

# All Our Yesterdays

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Executive Producers New Decade Production  
Produced by Rowley's Reels

Directed by Breege Rowley

Shooting Format - Digital

Aspect Ratio - 16.9

Audio format - 5.1 Surround

Length - 90 Minutes

Genre: Historical/Social documentary

Language - English (with subtitles available for international audiences)

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Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/1063156008>

Press Pictures: [Press Pictures](#)

Posters: [Poster Link](#)

Webpage: <https://breegerowleyeditor.com/>

Imdb: [https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0746797/?ref=fn\\_all\\_nme\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0746797/?ref=fn_all_nme_1)



# All Our Yesterdays



## Log Line

*All Our Yesterdays: A Powerful Journey Through 250 Years of Irish History—Told Through the Voices of a Town That Refused to Forget.*

## Synopsis

### All Our Yesterdays

A visually rich and deeply moving documentary, *All Our Yesterdays* chronicles 250 years of Swinford, County Mayo, capturing the town's resilience, history and cultural evolution. From the devastation of the **Great Famine** to its vibrant cultural revival, the film blends **rare archival footage, personal stories and moving music** to honour a community that refused to forget. This documentary is a powerful tribute to heritage, identity and the enduring Irish spirit.



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This documentary is more than the story of Swinford—it embodies the Irish experience worldwide. Themes of emigration, survival, and heritage resonate deeply with the Irish diaspora, cultural historians, and global audiences captivated by Ireland's rich past.



# Welcome.

## Director's Statement: – Breege Rowley

It all started with my neighbour throwing out his old cine films—memories he saw as unplayable, forgotten and obsolete. But to me, they were treasures, windows into a past that still mattered. In that moment, I realised how easily our stories—our history, our community—could disappear. That day, a mission took hold of me: to preserve Swinford's past, not just for us, but for generations to come.

*All Our Yesterdays* is the culmination of that mission. This documentary captures **250 years of Swinford's history** through the voices, photos, cine films and music of its people. It's a tapestry of memory, woven from the resilience, creativity and spirit of a town that has withstood the test of time.

With over two decades of experience in film and television, contributing to Award Winning works like *Buskers*, *Pavee Lackeen* and *Pilgrim Hill*, I knew I could take on this challenge. I began this project ten years ago, driven by a passion to preserve Ireland's heritage and inspired by the universal themes of emigration, survival and connection to home.

What makes *All Our Yesterdays* truly unique are the treasures it contains: unseen cine footage, **century-old letters** from Swinford to New York and a soundtrack created by local musicians, past and present. These elements create an intimate portrait of a small town with a global legacy, resonating with audiences worldwide.

This film is not just a tribute to Swinford; it's a call to action for communities everywhere to honour and preserve their own stories. Heritage is fragile and if we don't act to protect it, it risks being lost for ever.

Thank you for joining me on this journey to celebrate Swinford's extraordinary past. My hope is that *All Our Yesterdays* will inspire others to reconnect with their roots, value their history and see the power of storytelling in **bringing people together**.

With gratitude,  
**Breege Rowley**  
Director, *All Our Yesterdays*



# Storytellers.



## Kathleen Benson –Guardian of a Priceless Archive

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Born in Meelick, Swinford, Kathleen Benson shares a 100-year-old letter from her mother, a Cumann na mBan secretary, written to her uncle in New York during the Irish Civil War. This rare firsthand account provides a powerful glimpse into Swinford's past and is one of *All Our Yesterdays'* most treasured archives.

Kathleen's contribution ensures this vital history is preserved for future generations.

## Maura Reddington Sweeney

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Maura Reddington Sweeney reflects on the devastation of emigration and the Sisters of Mercy's role in establishing the Commercial Laundry, which provided vital employment in Swinford. She shares her mother's experience working there, highlighting the struggles and resilience of the women who depended on it.

Her testimony preserves the town's legacy of survival and progress.



About their contribution to the story



## Bernard O'Hara – Historian & Author

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Bernard O'Hara, a renowned Irish historian and former Registrar at Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), specialises in Ireland's social and economic history.

In *All Our Yesterdays*, he examines the Penal Laws, the Poor Law Act, and the impact of the Great Famine, emphasising their roles in emigration and social change. O'Hara also provides a compelling account of Michael Davitt and the Land League, exploring their fight for tenant farmers' rights and their enduring legacy in Ireland. As a published author and expert on County Mayo's heritage, O'Hara's insights add depth and context to Swinford's history.

## Tom Hennigan – A Keeper of Ireland's Past

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Tom Hennigan is a captivating storyteller and custodian of Hennigan's Heritage, preserving the history of Ireland's tenant farmers and rural life. Through vivid narratives, he shares their struggles, resilience, and traditions, including "killing the pig", a communal act of generosity. His own story reflects Ireland's past—his father was a migrant worker, often away to support the family. With a deep emotional connection to history, Tom brings the past to life, ensuring its legacy endures.



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# Storytellers.

## Marie Boran – Historian & Special Collections Librarian

★★★★★

Marie Boran, Special Collections Librarian at NUI Galway, explores the **Sisters of Mercy's impact on education**, their 1916 purchase of Brabazon House and the **Rural Domestic Economy School** that trained women for **economic independence**. She also examines **Swinford's role in the War of Independence and Civil War**, bringing its history of **resilience and survival** to life in *All Our Yesterdays*.

## Joe Mellett -Steward of Swinford's Heritage

★★★★★

In the documentary *All Our Yesterdays*, **Joe Mellett**, the seventh-generation proprietor of **Mellett's Emporium**—a family business **established in 1797**—shares insights into Swinford's rich cultural heritage. He discusses the significance of music in the community, the longstanding tradition of the **St. Patrick's Day Parade**, and his family's supportive practices, such as extending credit to customers and **assisting emigrants** with travel expenses, trusting they would repay upon securing employment abroad.

About their contribution to the story



## Michael Comer – Guardian of Swinford's History

★★★★★

The late **Michael Comer** was a devoted local historian who preserved and shared the rich history of Swinford. Through his storytelling, he brought to life the town's past, from the **Penal Laws and the Poor Law Act** to the **Famine**, **Michael Davitt's land reforms**, and the **opening of Swinford's train station**.

His own family's legacy was deeply tied to Ireland's fight for independence—his **grandfather supported Michael Collins in the Civil War**, a commitment that shaped their place in history. Michael's passion for Swinford's heritage ensured its stories live on, leaving behind a lasting legacy for future generations.

## Bríd O'Connell: Champion of Swinford's Cultural Heritage

★★★★★

For over four decades, Bríd O'Connell has been the driving force behind Swinford's Síamsa Sráide Street & Arts Festival, serving as its secretary and main organiser. The festival holds a special place in the hearts of the Mayo diaspora worldwide, strengthening connections to their roots and fostering a sense of belonging among those living abroad.

In the documentary *All Our Yesterdays*, Bríd shares her insights into the importance of music in Swinford's cultural identity and the role of the Síamsa Sráide Festival in reconnecting the Mayo diaspora with their roots. Her contributions to the film highlight the enduring power of community and the timeless connection to home.

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# Team.



## Breege Rowley – Director & Editor

★★★★★

### Breege Rowley – Director & Editor

Breege Rowley is an award-winning Irish filmmaker, director and editor renowned for her storytelling in drama and documentary. A graduate of Ballyfermot Film School, she gained early acclaim with her multi-award-winning short *Buskers* (2000) and has since worked on critically acclaimed feature films, including *Silent Grace*, *Pavee Lackeen: The Traveller Girl*, *Pilgrim Hill*, *A Doctor's Sword* and *Woken*.

Her expertise extends to documentary series and docudramas for TG4, Virgin Media and RTÉ, with credits including *1916 Seachtar Na Cásca*, *Assassins – Ireland's Contract Killers*, *The Rutland*, *My Trans Life*, and *State of Fear – Veronica Guerin*. A six-year immersion in the prestigious Sundance Feature Film and Documentary Labs further refined her craft.

Now making her directorial debut, Breege presents *All Our Yesterdays*, a deeply personal documentary chronicling 250 years of Swinford's history. The film blends rare archival footage, first hand testimonies and moving music, offering a poignant tribute to Ireland's past and its global diaspora.

With a passion for preserving cultural heritage and telling untold stories, Breege continues to create films that captivate, inform and inspire audiences worldwide.

[Breege Rowley IMDB](#)

About Our Crew



## Richard Kendrick – Director of Photography

★★★★★

Richard Kendrick is an acclaimed Irish Director of Photography with over two decades of experience in feature films, television and documentary storytelling. His work is celebrated for its rich visuals, atmospheric lighting and evocative storytelling.

For *All Our Yesterdays*, Richard's expertise in capturing historical landscapes and intimate human moments brings Swinford's journey to life, enhancing the film's emotional depth and authenticity.

His notable credits include *Song of Granite*, *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, *The Lodgers*, and *The Delinquent Season*, earning him multiple IFTA nominations and an Emmy nomination for *Barbarians Rising* (2017). In 2024, he was nominated for Best Cinematography at the IFTAs for *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, release in Ireland and the UK in April 2024.

Richard Kendrick continues to shape Irish and international cinema with his distinctive cinematographic style

IMDb Profile: [Richard Kendrick](#)

## Mary Harkin – Location Sound Recordist

★★★★★

**Mary Harkin** is a highly experienced **Location Sound Recordist**, with an extensive career across **drama, documentary, and entertainment television**. She has worked on acclaimed productions such as *Crá*, *Derry Girls* (CH4), *Corp & Anam* (TG4), *Narcos Dublin* (Sky Arts), *The Civil War Memory Project* (RTÉ) and *Ireland's Dirty Laundry* (RTÉ & ARTE).

In *All Our Yesterdays*, Mary's expertise in capturing natural soundscapes and dialogue helps bring Swinford's history to life with clarity, depth, and authenticity.

Notable Credits Include: Drama: *Crá*, *Derry Girls*, *Aithrí*, *Corp & Anam*, *Teenage Kicks*, *Rós na Rún*

Documentary: *Narcos Dublin*, *The Civil War Memory Project*, *Ireland's Dirty Laundry*, *The Rotunda*

Entertainment: *The Apprentice*, *Home of the Year*, *Big Year in Big School*, *Laochra Gael*



# Team.



## Nora McBurney – Narrator

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Nora McBurney brings *All Our Yesterdays* to life as its narrator, guiding audiences through the rich history of Swinford, Ireland. A cross-cultural communicator, project and people manager and seasoned tour guide, she has a deep passion for storytelling and heritage.

Her connection to the film is personal—her grandmother emigrated from Swinford in 1900. Through her narration she honours that journey, giving voice to the past and preserving the stories of the Irish diaspora for future generations.

## Noelle Rowley – Sound Designer

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Noelle Rowley is a **Sound Designer and Re-Recording Mixer** based in Donegal, Ireland and the founder of **Immersive Sound**. A relative of director **Breege Rowley**, she has collaborated with her on multiple projects, developing a unique shorthand that allows them to work seamlessly together. For *All Our Yesterdays*, Noelle's deep personal connection to the film shaped her approach, crafting a soundscape that blends **music, archival audio and atmosphere** to enhance its emotional impact. She works closely with filmmakers to create immersive, high-quality audio. Noelle continues to push the boundaries of sound in cinematic storytelling.

More at: [www.immersivesound.ie](http://www.immersivesound.ie)

## Jack Walsh - Drone Photography

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Jack Walsh's stunning drone imagery brought Mayo to life in *All Our Yesterdays*, seamlessly blending breathtaking landscapes with the film's powerful narrative. Originally a still photographer, he embraced moving images in 2023 when Director Breege Rowley challenged him to capture the film's visual storytelling.

His striking juxtaposition of beauty and struggle adds depth to the documentary, offering a unique perspective on Mayo's history. Jack now works across both mediums, using aerial imagery to enhance storytelling in new and dynamic ways.

More at: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100038654485734>



## New Decade Production – Executive Producers

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**Nuala Cunningham** and **Jen Dunbar** of **New Decade Production** served as executive producers for *All Our Yesterdays*, overseeing its successful completion.

With extensive experience in documentary and factual storytelling, their portfolio includes *The Swimming Diaries* (2024), *Notes from Sheepland* (2023), *My Lost Russian Mother* (2023), *The Secret Peacemaker* (2023) and *Storm Front in Mayo* (2019). For *All Our Yesterdays*, they played a key role in managing production, providing expert guidance and support to bring the film to the screen.

More at: <https://www.newdecade.ie>

## First Element – Online

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

First Element Post Production is a **leading post-production company** specialising in **editing, colour grading, sound design and final delivery** for film, television, and digital content. With a focus on **technical precision and creative execution**, they collaborate with filmmakers to shape **visually compelling and immersive audio experiences**.

For *All Our Yesterdays* First Element provided **online editing and sound mix**, supporting the film's **narrative flow and final presentation**. Their contribution included **technical support**, ensuring a cohesive and polished final product.

More at: [www.firstelement.ie](http://www.firstelement.ie)

## Ciara Gallogaly - Colourist

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ciara Gallogaly is a Dublin-based **film colourist** with extensive experience across commercials, music videos, **film and documentary**. Originally from **Swinford**, she has a personal connection to *All Our Yesterdays* and a long-standing working relationship with director Breege Rowley. Their shared roots and creative collaboration brought an added depth to her work on the film.

For *All Our Yesterdays*, Ciara expertly balanced archival cine film and modern multi-camera footage, ensuring a seamless and cohesive visual experience that preserves the film's historical authenticity. Her precise approach enhances the film's storytelling by maintaining its rich, cinematic look. Her notable work includes **Kneecap** (2024), **The Drowning** (2021), and **Pavee Lackeen: The Traveller Girl** (2005).

More at: [Ciara Gallogaly IMDb](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm100038654485734/).

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# Sound Track

## The Music of All Our Yesterdays

The soundtrack of *All Our Yesterdays* is a deeply moving and integral part of the film, capturing the **musical and cultural identity** of Swinford and its people. Featuring a blend of **traditional, contemporary and dance hall music**, the score brings the landscape and narrative to life. This is due to an extraordinary group of musicians, composers and vocalists, all with deep ties to the region.

Swinford Michael Davitt Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann provided vibrant performances that ground the film in the rich musical heritage of Swinford. **Alannah Thornburgh**, an award winning composer and harpist, crafted delicate yet powerful compositions that enhance the film's emotional depth. **Steven Doherty**, a renowned multi-instrumentalist, composed and arranged key pieces that shape the dramatic and atmospheric tone of the film. The late **Conor Walsh**, known for his emotive and minimalist compositions, set the tone for the opening act, capturing the struggle and resilience of the Irish people. **John Feeney**, a celebrated Swinford native and Carnegie Hall performer, brings the 1950s era to life, reflecting the town's social history and its diaspora.

The film's vocal performances add further richness. **Francie Mc Nicholas** delivers a stirring rendition of *Mo Ghrá Thu A Thiarna*, composed by **Liam Lawton**, whose generosity allowed its use in the film. **Sinéad Snee** performs a poignant and heartfelt version of *The Parting Glass*, closing the film with emotion and grace.

Capturing the essence of the dance hall era, **Brennan's Band – The Starlight Swingtet** recreates the sounds that once filled social gatherings with **Kathryn Noone** curating the musical selection.

A group of exceptional musicians from **Michael Davitt CCÉ** also contributed to the film's soundtrack, including **Adele Greene, Joe Greene, John Greene, Anthony Maguire, Anna Doherty, Séan Healy, Martin Woods, Christopher Woods, Riona Foote, Breege Gleeson, and Rob Thornburgh**. Their collective talent brings an authentic traditional Irish sound to the film.

The soundtrack is further elevated by special guest musicians. **Matt Molloy of The Chieftains** lends his legendary flute playing to the project, adding a masterful touch. The group **Alfi** also contributed to the richness of the musical score.

Much of the film's music was recorded at **Currinara Studio, Foxford**, under the expertise of **Stephen & Tom Doherty**, who brought the compositions to life with their recording and production skills. The film's piano accompaniment was provided by **Antoinette Byrn**, whose artistry adds warmth and depth to key moments.

The **juxtaposition of sweeping, breathtaking melodies against themes of struggle and perseverance** makes the soundtrack of *All Our Yesterdays* not just a complement to the visuals, but an emotional journey in itself.

# All Our Yesterdays



## Synopsis - Long

**All Our Yesterdays** is a poignant and visually stunning documentary that chronicles 250 years of Swinford, County Mayo. It captures the town's resilience, history and cultural evolution. Through powerful storytelling, rare archival treasures and moving musical artistry, the film celebrates the enduring spirit of the Irish people, bridging past struggles with present triumphs.

The journey begins in the shadow of the Penal Laws and the devastation of the Great Famine of 1845, when Swinford's workhouse bore witness to unimaginable loss. Yet, from these tragedies emerged a legacy of survival, shaped by emigration and an unbreakable determination to endure.

As Swinford rebuilt, the documentary captures its rise through transformative movements, including the Land League, led by Michael Davitt and the Mercy Sisters' pioneering efforts in women's education.

Key milestones—including the construction of the railway, the unity fostered by traditional Irish music and the town's resilience during the War of Independence and the Civil War—showcase Swinford's unyielding strength. The film culminates in a celebration of Swinford's vibrant cultural renaissance, from the long-standing 1952 St. Patrick's Day Parade to the 1961 All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil and the beloved 1984 Siamsa Straide festival.

Featuring rare cine film, personal photographic archives and haunting sketches from the collection of Maggie Blanks archive *All Our Yesterdays* offers an intimate, authentic glimpse into Swinford's past. Narrated by Pittsburgh-born Nora McBurney, the granddaughter of a Swinford emigrant, the documentary serves as a bridge between Ireland and its global diaspora—a powerful tribute to heritage, identity and the universal longing for home.



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These musical traditions come to life through the performances of:

🎵 Francie McNicholas, Sinéad Snee and the late world renowned Tenor John Feeney

🎵 Musicians from Swinford's Michael Davitt CCÉ

🎵 Guest musician Matt Molloy (The Chieftains)

🎵 Compositions by Alannah Thornburgh, Steven Doherty and the late Conor Walsh





## **Nine points of interest**

### **1. What is *All Our Yesterdays* about?**

*All Our Yesterdays* is a feature documentary that tells the story of Swinford, County Mayo, and its people over the past 250 years. It captures the town's rich history, resilience, and connection to the Irish diaspora through rare cine footage, personal photographs and first hand accounts. The film weaves together stories of emigration, community and cultural heritage, preserving the voices of past and present generations.

### **2. What inspired you to make this film?**

I have a deep connection to Swinford and a strong desire to preserve its history for future generations. Initially, the documentary was meant to explore the town's social history from the 1940s to the 1970s, but as the project evolved, so did the story. By the time I secured the funding to complete the film, I had to reimagine the narrative, expanding it into a broader exploration of Swinford's past and its people. Tragically, five of the key contributors I had originally interviewed passed away before the film was completed. Their words and memories remain at the heart of *All Our Yesterdays* and I feel privileged to carry their legacy forward in this documentary.

### **3. How did you source the archival footage and personal stories featured in the film?**

The documentary is built on a foundation of community collaboration. Locals generously contributed previously unseen personal photographs, cine footage and family archives, which were invaluable in bringing Swinford's history to life. I was also incredibly fortunate to have access to Maggie Blanks' archive, which includes sketches from her newspaper collection. These visual records added a unique artistic dimension to the film, capturing moments in Swinford's history that might otherwise have been lost.

### **4. What challenges did you face during the making of *All Our Yesterdays*?**

Funding was one of the biggest challenges. The film was largely self-financed, with additional support from Mayo County Council and Leader Rural Group. Securing archive licenses was another hurdle, as obtaining high-quality historical footage can be costly. Perhaps the greatest challenge was the evolving nature of the story itself. By the time I had the resources to complete the film, I had lost some of my key contributors. This forced me to rethink the film's structure, but it also strengthened my resolve to ensure their voices were heard. Though the project took longer than expected, the unwavering support of the Swinford community kept me going.

### **5. How does the documentary connect with the Irish diaspora?**

Like many Irish towns, Swinford has a long history of emigration. The film explores the experiences of those who left and the connections they maintained with home. Through letters, music and shared traditions, the diaspora's link to Swinford remains strong, even generations later. The response from the Irish diaspora has been incredibly moving—many viewers recognise their own family histories within the film, making it a deeply personal and emotional experience for people across the world.



## Nine points of interest

### 6. Who are some of the key contributors to the film?

The heart of the film lies in the voices of Swinford's people, past and present. Key contributors include local historians, musicians and community members who shared their personal experiences.

Sadly, five of these contributors passed away before the film was completed. Their voices, memories and perspectives are now preserved in *All Our Yesterdays*, ensuring that their legacy continues for future generations.

### 7. How was the music selected for the film?

Music plays a crucial role in *All Our Yesterdays*, helping to shape its emotional depth and historical resonance. The soundtrack blends traditional Irish music with contemporary compositions, carefully chosen to reflect the film's themes and key historical moments. Steven Doherty's arrangements add richness to the storytelling, particularly in the sections covering the War of Independence and the Civil War. The late Conor Walsh's music also features prominently, bringing an evocative and cinematic quality to the film. Additionally, composer Alannah Thornburgh's work enhances the emotional depth of the documentary, weaving modern sounds with echoes of the past.

### 8. What impact do you hope the film will have on audiences?

I hope *All Our Yesterdays* instills a sense of pride in Swinford's history and encourages people to appreciate the power of storytelling in preserving local heritage. For those with roots in Swinford, I want the film to serve as a reminder of where they come from. For others, I hope it sparks a connection to the universal themes of home, identity, and resilience. Above all, I want this documentary to keep the voices and memories of those who contributed alive, ensuring their legacy endures for generations to come.

### 9. Where can people watch *All Our Yesterdays*?

The film screened on **October 26th, 2024**, at Féile na Samhna in Swinford's Gateway Hotel. I am currently seeking a distribution company to bring *All Our Yesterdays* to a wider audience through festivals, screenings and digital platforms.

For updates on future screenings or availability, people can follow our official channels or contact me directly.



# Thanks.



Produced and directed by **Breege Rowley**, the film is the flagship project of **Rowley's Reels**, an independent production company dedicated to preserving untold stories through film. With the support of Mayo County Council and the Leader Rural Group, *All Our Yesterdays* stands as a testament to the power of local history and collective memory.

From the Irish War of Independence to the modern-day diaspora, this documentary is not just about the past—it's about how our history shapes who we are today.

**CONTACT US.**

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About All Our Yesterdays



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For press inquiries, interviews, or screening opportunities, please contact:

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