

Bill Bergin, now sadly deceased, lived in Kill all his life. In 1993 he wrote about his memories of Kill for the Parish Magazine, Link:

"I was born in Kill on the 25th September 1917. The room where I was born was beside the forge, three doors up from the Old House pub. My Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation all took place in Kill Church. My earliest memory of Kill goes back to my first day at school when I was five years of age. There were only two teachers in the school at that time, Mr. and Mrs. Stynes. There were about 75 pupils on the Roll and these all came from Kill Village and its neighbouring townlands.

The whole village was our playground when we were very young. The chestnut trees provided us with all we needed to play "hick, hack, first crack on your chestnut". We also made little push-cars which we would push down from St. John's Church to the river. On frosty nights we would pour water on this same hill and use it to slide down when it had turned to ice the following morning. There were very few motor cars around in those days and this made it perfectly safe to play games like these on the road.

At the "Hollow High", which is now named Glendara, we had a miniature Punchestown Racecourse which involved jumping fences, bushes and the river. An old man, Paddy Murray R.I.P. used to organise six races and the winners would get sixpence each prize money. We also used to play at the Moate. One gang would defend it while the other would try to take it. Our ammunition was sods of clay. God be good to our poor mothers!

On Bonfire Night we would light a fire at the Shoeing Stone and we would have tea and bread sitting around it. The Shoeing Stone was situated where the dual- carriageway now crosses the (Kill) River. We had a boxing ring in the ruins of Judy Connors old house which was at the end of the old road down to the river. On frosty, moonlit, winter, nights we had paper-chases. Two lads would start off by laying the trail through the fields and half an hour later the rest of us (called "the hounds") would try and pick up the trail.

I started serving Mass at the age of seven and remained an altar server until I was sixteen. The first priest I served Mass for was Fr. Donovan who was an invalid. He said Mass at a side altar erected where the statue of the Virgin Mary now stands. Serving Mass was much more involved in those days with the old Tridentine Rite. The Mass was then said in Latin and everything had to be perfect. i

suppose my most lasting memory of being an altar server is the sweet smell of incense at Benediction. Beautiful!

One of the most memorable days of my youth was the day Kildare won the "Sam Maguire" in 1928. I was then eleven years old and my uncle brought me to Croke Park to see the match. Incidentally, this was also the year Ireland's first coinage was minted. Prior to 1928 there was no E.S.B. electricity in Kill. Homes in the village area were lit up by parafin lamps and candles. John Hanlon's garage had a petrol generator and the Dew Drop Inn was illuminated by gas light. The plant for producing gas was in the building which is now Behan's Supermarket. I can still remember the great excitement which greeted the official "Switch on". When the homes were lit up by electricity there were cobwebs seen which were never seen before!

In 1929 the altar boys in Kill had the privilege of attending Mass in the Phoenix Park for the Centenary Celebration of Catholic Emancipation. It was Fr. Griffin, who was then curate in Kill, who brought us. Afterwards he treated us to our first film, in the Grafton Cinema in Grafton Street. The film was "Ben Hur". It was in black and white and silent.

In the Spring of 1932 we had the heaviest snowfall which I can remember in my 76 years. It was so bad there was no school for two weeks. (Great!) 1932 was also the year of the Eucharistic Congress. Kill village was decorated with bunting and flags. I had the privilege of serving Mass in Furness House for a week for an Italian Cardinal whose name I now forget. I was also in the Phoenix Park for the Eucharistic Congress and I was one of the 1,000,000 people who attended Benediction on O'Connell Bridge (Dublin).

There were four shops in Kill when I was young: Lizzie Phelan's, The Dew Drop Inn, Kathleen Keogh's (*nearest house to Old House*) and Kitty Walsh's (a long thatched house which was on the site of where Mr. Laurence Creighton now lives). Kitty Walsh was a fluent French speaker, having spent her youth as a child-minder in Paris. Her nickname, to us at the time, was "Parlay Boo".

In front of Kitty Walsh's house was the Village Green where travelling circuses pitched their tents. It is also said that Daniel O'Connell danced on the Green with Kitty's mother on the night before he fought the duel with D'Esterre at Oughterard.

The Kill of my youth was very self-contained. It had priest, parson, doctor and dispensary, garda, midwife, blacksmith, tailor, wheelwright, carpenter, builder, cycle mechanic, motor mechanic, thatcher and shoemaker. Many times as a child I went up to Kill Hill and looked down at the daily life of the village unfold: men going to the pubs, women going to the shops, horses going to the forge. Francis Ledwidge's words came to me:

*Below me smokes the little town,
With whitewashed walls and roofs of brown,
And its octagon spire toned down,
Like the holy minds within.*

These few words are just a short reflection of my youth in Kill. Moving a long way forward in time I would like to conclude this article by paying a few words of tribute to the late Fr. McDonald, or Fr. Mac as we all knew him. Fr Mac was a character. I think he was the first priest in Kill to break down that little bit of "stand-off" between priest and people. Often to be seen cycling around the parish with his black beret, dropping into a house and...: "Missus is the kettle boiling - and while you're at it throw on a few rashers and eggs on the pan, I'm starving". He loved weddings, and especially the dancing after the meal. He also loved race meetings....

The Kill of today is very fortunate to have such a dynamic community. Kill's continual success, year after year, in the Tidy Towns competition is living proof of the pride its people take in the village. I wish all the various organisations in the parish every success in the future." The house where Bill Bergin lived. The forge which operated in Kill until the late 1960s was inside the gates on the left of the photo.