

Dan's the man as he stars in village production

ACCORDING to friends, a stage debut by Dan Bradbury will extract from him every bit of acting ability he possesses.

The cameo role in Stage 2's latest production in Downham Village Hall calls on him neither to speak nor move.

In fact, any perambulations he makes around the stage will be done in a wheelbarrow. And he will not even have to open his eyes to make sure he does not bump into the scenery.

For Mr Bradbury is playing the corpse in "Beyond a Joke", the two-act comedy which opens on March 19th. His wife, Mrs Lesley Bradbury, who is one of the eight cast members, said: "He only has two entrances. In one he appears in a wheelbarrow and in the other he is

in a cupboard. Rehearsals have been exhausting for him."

Mr Bradbury, who is also stage managing the production in his off-stage moments, said: "I feel very important. I feel I ought to walk in the theatre on opening night wearing a big black cloak and a floppy hat and smoking a large cigar, just like a real thespian!"

He stresses he has not been typecast in the role.

The play opens on March 19th and runs until March 23rd with the exception of the Thursday night. Tickets are available at Clitheroe Tourist Information Office or at the Swan Inn, Whalley.

Our picture shows Mr Bradbury and other cast members during the rehearsals. (K280202/8)



Downham show proves that laughter is the best medicine



MEMBERS of the cast during a scene from the play (K280202/8)

LAUGHTER is such a good tonic, particularly, we hope, at the end of a dreary winter.

Those fortunate enough to take the trip out to Downham to see Stage Two's production not only found that they could park in the splendid new car park at the village hall, but were also treated to the opportunity to really enjoy themselves.

"Beyond a Joke" concerns Jane and Andrew's house, which is accident-prone. In fact there have recently been six fatalities there! Jane, Andrew and his sister, Sarah, were ably played by Lesley Bradbury, Eddie Bootle and Pat Hargreaves - experienced actors who understand the importance of timing and know how to milk an audience. We were not disappointed.

Potential son-in-law Geoff and daughter Sally were played by David Hulme and Emma White, both newcomers to the society who are still in the process of learning their

trade. It is very encouraging to see younger actors on stage and I hope that they will find themselves bitten by the bug and continue to develop.

Their facial expressions were good, but at times their dialogue got lost because they were either not projecting or were rushing through the lines. Most importantly, the potential is there.

Geoff accidentally learns about the mishaps, but is clearly under the impressions that they have not been caused by accidents, but by foul means. His concern is heightened when, looking for some soda water, a body falls out of a cupboard into his arms. When the vicar (nice little cameo for Gerry Purchase) arrives, Geoff is concerned for his wellbeing. His fears are confirmed when the vicar quietly dies on the garden bench just before Geoff's parents make their first visit to the house.

Audrey and Edgar were played convincingly

by Glen Purchase and another new face, Tom Garner. They want to see the garden where one body is reposing in the summer house and the vicar is still "asleep" on the bench. Andrew and Sarah manage to manoeuvre the vicar into a wheelbarrow and dispose of him elsewhere and later Sarah loads a body into Edgar's car.

As in any high comedy, there is plenty of misunderstanding and confusion, all of which is carried off very well indeed and producer Fran Osborne should be pleased with her production. Another cleverly designed set, by Dave Scott, split between garden and house demonstrated how much it is possible to cram on to a very small stage.

If you missed the play, you missed a treat so make sure you go to the next production in November. Live theatre is still alive and kicking in the Ribbles Valley, don't miss out.

R. J. CLEEVE