

Jon Whiteley

Titles: 5 Sources: 2 Stills: 6

Born: Monymusk, Aberdeenshire; February 19th 1945

As with John Howard Davies before him, Jon Whiteley made surprisingly few films, given the critical applause which greeted his splendid performance in Philip Leacock's "**THE KIDNAPPERS**", but he had central roles in all of them. Both boys were in truth sorely limited in their range, and Whiteley's faintly precious manner of delivery – recalling Roddy McDowall as a boy – sounded appealing but unengaged. In "**MOONFLEET**" he attached himself with winsome but unimaginative devotion to the fortunes of arch-smuggler Stewart Granger, who finally perishes rather than disabuse the boy's puppyish faith in him. "**THE SPANISH GARDENER**" was a turbulent man/boy/man love triangle with Whiteley exciting the jealousy of father Michael Hordern over his infatuation for young pelota-player Dirk Bogarde. All passion and sensuality was bleached from the tale in a prim, sterile, stultifyingly British production (also by Leacock).



Guileless orphan of "**MOONFLEET**"

Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion entry:

"British boy actor."

The Moving Picture Boy entry:

"In 1951 the six-year old Jon, son of a village schoolmaster, won a prize for verse-speaking at the Aberdeen Music Festival. A BBC van visited his school, and Jon repeated his recitation for the benefit of Scottish radio listeners. It was overheard by a talent scout, who reported back to studios in the south – and so Britain discovered one of its most unusual and likeable child actors.

Charming as his appearance was – a serious, square little face with watchful features beneath a tangle of blond hair – Jon's most precious attribute was his beautifully old-world Aberdeenshire voice: melodious, quaintly measured, almost pedantic. No child's voice quite like it had been heard in the cinema before, and it added a special quality to the parts he had to play, which were in general of the John Howard Davies type (delicate child thrown into tough or harrowing situations)...

The Whiteley manner was perfectly suited to "THE KIDNAPPERS", conversing with an even smaller Scot, Vincent Winter, over the ownership of an unidentified but hearty baby they had stumbled on. "Is it our babby now, Harry?" asks Winter. "It's mine," says Whiteley with sweet solemnity, "but you can have a loan of it while I've other business. You can feel it. Go on, feel it, if you crave to." (There is later a wonderful argument about a name for the baby. Winter favours "Rover".)

An attractive remake of "THE KID-NAPPERS" – now called "THE LITTLE KIDNAPPERS", which had been the original film's US release title anyway – was shown in 1990, with two very similar-looking children (Leo Wheatley and Charles Miller) as the two boys.

In Jon Whiteley's other roles (a frightened runaway in "HUNTED", a puzzled orphan in "MOONFLEET", a supposed murderer in "THE WEAPON", and the affection-starved son of a diplomat in "THE SPANISH GARDENER") his sober charm was used with varying success. But he was always a pleasure to watch and listen to. Whiteley got a degree at Oxford, wrote books on Ingres and the Pre-

Raphaelites, and became curator of an Oxford college art collection."

WHAT THE CRITICS SAID:

In "MOONFLEET":

"...Young Jon Whiteley – the older of the two small boys from "THE KIDNAPPERS" – turns in a very real portrayal of the fatherless boy who forms an affectionate bond with a likeable rogue (Stewart Granger), the leader of an adventurous band of freebooters..."

- TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995

FILMOGRAPHY

<i>Year</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Role</i>
52	7	HUNTED	
53	8	THE KIDNAPPERS / THE LITTLE KIDNAPPERS  with Vincent Winter, Christopher Beeney	as Harry (8)
55	10	MOONFLEET	US as John Mohune
56	11	THE WEAPON	
56		THE SPANISH GARDENER	
67	22	CAPETOWN AFFAIR	