

From the Garton Archive Picture of the Month No 1 January 2012 John Hurt

The photograph below shows the actor John Hurt taking a stroll with French master John S Granger in the grounds of Lincoln School in 1962. John of course is a distinguished actor known for his performances as Richard Rich in 'A Man for All Seasons' (1966); Caligula in 'I, Claudius' (1976); Bob Champion in 'Champions' (1984); and Winston Smith in 'Nineteen Eighty-four'. Who could also forget his stirring portrayal of 'The Elephant Man'? In recognition of his outstanding achievements, John has received an Emmy Award in 1976, and BAFTA Award in 1978 and 1981. More recently he has appeared in the TV series, 'Who do you think you are?'

However you may not be aware that John's first major film role when he was still a student at RADA was as in 'The Wild and The Willing', shot in Lincoln in 1962, and featuring the fictitious University of Kilminster, whose campus was located in the area around Lincoln Castle. Also starring in the film were Ian McShane, Samantha Eggar and a young Johnny Briggs who went on to star in 'Coronation Street' for many years.

And of course I too have admired John's remarkable performances. But I also remember him as a boarder at Lincoln School in the 1950s, who re-sat his 'O' Level exams, and was in my 'form' for a year in 1957. He sat behind me in Latin lessons and copied my Latin translation because he could see that I was copying Tony Leverington's, who was much better at the subject than I was!

My most striking school memory of John, or 'Vince' as he was known after his second name Vincent, was his performance of Lady Bracknell in Oscar Wilde's 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. Lincoln School was a boys' grammar school in those days, and boys had to play the female roles. Even to our undeveloped critical sense we could see that he was an actor of considerable ability and potential. However the Headmaster apparently did not see it in the same way. According to John's biographer, David Nathan, he told John that he was '... all right in school plays but ... wouldn't stand a chance in the profession'! And the rest, as they say, is history!



