

All Stars Band Concert 2011



Brian Roberts

I have always stated publicly and privately that being allowed to play with the Imperial Band is a privilege and pleasure and I have always given my thanks to the club and its members for extending to Kate the warmth and friendship that can never be replaced.

My original musical history was with the band of the Royal Marines and in the twilight of my playing career I have been honoured to perform a concert for the past three years with The All Stars Band made up of past members of the Royal Marines Band Service who meet once a year in Margate Kent to perform a concert for charity. One rehearsal and a live concert in front of a capacity audience. The band is lucky to have as its musical director Captain David Cole MVO MMUS ARAM RM who during his long career was the Director of Music of the Royal Yacht Britannia. Not bad for a band with an average age of 60 years.

This year was extra special because our Surmast Tony Borg was invited to play with the band as a guest trumpeter. It is an honour because normally no players other than ex Royal Marines are allowed to play, but with a bit of persuasion I managed to get Captain Cole to agree. I am glad I did.

Mind you, we were on a very tight schedule. We left Malta on the early flight to Heathrow on Saturday 12th March arriving at our hotel in Margate at about 6.30pm, just in time for a couple of beers and a curry.

The following day Sunday 13th we were up bright and early and following a “traditional English breakfast” went for a long walk by the sea. After breakfast a brisk walk was required to clear our systems before we made our way to the concert venue, the Winter Gardens for our rehearsal.

On our arrival it was the usual organized chaos before every concert. Music to be sorted, stands to be arranged and seats to be counted. I think Tony was glad to be able to sit back for once and let

someone else worry about it. Anyway it is always amazing that these things get sorted out in the end. For a while it was like musical chairs till everyone could get settled and we were ready to go.



Our two intrepid trumpeters ready to start the concert

Soon David Cole raised his baton and a four-hour gruelling rehearsal took place. This was a test of true musicianship and sight reading because a number of the pieces were new to us. By 5.30pm we were ready for a break and it was time for Tony to get to know the members of the band and renew old acquaintances over refreshments. And it was not long before his easy manner and sense of humour made him a hit with everyone.

Then it was down to the real business of the evening. The hall was full with an audience of



Tony in discussion with Captain David Cole

over 1200 people all waiting in anticipation. Our instruments were tuned, music in order and 120 musicians were ready to go.

It is strange that even after 55 years of playing I still get nervous before a performance and I am sure Tony felt the same. However there was one

more surprise to add to his own tension. David Cole introduced him to the audience and he was made to stand and take a bow. EMBARRASSED OR WHAT?

The programme consisted of a variety of pieces from light to serious compositions meant to extract the best of the players and the evening finished with a standing ovation. It was an excellent concert.

There is always a certain anti climax after a programme is finished. All that concentration and adrenalin takes time to evaporate but I am sure Tony will agree that to be able to perform with such talented and experienced musicians was a magical experience. It is an experience I want to relive as long as I am physically able. I was pleased and proud to sit alongside Tony and I hope he will be able to join me again sometime in the future.

I know he will be welcomed in the Royal Marines All Stars Band as I have been in the Imperial Band here in Mellieħa for so many years.

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