

AG17: Agallamh le Eòghainn MacAoidh: Saoirseannachd

Interview with Eòghainn MacAoidh: Carpentry

Presenter: Seumas Dòmhnallach (James MacDonald)



SEUMAS:

Fàilte. Còmhla rinn an-diugh tha Eòghainn MacAoidh à Beinn na Fadhla, a thug fad iomadh bliadhna na shaor. Eòghainn, carson a thagh thu a bhith na do shaor?

EÒGHAINN:

Bha bràthair mo sheanair, 's e saor a bh' ann. Bhiodh e a' togail cairtean agus taighean is bhiodh e a' dèanamh sèithrichean agus tòrr ... Rudan mar sin a bhiodh e a' dèanamh. Bha tòrr "tools" air fhàgail aige nuair a bhàsaich e. Bha iad anns a' bhàthaich againn. 'S e annas mòr a th' ann ga faicinn, leithid sin, fhios agad, tòrr diofar sàibh agus snìomhairean agus locraichean mòra agus locraichean beaga. Bha a leithid ann dhiubh, 's tòrr fiodh aige cuideachd. Seann phiosan air fhàgail, 's bha e dìreach snog na rudan a bha sin fhaicinn dhòmhsa.

SEUMAS:

Bha thu a' faighinn cothrom air a bhith a' cleachdadh na rudan a bha sin nuair a bha thu cho òg ri sin?

EÒGHAINN:

Nam biodh m' athair air falbh 's mura faiceadh e mi, bhitheadh, aidh! Bhithinn daonnan a' cur tairghean a-staigh ann am piosan fiodh 's gnothaichean mar sin nam faighinn grèim air òrd beag no òrd mòr no sìon mar sin cuideachd, ag obair le sàibh cuideachd nam faighinn grèim air, ach bha iad gu math cunnartach, a chionn bha iad eagalach mòr, feadhainn dhiubh.

SEUMAS:

Seadh. Uill, chuir thu romhad a bhith na do shaor. Dè a rinn thu?

SEUMAS (JAMES):

Welcome. With me today is Eòghainn MacAoidh from Benbecula, who has spent many years as a joiner. Eòghainn, why did you decide to become a joiner?

EÒGHAINN:

My grandfather's brother, he was a joiner. He used to build carts and houses and he made lots of chairs and lots of ... He made things like that. He had a lot of tools when he died. We had them in our barn. It was strange to things like that, you know, lots of different saws and drills and large planes and small planes. There were so many of them, and lots of wood too. Old pieces that were left over and I really enjoyed seeing those items.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

And were you allowed to use those tools when you were so young?

EÒGHAINN:

If my father was away and if he couldn't see me, yes, aye! I was always hammering nails into pieces of wood and things like that if I could get hold of a small hammer or a large hammer or anything like that, and also working with saws too if I could get hold of one, but they were pretty dangerous because they were very big, some of them.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

Right. Well, you decided to become a joiner. What did you do?

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EÒGHAINN:

Ca' n tug thu a-mach do chiùird mar gum bitheadh?

EÒGHAINN:

Dh'fhàg mi an sgoil aig sia deug agus thòisich mi leis an nàbaidh agam. Bha e fhèin a' togail thaighean. Bha mi sia bliadhna còmhla leis-san eadar Inbhir Nis agus Uibhist fhèin, eadar colaiste agus na sitichean, a' togail taighean thall 's a-bhos air feadh Uibhist. Seann taighean 's taighean ùra 's bàthaichean 's sìon sam bith eile a bha ri dhèanamh.

SEUMAS:

An t-àm a bha thu anns a' cholaiste, am biodh eileanaich eile còmhla riut a-muigh an sin? Am biodh tu a' cur eòlas air eileanaich eile no daoine à sgìrean eile?

EÒGHAINN:

Bha, ach 's e glè bheag a bha a' dèanamh saorsainneachd. Bhiodh iad a' dèanamh 's dòcha plumaireachd no cùrsaichean eile, "mechanics" feadhainn dhiubh cuideachd. Bha feadhainn ag obair aig a' Range an uairsin. Bha iad a-muigh anns a' cholaiste an sin, ach 's e glè bheag de dhaoine a bha ag obair air saorsainneachd còmhla riumsa le Gàidhlig co-dhiù. Bha fear à Geàrrloch, bha smodal aige-san. 'S e glè bheag ge-tà.

SEUMAS:

Dè cho fad 's a thug e ma-thà mus robh iad cinnteach asad mar shaor, mus leigeadh iad leat barrachd obrach a dhèanamh?

EÒGHAINN:

Where did you learn your trade, as it were?

EÒGHAINN:

I left school at sixteen and I started working for my neighbour. He was building houses. I spent six years working with him between Inverness and Uist, between collage and the building sites, building houses here and there all over Uist. Old houses, new houses, barns and anything else that needed to be done.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

When you were in college, were there other islanders out there with you? Would you get to know other islanders or people from other areas?

EÒGHAINN:

Yes, but very few of them were training in joinery. They were maybe doing plumbing or other courses, some were mechanics too. Some of them were working on the Range at that time. They were out there at the college, but very few of them were training as joiners like me at least who spoke Gaelic. There was a lad from Gairloch who spoke a little. Very little though.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

How long was it before they were confident in your abilities as a joiner, before they let you do more work?

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EÒGHAINN:

Uill, mar a dh'obraich cùisean, bha mi air an treas bliadhna - 's e "apprenticeship" a chanas iad ris - bha mi air an treas bliadhna dhe sin agus bha dà "apprentice" agam fhìn an uairsin, so, feumaidh, toiseach an treas bliadhna, feumaidh gu robh mi math gu leòr airson mo leigeil ma sgaoil leam fhìn. Mar a thuirt mi, bha dithis eile còmhla rium an uairsin, 's bha Gàidhlig aca fhèin cuideachd. Bha fear dhiubh, thòisich e còmhla rium, cha robh Gàidhlig idir aige, ach nuair a rinn e trì bliadhna, bha Gàidhlig gu leòr aige.

SEUMAS:

Seadh. Uill, sin a bha annasach mu do dheidhinn fhèin. Nuair a bha thu ag ionnsachadh do chiùird, a' chiad àite anns an robh thu ag obair, 's e Gàidhlig a bha a h-uile duine a' bruidhinn.

EÒGHAINN:

Cha robh facal Beurla ri chluinntinn air an làrach far an robh sibh ag obair. 'S dòcha droch fhacal ann am Beurla, ach 's e Gàidhlig a bh' aig a h-uile duine. Bha feadhainn de dhaoine a bha ag obair còmhla rinn, bha iad suas anns na leth-cheudan agus bha feadhainn òg mar mi fhìn cuideachd, so bha "mixture" math ann, ach 's e Gàidhlig a bh' aig a h-uile duine ge-tà.

SEUMAS:

A bheil e fìor a ràdh 's dòcha gu bheil facail Ghàidhlig agad co-cheangailte ri bhith na do shaor nach eil aig daoine eile?

EÒGHAINN:

Well, as things worked out, I was in my third year - they call it an apprenticeship - I was on the third year of that and I had two apprentices myself at that point, so I must have been, at the start of my third year, I must have been good enough for them to let me loose on my own. As I said, I was working with another two guys then and they spoke Gaelic too. One of them, when he started with me, didn't speak any Gaelic but by the time he'd done his three years, he spoke plenty.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

Right. Well, that's something unusual about you. When you were learning your trade, the first place in which you worked, everyone there spoke Gaelic.

EÒGHAINN:

You didn't hear a word of English on the site when you were working. Perhaps the odd swear word in English, but everyone spoke Gaelic. Some of the people who worked with us, they were up in their fifties and there were some young men like myself, so there was a good mixture, but everyone spoke Gaelic.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

Is it true to say that there are some Gaelic terms relating to joinery that other people wouldn't know?

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EÒGHAINN:

Uill, tha mi a' creidsinn ... Òrd-ladhrach, tha mi a' creids' gur e sin a' chiad rud a thig na mo chuimhne. 'S e rud a th' aig a h-uile saor, òrd, rud a dh'fheumas tu a h-uile latha. 'S e "claw hammer" a chanas iad ann am Beurla. Òrd-ladhrach a chanas iad anns a' Ghàidhlig. Chan ann tric a chluinneas tu sin. Locair, snìomhaire. Chan ann tric a bhios tu a' snìomh a-nise. Chan ann tric a chì thu fear. 'S e "battery drills" a th' aca an-diugh! Diofar mòr an sin.

SEUMAS:

'S bha sibhse a' cleachdadh na facail sin aig an àm gu nàdarra, an robh?

EÒGHAINN:

Bha. Shin a bha thu a' cleachdadh. 'S e òrd-ladhrach a bh' ann, òrd mòr no òrd beag. Shin agad a bha thu ag uisneachadh. Cha robh duine a' bruidhinn Beurla.

SEUMAS:

A bheil thu fhèin a' faicinn gu bheil teicneòlas an latha an-diugh a' toirt atharrachadh air obair an t-saoir?

EÒGHAINN:

Tha. Tha tòrr rudan a-nise a bhiodh tu ag uisneachadh, mar "electric drills" "sanders", locraichean ... Tòrr rudan an sin nach robh againne. Bha sinne ag obair, 's e a h-uile sìon le làimh a dh'fheumadh tu a dhèanamh. Dh'fheumadh tu a h-uile sìon a ghearradh le d' làmh, ach a-nise ... Tha diofar mòr ann a-nise.

SEUMAS:

A bheil sin a' ciallachadh gu bheil sgilean an t-saoir ag atharrachadh?

EÒGHAINN:

Well, I believe ... A claw hammer, I suppose that's the first thing that comes to mind. It's something that every joiner has, a hammer, which you need every day. It's called a claw hammer in English. The term for it in Gaelic is òrd-ladhrach. You don't often hear that. A plane, a drill. You very rarely bore holes by hand these days. You hardly ever see them. Everyone has battery drills nowadays! That's a big change.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

And you used those terms quite naturally at the time, did you?

EÒGHAINN:

Yes. That's what you used. It was a claw hammer, a large hammer or a small hammer. Those were the terms you used. Nobody spoke English.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

Can you see that modern technology is bringing changes to the way in which a joiner works?

EÒGHAINN:

Yes. We use a lot of different tools, such as electric drills, sanders, planes ... There are lots of things we didn't have. When we worked, everything had to be done by hand. Everything had to be cut by hand, but now ... There have been lots of dramatic changes.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

Does that mean that a joiner's skills have changed?

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EÒGHAINN:

Ma dh'fhaodte beagan, air sàillibh na rudan ùra a tha sin, ach tha a leithid de seann taighean ri dhèanamh suas fhathast, fhios agad, seann taighean, taighean mòra leòmach mar gum bitheadh. Tha tòrr obair mionaideach a dh'fheumas a dhèanamh an sin fhathast. Tha na sgilean a' dol fhathast.

SEUMAS:

Am moladh tu fhèin do dhuine òg ceàrd a thoirt a-mach mar shaor?

EÒGHAINN:

Gu dearbha, mholadh. 'S e deagh, fìor dheagh obair a th' ann. Obair cruaidh mar as trice, ach 's e deagh obair a th' ann, 's ma tha saorsainneachd agad, nì thu airgead air feadh an t-saoghail, ma thogras tu.

SEUMAS:

'S dè a tha cho math mu dheidhinn a bhith na do shaor, saorsainneachd, seach 's dòcha dreuchd sam bith eile a thaobh, can, plumair no fear-dealain no rud dhen t-seòrsa sin?

EÒGHAINN:

Uill, feumaidh plumair is dealanair, feumaidh e saor airson taigh a thogail. Mura h-eil taigh aca, chan urrainn dhaibh sìon a dhèanamh. 'S e saorsainneachd an obair as fheàrr a th' ann.

SEUMAS:

Eòghainn, tapadh leatsa an-dràsta. Tapadh leibhse.

EÒGHAINN:

Perhaps a little, because of those new tools, but there are so many old houses that are in need of renovation, you know, old houses, large, fancy houses as it were. They still require a lot of intricate work. Those skills are still in demand.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

Would you recommend that a young man should take up joinery as a trade?

EÒGHAINN:

I definitely would. It's a good job, a very good job. It's usually hard work but a good job, and if you're a joiner, you can make a living anywhere in the world if you want.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

What's so good about being a joiner, joinery, as opposed to any other trade, for example, say plumbing or an electrician or something like that?

EÒGHAINN:

Well, plumbers and electricians need a joiner to build a house. If they don't have a house, they can't do anything. Joinery is the best job there is.

SEUMAS (JAMES):

Eòghainn, thank you for now. Thank you.