



40 years of Brown Rigg School

## The Colditz Connection

Despite its somewhat stark appearance and the well held misconception, Brown Rigg was *Never* a prisoner of war camp, however, it did take on the appearance of one, albeit only for two weeks, when Yorkshire Television arrived in 1993 to use the place, by now deserted and in extremely run down condition, as a location for a spoof TV drama, "Stalag Luft".

The programme was to be a pilot for a proposed, full blown, comedy series and it featured some extremely high profile actors, most notably Nicholas Lyndhurst who became a household name as Rodney in "Only Fools And Horses". Also starring as British prisoners of war were the multi talented Stephen Fry and Geoffrey Palmer, best known for his TV role in "Butterflies".

The arrival of the film crew provoked a huge amount of interest locally, not least because they were auditioning for people to appear as extras in the film, and offering the princely sum of £30 a day to those willing to take on the role of prisoners or German guards.

The entire 29 acre site was pressed into service and, with the cunning use of props, was turned into a reasonable facsimile of a prison camp, the long wooden former school dormitories now doubling as the prisoners accommodation while the green grass area, known during the school years as the "Centre Lawn" was the prisoners exercise area.

Unfortunately, after the pilot episode was made, the producers decided not to continue with the series, so there was only the one TV performance of "Stalag Luft" and Brown Rigg's time as a film location proved to be very brief indeed.