

William Graham

Titles: 2 Sources: 3 Stills: 0

Born: Darlington, UK; 1932

The cinema's second (and, to date, last) William Brown was doubly miscast. At 15 he was clearly too old to play Richmal Crompton's grammar school scamp (his films were set post-war, a crucial decade later than the Britain of the books) and physically he was too lean and angular, with a bizarre mop of frizzy hair, bearing no resemblance at all to the William drawings. He tackled the part with energy and vim, naturally, but somehow did not convince. The films were poorly scripted and produced on the cheap, so he cannot shoulder all the blame, but Graham lacked the natural touch, and his Outlaws – Brian Roper, James Crabbe and Brian Wesker – filled their supporting roles better. He made no further films, and it's not known what later became of him.

Picturegoer Film Annual 1949 comment:

"During 1948 two major child discoveries were made. One was John Howard Davies, the Oliver of "**OLIVER TWIST**", the other Bobby Henrey of "**THE FALLEN IDOL**".... The success of these two boys - as actors and not simply as child stars - is proof of the fact that there is ample juvenile talent in Britain. In a heartier style so also is the work of William Graham and his colleagues in the **WILLIAM** films. A relaxing of the official attitude to children in film studios - and that is liable to happen in the near future - would enable Britain to produce films with a strong child interest that would rival anything that Hollywood can present."

The Moving Picture Boy entry:

"The most important if not the most picturesque impersonator of "**WILLIAM**", grubby hero of Richmal Crompton's popular series of children's books and England's answer to America's "**PENROD**", was the curly-haired son of a blacksmith."

Purportedly "from his own lips" account in **Hollywood-London Film Parade 1949**:

"As far back as I can remember, I have always wanted to act. But never, in my wildest dreams, did I hope that success would come my way so early in life. Even now, despite the indisputable evidence, I find it difficult to believe that I am really "on the pictures". How I got there is still something of a mystery to me. I suppose it was really a combination of cheek and determination. Although I had won a few local dance competitions in Darlington - my home town - it was not until Carroll Levis visited the local Hippodrome one week that I knew my big moment had arrived. At the end of the show, Levis's manager complimented me on the act, but I took it as part of the usual routine - you say the same thing to all the girls - and thought that was the last I had heard of that. Fortunately for me, I was wrong. Three months later, almost to the very day, Carroll Levis sent me a telegram offering me a big part in his new show, and before you could have said "Just William" I had packed my bag and was on the train to London.

For the next fourteen months I toured with Carroll Levis, dancing in Variety theatres up and down the country, learning the tricks of the trade the hard and only real way. Then Carroll heard that a British film studio was searching for someone to play the beloved "William" character, and thought of me. I've since heard that almost simultaneously several hundred agents and a few hundred mothers had

the same idea, but luck was on my side, and I got the role. I have now completed my second picture, "**WILLIAM COMES TO TOWN**", in wich I manage to win entry into No.10 Downing Street, but believe me, crashing the Prime Minister's home is not nearly as difficult as crashing "the pictures".

FILMOGRAPHY			
Year	Age	Title	Role
deb 47	15	JUST WILLIAM'S LUCK	in title role, William Brown with <i>Brian Roper, James Crabbe, Brian Weske</i>
48	16	WILLIAM COMES TO TOWN / WILLIAM AT THE CIRCUS 	in title role, William Brown with <i>Brian Roper, James Crabbe, Brian Weske, David Paige</i>