

THE SUTHERLAND LONGHOUSE PROJECT

SILVER SMITHING WORKSHOP

On 3rd December 2019, we were fortunate enough to visit the purpose-built workshop of Silversmith, Peter Rowland. We were there to witness and record the preliminary stages involved in preparing to forge a silver spoon. For the most part, Peter used skills that would have been employed in pre-clearance times, and tools that have changed little in the intervening years. Working from scrap sterling silver, he demonstrated and explained each of the stages involved in producing a silver ingot, ready to be formed into a spoon.



First, Peter built a fireclay hearth to form a sheltered area for the crucible. He cut up and squashed the silver into manageable pieces.

Then came the process of melting the metal down in a crucible. For heating small amounts of silver, a blow pipe would have been used.

Under an intense, focused heat, Peter melted down the silver in just a few minutes to create a pool of strangely mesmerising, molten silver.



The liquid silver was deftly poured into a mould. Probably made of soapstone in pre-clearance times, this would have been lined with beeswax to prevent the silver from sticking to the mould as it cooled.

In only minutes the metal had solidified sufficiently to be extracted from the mould. Still too hot to touch, Peter gripped the mould with pliers as he gently tapped it open to reveal the cylindrical silver ingot inside.