

# A Practical Joke

( aka: "A Joke on the Gardener" )

UK : 1898 : dir. G. A. Smith : G.A.S. Films

Silent : 50 sec

prod: G. A. Smith : scr: : dir.ph.:

.....  
Cast unknown

| Ref: | Pages | Sources | Stills | Words | Ω | 8 | € | M | ♀ | Copy on VHS | Last Viewed |
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| 5710 | 1     | 1       | 0      | 404   | - | - | - | - | - | No          | unseen      |

The British Film Catalogue 1895-1985 listing:

"Comedy. Boy treads on gardener's hose, then releases the water."

[no listing in "Classics of the Silent Screen", "A Pictorial History of the Silent Screen", "Silent Movies: A Picture Quiz Book", "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Bloomsbury Foreign Film Guide", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "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. A direct steal of the Lumiere brothers' original practical joke, and the earliest film known to this archive – "[L'ARROSEUR ARROSÉ](#)" (1895). The mysterious emptying hosepipe gag would put in several more solo appearances before submerging into the slapstick repertoire of the great silent comics: Chaplin, Keaton, Laurel & Hardy and others will all have resorted to it, in one guise or another.

Naughty boy films came thick and fast from 1898, which saw director James Williamson go to work with his sons on titles like "**TWO NAUGHTY BOYS UPSETTING THE SPOONS**", while R.S. Paul replied with "**WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY**", "**BIRDSNESTING**" and many others. Kids' pranks made ideal "storylines" for these one-reelers of a minute or less – essentially home movies with an eye to public exhibition – being cheap, simple, and universally recognisable. They were visual one-liners, requiring no caption cards or establishment of character, and were also a little cheeky, disrespectful of authority, which would have been in tune with the end-of-pier type venues where these early film performances were seen.

Denis Gifford's *British Film Catalogue* is a staggering work of research, listing virtually every live action film shot in the UK over the first ninety years of the cinema, but uniquely valuable for information on these earliest silent pieces, the great majority of which we must assume to be lost.

See subject index under **COMEDY, RASCALS & SCALAWAGS** and [SILENT CINEMA](#).