

= John Le Mesurier =

John Le Mesurier ( / l? ?m??r / , born John Elton Le Mesurier Halliley ; 5 April 1912 ? 15 November 1983 ) was an English actor . He is perhaps best remembered for his comedic role as Sergeant Arthur Wilson in the BBC television situation comedy Dad 's Army ( 1968 ? 77 ) . A self @-@ confessed " jobbing actor " , Le Mesurier appeared in more than 120 films across a range of genres , normally in smaller supporting parts .

Le Mesurier became interested in the stage as a young adult and enrolled at the Fay Compton Studio of Dramatic Art in 1933 . From there he took a position in repertory theatre and made his stage debut in September 1934 at the Palladium Theatre in Edinburgh in the J. B. Priestley play Dangerous Corner . He later accepted an offer to work with Alec Guinness in a John Gielgud production of Hamlet . He first appeared on television in 1938 as Seigneur de Miolans in the BBC broadcast of The Marvellous History of St Bernard . During the Second World War Le Mesurier was posted to British India , as a captain with the Royal Tank Regiment . He returned to acting and made his film debut in 1948 , starring in the second feature comedy short Death in the Hand , opposite Esme Percy and Ernest Jay . He undertook a number of roles on television in 1951 including Educating Archie alongside Tony Hancock .

Le Mesurier had a prolific film career , appearing mostly in comedies , usually in roles portraying figures of authority such as army officers , policemen and judges . As well as Hancock 's Half Hour , Le Mesurier appeared in Hancock 's two principal films , The Rebel and The Punch and Judy Man . In 1971 Le Mesurier received his only award : a British Academy of Film and Television Arts " Best Television Actor " award for his lead performance in Dennis Potter 's television play Traitor ; it was one of the few lead roles he played during the course of his career .

He took a relaxed approach to acting and felt that his parts were those of " a decent chap all at sea in a chaotic world not of his own making " . Le Mesurier was married three times , most notably to the actress Hattie Jacques . A heavy drinker of alcohol for most of his life , Le Mesurier died in 1983 , aged 71 , from a stomach haemorrhage , brought about by a complication of cirrhosis of the liver . After his death , critics reflected that , for an actor who normally took minor roles , the viewing public were " enormously fond of him " .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Le Mesurier was born John Elton Le Mesurier Halliley , in Bedford on 5 April 1912 . His parents were Charles Elton Halliley , a solicitor , and Amy Michelle ( née Le Mesurier ) , whose family were from Alderney in the Channel Islands ; both families were affluent , with histories of government service or work in the legal profession . While John was an infant the family settled in Bury St Edmunds , in West Suffolk . He was sent to school , first to Grenham House in Kent , and later to Sherborne School in Dorset where one of his fellow @-@ pupils was Alan Turing . Le Mesurier disliked both schools intensely , citing insensitive teaching methods and an inability to accept individualism . He later wrote : " I resented Sherborne for its closed mind , its collective capacity for rejecting anything that did not conform to the image of manhood as portrayed in the ripping yarns of a scouting manual " .

From an early age Le Mesurier had been interested in acting and performing ; as a child he had frequently been taken to the West End of London to watch Ralph Lynn and Tom Walls perform in the popular series of farces at the Aldwych Theatre . These experiences fuelled an early desire to make a career on the stage . After leaving school he was initially persuaded to follow his father 's line of work , as an articled clerk at Greene & Greene , a firm of solicitors in Bury St Edmunds ; in his spare time he took part in local amateur dramatics . In 1933 he decided to leave the legal profession , and in September of that year enrolled at the Fay Compton Studio of Dramatic Art ; a fellow @-@ student was Alec Guinness , with whom he became close friends . In July 1934 , the studio staged

their annual public revue in which both Le Mesurier and Guinness took part ; among the judges for the event were John Gielgud , Leslie Henson , Alfred Hitchcock and Ivor Novello . Le Mesurier received a Certificate of Fellowship , while Guinness won the Fay Compton prize . After the revue , rather than remain at the studio for further tuition Le Mesurier took an opportunity to join the Edinburgh @-@ based Millicent Ward Repertory Players at a salary of £ 3.10s ( £ 3 @.@ 50 ) a week .

= = = Career = = =

= = = = 1934 ? 46 = = = =

The Millicent Ward repertory company typically staged evening performances of three @-@ act plays ; the works changed each week , and rehearsals were held during the daytime for the following week 's production . Under his birth name John Halliley , Le Mesurier made his stage debut in September 1934 at the Palladium Theatre in Edinburgh in the J. B. Priestley play *Dangerous Corner* , along with three other newcomers to the company . The reviewer for *The Scotsman* thought that Le Mesurier was well cast in the role . Appearances in *While Parents Sleep* and *Cavalcade* were followed by a break , as problems arose with the lease of the theatre . Le Mesurier then accepted an offer to appear with Alec Guinness in a John Gielgud production of *Hamlet* , which began in Streatham in the spring of 1935 and later toured the English provinces . Le Mesurier understudied Anthony Quayle 's role of Guildenstern , and otherwise appeared in the play as an extra .

In July 1935 , Le Mesurier was hired by the Oldham repertory company , based at the Coliseum Theatre ; his first appearance with them was in a version of the Wilson Collison play , *Up in Mabel 's Room* ; he was sacked after one week for missing a performance after oversleeping . In September 1935 , he moved to the Sheffield Repertory Theatre to appear in *Mary , Mary , Quite Contrary* , and also played Malvolio in Shakespeare 's *Twelfth Night* . Le Mesurier later commented on the slow progress of his career : " had I known it was going to take so long , I might well have given the whole thing up " . In 1937 he joined the Croydon Repertory Theatre , where he appeared in nine productions in 1936 and 1937 . During this period Le Mesurier changed his professional name from John Halliley to John Le Mesurier ; his biographer Graham McCann observes that " he never bothered , at least in public , to explain the reason for his decision " . Le Mesurier used his new name for the first time in the September 1937 production of *Love on the Dole* .

Le Mesurier first appeared on television in 1938 , thus becoming one of the medium 's pioneering actors . His initial appearance was in a production of *The Marvellous History of St Bernard* in which he appeared as Seigneur de Miolans in a play adapted from a 15th @-@ century manuscript by Henri Ghéon . Alongside the television appearance , he continued to appear on stage in Edinburgh and Glasgow with the Howard and Wyndham Players , at least until late 1938 when he returned to London and re @-@ joined Croydon Repertory Theatre . His second spell with the troupe ended a few months later when , from May to October 1939 he appeared in *Gas Light* , first in London and subsequently on tour . The reviewer in *The Manchester Guardian* considered that Le Mesurier gave " a faultless performance " , and that " the character is not overemphasised . One may praise it best by saying that Mr. Le Mesurier gives one a really uncomfortable feeling in the stomach " .

From November to December 1939 , Le Mesurier toured Britain in a production of *Goodness , How Sad* , during which time he met the director 's daughter , June Melville , whom he married in April 1940 . After spending January and February 1940 in *French Without Tears* at the Grand Theatre in Blackpool , he returned to London where he was employed by the Brixton Theatre , appearing in a series of productions . In his time in repertory , Le Mesurier took on a variety of roles across a number of genres ; his biographer Graham McCann observed that his range included " comedies and tragedies , thrillers and fantasies , tense courtroom dramas and frenzied farces , Shakespeare and Ibsen , Sheridan and Wilde , Molière and Shaw , Congreve and Coward . The range was remarkable " .

In September 1940 Le Mesurier 's rented home was hit by a German bomb , destroying all his possessions , including his call @-@ up papers . In the same bombing raid , the theatre in Brixton in which he was working was also hit . A few days later he reported for basic training with the Royal Armoured Corps ; in June 1941 he was commissioned into the Royal Tank Regiment . He served in Britain until 1943 when he was posted to British India where he spent the rest of the war . Le Mesurier later claimed that he had had " a comfortable war , with captaincy thrust upon me , before I was demobbed in 1946 " .

= = = 1946 ? 59 = = =

On his return to Britain , Le Mesurier returned to acting , although he initially struggled for work , finding only a few minor roles . In February 1948 he made his film debut in the second feature comedy short *Death in the Hand* , which starred Esme Percy and Ernest Jay . He followed this with equally small roles in the 1949 film *Mother Riley 's New Venture* ? although his name was misspelt on the credits as " Le Meseurier " ? and the 1950 crime film *Dark Interval* . During the same period he also frequently appeared on stage in Birmingham .

Le Mesurier undertook a number of roles on television in 1951 , including that of Doctor Forrest in *The Railway Children* , the blackmailer Eduardo Lucas in *Sherlock Holmes : The Second Stain* , and Joseph in the nativity play *A Time to be Born* . In the same year Tony Hancock joined Le Mesurier 's second wife , Hattie Jacques ( the couple had married in 1949 following his divorce from June Melville earlier that year ) in the radio series *Educating Archie* . Le Mesurier and Hancock became friends ; they would often go for drinking sessions around Soho , where they ended up in jazz clubs . When Hancock left *Educating Archie* in 1954 to work on his own radio show , Hancock 's *Half Hour* , he maintained his friendship with Le Mesurier , and Jacques joined the cast for the fourth series of Hancock 's show , in 1956 .

In 1952 , as well as appearing in the films *Blind Man 's Bluff* and *Mother Riley Meets the Vampire* , Le Mesurier also appeared as the doctor in *Angry Dust* at the New Torch Theatre , London . Parnell Bradbury , writing in *The Times* , thought Le Mesurier had played the role extraordinarily well , although Harold Hobson , writing in *The Sunday Times* , thought that " the trouble with Mr. John Le Mesurier 's Dr. Weston is that he approaches the man too snarlingly ... [ it is ] a notion of genius that would be unacceptable anywhere outside Victorian melodrama " . In 1953 , he had a role as a bureaucrat in the short film *The Pleasure Garden* , which won the *Prix de Fantasia Poetique* at the Cannes Film Festival in 1954 . After a long run of small roles in second features , his 1955 portrayal of the registrar in Roy Boulting 's comedy *Josephine and Men* , " jerked him out of the rut " , according to Philip Oakes .

Following his appearance in *Josephine and Men* , John and Roy Boulting cast Le Mesurier as a psychiatrist in their 1956 Second World War film , *Private 's Progress* . The cast featured many leading British actors of the time , including Ian Carmichael and Richard Attenborough . Dilys Powell , reviewing for *The Sunday Times* , thought that the cast was " embellished " by Le Mesurier 's presence , among others . Later in 1956 Le Mesurier again appeared alongside Attenborough , with small roles in Jay Lewis 's *The Baby and the Battleship* and Roy Boulting 's *Brothers in Law* , the latter which also featured Carmichael and Terry @-@ Thomas . He was also active in television , in a variety of roles in episodes of *Douglas Fairbanks Presents* , a series of short dramas .

Le Mesurier 's friendship with Tony Hancock provided a further source of work when Hancock asked him to be one of the regular supporting actors in Hancock 's *Half Hour* , when it moved from radio to television . Le Mesurier subsequently appeared in seven episodes of the show between 1957 and 1960 , and then in two episodes of a follow @-@ up series entitled *Hancock* . In 1958 he appeared in ten films , among them Roy Boulting 's comedy *Happy Is the Bride* , about which Dilys Powell wrote in *The Sunday Times* : " [ M ] y vote for the most entertaining contributions ... goes to the two fathers , John Le Mesurier and Cecil Parker " . In 1959 , the busiest year of his career , Le Mesurier took part in 13 films , including *I 'm All Right Jack* , which was critically and commercially the most successful of Le Mesurier 's credited films that year , although he also had an uncredited role as a doctor in Ben @-@ Hur .

===== 1960 ? 68 =====

Le Mesurier appeared in nine films in 1960 , as well as nine television programmes , including episodes of Hancock 's Half Hour , Saber of London and Danger Man . His work the following year included a part in Peter Sellers 's directorial debut Mr. Topaze , a film which failed both critically and commercially . He provided the voice of Mr. Justice Byrne in a recording of excerpts from the transcript of R v Penguin Books Ltd . ? the court case concerning the publication of D. H. Lawrence 's Lady Chatterley 's Lover ? which also featured Michael Hordern and Maurice Denham . J.W. Lambert , reviewing for The Sunday Times , wrote that Le Mesurier gave " precisely the air of confident incredulity which the learned gentleman exhibited in court " . Later that year he played Hancock 's office manager in the first of Tony Hancock 's two principal film vehicles , The Rebel .

In 1962 he appeared in Wendy Toye 's comedy film We Joined the Navy before teaming up again with Peter Sellers in Only Two Can Play , Sidney Gilliat 's film of the novel That Uncertain Feeling by Kingsley Amis ; Powell noted with pleasure " the armour of his gravity pierced by polite bewilderment " . She compared Le Mesurier with the well @-@ known American straight @-@ face comedian , John McGiver . After appearing in another Sellers film in 1962 ? Waltz of the Toreadors ? Le Mesurier joined him in the 1963 comedy The Wrong Arm of the Law . Powell again reviewed the pair 's film , commenting that " I thought I knew by now every shade in the acting of John Le Mesurier ( not that I could ever get tired of any of them ) ; but there seems a new shade here " . In the same year he appeared in a third Sellers film , The Pink Panther , as a defence lawyer , and in the second Tony Hancock vehicle , The Punch and Judy Man . Le Mesurier played Sandman in the latter film ; Powell wrote that the role " allowed a gentler and subtler character than usual " . He also appeared in a series of advertisements for Homepride flour in 1964 , providing the voice @-@ over for the animated character Fred the Flourgrader ; he continued as the voice until 1983 .

In a change from his usual comedic roles , Le Mesurier portrayed the Reverend Jonathan Ives in Jacques Tourneur 's 1965 science fiction film , City Under the Sea , before returning to comedy in Where the Spies Are , a comedy @-@ adventure film directed by Val Guest , which starred David Niven . In 1966 Le Mesurier also played the role of Colonel Maynard in the ITV sitcom George and the Dragon , with Sid James and Peggy Mount . The programme ran to four series between 1966 and 1968 , totalling 26 episodes . He also took a role in four episodes of a Coronation Street spin @-@ off series , Pardon the Expression , in which he starred opposite Arthur Lowe .

===== 1968 ? 77 =====

In 1968 Le Mesurier was offered a role in a new BBC situation comedy playing an upper @-@ class Sergeant Arthur Wilson in Dad 's Army , although he was the second choice after Robert Dorning . Le Mesurier was unsure about taking the part as he was finishing the final series of George and the Dragon and did not want another long @-@ term television role . He was persuaded both by an increase in his fee ? to £ 262 10s ( £ 262 @.@ 50 ) per episode ? and by the casting of his old friend Clive Dunn as Corporal Jones . Le Mesurier was initially unsure of how to portray his character , and was advised by series writer Jimmy Perry to make the part his own . Le Mesurier decided to base the character on himself , later writing that " I thought , why not just be myself , use an extension of my own personality and behave rather as I had done in the army ? So I always left a button or two undone , and had the sleeve of my battle dress slightly turned up . I spoke softly , issued commands as if they were invitations ( the sort not likely to be accepted ) and generally assumed a benign air of helplessness " . Perry later observed that " we wanted Wilson to be the voice of sanity ; he has become John " .

Nicholas de Jongh , in a tribute written after Le Mesurier 's death , suggested that it was in the role of Wilson that Le Mesurier became a star . His interaction with Arthur Lowe 's character Captain George Mainwaring was described by The Times as " a memorable part of one of television 's most popular shows " . Tise Vahimagi , writing for the British Film Institute 's Screenonline , agreed , and commented that " it was the hesitant exchanges of one @-@ upmanship between Le Mesurier 's

Wilson , a figure of delicate gentility , and Arthur Lowe 's pompous , middle class platoon leader Captain Mainwaring , that added to its finest moments " . Le Mesurier enjoyed making the series , particularly the fortnight the cast would spend in Thetford each year filming the outside scenes . The programme lasted for nine series over nine years , and covered eighty episodes , ending in 1977 .

During the filming of the series in 1969 , Le Mesurier was flown to Venice over a series of weekends to appear in the film *Midas Run* , an Alf Kjellin @-@ directed crime film that also starred Richard Crenna , Anne Heywood and Fred Astaire . Le Mesurier became friends with Astaire during the filming and they often dined together in a local cafe while watching horse @-@ racing on television . In 1971 Norman Cohen directed a feature film of *Dad 's Army* ; Le Mesurier also appeared as Wilson in a stage adaptation , which toured the UK in 1975 ? 76 . Following the success of *Dad 's Army* , Le Mesurier recorded the single " *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square* " with " *Hometown* " on the reverse side ( the latter with Arthur Lowe ) . This , and an album , *Dad 's Army* , featuring the whole cast , was released on the Warner label in 1975 .

In between the annual shooting of *Dad 's Army* , Le Mesurier acted in films , including the role of the prison governor opposite Noël Coward in the 1969 Peter Collinson @-@ directed *The Italian Job* . The cinema historian Amy Sargeant likened Le Mesurier 's role to the " mild demeanour " of his Sergeant Wilson character . In 1970 , Le Mesurier appeared in Ralph Thomas 's *Doctor in Trouble* as the purser ; he also made an appearance in Vincente Minnelli 's *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever* , a romantic fantasy musical .

In 1971 Le Mesurier played the lead role in Dennis Potter 's television play *Traitor* , in which he portrayed a " boozy British aristocrat who became a spy for the Soviets " ; his performance won him a British Academy of Film and Television Arts " Best Television Actor " award . Writing for the British Film Institute , Sergio Angelini considered " Le Mesurier is utterly compelling throughout in an atypical role " . Chris Dunkley , writing in *The Times* , described the performance as " a superbly persuasive portrait , made vividly real by one of the best performances Mr Mesurier [ sic ] has ever given " . The reviewer for *The Sunday Times* agreed , saying that Le Mesurier , " after a lifetime supporting other actors with the strength of a pit @-@ prop , gets the main part ; he looks , sounds and feels exactly right " . Reviewing for *The Guardian* , Nancy Banks @-@ Smith called the role " his Hamlet " , and said that it was worth waiting for . Although delighted to have won the award , Le Mesurier commented that the aftermath proved " something of an anticlimax . No exciting offers of work came in " .

Le Mesurier made a cameo appearance in Val Guest 's 1972 sex comedy *Au Pair Girls* , and starred alongside Warren Mitchell and Dandy Nichols in Bob Kellett 's *The Alf Garnett Saga* . In 1974 he played a police inspector in a similar Val Guest comedy , *Confessions of a Window Cleaner* , alongside Robin Askwith and Antony Booth . The following year he also narrated *Bod* , an animated children 's programme from the BBC ; there were thirteen episodes in total .

== == 1977 ? 83 == ==

In 1977 Le Mesurier portrayed Jacob Marley in a BBC television adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* , which starred Michael Hordern as Ebenezer Scrooge ; Sergio Angelini , writing for the British Film Institute about Le Mesurier 's portrayal , considered that " although never frightening , he does exert a strong sense of melancholy , his every move and inflection seemingly tinged with regret and remorse " . In 1979 he portrayed Sir Gawain in Walt Disney 's *Unidentified Flying Oddball* , directed by Russ Mayberry , and co @-@ starring Dennis Dugan , Jim Dale and Kenneth More . The film , an adaptation of Mark Twain 's novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur 's Court* , was hailed by *Time Out* as " an intelligent film with a cohesive plot and an amusing script " and cited it as " one of the better Disney attempts to hop on the sci @-@ fi bandwagon " . The reviewers praised the cast , particularly Kenneth More 's Arthur and Le Mesurier 's Gawain , which they said were " rather touchingly portrayed as friends who have grown old together " .

Le Mesurier played *The Wise Old Bird* in the 1980 BBC Radio 4 series *The Hitchhiker 's Guide to the Galaxy* and appeared on the same station as Bilbo Baggins in the 1981 radio version of *The Lord of the Rings* . In the spring of 1980 he took the role of David Bliss alongside Constance

Cummings ? as Judith Bliss ? in a production of Noël Coward 's 1920s play Hay Fever . Writing for The Observer , Robert Cushman thought that Le Mesurier played the role with " deeply grizzled torpor " , while Michael Billington , reviewing for The Guardian , saw him as a " grey , gentle wisp of a man , full of half @-@ completed gestures and seraphic smiles " .

He took on the role of Father Mowbray in Granada Television 's 1981 adaptation of Brideshead Revisited . He guest @-@ starred in episodes of the British comedy television series The Goodies , and in an early episode of Hi @-@ de @-@ Hi ! . His final film appearance was also Peter Sellers 's final cinema role , The Fiendish Plot of Dr. Fu Manchu , which was completed just months before Sellers 's death in July 1980 .

In 1982 Le Mesurier reprised the role of Arthur Wilson for It Sticks Out Half a Mile , a radio sequel to Dad 's Army , in which Wilson had become bank manager of the Frambourne @-@ on @-@ Sea branch , while Arthur Lowe 's character , Captain George Mainwaring , was trying to apply for a loan to renovate the local pier . The death of Lowe in April 1982 meant that only a pilot episode was recorded , and the project was suspended . It was revived in 1982 with Lowe 's role replaced by two other Dad 's Army cast members : Pike , played by Ian Lavender , and Hodges , played by Bill Pertwee . A pilot and twelve episodes were subsequently recorded , and broadcast in 1984 . Le Mesurier also teamed up with another ex @-@ Dad 's Army colleague , Clive Dunn , to record a novelty single , " There Ain 't Much Change from a Pound These Days " / " After All These Years " , which had been written by Le Mesurier 's stepson , David Malin . The single was released on KA Records in 1982 .

He appeared opposite Anthony Hopkins in a four @-@ part television series , A Married Man , in March 1983 , before undertaking the narration on the short film The Passionate Pilgrim , an Eric Morecambe vehicle , which was Morecambe 's last film before his death .

= = = Personal life = = =

In 1939 , Le Mesurier accepted a role in the Robert Morley play Goodness , How Sad ! , directed by June Melville ? whose father Frederick owned a number of theatres , including the Lyceum , Prince 's and Brixton . Melville and Le Mesurier soon began a romance , and were married in April 1940 . Le Mesurier was conscripted into the army in September 1940 ; after his demobilisation in 1946 , he discovered that his wife had become an alcoholic : " She became careless about appointments and haphazard professionally " . As a result , the couple separated and were divorced in 1949 .

In June 1947 , Le Mesurier went with fellow actor Geoffrey Hibbert to the Players ' Theatre in London , where among the performers was Hattie Jacques . Le Mesurier and Jacques began to see each other regularly , although Le Mesurier was still married , albeit estranged from his wife . In 1949 , when his divorce came through , Jacques proposed to Le Mesurier , asking him , " Don 't you think it 's about time we got married ? " . The couple married in November 1949 and had two sons , Robin and Kim .

Jacques began an affair in 1962 with her driver , John Schofield , who gave her the attention and support that Le Mesurier did not . When Jacques decided to move Schofield into the family home , Le Mesurier moved into a separate room and tried to repair the marriage . He later commented about this period : " I could have walked out , but , whatever my feelings , I loved Hattie and the children and I was certain ? I had to be certain ? that we could repair the damage " . The affair caused a downturn in his health ; he collapsed on holiday in Tangier in 1963 and was hospitalised in Gibraltar . He returned to London to find the situation between his wife and her lover was unchanged , which caused a relapse .

During the final stages of the breakdown of his marriage , Le Mesurier met Joan Malin at the Establishment club in Soho in 1963 . The following year he moved out of his marital house , and that day proposed to Joan , who accepted his offer . Le Mesurier allowed Jacques to bring a divorce suit on grounds of his own infidelity , to ensure that the press blamed him for the break @-@ up , thus avoiding any negative publicity for Jacques . Le Mesurier and Malin married in March 1966 . A few months after they were married , Joan began a relationship with Tony Hancock , and left Le Mesurier to move in with the comedian . Hancock was a self @-@ confessed alcoholic by this time ,

and was verbally and physically abusive to Joan during their relationship . After a year together , with Hancock 's violence towards her worsening , Joan attempted suicide ; she subsequently realised that she could no longer live with Hancock and returned to her husband . Despite this , Le Mesurier remained friends with Hancock , calling him " a comic of true genius , capable of great warmth and generosity , but a tormented and unhappy man " .

Le Mesurier was a heavy drinker , but was never noticeably drunk . In 1977 he collapsed in Australia and flew home , where he was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver and ordered to stop drinking . Until then he had not considered himself an alcoholic , although he accepted that " it was the cumulative effect over the years that had done the damage " . It was a year and a half before he drank alcohol again , when he avoided spirits and drank only beer . Jacques claimed that his calculated vagueness was the result of his dependence on cannabis , although according to Le Mesurier the drug was not to his taste ; he smoked it only during his period of abstinence from alcohol . Le Mesurier 's favoured pastime was visiting the jazz clubs around Soho , such as The Establishment or Ronnie Scott 's , and he observed that " listening to artists like Bill Evans , Oscar Peterson or Alan Clare always made life seem that little bit brighter " .

Towards the end of his life Le Mesurier wrote his autobiography , *A Jobbing Actor* ; the book was published in 1984 , after his death . Le Mesurier 's health visibly declined from July 1983 when he was hospitalised for a short time after suffering a haemorrhage . When the condition recurred later in the year he was taken to Ramsgate Hospital ; after saying to his wife , " It 's all been rather lovely " , he slipped into a coma and died on 15 November 1983 , aged 71 . His remains were cremated , and the ashes buried at the Church of St. George the Martyr , Church Hill , Ramsgate . His epitaph reads : " John Le Mesurier . Much loved actor . Resting . " His self @-@ penned death notice in *The Times* of 16 November 1983 stated that he had " conked out " and that he " sadly misses family and friends " .

After Le Mesurier 's death fellow comedian Eric Sykes commented : " I never heard a bad word said against him . He was one of the great drolls of our time " . Le Mesurier 's fellow *Dad 's Army* actor Bill Pertwee mourned the loss of his friend , saying , " It 's a shattering loss . He was a great professional , very quiet but with a lovely sense of humour " . Director Peter Cotes , writing in *The Guardian* , called him one of Britain 's " most accomplished screen character actors " , while *The Times* obituarist observed that he " could lend distinction to the smallest part " .

*The Guardian* reflected on Le Mesurier 's popularity , observing that " No wonder so many whose lives were very different from his own came to be so enormously fond of him " . A memorial service was held on 16 February 1984 at the " Actors ' Church " , St Paul 's , Covent Garden , at which Bill Pertwee gave the eulogy .

= = Approach to acting = =

Le Mesurier took a relaxed approach to acting , saying , " You know the way you get jobbing gardeners ? Well , I 'm a jobbing actor ... as long as they pay me I couldn 't care less if my name is billed above or below the title " . Although Le Mesurier played a wide range of parts , he became known as " an indispensable figure in the gallery of second @-@ rank players which were the glory of the British film industry in its more prolific days " . He felt his characterisations owed " a lot to my customary expression of bewildered innocence " and tried to stress for many of his roles that his parts were those of " a decent chap all at sea in a chaotic world not of his own making " .

Philip French of *The Observer* considered that when playing a representative of bureaucracy , Le Mesurier " registered something ... complex . A feeling of exasperation , disturbance , anxiety [ that ] constantly lurked behind that handsome bloodhound face " . The impression he gave in these roles became an " inimitable brand of bewildered persistence under fire which Le Mesurier made his own " . *The Times* noted of him that although he was best known for his comedic roles , he , " could be equally effective in straight parts " , as evidenced by his BAFTA @-@ award @-@ winning role in *Traitor* . Director Peter Cotes agreed , adding , " he had depths unrealised through the mechanical pieces in which he generally appeared " ; while Philip Oakes considered that , " single @-@ handed , he has made more films watchable , even absorbing , than anyone else around " .

= = Portrayals = =

Le Mesurier 's second and third marriages have been the subject of two BBC Four biographical films , the 2008 Hancock and Joan on Joan Le Mesurier 's affair with Tony Hancock ? with Le Mesurier played by Alex Jennings ? and the 2011 Hattie on Jacques 's affair with John Schofield ? with Le Mesurier played by Robert Bathurst .

= = Filmography and other works = =