

## **Tim Skelton recollections**

Having established myself as an enthusiastic participant in school dramatic productions, appearing in 'The Dock Brief' and 'Coriolanus', I then proceeded to abuse the position of trust in which I found myself. As well as performing, I had also laboured as Mr. Williams' production assistant on 'Coriolanus' and consequently had been entrusted with the key to the space above the Assembly Hall (to check on lighting etc.) and on one occasion whilst up there I discovered, in the corner behind the organ pipes, a very interesting void.

This void was approximately ten feet deep, roughly triangular in shape and had a floor space of around thirty square feet. Perfect, I thought, for a secret smoking room! I enlisted the help of three or four trusted cohorts and, in time, we had purloined a desk and a few chairs from the music room nearby, acquired a hurricane lamp from somewhere and set up a flashing light with a button hidden under the door from the fly floor to announce entry. All very cosy. We even engaged the services of a chap, I can't recall his name but I think he was Jewish, who was a superb musician and was, during every lunch break or free period it seemed, in the hall practicing on the piano. We arranged with him to play a certain tune if there was a master in the vicinity and another tune to signify the 'all clear'.

We enjoyed our own private 'common room' for quite some time - it certainly beat the bike shed for having a crafty fag - but, inevitably, we were in time rumbled. If I remember correctly Mr. Bruce was our Nemesis and, naturally enough, because of my involvement with the school plays, I was deemed to be the "ringleader". So it was off to the Headmaster for punishment.

Having waited an age outside his office (I am convinced this was deliberate strategy - a kind of psychological warfare) I was called in to receive, I assumed, my inevitable caning. To my utter amazement Mr Mills then sat me down and stated that, although he could by no means condone our actions, he was full of admiration for our resourcefulness, initiative and industry and what a pity we did not apply the same qualities to our academic endeavours. I was then dismissed with a very "twinkly" smile!

I can't speak for earlier generations but our year always thought "Henry" was bit "different" - this occasion served to further the legend.

Tim Skelton