

# 'ABSOLUTELY FIRST-CLASS' SAYS WILFRED PICKLES

**E**FFINGHAM became the most important village in England for half an hour on Tuesday evening. Hundreds of thousands of radio listeners were introduced to half a dozen Effingham people by that personification of geniality, Wilfred Pickles, and heard an audience of villagers laugh, sing and cheer with enthusiasm.

They heard of experiments in an Effingham garden which led to the invention of the "dam-buster" bomb, of the Women's Institute Choir, of sheep - shearing and of grumbles about the last bus. Effingham, in fact, provided a typical "Have a Go."

For 300 people in the Howard of Effingham Secondary School hall who had been fortunate in the ballot for tickets the evening was a memorable one. The preliminary "warming-up" variety programme started on time—but only just. The artistes' arrival was delayed by trouble on the railway and a last-minute decision to travel by road.

The audience, however, lost none of the entertainment and enjoyed a programme by Sheila Williams (violinist), Gwenda Wilkin (accordionist), Harry Hudson (comedy songs at the piano) and Gil Leaney (television illusionist), for whom Miss Molly Stevens, of Effingham, an assistant in the Leatherhead County Library, performed most efficiently as assistant.

A few minutes before the broadcast was "live" Mr. Wilfred Pickles, his wife, Mabel, a B.B.C. assistant, Miss Joan Archer, and the competitors were formally introduced. Mr. Pickles told the audience: "Treat it like a musical show and do sit back and laugh! I always like to look on this show as a family party and I want you to as well."

Mr. Pickles held centre in front of the three microphones. Facing Mr. Pickles on the extreme left at a table were Miss Archer and Mabel (who had the money!) and behind at the back of the stage were the six competitors — Mr. Christopher Wallis, Mr. Henry Tyrrell, Miss B. R. Boxall, Mrs. L. Bridger, Mrs. Dorothy M.

Deighton and Mrs. Freda E. Watkins, with Harry Hudson at the piano.

Producer Stephen Williams had earphones clamped on, checking and timekeeping for Mr. Pickles, and ensuring that the competitors were the right distance from the microphone.

None of the competitors showed nervousness before the microphone, but Mabel was always stood handy and ready with a discreet whisper.

Mr. Wallis, son of Mr. Barnes Wallis, the famous scientist, told of experiments with marbles, a catapult and a wash-tub which the family made, and which led to the design of the bombs which burst the Mohne Dam. Mrs. Deighton, conductor of the Women's Institute Choir, sang a solo, and Mr. Tyrrell, 82 years old, told of his life in agriculture.

"I think the people here to represent Effingham have been absolutely first-class," remarked Mr. Pickles immediately after the broadcast. They were chosen, he said, from 30 volunteers and he added: "We don't want any hard feelings. Stephen has a tough job. It is not easy." He obtained a promise from the audience that there would be none.

He thanked the Vicar, Rev. J. W. Reynolds—he had been most helpful, he said—Mr. Burns, headmaster of the school, and the Surrey education authorities for the use of the hall, and Mr. and Mrs. Stanton, of the Effingham Stores, where the ballot box for tickets was placed.

Miss Elizabeth Johnson presented Mrs. Pickles with a bouquet of flowers.

Transmission was in charge of a senior outside broadcasting engineer, Mr. L. G. Putnam. It went to Broadcasting House via the Post Office land line, which was specially tested prior to the show. Mrs. Stephen Renaud Williams also assisted in production.

A recording of the show will be broadcast in the Home Service at lunch-time to-day (Saturday) and in the Light Programme on Sunday morning.