



**Name:** Thomas Reilly  
**From:** Cloon, Claregalway  
**Age:** 66 years  
**Interviewers:** Angela Glynn & Marie Duggan  
**Date:** 19 June 1991

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**Marie**            **When did you start ploughing?**

Thomas            The first one was in 1945 and that was in Minor Grade.

**Marie**            **Was it very popular at the time?**

Thomas            Ara! T'was sure, there used to be up to 60 or 70 teams of horses in the competitions that time. The first competition was in 1945 and in Second place I was. And the next year then was in Glenamaddy, in the Junior Grade, I won that day. And in 1947, I won the first County Senior Championship and ever since that day in 1947, I won 26 County Championships since then.

**Marie**            **Was there anyone else around the area involved in ploughing at that time?**

Thomas            Oh there was of course, there was quite a few of them, one time in the beginning but that was the County level. Well in the All-Ireland then you see you had to come first or second in the County match to get into an All-Ireland like and I qualified for quite a few of them, but, you see, it was mostly in the Spring time they had the competitions at the beginning like for the All-Ireland, but they changed it then from the Spring to October do you know, and I could not go to a lot of them because that is the time we used to be at the sugar beet. But, anyway, we won the All-Ireland as a team in 1956 and I won the All-Ireland as an individual in 1963 and I won it again in 1978 and I won an All-Ireland again in 1981. I won five All-Ireland's in a row then, so I was the one and only to win five All-Ireland's in a row then, So the total of all the All-Irelands I won then came to nine and then I represented Ireland in the worlds ploughing in England in 1984 and this year I qualified for the world ploughing now again in Glenamaddy in Derry in October. And the All-Ireland will be in Limerick, Saint Patrick's weekend break. They have three days now in the All-Ireland so last year for the first time they introduced an under forty class and the son Gerard qualified for that and he won that day on the first attempt too and he is qualified now this year.

**Marie**                    **When is this year's World Ploughing Championship on?**

Thomas                    The eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth, I think of September and you are ploughing there for two days then and after the two days then they are added or each mark taken.

**Marie**                    **Did you use your own horses and plough for the Competitions?**

Thomas                    Well, not at the beginning, I used to get the loan of horses for a long time, but when I went at it in earnest, I brought my own horses.

**Marie**                    **Are there any other members of your family involved in ploughing?**

Thomas                    Oh yes, there is Gerard, the son Gerard is doing it. He does a bit now.

**Marie**                    **Did he ever win anything?**

Thomas                    No, he never won anything as a matter of fact he never done any ploughing, good, bad or ..... with horses or tractors until the last year.

**Marie**                    **Does the ground have to be in a certain condition before you can plough it?**

Thomas                    Well, the ground has a big part to play in it, but it is alright because the fields are always in good condition but then "What is good for the goose is good for the gander" they say. But you have the element always with you.

**Marie**                    **Would you have to travel far now to foreign places or that for Championships?**

Thomas                    Oh, there were the World Ploughing Competitions all over the world like. I mean, take the All-Ireland now can be in several different counties like the last three years now in a row it was in Carlow but it is coming to Limerick this year.

**Marie**                    **Do you notice many differences in the ploughing now from when you started it? - the ploughs maybe?**

Thomas                    Well, I would say there is a great improvement now, they improved a lot especially in the tractor ploughing now, they improved a lot down through the years. Oh, do you know Eamonn De Butlear did a bit of ploughing for me over in the field.

**Angela**                    **He did a bit of ploughing for you?**

Thomas                    Yes, he did, as a matter of fact, I have snaps of him back here in the room. He came in 1985 to interview me and I was on the television programme then "Amuigh Faoin Speir". The day he came ...Oh, he came in the door there and Father Callanan with him. Father Callanan told him where I was. Father Callanan that married himself and his wife, she was a Ms. Lamb. Anyway, he came there and he wanted me to do a bit of ploughing. He done a bit of ploughing himself too and his son, Cian that came again later in 1987 and I

done another bit of ploughing for him that day - I would say an hour and a half or so that day.

**Marie** **Have you met any other famous people?**

Thomas Well, when I was in England for one of the World Ploughing Championships in 1984, I shook hands with the Prime minister herself, Margaret Thatcher.

#### **Additional Interview Notes**

\*He met President Hillary and he did a bit of ploughing with his horses.

