

# Launch of Mac Fhir Bhisigh's Chair in Skreen



Have you noticed a new wayside monument along the N59 in Skreen recently?

The monument, or Mac Fhir Bhisigh's Chair, commemorates Dubhaltach Mac Fhir Bhisigh, a noted 17th century scribe, genealogist and Gaelic scholar who was murdered nearby in Doonflinn in January 1671. The monument replaces the original chair which was erected in Doonflinn in 1931. The chair was commissioned as part of the National Roads Authority funded N59 Farranyharpy to Ballygreighan Realignment which saw 3kms of the route improved for a total budget €9m. The overall project was led by the Road Design Section of Sligo County Council.

Mac Fhir Bhisigh's Chair was officially unveiled by Councillor Joe Queenan, Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council, at the N59 Layby at Skreen Beg, Skreen, Co. Sligo on Friday 15th May 2015. There was a reception afterwards at Skreen and Dromard Community Centre for a presentation and light refreshments and all were welcome.

Dubhaltach Mac Fhir Bhisigh was born at Lackan, Co. Sligo, about the year 1600 to a noted learned family. Literate in Irish, Latin and English, he compiled, transcribed or translated many learned works, including important collections of Irish annals and early Irish law tracts.

His principal work was The Great Book of Irish Genealn mainly in Galway about the year 1650 with a



**(top) Mac Fhir Bhisigh's Chair which was officially unveiled by Councillor Joe Queenan, Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council, at the N59 layby at Skreen Beg, Skreen, Co. Sligo on Friday 15th May 2015.**

**(above) SFC Hon. Treasurer Martin Wilson looks on as sculptor Martha Quinn puts the finishing touches on Mac Fhir Bhisigh's Chair.**



**(above) The text panel explaining the life, achievements and eventual murder of Mac Fhir Bhisigh**

## **Sligo Field Club give funds for Book of Ballymote work**

Sligo Weekender Luke Henderson | May 14, 2015

Sligo Field Club presented €600 to help preserve a piece of Sligo history over 600 years old.

The Book of Ballymote is the major surviving manuscript, nationally speaking, of the late 14th century. It was compiled for Tomaltach MacDonagh about 1391 at Ballymote Castle, the largest surviving medieval castle in north Connacht.

It was sold for 140 milch cows in 1522 to Aed 'g O'Donnell of Donegal. After many wanderings, and a stay in TCD from 1686 and with Charles O'Connor of Belanagare, Co. Roscommon, it reached the Royal Irish Academy in 1785.

Recently the Academy held an international two-day conference with many members of Sligo Field Club and of Ballymote Heritage Group attending and they added a Sligo taste to the proceedings. A plea for donations towards conservation of the book prompted Sligo Field Club members attending, Aidan Mannion, Leo Leydon, Larry Mullin and Martin A. Timoney, to agree that the Sligo Field Club would provide €600 for the conservation work and a protection box.



shorter version, the Cuimre, written in Tireragh in 1666.

This very important genealogical work contains details of leading Irish families, political, ecclesiastical and scholarly, dating back well over 1,000 years. Through his scholarly work Mac FhirBhisigh ensured the survival of several important sources of medieval and early modern Irish history and it is not an understatement to say that his invaluable work provides us with a huge insight into centuries of Irish culture of both the county and country as a whole.

The new Chair, which has been carved in limestone, is the work of Sligo based sculptor Martha Quinn. The inspiration for the design and layout of the Irish and the English inscriptions in two columns lying side by side was drawn from the Book of Ballymote, where the text was also laid out in a similar fashion. The patterned side panels refer to designs based on book shrines contemporaneous with the Book of Ballymote.

Missal shrines served the purpose of protecting and augmenting the importance of the contained manuscript and in this instance similarly points to the importance of the monument to commemorate the renowned scholar, historian and genealogist Dubhaltach Mac Fhir Bhisigh.

Anyone travelling along the N59 towards Skreen will now pass Mac Fhir Bhisigh's Chair, be sure take a minute to stop at the chair and sit for a moment to appreciate and reflect on the legacy that Dubhaltach has bequeathed to us and the stunning west Sligo landscape along the Wild Atlantic Way