

# Actors play it for laughs

"A FLY in the Ointment" – a farce by Derek Benfield – was Downham Stage Two's production for spring this year.

Stage Two enjoys sharing Benfield's fun with its fans as "Fly in the Ointment" is not the first play of his that they have presented, and true to expectations, the capacity

audience laughed their way through two acts of absurdly comic, suspicious and lustful situations – all set in a quiet village somewhere along the coast of Sussex.

Considering the cosy dimensions of Downham Village Hall's stage, the ingeniously-constructed set was very pleasing

to the eye, while allowing maximum acting area space.

Congratulations to designer Dan Bradbury, who had created the realistic sunny drawing room of a bungalow, which sported a wide bay window showing a pleasing perspective of seaside homes and cliffs in the background.

Action began in a quiet moment as the Rt Hon. Ron Corley MP (Bob Cleeve) stole into the bungalow to retrieve a collection of compromising photographs taken at an earlier time of himself and his amorous love, Donna (Lesley Haworth).

Of course, Donna returned to her bungalow and was thrilled to find her "pigeon" had "flown in". So awkward situation number one – she wanted to, he didn't! This led to angry tantrums accompanied by four blasts through the window from Donna's emergency whistle.

Enter policewoman Hackett (Glen Purchase) – through the window!

From then on, action picked up pace and there were further complications when Albert, the pizza delivery man (Gerry Purchase) arrived at the door with a pizza that no one had ordered.

The final "fly" buzzed into this complicated tangle in the shape of Dr Billing (Brian Haworth) romantically carrying a bouquet of flowers. He had, at last, plucked up enough courage to tell Louise of his love for her, so he had followed her down from London in his car in order to declare his passion to her.

Bob Cleeve as Ron Corley MP had a huge part to learn, and so many nuances of emotions to portray.

Lesley Haworth as Donna, the lover with the libido, provided whole-hearted entertainment. She gave her all – or nearly!

Glen Purchase as policewoman Brenda Hackett wooed the audience with her north eastern accents. Benfield's dialogue was treated to the Geordie subtlety of phrasing and vocal melody and inflexion.

Gerry Purchase as Albert the Pizza, was played with convincing bewilderment.

Liz Wrigley as Louise Corley, Ron's trusty wife was not so trusting after the trip to the seaside and Brian Haworth's Dr Billing shared his lovelorn feelings with all of us; we were with you to the end.

The production sustained the pace of action throughout, and must be highly appreciated because of the amount of rehearsal time, acting energy and concentration of characterisation that the roles required; also the amount of private time spent in memorising such quick dialogue.

Bouquets all round to David King, the producer, his cast and all backstage and front of house staff. Raffle money taken over the four nights was £200 plus, raised for Macmillan Nurses.

MSS

# Stage set for a fine farce in Downham

WHY should Ron Corley MP, the Minister for the Environment, be searching the seaside bungalow of his ex-mistress, Donna, on a Friday afternoon in summer?

And why does his virtuous wife, Louise, turn up at the same place on the same day?

And what was a romantic doctor with a bunch of flowers doing in Sussex when his practice is in London?

These are just some of the questions that set the scene for Derek Benfield's classic British farce "A Fly in the Ointment", soon to be staged in Downham.

If the laughter at rehearsals is anything to go by, then Stage Two drama group's latest production should be a riot of



comedy. Performances take place at Downham Village Hall nightly at 7-30 p.m. from March 31st to April 3rd inclusive and admission is just £4.50 including refreshments.

Directed by David King, the cast boasts a wealth of local talent. Bob Cleeve stars as the mis-

chievous MP, with Liz Wrigley as his virtuous wife, Louise, and Lesley Haworth as his less-than-virtuous, but enthusiastic, mistress.

The plot thickens with the introduction of more characters - Brian Haworth as the amorous doctor, Gerry Purchase as

Albert, a devious pizza delivery man, and Glen Purchase as Brenda Hackett, a frustrated police-woman.

Our picture shows (from the left) Glen Purchase, Gerry Purchase, Lesley Haworth, Bob Cleeve, Brian Haworth and Liz Wrigley. (B070304/4)