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The Grand Escapade

UK : 1946 : dir. : ? min
prod: John Baxter : scr: : dir.ph.:
Peter Coyle; Phillip Hartley; Jack Armitage

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	≠	M	⊗	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Early joyriders caught in the act

Source: Picture Show Annual 1948

Picture Show Annual 1948 comment:

“Three boys who were all sixteen years old at the time became film stars after John Baxter, the film producer, had seen them in a music hall act. For two years they had been appearing on the variety stage as "The Artemus Boys". Mr Baxter decided to star them in an open-air film dealing entirely with the adventures of three town boys in the English countryside, entitled "**THE GRAND ESCAPADE**". The boys were Peter Coyle of Newcastle; Phillip Hartley of Hull, who before he went on to the variety stage was a page boy in a Hull cinema; and Jack Armitage of Bradford who worked in a shutter factory. After "**THE GRAND ESCAPADE**" Mr Baxter decided to feature them in another film, "**NOTHING VENTURE**". ”

[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"]

No further information currently available. One of those obscure minor features which has vanished now without trace. But it is precisely for titles like this one, long-forgotten and unlamented, that the archive exists. The title is hilarious, and affords some inkling of the *hi-jinks in the countryside* tone of the business. The quaint naiveté of these post-war British children's productions – hugely patronising of their audience and devoid of all drama – disarms more severe criticism.

Those three waifs in the still are *sixteen*? An average 14-year old today would tower over them. It's astonishing how much physical childhood has foreshortened in those scant fifty years, while the social construct of childhood – prolonged schooling and economic dependence on the parents – has been expanding in the opposite direction. Contemporary reconstructions of the 1930s and 40s in cinema and television make no allowance for this (by casting 13-year olds in 16-year old roles, for example) but that is all part of the same wilful blindness. History has no merit to modern eyes – except as a bland reflection of the present.

Holmstrom lists two other titles for "The Artemus Boys" – "**HERE COMES THE SUN**" in 1945 and "**NOTHING VENTURE**" in 1947, but has no other details about them.

See also "**IF WE HAD OUR WAY**" for another countryside "adventure" in the same vein made the same year, and subject index under **PASTORALS / HOLIDAYS IN THE COUNTRY**.