



# Romancing Ireland: Richard Hayward, 1892–1964

*Paul Clements*

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## **Romancing Ireland: Richard Hayward, 1892–1964** Paul Clements

Richard Hayward was one of Ireland's best-loved cultural figures of the mid-twentieth century. A popular Irish travel writer, actor and singer, he led an intense and productive life, leaving behind a remarkable body of work through his writing and recordings. However, since his death in a car crash in 1964, the man who was a celebrated Irish household name has suffered neglect. Born in Southport, Lancashire, Hayward was raised in Larne on the Antrim coast. He buried his English past and devoted his days to promoting Ireland. As a pioneering filmmaker, he appeared in the first black-and-white Irish talkies' and broke new ground in his BBC radio work alongside Tyrone Guthrie. On Radio Éireann, he sang with Delia Murphy and recorded with Decca and HMV. In his travel books and enthusiasms, Hayward opened up an unknown Ireland to thousands of people. Published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his death, *Romancing Ireland* draws extensively on Hayward's original note- books, private papers and hitherto unpublished letters. They reveal a man with an explosive temper whose detractors envied his success. Paul Clements brings to life the flamboyant personality, laced with hubris, of a largely forgotten figure who contributed a cosy and unthreatening narrative to the construction of an Irish cultural world. *Romancing Ireland* exposes fascinating details and rare photographs that have lain unseen for decades. It uncovers an extraordinary man with limitless energy and passionate perceptions, who captured a newly independent Ireland in all its changing hues.

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