

PLAY PROVES A WINNER AS VILLAGE CAST SHOWS ITS WORTH

An unforgettable performance of wit brought the professionalism of Shaftesbury Avenue to Downham last week, when Stage Two delved into the delights of Peter Tinniswood's plan, 'The Village Fete'.

Nancy, Rosie, William and their father are the ever-wandering and never content Empson family. When they move into their new home in the country, well meaning, but ineffectual neighbours Stanley and Janet, humorously portrayed by Gerry Purchase and Dorothy Cushing, try to persuade them to help with the village fete.

The rather snobbish, self-absorbed Epsoms hope to continue to keep themselves to themselves: however, their lives are transformed one by one by the appearance of infamous wooer and handyman Winston! This disreputable individual with the tattoos 'Mild' and 'Bitter' clearly visible through his dirty string-vest, is the pivotal character of the play.

Eddie Bootle played Winston with great verve and humour, succeeding in charming the ladies in the play and audience, despite his mucky gumboots! Rosie is enchanted by Winston and Lesley Knight elegantly and convincingly presented her character's changing mood from sedate designer to invigorated woman.

Meanwhile, railway enthusiast William, excellently played with Rik Mayall-like style by newcomer James Masterman, is enticed out of his anorak by seductress Mrs. Godwin: Glen Purchase at her vampish best!

Mel Scora superbly demonstrated his versatility in the role of father, whose secret gin drinking and doddering reminiscences of the Raj provoked much laughter.

Nancy, who is still confused and unable to find the source of everyone's happiness, is last to fall for Winston's charms. Barbara Price passionately yet amusingly engaged the audience in her tormented struggle to find happiness, bringing the strength of this serious undertone to accentuate the humour and wit of the characters.

David Scott's skilful set design accommodated several rooms and a delightful garden in the limited stage space. Gradually the house, with the family, flourished with Winston's care. Fran Osborne's gifted directing was projected in the cohesion of the play and the dynamic characterisation of the actors. The audience's enthusiastic laughter throughout, and the positive comments after the production declared that a good night was had by all.

Kate Taylor

READY FOR CURTAIN UP ON DOWNHAM PLAY

Rehearsals are well under way for a production written by Peter Tinniswood which is being performed by local thespians.

His play, 'The Village Fete', is being performed at Downham Village Hall from Wednesday by members of the Stage II Downham amateur dramatic group.

Produced by Fran Osborne, the action centres around a family of two sisters, a brother and a father, who move to the countryside from London. Life is fairly miserable until they meet important villager Winston who changes their lives. The family's neighbours, Stanley and Janet and Mrs Godwin, the seductress, are among other characters featured in the play.

Tickets for the production cost £3.50 including refreshments and are available from Clitheroe Tourist Information Office.

Our picture shows Lesley Knight and James Masterman rehearsing with other members of the cast.