James, 17 has extra reason to enjoy film

A STUDENT’S dream came true when he acted alongside Hollywood stars as the youngest stunt extra in the new summer blockbuster Robin Hood.

Hills Road Sixth Form pupil James Dilley, 17, was only 16 when he found himself standing on a beach in Pembrokeshire dressed as a French pikeman in full battle gear as 150 horsemen charged at him, wielding swords and hammers.

The student then switched sides and stood his ground as an English archer, firing flaming arrows into the air as several hundred extras helped star Russell Crowe as Robin Hood besiege a castle in the dead of night.

James, who won the title of Young Archaeologist of the Year when he was 15, landed the role in the £130 million project after Britannia, a professional 5th century historical re-enactment group of which he is a member, was recruited by director Ridley Scott last summer.

James, from Barkway Road, Royston, said: “Working on the film was fantastic. It was quite an experience when 150 cavalry charged up the beach at me. I got hit a couple of times, it was a rubber hammer but it still hurt quite a lot, especially as our chain mail was really made of plastic.

“I also really enjoyed being an English longbow man shooting arrows at people in a castle which looks amazing, but was made out of plaster and wood. They poured fake boiling oil at us and we rammed the doors down, the whole experience was a dream come true.”

The A-level student, who watched the film with friends last weekend, revealed famously hot-tempered Crowe did not live up to his fiery reputation on set.

“Russell is a really nice guy – as long as you let him have his own way. He is a tough bloke but was friendly to all of us.”

James added: “Ridley was great too.”

It was the second time the 73-year-old director called on the Britannia history buffs to help him out, as more than 100 “soldiers” were used in the grisly opening battle scene in the Oscar-winning Gladiator, also starring Crowe.