.

#### Further research

Investigate the discrepancy between higher number (three times) of applications and payments. For example 18 applications from Galway in 2000, only 3 completed/paid in 2000 and 3 in 2001.

#### Recommendations

Will make a number of key recommendations regarding the operation of the funding/grant aiding procedure that will impact positively on the future of thatched structures.

### ❖ Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government

#### Thatched Roof Grants

Year	No. approved by DOEHLG	No. paid by DOEHLG	No. approved by DCRGA	No. paid by DCRGA
1998	204	139	621	522
1999	356	150	726	564
2000	214	200	967	673
2001	183	171	1097	868
2002	241	190	848	874
June 2003	101	71	420	336

Note the DOEHLG Thatching Grant and Gaeltacht grant cannot be applied for simultaneously.

### ❖ The Heritage Council

2001: 2 thatched properties were thatched. The total grant was £21,500 or €27,305.

2002: 7 thatched properties were thatched. The total grant was €72,830.

2003: 12 thatched properties were thatched. The total grant was €99,000.

### ❖ NI Environment & Heritage Service

Average Grant dispersed £120,000 / year for last 3 years. EHS pays out on an average of 15 re-sparings or complete new coatings per year (average £8,000 each)

### ❖ NI Housing Executive

No records are kept on grant assistance to thatched dwellings.