



[The Wind in the Willows](#) by Kenneth Grahame

Adapted for the stage by Alan Bennett

Presented by [Library Theatre](#) , performed at [The Lowry](#) , directed by Chris Honer

Reviewed by [Charlotte Starkey](#) December 2011

Some people, who find animals endlessly fascinating, tend to be outward looking, always seem glad that they are still alive to enjoy the world, just like Mole; others, who do not have the same connection with animals, seem to believe the world should feel privileged that they are alive, just like Toad. This is a generalisation, of course; but I realised the limitation of imagination, when an English teacher whom I had admired, declared that 'animal stories' are 'not sufficiently substantial'.

I never did grasp the meaning of that and promptly threw him into my trash bin, having just read *Gulliver's Travels*

and

*Animal Farm*

as well as having been brought up in the company of animals, wild and domesticated. After all, I had read

*The Wind in the Willows*

by the tender age of six months, or so it seems from this distance, and my love of the tale has never waned. This production is no place for the self-lover, the introvert, the

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t-ridden career seeker or anyone on a mission. It is for those who find something quite mad, amusing and mysterious about creation and understand that the unpredictability of animals comes largely from their having to share a planet with a rather weird race of beings - us.

One has to imagine a world where the family motor car was not an upholstered four by four lorry, where there were no motorways, no developers or planners, no wind turbines to ruin the view; where life flowed with the rhythms of a rural idyll; where the only sound in harmony with the chatter of the river and the creatures on its banks was that of the wind in the willows. That is where I was yesterday evening, basking - on the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal; or, more precisely, sitting in the Quays Theatre at The Lowry alongside the same canal. The theatre, like The Lowry in general, encased me in its warmth, glow and intimacy and I settled back to read the programme information on Squirrels, Otters, Toads, Water Rats, Badgers, Moles, Stoats and Weasels.

