



Sue interviewing Diarmuid Johnson in Carnoët

Diarmuid: I live in Chapelle-Neuve for at least some of the time. I've had a house there for many years. I spent some time here in the 1990s and then was elsewhere for various reasons but I've been here this year for some of the time.

Sue: And whereabouts are you the rest of the time?

Diarmuid: At the moment I work in Brussels. I work for the European Commission as a translator actually. Not that I intend to make a career of it but

Sue: What languages do you translate?

Diarmuid: Well principally into Irish or Gaelic from English, and sometimes some German or French.

Sue: And what about Breton?

Diarmuid: Breton is not an official language so it's not a working language of the European Union.

Sue: Do you speak Breton?

Diarmuid: I do.

Sue: You speak all the Celtic languages ? They're very similar aren't they?

Diarmuid: Well, there are 2 branches of Celtic languages. There's the Gaelic branch and there's the Brythonic branch though within those branches they're quite similar so Irish Gaelic and Scots Gaelic. Breton and Welsh though although they belong to the Brythonic branch they've, um, grown apart over the last 1000 years or so.

Sue: Originally you're from Wales I believe?

Diarmuid: I was born in Cardiff but I grew up in Ireland. I went to school in Ireland

Sue: So you've really got a very mixed Celtic background?

Diarmuid: Well for me its not really Celtic although linguistically it is. But they're just distinct things really. My mother and her family are Welsh and they speak Welsh together. My father is Irish and I'm in Brittany, so obviously there's a



Celtic connection. As I say for me they're distinct and different things actually but

Sue: Now as well as being a translator, I think you're probably better known as a poet?

Diarmuid: Well I'm not sure, possibly in different places. I've published numerous books but in different languages and places so some in Ireland and some in Wales and some in Germany and some in Romania. So poetry is a sort of constant thing in my life, it's the thing I return to. The books I've written are about other things so as well as being a translator or a musician principally I suppose by now I'm a writer.

Sue: What do you like doing most?

Diarmuid: Well being a writer means you have to do it, it doesn't leave you a choice really. I wouldn't call it an obsession but existentially it's something you can't not do, if you have it in you, you know. So that's what I like doing I suppose, but in balance with other things like music and maybe good food.

Sue: And how does Breton food meet your expectation?

Diarmuid: Well of course the culinary gastronomic culture of France and Brittany is wonderful really so, it's good in other countries too, but there's a lot of finesse here in the cooking, so it's always a pleasure really to eat the simple things, fresh things, so vive la cuisine française.

Sue: If our listeners wanted to see your books, your poetry, how can they do that?

Diarmuid: Sometimes the print runs are small so they sell out or isn't available. You might find copies of the book of poetry called the "Crooked Road" on the internet. There are others but not in English. The principal work I refer to in English is, it's a book about West Wales about my mother's culture, it's called "Pen and Plough". It describes social change in the 20th century. I think English speakers living in Brittany would be interested in that because the agrarian society in West Wales, now greatly changed, is similar to that of for example Brittany as well. It's called "Pen and Plough".

Sue: Thank you very much, Diarmuid.

Diarmuid: Thank you, Sue. And all the best with the programme and the very best to the listeners.



Sue: Thank you