

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



JAMES YOUNG (1918-1974): Actor and Comedian

James Young was born in Ballymoney, Co Antrim on 23 June 1918, but the family moved to south Belfast when he was six months old; his father looked after the horses of the Ormeau Bakery. An amateur actor from his teens, James soon turned professional and shared in the great success of the Ulster Group Theatre in the 1940's and 1950's. His association with Joseph Tomelty was particularly fruitful; his performances in *Right Again*, *Barnum* and as Derek the window-cleaner in the radio series *The McCooeys* are still remembered.

His greatest popular success was however as a variety entertainer, along with his lifelong partner Jack Hudson (whom he had met while on tour in the Middle East). He performed his sketches - featuring characters like Ernie the Shipyard Worker and Orange Lil - in theatre and on TV, in Ireland, Canada and the United States. He also sold some quarter of a million of records. Catch phrases like "Aw now" and "Och, go on" entered the popular consciousness. Purists may however regret his defection from the serious theatre; performances like that of the salesman in George Shiels' *The Passing Day* (Northern Ireland Festival Theatre Company, 1951) had no successors.

James Young died on 5 July 1974.

Victor Price