

A long journey!

AT the end of Riding England Sidesaddle, in the studio at The People's Theatre last week, the audience felt as if they had travelled for miles and met dozens of characters.

It came as a surprise at curtain call (without any curtains) to realise that the whole night's entertainment had been put on by six actors, including one little girl.

Props had been minimal, too. Celia's "horse" came from a gym, a large packing case served also

as a coach, with the horses' hoofbeats reproduced traditionally but effectively with coconut shells.

The People's own Christopher Goulding has written a clever script which catches the essence of the 18th century traveller Celia Fiennes, an ancestor of Sir Ranulph of Antarctica fame, and it was staged with a skill worthy of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Katherine Wright

► REVIEW

Tale of Sir Ranulph's wandering ancestor

RIDING ENGLAND SIDESADDLE.

Until Saturday February 20: 7.30pm. People's Theatre, Stephenson Road, Newcastle: 7.30pm.

The People's Theatre is proud to present the premiere of this new play by Newcastle author Chris Goulding. Written in a light and entertaining style, the play is based on the actual travels of Celia Fiennes through Restoration England, and explores the character of this unorthodox, adventurous, and rather eccentric seventeenth century heroine.

Tel: (091) 265 5020.

THE MAGIC JOURNEY

CELIA Fiennes was a game old girl — a spinster whose life spanned the 17th and 18th centuries.

It was the way in which this ancestor of Sir Ranulph Fiennes defied convention in the years around the turn of the 17th century that first captured the interest of People's Theatre member Chris Goulding — the author of this new play.

Celia — like Goulding — had an insatiable curiosity,

Riding England Sidesaddle People's Theatre, Newcastle
By DAVID ISAACS

and one that refused to be denied by a society which deemed that unmarried ladies of her class did not tour the country on horseback.

Our heroine is played at either end of the age scale by Andrea Riseborough and Ella Brace, but it's Karen Elliott's Celia with whom we travel for most of the

play — and a very engaging performance she gives, full of humour and deft touches of character.

The two men in the cast, Gordon Russell and Roger Liddle, provide admirable variety in tackling a number of tasks — though co-directors Bob Webb and Keith Wigham might improve the narrative sections by injecting some theatrical pace and verve so they sound rather less like history lessons.