

## AG13: Agallamh le Callum Dòmhnallach: Iasgach

Interview with Callum Macdonald: Fishing

Presenter: Seumas Dòmhnallach (James MacDonald)



### SEUMAS:

Còmhla rinn an-diugh tha Callum Dòmhnallach às na Hearadh a tha fìor eòlach air iasgach. Fàilte ort, a Challuim. Tha ùidh mhòr agad fhèin, tha e follaiseach, anns an iasgach. Ciamar a thòisich sin?

### CALLUM:

Uill, thòisich e air creag anns na Hearadh. Laimrig 's e a bh' againn oirre an uairsin, far am faigheadh tu a-mach gu cùdaigean, agus, ma bha thu fortanach, gheibheadh tu beagan iasg nas motha na sin cuideachd, 's dòcha saoidhean no liùghag no rudeigin mar sin, ach sin mar a thòisich mise, dìreach ... Agus ag iasgach le slat cuilc, chan ann le slat air a dhèanamh, ach dìreach pìos a thàinig a-mach às an iodhlainn far an robh seileach a' fàs.

### SEUMAS:

Seadh. Innis dhomh mun an t-slait cuilc a tha sin.

### CALLUM:

Uill, dh'fheumadh i bhith dìreach. Dh'fheumadh i a bhith 's dòcha sia troighean a dh'fhaid agus bhiodh sinn a' fàs seileach co-dhiù airson clèibh a dhèanamh agus bhithinn a' gearradh - nuair nach biodh m' athair a' faicinn dè a bha a' dol, dheidhinn a-mach 's ghearrainn am pìos seileach a b' fheàrr a bh' ann airson slat a dhèanamh. Agus cha robh ann ach pìos driamlaich agus dubhan air ceann sin, a' cleachdadh feusgain no bàirnich - feusgain mar bu trice - agus buntàta air a bhruich airson a chath dhan uisge airson gun tarraingeadh e an t-iasg.

### SEUMAS:

Dè cho cudromach 's a tha am biathadh ann a bhith a' tarraing an èisg?

### JAMES:

With us today is Callum Macdonald from Harris, who is very experienced fisherman. Welcome, Callum. You obviously have a tremendous interest in fishing. How did that begin?

### CALLUM:

Well, it started on a rock on Harris. We called it Laimrig (Landing Place) at the time, and you could catch cuddies, and, if you were lucky, you could catch a few larger fish there too, perhaps saithe or lythe or something like that, and that's how I got started, just ... And fishing with a reed rod, not one that had been man-made just a piece that came from the (stack)yard where willows grew.

### JAMES:

Right. Tell me about that reed rod.

### CALLUM:

Well, it had to be straight. It had to be around six feet long and we grew willow anyway for making creels and I would cut - when my father couldn't see what was going on, I would go out and cut the best willow branch to make a rod. And then it was just a case of adding the line and a hook to the end, using mussels or limpets - usually mussels - and boiled potatoes to throw into the water to attract the fish.

### JAMES:

How important is the bait when it comes to attracting fish?

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### CALLUM:

Uill, tha mi a' smaoinichadh gu bheil iasg a' fàs cleachdte ri bhith a' faighinn biadh ann an àiteachan sònraichte agus bha grunnan againn a' dol chun na h-aon chreige a bha seo 's bhiodh an t-iasg, tha mi a' creidsinn, a' feitheamh ri deagh bhiadh! Rud eile a bhiodh sinn a' dèanamh, bhiodh sinn a' dòirtheadh uisge a bha a' tighinn far na feusgain nuair a bha sinn ga - Cha robh sinn gan goil - cha robh sinn ach gan teasachadh gus am fosgladh iad. Bha iad a' ràdh rinn nan goileadh tu iad, cha robh iad gu feum sam bith, agus bhiodh sinn a' dòirtheadh an uisge a bha sin a-mach air a' mhuir, airson gun tarraingeadh e ... Tha fios gur e dìreach am fàileadh - no am blas; 's dòcha nach eil fàileadh aig iasg ach blas - a bha a' tarraing an èisg a-steach.

### SEUMAS:

Dè an seòrsa iasg a bha sibh a' glacadh, ma-thà?

### CALLUM:

Uill, dìreach cudaigean. Gheibheadh tu carran-creige agus muc-creige 's dòcha, truisg bheaga - 's e "bodaich-ruadha" a chanas sinne riutha - agus 's dòcha, ma bha thu fortanach, gum faigheadh tu saoidhean no liùgh. Cha robh iad uabhasach mòr, ach bha iad math.

### SEUMAS:

Agus bhiodh sibh ag ithe an èisg a bha sin?

### CALLUM:

Bha, agus bhiodh sinn a' dèanamh sabhs. Sin an t-uisge anns a bheil thu a' bruich nan cudaigean. Bha thu ag òl sin leis a' chudaig agus 's dòcha le aran-coirce no rudeigin mar sin.

### CALLUM:

Well, I think that fish get used to being fed in specific locations and a lot of us used to go to this one rock and the fish, I suppose, would be waiting for a good feed! Another thing we used to do, we used to pour the water drained off the mussels when we - We didn't boil them - we just heated them up until they opened. People always said that if you boiled them, they wouldn't be any good, and we used to pour that water out into the sea, so that it would attract ... It must have been the smell - or the taste; maybe fish only have a sense of taste - that used to draw the fish in.

### JAMES:

What sort of fish did you used to catch, then?

### CALLUM:

Well, just cuddies. You sometimes caught lumpfish (prawns) or wrasse, small cod - codlings - we call them "bodaich-ruadha" and occasionally, if you were lucky, you might catch a saithe or a lythe. They weren't very big, but they were delicious.

### JAMES:

And you used to eat those fish?

### CALLUM:

Yes, and we made a fish sauce (soup). That's the water in which you cooked the cuddies. You used to drink that along with the cuddy and perhaps some oatcakes or something.

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### SEUMAS:

Seadh. Ciamar a bha sibh ag ullachadh an èisg airson ithe? Ciamar a bha sibh a' còcaireachd an èisg?

### CALLUM:

Uill, ma gheibheadh tu rudeigin mòr, 's dòcha gu fàgadh tu e. Ma bhruicheas tu iasg ann am pana agus ma chuireas tu ann an ola e, tha e a' tionndadh; tha e a' dol cruinn, agus chan eil e cho comasach dhut a bhruich mar sin. Ma dh'fhàgas tu gu làrna-mhàireach e, tha e a' fuireach dìreach anns a' phana, 's tha thu ... tha thu ... Ach, mar as trice, 's ann gan goil, dìreach no an goil ann an uisge agus ga ithe dìreach nuair a gheibheadh tu dhachaidh.

### SEUMAS:

Uill, sin iasgach na mara. Tha e follaiseach cuideachd gu bheil ùidh agad ann an iasgach slait air tìr, air na h-aibhnichean 's na lochan. Cuin a thòisich thu air sin?

### CALLUM:

Uill, nuair a bha mi anns a' bhun-sgoil, tha mi a' creidsinn, thòisich mi ag iasgach le boiteag ann an cupannan na h-aibhne faisg air an taigh againn agus bha bodach anns a' bhaile, 's ann leis a bha an abhainn, 's ann aige a bha còirichean air an abhainn, agus 's esan a dh'ionnsaich dhomh ciamar a chuirinn boiteag air dubhan, 's gu feumainn tòrr cinn, mar a' chanadh e fhèin, a chur orra. Feumaidh tu barrachd air aon bhoiteag airson gum biodh e tarraingeach dhan iasg.

### JAMES:

Right. How did you prepare the fish for eating? How did you cook the fish?

### CALLUM:

Well, if you caught something large, you might leave it. If you cook fish in a pan and you cook it in oil, it curls up; it rolls up, and you can't cook it properly like that. If you leave it until the next day, it stays flat in the pan, and you ... and you ... But, most often, we boiled them, we just boiled them in water and ate them as soon as we got home. Well, that's sea fishing.

### JAMES:

It's also obvious that you have an interest in rod fishing on land, on the rivers and lochs. When did you start doing that?

### CALLUM:

Well, when I was in primary school, I think, I started fishing with worms in the pools on the river near our house and there was an old man in the village, and it was his river, he had the rights to the river, and he taught me how to bait a hook, and that I needed to put a lot of heads on it, as he would say. You need more than one worm to make it attractive to the fish.

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### CALLUM:

Agus bhiodh sinn a' faighinn breac, bric ruadha, bànan agus bradain. Bhiodh sinn a' faighinn bànan mòra, mòra an uairsin, 'fhios agad, suas gu seachd, ochd puinnnd. Cha robh càil a dh'fhios agamsa dè a bh' ann am bànan. Uill, cha robh fios agam dè an t-eadar-dhealachadh a bha eadar bànan is bradan, ach dh'ionnsaich mi sin a-rithist. Tha an ceann tòrr nas lugha air bradan 's tha earball eadar-dhealaichte air. Ach bànan, bha iad mòr an uairsin. Bha iad math dha-rìribh.

### SEUMAS:

Tha diofar a thaobh aois cuideachd, nach eil, eadar bànan agus bradan?

### CALLUM:

Tha. Bànan, 's e breac ruadh a chaidh gu muir a th' ann, agus tha e seachd bliadhna no mar sin, còig bliadhna co-dhiù, mus till e air ais dhan abhainn. Mar sin, tha am bradan a' fàs nas luaithe agus tha e a' tilleadh nas aithgearra chun an abhainn anns an do rugadh e.

### SEUMAS:

Agus dè am fear dhiubh sin as blasta?

### CALLUM:

O, 's e a' bhànan. Gu deimhinne, 's e a' bhànan as blasta.

### SEUMAS:

Agus ciamar a bhiodh tu a' còcaireachd, ag ullachadh bànan airson a h-ithe?

### CALLUM:

And we used to catch trout, brown trout, sea-trout and salmon. We used to catch big, big sea-trout in those days, you know, up to seven, eight pounds. I didn't have a clue what a sea-trout was. Well, I didn't know the difference between a sea-trout and a salmon, but I learnt that later. A salmon has a much smaller head and a different tail. But sea-trout, they were very large then. They were very good.

### JAMES:

There's an age difference too, isn't there, between sea-trout and salmon?

### CALLUM:

Yes. A sea-trout is a brown trout that's gone to sea, and it's around seven years old, or at least five, before it returns to the river. And so the salmon grows more quickly and it returns sooner to the river in which it was hatched.

### JAMES:

And which of them tastes better?

### CALLUM:

Oh, the sea-trout. Without a doubt, the sea trout is more tasty.

### JAMES:

And how would you cook, prepare a sea-trout for eating?

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### CALLUM:

Uill, a-rithist, bhiodh sinn gam bruich mar as trice. Bhiodh sinn dìreach gan toirt chun a' ghoil, 's an uairsin gam fàgail anns an uisge gus am fuaraicheadh an t-uisge, dìreach ann an uisge air a shailleadh, agus bha sin math dha-rìribh. Ach nam biodh cabhag ort, dh'fhaodadh tu a bhruidh airson fichead mionaid 's bhiodh e agad an uairsin fhèin, ach bha e na b' fheàrr ma dh'fhàgadh tu anns an t-sabhs e, anns an t-sùgh e, airson gum bruicheadh e ceart.

### SEUMAS:

Seadh. Uill, sin an iasgach a bha sibh a' dèanamh le boiteag. Ciamar a bha sibh ag iasgach leis a' chuileag?

### CALLUM:

Uill, bha mise ... 'S ann an Inbhir Nis a dh'ionnsaich mi iasgach leis a' chuileag, air Drochaid Nis. Chaidh mi dhan an sgoil nuair a bha mi trì deug an Inbhir Nis agus fhuair sinn cothrom a dhol a dh'iasgach agus sin far an d'fhuair mi a' chiad bhradan oifigeil a fhuair mi riamh. Bha còig puinnnd air fhichead ann. Agus dh'ionnsaich mi o fear ... Chaidh mi gu club iasgaich, 's dh'ionnsaich am fear a bha seo mi airson iasgach airson bradain.

### CALLUM:

Nise 's ann air abhainn a bha sin, 's tha sin eadar-dhealaichte ri an seòrsa iasgach a tha thu a' dèanamh air loch ach dh'ionnsaich mi an t-iasgach air loch nuair a chaidh mi a Leòdhas, a Steòrnabhagh a-rithist. Chaidh mi gu loch còmhla ri fear a dh'ionnsaich dhomh iasgach agus 's e rud eadar-dhealaichte a tha sin. Tha dà dhòigh air iasgach air loch. Faodaidh tu a dhol a-mach ann am bàta beag, ann an eathar bheag, geòla, air neo faodaidh tu iasgach far a' chladaich, ach tha an dà sgiol eadar-dhealaichte ann an dòigh.

### CALLUM:

Well, again, we normally used to boil them. We would just bring them to the boil, and then leave them in the water until the water cooled, just in water with a little salt, and that was very good. But if you were in a hurry, you could boil them for 20 minutes and then they'd be ready to eat, but they were much better if you left them in the sauce, in the stock, to cook properly.

### JAMES:

Right. Well that was how you used to fish with a worm. How did you fish with a fly?

### CALLUM:

Well, I was ... I learnt how to fish with a fly in Inverness, on Ness Bridge. I went to school in Inverness when I was thirteen and we had the opportunity to go fishing and that's where I caught my first ever official salmon. It weighed twenty-five pounds. And I learnt from a man ... I joined an angling club, and this man taught me how to fish for salmon.

### CALLUM:

Now, that was on a river, and that's a different style of fishing from what you would use on a loch, but I learnt how to fish on a loch when I went back to Lewis, to Stornoway. I went to a loch with a man who taught me how to fish and that's a completely different technique. There are two ways to fish on a loch. You can go out in a little boat, a dinghy, a yawl, or you can fish from the shore, but the two skills are different in a way.

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### SEUMAS:

Seadh. Am bi thu fhèin a' dèanamh chuileagan? Am bi thu a' ceangal chuileagan?

### CALLUM:

Cha bhi. Cha bhi mi gan dèanamh idir. Bidh mi gan ceannach. Tha e nas sìmplidh agus nas fhasa dhomh na an dèanamh. Tha mi dèidheil air a bhith a' cruinneachadh chuileagan. Tha mi air a bhith a' cruinneachadh chuileagan, tha mi a' creidsinn, bho chionn deich air fhichead bliadhna, 's tha feadhainn agam a tha gu math luachmhor, a chaidh an ceangal le daoine a tha gu math ainmeil ann an saoghal ceangal-cuileig.

Ach tha a' chuid as motha dhiubh a gheibh thu anns an bùitean an-diugh tha iad ... tha iad math dha-rìribh, 's tha iad furasta fhaicinn cò an fheadhainn a th' ann. Chan ainmich mi a h-uile gin dhiubh idir, tha eagal orm. Chan eil iad air chuimhne mar sin agam ach tha fhios agam cò am fear, an-dràsta nan deidhinn gu loch anns a bheil an t-uisge dorcha chleachdainn ... seo am fear a dh'fheuchainn an toiseach.

### CALLUM:

Agus gu math tric, ma bhios tu còmhla ri cuideigin às an àite fhèin anns a bheil thu ag iasgach, innsidh iad dhut, "Uill, seo a' chuileag as fheàrr airson an loch a tha seo," no, "Seo mar as fheàrr a dh'iasgaicheas tu a' chuileag a tha sin." Agus tha ainmean gu math annasach air cuid dhe na cuileagan a tha sin. Tha feadhainn ann a tha gu math èibhinn. Tha "Hairy Mary" 's tha "Bloody Butcher" 's tha ... Och, tha ... "Claret & Grey", sin tè dhen fheadhainn as ainmeile a th' ann. Tha feadhainn eile ann cuideachd, ach "Baby Doll" ... Sin "Baby Doll" ann a shin, an tè dhearg a tha sin leis an rud bhuidhe oirre. Tha i gu math coltach ri "doll", chanainn.

### JAMES:

Right. Do you make your own flies? Do you tie flies?

### CALLUM:

No, I don't. I don't make them at all. I buy them. That's much simpler and much easier for me than making them. I do enjoy collecting flies. I have been collecting flies for over thirty years, and I have some that are quite valuable, which were tied by people who are very well-known in the world of fly-tying.

But most of the ones you get in the shops nowadays they are ... they are very good, and they're very easy to recognise. I can't name them all, I'm afraid. I haven't memorised them like that but I do know which one, for example, if I went to a loch where the water was very dark I would use ... this is the first one I would try.

### CALLUM:

And quite often, if you're with someone from the local area in which you are fishing, they will tell you, "Well, this is the best fly to use on this loch," or, "This is how best to fish with that fly." And some of those flies have rather unusual names. Some of them are really funny. There's the "Hairy Mary", and the "Bloody Butcher" and ... Och, there's ... the "Claret & Grey", that's one of the most famous there is. There are others too, but "Baby Doll" ... That's "Baby Doll" there, that red one with the yellow bit on it. I'd say it's quite like a doll.

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**SEUMAS:**

Tha e follaiseach, a Challuim, gur e deagh chur-seachad a th' ann dhut fhèin.

**CALLUM:**

O 's e dha-rìribh. Tha mi a' smaoinichadh ma gheibh thu feasgar air loch agus gun càil timcheall ort, no duine eile timcheall ort, gur e sin an sìth as fheàrr a gheibh thu.

**SEUMAS:**

A Challuim, tapadh leat an-dràsta.

**CALLUM:**

'S e do bheatha.

**JAMES:**

It's obvious, Callum, that this is a great pastime for you.

**CALLUM:**

Oh, yes, absolutely. I think that if you can get an afternoon on a loch with nothing around you, or anyone else around you, that it's the best way to relax.

**JAMES:**

Callum, thank you for now.

**CALLUM:**

You're welcome.