

Straw/Hay Rope Chairs.

John Boardman sends this photograph of an ash chair with hazel rails and a seat of twisted rye grass belonging to a woman in Stoneleigh.



The chair was described as 'an Irish bog oak chair' but appears to be made of ash with hazel rails with traces of green paint. Details of the technique will be found in a forthcoming book to be published by Dryad:

Mary Butcher, Olivia Elton Barratt and Kay Johnson
Chair Seating - Techniques in Cane, Rush Willow,
Straw and Cords.

Apparently in Ireland very simple chairs seated with a rope twisted from straw, hay or rye grass have been made since the 18th century. The frames were made with whatever wood was available, and had round or squared back legs and back pillars with round rails and stretchers. The joints were simple wedge dowels and the wood was often painted.

The straw rope, or 'Sugan', was made using a 'thraw hook' made from heavy wire or metal which rotated the rope. In England such ropes were made to secure thatch or to tie bales of straw or hay and to secure loads.