

started with a clean-up for some occasional performances in 1943/44 including a commemoration of the enfranchisement of the town by the second Earl of Richmond in 1093. These performances were given with the pit still floored over. Indeed the Sunday Times of 25th July 1943 declared *There is no raised stage, the action takes place on the floor of the auditorium*. An understandable mistake, for it was to take some expert research to determine that the wine cellars had been an unrecorded modification following the cessation of stage performances in the mid-nineteenth century.

The principal detective was Richard Southern and we can follow his illustrated account in the official guide book. Had this really been a theatre without a raised stage?

The cellar was so solid, so separate from the theatre above, and seemed so integral a part of the building, with the crown of the vaults coming so close under the floor of the theatre, that the case for the theatre being a freak, with no raised stage, seemed proved.

But there was one final clue; in the floor of the theatre appeared signs of three nailed-up traps. One of these was opened. The brick vault was found underneath right enough, some 18 inches down – but just below the opening of the trap itself was something else, namely a sloping groove. In this the trap door had once slid aside to free the opening. For what purpose? Clearly to allow an actor to rise on a platform to the stage for an effect. But the machinery for such an effect must require some 8 or 9 ft of depth. Thus it was inevitable that the whole cellar was an intrusion.

This inevitability was reinforced by a study of the pit passage which plainly gave conventional access to the front of the pit – the only existing entry being that through the centre box which however



*The Georgian Theatre, Richmond, Yorkshire. Built 1788. Restored 1962.*

