

Telly

When I got the part it was absolutely surreal

Netflix hit *The Crown* proved that the Windsors have plenty of dramatic potential, but it seems that when it comes to royalty, TV writers can't shake their fascination with the Tudors.

The latest series to explore their story is the drama *Becoming Elizabeth*, which follows the early life of Queen Elizabeth I.

The first episode begins with the aftermath of the death of Henry VIII, as his son is proclaimed Edward VI. However, given that the new king is only nine years old, there are still plenty of people

Rachael Popow chats to Alicia von Rittberg and Bella Ramsey about becoming Elizabeth I and Lady Jane Grey for a new historical drama



Bella Ramsey plays Lady Jane Grey

vying for power, and Elizabeth, Edward and their older sister Mary are potential pawns in the game. But can Elizabeth learn to be a player?

Taking on the role was something of a learning experience for actress Alicia von Rittberg. Although she comes from an aristocratic background herself, the German actress was surprised when she was invited to send in a taped

audition - in fact, she claims she thought it was a mistake as she had assumed her nationality would rule her out.

It was only when she was called in for a face-to-face meeting that she accepted she was being seriously considered.

Alicia, 29, told *W* magazine: "I got the call for the test screening, and that's the first time I actually met everyone and realised how little they questioned the fact that I am German.

"They were just like, 'Well, we think you can do it. You're



TURBULENT TIMES: L-R Alexandra Gilbreath as Kat Ashley and Alicia von Rittberg as Elizabeth

going to have some dialect coaching, and we're not worried at all.' That really helped me to believe in myself, and I think that's when I realised it could happen.

"When I got the part, it was still absolutely surreal."

By contrast, one of her castmates definitely feels a geographical connection to her

character. *Becoming Elizabeth* also features rising star Bella Ramsey, who was seen earlier this year in *The Last of Us*, plays Lady Jane Grey.

The 19-year-old from Nottingham told movie website *CinemaBlend*: "Funnily enough, *Lady Jane Grey* is someone that I was quite familiar with, because she

lived literally 15 minutes down the road from me. The remains of her place of residence are still intact, so I actually wanted to do my audition there. Quite funny!"

Bella added: "So I knew of her... I guess I just learned more of the history and all the links between her and the rest of the royals and the people in court, because I've never really learned that before. I'd known a bit in history lessons, but I hadn't really paid attention. It was good to be able to learn for myself."

For anyone who didn't grow up next to Lady Jane Grey's home, the drama should offer a new insight into this turbulent period in history.

And if that isn't enough to convince you to tune in, there's the great cast, which also includes *Atonement*'s Romola Garai as Mary, *Downton Abbey*'s Tom Cullen as Thomas Seymour, and *Call the Midwife*'s Jessica Raine as Henry VIII's last wife, Catherine Parr.

■ *Becoming Elizabeth* is on Channel 4, Saturday, 9.15pm

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German actress Alicia von Rittberg on playing Queen Elizabeth I

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BRISTNALL HALL ACADEMY IS A VIBRANT AND NURTURING SCHOOL, THAT PRIDES ITSELF ON TRULY TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF ITS STUDENTS

Bristnall Hall is also holding an open fortnight between Monday 25th September - Friday 6th October 2023. To book a morning tour, please contact the academy on 0121 552 5425 or email BHA-Info@atrust.org.uk.

Students' conduct around the academy is exemplary, which is something the school is very proud of. Visitors to the academy are welcome at any time of the day to see for themselves the outstanding learning community at work.

The caring community ethos at Bristnall Hall is clearly distinguishable, with older students mentoring their younger peers in Key Stage 3, who hugely benefit from having strong role models from their fellow pupils and staff.

Bristnall Hall Academy has continued to build on its impressive successes in recent years, with students' attainment and progress amongst the highest in the West Midlands.

BRISTNALL HALL ACADEMY IS HOLDING OPEN DAYS IN SEPTEMBER

Previously, the academy was awarded a 5* rating in *The Real Schools Guide* and listed in the top 2% of all schools nationally based on their Progress 8 score in 2022.

Bristnall Hall Academy's Progress 8 score was +0.83, with positive scores in every category, including English, Mathematics and Science. Students of all abilities at Bristnall Hall Academy excelled and made exceptional progress.

During the academy's recent Ofsted visit in November 2021, inspectors also noted that students at Bristnall Hall Academy "have positive attitudes to their learning", thus ensuring that they "achieve highly in their studies, including in English and Mathematics" and how "Pupils say how happy they are coming back to the school." Ofsted also said: "There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if the inspectors were to carry out a section 5 inspection now."

It is clear that Bristnall Hall Academy is a beacon of excellence and leading the way in Sandwell and the Black Country with significant improvements in all areas including attendance, facilities and confidence of its fantastic young people.

Due to the high standards, relentless focus on the quality of teaching and learning, coupled with exceptional care for young people, Bristnall Hall Academy is an exceptional institute for young people to learn and develop in with exceptional outcomes for all stakeholders.

All prospective students are welcome to join the academy to take on this transformational journey together.

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Email: BHA-info@atrust.org.uk**



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No booking required

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Morning tours available call 0121 552 5425 to book your appointment

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