

THE BOY FROM THE BORO

by Roger Price and Stuart Horobin

THREE IN ONE PRODUCTIONS

BLUE ORANGE THEATRE

Just occasionally I get invited to review something that takes me unawares and makes me think, did I really see that?

This was the case with The Boy from the Boro which tells the story of a young man from Nuneaton who volunteered during the 1914-18 Great War and fought on all the major fronts during that most notoriously futile of all conflicts. I must admit on paper it sounded a well-worn track, but the reality of this superb production, directed by Ian Craddock, took me unawares. In a year of great productions it stands out as something special.

A farm boy turned greengrocer, Arthur Horobin volunteered for the army swayed by the lurid propaganda of the time and after being sent a coward's white feather. The story of his military career, from being packed onto a cattle boat to cross the channel, through the horrors of trench warfare on the Somme and the mud at Ypres with suicidal advances on enemy lines and gas attacks, was raw and visceral.

Told through the letters, telegrams and diaries of real soldiers serving in this terrible war, all subtly underlined by projected photographs, newspaper headlines and live footage as well as the poetry of Wilfred Owen, it made the horrors of war come powerfully alive.

Everything about this production is outstanding – Stuart Horobin and Roger Price's script, Adrian Fairburn's set, the authentic costumes, but most importantly Mr. Horobin's natural portrayal of the gentle Arthur which has a rare charm and grace.

I thought I was immune to the retelling of this sorry tale, but a final reading of Owen's *Dulce Et Decorum Est* undid me completely, showing how perfectly this marvellous production gets under the skin.

The Boy From The Boro is a rich meal, but in the splendid hands of everyone involved, easy to digest. It would make a wonderful resource for anyone studying the period. As an artistic experience it offers a taste of real life, raw, visceral, and very moving. This is theatre at its very best.

Phil Preece