

Just William

UK : 1937 : dir. Graham Cutts : Associated British : ? min
 prod: : scr: Graham Cutts & Doreen Montgomery : dir.ph.: Walter Harvey
Dicky Lupino; Roddy McDowall [sic]; *Norman Robinson; Peter Miles; Eric Searle*
 Fred Emney; Iris Hoey; Basil Radford; Amy Vaness; Jenny Laird; David Tree

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 ∅ M ∅	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Dicky Lupino – more doughy than doughy (worsted school shorts did not favour a rotund child)
 Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion note:

"The argumentative small boy created in over thirty novels by Richmal Crompton had several British film incarnations, none very satisfactory, in the thirties and forties.¹"

¹ and consequently Halliwell doesn't list a single one of them in his film guide...

The Films of Roddy McDowall excerpt:

"JUST WILLIAM" offered McDowall scope as one of Richmal Crompton's lively little boys (although the title role itself was played by Dicky Lupino)."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]



Roddy McDowall kicks his heels in a supporting role before World War II conveniently steers him to Hollywood fame. Source: indeterminate



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Filmed on the eve of a disastrous war, this arthritic British frolic pokes a little nervous fun at the German regime in the midst of more parochial concerns – William and his Outlaws redub themselves “The Nasties”, and William assumes the title “Her Brown, Chief of the Nasties”, since it isn’t sissy to be called “her” in foreign languages. William’s gang consists of Ginger (Roddy McDowall, his name mis-spelt on the credits), dour Scot Douglas (Norman Robinson) and Henry (Peter Miles). The chief object of their scorn (there being no Violet Elisabeth Bott in this film) is Marmaduke Sidway (Eric Searle). William’s and Marmaduke’s fathers are competing for election to the local council, and both avidly courting the sponsorship of rich widow Mrs Bott, whose son Montague also has a yen for William’s elder sister.

William’s present goal in life is to raise 2/6^d for an air gun, and since the forthcoming feature at the village cinema is “The Amazing Adventures of Dynamite Dan”, his mind is much preoccupied with spies and saboteurs. The gang soon spot a suspicious customer they decide is Dynamite Dan, and track him closely. The man is actually Mr Fletcher, a swindler hawking phoney copper shares to William’s father. When he learns from Mr Brown of the rich Mrs Bott, he resolves that she too must be shown the benefits of prudent investment.

William would also like to relieve Mrs Bott of some of her wealth – approximately two and sixpence worth, so he makes himself helpful by weeding her garden of all its flower-shaped things. He’s interrupted at this good work by two more shady characters (confederates of Mr Fletcher’s) who convince him they’re Scotland Yard men.

Dicky Lupino, 8, nephew of actress Ida Lupino, made for a bit of a podgy William, unfortunately reminiscent of the dwarf comedian Jimmy Clitheroe, who was still playing mischievous small boys until the day he died. He trots out Crompton’s dialogue gamely enough, but lacks the spark of independence and grubby-kneed invention which was the essence of the character, more a Friar Tuck than a Robin Hood, which was not at all what the author had in mind. To be fair to him, a lame script and clumsy directing were chiefly to blame, but he was miscast for all that. Roddy McDowall, 9 in '37 (though he looks even younger), plays Ginger. Surprisingly, he’d already made nine or so films in the UK, none of them ever seen today, including “HEY! HEY! U.S.A!” and “I SEE ICE” (with George Formby).

See subject index under **COMEDY, FOLLOW THE LEADER** (children’s gangs), **KIDS OUTWIT THE CROOKS** and **RASCALS & SCALAWAGS**. The next (and final cinema) incarnation of William was William Graham, in “**JUST WILLIAM’S LUCK**” and “**WILLIAM COMES TO TOWN**”. See **JUST WILLIAM – GENERAL NOTE** for further comment.