

A WONDERFUL EVENING

What more could you ask from an evening's entertainment?

An Alan Ayckbourn comedy and an exceptionally strong cast led me to believe I was in for a wonderful evening - I wasn't wrong.

Stage Two celebrated its 20th year by reviving its first ever production at Downham - 'Round and Round the Garden', directed this time by Eddie Bootle.

Norman is trying to whisk his sister-in-law Annie away for a dirty weekend (without his wife's knowledge, of course). Annie is also being wooed, indecisively by the local vet.

Her forceful sister Sarah and Sarah's hen-pecked husband, Reg, have been co-opted to look after the house and mother in her absence, but alas, Annie gets cold feet and decides not to go away with Norman.

The weekend, awkward already, becomes moe so when Norman's wife Ruth arrives.

Bob Cleeve never lets an audience down. He played Norman 20 years ago and again in this production. His performance was, as always, a pleasure to watch and had the audience with him from the outset.

Lesley Howarth as Annie, portrayed her longing for a 'slice of life' with great sympathy and sweetness, but with a little acerbity - perfect!

Steve Cooke was a slightly rumped, very earnest, diffident Tom, the vet, who had the audience chuckling all evening.

Sarah was played competently by Pat Bowker. Although the characterisation slipped occasionally, she was a seriously nagging wife!

Liz Wrigley as Ruth had, judging by the laughs, some of the funniest lines in the play. They were delivered simply, without attempting to force the humour - well done!

For me the star of this production was Brian Howarth.

He portrayed the hearty, bluff, schoolboyish Reg perfectly, showing Reg's exuberance when away from his wife and in contrast, his weakness, when being hen-pecked by her.

Good direction from Eddie Bootle, making excellent use of the stage, the set and the characters. A lovely garden set constructed by Dan Bradbury and Gerry Purchase, full of delightful detail.

All in all, an excellent evening. If you haven't yet seen a Stage Two production you should. Alternatively you could join this excellent group and become a member.

POIGNANT PLAY

are in full swing for the next Stage Two Downham

group, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, and 'Round the Garden' by Alan Ayckborn for its spring

Wednesday and each evening until Saturday, May 2nd in Downham Village Hall. This comedy, which is 'The Bootle', is poignant to the cast as it was the first play staged when it moved to Downham from Waddington 20

Norman's desperate attempts to have a nice civilised weekend with his sister: Ruth, Norman's wife, is summoned, but Norman still causes havoc.

Norman is helped by the slow-thinking Tom, who mistakes Ruth's words during a conversation they have together.

The horrific weekend draws to a close, but not without a twist!

'Round the Garden' is the third part of Alan Ayckbourn's 'The Three of Us' trilogy and the cast included one member from the previous production, Bob Cleeve, who will play Norman.

Other members of the talented cast are Lesley Haworth, Steve Wignall, Brian Haworth and Liz Wrigley. A first-rate production is expected.

Tickets are £5 for Wednesday nights and £6 Thursday to Saturday and are available from Clitheroe Tourist Information or by telephone on 01200 3302 or 01200 425566

Cast (back left to right) Brain Haworth, Bob Cleeve and

(front right) Pat Bowker, Liz Wrigley and Lesley Haworth