

Compton & Shawford Magazine

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LOCAL NEWS • EVENTS • GARDENING • HISTORY

BABES IN THE WOOD

The 2026 Shawford Pantomime



This year's Compton and Shawford pantomime was Babes in the Wood, once again written by the amazing, evergreen, Simon Theobalds (his eleventh panto performed in the Shawford Parish Hall). It was directed with great energy, vision, and patience by John Amos, and the words and music for the songs were written by the multi-talented Martin Harris, who also played in the band, alongside Jon Shurlock, Richard Croker and Gordon Munro.

The show was narrated in song by Alan-a-Dale (the charismatic Marcus Whitfield in his coat of

many colours) with the other cast members. The junior chorus of Arthur Townell, Rafferty Sautereau, Imogen Webster, Katie Holt, Zoe Robbins, Tilly Blachford, and Hettie Hingston (sometimes aided and abetted by Eileen Gorrod) participated with great gusto in the songs and dance and put enormous energy into various roles including forest creatures, wolves, kindergarten kids and pages.



The action began in Nottingham Castle where a very bad tempered and broke Sheriff of Nottingham (played by a magnificently menacing Tim Robbins) is visited by an emissary from the king, Portcullis Pursuivant (played with stately superiority by Simon Theobalds). Pursuivant explains that the King

needs subjects to run a new venture called a 'Postal Service' and also to be rid of two 'minor inconveniences', a pair of twins (played with sibling sassiness by Hannah Lowry and Christina Burdyug in the first half and Otilie Pemsel and Grace Baker in the second, all talented and feisty performers). Seeing an opportunity to make money, the Sheriff willingly



undertakes both tasks. Together the Sheriff and his sidekick, Wormwood (played flamboyantly by Anthony Fletcher) decide to use Robin Hood (John Amos again demonstrating considerable energy) and his Merry Men as postmasters and to tax any money generated.

The task of disposing of the Babes is given to the Sheriff's

henchmen, Smash and Grabbe (played with a dual mix of the dastardly and the dumb by Roly Simpson and Richard Webster.) They leave the Babes to be eaten by wolves in the forest but the other woodland creatures protect them and they are found in the morning by Red Riding Hood (the charming Belles Sharpe, who sings beautifully of her love for Much the Miller's son) and they are taken to the house of Granny Hood (played with empathy and authority by the ever-reliable Jenny Walmsley).





The Merry Men get wise to the plan and set up a trap for Wormwood in Granny's house where Much the Miller's son (Alex Robbins, whose acting and delivery of lines demonstrated brilliant comic timing) hides in Granny's bed dressed as her. With Red's help, they capture Wormwood and Robin leads a party to Nottingham for a showdown with the Sheriff. We learn that the King had ordered the Babes to be disposed of five years previously because of concerns about succession. The King has died without heirs, meaning that the Babes become the joint queens. They command the Sheriff to be taken to the oubliette and Wormwood to work for them developing AI (Alchemist's Intelligence). Friar Tuck (a suitably bucolic and worldly Antony Fanshawe) conducts the marriage of Red and Much.

Cue a final audience participation song led by Alan-a-Dale.

Five years pass by and the Merry Men are getting well known and rich thanks to their posting activities, through which they advertise their goods and services. Marian (a fabulously feisty Eileen Gorrod) writes books and responds to letters. Granny keeps the babes safe in the kindergarten she has set up in the forest.

The Sheriff complains that he is only receiving a small fraction of what he desires through taxes. The conniving Wormwood comes up with a scheme to defraud the Merry Men by applying the 'alchemist's algebra', invented by Fu Jit Su, to the Merry Men's accounts to divert their profits into the Sheriff's. Each of the Merry Men is told in turn that they are the only ones having problems and that the alchemist's algebra will put all to rights.





Thanks to all involved including the crew back stage and those helping with the costumes, make up, set design and building, prompting, lighting, wrangling the junior chorus, programmes, tickets and refreshments: Bryan Green, Pamela Potts, Bridget Amos, Jonny Hingston, Jo and Clemmie Fowle, Catherine Trussler, Ella and Louise Tyson, Kevin Hughes,

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OUR COMPTON &
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