

Beaufort Players

“Ladies’ Day”

This lively comedy, presented by the Beaufort Players in the Ascension Hall at the end of November, was about four North Country fish-factory women who take themselves to Ascot Ladies’ Day at York racecourse in the hope of meeting the rich and famous.

Unwilling to pay £2000 to a tout for tickets, they are lucky enough to find a purse containing the money. Luckier still, they finish the day by winning the jackpot, having correctly forecast the winners of every race. While at the course, one of them also somehow manages to find time and space to chat up a jockey just before he races and another meets up with her lost bookie lover and enjoys a smoochy waltz with him.

All this was so unlikely that when the women discussed their personal problems which ranged from family troubles to financial worries and one’s bit-on-the-side, it was hard to feel involved. However this was the fault of the writer, not the cast, who acted with great gusto throughout.

The play began with the four women frenetically fish-filleting as they planned the outing (though they talked so fast that it was not always easy to follow what they were saying). It then followed them through their day at the racecourse, punctuated by details of the runners, riders and bookies provided by the race announcer, together with commentaries on the finishes.

The racecourse setting was simply portrayed by a bare stage and wide green carpet down the hall with the audience along both sides. The director, Diana Dishley, made excellent use of the layout, while the cast rose to the challenge of 360-degree acting very well. However the women’s outfits could perhaps have been more brazen and colourful to help compensate for the lack of scenery.

All four (June Burgess, Tania Hunt, Jane Quill and Gemma Robinson) gave strong performances, especially as the day passed and alcohol took its toll. Supporting them, Ted Hunter was a commanding racecourse announcer and Roger Dishley very convincing as a smarmy tout. The other parts were played by Robert Allan, Matt Tylianakis, Alan Robinson and Séin Ó Muineacháin. The producer was Kate Martin.

As always with the Beaufort Players, they got top-class support from their colleagues backstage and front-of-house, ensuring an enjoyable evening for everyone.

John Harrison