

BRENDA

40 – 60 Brenda is a woman committed to tedious subjects. Last year she spoke to the group on the history of the tea towel. This year it is “The Fascinating World of Broccoli”. She soldiers on seriously while her audience dissolves sniggering. Brenda is a bore.

Brenda *(off)*...such a rush, *such* a r----, are we in here?

Marie returns, suddenly all sweetness and light, with Brenda Hulse, a dull speaker

Marie Ladies, the slight delay was Brenda double-booked! She’s hotfooted it over here from another engagement.

Brenda Yes. That’s right. I was actually just down the dale at *another* Women’s Institute, High Ghyll.

There is a little frisson goes round the room

Chris

Annie *(together, sotto voce)* Boo.

Cora

Marie *(Frostily)* Right, well anyway.

Brenda Amazing standard. Some of the autumn poems those ladies came up with were astonishing.

Marie As I say, we ---

Brenda Decorated the whole hall with bulrush lanterns.

Marie *(loudly)* We did that last year. Wherever we lead, High Ghyll tends to follow.

A little later in the scene, Brenda starts her talk.

Brenda *(attempting some theatre)* Ladies. This harvest come with me, as I invite you into the fascinating world...of broccoli.

Chris *(nodding, mock “serious”)* Broccoli. Very good.

Annie *(not moving her lips)* You promissssed...

Brenda Broccoli has perhaps one of the most surprising lineages of any vegetable, and yet many persist in ranking it along merely with the carrot.