



Cladaí Inis Meáin

Shores of Inis Meáin



Feamainn agus Sliogáin

Seaweed and Seashells



Cladaí Inis Meáin: Feamainn agus Sliogáin

An chéad chló 2026

Téacs agus íomhánna © Aedín Ní Thiarnaigh

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Réamhrá an taighdeora

Treoir phóca phraiticiúil í seo a chuideoidh le daoine roinnt den saibhreas bithéagsúlachta cois cladaigh in Inis Meáin a aithint, agus a thabharfaidh blaiseadh dóibh ar chultúr an oileáin, a bhfuil dlúthbhaint aige le cúrsaí farraige. Tá súil againn go mbeidh sí ina hacmhainn luachmhar don phobal, do chuairteoirí, agus do dhuine ar bith a bhfuil spéis acu san oidhreacht nádúrtha.

Ní haon ionadh go bhfuil cúrsaí cladaigh fite fuaite leis an saol agus leis an stair i measc pobal oileánda amhail muintir Inis Meáin; bíodh beatha á fáil acu ó fhaochain agus ó bhairneachaí, ioncam á shaothrú acu ón gceilpeadóireacht nó ó charraigín agus duileasc a dhíol, nó feamainn á baint acu do na garrantaí, ar cruthaíodh iad de láimh tríd an bhfeamainn chéanna a mheascadh le gaineamh agus le créafóg.

Tugtar tús áite do scéalta, do nósanna agus d'ainmneacha áitiúla sa leabhrán seo, chomh maith le trácht anseo agus ansiúd ar thraidisiúin a bhaineann lenár gcomharsana i gConamara agus le ceantair níos faide i gcéin.

Le Cladaí Inis Meáin, féachann muid le beocht a choinneáil in oidhreacht shaibhir Inis Meáin, le seanchas na ndaoine a chaomhnú agus a cheiliúradh, agus leis na scéalta tábhachtacha seo a chur ar aghaidh go dtí an chéad ghlúin eile.

Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil leis na daoine ar fad a chuidigh liom an taighde seo a chur i gcrích, go háirithe na maoinitheoirí Éire Ildánach, Oifig Bithéagsúlachta Chomhairle Contae na Gaillimhe, agus Pleanáil Teanga Inis Meáin, agus leis na saineolaithe uile a d'fhreagair mo chuid ceisteanna maidir le mionsonraí agus le speicis.

Thar aon ní eile, gabhaim buíochas ó chroí leis na daoine áitiúla a roinn a gcuid scéalta, a gcuid ama, agus a gcuid saineolais liom go fial i gcaitheamh mo chuid taighde. Is libhse agus is daoibhse an leabhrán seo agus tá súil agam go mbeidh sibh bródúil as.

Le meas,
Aedín Ní Thiarnaigh.

Researcher's foreword

This practical pocket guide will help readers identify some of the rich biodiversity found along the shores of Inis Meáin, while also offering an insight into the island's culture, which is deeply connected to the sea. We hope it will serve as a valuable resource for the local community, visitors, and anyone with an interest in our natural heritage.

It is no surprise that the seashore is deeply woven into the life and history of an island community like Inis Meáin. For centuries, the people of the island have depended on the coastline: on limpets and periwinkles as a food source, on kelp-making or the sale of carrageen and dillisk as a source of income, and, of course, on the seaweeds that provided vital fertiliser for the fields, which themselves were painstakingly created by hand by mixing seaweed with sand and soil.

Local names, stories, and customs are at the heart of this booklet, with traditions associated with our neighbours in Conamara and other areas further afield also explored where relevant.

Through Cladaí Inis Meáin, we seek to keep the island's rich heritage alive, to preserve and celebrate local folklore and traditional knowledge, and to pass these important stories on to the next generation.

I would like to thank everyone who helped make this research possible, especially our funders: Creative Ireland, the Galway County Council Biodiversity Office and Pleanáil Teanga Inis Meáin, as well as all the experts who answered my questions about species identification and technical details.

Above all, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the people of Inis Meáin who so generously shared their stories, their time, and their knowledge with me during my field work. This booklet belongs to you, and I hope you will be proud of it.

Kind regards,
Aedín Ní Thiarnaigh.

Nóta Tábhachtach maidir le Baint Feamainne

Má tá rún agat feamainn a bhaint, cloí leis na treoracha seo a leanas:

- Tá contúirt ag baint leis an bhfarraige. Bíodh d'éadan dírithe ar an bhfarraige agus tú ag baint feamainne, agus bíodh aird agat ar an taoille i gcónaí.
- Ná bain greamacháin feamainne ón gcloch riamh. Má dhéantar seo, ní fhásfaidh an fheamainn ar ais. Úsáid scian nó siosúr chun an fheamainn a ghearradh agus ná bain níos mó ná aon trian den phlanda.
- Ná hith feamainn nach bhfuil fáiscithe leis an gcloch (feamainn atá tagtha i dtír, nó atá ar snámh sa bhfarraige). D'fhéadfadh go mbeadh baictéir bailithe ag an bhfeamainn agus go mbeadh duine tinn tar éis í a ithe.

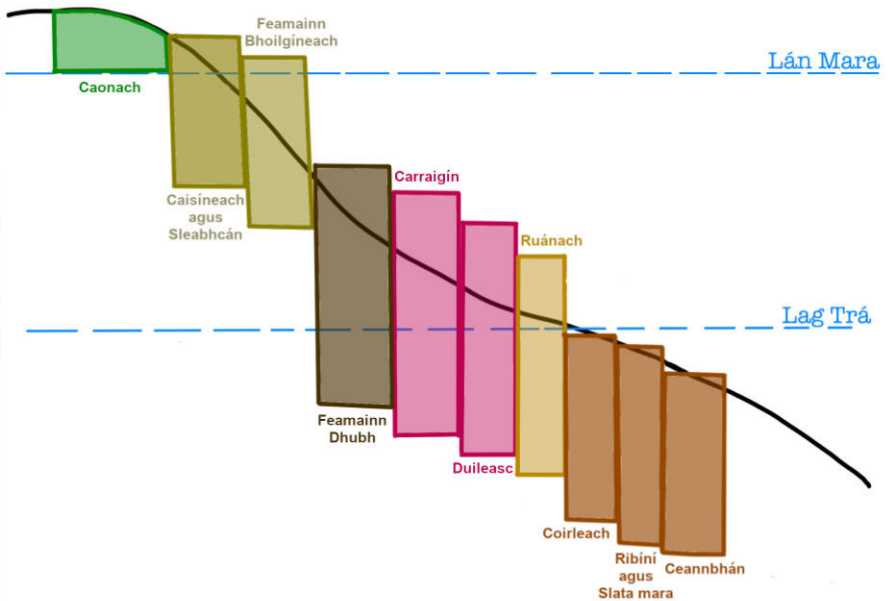
Important Note on Harvesting Seaweed

If you intend to harvest seaweed, follow these guidelines:

- The sea can be dangerous. Always keep your face towards the sea while harvesting seaweed, and be aware of the tide at all times.
- Never remove a seaweed holdfast from the rock. If you do, the seaweed will not grow back. Use a knife or scissors to cut the seaweed, and do not remove more than one third of the plant.
- Do not eat seaweed that is not attached to the rock (seaweed that has washed ashore or is floating in the sea). It may have accumulated bacteria and could make people unwell if eaten.



Feamainn de réir raon taoille - Seaweed distribution by tidal range



Lán mara - High tide; Lag trá - Low tide; Caonach - Sea lettuce and Gutweed; Caisíneach agus Sleabhacán - Channel wrack and Purple laver; Feamainn bhoilgíneach - Spiral wrack; Feamainn dhubh - Bladder wrack and Serrated wrack; Carraigín - Carrageen; Duilleasc - Dillisk; Ruánach - Thongweed; Coirleach - Oarweed; Ribíní agus Slata mara - Sugar kelp and Forest kelp; Ceannbhán - Furbelows.

Gluais - Glossary

Ceilp / Kelp: Tá dhá bhrí leis an bhfocal “ceilp” agus déantar tagairt don dá chineál sa leabhrán seo. An chéad bhrí ná cineálacha feamainne a fhásann in íochtar an chladaigh amhail coirleach (*Laminaria digitata*) agus slata mara (*Laminaria hyperborea*). An dara brí ná luaith a dhéantaí fadó as feamainn a dhó, a raibh feidhmeanna éagsúla ag baint léi. Nuair a bhítí ag dó feamainne leis an luaith a dhéanamh, deirtí go mbítí “ag déanamh ceilpe”.

The word “kelp” has two meanings, both of which are referred to in this booklet. The first refers to large brown seaweeds that grow on the lower shore, such as oarweed (*Laminaria digitata*) and forest kelp (*Laminaria hyperborea*). The second refers to the ash traditionally produced by burning seaweed, which was used for a variety of purposes. The process of burning seaweed to produce this ash was known as “making kelp”.

Greamachán / Holdfast: An chuid den fheamainn a cheanglaíonn leis an gcarraig í.

The root-like base of a seaweed that anchors it to the rock.

Fronnaí / Fronds: Na píosaí fada feamainne a fhásann amach ón stíp, mar a bheadh duilleoga ann.

The long, leaf-like parts of a seaweed that grow from the stipe.

Moileasc / Mollusc: Ainmhí inveirteabrach a bhfuil corp bog aige. Bíonn blaosc chrua ar a lán cineálacha moileasc chun iad a chosaint, mar shampla, diúilicíní.

An invertebrate with a soft body. Many species of mollusc have a hard shell for protection, for example, mussels.

Stíp / Stipe: An chuid den fheamainn a nascann an greamachán leis na fronnaí, cosúil leis an gcós a bheadh ar phlanda.

The stem-like part of a seaweed that connects the holdfast to the fronds.

Feamainn - Seaweed

De réir chriosanna an chladaigh - In order of shore zones

Caonach - Gutweed and Sea Lettuce

(*Ulva spp.*, *Ulva lactuca*)

Tugtar “caonach” ar dhá chineál feamainne a bhfuil dath glas orthu in Inis Meáin: *Ulva spp.*, a fhasann ina snáithíní, agus *Ulva lactuca*, a bhfuil bileoga níos leithne air agus atá cosúil le leitís.

Is féidir *Ulva lactuca* a ithe. Déantar é a ghlanadh agus a ithe amh, nó is féidir friochadh domhain a dhéanamh air chun criospaí blasta feamainne a dhéanamh. Tá dhá áit ar an taobh ó dheas den oileán atá ainmnithe i ndiaidh na feamainne seo: An Chaonaigh agus Scailp na Caonaí.

Fásann an dá chineál caonaigh i mbarr an chladaigh, go háirithe in áiteacha ina mbíonn fíoruisce ag sileadh. Má tá an t-uafás caonaigh ag fás i suíomh ar leith, uaireanta is fuíolluisce nó rith talmhaíochta is cúis leis, agus ní chóir an fheamainn sin a ithe.

The name “caonach” is given to two types of green seaweed in Inis Meáin: gutweed (*Ulva spp.*), which grows in strands, and sea lettuce (*Ulva lactuca*), which has broader lettuce-like leaves.

Sea lettuce is edible. It can be washed and eaten raw, or deep-fried to make tasty seaweed crisps. Two locations on the south side of the island are named after these seaweeds: An Chaonaigh and Scailp na Caonaí.

Both types of caonach grow on the upper shore, especially in places where some freshwater flows. If there is an excessive growth of caonach in a particular area, it may be due to wastewater or agricultural runoff, and seaweed from these patches should not be eaten.

Caonach Gutweed (Right)
Caonach Sea Lettuce (Left)



Sleabhcán - Purple Laver

(*Porphyra spp.*)

Is feamainn inite dhubhchorcra é an sleabhcán a fhásann ar charraigeacha i mbarr an chladaigh. Bíonn an sleabhcán aibí i rith an gheimhridh agus é níos blasta le hithe an t-am sin. Bhaintí é agus dhéantaí é a bhrúth agus a ithe mar ghlasra in Inis Meáin uair amháin, ach bhí tóir níos mó air in áiteacha eile.

Sa mBreatain Bheag, mar shampla, déantar arán speisialta coirce leis an sleabhcán, agus sa tSeapáin glaoitear “nori” ar fheamainn cosúil leis seo agus baintear leas as chun sushi a chlúdach.

Tá cothú iontach sa sleabhcán. Tá go leor vitimín C agus sinc ann agus tá an leibhéal próitéine is airde ann thar aon chineál feamainne eile in Éirinn (idir 15-37% próitéin sa sleabhcán triomaithe).

Purple laver, known as “sleabhcán” in Inis Meáin, is an edible, dark purple seaweed that grows on rocks in the upper shore zone. It reaches maturity and is tastiest during the winter.

It was once boiled and eaten as a vegetable on the island, although it was far more popular in other areas. In Wales, for example, a traditional bread called ‘laver bread’ is made using purple laver and oats. In Japan, a similar seaweed is known as “nori” and is used to wrap sushi.

Purple laver is highly nutritious. It contains large amounts of vitamin C and zinc and has the highest protein content of the common Irish seaweeds, with between 15-37% protein content in its dried form.



Beanna Veilbhite - Velvet Horn

(*Codium tomentosum*)

Níl ainm áitiúil ar an bhfeamainn dúghlas seo in Inis Meáin, ach tugtar “beanna veilbhite” uirthi in áiteacha eile mar gheall ar chruth na feamainne atá cosúil le beanna fia, agus toisc í a bheith bog. Tá sí fairsing sna bulláin i lár an chladaigh.

This dark-green seaweed has no known local Irish name on Inis Meáin. Both its English name, “velvet horn”, and standard Irish name “beanna veilbhite” (velvet antlers) refer to its antler-like shape and soft texture. It is commonly found in rock pools in the mid-shore zone.



Míobhán - Pepper Dulse

(*Osmundea pinnatifida*)

Feamainn inite é an míobhán a fhásann in íochtar an chladaigh. Tá blas láidir air a chuirfeadh strufal i gcuimhne do dhuine. Ní thugtar aon ainm áitiúil ar leith air in Inis Meáin agus ní bhaintí leas as mar bhia anseo go stairiúil, ach in áiteacha eile dhéantaí é a thriomú agus d'úsáidtí é chun blas breise a chur le béilí.

Pepper dulse is an edible seaweed that grows in the lower shore zone. It has a strong truffle-like taste. This seaweed has no known local name on Inis Meáin, and is not thought to have been eaten here. However, in other places it was commonly dried and used to add extra flavour to meals.



Caisíneach - Channel Wrack

(*Pelvetia canaliculata*)

Fásann an chaisíneach in uachtar an chladaigh in Inis Meáin. Ní thugtaí mórán suntais di ar an oileán, ach in áiteacha eile thugtaí í mar bhia do na muca agus thugtaí “muirín na muc” uirthi dá bharr. Ainm coitianta eile atá ar an gcaisíneach ná “dúlaman” agus aithnítear an t-ainm sin go forleathan mar gheall ar an amhrán cáiliúil den ainm céanna.

I gConamara, bhíodh gasúir ag spraoi leis an gcaisíneach. Bhailídís agus dhóidís í agus iad ag déanamh aithris ar na daoine fásta a bhíodh ag dó ceilpe. “Channel wrack” atá ar an gcaisíneach as Béarla mar gheall ar na cainéil bheaga a ritheann tríthi.

Channel wrack is found on the upper shore in Inis Meáin. Little use was made of it on the island, but elsewhere it was fed to pigs. Another common Irish name for channel wrack in Ireland is “dúlaman”, which is widely recognised because of the famous folk song of the same name.

In Conamara, children used to collect and burn this seaweed for fun, imitating the adults who burned other seaweeds to make kelp. The name “channel wrack” refers to the small channels that run through this seaweed.



Feamainn Bhoilgíneach - Spiral Wrack

(*Fucus spiralis*)

Fásann an fheamainn bhoilgíneach go fairsing in uachtar an chladaigh agus tá an-mheas ag feilméaraí Inis Meáin uirthi mar leasú do na hioimaireacha fataí. Tá an nós seo luaite i seanrá ar an oileán: “Leasaigh fúm, clúdaigh tharam, cíor mo cheann agus beidh mé agat”* (scar feamainn ar an talamh, clúdaigh le créafóg í chun an iomaire a dhéanamh, bain an salachar as an iomaire de réir mar a fhásfaidh na fiailí, agus tiocfaidh na fataí).

Tugtar “casfheamainn” ar an bhfeamainn seo in áiteacha eile mar gheall ar an gcasadh a thagann san fheamainn agus í ag triomú. D’úsáidtí an sú i mboilgíní na feamainne seo i gConamara uair amháin mar leigheas ar na fadharcáin.

Is fiú a lua gur cineál feamainne coitianta eile, *Fucus vesiculosus*, a dtugtar “feamainn bhoilgíneach” uirthi in áiteacha eile. Is féidir leis an speiceas seo hibridiú a dhéanamh le *Fucus spiralis* chomh maith.

**Leagan eile den seanrá seo ná: “Leasaigh fúm, iompaigh tharam, cíor mo cheann agus beidh mé agat”.*



Spiral wrack grows abundantly on the upper shore and has long been valued by the farmers of Inis Meáin as a fertiliser for potato ridges. This practice is reflected in a local saying: “Leasaigh fúm, clúdaigh tharam, cíor mo cheann, agus beidh mé agat.” (“Place seaweed beneath me, cover me over, comb my head, and you’ll have me.”) In other words, spread seaweed on the ground, cover it with soil to make the potato ridge, remove the weeds as they grow, and you will have a good harvest.

A common Irish name for spiral wrack in other areas is “casfheamainn” (twisted seaweed), because the seaweed twists as it dries. In Conamara, the gel in the bubbles of this seaweed was used as a remedy for corns.

It is worth noting that the local name for spiral wrack in Inis Meáin, “feamainn bhoilgíneach”, is more commonly associated in other areas with bladder wrack (*Fucus vesiculosus*), another common species of seaweed which can sometimes hybridise with spiral wrack.



Feamainn Dhubh - Serrated Wrack and Bladder Wrack

(*Fucus serratus*, *Fucus vesiculosus*)

Tá dhá chineál feamainne a dtugtar “feamainn dhubh” orthu in Inis Meáin: *Fucus serratus* agus *Fucus vesiculosus*. Fásann an dá chineál i lár an chladaigh agus bhíí á mbaint le húsáid mar leasú chomh maith.

Cé gur “feamainn dhubh” a thugtar ar *Fucus vesiculosus*, tagann dath níos gile uirthi sa samhradh mar gheall ar sholas na gréine. Aer atá i mboilgíní na feamainne seo a chuidíonn léi dul go barr an uisce.

Tugtar “míoránach” ar *Fucus serratus* in áiteacha eile agus is éasca í a aithint ón gcruth fiachlach atá ar imeall na feamainne. Is uaidh seo a thagann ainm eolaíoch an phlanda a chiallaíonn “feamainn fhiachlach”.

Is í *Fucus serratus* is coitianta a úsáidtear i bhfolcadáin feamainne in Éirinn. Tá an-cháil ar an ola a thagann ón bhfeamainn nuair a chuirtear í ar maos in uisce te mar leigheas ar fhadhbanna craicinn amhail eachma agus soiríais. Tá an ola seo ceaptha a bheith iontach maith don ghruaig freisin.

Cuireann iascairí áitiúla an fheamainn dhubh anuas ar na boscaí gliomach agus iad á seoladh isteach go dtí an mhórhóir chun an ghrian a choinneáil ó na gliomaigh agus lena gcoinneáil úr.

There are two species of seaweed known as “feamainn dhubh” (“black seaweed”) on Inis Meáin: bladder wrack (*Fucus vesiculosus*) and serrated wrack (*Fucus serratus*). Both species grow in the mid-shore zone and were traditionally harvested on the island as a fertiliser.

Bladder wrack is dark in colour, though it becomes lighter during the summer as it is exposed to sunlight. The bladders on this seaweed are filled with air, which helps it to float in the water.

In other areas, serrated wrack is known in Irish as “míoránach”. It is easy to identify by the toothed edges of its fronds. This feature is the source of the plant’s Latin name, *Fucus serratus*, which means “toothed seaweed.”

Serrated wrack is the species most commonly used in seaweed baths in Ireland. The oil released from the seaweed when it is soaked in hot water is renowned for soothing skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis and is also believed to be an excellent hair treatment.

Local fishermen use these seaweeds to cover the lobsters as they are transported to the mainland, to shield them from the sun and to keep them fresh.



Carraigín - Carrageen

(*Chondrus crispus*)

Bhíodh an-tóir ar an gcarraigín in Inis Meáin fadó toisc go mbaintí í lena díol. Deirtear, chomh luath agus a bhíodh na fataí curtha ag muintir Inis Meáin, go mbíodh daoine ag tabhairt aghaidh ar an gcladach le carraigín a bhaint. Bíonn sí aibí ó mhí na Bealtaine amach.

Tá cuma chatach ar an gcarraigín agus fásann sí i lár agus in íochtar an chladaigh. Fásann sí go fairsing ag an gcósta ó Phort na Cora go Trá Cheann Gainimh. D'fhéadfadh dath dearg nó dath geal a bheith ar an bhfeamainn seo ag brath ar an méid gréine atá faighte aici agus scaití bíonn loinnir ghorm ar na bileoga faoin uisce.

Tar éis an charraigín a bhaint, déantar í a scaradh ar réileog le go bhfaighidh sí solas na gréine agus uisce ón drúcht agus ón mbáisteach lena gealadh. Nuair a thagann dath bán ar an gcarraigín, déantar í a thriomú agus a stóráil.

Bhítfí ag baint go leor carraigín in Inis Meáin le díol uair amháin ach is beag duine a bhíonn á díol anois. D'úsáidtí í mar leigheas traidisiúnta ar an oileán freisin; dhéantaí an charraigín a fhiuchadh in uisce agus d'óltaí an sú chun casacht a bhogadh nó chun slaghdán a leigheas. Tagraíonn seanrá in Inis Meáin don chothú breá atá sa bhfeamainn seo: “Sú sú carraigín, sú sú bairneach, cuir i do bholg é, agus beidh tú láidir”.

Tá cáil ar an gcarraigín as leachtanna a dhéanamh níos tibhe. Chuige seo, baintear an-úsáid aisti ar fud an domhain i mbia agus i gcosmaidí.

Dhéantaí milseog shimplí as an gcarraigín in Inis Meáin trína fhiuchadh i mbainne agus beagán siúcra a chur tríd. Déantar milseoga cosúil leis seo as an gcarraigín in Inis Meáin fós, le comhábhair nua-aimseartha amhail fanaile.



Carrageen was commonly harvested and sold from Inis Meáin in the past. It is said that as soon as the islanders had planted the potatoes, they would head to the shore to pick carrageen, which is mature from May onwards.

This seaweed has a curly appearance and grows in the midshore and lower shore zones. It is abundant along the coast from Port na Cora to Trá Cheann Gainimh. Carrageen may be red or light in colour depending on its exposure to sunlight. The fronds may also have some blue iridescence underwater.

After harvesting, carrageen is spread out on a flat grassy area to be bleached by sunlight, dew, and rainwater. Once it has turned white, it is dried and stored.

Large quantities of carrageen were once sold from Inis Meáin, but very few people sell it today. It was also used as a traditional remedy on the island: the seaweed was boiled in water and the liquid was drunk to ease a cough or cure a cold. An old Inis Meáin saying refers to the excellent nutritional value of carrageen: “Sú sú carraigín, sú sú bairneach, cuir i do bholg é, agus beidh tú láidir” (Juice of the carrageen, juice of the limpet, put it in your belly and you will be strong).

Carrageen is well known for its ability to thicken liquids. Because of this, it is widely used throughout the world in food products and cosmetics.

A simple dessert was traditionally made on the island by boiling carrageen in milk and adding a little sugar. Similar desserts are still made on the island today, often with modern additions like vanilla.



Feamainn Bhuí - Egg Wrack

(*Ascophyllum nodosum*)

Glaoitear “feamainn Chonamara” ar an bhfeamainn bhuí in Inis Meáin freisin mar is í is mó a bhaintear i gConamara ar scála mór don mhonarcha feamainne Arramara i gCill Chiaráin. Ní bhíodh feamainn bhuí fairsing ar an oileán fadó ach tá roinnt di anois ag fás i gClái Gainimh.

Bíonn boilgíní móra ar an bhfeamainn bhuí agus í aibí, agus i gceantair eile bhíodh gasúir ag spraoi leis na boilgíní sin le feadóga a dhéanamh astu.

Egg wrack is known as “feamainn bhuí” (yellow seaweed) or “feamainn Chonamara” (Conamara seaweed) on Inis Meáin, as it is the species most commonly harvested in Conamara on a commercial scale for the seaweed-processing factory, Arramara Teoranta, in Cill Chiaráin.

This seaweed was not commonly found on the island in the past, but some patches can now be found growing at Clái Gainimh.

Air bladders develop on egg wrack when mature and in other areas, children used to use these to make play whistles.



Feamainn Ghuairach Sheapánach - Wireweed

(*Sargassum muticum*)

Is speiceas coimhthíoch ionrach í an fheamainn ghuairach Sheapánach atá ag scaipeadh in Inis Meáin. Meastar gur tháinig an speiceas seo ón Aigéin Chiúin agus taifeadadh í in Éirinn den chéad uair in 1995. Meastar gur tháinig sí isteach leis an dobharshaothrú, le huisce ballasta agus le cabhlacha soithí móra, agus aimsítear í ar fud chósta na hÉireann anois.

Is bagairt mhór í don bhitheagsúlacht toisc go scaipeann sí go héasca agus go gclúdaíonn sí dromchla an uisce. Mar thoradh air seo, ní fhaigheann na plandaí agus na speicis dhúchasacha in íochtar na farraige agus sna bulláin solas na gréine agus cuireann sé seo isteach go mór orthu.

Is fadhb í an fheamainn seo ar fud na hÉireann agus na hEorpa anois. Scaipeann sí go héasca má bhristear na fronnaí agus mar sin teastaíonn saintraenáil ó dhaoine chun an tslí cheart a fhoghlaim lena baint, nó d'fhéadfaí an fhadhb a dhéanamh níos measa. Tá an speiceas seo rialaithe de réir an dlí náisiúnta agus de réir dhlí na hEorpa agus is gá ceadúnas a fháil ón tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra lena bhaint.

Wireweed is an invasive, non-native species that has been spreading on Inis Meáin for a number of years. The species is native to the Pacific Ocean and was first recorded in Ireland in 1995. It initially arrived in Ireland either through aquaculture imports, in the ballast water of ships, or attached to boat hulls. The seaweed subsequently spread and today is found right around the Irish coast.

Sargassum muticum spreads very easily and poses a serious threat to native biodiversity as it competes with native seaweeds for light, nutrients and space, which also negatively affects native invertebrate species.

Wireweed is now a problem throughout Ireland and Europe. As it spreads easily when its fronds are broken, specialised training is needed to learn the correct methods for removing it. Evidence to date suggests that attempts at removal could make the problem worse. Wireweed is a regulated species under national and EU law and removal for disposal requires a license from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.



Duilleasc - Dulse / Dillisk (*Palmaria palmata*)

Tá an duileasc ar an bhfeamainn is mó a mbíonn tóir ag muintir Inis Meáin air mar ábhar bia, agus an-dúil ag muintir na háite an fheamainn thriomaithe a ithe. Is in íochtar an chladaigh a fhásann an duileasc agus ní fheictear é ach le taoille íseal. Tá éileamh ar an duileasc mar bhia ar fud na hÉireann le fada an lá, agus bhaintí go leor duilisc in Inis Meáin uair amháin le díol ar an mhórhóir.

Déantar idirdhealú in Inis Meáin idir cineálacha éagsúla duilisc: “stopógaí” agus “creathnach”. Is é an speiceas céanna atá i gceist leis an dá chineál seo, ach bíonn tréithe difriúla ag baint leis an bhfeamainn ag brath ar an áit ina bhfásann sí.

Tugtar “stopógaí” ar an duileasc a fhásann ina stropaí níos faide, a aimsítear ar an gcósta thuaidh agus in áiteacha a bhfuil foscadh níos fearr iontu. Níl mórán measa ag na hoileánaigh ar na stopógaí mar bhia, toisc iad a bheith níos righne agus blas níos láidre orthu. Is minic a fheictear stopógaí ag fás ar an tslat mhara (*Laminaria hyperborea*) chomh maith.

Tugtar “creathnach” ar an duileasc a fhásann ó dheas agus is mó i bhfad an t-éileamh atá uirthi seo mar bhia. Fásann an chreathnach ar na diúilicíní in áiteacha garbha agus bíonn bileoga na feamainne níos giorra agus níos boige ná na stopógaí. Tar éis í a bhaint, scartar an chreathnach ar leic lena triomú faoin ngrian agus déantar í a ithe, nó a stóráil, ina dhiaidh sin.

An áit is mó a luaitear le baint creathnaí in Inis Meáin ná An tAirdeall, atá suite ar chósta theas an oileáin. Is áit chontúirteach é An tAirdeall, gan mórán foscaidh ann ón bhfarraige agus tá seanrá ag baint leis: “Nuair a théann tú ar an Airdeall, bíodh airdeall amach agat”*. Moltar do dhaoine gan a gcúl a iompú leis an bhfarraige agus iad ann.

Áiteacha eile ó dheas ina bhfásann creathnach ná An Chaonaigh agus Carra na Lugáin, i measc eile.

**Leagan eile den seanrá seo ná: “Má théann tú ar an Airdeall, bí san airdeall”.*

Creathnach



Dillisk is a prized delicacy on Inis Meáin, considered a treat by many local people. This seaweed grows in the lower shore zone and can only be seen at low tide. It has long been a sought-after food throughout Ireland, and large quantities of it were once harvested on Inis Meáin for sale on the mainland.

On Inis Meáin, a distinction is made between two types of dillisk: “stopógaí” and “creathnach”. Though both forms are the same species, they exhibit different characteristics depending on where they grow.

Dillisk that grows in longer strips, found on the north coast and in more sheltered areas, is known as “stopógaí”. These strips are tougher to eat, have a stronger flavour, and are not highly regarded on the island. Stopógaí are also often found growing on the stipes (stem-like parts) of forest kelp (*Laminaria hyperborea*).

The dillisk that grows on the southern coast is known as “creathnach”, and it is much more highly valued by islanders. Creathnach grows on mussels in exposed areas, and its fronds are shorter and softer than stopógaí. After harvesting, it is spread on a flat rock to dry in the sun and is then eaten or stored.

The place best known for collecting creathnach on Inis Meáin is An tAirdeall on the south coast. This exposed area can be dangerous and people are advised never to turn their backs on the sea while there. This is reflected in an old local saying on the island: “Nuair a théann tú ar an Airdeall, bíodh airdeall amach agat” (If you go to An tAirdeall, be on your guard).

Other places on the southern coast where creathnach grows are An Chaonaigh and Carra na Lugáin, among other areas.

Stopógaí



Ruánach - Thongweed

(*Himanthalia elongata*)

Tá an-tóir ar an ruánach le blianta beaga anuas mar ábhar bia. Tá an fheamainn seo aitheanta go forleathan mar “spaigítí na mara” toisc gur cosúil na fronnaí móra fada leis an pasta coitianta, agus toisc é a bheith éasca le húsáid mar ghlasra mara. Tugtar “ríseach” ar an ruánach sa nGaeilge i gceantair eile.

Ní bhaintí an ruánach mar bhia in Inis Meáin go traidisiúnta ach bhaintí é uaireanta le dó in éindí le cineálacha feamainne eile chun ceilp a dhéanamh.

Fásann an ruánach in íochtar an chladaigh. Bíonn sé an-fhairsing i rith an tsamhraidh agus na fronnaí fada éasca le haimsiú ag scaipeadh amach ar dhromchla na farraige. Fásann sé ar an gcloch ó ghreamacháin atá cosúil le cnaipí beaga buí, agus tugtar “imleacáin cloch” orthu seo in áiteacha eile.

Uaireanta, feictear go leor ruánach amuigh ar an bhfarraige, ar baineadh na fronnaí ón gcloch le drochaimsir agus a chuaigh i bhfostú ar a chéile. Tugtar “cáiteachaí” orthu seo, agus is minic a fheictear feamainn bhuí Chonamara (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) ina measc freisin.

Feictear cairn den ruánach i dtír ar an trá freisin. Tugtar “rocálach” air seo agus bhaintí úsáid as mar leasú ar na garrantaí chomh maith.



Thongweed has become very popular as a sea vegetable in recent years. This seaweed is widely known as “sea spaghetti” because of its long pasta-like fronds. Known on Inis Meáin as “ruánach”, it is known in other areas as “ríseach”.

Traditionally, thongweed was not harvested as a food on Inis Meáin, although it was sometimes gathered and burned along with other seaweeds to make kelp.

Thongweed grows on the lower shore and is especially abundant during the summer, when its long fronds can easily be seen across the surface of the sea. It grows from holdfasts attached to the rock that look like little yellow buttons. In other Irish-speaking areas, these are known as “imleacáin cloch” (rock belly buttons).

Sometimes, masses of thongweed can be seen floating out at sea. These form when the fronds are torn from the rocks in bad weather and become tangled together. These floating masses are locally known as “cáiteachaí”, and sometimes also have egg wrack (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) caught up in them.

Thongweed can also sometimes be found in piles cast up on the beach. These are referred to locally as “rocálach”, and these were also used by farmers as fertiliser.

Rocálach



Coirleach - Oarweed (*Laminaria digitata*)

Fásann an choirleach in íochtar an chladaigh agus sa leibhéal fothaoidmhear agus bhí tóir uirthi in Inis Meáin ar dhá chúis. Ar an gcéad dul síos, bhí sí (agus na slata mara, *Laminaria hyperborea*) ar an dá fheamainn ba mhó a ndéantaí ceilp astu. Bhailítí an fheamainn nuair a thagadh sí i dtír, nó bhaintí í le giorrthrá, dhéantaí cairn bheaga di go dtí go stálaíodh siad agus thugtaí go dtí an tornóg ansin iad lena ndó.

Thógadh sé i bhfad chun an fheamainn a dhó sna tornóga agus bhíodh daoine ag obair i gcaitheamh na hoíche go dtí go n-iompódh an fheamainn isteach ina luaith chrua. Is í an luaith seo a sheoltaí go hÁrainn agus a dhíoltaí mar ceilp. Ó Bhealtaine go Samhain a bhíodh séasúr na ceilpe in Inis Meáin.

Bhaintí leas as an gceilp fadó chun glónra a chur ar earraí potaireachta, agus le gloine agus gallaoireach a dhéanamh. I lár an ochtú haois déag, fuarthas amach go raibh méid mór iaidín sa gceilp agus bhí éileamh uirthi mar gheall air sin go dtí aimsir an Dara Cogadh Domhanda. Ceaptar gur tháinig deireadh le déanamh ceilpe in Inis Meáin i dtús na gcaogaidí.

D'úsáidtí an choirleach mar leasú agus bhítí á díol chomh maith. Deirtear go raibh an-leasú inti ach gur fearr fós í agus í triomaithe. Dhéantaí í a thriomú agus a stóráil sa gcró agus deirtear go mbíodh boladh breá uirthi agus í triomaithe. Scartaí ar an ngarraí ansin í, nó chuirte í chuig an mórthír lena díol.

Lá mór ab ea é Aoine an Chéasta in Inis Meáin ó thaobh na coirlí de. Bhíodh trá mhór ann agus ba nós leis na daoine áitiúla dul á baint an lá sin.



Oarweed grows in the lower shore and subtidal zones and was highly valued on Inis Meáin for two reasons.

Firstly, it was one of the two seaweeds (along with *Laminaria hyperborea*) most commonly used to make kelp. The seaweed was collected when it washed ashore, or it was harvested at very low tide. Small piles were made and left until they had dried out, after which they were taken to the kiln, called a “tornóg”, to be burned.

Burning the seaweed in the tornóg took a long time, and people would work throughout the night until the seaweed formed a hard ash. It was this ash that was shipped to Inis Mór and sold as kelp. The kelp season on Inis Meáin lasted from May to November.

Kelp was used long ago to glaze pottery and to make glass and soap. In the mid-eighteenth century, it was discovered that kelp contained large amounts of iodine, which led to a consistent demand for it until the end of the Second World War. It is thought that kelp production on Inis Meáin came to an end in the early 1950s.

Oarweed was also used locally as a fertiliser and harvested for sale. It was dried and stored in sheds, where it was said to develop a pleasant smell, before being spread on fields or sent to the mainland for sale.

Good Friday was an important day for gathering oarweed on Inis Meáin. There was usually a very low tide, and it was customary for local people to gather oarweed on that day.



Feamainn Dhearg / Sлата Mara - Forest Kelp / Sea Rods (*Laminaria hyperborea*)

Feamainn dhearg atá sna slata mara a fhásann sa leibhéal fothaoidmhear. Tá fronnaí fada na feamainne cosúil le fronnaí na coirlí, ach tá an chos atá ar an tslat mhara crua agus deacair le lúbadh i gcomparáid le cos na coirlí, atá solúbtha.

Bhíodh tóir ar na slata mara, a thagann i dtír nuair a bhíonn oibriú farraige ann, toisc go mbíodh ceannacht orthu mar gheall ar an méid mór iaidín atá iontu. Bhailítí an fheamainn ar an trá agus scartaí na slata ar an gclai le triomú. Nuair a bhíodh siad triomaithe, cheanglaítí le chéile iad ina mbeartanna móra agus dhíoltaí iad leis an monarcha feamainne Arramara i gCill Chiaráin.

Bhíodh ardmheas ag muintir Chonamara ar na slata mara. Bhí an-éileamh orthu le ceilp a dhéanamh astu, ach b'iomaí úsáid eile a bhain siad astu freisin: dhéanadh na gasúir liathróidí beaga d'fhadharcáin na feamainne agus camáin de na slata, agus d'fhéadtaí cosa sceana a dhéanamh as na slata freisin, ach an t-iarann a shá sa stíp úr agus nuair a stálfaíodh sé, bhíodh greim iontach aige ar an scian.



Forest kelp is a reddish-brown seaweed that grows in the subtidal zone. Its long fronds are similar to oarweed, but the stipes of forest kelp are tough and inflexible, whereas the stipes of oarweed are flexible.

The stipes of forest kelp, known as sea rods or “slata mara”, wash ashore after heavy swells. These rods have a high iodine content and were collected on the island to be shipped to the mainland for sale. The stipes were laid out on the stone walls to dry and once dried, they were tied together in large bundles and sold to the seaweed-processing factory, Arramara, in Cill Chiaráin.

The people of Conamara held sea rods in high regard. They were considered to be excellent for making kelp, but they had many other uses as well. Children made balls from the knots on the rods, as well as makeshift hurleys from the rods themselves, which could also be used to make knife handles. An iron blade would be inserted into a fresh stipe and, once dried, it would form a secure handle for the knife.



Ribíní - Sugar Kelp

(*Saccharina latissima*)

“Ribíní” a thugtar ar an bhfeamainn seo in Inis Meáin mar gheall ar an gcuma chatach, mhaisiúil atá uirthi, atá éagsúil ó na ceilpeanna eile a fhásann amach ón oileán a bhfuil cuma mhín orthu. Is annamh go bhfeictear na ribíní ag fás, toisc go bhfásann siad i bhfad amach sa bhfarraige, ach feictear iad caite i dtír minic go leor, go háirithe tar éis stoirme.

Ní raibh an meas céanna ar na ribíní agus a bhí ar chineálacha feamainne eile in Inis Meáin mar leasú, agus ba mhinic go mbaintí amach iad as an bhfeamainn dhearg a bhailítí ar an gcladach. Bhíodh spraoi ag roinnt de na caillíní óga in Inis Meáin leis an bhfeamainn seo, agus iad á húsáid mar mhaisiúchán nuair a bhídís ag déanamh “teachíní beaga” cois claí, agus iad ag samhlú gur ribíní na Nollag a bhí ann.

“Rufa” a thugtar ar an *Saccharina latissima* seo in áiteacha eile sa tír, mar gheall ar chuma rufach na feamainne, agus bhaintí leas aisti uaireanta mar thuair báistí. Chrochtaí an fheamainn thriomaithe ar an doras agus dá mbeadh an ribín briosc, léireodh sé go raibh aimsir thirim ag teacht, ach dá n-éireodh sí bog, tuar ab ea é go dtiocfadh báisteach.

Tagann gráinníní milse ar an bhfeamainn seo nuair a thriomaíonn sí. Is chuige seo a dtugtar “sugar kelp” uirthi sa mBéarla.



Sugar kelp is known as “ribíní” (ribbons) on Inis Meáin because of its curly, decorative appearance which distinguishes it from smoother kelps that grow off the island. As it grows in the subtidal zone, it is rarely seen growing, but is often found washed ashore after storms.

Unlike other seaweeds, sugar kelp was not highly valued as a fertiliser on Inis Meáin and was often discarded from the red seaweed collected on the shore.

Some of the island’s young girls would use this seaweed to decorate their “teachíní beaga” (play houses) by the stone walls, imagining that the fronds were Christmas ribbons.

In other areas, *Saccharina latissima* is known in Irish as “rufaí” (ruffles) because of its ruffled appearance. Dried fronds were sometimes hung on doors as a weather forecaster: if they remained crisp, dry weather was expected; if they became soft, rain was thought to be on the way.

Small sweet crystals form on the fronds as they dry, giving rise to the English name “sugar kelp”.



Ceannbhán / Ceannaslat - Furbelows

(*Saccorhiza polyschides*)

Is é an ceannbhán an fheamainn is mó a fhásann amach ó chósta na hÉireann agus d'fhéadfadh suas le 22kg a bheith in aon phlanda amháin. Is éasca an ceannbhán a aithint ón ngreamachán garbh, bleibíneach atá air, agus ó na sciatháin ghearra chatacha a fhásann ag a bhun. Is minic a fheictear an ceannbhán ag fás in íochtar an chladaigh timpeall chósta Inis Meáin, nó caite i dtír ar an trá.

Tugtar “ceannaslat” ar an gceannbhán in Inis Meáin freisin, ach is é an t-ainm is coitianta ar an bhfeamainn seo i gceantair eile ná “claíomh”, mar gheall ar an gcos mhín fhada atá air.

Furbelows, known as “ceannbhán” in Inis Meáin, is the largest seaweed found off the coast of Ireland, weighing up to 22kg. It is easily identified by its rough, knobbly holdfast and by the short, curly wings that grow above its base. Furbelows can often be seen growing in the lower shore zone around the coast of Inis Meáin, or washed ashore on the beaches.

On Inis Meáin, furbelows is also known as “ceannaslat”, but in other areas its most common name in Irish is “claíomh” (sword), referring to the seaweed’s smooth sword-like stipe.



Sliogáin agus Ábhar Cladaigh - Shells and Shore Finds

De réir méide ó bheag go mór - In order of size from small to large

Na Sliogáiníní - Small Shells

Tá roinnt sliogán beag a fhaightear ar an gcladach in Inis Meáin nach bhfuil ainmneacha orthu go háitiúil ach a dtugtar “sliogáiníní” orthu uile. Tá ainmneacha Gaeilge ar na sliogáin seo in áiteacha eile, a luaitear anseo thíos.

There are many small shells found on the shores of Inis Meáin that have no known local names and are all simply referred to as “sliogáiníní” (little shells). However, there are Irish names for these shells in other areas, included below.



Bairneach mín - Blue-rayed limpet

(*Patella pellucida*)

Sliogán beag bídeach is ea an bairneach mín (1.5cm ar a mhéad). Bíonn dath donn nó buí air, ach is í an ghné is speisialta a bhaineann leis an sliogán seo ná na línte lonracha gorma a bhíonn air. Maireann an bairneach mín ar an gcoirleach go príomha, agus is féidir poill bheaga a fheiceáil sa bhfeamainn scaití san áit ar ith an moileasc í.

The blue-rayed limpet is another tiny shell, reaching a maximum size of just 1.5cm. It is brown or dark yellow in colour, but its most distinctive feature is the luminous blue lines seen on the shell. This small limpet lives mainly on oarweed, and small holes can sometimes be seen in the seaweed where the mollusc has eaten through it.



Fínicín - Cowrie

(Trívia)

Sliogán beag bán nó bándearg atá sa bhfínicín a aimsítear ar chósta Iarthar na hÉireann agus a bhíonn fairsing i gCláir Gainimh in Inis Meáin. Aimsítear fínicíní ar fud an domhain agus b'iomaí úsáid a bhaintí astu fadó. Bhí á n-úsáid mar airgead, d'úsáidí iad i ndeasghnátha, agus dhéantaí seodra astu go mion minic, rud a dhéantar fós sa lá atá inniu ann.

Sa bhliain 2012, aimsíodh fínicíní a raibh poill iontu le linn tochairt sheandálaíochta i bhFánóir, Contae an Chláir a bhaineann le ré na bhfiagaithe cnuasaitheoirí (tuairim is 6,500 bliain ó shin). De réir an taighde a rinneadh ar na sliogáin seo, meastar gurb iad seo an sampla is sine de sheodra a fuarthas in Éirinn riamh.

Ainm Gaeilge eile ar an bhfínicín a úsáidtear i gCorca Dhuibhne ná “sagairtín”.

Cowries are small white or pink shells found along the west coast of Ireland. They are found in abundance at Cláir Gainimh on Inis Meáin. Cowries are found throughout the world and had many uses in the past. They were used as currency, featured in rituals, and were often made into jewellery, a practice that continues today.

In 2012, perforated cowrie shells were discovered during an archaeological excavation in Fanore, County Clare, dating back to the hunter-gatherer period (approximately 6,500 years ago). Research on these shells suggests that they are the oldest examples of jewellery ever found in Ireland.

Another Irish name for these shells is “sagairtín” (little priest), used locally in Corca Dhuibhne, County Kerry.



Fínicíní pollta -
íomhá le Michael Lynch

Cuach Coirn - Tower Shell

(*Turritella communis*)

Sliogán beag dathúil é an cuach coirn atá cosúil le hadharc agus a fhaightear go minic ar chladaí Inis Meáin. Cónaíonn siad faoin ngaineamh nó sa láib. Bíonn barr biorach ar an sliogán agus dath idir bándearg agus donn air go hiondúil.



The tower shell is an attractive little horn-shaped shell that is found frequently on the shores of Inis Meáin. It lives buried in sand or mud. The shell has a pointed tip and is usually pinkish-brown in colour.



Feannadóir - European Sting Winkle

(*Ocenebra erinacea*)

Sliogán bíseach é an feannadóir a bhfuil dath bán agus cuma mhaisiúil air. Ó fochtar cladaigh amach a mhaireann siad agus is minic iad tagtha i dtír ar na tránna in Inis Meáin. Is creachadóir é an feannadóir. Déanann siad ionsaí ar mhoilisc eile, amhail oisrí, trí pholl a dhruileáil sa mblaosc agus an bia a shú amach ón gcreach.



The European sting winkle is a spiral-shaped shell with a white colour and a decorative appearance. It lives from the lower shore zone out to sea and is often found washed up on the beaches of Inis Meáin.

The European sting winkle is a predator. It attacks other molluscs, such as oysters, by drilling a hole through the shell and sucking the flesh from its prey.



Cuachma Chon - Dog Whelk

(*Nucella lapillus*)

Seilmidhe mara coitianta í an chuachma chon a aimsítear ar chladaí carraigeacha. Is féidir go leor acu a aimsiú in éindí a chéile i lár an chladaigh agus sa bhfarraige éadomhain. Giúrainn agus diúilicíní an príomhbhia a itheann siad. Bíonn dathanna éagsúla ar an sliogán seo idir liath agus bán agus bíonn barr biorach air.

The dog whelk is a common sea snail found on rocky shores. Large numbers of them can often be found together from the middle shore zone into shallow waters. Barnacles and mussels are their main food source.

The shell varies in colour from grey to white and has a pointed tip.



Cuachma Chon Mhogallach - Netted Dog Whelk (*Hinia reticulata*)

Sliogán beag donn agus bán í an chuachma chon mhogallach a bhfuil cuma gharbh cosúil le líon nó mogall uirthi. Is scroblachóir í, a chonaíonn faoin ngaineamh agus a chuardaíonn conablaigh portán agus iasc mar bhia. Uaireanta, cónaíonn faochain ghliomaigh sna sliogáin seo.

The netted dog whelk is a small brown-and-white shell with a rough, net-like appearance. It is a scavenger that lives beneath the sand and feeds on the remains of dead crabs and fish. These shells are sometimes occupied by hermit crabs.



Cuachma Chon Bhruasach - Thick-lipped Dog Whelk (*Tritia incrassata*)

Tá an chuachma chon bhruasach ar cheann de na sliogáin is lú a fhaightear ar chladaí Inis Meáin, agus iad níos lú ná 1cm go hiondúil. Bíonn bandaí de dhathanna éagsúla ar na sliogáin seo, idir bán, bándearg agus donn agus is minic a aimsítear iad i gCláí Gainimh.

The thick-lipped dog whelk is one of the smallest shells found on the shores of Inis Meáin, usually measuring less than 1cm in length. These tiny shells have bands of varying colours, including white, pink, and brown, and are often found at Cláí Gainimh.



Na Faochain - Periwinkles

Faochain Dhaite - Coloured Periwinkles

Tá roinnt faochan beag in Inis Meáin a dtugtar “faochain dhaite” orthu go léir. Ar cheann acu tá an fhaocha bhuí (*Littorina obtusata*), a fheictear go mion minic ar thránna Inis Meáin. Dath buí nó oráiste a bhíonn orthu seo go hiondúil agus feictear go minic iad le giorrthrá ar an bhfeamainn dhubh, a bhíonn á hithe acu.

Bailíonn daoine na sliogáin seo le healáin a dhéanamh leo; iad greamaithe de phrócaí nó de shliogáin mhóra chun maisiúcháin tí a dhéanamh. “Faocha leathan” an t-ainm Gaeilge atá ar an sliogán seo go hoifigiúil agus meastar gur féidir leo maireachtáil ar feadh breis agus ocht mbliana.

Faocha dhaite eile is ea faocha Mhuire (*Steromphala umbilicalis*), atá coitianta ar na cladaí agus sna bulláin in Inis Meáin. Bíonn dath an airgid nó dath liath ar na sliogáin seo agus bandaí corcra orthu. Is minic go mbíonn cuma chaite ar bharr an tsliogáin agus loinnir airgid air. An ghné is aitheanta d’fhaocha Mhuire ná poll beag, ar cosúil é le himleacán, a fheictear taobh le hoscailt na faochan.





There are several small shells on Inis Meáin that are collectively known as “faochain dhaite” (coloured periwinkles). One of these is the flat periwinkle (*Littorina obtusata*), which is commonly found on the island and known locally as “faocha bhui” (yellow periwinkle).

These shells are usually yellow or orange in colour and can often be seen at low tide on the wracks which they graze on. People collect these shells for arts and crafts, attaching them to jars or larger shells to make decorative household ornaments. The official Irish name for this species is “faocha leathan” (broad periwinkle) and it is said that they can live for over eight years.

Another coloured periwinkle is the flat top shell (*Steromphala umbilicalis*), which is common on the shores and in the rock pools of Inis Meáin. These shells are silver or grey in colour with purple bands. The tip of the shell is often worn, giving it a silvery sheen.

The most distinctive feature of the flat top shell, which is known as “faocha Mhuire” (the Virgin Mary’s periwinkle) in other areas, is the small navel-like hole beside the shell opening.



Faocha - Edible Periwinkle

(*Littorina littorea*)

Tá an-tóir ar na faochain in Inis Meáin, agus daoine á mbailiú mar bhia le fada an lá. Dath dubh atá ar an bhfaocha inite, agus í le haimsiú sna bulláin agus faoi na clocha ó bharr an chladaigh amach.

Ba lá mór é Lá Fhéile Bríde (1 Feabhra) do na faochain in Inis Meáin, agus é de nós ag muintir an oileáin béilí faochan a ithe ar an lá sin chun ádh a thabhairt ar an teach agus ceiliúradh a dhéanamh ar thús an tséasúir iascaireachta. Dhéantaí an t-iasc beo a bhrúith agus ansin bhaintí an bia amach as na sliogáin le snáthaid lena ithe. Béilí speisialta a bhí sa mbéilí faochan Lá Fhéile Bríde, ach d'ití faochain le fataí go minic mar ghnáthbheilí i rith na bliana freisin.

Ní in Inis Meáin amháin a itear na faochain, agus bíonn an-éileamh orthu mar bhia sa bhFrainc, i rith an gheimhridh go háirithe. Chuige seo, bíonn roinnt daoine in Inis Meáin ag baint faochan le díol. Ceann de na háiteacha is fearr le faochain a aimsiú in Inis Meáin ná “Srúill na bhFaochan”, srúill chaol idir Phort na Cora agus Cláí Gainimh.

Ní daoine amháin a chuireann suim i mbia na bhfaochan, agus is minic a bhíonn éin chladaigh á mbaint ón gcloch freisin. Tógann siad na faochain suas san aer agus scaoileann siad anuas iad ar thalamh crua ionas go mbrisfidh an bhlaosc ar an talamh agus go nochtfar an bia taobh istigh. Is mar gheall ar an nós seo gur gnách smionagar sliogán a fheiceáil ar Chéibh an Chalaigh Mhóir.



The edible periwinkle is a popular shellfish on Inis Meáin, and people have been gathering it as a food source for generations. The shell is black in colour and can be found in rock pools and beneath stones from the upper shore downwards.

St Brigid's Day (1 February) is an important day for periwinkles on Inis Meáin. It is a long-held tradition on the island to eat a meal of periwinkles on that day to bring good luck to the household and to celebrate the beginning of the fishing season. The shellfish were boiled and the fish was then picked out from the shells with a needle and eaten. While this was a special meal on St Brigid's Day, periwinkles were also commonly eaten with potatoes throughout the year on the island.

Periwinkles are also highly prized as a food in France, particularly during the winter months. As a result, some islanders still gather them to be sold and exported. One of the best places to find periwinkles on Inis Meáin is Srúill na bhFaochan (The Periwinkle Channel), a narrow channel between Port na Cora and Claí Gainimh.

Humans are not the only creatures interested in periwinkles; shore birds often pry them from the rocks as well. They carry the shells into the air and drop them onto hard surfaces so that the shell breaks open, exposing the food inside. This habit is the reason why piles of broken shells are often seen on the pier at An Caladh Mór.



Faocha Chapail - Thick Top Shell

(*Monodonta lineata*)

Níl mórán measa ag muintir Inis Meáin ar an bhfaocha chapail, toisc nach mbí á n-ithe ar an oileán. Tugtar “faocha chíre” ar an bhfaocha seo i gceantair eile agus tá sí an-chosúil leis an bhfaocha Mhuire, ach í beagán níos mó agus ní bhíonn poll in íochtar an tsliogáin. Tá na sliogáin seo an-choitianta ar chladaí carraigeacha Inis Meáin.

The thick top shell, known locally as “faocha chapail” (horse periwinkle), is not held in particularly high regard on Inis Meáin, as it was not considered edible on the island. In other areas, it is known in Irish as “faocha chíre”. It looks similar to the flat top shell, but is slightly larger and lacks the small navel-like hole on the underside of the shell. These shells are very common on the rocky shores of Inis Meáin.



Sliogáin Mhóra - Larger Shells

Cuachma - Common Whelk (*Buccinum undatum*)

Is annamh a thagann na sliogáin dhathúla seo i dtír ar an trá in Inis Meáin. Ba mhór an spórt do dhaoine iad a aimsiú, agus é de nós ag gasúir an sliogán a chur taobh leis an gcluas ar mhaithe le ceol na farraige a chloisteáil.

Amuigh sa bhfarraige dhomhain a mhaireann an chuachma go hiondúil. Sliogiasc feoiliteach atá ann. Leanann siad boladh na creiche san uisce chun portáin, péisteanna mara agus sliogéisc bheaga eile a sheilg. Feictear ubhshaic na cuachma ar an trá uaireanta: liathróid bhog, bhoilgíneach a bhfuil dath geal uirthi agus atá in ann a bheith ar cóimhéid le horáiste mór.

These attractive shells rarely wash up on the beaches of Inis Meáin, making them a prized find. Children often held the shell to their ear in the hopes of hearing the sound of the sea inside.

The common whelk usually lives in deeper offshore waters. It is a carnivorous shellfish that follows the scent of its prey through the water to hunt crabs, worms, and other small shellfish.

The common whelk's distinctive egg masses can sometimes be found on the shore. These spongy, light-coloured balls, made up of little bubbles, can be as big as a large orange.

Íomhá le Cormac Mac
Fhionnlaoich



Diúilicín - Mussel

(*Mytilus edulis*)

Moileasc inite atá sa diúilicín a bhfuil an-éileamh air mar bhia in Éirinn agus níos faide i gcéin. Fásann go leor acu sa mullach ar a chéile ar na carraigeacha ar chósta an oileáin ach ní ití rómhinic iad, toisc gur annamh iad a bheith sách mór le hithe. Ba mhó tóir a bhí ar na diúilicíní mar gheall ar an gcreathnach a fhásann orthu, seachas na moilisc féin.

Scagbheathóirí iad na diúilicíní – is é sin le rá gur féidir leo cothú a shíothlú ó ainmhithe beaga agus plandaí eile sa tsáile. Feictear roinnt de na héin chladaigh, amhail an faoileán, an roilleach, agus na géabha fiáine, ag ithe diúilicíní ar an gcladach in Inis Meáin.

The mussel is an edible mollusc that is highly prized as a food in Ireland and further afield. Large numbers of mussels grow in dense clusters on the rocks around the coast of Inis Meáin, but were not often eaten on the island as they rarely grow large enough for eating. The mussels were more highly valued perhaps for the creathnach (*Palmaria palmata*) that grows on them, rather than for the mussels themselves.

Mussels are filter feeders, meaning they obtain nutrients by filtering tiny plants and animals from seawater. Several shorebirds, including gulls, oystercatchers, and wild geese, can be seen feeding on mussels along the shores of Inis Meáin.



Scian Mhara - Razor Shell

(*Ensis spp.*)

Tá na sceana mara an-fairsing ar Thrá Cheann Gainimh in Inis Meáin. Is minic na sliogáin fholmha a bheith fairsing ar an ngaineamh, ach thíos faoin láib a chónaíonn siad agus iad beo.

Is féidir rian na sceana mara beo a fheiceáil le giorrthrá; poll beag ciorcalach ar an ngaineamh. Cleas a bhí ag daoine chun na sceana mara beo a mhealladh amach ná salann a dhoirteadh ar an bpoll, ansin cheapfadh an t-iasc go raibh an taoille ag tuilleadh agus thiocfadh siad aníos go dtí an dromchla.

Razor shells, known as “sceana mara” (sea knives) on Inis Meáin, are very common on Trá Cheann Gainimh. They live under the sand and their empty shells are often found scattered on the beach.

At low tide, traces of razor shells can be spotted by the small circular holes they leave in the sand. A traditional trick for bringing them to the surface was to pour salt into the hole. The mollusc, sensing the change and thinking the tide had come in, would quickly rise to the surface.



Bairneach - Common Limpet

(*Patella vulgata*)

Deirtear in Inis Meáin gurb é an t-iasc is mó a bhfuil faitíos ar an mairnéalach roimhe ná an bairneach. An chúis leis seo ná, dá bhféadfadh sé an bairneach a fheiceáil ón mbád, léiriú a bhí ann go raibh an bád i bhfad róghar don charraig agus é i mbaol briseadh ina coinne.

Tá bairneachaí á mbaint in Inis Meáin le cuimhne na ndaoine, iad á mbaint ón gcarraig le buille éadrom de chloch a bhfuil gob géar uirthi de ghnáth. D'ití na bairneachaí go minic ar an oileán, iad á mbruith in uisce ar dtús go dtí go dtagadh an bia amach as an mblaosc, agus dhéantaí iad a róstadh ar an bpan ina dhiaidh sin. Deirtear gur deise na bairneachaí le hithe san earrach, nuair a bheadh trí dheoch d'uisce an Aibreáin ólta acu - sin é go mbeadh an taoille casta faoi thrí.

Thugtaí bairneachaí mar bhia do na hainmhithe tí go minic: do na lachain, do mhuca, agus do na cait. Dhéantaí iad a bhrúith ar dtús agus d'itheadh na hainmhithe ansin iad. Bhí éileamh ar an mbairneach mar bhaoite freisin, agus chuireadh iascairí ar an spiléad iad chun langa agus trosc a fháil.

Cé gur folláin an bia atá sa mbairneach, ní mórán daoine a bhíonn á n-ithe níos mó toisc iad a bheith righin agus blas láidir orthu. I gConamara, shamhlaigh daoine bairneachaí le bia na mbocht, agus seanráiteas ann i measc an phobail: “Seachain teach an óil, nó is bairnigh is beatha duit.”

On Inis Meáin, it is said that the fish the sailor fears most is the limpet. The reason for this is that if a sailor can see the limpet from the boat, it is a sign that they are far too close to the rocks and in danger of running aground.

Limpets have been gathered on Inis Meáin for as long as anyone can remember. They are removed from the rocks with a light tap from a stone, usually one with a sharp point. Limpets were commonly eaten on the island; first boiled until the fish emerged from the shell, then roasted on the frying pan. It was said that they were at their best in spring, after they had “drunk three drinks of April seawater”, meaning that the tide had turned three times.

Limpets were also commonly fed to domestic animals on the island, including ducks, pigs, and cats. They were briefly boiled before being given to the animals. They were also valued as fishing bait, with anglers using them for longlining to catch ling and cod.

Although limpets are a nutritious food, few people eat them today because of their tough texture and strong flavour. In Conamara, they were once associated with poverty, giving rise to the saying: “Seachain teach an óil, nó is bairnigh is beatha duit.” (Avoid the public house, or you'll be living on limpets).



Cluas Mhara / Pláitín - Sand Gaper

(*Mya arenaria*)

Sliogán dathúil bán atá sa gcluas mhara, a aimsítear réasúnta minic ar Thrá Cheann Gainimh freisin. “Breallach gainimh” a thugtar ar an sliogán seo i gceantair eile ach cluas mhara a thugtar air in Inis Meáin toisc iad a bheith cosúil le cluas an duine.

Ainm eile a thugtar ar an sliogán céanna ar an oileán ná “pláitín”, toisc é a bheith cosúil le pláta beag bán a bheadh sna tithe. Bhíodh cailíní óga in Inis Meáin ag bailiú na bpláitíní do na “teachíní beaga” a dhéanaidís agus iad ag spraoi: na sliogáin á leagan amach ar an gclai mar a bheadh plátaí deasa á dtaispeáint ar dhriisiúr.

The sand gaper is an attractive white shell that is frequently found on Trá Cheann Gainimh. In other areas, it is known in Irish as “breallach gainimh”, but on Inis Meáin this shell is known as “cluas mhara” (sea ear) due to their ear-like shape.

Another local name for this shell is “pláitín” (little plate) because it resembles a little white plate like those found in the home. Young girls on Inis Meáin used to collect pláitíní for their “teachíní beaga” (play houses), arranging the shells on stone walls as though they were fine plates displayed on a dresser.



Muirín - Great Scallop

(*Pecten maximus*)

Sliogán breá eile a aimsítear ar Thrá Cheann Gainimh is ea an muirín agus is iomaí teach in Inis Meáin a mbíodh muiríní ar na boird ann, toisc go n-úsáidtfí iad go mion minic ar an oileán mar luaithreadáin dóibh siúd a bhíodh ag caitheamh tobac.

Is féidir muiríní a ithe agus ar feadh roinnt blianta bhíodh báid iascaigh ag tráláireacht le haghaidh muiríní amach ó Cheann Gainimh lena ndíol. Ba chaitheamh aimsire é do dhaoine áitiúla freisin dul ag cartadh muiríní ar an trá le spáidín ar an Domhnach. Tá líon na muiríní laghdaithe go mór le blianta anuas ach bíonn roinnt sliogán folamh fós le haimsíú ar an trá.

Another beautiful shell found on Trá Cheann Gainimh is the great scallop. Scallop shells were once a common sight in many homes on Inis Meáin, as they were often used as ashtrays.

Scallops are edible, and for many years fishing boats dredged for them off Ceann Gainimh to sell on the mainland. Digging up scallops on the beach with a small spade was also a popular Sunday pastime for islanders.

Although their numbers have declined significantly in recent years, empty scallop shells can still be found along the beach.



Ábhar Cladaigh Eile - Other Seashore Finds

Sparán an Chailleach Dhubh* - Mermaid's Purse (*Scyllorhinus canicula*)

Ba mhór ag daoine sparán an chailleach dhubh a aimsiú ar an trá, áit a dtagadh sé i dtír agus é i bhfostú sa bhfeamainn. Shamhlaigh gasúir an oileáin gur sa sparán beag dubh seo a choinníodh an chailleach dhubh (éan mara atá fairsing sna farraigí timpeall ar Inis Meáin) a cuid airgid, nó rudaí luachmhara eile.

Ubhshaic atá sna sparáin seo i ndáiríre, a bheireann roinnt siorcanna, amhail an freangach (*Scyllorhinus canicula*) agus roinnt roc (*Raja spp.*). Fíonn an freangach teannóga an ubhshaic timpeall ar an bhfeamainn chun an ubh agus an t-iasc óg a choinneáil slán.

“Sparán na caillí mairbhe” a thugtar orthu seo i gceantair eile.

**De réir rialacha na Gaeilge caighdeánaí, “Sparán na Caillí Duibhe” a bheadh air seo ó cheart, ach is é “Sparán an Chailleach Dhubh” atá sa gcaint in Inis Meáin.*



Finding a mermaid's purse was a reason for excitement when they came ashore on the beaches of Inis Meáin, often tangled in seaweed. Children on the island imagined that these little black purses belonged to the chailleach dhubh (cormorant), a familiar seabird, in which she kept her money and other treasured possessions.

In reality, these purses are egg cases laid by certain sharks, such as the dogfish (*Scyllorhinus canicula*), and by several species of skate (*Raja spp.*). The dogfish wraps the tendrils of the egg case around seaweed to anchor it securely, protecting the developing embryo.

In other areas, mermaid's purses are known in Irish as “sparán na caillí mairbhe” (the dead old woman's purse).



Bundún Leice - Beadlet Anemone

(*Actinia equina*)

Tá an bundún leice fíorchoitianta ar na carraigeacha agus sna bulláin in Inis Meáin. Bíonn dath dearg orthu go hiondúil agus nuair atá siad faoin uisce, cuireann siad braiteoga amach lena mbeireann siad ar a gcreach (éisc agus portáin bheaga, mar shampla).

Le lag trá, coinníonn an bundún beagán uisce ina bholg ionas nach dtriomóidh sé amach. Bhíodh sé mar chluiche ag gasúir an oileáin uair amháin an bundún leice a bhrú chun go steallfadh siad roinnt uisce amach, ach moltar gan a leithéid a dhéanamh anois, mar d'fhéadfaí an bundún leice a ghortú.

Is iomaí ainm cruthaitheach atá ar an mbundún leice i gceantair eile, amhail “hata an tsagairt”, “cíoch charraige” agus “cac ar leicín” go fiú!

Beadlet anemones are very common on the rocks and in the rock pools of Inis Meáin. They are usually red in colour and, when submerged, extend tentacles to catch passing prey (such as small fish and crabs).

At low tide, the anemone retains a small amount of water inside its body to prevent it from drying out. Children on the island once amused themselves by gently squeezing sea anemones to make them squirt out water, but this is no longer recommended, as it can harm the animal.

In other areas, anemones have a variety of colourful names in Irish, including “hata an tsagairt” (the priest's hat), “cíoch charraige” (rock breast) and even “cac ar leicín” (droppings on a little stone).



Máirtín Gágach - Starfish

(*Asterias spp.*, *Ophiuroidea spp.*)

“Crosóg mhara” a thugtar ar an gcréatúr seo go forleathan i gceantair eile ach in Inis Meáin tugtar “Máirtín Gágach” air i ngeall ar an gcuma gharbh atá ar a chraiceann. Is iomaí cineál crosóg mhara, idir chrosóga mara agus chrosóga briosc, a aimsítear in Éirinn agus aimsítear iad anois agus arís sna bulláin agus ar an trá in Inis Meáin. Is minicí a aimsíonn na hiascairí amach ón gcósta iad, toisc gur dual don Mháirtín Gágach dul isteach sna potaí gliomach ar thóir an bhaoite!

Starfish are widely known in Irish as “crosóga mara” in other areas, but on Inis Meáin they are called “Máirtín Gágach” (chapped Máirtín), in reference to their rough skin. There are many species of starfish found in Ireland, including both sea stars and brittle starfish, and they are occasionally seen in rock pools and washed up on the beaches of Inis Meáin.

Fishermen are more likely to encounter them offshore, as the Máirtín Gágach has a habit of crawling into lobster pots to eat the lobster bait.



Cuán Mara - Sea Urchin

(*Echinus esculentus*, *Psammechinus miliaris*, *Paracentrotus lividus*)

Bhíodh trí chineál cuán mara le haimsiú in Inis Meáin uair amháin: an cuán mara coiteann (*Echinus esculentus*), an cuán mara glas (*Psammechinus miliaris*), agus an cuán mara dubh (*Paracentrotus lividus*), ach tá líon na speiceas ar fad laghdaithe le blianta anuas.

Dath dearg nó gealchorcra atá ar an gcuán mara coiteann. Bíonn deilgíní géara bána orthu agus tá siad in ann a bheith sách mór. Faightear beo iad sna potaí gliomach go minic, agus bíonn na cuánta mara marbha le haimsiú i dtír chomh maith, na deilgíní imithe uathu agus an bhlaosc chorcra fágtha a bhfuil spotaí bána uirthi. Bailíonn daoine ar an oileán na blaoscanna seo agus is minic go gcuirtear snas orthu le maisiúcháin tí a dhéanamh díobh. Itear cuid d'iasc amh an *Echinus esculentus* i dtíortha eile, ach níor ghnách le muintir Inis Meáin iad a ithe.

Tá an cuán mara glas níos lú agus ní féidir é a ithe. Mar a chéile leis an gcuán mara coiteann, aimsítear na blaoscanna ar an trá agus úsáidtear iad mar mhaisiúcháin tí. Bhíodh na cuánta mara dubha á mbailiú le díol uair amháin in Inis Oírr agus in Inis Meáin, ach is cosúil gur baineadh an iomarca díobh agus is annamh a aimsítear anois iad.

Ba mhór an crá croí do dhaoine dá n-imeodh dealg ón gcuán mara isteach sa méar nó sa gcois; iad pianmhar agus an-deacair le baint amach. Bhíodh seanchas ar an oileán ina leith seo, gur cheart do dhaoine fanacht go dtí go raibh an taoille ag tuilleadh, agus go mbeadh sé ní b'fhusa ansin dealg an chuáin mhara a bhaint, toisc go mbeadh tionchar ag an taoille air a chuideodh lena tharraingt amach. Is suimiúil gurb é a mhalairt a mholtar in Inis Oírr, áit a ndeirtear gur chóir na deilgíní a bhaint agus an taoille ag trá.



Three different species of sea urchin were once found on Inis Meáin: the common sea urchin (*Echinus esculentus*), the green sea urchin (*Psammechinus miliaris*) and the black sea urchin (*Paracentrotus lividus*). However, all three have greatly declined in number in recent years.

The common sea urchin is red to light purple in colour. It has sharp white spines and can grow to be quite large. Live specimens are often found in lobster pots, while the empty shells of dead sea urchins are frequently found washed ashore. Once the spines have fallen away, the light purple shell, marked with white spots, is revealed. These shells are collected on Inis Meáin and are often polished and used as decorative ornaments. Although the roe of *Echinus esculentus* is eaten in some countries, sea urchins were not traditionally eaten on Inis Meáin.

The green sea urchin is much smaller and is not considered edible. Like the common sea urchin, its empty shells can be found on the beach and are also used as decorations. The black sea urchin was once collected for sale on Inis Oírr and Inis Meáin, but it appears to have been overharvested and is now very rarely seen.

Sea urchin spines were dreaded by islanders, as they could easily become lodged in a finger or foot, causing considerable pain and proving difficult to remove. On the island, local folklore held that it was easier to remove a sea urchin spine when the tide was coming in, as the tide was believed to help draw it from the skin. Interestingly, the opposite advice is given on Inis Oírr, where it is said that the tiny spines should be removed when the tide is going out.



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