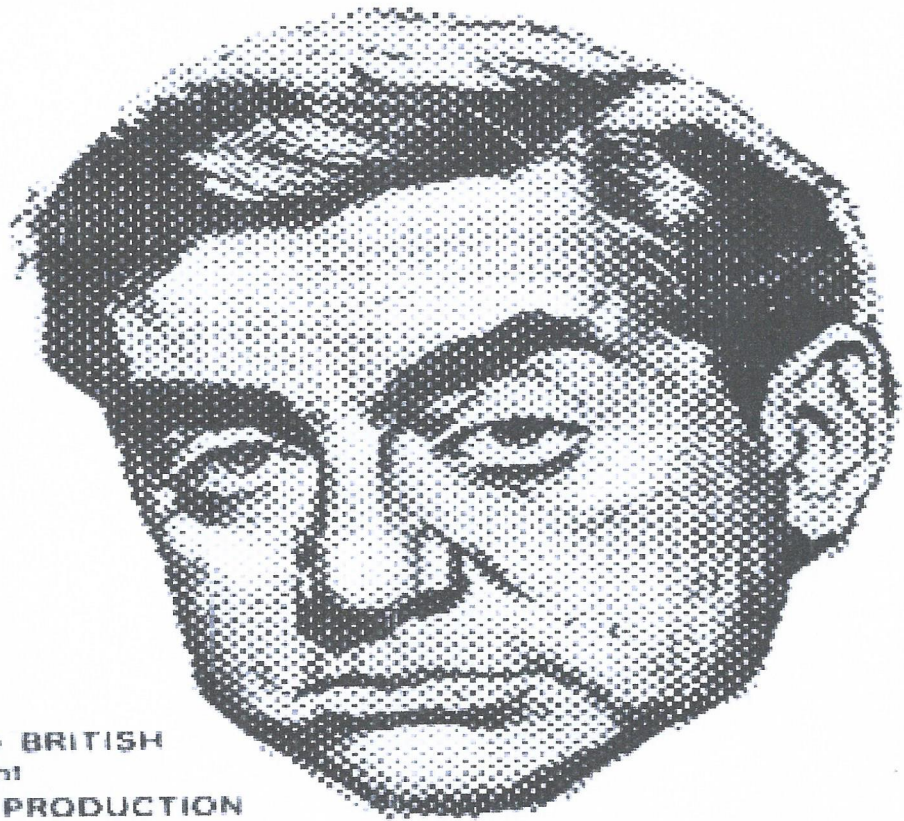


*Tony
Hancock*

Archives Magazine

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May 2012

Hancock Hilarious!



ASSOCIATED BRITISH
present
A MACCONKEY PRODUCTION

TONY HANCOCK **SYLVIA SYMS**
RONALD FRASER **BARBARA MURRAY**

**THE PUNCH &
JUDY MAN** ^U

50th Anniversary

The Online Magazine of the Tony Hancock Archives

THE PUNCH & JUDY MAN

The Plot

Based on Hancock's childhood memories of Bournemouth, the movie is both filmed and set in 1962 in the sleepy fictional seaside town of Piltdown. Hancock plays Wally Pinner, the unhappily married Punch and Judy Man. Wally and the other beach entertainers, the Sandman (John Le Mesurier) who makes sand sculptures, and Neville the photographer (Mario Fabrizi) are socially unacceptable to the town's snobbish elite.

Wally's wife, Delia (Sylvia Syms), runs a typical seaside curios shop of the time below their flat, and is socially ambitious. To achieve this she needs to have Wally invited to entertain at the official reception for Lady Jane Caterham (Barbara Murray), who is to switch on the town's illuminations, and at the Mayoress' suggestion the Reception Committee invites Wally to entertain.

The illumination ceremony ends in farce when Wally's electric shaver shorts out some of the lights, causing some of the illuminated signs to display unflattering comments about the town. The dinner degenerates into a food fight when one of the drunken guests heckles Punch, and when Lady Jane rounds on Wally, Delia floors her with a punch. Her dreams of social acceptance are gone, but Wally and Delia retire, wiser and closer.

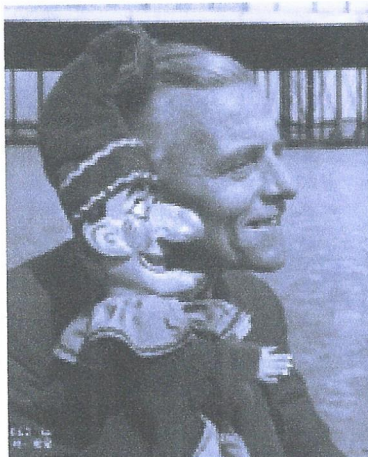
Memories of 1962 from Trevor Jennings Bognor Regis Punch & Judy Man 1943 -2011

As Bognor's own 'Punch and Judy Man' since 1943 I was naturally interested in hearing about the film to be made. I made enquiries but having found they had already got someone to use the puppets and speak the dialogue for Punch (the gentleman was the resident P&J man at Chessington Zoo), I was then approached by Mr. Humphreys, manager of the Royal Hotel who I knew pretty well and he said the producer was looking for, as he put it, some "special" extras. In other words, people who knew a bit about acting (not that it made any difference!).

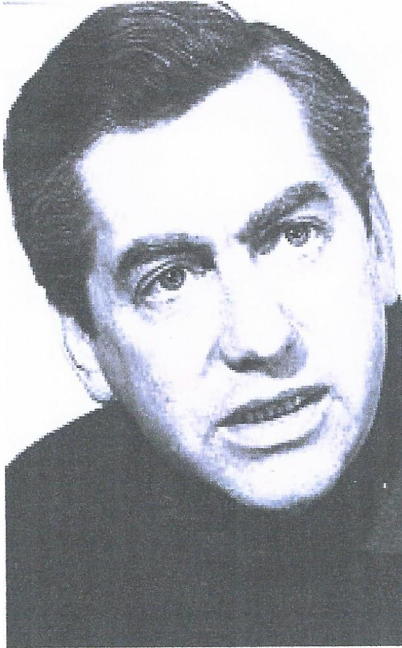
Being a member of a local Drama Group - the North Bersted Players - we got together about 15 of us, and duly reported at the Royal Hotel, where a certain amount was filmed, at 9 o'clock on a sunny Sunday morning.

My wife and I had to be in full evening dress with two or three others, whilst a number of our men were issued with police uniforms (for holding back the crowds!) All we had to do was stand at the top of the steps outside the Royal, looking very important, while the cameramen lined up their gear and took light readings before filming. We then had to disappear whilst the actors took our place and they started filming. The only bit of me I recognised in the film was my semi-back view near a window inside the Royal holding a glass of beer!

They gave us a chicken lunch from a mobile canteen and we got £5 each for our day's efforts. The gent whose puppets and voice were used was given about £40 a day for doing nothing most of the time but had to be on call all the time. The poor fellow was bored to tears



Joe Hasting resident P&J man at Chessington Zoo



The Punch and Judy Man: Interview with Tony Hancock

Comedy can be more compelling in its effect on people than drama. Comedy is destructive of bad values and I think it should be. The way is to show, not to point.

If you do something that people recognise, it is a much better thing than pointing your finger out from your rather shaky greenhouse and saying 'That's wrong, that's wrong and that's wrong'.

In *The Punch and Judy Man* we try to show the relationship between a woman and the showman to whom she is married. Her values are a waste of time, they have nothing, she's supporting the wrong things and in the end she sees this.

He is also vulnerable: if you are going to make him perfect and her imperfect, it doesn't work, it's not life. Sometimes she attacks him, and she's right. Sometimes he's lazy and this is right: but in the end, I think he knows more about the true values of life than she does.

The Punch and Judy show itself is perhaps the most violent form of comedy, as well as one of the oldest. Put the baby in the mincer and comes out a string of sausages... I don't like the present trend in 'sick' comedy. *Punch and Judy* is not sick. It has a strong sort of purity.

The Punch and Judy Man is a cold, close look at the situation of marriage, which is pretty ghastly anyway, and there is no happy ending, only a faint hope. When marriage gets scratchy and when after some years you know the other's weaknesses, you also know how to go for them.

This works from both sides. The experienced destroyer of an individual because two happen to live together, that's really the theme.

One sees so many times that marriage as a relationship doesn't work. People keep up the illusion and know how hard to hit each other (in the subtlest possible way) and become expert in tearing each other apart. That's really the feel of the thing.

Being brought up in a seaside town, you find these poor, underground entertainers who are absolutely honest... Every time I go to a seaside town I find these underground people, maybe a *Punch and Judy* man, a dedicated man to his own trade, for what else can he do?

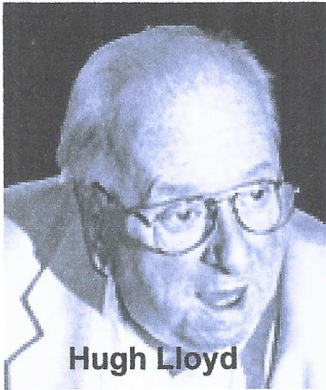
This is a film about people who are acceptable and real, as against *The Rebel* which was a fake thing, badly done in some ways from my point of view. I am not getting away from the Hancock's Half Hour kind of humour, you can't do that; instead you try to move on a bit.

In *The Punch and Judy Man* there are some tough scenes between Sylvia and me, which even I watched in the rushes with a certain amount of jolt. We did all of these in the first week, which was rather embarrassing because people immediately expect a comic to be funny and I wasn't.

The new film is not in colour. Colour slows down comedy. It is too peaceful... Some films have to be made in black and white; look at the wonderful quality they got out of *Sweet Smell of Success*...

(*'Films and Filming'* 1962)

Memories of Filming- Hugh Lloyd



We shot the film in Bognor Regis on the Sussex coast where at one point we drank the town out of vodka. On the first night we checked into a local hotel on the seafront and I went up to my room to have a bath before going downstairs to meet the others for a drink in the bar. When I turned the taps on, nothing happened. I assumed there must have been something wrong with the water system and decided to go for a drink.

Chatting away, I forgot all my intentions of having a bath, and a little while later there was a tremendous crash in the restaurant. Everybody dashed in to see what had happened and discovered that part of the ceiling had caved in. The culprit? Me!



While I had been down in the bar drinking, the water which for some unknown reason had been temporarily cut off had come on again. I hadn't switched the taps off properly after trying them and the bath had overflowed. The management were very good and assured me it wasn't my fault as there had been no warning about the water being off and actually they were very pleased as they told me they could get a brand-new ceiling on the insurance!

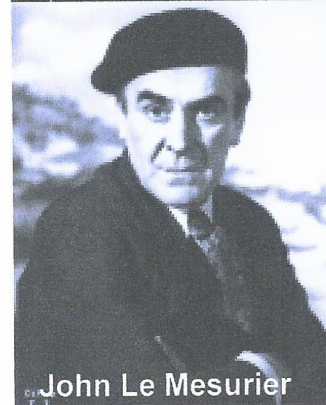
One of the cast, who was also a regular in the Half Hour's, was a marvellous, warm-hearted Italian called Mario Fabrizi. He was a wonderful character, a bit like Sam Costa. He was supposed to be an Italian Count or something and he loved the good life in every way, and Tony adored him. Mario was a great puller of women. He used to sit in the hotel looking out over the seafront and one of the cast only had to remark on an attractive girl passing by and within minutes Mario had dashed outside and never failed to bring the particular lady back.



Some of the Punch and Judy Man scenes were filmed at Elstree Studios in Hertfordshire. One morning, Mario, John Le Mesurier and I were doing a scene in which we were waiting for Tony to join us in a local pub. We started shooting at around 8.00 am. John and I were given pints of ordinary beer to drink, but Mario insisted on having bottles of Green Shield Worthington, which was pretty potent stuff.

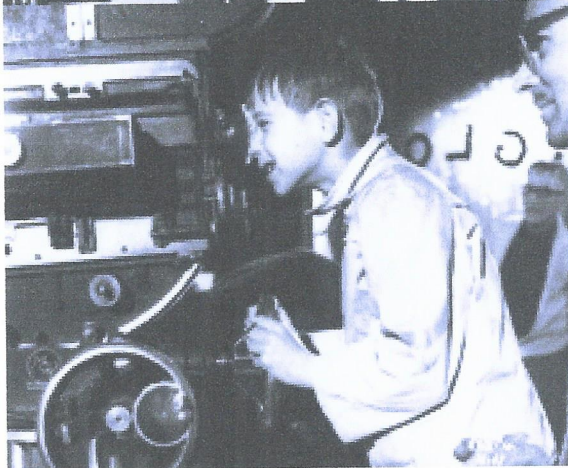
Every time we shot a take, John and I would just take a sip from our glasses, but Mario would knock back the whole bottle and demand another one. The trouble was that the scene took about twelve takes.

By the time it came to Tony's entrance, Mario had fallen off his bar stool and had passed out drunk on the floor! Of course, filming had to be abandoned for the rest of the day but Tony wasn't in the least bit annoyed. Far from it. He thought the whole episode was hysterically funny.



We enjoyed filming 'Punch and Judy Man' and took over Bognor Regis. Despite the fact that the direction over emphasised the domestic drama at the expense of comedy, Tony's rich portrayal ensured that the film is still much loved today.

On Location in Bognor Regis

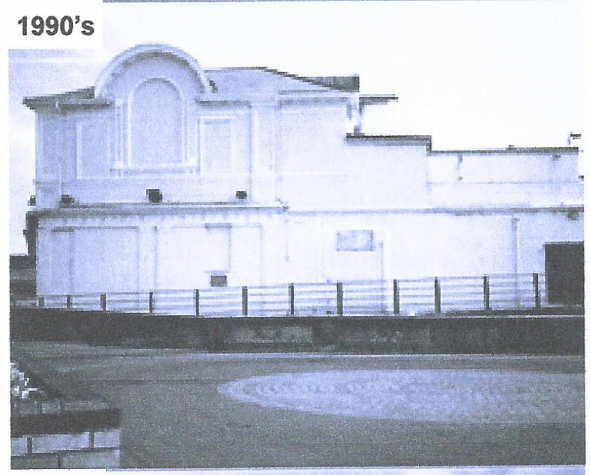


In the scene above, Wally retreats from the rain into an ice cream parlour with a small boy, played by Sylvia Syms' nephew, Nicholas Webb. The boy asks for a large sundae (a "Piltown Glory") and Wally orders the same. Then, because he is uncertain of the correct etiquette for eating the dessert, Wally carefully watches the boy and imitates his every move.

The scene was done in several takes and in between each take Hancock would rinse his mouth with vodka to remove the taste of the ice cream.

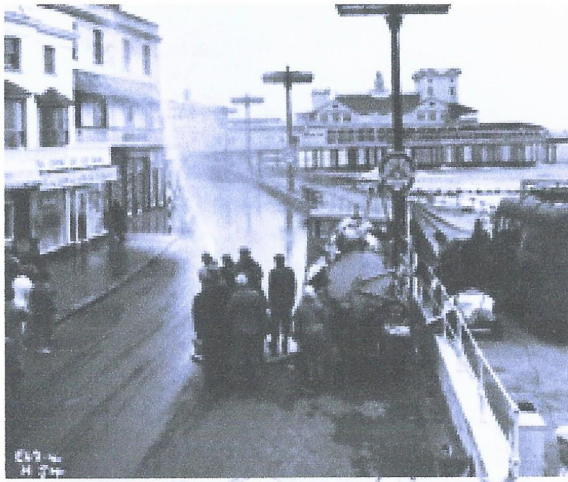


Bognor Locations found by Elaine Schollar in the 90's



Reel streets

http://www.reelstreets.com/index.php?option=com_films_online&task=view&id=801&film_ref=punch_judy_man



An article in the Bognor Regis Post (Sat May 12th 1962, Tony's 38th birthday) asked for local extras to appear in the film. Nearly 2,000 people arrived at the Royal Norfolk Hotel, where they had to leave their names and addresses, for them to be contacted at a later time. A number of residents were selected to play their own part in this film. Kay Sharp took her 5 year old son along to where the filming was taking place and Peter ended up being an 'extra' in the film which included him proudly queuing up for his cup of tea at break time. It was filmed out of season so the beach scenes were flipping cold. Cinema managers were also advised that they should invite the local Punch and Judy man to attend the cinema, during the previous week's films, as an advertising feature for the forthcoming shoot. Tony was filming in Spencer Street, Bognor on Friday 18th May 1962. Hattie Jacques spent one day filming at the end of May 62.

Relaxing between takes 7.6.62

Tony Hancock
Tue 7. 1962

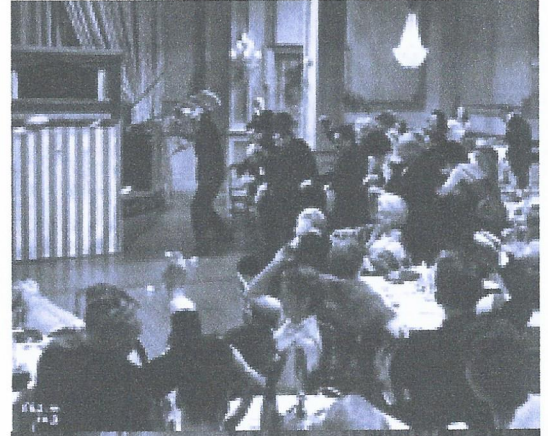
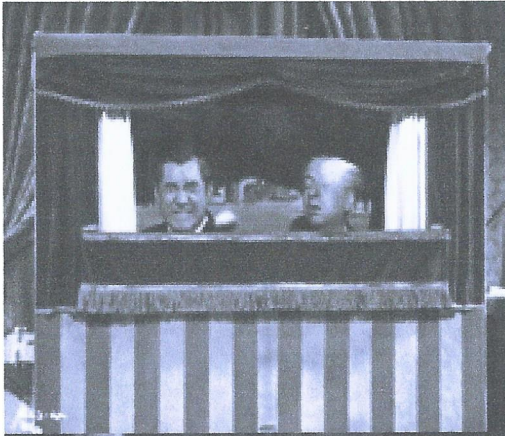
Shooting beach scenes (Boynor Kaye)
from the film
for his latest film "The Beach & Jackie Mann"

www.tonyhancockarchives.org.uk



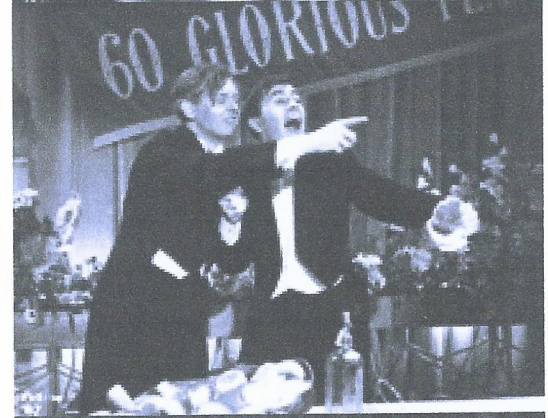
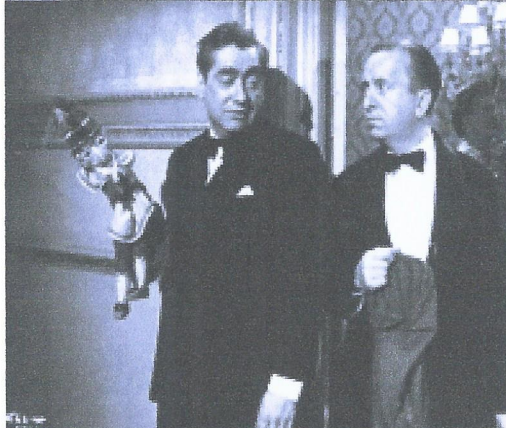
www.tonyhancockarchives.org.uk

Filming at Elstree





The still (left) shows Wally angrily ramming a bunch of flowers up a porcelain pig's backside. The script originally called for the flowers to go up the pig's nose, but Hancock argued that the joke had to be stronger and so a prop with a suitable orifice was made. In the next scene Delia discovers the flower-adorned pig, but the audience has to guess how it got that way.

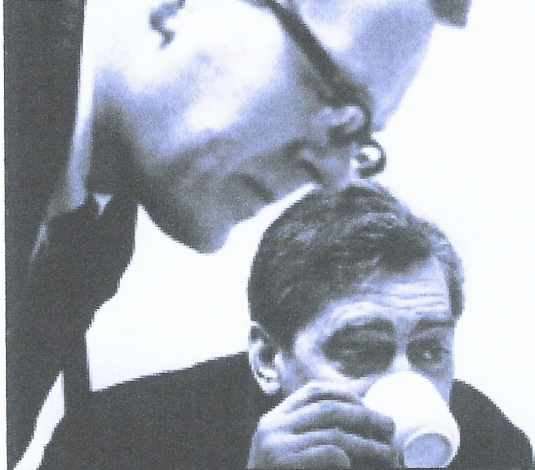


The Punch & Judy Man *Deleted scenes*

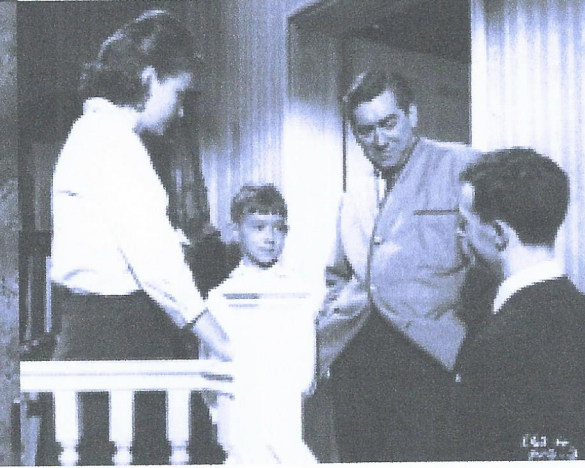
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cc-Vd5ivy-4>

Above link
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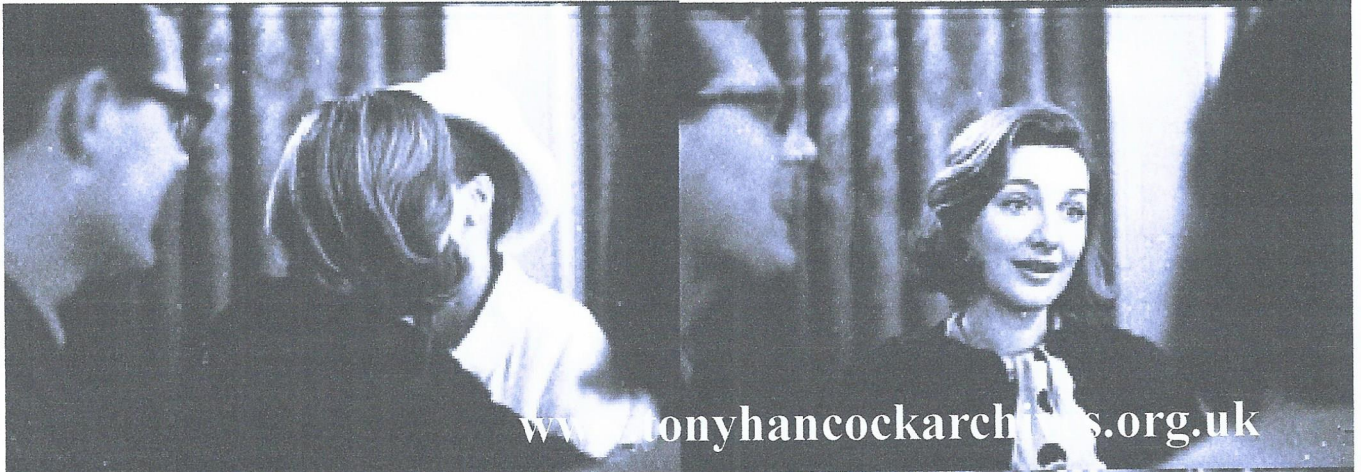
Behind the scenes



During what amounted to a series of conversations with Philip Oakes (pictured left), Hancock revisited his formative years spent in Bournemouth on the south coast of England. Casting his mind back some thirty years, he'd recall the rich atmosphere that occupied the busy seaside town, and the colourful and unconventional characters that made their living from the district.



Premier Party at the Savoy Hotel London



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Acknowledgements

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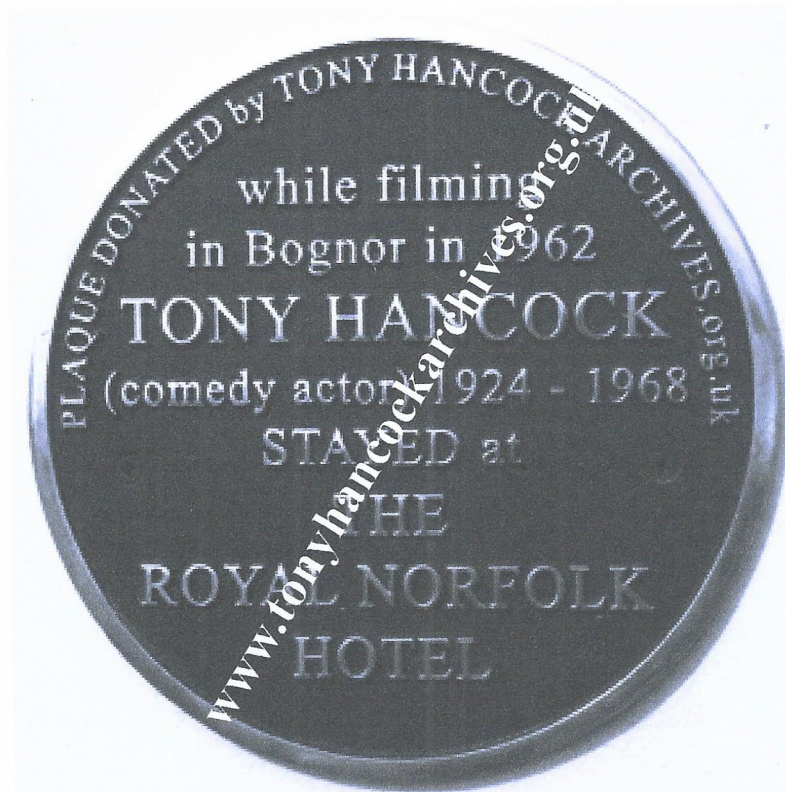
reunited with Mr Punch

at Birmingham in 1998

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBrfzWtJf_4

Above link operative at

time of writing



Many areas of Bognor Regis became immortalised in the film, the Pier and Town Hall, alongside other areas such as Spencer Street, Belmont St., and York Road, beside the Esplanade and Royal Hotel, where in fact the film crew stayed. Tony Hancock himself resided at the Royal Norfolk Hotel during filming.

A plaque to mark the fact has been presented to The Royal Norfolk Hotel
by
The Tony Hancock Archives

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