

# FROM HUDDERSFIELD TO HOLLYWOOD

Profile of Jodie Whittaker by Matt Ottey

Links between Huddersfield and Hollywood are few and far between, with both possessing very differing yet equally appealing features. Hollywood offers bright lights, fame, stardom and wealth, as well as other slightly more questionable attractions, whereas the Dearne Valley countryside offers peace and tranquillity, a sense of community and, of course, Nortonthorpe Cricket Club.

Yet an actress, born and raised in Clayton West, Scissett's neighbouring village, is proving, with astonishing confidence and increasing success, that a Yorkshire girl can cut it on screen with the very best, and I do mean quite literally, the *very* best.

The lady in question is Jodie Whittaker, daughter of ex-Huddersfield Central League president and Nortonthorpe's hardworking groundsman Adrian Whittaker.

Jodie has been an actress for as long as she cares to remember, perhaps not always in front of a playhouse audience (as she did when performing in the play *Bash* at the Trafalgar Studios), or in front of millions on the TV and cinema screens (Jodie has enjoyed success in TV dramas *Doctors* and *Dalziel and Pascoe* and feature films *Venus*, *St Trinians* and upcoming stage show adaptation *Good* starring *Lord of the Rings'* Viggo Mortensen), but in her head she was always performing.

"I played on my own for hours. I didn't need anyone. All my dolls and teddy bears had a voice. My bed was a boat; my window was a magic mirror." she explains

Jodie burst onto cinema screens with a stunning performance as Jessie in 2006's critically acclaimed drama *Venus*. Having grown up in the Dearne Valley, the role of brash young Yorkshire lass enabled her to retain the natural accent that distinguishes her so well. "I'm very proud of my accent and it's a huge part of who I am. My dad would kill me if I lost it."



**Jodie and Peter O'Toole share a scene in the hit film *Venus***

Although Jodie currently lives in London, her accent only gently carries a southern manner, giving way to the stronger, more familiar northern tones.

When researching this article on Jodie, I went out and bought the film *Venus*, partly so I wasn't making claims and assessments of her work out of ignorance, but mostly because I just wanted to watch the film, as every reviewer I'd read loved it and, I've got to admit, so did I.

She still returns home as often as her increasingly crowded schedule will permit. It was her upbringing in an avidly cricket loving atmosphere that actually helped forge a friendship with her *Venus* co-star - the legendary actor, *Lawrence of Arabia* star and cricket fan Peter O'Toole.

Her down-to-earth character (which dad Adrian will no doubt claim is down to brilliant parenting) makes the acting seem effortless and her demeanour incredibly laid back. While on the subject of her northern-ness, if there is such a thing: "If I say 'Jer-deh', nobody can tell what I'm saying," she explains, "so I have to go, 'Joe-dee'. It's me London voice!"

Jodie Whittaker is no doubt going to continue to take the British and international film industry by storm, and having already worked with the likes of Peter O'Toole and Leslie Phillips at this stage in her career is nothing short of astonishing, especially considering how naturally she has adapted to an incredibly diverse range of roles.

Put simply, everyone at Nortonthorpe Cricket Club should be, and are, incredibly proud of the girl who has dared to dream of a life on the silver screen.