

Filey Shellfish

In the spirit of Yorkshire day 2012 we offer advice in a ‘tongue in cheek’ spirit. The author’s very Yorkshire father once made his son exist for a week on the seaweeds and seafood of Filey Brigg and sands. This is not a thing to be recommended unless starving and you are far better paying the ‘pocket money’ prices of our local wet fish shops for their superbly presented local crab and lobsters or shellfish and other seafood sourced from the purest possible areas of the sea. The Discover Filey project supports our local fishermen and seafood retail outlets who use traditional and sustainable methods. What better food on Yorkshire day than a Filey Bay crab or lobster.

The term ‘shellfish’ is a general term covering all marine animals with a shell, from mussels and oysters to crabs and lobsters. If you are considering collecting crabs, lobsters or mussels from Filey Brigg, there are minimum sizes that can be taken (2 inches long for a mussel) for a . There are substantial fines for collecting undersize shellfish. If you use a lobster pot, it must be licensed and the pots have to have tags. . Mussels can also be affected by occasional growths of toxic microscopic algae. Although sewerage contamination is a thing of the past, in practice they are best sourced from a local seafood expert. No responsibility can be taken if you do decide to eat local mussels, periwinkles flithers or any other seafood you collect for yourself.

The Limpet (*Patella vulgata*) ‘Flithers’

Limpets are common on Filey Brigg. They are known locally as ‘flithers’ and were used once as bait for fishing with ‘long lines’ . Local fisherwomen gathered flithers from the rocks and an entire tradition of the ‘flither girls’ was born. If you have no other food source they can be eaten, but are rubbery and tough and are not recommended. Look out for the ‘flither trail’ on Filey seafront, or even better visit Filey Museum to find out about flither girls.



Mussels (*Mytilus edulis*)

‘Filter feeding’ shellfish such as mussels and oysters do a fantastic job of concentrating sewerage and any heavy metals such as lead and cadmium in their bodies. Since the mid eighties there has been a major clean up and high levels of bacteria from sewage outlets are a thing of the past, however mussels gathered the far coasts of Scotland and Ireland offer the purest possible product. There are also very few mussels on Filey Brigg over the minimum collectible size of 2 inches.



Periwinkles (*Littorina* spp.)

Periwinkles live off seaweeds growing on the rocks in the 'mid tide' areas and particularly love green seaweeds. They can be prolific. Traditionally they can be boiled and eaten from their shells by picking them out with a pin but it takes a lot of periwinkles to make a mouthful. In the opinion of the author periwinkles are not worth the bother and are better living on Filey Brigg where they prevent a build up of slippery green seaweeds. Periwinkles are not to be confused with dog whelks, which have a noticeable groove at the shell entrance and are not edible.



Razorfish (*Ensis*)

Razorfish (or razor clams) have a large 'rubbery' foot muscle which can be eaten. Their more common use is for bait. They are found in burrows under the sand at extreme low tides.



Velvet Swimming Crabs (*Necora puber*)

Velvet swimming crabs can be found on the lower shore and are extremely active and 'nippy'. They are generally not eaten in this country but are edible. Several crabs are needed to make a meal. It is unlikely that you will find any crabs of legal minimum size (65mm across the shell) above low water on Filey Brigg. The same observation applies to edible crabs found on the seashore (130 mm minimum size across the shell). Fisheries officers do visit the seashore and can make a major dent in a Yorkshire person's pocket. The moral is check carefully in your children's crab buckets before Leaving the beach to make sure a velvet swimmer or baby edible crab hasn't sneaked in.



Check our website at www.discoverfiley.org.uk for further information and events

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