

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



BRIAN DESMOND HURST (1895-1986)

Film Director

Brian Desmond Hurst was born Hans Hurst in East Belfast on 12 February 1895 (Hans was changed to Brian during the First World War). He left school at fourteen to work at the Bloomfield linen factory. He signed up in 1914 and fought with the Royal Irish Rifles at Gallipoli.

Following the war Hurst studied art in Canada and Paris. He arrived in Hollywood in 1928 where he met the film director John Ford. Ford, a lifelong friend, introduced him to the film industry.

Hurst moved to England in 1933 and began a long career in British cinema. Between 1935 and 1962 he produced or directed over 30 films, including adaptations of plays by J. M. Synge. *Ourselves Alone*, a 1936 film set during the Irish War of Independence, was censored in the south and banned completely in Northern Ireland. *Scrooge*, Hurst's 1951 version of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, is perhaps his most lastingly popular film. He worked with the foremost actors of the time including Sir Alex Guinness, Siobhan McKenna and Sir Ralph Richardson. He launched the careers of Lord Richard Attenborough and Vanessa Redgrave by providing them with their first credited roles and paid for Sir Roger Moore to attend RADA.

Irish Hearts is artistically interesting, as it is probably Ireland's first feature length talkie as is *On the Night of the Fire*, which is Britain's first film noir. His last film, an adaptation of the *Playboy of the Western World*, was released in 1962.

Brian Desmond Hurst died in London on 26th September 1986.

Patrick Devlin