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local NEWS

On location

North Norfolk, with its mix of heritage and scenery, is a Mecca for movie-makers. Shakespeare in Love was shot on Holkham Beach and The Duchess (starring Keira Knightley) at the hall. All The King's Men (with David Jason) was filmed at various locations including Cromer Pier, Sandringham and Blickling Hall. Farmland at Burnham Deepdale was turned into Korean paddy fields for the James Bond action adventure Die Another Day. Heydon Hall has a string of credits including The Grotesque with Alan Bates and Sting (1977), A Cock and Bull Story, The Go-Between and in Monty Python's village idiot sketch. Little Walsingham Abbey was used for the wartime thriller Glorious 39 starring Julie Christie.



Chick Lit writer and director Tony Britten who has been filming at Gresham's School at Holt where he also shot a film about Benjamin Britten. Picture: ANTONY KELLY

Lights, camera, action – and our office gets a role in film comedy

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Filming has started on a new movie which is set in north Norfolk – starring local places and people, as well as familiar faces from stage and screen.

The Hunny Bell pub at Hunworth, and even the EDP and North Norfolk news office at Cromer, are on the shooting schedule over the next three weeks – as a 20-strong crew captures scenes for the comedy Chick Lit.

It is a tale about four guys in a pub who decide to write an erotic novel to save their beloved watering hole.

It was hatched by Tony Britten from Holt-based Capriol films, which also made In Love with Alma Cogan based on Cromer Pier.

The cast list includes cameos from top actors John Hurt and Dame Eileen Atkins – as a pair of “dodgy” literary agents.

The lead male role of David, the editor of the local paper, is played by Christian McKay who was Lord Hesketh in the motor racing film Rush.



The Cromer office of the Eastern Daily Press and the North Norfolk News where filming has been taking place.

A day in the life of a local newspaper editor

The life of a local newspaper editor is laid bare in Chick Lit as the plot follows David working at the office, playing dominoes at the pub, and secretly penning his saucy book.

He will be seen discussing breaking news such as “vegetable wars” and football team coloured sausages – as well as clashing with his boss. But this is the movies. None of that happens in real life, of course.

Or does it? We have our share of wacky stories. Recently there was the tetchy turkey attacking people in a National Trust parkland, and a mayoral chain ban re-igniting tensions between rival towns.

But what you won't see in the

film is all the unglamorous hours spent sitting at council meetings, and tackling the wealth of parish pump news that is what makes communities, and the newspapers that reflect them, tick.

An “ed cam” following me won't see me playing dominoes down the watering hole – just tackling around nine holes on a Wednesday when our weekly paper, the North Norfolk News, has “gone to bed”.

I haven't written a novel – though I did pen a chapter on the fishing industry in an EDP coffee table book on Norfolk many years ago. More Crab Lit than Chick Lit.

And as far as having disagreements with my bosses... Roll the credits.



Richard Batson, our man at the helm in Cromer.

His wife Jen is played by Caroline Catz, the long-suffering wife of Doc Martin.

David is one of four men – who also include comedian Miles Jupp as Marcus – who meet to play dominoes every week, and write a saucy novel to raise money to keep the pub open.

The novel becomes a success and they have to employ a young actress to role-play the part of the mythical author, who also ends up starring in the film of the book.

Mr Britten said: “It's all about the notion of what would happen if a group of people wrote a book.

“It also ties in with this whole

phenomenon of erotic literature and how it has grown from books like Fifty Shades of Grey.”

Producer Phil Partridge said scenes inside the newspaper office had been shot in a Fakenham solicitors' practice.

The EDP and North Norfolk News office will be used for the front and reception – but the name of the paper changed in the film.



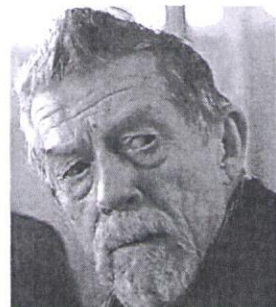
Regulars at the Hunny Bell will also figure as extras.

A book launch will be filmed at Holt bookshop.

Other scenes are being shot at Gresham's School, Blakeney, Morston, the Muckleburgh Collection, and the Epic film studios in Norwich, as well as a couple of days in London.

The film is planned for release next year.

Do you have a story for Richard and his team? Email richard.batson@archant.co.uk



Actors with roles in the new film are, from top, John Hurt, Christian McKay, Dame Eileen Atkins, and left, Caroline Catz.