

The Old Graveyard



On Sundays

When we were children
And the weather was good
My father and mother
Dressed in their Sunday Best
Would take us for a walk
From our home in Mill Street
To the Back Lough.

At the top of Rutherford's Lane
On the side of Cornagrade Hill
Was an old graveyard
Surrounded by a briar hedge
It had an iron gate, long locked
There were no tombstones
Just grass mounds
Like abandoned potato ridges.

Every time we reached
the graveyard my father stopped
At the iron gate
He would take off his cap
And my mother would lean into him
They stood like that a while
Him bare headed
Her gripping his arm.

When we were older my mother told us of
The Workhouse and its misery
And the Paupers Graveyard and its shame.

Not long ago my cousin
A clever methodical man
Traced our family tree.
He told us about the old graveyard
And our kin buried there.
When I think back to those days
I remember my father

Standing there bareheaded.

I think of the workhouse

I think of the paupers in the graveyard

I think a private prayer.

Ken Ramsey