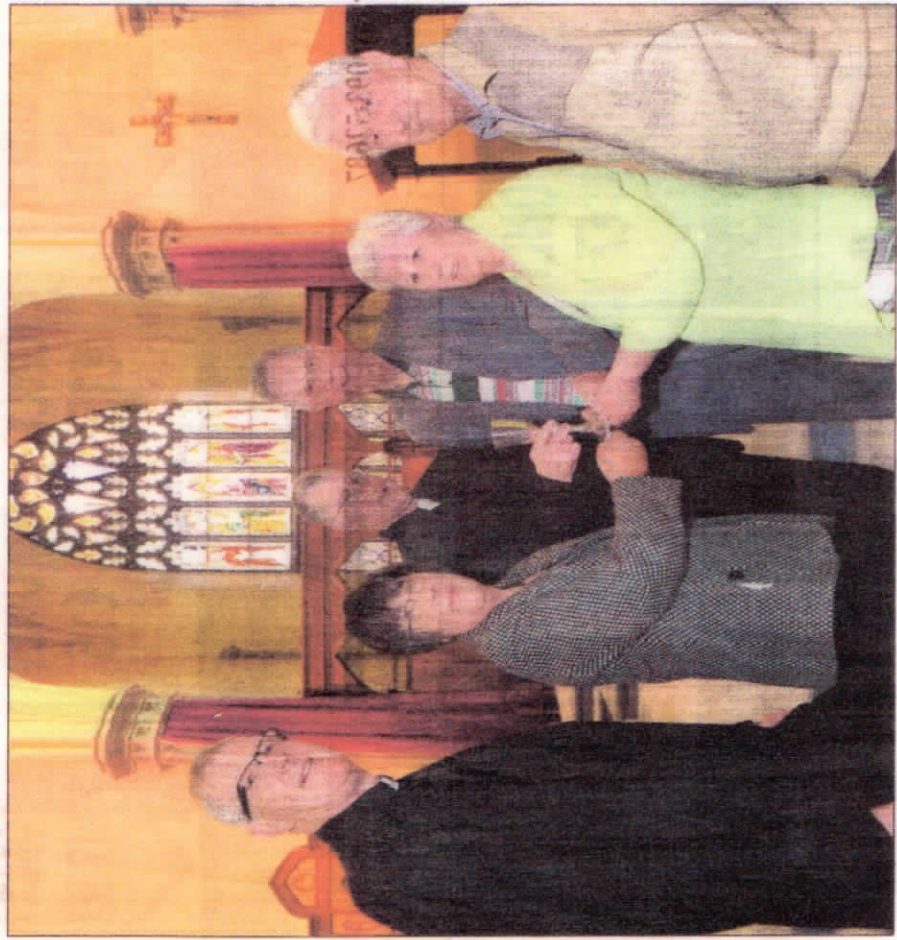


Lavally Church donates 112-year-old chalice to Milltown Heritage Centre



AT the official handing over of the O Beirn Chalice from Lavally Church to Milltown Heritage Centre were Fr Stephen Farragher, Adm Ann Burke, Lavally Pastoral Council, Fr Micheál O Flannabhra, Frank Glynn, Milltown Heritage Centre, Maureen Riggs, caretaker Lavally Church and Padraic Flannery, Milltown Heritage Centre. Photo: Ray Ryan

By SIOBHÁN HOLLIMAN

THE ordination chalice of one of Milltown's most noted Irish speakers and writers, Fr Liam O Beirn, will become part of the town's cherished heritage collection more than 100 years after it was first used.

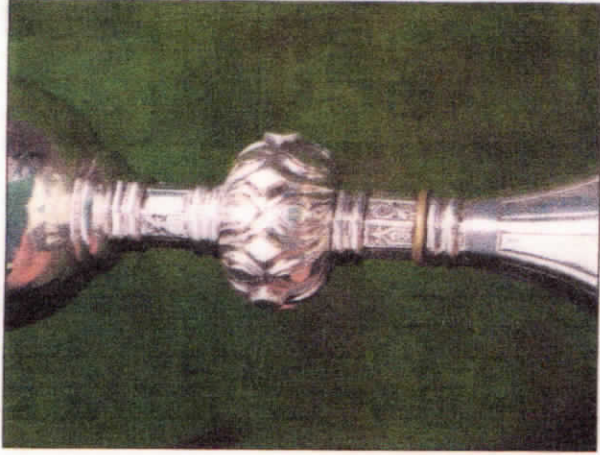
The chalice was the ordination chalice of An Beirneach, as Fr Byrne became known through his Irish writings, and was presented to the native of Carnagee when he became a priest in 1899.

Fr O Beirn died in 1949 but his chalice was given to Lavally church when it was established in 1948 and has been used there ever since. However, efforts have been made for many years by the Milltown Heritage Centre Committee to have the chalice presented to Milltown in honour of Fr O Beirn's local connections.

Following discussions between the Milltown group, Lavally Pastoral Council and Tuam Diocese, the chalice was officially handed over to the Heritage Centre on Friday.

The chalice, which is 112 years old, has the wedding rings of Fr O Beirn's parents, Thomas Byrne of Carnagee and Brigid Quinn of Addergoole, embedded in its design. The priest's parents' marriage coins have also been soldered into the underneath of the bottom of the chalice, adding to the local heritage value of the piece to Milltown.

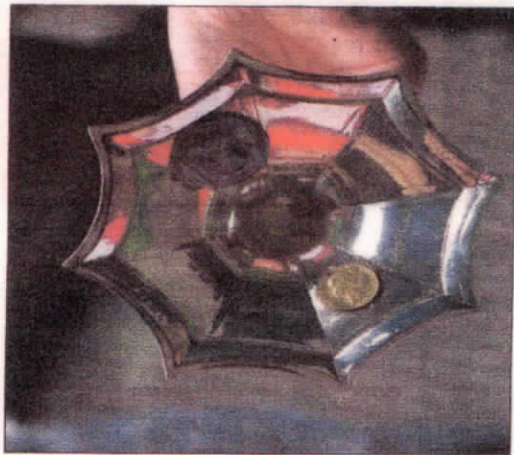
Frank Glynn, Milltown Heritage Centre, said they had been endeavouring to have the chalice donated,



especially since the centenary celebration in 1999.

It's planned that the

chalice will be used at a mass in Milltown before it goes on official display in the heritage centre. "We're



Fr O Beirn's parents' wedding coins are soldered into the base (above) and (top) their wedding rings form part of the design.

delighted that Lavally Pastoral Council has agreed to donate the chalice. It will be another valuable item to add to our extensive collection," he remarked.

To mark the handover, Milltown Heritage Centre has donated a vestment to Lavally Church, which has also received an alternative chalice.

Maureen Riggs, caretaker of Lavally Church, has been responsible for the chalice's safekeeping for many years.

"We are happy to give the chalice to Milltown. It's fitting that it will be located in the place where Fr O Beirn came from," she commented.

Milltown native, retired Fr Micheál O Flannabhra, said Fr O Beirn, or An Beirneach as he was known in his later years, had grown up in a home where Irish was always used and loved.

His career as a writer blossomed and many of his essays were written under different pen-names such as An Fear Mór Maol and Mac Pharaic Naomhtha, while he won the Otreachtas prize of 1888 under the nom-de-plume Sairséal.

Fr O Beirn contributed articles in Irish to many publications; he acted as a judge at feiseanna, was a collector of songs, had a famous book of short stories published in 1926 and his most noted book was *Seo Stúid*.

He died in 1949 and is buried near the family plot in Kilklooney cemetery.

Towards the end of 1989, relatives of Fr O Beirn laid a wreath on his grave during the special centenary celebration of his ordination.

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