ELIZABETH HYDE (PIRATES, CASTAWAYS & CODFISH EVENT):

Scaplen's Court Players

Chelsea Ball 14 August 2021 Scene One Plus

Poole Town has an incredibly interesting and varied maritime history which is passionately preserved by many local groups and businesses. It’s this passion which brings so many historical and celebratory events to Poole each year. This weekend I headed over to Scaplen’s Court in Old Town Poole to watch the Scaplen’s Court Players perform *Elizabeth Hyde* at *Pirates, Castaways and Codfish*. The event was free, with donations gratefully received, and is designed for people of all ages. With storytelling, live theatre, boat building and sea shanties available, it was a pretty packed morning!

*Elizabeth Hyde* was set in one of the rooms inside Scaplen’s Court. Whilst not an ordinary setting for a show, Scaplen’s Court was built in the 1500s-1600s. This helps to give the show additional gravitas as you can well imagine some of these events taking place in those rooms all those years ago. The play, unsurprisingly given the title, was set around Elizabeth Hyde, a female spy who had a direct hand in contributing to the usurping of King James II by William of Orange. This woman had a hand in changing the course of history, and managed to beat the odds by becoming a part of a rare handful of women who were recognised that far back in time. It was very refreshing to see a historic play have a female protagonist.

The performance itself was fascinating and very compelling. It started well, with a round of ‘Lillibullero’ performed by John Wicks, with support from the cast. The song was very relevant as it was written around the time of the events on stage as a way to mock arriving Irish regiments in support of James II. The play was well paced, interesting and was quite humorous in places, especially when the military soldiers were onstage.

It was a small cast with each actor bringing their characters to life with a lot of enthusiasm, which was lovely to see. It’s because of this that I won’t be naming stand out characters. The team were solid in their performance without a single weak link and it was clear that all involved were really enjoying themselves. Evidence of how good the performance was, was provided by the children in the room who remained engaged and silent throughout the performance; a true accolade as children will make it known if they are not enjoying themselves!

As mentioned earlier, there were other activities to enjoy as part of the event as well. The Exmouth Shanty Men treated the people of Poole to a round of Sea Shanties at the entrance of Scaplen’s Court which was clearly being well enjoyed by the audience. Children, and adults who were so inclined, could build their own Pirate Boat to take home, which was also a very popular activity. Further history was brought to life by Don Gent through the storytelling of Roberts Story and there were guided walks through Old Poole run by members of the Poole Old Town Conservation Group.

All in all this was a very well run, well organised event. No mean feat given some of the challenges that they have had to overcome. A huge congratulations to the organisers, cast and everyone involved. One of your objectives was to give Poole residents a little look into history, you certainly did that, with bells on.