

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



RICHARD HAYWARD (1892-1964): Writer, Actor, Singer

Harold Richard Hayward was born on 24 October 1892 in Southport, Lancashire, a son of Captain Scott Hayward, yachtsman and boat designer, and Louise Eleanor. The family moved to Ireland about 1894 and lived briefly in Larne, Co. Antrim, before settling in Greenisland, and Richard and his three brothers were educated at Larne Grammar School.

In 1929 Hayward and J. R. Mageean founded the Empire Players (the Belfast Repertory Theatre Company) at the Empire Theatre, Belfast. They performed many of shipyard playwright Thomas Carnduff's works. The Empire Players was wound up in December 1937.

Hayward was one of the first artists to broadcast on the BBC when it opened in Northern Ireland in 1924. With Tyrone Guthrie, he founded the Belfast Radio Players. He wrote a variety of sketches, including in 1925 the first long play ever broadcast from Belfast, *A Trip to the Isle of Man: a Saga in Two Parts*. In 1924 Hayward started making gramophone records. By 1950 he had produced more than 140 recordings. These included such popular local classics as 'The Ould Orange Flute', 'My Lagan Love' and 'The Inniskilling Dragoon'. His first involvement with films was as a singer and actor including *The Voice of Ireland* (1932) and other similar films in the 1930s. Hayward even had a small part in *The Quiet Man* (1952) and was also co-producer of *The Luck of the Irish* (1935).

Hayward's first publication was a book of poems in 1927, followed by a novel *Sugarhouse Entry* (1936). Two years later he produced *In Praise of Ulster* which established his reputation as a descriptive writer. Its success lay in its blend of local history archaeology and folklore, giving a broad and enthusiastic picture of the village or area. After this came *Where the River Shannon Flows* (1940) *The Corrib Country* (1943), and *In the Kingdom of Kerry* (1950). Publication of the series of five books, covering the four provinces of Ireland was spread over the remainder of his life, culminating in *Munster and the City of Cork* only a few months before his death. Hayward's last major activity was with the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club, which he joined in 1944. and was elected president for 1951-2 the club, and both of them remained its moving spirits until their deaths.

Public recognition of Hayward's work included the award of an honorary DLitt of Lafayette University, Pennsylvania, in 1959, and an OBE in 1964. He died near Ballymena, Co. Antrim, on 13 October 1964, having suffered a heart attack while driving. He was cremated at Roselawn on 16 October and on 4 November a memorial service for Richard Hayward was held in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

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