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OBITUARY



HUGH RYAN (1908 - 1990)

Hugh Ryan's life was one of profound humility but remarkable cultivation. He was born in Clogheen, son of James Ryan, a Cork policeman, and Kate Power of Mothel, Carrick-on-Suir, where he was reared after the early death of his father.

Hugh's mother also died young, and he entered Bourke's drapery in Carrick as an orphaned live-in apprentice at the age of 13. He was followed two years later by his brother Martin, who died a week before Hugh last January.

When they retired from Bourke's the brothers had given a combined service of 120 years to the firm. Aside from the draper's counter and its quasi-Dickensian ambience, Hugh had another life. He was a lifelong collector of books and other historical material, and was absolutely passionate about the record, especially as it related to chronicling the local and the regional.

The Carrick bookman Sean O'Floinn was an influence. There was also the family background in Mothel, which gave him a love of reading and a devotion to the nationalist ideal. His maternal grandfather Martin Power served a month in Waterford Jail during the Land War.

Too much the gentleman to be intolerant in politics, Hugh never lost the romantic idealism which he brought to the foundation of Fianna Fail in Carrick. He was unable to trim that idealism because he believed in an honourable and benign patriotism.

Somehow, from a meagre wage and through lifelong frugality in other things, Hugh collected his books, and cherished them like children. They ranged widely: history, literature, biography, politics and some manuscript material. He was also a dedicated collector of circumstantial ephemera - newspaper cuttings, pamphlets, posters, photographs, postcards and letters.

Mothel, his last and fitting resting-place, he loved particularly. Towards the end of his life, and when he was no longer robust, he recorded all the gravestone inscriptions there. This substantial survey - of which he was quietly proud - was published over four issues of *Decies*, the journal of the Old Waterford Society.

Hugh would squirm in genuine embarrassment if anyone called him an historian or a scholar. Yet he had the true passion of the fastidious chronicler-collector, and he leaves Carrick and the whole region enduringly in his debt. During his life he never hesitated to share his precious material generously with those who were interested. This material he left to friends and to local repositories.

Hugh never married. To some extent, his small circle of friends functioned as a kind of vicarious extended family, who held him in deep affection. His quiet and humble life was one of absolute integrity. It was a privilege to know him.

Michael Coady.

