

Joy to see play by brilliant student of humanity

IT was a joy to see a local performance this week of an Alan Bennett play.

Bennett, one of the foremost playwrights of our time and a brilliant student of humanity with all its quirks, foibles and peculiarities, is always worth watching.

Most of us can identify with his finely-drawn characters and, on this occasion, we had the pleasure of witnessing a presentation by Stage Two, Downham, of one of his "Talking Heads" plays. The choice was four short plays from one of his early works - "Bed Among the Lentils", "Cream Cracker Under The Settee", "Chip in the Sugar" and "A Lady of Letters", originally played in the West End by Maggie Smith, Thora Hird, Patricia Routledge and Bennett himself, respectively. Many people will recall either the stage version or the later television production.

The staging and effects were simple, but effective, and the casting was perfect. The director had at his disposal four experienced performers in Dorothy Cushing, Pat Hargreaves, Gerry Purchase and Barbara Price, who slotted so well into their respective characters with sympathy and understanding, drawing out, and bringing out, the lovely Northern wit and dry humour.

Congratulations are in order to Mel Scolah, the director, and his team of actors and backstage workers (among whom was a new recruit to lighting, handling a newly installed system - hang on to him!) for a first-class evening's entertainment.

We look forward to the next Stage Two production in November.

Barbara Taylor

Challenge of Alan Bennett's 'Heads' faced at Downham



THE challenges posed by Northern play-

They will be played by Barbara Price