

Tom Whelan

Male

File 1 0:00:00 – 0:07:43

FARRIER/TRADES –

Tom was well known in west Clare as a farrier. He was born in Moyasta and at the age of 17 he started work with Martin Barry, farrier in Kilrush. There were plenty blacksmith workshops at that time until the 1950s when the tractors came in. He says you had to work unpaid as an apprentice for three years and then in the fourth year you got a few shillings a week. He remembers his first day. There were four men working there. They worked from eight in the morning until seven or eight at night. He says instead of paying an apprentice fee he milked Martin Barry's cows every day. He says everybody went for a trade at that time. For every trade you had to give three year apprenticeship. There were seven or eight tailors in the town. He says there were tradesmen of every kind in every village and town and they aren't there now. He was the last farrier in the town. The forge was in the High Street at the top of the Glen. Barry's farm was in Monvana. He would milk the cows there at seven. He describes a typical day in the forge.

0:07:44 – 0:12:30

WORK IN ENGLAND –

After his apprenticeship he went to England for two years. He had a job there shoeing horses for the railway in Manchester. He remembers his first cheque-he got £10. He says work would start at five in the morning until 2pm. Shoeing five horses was a day's work. He then did overtime. He worked with a man from Tipperary. He came back and started off with his own forge. He built the forge in O'Dea's Road, which is still there.

0:12:31 – 0:15:40

TRAGEDY OF HORSE BUYER FROM DUBLIN -

He speaks of a vet called White who would come to buy horses at the fair, in the 1950s. It would cost about £60-£100 for a good horse. Mr White would bring the horses to Martin Barry's forge to shoe them. PJ Ryan, from Cooraclare, had a lorry and he was asked to bring the horses to Ennis to meet the train. One night Mr White and his sons were travelling to Clare when their car plunged into the Liffey and they drowned.

0:15:41 - 0:18:13

KILRUSH HORSE FAIR -

Tom says the best horses in the world were at the fair. Mr Softee, High Society, Tomahawk were some of the top horses he shod. David Broom had the horses Mr Softee and Cregaun, (named after a bird).

0:18:14 - 0:33:52

WORK IN THE FORGE -

Tom is able to take a drop out of a horses hoof. He explains how he does this. He never got a kick or injury from a horse. He recalls a dangerous horse that a man called Michael in Monmore had bought and brought to him to shoe. He describes how he shod him. He names some of the equipment he used in the forge, including the hammer and the anvil. The iron came from Newsoms in Limerick and McArthur's in Dublin. During frosty weather he would chisel-cock the horses' shoes so they wouldn't slip. He would do it to the horse in Glin's Mills. This would have to be done every morning. He remembers it being 5 shillings to shoe a horse. He describes the work today. He says there is no one able to make a shoe now. He recalls a few sayings about milking and horses that Mickey Kelly in Tullabrack would say. He says they came from Kerry on the Ferry to him. They also came from Newmarket, Quin, Ennis-all around to him.

0:33:53 - 0:40:49

BETTING ON HORSES -

He kept some horses and greyhounds himself. He tells a story about a racehorse and gambling.

His advice to young people is to work hard and keep away from drink. He would do five miles with his dogs every day.