

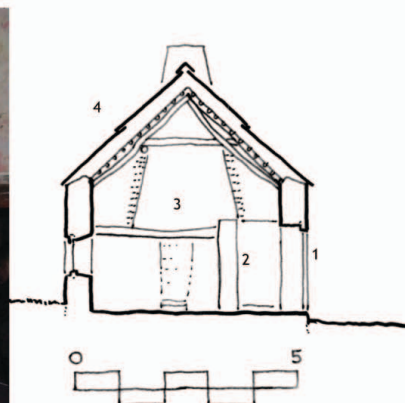
The hearth was the focus of the traditional Irish house, where the occupants worked, ate and entertained. The fire was always kept alight on a flagstone at floor level, in front of the "hob", an upright stone slab.

Above the hearth a timber beam spanned across to support a large canopy constructed of wicker, plastered over with earthen plaster and white-washed. A roomy shelf over the beam to one side of the canopy was called the *táilleog* or "thawluck", from the word "tallet" an English dialect term of French derivation for a loft. Later houses had stone chimney flues with a stone arch or timber beam over the hearth. Beneath the hearth canopy there was space to sit beside the fire and cooking pots and kettles were hung on metal cranes. Houses of the hearth-lobby type had the distinctive spy-hole so people seated at the fire could see who was coming and going. Often there were cavities on either side of the fire for turf and for ashes.

The interiors of most houses surveyed in 2007 have been heavily adapted over time, though some examples of wicker hearth canopies survive and some benches were found in the traditional position at lobby wall side.



Hearth canopy resting on a jamb wall with táilleog shelf



Cross section of a Hearth-lobby house near Baltinglass

1. Entrance
2. Lobby with jamb wall
3. Fireplace and canopy
4. Galvanised metal sheeting on existing thatch



Detail of wicker construction of canopy with rail for hanging pots

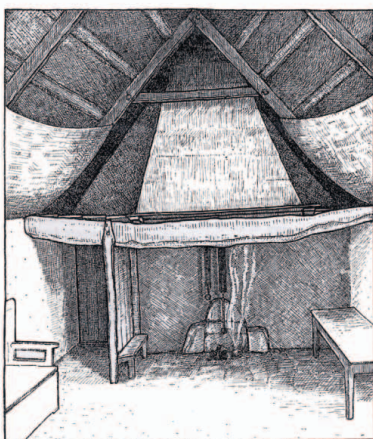


Later house with stone arch over the hearth



Metal crane for hanging pots

The *táilóg*, still called that, is a roomy shelf near the chimney cowl on one side. Things to be kept dry are kept there. Salmon salted and smoked used to be stored in the *táilóg* till the mine water (Avoca mines) prevented them from coming up our rivers from Arklow. (N.F.C. 1309, pg. 238) 1951



Sketch of a heart canopy in Ballinglen, Co. Wicklow by Ake Campbell, c. 1935



Flue recessed into the stone wall with wicker forming other sides



Typical spy hole

Every house in Ballinglen had the wicker chimney - "black" sallies interwoven. Then a coating of marl clay about 2" thick (to protect it from the fire). The rougher the sallies were woven, the better the clay stuck. A fellow named Hinch worked at nothing else - making and repairing these chimneys. There were, and are, chimneys in the district same as above, but without the marl plaster. In later years, when the old sally chimneys - or the beams underneath got moth eaten or worn out, they were replaced with lath and plaster chimneys or wood. (N.F.C. 130, 9 pg. 246) Rose Byrne, Rathcoyle, Kiltegan 1952

Beneath one of the benches near the hobstone was a deep hole called the ash hole. The ashes was taken out every morning and swept into this hole and also dust off the floor was brushed in here. The ashes was taken from this and threw on the manure heap. The floors of the old houses were made of clay and sometimes flag floors were to be seen. These flags were got in the slate quarries which are numerous in this district. (N.F.C.S. 914, pg. 340) Eddie Sinnott, Dunlavin