

Irish Rover's dream takes shape

Reading letters from relatives in Greymouth as a boy, Irish Rover Will Millar was captivated — now he's here in person researching a documentary on Irish immigrants.

Millar, who has just finished touring with the show Ireland, believes the West Coast's history is full of interesting Gaelic characters and well worth a television programme.

Although he currently resides in Canada, he came up with the idea seven years ago when he got talking to local historian Trevor Johnston after a gig in Greymouth.

Over the years the concept has progressed and now Millar, Mr Johnston and fellow historian Les Wright will spend the next few days completing a proposal for funding from New Zealand On Air.

With a twinkle in his eye, Millar announced he'd like to call the documentary Far Away from the Shamrock Shore — the Story of the Wild West Irish of New Zealand.

"When I was a kid growing up there were letters from my relatives about gold mining in this tropical place called. . . Greymouth."

Millar visited the Karoro Cemetery yesterday, where some of his relatives are buried, and found inscriptions from places familiar to all Irishmen — Galway and Kilkenny.

There are some great stories here, he said, and laughingly mentioned one famous immigrant to the West Coast — Biddy.

Millar is due to pack up his tin whistle and return to Canada this month, but before he jets off he hopes to make it down to Dunedin to meet with Graham McArthur of the Dunedin television company Taylormade to firm up the proposal. The television programme is one of two currently being considered for the Coast.

Touchdown Television said recently Greymouth was one town they were seriously considering for the show World Famous, which will hit the road sometime soon to meet local characters who want to make their town famous.