

# Father Alfred's El Salvador honour

■ Town erects a statue for a Limerick Franciscan priest, Fr Alfred Loughran, who has served in Gotera for over 20 years

Donal O'Regan

NORMALLY statues are erected for people after they die but a town in El Salvador have made one for a Limerick priest who is very much alive.

Fr Alfred Loughran, a Franciscan priest originally from Garryowen, has served for over 40 years in El Salvador and other Central European countries.

Bullets have come through his window; he has replaced priests that were killed and has met guerilla leaders during the Civil War that claimed 80,000 lives.

Speaking from Gotera in El Salvador Fr Alfredo, as he is known over there, said generally statues are erected for people who have passed away.

"I think they thought I was going to die quite young. They're sort of disappointed!" he joked. They called the square in front of the church "Plaza Cultural Fray Alfredo O Lochrainn" in his honour as well.

"They passed a resolution in the town hall and the mayor decided to honour me with a statue. The Bishop came for the ceremony and blessed the statue. I think he was jealous you know!" laughed the 70 year-old.

"I joke about it a lot because there are other fellows a lot more qualified to have statues than me. I think it was mostly because I was the longest serving priest to be here from Ireland and probably ever in the parish.

"I pray for the poor fellow out in the square because we have had such heavy rain, thunder and lightning. I was going to go out with an umbrella a few times!"

Fr Loughran, whose birth names were Colm Ignatius, is from a proud Limerick family. They are well known from running Siopa Rothar and Hacketts barber shops. Fr Loughran's brother Ciaran is a retired Christian Brother who served in Liberia and Sierra Leone and his nephew Fr Terry Loughran is based in Cappagh.

Fr Loughran arrived in Gotera in 1968 aged 26 after being ordained in Rome.

"I was here until 1989. They were all the war years which were very, very difficult. We were right in the centre of a very conflicted area.

"I remember doing an interview with Radio Eireann lying on the floor here in the house and the bullets were going everywhere. There was a big attack in the town. There were about 300 people

killed.

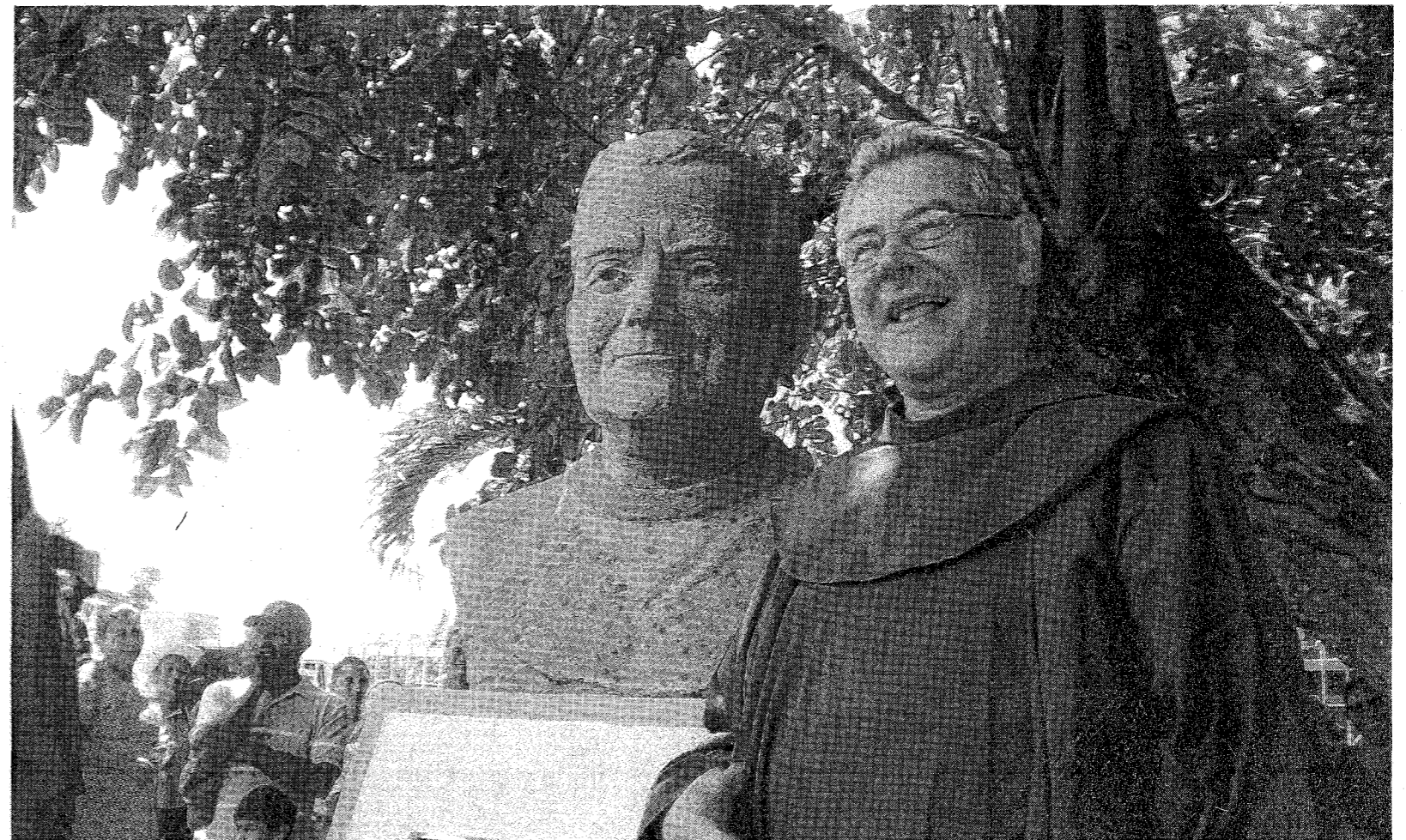
"I was a bit involved with the Archbishop of the country when he was trying to fix up dialogue between the Government forces and the rebel forces. I went up with him to meet with the different guerilla leaders. It was an interesting time," said Fr Loughran, who served with other Limerick priests including Fr Ciaran O Nuanain, Farranshone and the late Fr Peter O'Neill, who had links to Mulgrave Street.

On one occasion a bullet came through his window.

"I think it was accidental. I had just left my room a couple of minutes beforehand. The bullet had gone through my window, over my desk and in to my wardrobe. When I went back in the room was full of smoke.

For many years Fr Loughran had to visit the six towns and 80 communities on horseback but now he can go by car. He left Gotera in 1989 when he was appointed novice master in Guatemala. He then spent the next 20 years in Guatemala and Nicaragua before being sent back to Gotera two years ago.

"I used to joke with people that I'm like Jesus this is my second coming!"



Fr Alfred Loughran at the ceremony in Gotera where huge crowds attended the unveiling of a statue for him

## Wave of support behind local surfing invention

Donal O'Regan

THERE is an estimated 17 million surfers in the world and a County

currently at two per cent. Investors can pledge as little as €15 to get a surf buckle and the more they buy the more buckles and

# Harvey Norman®

# WHITEGOODS