

Account of Purley on Thames

Rain or Shine - The Wind in the Willows

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The popular Rain or Shine Theatre Company made their annual pre-Christmas visit to The Barn on Friday December 7th to present James Reynard's adapted version of 'Wind in the Willows'

The afternoon performance at 1:15 pm was played to a handful of villagers, but mostly to Years One and Two children from Purley C of E Infant School, accompanied by their teachers. The five to seven year olds were entranced with only one child asking to go to the toilet, a sure sign of the actors' ability to entertain their audience.

The evening show played to a crowd of 110, most of whom were at the other end of the age range. But the attention, laughter and applause the cast received as well as the requests for autographs, more than justified the claim in the show's advertising that it would be suitable for all ages from 6 to 106.

James, who also directed, has his five-strong cast telling the story of Toad's adventures in flashback, though the majority of the action was true to Kenneth Grahame's original writing. The actors, playing more than twenty characters as they constantly changed appearance and dialect, produced exactly the right blend of humour, movement and drama, with Anthony Young excelling as Toad.

The set, stage and props were fascinating too, so that at various times we saw a caravan, a rowing boat, a barge, two horses, a couple of motor cars and a railway engine, as well as many colourful costumes and hats. Audience participation is the tradition with Rain or Shine also and Jan Page must surely be in line for a BAFTA after her delivering of the word 'guilty!' at the end of Toad's trial.

I am grateful to Ben, Clive, John and Marion for their help in preparing The Barn and tidying and clearing away afterwards, and also to Angela, Catherine and Val for organising the refreshments. As a result of everybody's efforts and of the generosity of those who contributed to the retiring collection, Project Purley will be able to donate the sum of £470 to our local Purley Park Trust.

Rain or Shine will return to The Barn on Friday June 7th, 2013 to perform Shakespeare's 'Comedy of Errors'

David Downs