

The Merry Wives of Windsor

"A most pleasant and excellent conceited comedy"

The Merry Wives of Windsor is one of the best loved of Shakespeare's comedies and also contains the highest proportion of prose of any of his plays. Some place the play's creation as late as 1601. Its central character is Falstaff who had been a roaring success with audiences in *Henry IV* Part I and Part II, although in this incarnation he bears little resemblance to his previous character. The play may have been performed or at least written for the occasion of the installation of Lord Hunsdon as a knight of the Garter on 23 April 1597, although John Dennis a century later claimed that the bard had written the play on the order of Elizabeth I who wished to see Falstaff in love.

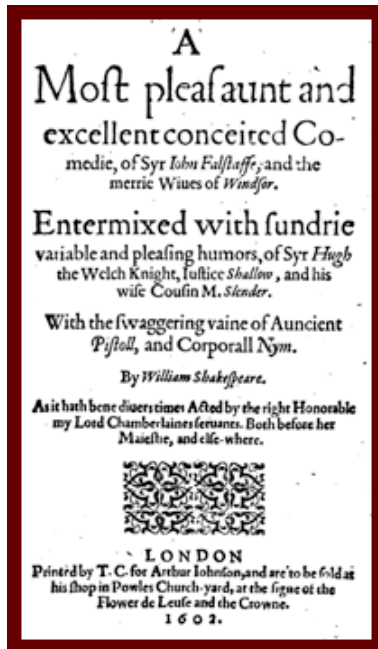
Performances of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* by Balally Players this summer:

Airfield Gardens - Tue 27 June to Fri 30 June

Sylvan Theatre, Kilruddery House - Sat 1 July

Elm Park Gardens - Sat 8 July

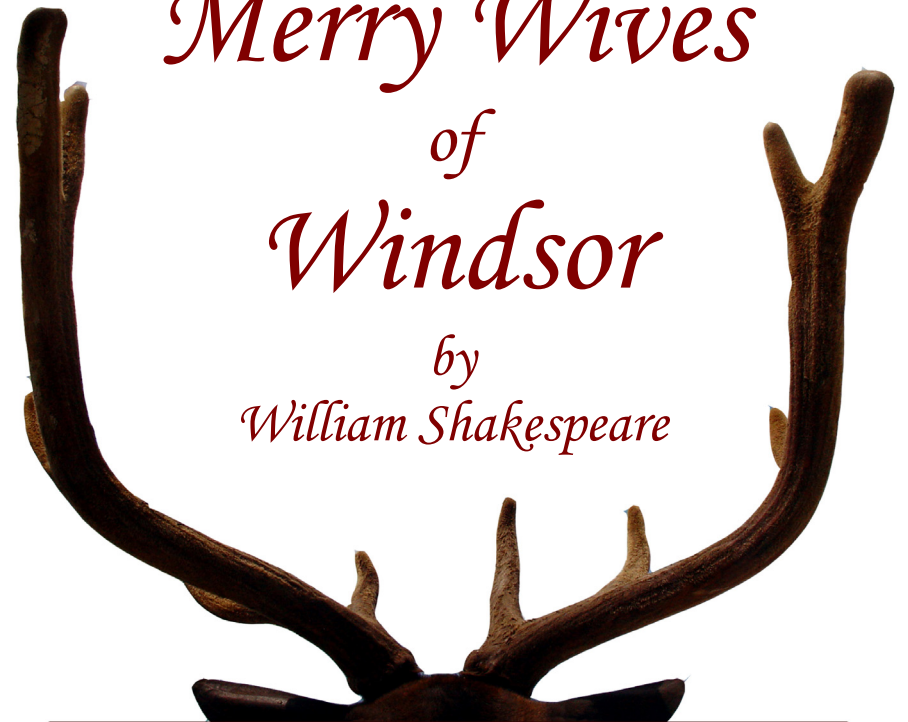
Cabinteely Park - Sun (afternoon) 16 July



www.balallyplayers.com

Balally Players Present

The Merry Wives of Windsor by William Shakespeare



Tue 27 to Fri 30 June 2006

*Airfield Gardens
Dundrum*

Play Synopsis

The Merry Wives of Windsor begins with Parson Evans receiving a complaint from Justice Shallow and nephew Slender that Sir John Falstaff is again causing trouble. Running out of money, Sir John decides to seduce his way into money by sleeping with the wives of both Page and Ford. Disgusted, Sir John's friends Pistol and Nym decide to inform the husbands. Mistress Quickly tells Simple she will help Slender woo Anne but this is overheard by Doctor Caius, who also loving Anne, challenges Parson Evans to a duel for interfering. Fenton also loves Anne...

Meanwhile Mrs Ford and Mrs Page discover Sir John Falstaff's letters to be identical, plotting with expert prankster Mistress Quickly to punish him. Likewise, Mr Ford and Mr Page learn of Sir John's plans from Pistol and Nym. Whilst Page trusts his wife, Ford is not so sure, taking the disguise of Brooke to divine Falstaff's intentions. Brooke offers Falstaff money to sleep with Mrs Ford. Falstaff agreeing but also insulting Brooke, unaware that he is Ford. Meanwhile, Caius waits in a field for Parson Evans to show up which he does not. Evans though is also waiting for Caius to show, but is in another field. Eventually both learn that the Host gave them different locations to stop the duel both uniting to make the Host pay for this.

Falstaff arrives to seduce Ford's wife, Mrs Page, to warn Falstaff of Mr Ford's arrival. Panicking, the women convince Falstaff into hiding in a trunk full of dirty laundry they then have thrown into a muddy ditch. Ford arrives, not finding Falstaff. Meanwhile Fenton declares his love for Anne. Anne loves Fenton but Mr Page wants her to marry Slender, Mrs Page preferring Caius. Brooke arrives, Falstaff recounting his wet ordeal but also his next meeting... At Mrs Ford's house, Falstaff again is warned of Mr Ford's imminent arrival but Ford does turn up and they decide to hide Falstaff this time as a woman to escape injury. Angry at Ford's distrust, Mrs Page and Ford have the trunk once again taken out but without Falstaff. Seeing what he thinks is the aunt of Mistress Ford's maid, Ford beats up the Brainford woman (Falstaff). Now the women reveal all to their husbands, Ford apologizing for doubting his wife and now the two women decide to promise to meet Falstaff together at midnight where children disguised as fairies can terrify Falstaff.

Meanwhile, Mr Page has chosen Slender to be Anne's husband but Mrs Page wants her daughter to marry Caius. Anne has chosen to marry Fenton but to fool her parent's wishes she will not be wearing white as Mr Page told Slender, nor green as Mrs Page told Caius, both men making away with peasants wearing these colours! Falstaff arrives at the oak giddy with excitement, only to be tormented by fairies and in his terror, laughed at by most of Windsor. Anne's elopement with Fenton is accepted and Mistress Quickly informs Falstaff of the pranks to which he famously acknowledges, "I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass."

Cast

Citizens of Windsor

MISTRESS MARGARET PAGE	Mary Ryan
MASTER GEORGE PAGE	Leonard Nealon
ANNE PAGE (Nan, their daughter)	Karina Steffens
MISTRESS ALICE FORD	Ciara O'Byrne
MASTER FRANK FORD	Peter Flood
JOHN & ROBERT	Francis Cahill and Rupert Heather
MISTRESS QUICKLY	Antoinette Fahey, Ruth Blayney
DOCTOR CAIUS	Jim Carroll
JIN RUGBY (Servant to Dr Caius)	Roger Cleary
SIR HUGH EVANS	Tony McGettigan
HOST OF THE GARTER INN	Niall O'Kennedy
MAIDENS & WOMEN OF WINDSOR	Emma Brewer, Rachel Fitzpatrick and Teresa Dempsey

Visitors to Windsor

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF	Geoffrey O'Keefe
PISTOL & NYM (his followers)	Niall O Kennedy and Rupert Heather
ROBIN (his servant)	Anita Roche
MASTER FENTON (a young gentleman)	Anthony Duffy
MASTER ROBERT SHALLOW (a Justice)	Lorcan Dunne
MASTER ABRAHAM SLENDER (his nephew)	Patrick O'Malley
SIMPLE (servant to Slender)	Doris Cullen

Crew

Stage Manager	Jean Monahan
ASM	Oran O'Rua
Costume Design	Dympna Murray
Sound & Lighting	Patrick Hand and Gerry Doyle
Set Design	Gerard Bourke
Construction	Brian Dempsey, Pat Hand, John Carleton
Make Up	Sonia Dolan and Teresa Dempsey
Poster Design & Programme	Declan Brennan, Geoffrey O'Keefe
Front of House	Joanne Keane, Judy McKeever and other members of Balally Players

Directed by Karen Carleton