

Dickon
The Castle Players
St Mary's Parish Church,
Barnard Castle
 IT'S been quite the year for anyone with an interest in all things Ricardian.

Just a week after the splendid Windows for the King were unveiled at St Mary's, the parish church was the setting for Dickon, by Elizabeth Mackintosh, better known under the pseudonym Josephine Tey, but on this occasion writing as Gordon Daviot.

The programme billed it as "A play about the real Richard III".

I beg to differ. I can't believe this version of Richard could possibly exist either today or five-and-a-half centuries ago.

As presented by Mackintosh/Tey/Daviot he is the very model of good behaviour, a paragon of virtue. The play may as well have been titled Saint Dickon.

In this version, there is not a bad bone in his body or malevolent thought in his head. He is simply too good to be true – a bit like those leading men in the Christmas matinees currently airing on Channel 5.

Review

This is all very well, but when a character is presented so one dimensionally, he is, well, just a bit dull.

He came across as an over officious, teetotal, book-keeping bore, immersed in parliamentary procedure, government efficiency and the minutiae of running his estate.

Yet we are meant to believe this is someone who could inspire 20,000 men to take up arms in his cause. Really?

This is not to take anything away from Gordon Duffy-McGhie's efforts in portraying our holier-than-thou hero.

It's a big role and it's difficult to think who else in the Players could have tackled it with such aplomb.

Ben Pearson was his usual eye-catching self in a trio of roles – lush Edward IV, scheming John Morton, Bishop of Ely, and suitably over the top as Ben Thacker, a Guildsman from Gloucester.

With such a large number of characters, Ben was joined by several others in the cast who took on multiple roles and to be honest I found



STEPPING BACK IN TIME: The Castle Players cast of Dickon, performed at St Mary's Parish Church, Barnard Castle

myself reaching for the programme to clarify who was who at the beginning of a couple of scenes.

I've seen Phoebe Lorenz in a number of Players productions over the years and in Dickon she was on top form as Richard's niece Princess Elizabeth, while

Susie Kitson had real presence as Francis, Lord Lovell. The scenes in which she featured were among my favourites.

All in all, I think a decent knowledge of the subject would certainly add to the enjoyment of Dickon – and there was a fair sprinkling of

Northern Dales RIII members lapping it up.

I'm not sure the play has wider appeal to folk like me with a more, how shall I put it, rudimentary understanding of the events portrayed.

Finally, my common complaint of many Players

productions – it was too long, and if you are asking people to sit for three hours, please don't pack us in like sardines and give us a comfortable seat to sit on. My stiff back and numb bum are still recovering from the experience.

Stuart Laundry