

# Audience spellbound by Playgoers' gripping drama

**WORKINGTON Playgoers Golden Jubilee season is sure to be remembered in more ways than one.**

For the latest production "The Roses of Eyam" by Don Taylor, is in complete contrast to the more usual offerings but one which was tackled with enthusiasm, gusto and more than just a hint of professionalism.

The performance, though lengthier than most, had the audience — sparse though it was — spellbound from start to finish and with good cause. It was truly captivating and producers Dudley Evans

and Christine Jackson — who herself played a prominent part — are to be highly commended as are the 55 strong cast.

## GRIPPING

And to those who normally patronise the Playgoers but were conspicuous by their absence (the theatre was less than half full) then you have only yourselves to blame. Wednesday night's viewing of Coronation Street and

Dallas palled into insignificance against such a gripping and compelling dramatic production.

The society travelled back in time to 1665/66 when plague spread from London to the village of Eyam in Derbyshire.

Arriving innocently enough in a large black box containing materials from London, it claimed its first victim within fifteen hours and many more quickly followed until burial spaces

because non-existent and fields had to be used to bury the corpses.

## RIVALRY

Throughout the play we see the rivalry between the new priest and his older, embittered Puritan predecessor and witness changes of allegiance of many of the parishioners.

There are a few light-hearted moments when we see the bantering between two old men (Alec Penn and Frank Yearsley) and our heart strings are pulled taut at the plight of the young lovers (Stuart Sorenson and Julie Richardson).

The cast was headed by an old hand, Ian Mitchell who, as the new rector of Eyam, was flawless throughout. Never once did he falter or miss a line and he gave a convincing and moving performance with great depth of feeling.

Another equally outstanding performance came from another stalwart in the society. Ron Dickens gave an excellent portrayal of the village simpleton The Bedlam with his twisted broken body and his ramblings which, though ignored, proved all too prophetic.

## BITTERNESS

Special mention too of Tony Singleton as Thomas Stanley, the former rector during the Commonwealth days, who played his role with all the bitterness needed and Christine Jackson as the Rector's hard working and supportive wife. Also Robbie Graham as Puritan, Edward Thornley.

The costumes were exceptional, lighting effective and there were minimal scene changes which always helps such a production.

The Rose of Eyam is essentially a true and very remarkable story and has been well re-enacted on the stage of the Theatre Royal. It continues every night through until Tuesday next (excluding Sunday) and the curtain rises at 7.30 p.m. prompt.



**A penny for the fool. From left, Karen Powe, Christine Jackson, Ian Mitchell, Richard Rollinson, Ted Youngusband and Ron Dickens.**