

Dark secrets are revealed

Bumped Off
Loddon Players
Sherfield-on-Loddon Village Hall

AMATEUR dramatic group The Loddon Players had been considering a murder mystery production for some time and it was well worth the wait.

The story took place in a country house belonging to Colonel Sir Rodney Gung Ho and his wife Lady Phyllis Gung Ho who were planning a family gathering.

Lady Phyllis was played brilliantly by Denise Hobbs with her perfectly "Penelope Keith" clipped tones, portraying the superior and upper-class mannerisms of the aristocracy who thought she had control over her family, husband and home.

Sir Rodney, a truly authentic performance by Mathew Stanley in his plus fours, deer stalker and boasting a double barrel shotgun, begrudgingly faced the prospect by delegating the organisation to his former army batman turned eccentric butler, Stanley Binge, who was prone to sampling his employer's whisky.

The house guests included Lady Phyllis's old friend Winner Miller and tearful, highly strung daughter Sadie who was engaged to be married to Oliver Smooche, a local untrustworthy bookmaker, with a bad reputation as a lothario. He was played by Nick Robinson, whose cunning connection with the audience was well received.

The remaining two guests were Reverend Claude Smithers and his fiancée Caroline Gung Ho, daughter of Sir Rodney and Lady Phyllis.

It became apparent that the dark secrets emerging from Smooche's past provided strong motives for all of the guests to want to kill him. He made reference to Caroline's affair with the chauffeur, which was reminiscent of a Downton storyline, and indeed at times it felt as though we were in the Abbey!

The cast interacted well with each other with some wonderful humour especially from Rev. Claude Smithers, played by Pete Francis. In the second half, all was revealed, and on the night I attended the audience's reaction was certainly one of surprise.

The interval was filled with a quiz and "whodunit" solution sheets, and a chance for the audience to intermingling with the cast whilst enjoying a supper.

This production by director Chris Horton, founder of the Loddon Players, was an ideal opportunity for interaction between cast and audience, and each other!

Her reputation for hard work and attention to detail certainly showed on the night in pulling off the first murder mystery for the LP.

—Jacqui Morris

● Further information on the Loddon Players is online at loddonplayersatsherfield.co.uk.