



The Rutland Brass Collective

By Hugh Illingworth (B 57)

As an amateur musician, to be able to play a trumpet fanfare in a large Cathedral might be a lifetime ambition or just a dream! Towards the end of last year, having been asked to do that by Geoff Thomson, the High Sheriff of Rutland, initially it seemed to be a daunting challenge but as trumpet players know, there is no hiding place.

Towards the end of the tenure as a High Sheriff of Rutland, there is a final service in the impressive Peterborough Cathedral, mustering all the pomp and circumstance that Rutland can offer and attended by several High Sheriffs from neighbouring counties all attired in their ceremonial dress.

My trumpet playing originally started two years before leaving school and then following a little playing after schooldays, there was a layoff of about thirty years before embracing it once again about twenty-five or so years ago. So, faced with the challenge as described above but basically competent, I still needed some help.

Fortunately, I was able to turn to Stewart Drummond, former Head of Brass at Uppingham and also former Housemaster of Fairfield to request assistance. Happily, Stewart consented and then came the task of choosing and also sourcing suitable music. Looking ahead, I also needed to locate suitable 'Rutland' brass players and then arrange a rehearsal, having initially been to Peterborough Cathedral and discussed the requirement with the Cathedral Precentor and organist.



We chose the Arthur Bliss Royal Fanfare 2 and Gordon Jacob's fanfare for 'God Save the King'. Both these fanfares are magnificent to hear but needed a beefy sound and so the chosen line-up comprised six trumpets, two trombones and a tuba. We had a brief rehearsal in earlier weeks but on a Saturday morning, two weeks before the event (in March) we assembled for our principal rehearsal in the transept of the Cathedral and with the mentoring and encouragement of Stewart we performed. What a sound! The resonance within the Cathedral of our playing lasts about seven seconds and the music carries so well that surprisingly it does not need large volume from the playing by the individuals. An informal recording was taken during the rehearsal, which sounded good with a few imperfections, which we subsequently worked on to improve.

On the day, as both an organiser and performer, I was mightily relieved that there were no drop-outs because of Covid or other lurgies and so the service began. Our Arthur Bliss fanfare announcing the procession of High Sheriffs up the nave went flawlessly and then at the end of the service, we performed the Gordon Jacob fanfare as the introduction of 'God Save the King'.

As I write this, I can feel the hairs on the back of my neck rising! As the fanfare ended, the bass notes of the mighty organ kicked in and then after the organ played the first line of God Save, the trumpets followed in with the descant rising above the sound of the organ.

I have to say that it was a relief when it was all done but I am absolutely delighted to have taken part and I have been assured that the performance was perfect in sound – we shall never know as there was not a recording! My enduring thanks for Stewart in assisting the journey to perfection!

Rehearsing in Peterborough Cathedral

