

## Mr. Robinson: My Experience Meeting Christopher Eccleston

This term, Buile Hill received a visit from Salford-born actor, Christopher Eccleston: the critically-acclaimed star who appeared in *28 Days Later*, *Thor: The Dark World* and, most recently, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Teaching Assistant Mr. Robinson talks about what it took to get Christopher here, and why visiting Buile Hill was so important to him.

How did you feel when Christopher Eccleston came in?

It was really good. To be honest, I felt relieved, as it took a while to pin him down. I contacted him through his agent, but it took a lot of emails going backwards and forwards before anything could be finalised. The problem was, he was in the middle of playing *Macbeth* at a theatre in London for six months, so it was a matter of finding the best time in his schedule to make it up to Salford. But we got there, in the end, and I was very pleased with how it all came together.

How long did it take you to get Christopher Eccleston to do it?

It took eighteen months; a year and a half! Like I said, he's a busy man; when he wasn't doing Shakespeare he was working on television programmes for the BBC, or in America doing stuff for HBO [an American TV studio].

What was the point of bringing Christopher Eccleston to Buile Hill?

The point of Christopher Eccleston coming in was to help the Year 11 students learn about the play *Macbeth*. Since he'd spent a lot of time playing the role for the Royal Shakespeare Company, he obviously knew a lot about the character of *Macbeth*, as well as the different meanings behind the text. He came in to do a talk to the Year 11 cohort about the play and its different characters, and then he addressed questions from the audience. Hopefully, the students managed to benefit from all that when they did their GCSEs.

So is Christopher Eccleston a big fan of *Macbeth*?

Funny you should ask: that came up when he was fielding questions. He did admit that a lot of people find the play boring and hard going, and that he prefers to do more modern material. He said he never really studied the play at school himself, since working-class kids were never expected to understand Shakespeare.

However, he didn't let that stop him, and from a very young age he promised himself and his parents he would play *Macbeth* someday. So starring in that play was a personal accomplishment for him, because it showed you don't have to be limited by what others think of you.

Were there any other reasons he chose to visit?

Some children, because they come from Salford, have a negative view of themselves because of the reputation attached to the Salford area. The reason Christopher Eccleston wanted to visit was to show that he still managed to be successful and achieve his dream: despite growing up in Langworthy, despite going to a public school in Little Hulton, despite his parents not having tons of money. And he wanted to make it clear to the kids like him in this school that they can achieve their dreams, too.

Does he ever plan on coming back?

As he was leaving, Christopher said that he'd like to come back and repeat the experience before next year's exams. So, watch this space! Hopefully, this time, it takes a little less time than eighteen months.