

A close brush with the A-listers at The Peacock

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ALL I can say is I'm not about to become a member of the paparazzi - one morning trying to track down the stars is enough for me. Hot on the heels of the BBC's new *Jane Eyre* being filmed at Haddon Hall, Hollywood producer Scott Rudin has chosen the picturesque hall as the backdrop to his screen treatment of Philippa Gregory's historical novel - *The Other Boleyn Girl*. And when we heard a whisper that the stars of the show were staying at the Haddon Estate's award-winning hotel, The Peacock in Rowsley, I felt a little further investigation was in order. Learning that Eric Bana (*The Hulk*), Natalie Portman (*Star Wars*), Scarlett Johansson (*Girl with a Pearl Earring*) and Kristen Scott Thomas (*Four Weddings and The English Patient*) were among the names staying at the hotel, I quickly organised myself up and hit the road. First stop Haddon itself. When the BBC crew was here in May the hall car park was the location for all the buses and trailers which make up the nomadic caravan of support and catering crew.



And in the few minutes of statistics I managed to garner before being ejected by a burly security guard I was able to confirm that Misses Scott Thomas, Johansson and Portman would indeed be having their hair and make-up attended to and grab a bacon sarnie in that very area.

The film set however was a closed area and no matter how nicely I pleaded I was not going to be allowed in.

So it was off to Rowsley, which by now must be becoming a bit blasé to the A-listers sashaying along its pavements in their designer wear.

The post office was closed, so we shall never know if David Morrissey has a penchant for wine gums, but on entering the lunchtime hubbub of the Grouse and Claret I got my first whiff of fame.

Yes, they knew the hollywoodies were shackled up at the Peacock and they themselves were playing host to the production team.

However looking carefully around for a famous face enjoying a beef and ale pie and with an ear open for an American or Australian tone, I was sadly disappointed.

But now it was time for the big one - The Peacock itself.

Hiding behind an old chap who had come in for lunch after a morning's fishing I pretended to be mightily interested in the details of how the River Derwent is performing and which flies are doing best, recorded in the fishing record, whilst scanning the visitor book for any famous names.

My eye was immediately drawn to the address of Hampton Court, but no it was just a suggestion from Eddie Redmayne as to alternative breakfast cereals which the hotel might provide.

Then, there it was, Eric Bana and family Melbourne, Australia



Picture from www.imdb.com

ROYAL VISIT: Scarlett Johansson and Natalie Portman on the set of *The Other Boleyn Girl*.

and the message: "Excellent. Huge thank you for making the entire family feel welcomed and comfortable. A wonderful country surprise."

So it was true. We did have Hollywood royalty in our midst.

As I nervously approached the hotel desk, expecting to be forcibly ejected this time, receptionist Hilary Maguire looked up with a smile.

I explained I was from the Mercury and wanted the inside track on their exalted guests and Hilary seemed happy to oblige.

"There are a number of people

here with us for the week and it's been great," she said. "They go off during the day for filming and then we tend to see them again in the evenings."

"They have been lovely to have here, not heavy duty at all - excuse me while I give this lady her key"

And as I turned to see who it was I realised Kristen Scott Thomas herself was standing beside me at the reception desk.

In the time it took me to think, "It's her, be cool," the tiny figure in the furry gilet was gone and

had happened.

"Was that her?" I said stupidly and Hilary smiled again.

● *The Other Boleyn Girl* is the story of Anne and her lesser-known sister Mary Boleyn, both of whom were rivals for the heart and bed of King Henry VIII.

Eric Bana plays King Henry VIII with Scarlett Johansson as Mary Boleyn and Natalie Portman as Anne and Kristen Scott Thomas as Lady Elizabeth their mother.

The film is set to be released next year.