

Account of Purley on Thames

Rain or Shine - The Tempest

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Rain or Shine's sixteenth visit to The Barn took on an extra dimension in June 2015. The actors had performed at Kendrick School on Thursday afternoon, and rather than travel to and from their base in Gloucester overnight, had asked if it were possible to be accommodated in Purley. I am very grateful to Anne and John, Ben and Dorothy and Marjorie and Roger, who willingly agreed to host the seven-strong cast. The outcome of such kindness was that all concerned thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Preparations for the actual performance began at 4 p.m. on Friday afternoon. The actors arrived to set up staging, lights, sound system and costumes. David, Martin and Richard organised the seating, whilst Catherine and Ann brought in the drinks and arranged the bar. With everything ready and tea provided by Jean and Marjorie over, we opened the doors at 7 p.m.

Numbers attending were slightly down this time, but those who stayed away, for whatever reason, missed the usual high quality presentation. The Tempest is one of Shakespeare's later plays, and perhaps with a sense of finality he reduces the comic element and leaves more to the imagination of the audience. Indeed there is little humour until the "A man or a fish?" episode halfway through the play, which gives the actors ample licence for some verbal as well as physical dexterity. The slapstick begins in earnest with the arrival of the drunken Stephano, played with obvious relish by Anthony Young who complains "My stomach is not constant!" to the obvious delight of the audience.

Taking a lesser role on this occasion was Claire Tucker as the spirit Ariel. She is married in real life to James Reynard, who besides playing Prospero, also directed the production. The couple were married last year and expect their first child in mid-November. All at Project Purley send their best wishes for the forthcoming happy event.

Project Purley audiences are discerning and critical as well as generous. We listened to many appreciative comments as people left, and the occasion raised a total of £450, which will go towards the setting up of a sensory garden at Purley Park Trust. On behalf of Project Purley I express since thanks to everyone – actors, helpers, spectators – who yet again made the occasion such a success.

David Downs