

## Cill Aodain Graveyard On The Pollagh River

Cill Aodain graveyard's back on its feet –  
headstones are standing better than ever,  
bits of history are tacked onto walls; not enough  
for a talkative village, but enough for now.  
It's a clean monument. It pulls in the sun, but  
it's lost its flair for weeds and our hunt for  
relatives under growth – My great grandfather's  
plain to be seen; his memory needs a touch up.

This used to be  
an important place.

I had the monks from my father, fairy funerals  
from a neighbour and jackdaws for fear.  
I heard a fiddler from far away, and saw  
ordinary young fishermen swop lean worms  
on a Sunday. The pattern's darkening:  
there's open-air mass once a year,  
the eel and moor-hen lost out to a drainage scheme,  
the hundred yards down to the meeting of the Pollagh  
and the Glore, before they went on to India, used to be  
forbidding and swampy – *would you believe it!*

and a big horse cleared a fence, never to be seen again –  
its owner had tinkered with blackthorn, said a child  
from its fairy tree.

The soft elements  
have become sullied and foul.  
We lit bonfires  
on St. John's night!

Once when I was fishing, a king sailed past.  
I was busy with the one that got away, so  
I only nodded. The king called on me to follow.  
I knew I would when the river level dropped  
and history was tacked onto walls.

Exile is getting easier.

## From Cill Aodain To Killeenin

Mise Raifteiri an file / I am Raftery the poet.  
No house. Nothing, but the hearthstone remains.  
A whitethorn has become Raftery's bush. Child,  
run and tell your teacher, before the flame dies!

Old and young on their knees – along lines of  
rosary beads – would sing Cill Aodain between  
decades to lessen the nausea of weak faith, or  
the strut of a red-eyed schoolmaster.

His name is there: Anthony Raftery  
in The Poet's Graveyard in County Galway.  
Years ago, my father planted saplings from  
Cill Aodain in Craughwell and a small group sang

to the vision of the blind bard. They were  
respectful, as if waiting for tales  
of his withered eyes, Taffe's horse, Mary Hynes,  
or even a love song to fill in the long scar from

his hearthstone in Cill Aodain  
to his gravestone in Killeenin.

### Terry McDonagh

Terry McDonagh, [www.terry-mcdonagh.com](http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com), poet and dramatist, has published four collections of poetry; a play; a book of letters and a novel and poetry for children. His work has been translated into Indonesian and German, funded by Ireland Literature Exchange. With piper Diarmaid Moynihan, he completes poet/piper duo, Raithneach. Twelve of his poems have been put to music by German composer, Eberhard Reichel. His latest collection, Cill Aodain & Nowhere Else, [www.killedan-and-nowhere-else.com](http://www.killedan-and-nowhere-else.com), illustrated by artist Sally McKenna, was published in 2008.

#### Publications:

##### Poetry:

- The Road Out ('93)
- A World Without Stone ('98)
- A Song for Joanna ('02)
- Boxes (for young people) ('06)
- Cill Aodain & Nowhere Else (illustrated by artist, Sally McKenna) ('08)

##### Prose:

- Elbe Letters Go West ('99)
- One Summer in Ireland ('02)

##### Drama:

- I Wanted to Bring You Flowers (German, *Ich kann das alles erklaren*)('91)