

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 tradition 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 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.

es from the scene at windswept and desolate
rox and Demdike are fashioning small clay
e been unfortunate enough to incur their

e action it should be noted that the sad story of
s on the encounter between Alizon Devize, the
e, and a traveller John Law.

hapless Alizon with feeling and depth. She
but is refused and in response utters a curse,
naïve, and innocent character, does not
ate Law later dies of a stroke, triggering the
craft, thus sealing the fate of the entire family

e conflict was Richard Baldwin, played with
, who sympathised with the accused, but was
secution.

ded by Margaret Smith lent an authentic
n, which was greatly appreciated by the

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