

**Writtle Cards presents The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's
Guild Dramatic Society's Production of The Christmas Carol.**
Performed on November 26, 2009 at Writtle Village Hall

Director – Shirley Piggott

The “Farndale Ladies” produced a seasonal spectacular up to their usual standard; such a shame that Mercedes had injured her legs and arms, thus slowing down her, no doubt, usual lightening fast responses to cue lines. Mrs Reece’s relentless good humour and tolerance of the inadequacies of her fellow man (or Townswoman) even allowed the extension of a hand of friendship to a visiting foreign exchange student. Well done Mrs Reece for introducing our foreign brothers and sisters to good quality English drama. I don’t suppose they have much theatre behind the Iron Curtain or wherever. Mrs Reece’s mastery of microphone technique didn’t quite stretch to discovering the on-off switch but she could not have known that her radio frequency was the same as that of the local emergency services. Actually I think it is rather a cheek for the police to be chatting to each other at the same time as the Christmas show. You would think these Community Constables would have more respect for their community. Anyway, Mrs Reece’s ability to change character from master of ceremonies to Tiny Tim, to Fred’s wife and even a ghost was remarkable. Were it not for her handbag I doubt that many in the audience would have recognized her. Thelma was a constant source of delight, playing Scrooge with aplomb. If I am to be a teeny weeny bit critical I wonder whether she could have been made to look a bit older and maybe more like a man, possibly more Scrooge-like? But then having so many lines to learn (her own and everyone else’s) perhaps is sufficient burden for any one actor. Gordon seemed to be having an off day on the night I saw the play. Sorry Gordon but I don’t remember you being quite so grumpy last time you appeared on stage. Knocking over the snowman not once but twice and then one more time seemed a trifle overdone; I fear for the mental health of the children watching the play, they may think it is real. Knocking over Mercedes in the second act is ok since that was obviously meant to happen – I think they call that ironic in the theatre. Finally, Felicity looked lovely, particularly as Fred and she sang so well too. Perhaps next time she could have a slightly bigger costume when she plays the top half of a ghost. I thought that bit was just a bit weak since the suspense of that spectral scene when Scrooge saw the ghost was spoilt by the realisation that Gordon was giving Felicity a piggyback. Up until that point I had been totally absorbed by the magic of it all – I thought Gordon’s “whoo-whooing” as Marley’s ghost was so frightening – but seeing Felicity’s legs just burst that ghostly bubble. I was delighted to see the village hall so well decorated for Christmas and particularly enjoyed the mince pies and mulled wine. Thank you for inviting me to review your Christmas play, I so much enjoyed it and only wished more of the ladies of Farndale would follow your lead and be so public-spirited. I did hear a rumour that Andrew Lloyd Webber was going to release Starlight Express for amateurs. This could be right up your Avenue; although I suspect Mercedes would need to get better first.

Reviewer – Stewart Adkins