

Midshipman Easy

(US = "Men of the Sea")

UK : 1935 : dir. Carol Reed : ATP

: 77 min

prod: Basil Dean & Thorold Dickinson : scr: Anthony Kimmins : dir.ph.: John W Boyle

[Hughie Green](#); [Desmond Tester](#)

Margaret Lockwood; Harry Tate; Robert Adams; Roger Livesey; Lewis Casson

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ € Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5448	2½	4	3	1,089	- - - - -	No	unseen



That's Hughie Green right enough – the humourless rictus grin of the gameshow host is already going through its paces. Desmond Tester is seated to his right.
Source: The Moving Picture Boy

Halliwell's Film Guide review

"In 1790, young naval officers rescue a girl from Spanish bandits. Stilted adventure story with interesting credits. Scr: Anthony Kimmins, from the novel by Frederick Marryat."

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

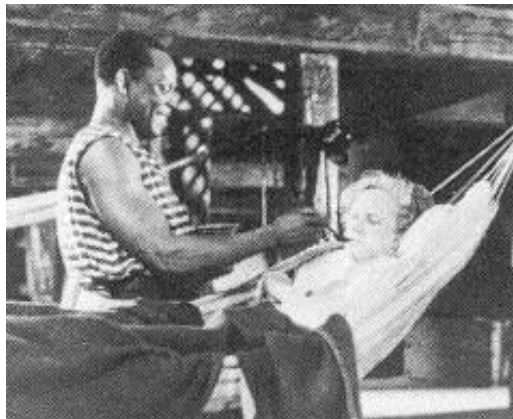
"The adventures of Captain Marryat's young officer hero are somewhat handicapped in this version (there had been one in 1916) by

Hughie Green, who plays him with unjustified self-confidence. He goes to sea with a rough diamond captain (Roger Livesey), captures a Spanish ship and rescues a Spanish maiden (Margaret Lockwood) from bandits. With Robert Adams, Lewis Casson and Harry Tate."

NFT Bulletin – May 1978 – review:

"Captain Marryat's famous sea-going adventure yarn gave Reed his first chance to go solo and he seized it eagerly, guided by the supervising hand of Thorold Dickinson. It has

some splendid swashbuckling fights and exciting sea rescues as Easy defends the Spanish heroine from Spanish pirates and Italian brigands. The quaintly sententious flavour of the hero's egalitarian beliefs is neatly preserved in Hughie Green's performance and music-hall comedian Harry Tate makes a rare straight appearance as the boatswain."



Easy takes it easy while he finds his sea legs
Source: NFT Bulletin June 83

NFT Bulletin – June 1983 – review:

"In the Early 1930s, Guyana-born Robert Adams was well known in European wrestling circles as the "Black Eagle". After he achieved the distinction of becoming the Heavyweight Champion of the British Empire, he decided to pursue a career as an actor and made his first major screen appearance in Carol Reed's lively version of Captain Marryat's 19th-century maritime adventure story. He played the cabin boy, Mosty, who joins Easy (Hughie Green) in a series of escapades aboard the HMS Harpy."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Hughie Green:

"Hughie Green had a Scottish-Canadian father and an Irish mother, and spent much of his childhood in Canada. But perhaps a more powerful influence on his future life was the fact that he had as godfather the great comic Harry Tate. On his return to London the boy saw Tate in action at many a music-hall, and absorbed tricks of comedy timing from him. (Film survives from the mid-Thirties of godfather and godson performing a sketch together.)

By the time he was 14 he had his own radio show ("*Hughie Green and his Gang*") and made his entry into movies, first in "**LITTLE FRIEND**" with Nova Pilbeam and then in the title role of "**MIDSHIPMAN EASY**", a wholly delightful version of a once-famous boys' adventure by Captain Marryat which marked the solo directorial debut of Carol Reed. (Uncle Harry also has a featured part.) Hughie creates a tactless and absent-minded hero of enormous, blundering charm – a bizarre cross, if it can be imagined, between Mickey Rooney and Ernest Thesiger.

Green wasn't much seen in films after this, though he crops up in the 1940 "**TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS**". He did war service in the Royal Canadian Air Force, and during the Fifties and Sixties became a popular presenter of quiz and talent shows, such as Double Your Money and Opportunity Knocks on British TV. By this time his charm had coarsened to a sort of ogling archness that was painful to those of a sensitive disposition."



Source: NFT Bulletin May 78

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film 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. Passing over the preposterous notion of a black heavyweight wrestler as a “cabin boy” in the 18th Century British navy, or the scurrilous implications of a young midshipman going by the name of “Easy”, (Jode Foster’s prostitute-name in **“TAXI DRIVER”**) what we have here is a minor classic of boys’ literature with a period setting similar to **“H.M.S. DEFIANT”** or, for that matter, **“TREASURE ISLAND”**. As a boy, I once made a half-hearted attempt to adapt “Mr Midshipman Easy” into a school play, but in truth was not very much interested in seagoing sagas or period accuracy. The story would hold more interest now for what light it throws on the lives of 13/14 year old boys precipitated into naval service without any prior landward training in the skills required. The persecution of a dry-behind-the-ears midshipman (the captain’s young son) by a vindictive first officer was the pivot of the drama in **“H.M.S. DEFIANT”**, but we saw little of the boys going about their shipboard duties, beyond when they were presenting themselves for a caning by the officer deputed to their discipline. The boys played no part – in that film, at any rate – during actual naval engagements, and one is left in the dark as to what their precise duties were.

Hughie Green was 15, and appeared in a forgotten title called **“BIG BEN CALLING”** the same year, but it would be hard for anyone familiar with his sham sincerity and laboured comedy schtick as a TV host to watch his younger self with the requisite objectivity. Although a year older, Desmond Tester nonetheless enjoyed a longer run as a boy in British films, playing a drummer boy at 19 in **“THE DRUM”**, Edward VI at 17 in **“TUDOR ROSE”**, and a boy blown to bits by the terrorist bomb he’s innocently delivering in Hitchcock’s **“SABOTAGE”** the same year. With the likes of Tester, Green and Anthony Newley, all of whom debuted on film in mid-adolescence, pre-war British cinema seemed rather poorly stocked with boy talent, but one presumes that was determined by the stringent British laws restricting child performers at the time, which is why home-grown stars like Freddie Bartholomew and Roddy McDowall did all their best work in Hollywood.

See subject index under **HISTORY** and **SEAFARING**.