

## **Elaine interviews : Paddy O'Keefe**

Elaine: So er Paddy. Top of the morning to you

Paddy: A very good morning to you Elaine.

Elaine: And thank you very much for agreeing to spend a few minutes

Paddy: You're welcome.

Elaine: Talking to us about your brocante. So first of all, when did you discover Langoelan and why did you decide to put down roots here?

Paddy: Ah, I guess I was on a bit of a tour. I was catching up with some old friends in Angers and in Rennes. So I was on a road trip with with my dog, and we had no plan. We just decided we we followed road wherever the road took us, and we ended up in Langoelan. It was er had um a gîte for two months. So was, actually it came down to ha.. being able to get a long-term rent on the gîte that brought me here. Um, and the idea was spend a few months in this locality and push on. But once I got here, it's I just got stuck. I got caught. I couldn't leave. It was, the people were great, the the fantastic community, fantastic area to live in, and I just got bogged down. And then within a couple of weeks, I decided it was actually maybe would be time to make a move from Ireland to France, which was so always something that had been in my head for for a long time. And I thought, well, look, I'm here now. You know, I know the story, I know how things work, and it might be a good idea. And I decided I'd make the make the move full time. So I actually stayed. I never even went back to Ireland. Well, I did much, much later, but actually stayed then.

Elaine: Brilliant.

Paddy: Yeah, so that was...

Elaine: It absolutely grabbed you.

Paddy: Yeah, completely by default. Just

Elaine: Fantastic.

Paddy: Love the pace of life, the attitudes of the people. Celtic cousins, I suppose as well, being Irish in Brittany.

Elaine: Of course. Yes.

Paddy: Those those Celtic connections.

Elaine: So you've got that very strong connections.

Paddy: Yes we have those strong connections, yes, so maybe get away with a wee bit more. So, yeah, so that was what brought me here, and

Elaine: And why did you decide to set up a brocante?

Paddy: Um,

Elaine: How did that work out?

Paddy: I was collector for years. I spent basically my whole career, travelling back and forth from from different countries and working in different countries. A love of history and a love, I guess, of objects that have a history behind them. I love being able to find something that can tell a story too, and it was collecting for years. And when I was back home in Ireland, I moved from my house, my uncle left myself and my sisters a small farmhouse. So, you know, being able to get out of a a built up area in a big town and move to the country was a huge thing for me. Now, everything I had, my house at home, would have been set up exactly the same way my shop is set up. So when I down downsized, luckily, he had a great big hangar and it was able to put everything in there. And I guess I'm a bit OCD, I actually set up everything on display in the hangar as well. And I just did it kind of once a month as as a tester, see what people be interested to come and visit. And then they were, people were and then they were starting to buy so that that seed was planted, but it was still, actually engaged, still in, you know, the working with the dogs, with the the um Urban Search and Rescue. But like I said, it was, it was something that was parked, it gives you a little spark. And then when I got here, and actually came to see Jean Claude, the mayor, and he showed me the location where the shop is now, which had been the local epicerie. And he said, Yeah. He said, Yeah, no problem. Be delighted. Went home, filled my shipping container, brought everything back, set up, and

Elaine: Fantastic.

Paddy: Away we went.

Elaine: Yeah.

Paddy: Yeah, so I actually had enough to get started initially. And I love the cure... I love curiosities, mostly the curio side of things. So I had quite a lot of that. I know, the only thing is, it's harder. You have to work very hard to fill, you know, when items are are sold, you have to work very hard to to replace them. You know, you spend a lot of time on the road. You're, you're hoping to get house clearances. You know, people would call in. You got the vide greniers, the brocantes. So, yeah, I I do my best. I work very hard to try and keep the shop the way it is, the way it started, and to keep on

Elaine: To keep to keep the basically the stock up.

Paddy: Yeah, to keep the stock up, but it's the type of stock as well. Because when people came first, they actually. It had, I think, been advertised in a newspaper article that it was a brocante. But I'm actually antiques and curiosities. And there's objet d'art. So people coming in they they didn't expect to see what they saw. And, you know, brocante, obviously, is, you know.

Elaine: Well, it's all sorts isn't it.

Paddy: All sorts.

Elaine: It's all sorts. You don't know.

Paddy: You go cheap, you know. And they they they use that. So I said, In this second part of the shop here, I said I'd open up a small side of things, which was a brocante, to give people that side of it, but then the the main shop then is the curiosities, the antiques and the the artworks.

Elaine: Fantastic. Well it's, I mean, I've just only had a very brief look around, and there's just I mean, I'd like that, I'd like that, I'd like that.

Paddy: Yeah, yeah.

Elaine: You just feel like, wow, just bring me a big van.

Paddy: Well, that's always good for me, like, that's the reaction I get from most people, which is great for me. It means I'm actually on the right path and doing things the right way, and I have the right stock.

Elaine: Yeah, yeah. Excellent. So er where do you find, though, all these things? I mean, how do you source them?

Paddy: You have

Elaine: You have ????

Paddy: To spend a lot of time on the road.

Elaine. Right.

Paddy: An awful lot of time doing it. If you're not, I mean, I've probably only had two house clearances since I've been here, which are great, but it's those specific items that I'm looking for. So I'm out on the road. Like I said, people come to, people call to me, you know, send me photographs. I have connections now with other dealers in the the locality. So we help each other. You know, I've got this. Are you interested in this? And it comes back and forth. So, yeah, it's just, but it it's not, it's treasure hunting. So it's a pleasure to be able to do it. It's not, I

can't say it's classed as work. It's history. It's a hobby of collecting, you know, objects, and then getting out and about, especially meeting people you deal with, people constantly dealing

Elaine: Well, I think it's wonderful. I think, to to think that your work is something you really, really.

Paddy: Yeah.

Elaine: Love doing.

Paddy: Yeah.

Lorraine: It's something that really interests you. And you can think, Okay, where am I going to go today? What am I going to find?

Paddy: Exactly.

Elaine: Isn't it.

Paddy: Yeah. That's

Elaine: What a spark.

Paddy: Exactly. Yeah.

Elaine: It is.

Paddy: It's brilliant. It's good. It's a good motivator. Never knowing. But then Elaine there's the days you know you could be out for the day and come back empty handed. You know, you get overlap, because you'll always find something in that that recharges the batteries, re energises you to go and there is, there is items and

Elaine: Well.

Paddy: Treasures out there.

Elaine: I think that's it, isn't it? There's always with anything. When you're searching for something, you'll have a day when you find exactly what you want, and another day when zilch.

Paddy: Absolutely.

Elaine: And it's it's not there.

Paddy: Yeah.

Elaine: And it's that excitement.

Paddy: It's a fine balance, um and then I guess the thing for me here, being in Langoelan, is I'm not looking to make massive amounts of money off any object. I base my prices on what I paid for it. So you know, if I get an item. It's like, I need it for 500 bucks, and I maybe bought it for 100. I'm quite happy to let that slide for 150.

Elaine: Well, I think that's what people almost expect when they go to a brocante.

Paddy: Yes, that's that's

Elaine: It's very

Paddy: But it's not a brocante.

Elaine: No.

Paddy: You know, it's it's next door is the antiques and curiosities

Elaine: Yeah.

Paddy: The ??? shop. Yes.

Elaine: Yes.

Paddy: There is items that can push on for two euros to 10 euros, whatever. But

Elaine: OK.

Paddy: I I have to be strict enough, with some of the

Elaine: Yeah.

Paddy: The deals.

Elaine: I see. You mean, so you've got the two. Basically you're running it's two slightly different.

Paddy: Two separate identities,

Elaine: Identities, yes, yes. Excellent. Well, I mean, it's the when I'm looking around, just in here the small room, the range, of everything from I see a a a stuffed fox over there, which.

Paddy: Yeah.

Elaine: Which you would typically find in

Paddy: You don't actually.

Elaine: A lot of houses here.



Paddy: Yeah, actually she was in terrible order when I found her. And I normally don't do the taxidermy and I don't know the stuff, she was just sitting in the corner this, this house that had been vacant for about 15 years. Sol brought her home, shampooed her, combed her out, and just brought her up, so just the thought of her in stuffed animals.

Elaine: Basically, er you do a breakfast. I believe.

Paddy: We do. We do.

Elaine: Weekend breakfast?

Paddy: We have an association, the Celtic Association, Langoelan. So we do ah breakfast mornings. We used to it twice a month, but obviously, because the community hall is in high demand, I guess it was a bit unfair us block booking two weekends every month, which meant that it wasn't available for our family functions and so on. So we we've kind of cut it down to one at the moment, till we we get back into the winter season. So yeah, so we just, I've I've Chris and John, who used to run the Florentine pizzeria in the village for for a long time. So between the three of us, we do, well our menu is our extensive menu is is a large breakfast and a small breakfast.

Elaine: Right.

Paddy: With er. We

Elaine: Not a full English is it?

Paddy: Irish, Elaine, Irish. It's full Irish.

Elaine: Full Irish.

Paddy: It's a full Irish. So we've added a third option, which is, I can't we call it le caisse. So it's one of our customers who actually, one day came in really, really hungry and had a large with a small on top. So then he came back a couple weeks later with three of his three of his friends, and they all had it, so we officially added it to the menu. So look, it's it's it's good, we have traditional Irish music playing in the background. Chris does all homemade jams and homemade marmalades.

Elaine: Fantastic.

Paddy: Homemade cakes. And look, it's it's a it's a really good atmosphere. People that have come are are great. And we, it's, I know when you kind of speak of numbers of between, you know, 30 to 50 depending. It's very 'family'esque' people know er. It's the same faces, people are getting to know each other. So

there's a lot more interaction between the our customers when they come. So so it it's a good it's a good event.

Elaine: Do people have to reserve?

Paddy: Yes, reserve is is vital, because we can't carry stock for another restaurant. We don't have the facilities to carry stock, so we prepare our stock on the amount of bookings.

Elaine: What do you say? The Irish breakfast is what?

Paddy: Is, so it's Irish sausages.

Elaine: Okay.

Paddy: Irish rashers, Irish black and white pudding. Then you have, obviously, the normal the beans, the mushrooms

Elaine: Yeah.

Paddy: Your tomato and

Elaine: Oh my God

Paddy: The eggs.

Elaine: Goodness.

Paddy: So the the large breakfast is quite substantial. It it. generally, it does you for the day on Sunday. And what people have a tendency to do, they'll have a large breakfast, and then they'll take slices of Chris's cakes for their evening.

Elaine: Of course.

Paddy: Coffee.

Elaine: Of course.

Paddy: And that's it. There. The job is done for the day. There's no cooking involved. For.

Elaine: Brilliant.

Paddy: For the

Elaine: So um what are your opening hours?

Paddy: Opening hours for Bad Dogs is Thursday, Friday, Saturday is 1.30 to 6. And Sunday, it's 12 to 5.

- Elaine: Right. 1.30 to 6, so Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.
- Paddy: No Sunday is.
- Elaine: Oh Sunday is.
- Paddy: Twelve midday
- Elaine: Twelve midday
- Paddy: To five o'clock.
- Elaine: To five o'clock. Oh that's enough really because you need the days
- Paddy: Indeed.
- Elaine: Between to go off.
- Paddy: Yeah, absolutely.
- Elaine: And and do your shopping. As it were.
- Paddy: Do the shopping. Yeah, absolutely. So it's always good to have the shop ready.
- Elaine: That's brilliant.
- Paddy: On Thursday, by Thursday.
- Elaine: So for contact information. I mean, I just found your er tele... mobile number.
- Paddy: Yeah, okay, so I think I don't really, I'm not someone who enjoys social media.
- Elaine: No.
- Paddy: So I don't have any social media accounts for the the shop, but I am on Google Maps, so if you search Bad Dogs Brocante and Antiques on Google Maps, all the contact details, my numbers there.
- Elaine: Yeah. Well, that's what, what I, because I don't, I don't do social media either. No. Far too complicated for me.
- Paddy: So that's, that's that is probably the best place to catch up with me.
- Elaine: And other? Do you have other people helping you? Or is it?
- Paddy: No, no.
- Elaine: Oh it's just you.
- Paddy: Just me, yeah.



Elaine: Yeah, wow. Finally, why the name Bad Dogs? Where does that come from?

Paddy: Um. So as I said, it was in I was um worked as an urban search and rescue canine handler, especially uprising in disaster zones, and also the dog. My first dog became, actually, by default, a specialist in human remains recovery. So his career was coming to an end. And a friend of mine, who was an instructor and breeder in Greece, told me he had a dog which would be perfect to replace Mambo. So that would have been Cooper. So I went to Greece, did a six months training package down there. But he had another dog called which I called Derek, another Labrador that he was just the most mischievous, imp of a dog, you have ever come across. And obviously he stayed with me for for the train, for a lot of that training phase. And in the end, when I was returning back to Ireland, actually brought Derek back with me, and he since went on to become um an awesome assistance dog. So he's actually with a with a family and two young lads who were just nuts about him. But when I moved to the farmhouse, I had a collection of T shirts from company called Black Rifle Coffee. And it was artwork from the nose art from the World War 2 bombers, such as a limited collection. I think there was 40 t shirts there, and I don't know, for some reason, I had them out and they were folded on the bed. And I went out to do the hanger to start, you know, tinkering around with the the antiques and stuff of the hangar. And I came back in, and the T shirts were just, they actually had the last one. They were playing tug of war with the last one.

Elaine: They shredded them all.

Paddy: And they shredded, and they - I can't say it on the radio.

Elaine: No, I know. Well whatever it is in Irish! Yes.

Paddy: And that was it. So even on the logo. It's Derek and Cooper.

Elaine: Yeah, brilliant.

Paddy: Better on the logo. So Cooper obviously stayed with me because he became, I actually trained him then as, when I say trained him as he was trained on human hair and human teeth and blood. And we did, uh, a mission to the Ukraine in 2022 for four months doing human remains recovery. And that we were both pretty much shattered. After that four months, we got back to Ireland. It was end of September, early October, in 2022 and that was kind of when I decided we've we've done enough. We've given enough over the years, and now it's maybe something to to do something for myself. And then that seed that had been planted all that time ago about the antiques, and when I walked into the hangar and I was thinking, yeah, maybe this is the route to go. And then I ended up over here, you know, a couple of months later, sort of , well, five months later, and it just everything just kind of fell into place,

Elaine: It was meant to be.

Paddy: So it was written in the stars.

Elaine: It is. It was meant to be. It's called serendipity isn't it. It's though it was meant to be.

Paddy: Yeah.

Elaine: And having been through very traumatic situation, seeing dreadful things, obviously in in human remains recovery programme, um then this is just so calm.

Paddy: Absolutely.

Elaine: Isn't it?

Paddy: Yes. Calm. The pace of life here is is something that's missing, I think, in in today's society, is to people to stop, take a breath,

Elaine: Exactly.

Paddy: And just enjoy lots of.

Elaine: I I mean, just the simple as, like, the excitement even when a a car goes by.

Paddy: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well it's great. That that's actually Daniel. He's an ex-Sapeur Pompier from Paris.

Elaine: Oh really.

Paddy: He, he he, he's brilliant. He comes in a lot, we have a good, good relationship with him. So, yeah,

Elaine: Yeah, yeah, no, brilliant. Well, I'm I'm absolutely, so I'm really, totally overwhelmed by it all. Because I just love, I love looking around antiques and brocantes. And I, I have to stop myself collecting now.

Paddy: Yeah.

Elaine: Because I'm at point where

Paddy: No, no, that affects everyone everyone that comes in, like, especially couples, you know, I've always said to them, they come in as a couple, that I should really say one is only allowed in at a time, because one will buy loads, generally, the the wife and then that the husband was, oh yeah. And it's like, oh, there's no room for that. Well like, OK, new rule, you come in individually so there's nobody there to counter what you want. But it's funny. It's funny, you really are. But no, it's great,



Elaine: Excellent. Well, thank you very much. And I'm gonna have a I will,  
Paddy: Have a little nose around.  
Elaine: Have a  
Paddy: Enjoy your coffee.  
Elaine: Have a nose around.  
Paddy: Yeah.  
Elaine: Meanwhile I I'm trying to sort of like gradually clear some of my collections.  
Paddy: No, you, no you need to add to your collection.  
Elaine: Well, my children would throw up their hands in horror.  
Paddy: Like they'd say, Oh you've no room for that. There's always room  
Elaine: So very true.  
Paddy: For more. Yeah.  
Elaine: Thank you very much.  
Paddy: Well thank you, Elaine.