

Weekendplus

Players have another hit on their hands

"PICTURES of Clay" by Sharif Samad was competently produced and performed by Stage Two Downham Players.

Downham Village Hall was an appropriate setting for this tale of the Lancashire witches, nestling as it does in the awesome shadow of ancient Pendle Hill, the traditional haunt of the witches.

Kate Taylor and Lucy Scott shared their directing debut and proved more than equal to the task. Their thoughtful staging and use of scenery and lighting to produce a continuous action worked superbly well and the production flowed smoothly from beginning to end.

Although of short duration, the play not only conveyed the fear of witchcraft and superstition, but highlighted the condemnation suffered by the Catholic faith.

The play opened with a reading by Rachel Scott of an extract from "Pendle Witches", penned by Richard Catlow, and moved to the opening scene at Read Hall, the home of magistrate Roger Nowell. The character of Nowell was roundly played by Eddie Bootle, whose voice and presence added authority to the production. Nowell's niece Clara, played by Rachel Humphreys, convincingly portrayed the struggle to reconcile her faith with the condemnation of Catholicism promoted by Nowell.

Dave King, as lighting technician, effortlessly transported us to the graveyard of Newchurch-in-Pendle where Dan Bradbury and Gerry Purchase had worked their magic on the set designs. Here we encountered Chattox and Demdike exhuming a recent grave to remove a ring, complete with finger! Lucy Scott's performance as Chattox was outstanding. Her partner in the black arts, Old Demdike, was equally well characterised by Glen Purchase. Together they gave the play momentum and kept the audience occupied with their bickering and plotting.

The title of the play derives from



OUR photograph shows Lucy Scott, Glen Purchase and Eddie Bootle as their "Pictures of Clay" characters. (S240607/1)

the scene at windswept and desolate Malkin Tower where Chattox and Demdike are fashioning small clay effigies of those who have been unfortunate enough to incur their displeasure.

Although we never see the action it should be noted that the sad story of the Pendle witches centres on the encounter between Alizon Devize, the granddaughter of Demdike, and a traveller John Law.

Rachel Ruddock portrayed hapless Alizon with feeling and depth. She begs a few pins from Law, but is refused and in response utters a curse, in Latin. A curse that the naive and

innocent character does not understand. The unfortunate Law later dies of a stroke, triggering the arrest of Alizon for witchcraft, thus sealing the fate of the entire family.

Caught in the middle of the conflict was Richard Baldwin, played with conviction by Karl Barnsley, who sympathised with the accused, but was unable to prevent the persecution.

The period costumes provided by Margaret Smith lent an authentic ambience to the production, which was greatly appreciated by the audience.

JANICE WOOD

STAGE TWO DOWNHAM Hallowe'en comes early this year in Downham

Stage Two Downham presents the play

Pictures of Clay

by Sharif Samad

in July in place of the usual spring play

The story is the well-told tale of the Pendle witches, Chattox and Demdike and their demise at the hands of the 'witchfinder' magistrate Roger Nowell.

The realistic set and even more realistic characters will portray the infamous story candidly. Although this version of the story had its first performance only two years ago, the story is centuries old and very well known.

Four performances from Wednesday 11th to Saturday 14th July 2007 at 7.30

time to fit this in before your summer break.

Not to be missed

Tickets £ 5—Concessions £4 Wednesday night only
from Clitheroe Tourist Information 01200 425566 or Elizabeth Wrigley 423005

Stage 2 Downham

presents



PICTURES OF CLAY

a play by Sharif Samad
about The Lancashire Witches

Directed by Lucy Scott & Kate Taylor

Downham Village Hall

WED-SAT 11th - 14th JULY

7.30pm

Tickets available from Clitheroe
Tourist Information - 01200 425566

£4 Wed £5 for the rest of the week