

Faringdon Folly

FROM the outside you wouldn't think that a play about the goings-on at a local branch library would be a great subject for an entertaining play. But when you learn that the playwright is Alan Plater, one of Britain's top TV writers whose CV goes from Z Cars to the Flambarads, as well as other plays and novels, it suddenly gets more interesting.

The Faringdon Dramatic Society put on three performances of Alan Plater's 'I Thought I Heard A Rustling' at the Junior School over the Bank Holiday weekend in May. The play is set in London in the early 90's and to set the scene an unknown Geordie 'poet' Bill Robson, has been selected as the branch's writer-in-residence. The trouble is he can't write a word and it transpires that his whole life is a pack of lies. Bill, who is played to great effect by Daniel Lander, whose Geordie accent throughout is excellent to my ears, blags his way through life by making up lies about himself and then lies about the lies and he just doesn't care.

The interaction between Bill and librarian Ellen Scott, played by Joan Lee, and the humour that comes from the dialogue is at the heart of the play. She of course discovers the nature of his deception, but actually gets to like him.

The irritating and pretentious freelance writer Gerald Nutley, (Allan Dover) does some investigation and also discovers that Bill has just made things up and is also annoyed that he was himself overlooked for the post. He is about to blow the story, when he is persuaded to join an unlikely campaign to save the library from closure, which it does.

This play was funny, it has a rich vein running through it, not belly laughs, more understanding chuckles as the playwright taps into the world of local politics. It's the class divide and a North v South all over again.

Although almost a period piece from 18 years ago, it was also extremely topical with its searing dissection of local politics, which translates easily to the sleazy world of Westminster. Full credit to FDS for putting on shows like this, as well as their more popular ones, just a pity that more people didn't make it. An excellent cast of five, good behind the scenes work, well worth the trip out and winning a bottle of wine in the raffle was just a bonus.

Hal Crane, Faringdon Folly, June 2009