

## NEWS

# Milltown plans to restore its ancient bardic school

By Mary Ryan

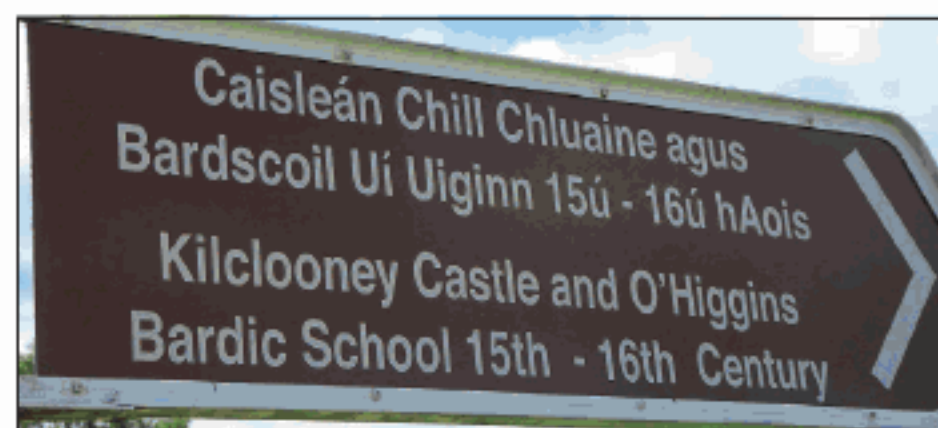
MILLTOWN'S ancient Bardic School is on its way to restoration. Local woman Aine Sheridan has secured funding from Galway 2020 to conduct a series of events over the next two years which will highlight the role Milltown played in the old Gaelic culture.

Events will focus on Kilcooney Castle, known locally as the Tower House. This was once home to the Ó hUigín bardic family and it was here that fil or poets were trained.

These were never simply poets and held a very important part in Celtic society. They were counsellors to the chief, law-givers and judges and were seen as having a magical essence.

Tadhg Dall Ó hUigín of Sligo (1545-1593) refers to a school of poetry in Milltown in the 16th century. Each file studied filocht or poetry here for 12 years with each student having his (the vast majority were male) own stone hut.

There is no evidence to the naked eye of those huts today but with the help of a drone and other modern electronic equipment, it is hoped that it will be possible to identify the shapes of the individual buildings and



THE site is already signposted locally.

have them mapped. Expert advice has come from Prof Elizabeth Fitzpatrick of NUIG who recently met with Milltown Community Council members Pauline Connolly, Frank Glynn and Frances and Tony Murphy, along with Aine Sheridan, to discuss the ambitious plan which Aine will coordinate between now and 2020.

Established in the 13th century, the Ó hUigín Bardic School went on to become a significant presence nationally and internationally.

The present building, once home to the Ó hUigín family, as well as being a school, retains some of the original features but is in a bad state of repair. During the visit, horses were wandering freely in and out and Prof Fitzpatrick pointed out that it is being destroyed bit by bit.

Urgent action is needed to save this building and to

bring to it the attention it deserves. In the coming months the site will be surveyed by Prof Fitzpatrick and her students. The master plan is to have an exhibition in a purpose-built heritage centre.

This would use interactive computer screens to give a virtual experience of the Bardic School. This work will take a year and at the end of that, Aine hopes that the inspiration from the close connection with the world of poetry will lead to a sculpture in the village.

Aine Sheridan commented: "This bardic school has been waiting some time in our landscape, waiting for its language to be re-heard, re-sounded and put in the context of its community today. The monument speaks and we answer - 'Look into your past and you will see and understand your present and future'."



FRANK Glynn and Prof Elizabeth Fitzpatrick examine a part of Kilcooney Castle.



UNDER an ancient oak, the sacred tree of the Celts, Tony and Frances Murphy, Pauline Connolly, Prof Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Aine Sheridan and Frank Glynn, with the Ó hUigín castle in the background.

## SUNSHINE AND SMILES AT CORRANDULLA PLAYGROUND OPENING



JESSICA Blumlein, Clodagh Harkin, Heather Hardiman, Aallyah Davis, Jenny Condon, Kyle McLoughlin and Holly Hardiman, Corrandulla at the official opening of the Corrandulla Playground.



DYLAN and Geraldine Burke, Cloonboo at the official opening of the Corrandulla Playground.