



North East

Leader reporter PATRICIA FEEHILY covers the areas listed on the page opposite. You

The Ryan line: what's in a family nickname?

■ Some soubriquets were complimentary, but some were derogatory

A BRIEF study of Ryan nicknames in east Limerick has come up with some fascinating soubriquets, like Ryan Goat, Nissan, Norwegian, Bones, Ladder, Whispers, Rambledy, Stand Idle and Ryan Stand Still.

And the list is growing.

Over 370 nicknames were collected by Dr Liam Ryan, retired Professor of Sociology at NUI Maynooth, who was assisted by local folklore expert John Mulcahy.

The list published in the Capamore Historical Society's annual, *Ceapach Mhór*, at Christmas, has provoked huge interest throughout the Slieve Felims.

"We're still getting calls telling us of more nicknames," said Fr Ryan.

Both he and Mr Mulcahy pointed out that Ryan was one of the five most numerous surnames in Ireland, and had for centuries been concentrated largely in two baronies called Owney O Mulryan, straddling the Limerick and Tipperary border.

"As the clan became more numerous, the use of nicknames became inevitable to distinguish



Fr Liam Ryan and John Mulcahy discuss the Ryan family name

one family from another," Fr Ryan said.

Mostly first names were added, some going back for generations. Wives' maiden names were also used, as were occupations, personal qualities, physical characteristics and placenames.

Even animals and birds were common nicknames, and the anglicisation of Irish words made the names even more intriguing.

hair is still a feature among family members.

Some nicknames were complimentary, but some were derogatory, and many have long been abandoned by families.

"The origins of many names and their meanings have been lost. Compiling a complete and comprehensive list may well be impossible," Fr Ryan said.

For all their vast numbers, there are few famous Ryans mentioned in Irish history. The outlaw and raparee, Eamon a' Cnoic, believed to be buried near Doon, is one.

"The only other famous Ryan I could find in history was a Captain Ryan who arrested Robert Emmet," said Fr Ryan.

But east Limerick does have a memorial to one famous Ryan with the most unlikely nickname of all - Paddy Ryan (Chicken), the Olympic gold medal hammer thrower from Pallasgreen.

Also according to Edward McLysaght's *Irish Families*, the Ryans played a huge role in the Church, particularly in the US, and there were two abbés named Ryan executed during the French Revolution.

"Perhaps the most interesting nicknames of all are those that don't fit into any category," Fr Ryan said.

The Ryan Metals, for instance, had nothing at all to do with metal, but may have borne for years a version of Mhickaleen - Mhickeel - which eventually became Metal.

Fr Ryan said that his own family nickname is "Rue", and red

Mary's CD raises €3,720 for Milford Care Centre



WHEN Mary Gordon's husband, Brendan, passed away over three years ago after a short battle with cancer, she made up her mind that she would give something back to Milford Care Centre, where he was cared for in his final hours.

"He spent only one night in Milford, but I will never forget the way he was looked after."

all expectations.

"I thought I would sell about 50 copies, but I sold 250 and made €3,720 for Milford. I'm delighted. I never really expected anything like that," she said.

Mary comes originally from Templeberry and lives now on Ennis Road.

"I love to sing, but I wouldn't be a professional in any

ern, and the Scottish singer, Isla Grant, is one of her favourites.

"I sing three of her songs on the CD," she said.

Ahern's is one of her favourite haunts and the CD coincided with another happy event in the pub.

"Teresa Ahern was celebrating the tenth anniversary of the extension. It's a place

Bet

S

DE to aw ety wit I are reli / prc Stu wo I the you bit wh ing gro for reg I tur Stu me: by: Mir wh titi " saic nle