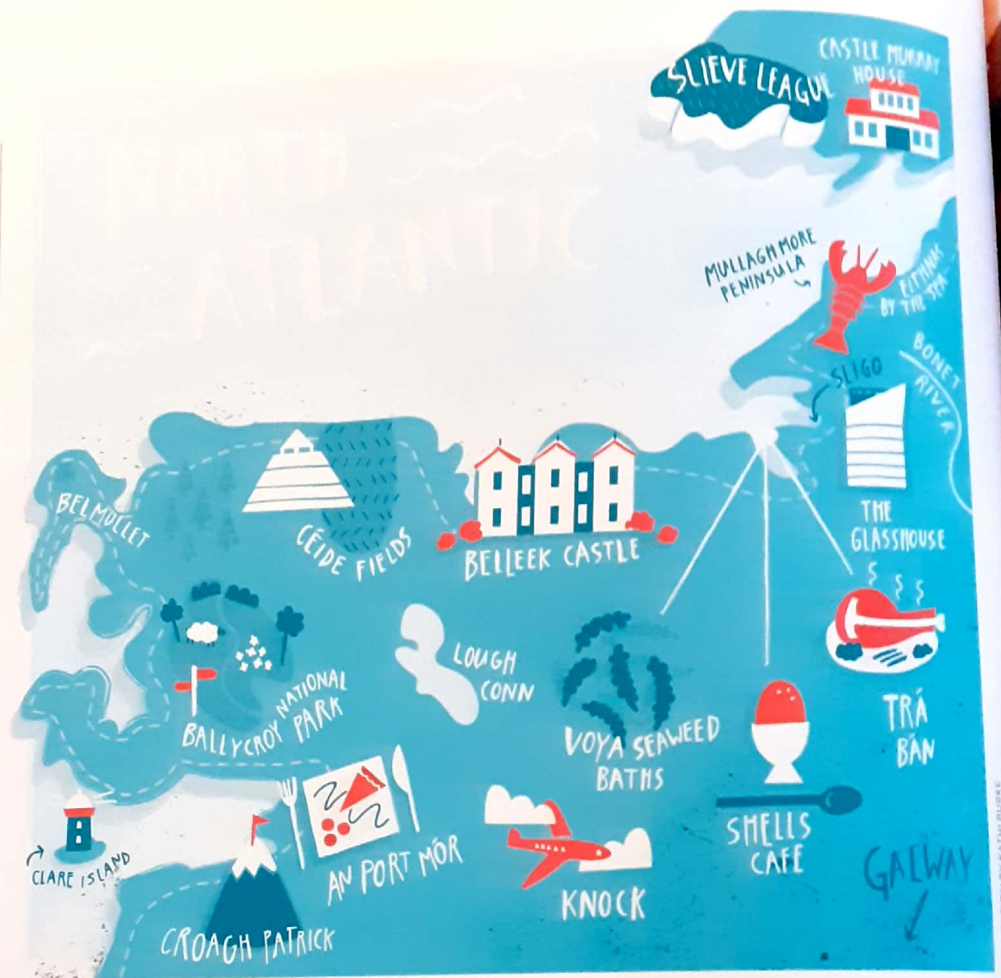


Below, Classiebawn Castle, Mullaghmore, Co Sligo, and bottom, chalkboard fancies at Eithna's By the Sea.



people not to “approach or attempt to move cattle” on the beach, and Classiebawn Castle, holiday home of the late Lord Mountbatten, who was murdered by the IRA nearby in 1979, stands desolate on a hill. I stop into **Eithna's by the Sea** restaurant (bythesea.ie) to meet Joe McGowan, a local historian, and Auriel Robinson, maritime archaeologist with seatrails.ie.

Eithna O'Sullivan provides a ravishing seafood platter. Auriel explains the lay of the land with a dog-eared map and a 330-million-year-old sea lily (or crinoid stem). Spanish Armada shipwrecks, fossilised seabeds and the footprints of promontory forts all feature in a short but fascinating stroll around a coastline massaged by massive swells.

“The sea always gave something,” says Joe. “It used to be that people avoided the big swells because they meant nothing but trouble to the fishermen. Now the surfers come looking for them. It's a topsy-turvy world.”

I notice that his Twitter handle is @eadaiill. What does it mean?



“Back in my father's time, we used to go looking for *eadaiill*,” he says. “It's the Irish word for treasures of the sea. I remember Tomás Ó Criomhthain writing about the Blasket Islands, saying the first time they ever tasted tea was when it washed up on shore. There was a lot of stuff coming in during the war years too. Bales of rubber, barrels of whiskey, planks ... the cradle I was rocked in was made from wood washed up in the same way.”

I leave Mullaghmore, heading for the cliffs of Slieve League. Joe's words remind me of my foraging trip with Denis Quinn – a short time ago but already a world away. The sea always gave something, indeed. This year, it's the Wild Atlantic Way. 🍀

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