## OTTERSHAW PLAYERS 'THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS' – NOVEMBER 2006

I must be one of the few people who were not brought up on this popular and much loved tale and after seeing your super production I felt I had definitely missed something!

Many congratulations to all those involved in the design and building of the magnificent set which well deserved the opening applause. The stream with its reflections was so realistic, and the interiors of the tree trunk homes were delightful.

Matthew Horton's direction was excellent and the ideas for the various modes of transport were amusing and effective. Use of the different levels on stage made for attractive positioning of the company and the darker woodland area looked sinister enough for any 'baddies' lair.

Kay Doyle's acting was very good and she made a brilliant Mole. She was gentle but had presence, and her whole demeanour, including splayed fingers, added to the characterisation.

Ratty as portrayed by Sandy Hurle was blustery, very much in charge and Stewart Mison gave a commendable performance as a larger than life Toad. Both men constantly kept in mind the characteristics of their particular animals and at one point Toad sat at the front of the stage doing very toad-like things with his mouth!

George Grafton played a wonderfully deadpan Albert and again his mannerisms were well studied. In the role of Badger, Alan Wakefield could have been a little more positive and some of his dialogue slowed the pace of action.

Wearing three different costumes Graham Collier performed each part with confidence and the Chief Weasel, played by Mark Holton was truly nasty. Weasel Norman, the rather soft 'baddie', was nicely interpreted by Peter Moore. I liked the gangster style suits and accessories worn by the Wildwooders and also their eerie face make-up.

The make up was extremely well done, and the supporting roles had worked hard to reflect the mannerisms of their own particular characters. This gave reality to the piece, especially for the children in the audience who appeared to be enchanted. Members of the cast supported the leads admirably and all of them, children included, added to the first class show.

Danny Sparkes made a memorable Washerwoman, that scene was very good, and Alison Byers' Magistrate was also well acted.

I liked the choice of music, most appropriate and fun, and the sound effects were good. The lighting too complemented the production.

There were one or two occasions with long sections of dialogue and not a lot of action, perhaps some of it could have been cut. I don't know what restrictions, if any, there are on the play but the inclusion of a couple of musical numbers would have also broken up the more lengthy spells of dialogue. These are just a couple of slightly negative points on an otherwise splendid production.

Your programme is interesting to read and nicely set out.

Thank you for inviting me to see 'Wind in the Willows' and for your hospitality on the evening. It was good to meet Chris again and also to have a chat with Matthew in the interval.

Good luck with your next play 'The Merry Wives of Windsor', which I shall look forward to seeing in June next year.

Meantime I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

E. Gloria Smith NODA Regional Representative