

About Achill

Is é Oileán Acla i gcontae Mhaigh Eo an t-oileán is mó as na h-oileáin uile ar chósta Atlantach na hÉireann. Is oileán sléibhtiúil é a bhfuil cuid de na cnoic air suas le 2,000 troigh ar airde. Téann an chuid sin den oileán a bhfuil sléibhte air síos chomh fada leis an gcósta in áiteanna, rud a chiallaíonn go bhfuil aillte an-arda air. Is ar an taobh ó thuaidh agus ar an taobh ó dheas den oileán atá bána clúiteacha an Fhóid Duibh agus Chuan Mó de chuid chósta Mhaigh Eo.

Ar feadh na gcéadta bhí an-chuid pobal talmhaíoch intire ann, ach tháinig meath orthu sin tar éis an Ghorta Mhór i lár na naoú na haoise déag. Mar gheall air sin, d'imigh go leor oileánaigh le gabháil i mbun oibre in áiteanna eile, ag amanna áirithe den bhliain. Mar a bhí amhlaid le pobail eile ar an gcósta Atlantach, agus pobail intire ach go háirithe, bhí na tithe de dhéantús primitibeach, agus níor tháinig mórán feabhais air sin thar na céadta blianta.

Chuir na feabhsuithe éagsúla i gcúrsaí iompair isteach go hOileán Acla le himirce shéasúrach le linn na naoú haoise déag. Osclaíodh Droichead Mhíchil Dáibhéid atá 120 troigh ar leithead agus a théann trasna Ghob an Choire sa bhliain 1887 agus críochnaíodh an bóthar iarainn idir Cathair na Mart agus Oileán Acla idir na blianta 1894-95. Léiríodh an gearghá a bhí le bóthar iarainn nuair a tharla tubaiste Chuan Mó i mí an Mheithimh, 1894, nuair a d'iompaigh bad aitiúil farantóireachta beal faot agus cailleadh 32 oileánaigh de bhunú Acla.



Achill is famous for stunning scenery, as seen here at Keem Bay



Monument to the victims of the Clew Bay disaster, in Kildownet Cemetery



Michael Davitt Bridge - Achill's link to the mainland

Achill in County Mayo is the largest of the numerous islands along Ireland's Atlantic seaboard. It is a mountainous island, with hills reaching up to 2,200ft. The hilly region extends right down to the coast in places, resulting in very high cliffs. North and south of the island are the famous Blacksod and Clew bays of the Mayo coastline.

For centuries there were numerous agricultural communities inland, but those declined after the Great Famine of the mid-nineteenth century, causing many islanders to leave Achill to work elsewhere, at certain times of the year. In common with other communities of the Atlantic seaboard, and especially island communities, housing was of a very primitive type, with little improvement over hundreds of years.

Seasonal migration was aided by various improvements in transport access to Achill during the nineteenth century. The 120ft Michael Davitt Bridge across Achill Sound was opened in 1887 and the Westport-Achill railway was completed during 1894-5. The need for the railway was underlined by the Clew Bay disaster of June 1894, when a local ferry boat capsized and 32 Achill islanders lost their lives.

Is e Acaill ann an Siorrachd Mhaigh Eo an t-eilean as motha san t-sreath de dh'eileanan ann an Éirinn a tha a' ruith ri oirthir a' Chuain Shiar. Tha an t-eilean làn bheanntan le feadhainn dhiubh ag éirigh gu 2,000 troigh de dh' airde. Ann an àiteachan tha an ceàrnaidh cnocach seo a' ruighinn síos gu na creagan àrda aig a' chosta. Aig ceann a tuath agus ceann a deas an eilein tha na bàghan ainmeil, Cuan an Fhóid Duibh agus Cuan Mó, air oirthir Mhaigh Eo.

Airson linn-tean bha coimhearsnachdan àiteachais lionmhor a-staigh san tìr, ach chrìon iad sin às dèidh Gort Mhòr na naoidheamh linne deug, ag adhbhrachadh dha mòran eileanaich Acaill fhàgail agus obair fhaighinn ann an àiteachan eile aig amannan sònraichte den bhliadhna. Coltach ri co-chomainn eile air oirthir a' Chuain Shiar, agus gu h-àraid nàbaidheachdan sna h-eileanan, bha taigheadas san fharsaingeachd glè fhada air ais, gun mòran leasachaidh ga dhèanamh air thairis air na ceudan de bhliadhnaichean.

Bha imrich seusanail nas fhasa do dhaoine às dèidh diofar leasachaidhean air còmh-dhail a' ruighinn Acaill tron naoidheamh linn deug. Chaidh Drochaid Mhicheil Mhìc Dhaibhéid, san robh 120 troigh tarsainn air Gob an Choire, fhosgladh ann an 1887 agus chaidh crìoch a chur air an rathad iarainn eadar Cathair na Mart agus Acaill sa bhliadhna 1894-5. Chaidh an cruaidh-fheum a bh' ann air an rathad iarainn a dhearbhadh le mòr-thubaist Chuan Mó san Ògmhios 1894, nuair a chuir bàt'-aiseig ionadail car dhi agus chaidh 32 eileanaich à Acaill am beatha.



Achill Railway Station and yard

During the seventeenth century Brian Rua Ó Cearbáin, the famous Irish seer, prophesied that 'coaches of fire emitting smoke' would one day come to Achill, and that they would carry coffins on their first and last journeys. In 1894, the first part of the prophecy came true, when 32 victims of the Clew Bay Disaster were carried on the first train from Achill after the local branch railway was built. All were seasonal workers, who had been travelling from Achill to the potato fields of Scotland. Then 43 years later, one of the last trains to Achill, before the line was closed, carried coffins containing the victims of the Kirkintilloch tragedy. So great was the intensity of local feeling that Westport enginemans felt unable to drive the train, and a crew from Achillone was drafted in.



The beauty of Achill's coastline - a view from Atlantic Drive



Keel Beach at sunset