

In common with other large country houses of the late 18th and early 19th century an ice house was built to store ice to keep provisions fresh.

This building is situated on the slope of the motte next to the river. The Ice House consists of an entrance at ground level, facing north to keep the temperatures down and a conical underground chamber which would have contained the ice. It is brick-lined for extra insulation.

This was only possible due to the severity of the winters during this time. The same process could not be done naturally today as global warming has made the winters in Northern Ireland mild in comparison. The ice used for this purpose would have to be thick and this would have required temperatures below freezing for a sustained period of time.

This was also a highly intensive job, the constant checking of the ice to see when it was suitable for extraction, the manual lifting and transporting of the ice. Once the ice had been taken to its destination it would then have to be cut to the correct size and

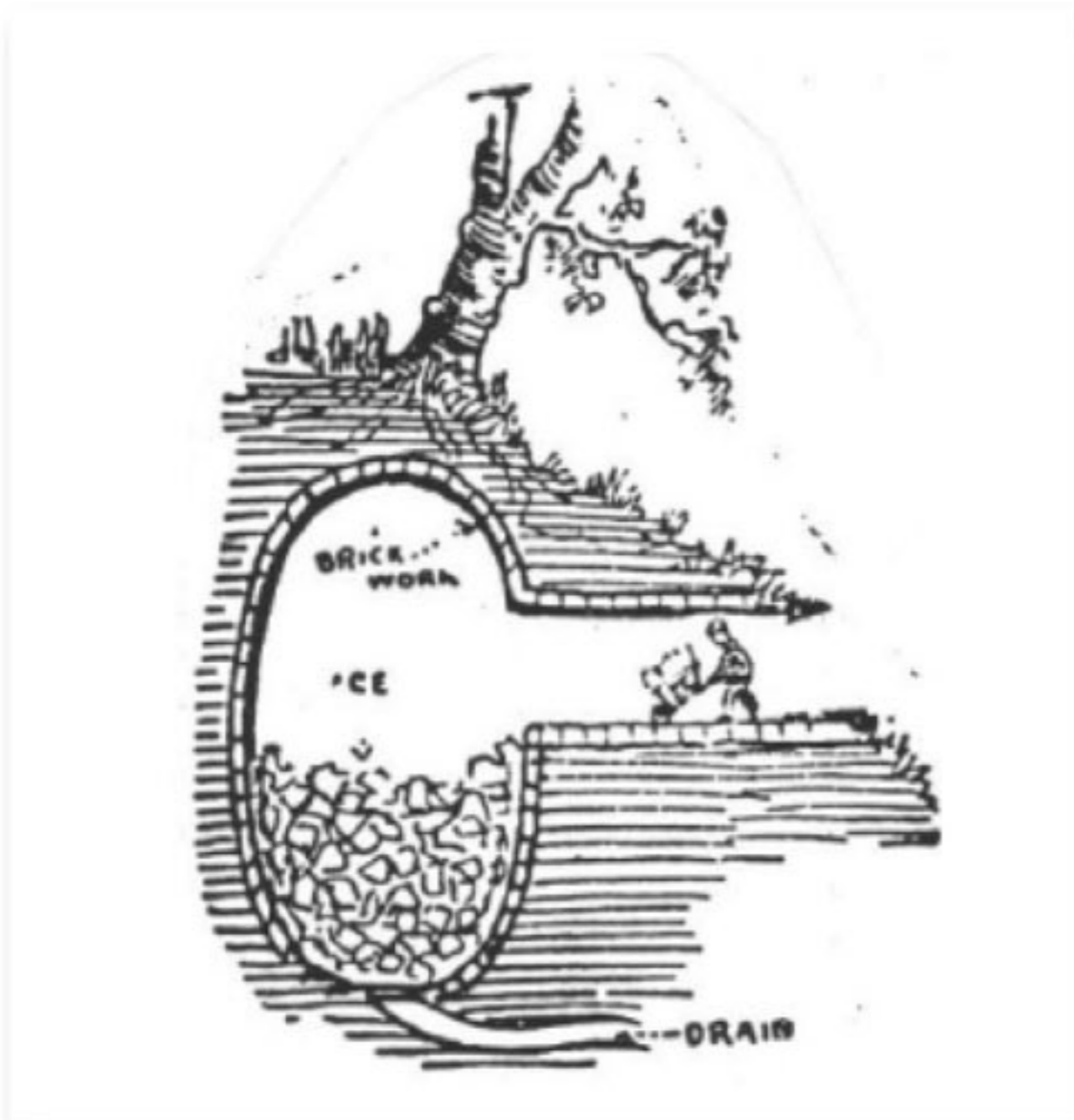


Diagram of an Ice House



The Ice House Today

The reason it is underground is to keep the general temperatures down. At the bottom of the chamber there is a drain which lets the melted water from the stored ice to drain away in this case into the River Lagan.

Ice was sourced from the River Lagan, packed into the interior during the winter when the rivers and ponds froze over. This task was probably done by the head gardener and his staff. Once the store was filled it was shut up and the entrance tunnel filled with straw for extra insulation.

carefully positioned to provide the maximum effect with the minimum amount of melting.

All this was done in order to preserve and maintain the food stuffs for the landowner and his family. This meant the landowner would have a varied diet even during the winter months when the produce available was limited unless imported. Another example of how those with money and power could maintain a lifestyle which not only showed their social status but meant their general wellbeing was much improved especially compared to the working classes.