

## Lark Rise to Candleford

Rebecca Brockbank's backcloth of autumn fields and country music by The Reunion Band served as an apt introduction to the golden world of country life into which we were to be immersed.

We met Laura both old and young played by Pauline Woolfenden and Hannah Stobart. Young Laura was cast exactly as one might imagine and played her part to perfection. Her mother, Jennifer Collard, and her brother, Toby Collard, helped portray the secure, but by no means affluent, country home in which Laura was brought up in the 1880's. Her stonemason father, played by Michael Bauer, gave us his radical views adding interest to the rather goody good family.

In Act 1 we lived through the daily rituals of life in rural England in the late 1800s and through glimpses of the school life of Laura. This was no action packed drama but a well written and acted cameo of life. Frank Cosgrove played many parts, with enthusiasm, including a cheap crockery seller. His roll as Old Dick with Pauline Woolfenden as Old Sally was greatly enjoyed, as was his singing of music hall in his part of the Squire.

Ken Woolfenden not only directed the play but he also played the parts of Jerry Parish, Old Monday, the Rector, a soldier, and a pig. In guises other than the pig he sang many narrative songs to the accompaniment of Reunion.

In the second Act the action moved on with the family journeying to Candleford to meet relations. Character observation was one of the main strengths of this play.

Jane Simpson and Mandy Wilson were excellent supporters in many scenes, and took their own parts as a Cousin and Aunt. Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee heralded the end of the old life and the beginning of the new and the audience was swept up in the drama and pathos of the First World War. It was a poignant end.

The cast played all their various parts with great enthusiasm and were all perfectly cast. The singing of all the various songs adding greatly to the play. The lighting, clothes, props, hair and other back room staff performed their tasks with their usual aplomb making this production another great for Caldbeck Players.

A final word - we had understood that Pauline Woolfenden was to be the narrator, as indeed she was, and therefore imagined she would be reading her lines. But no, she had memorised pages and pages perfectly – well done. All this cast knew their lines, and were well directed.