



*fcooa*

## **FEDERATION OF CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATIONS**

---

**The minutes of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held at Oxford, Christ Church on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2017, commencing at 3pm+**

23 delegates representing 15 Associations signed the Attendance Register. The following Associations were represented: Chapel Royal (London), Durham, Eton, Exeter, Gloucester, Leicester, Lichfield, London St Pauls, Norwich, Oxford Christ Church, Peterborough, Rochester, Salisbury, Warwick and Westminster Abbey.

**27a Welcome by the Chairman**

The Chairman of the Federation, Alastair Pollard, welcomed delegates to Oxford.

**27b Federation Prayer and Obituaries**

The Chairman read the Federation prayer and delegates stood to remember 6 individuals who had passed away during the year. A list is filed with these minutes.

**27c Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from 8 individuals and one association. A list is filed with these minutes.

**27d Minutes of the 2016 AGM**

The minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at Wakefield, having been circulated in advance, were signed as a true record.

**27e Matters arising from these minutes (not on the Agenda)**

There were no matters arising.

**27f Presentation and Adoption of Annual Accounts for 2015**

A statement supporting the accounts, from the Treasurer, who had sent his apologies, was read by the Acting Secretary and is filed with these minutes.

Ian Henderson (Rochester) asked if the subs of £20 under expenses related to Friends of Cathedral Music. He also asked if there was a simpler method of revaluation of the regalia by reference to an index rather than through a full valuation.

The accounts were proposed for adoption by Arnold Wills (Peterborough) seconded by David Horwood (Eton) and agreed by all present.

**27g**      **Appointment of Independent Financial Examiners**

The nomination of Mr Matthew Guest, ACMA, of Manchester as the Federation's Independent Financial Examiner was formally proposed by Geoffrey Webber (Exeter), seconded by Ian Henderson (Rochester) and agreed by all present.

**27h**      **Proposed change to the constitution**

As it was unlikely that the Federation would produce, in this year or future years, a printed version of Once a Chorister and that we no longer sold merchandise to the extent we had in the past, it was proposed by the Executive Committee that the roles of Publications Officer and Marketing Officer be removed from the constitution.

Ian Henderson (Rochester) asked if there wasn't a continuing need to produce publications to remain connected with the membership. The Chairman responded that, indeed there was just as much need to keep in touch with the membership but, the Executive had resolved that we had to move with the times and adopt different forms of communication, which were to be discussed under items o, p and q.

It was also proposed by the Executive Committee that the roles of Development Officer and Website Officer be created.

Gordon Hughes (Oxford Christ Church) seconded the changes to the constitution and agreed by all present.

**27i**      **Election of Officers**

The Peterborough Association, being the hosts of the 2018 Festival, proposed the Dean of Peterborough as their nominee for the Presidency of the Federation for the year 2018. The appointment of a new Dean is expected later this year and, in the event that the Dean is not appointed, the current Acting Dean will become President.

The Chairman advised that Arnold Wills (Peterborough) had been co-opted to the Executive Committee during the year and would be taking on the role of Development Officer, with the specific purpose of looking at how the Federation can remain relevant and grow in the future and to encourage new members to join. He also advised that Richard Watts (Westminster Abbey) had formally joined the Executive Committee as Website Officer.

There being no other nominations, the following to hold Office until the next AGM was proposed by David Horwood (Eton) and seconded by Ian Henderson (Rochester).

| <b>Office</b>                | <b>Name</b>      | <b>Association</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Chairman                     | Alastair Pollard | Durham             |
| Vice Chairman                | Nick Hodges      | Warwick            |
| Hon. Secretary               | Vacant           |                    |
| Hon. Treasurer               | Michael Lake     | Chelmsford         |
| Website Officer              | Richard Watts    | Westminster Cath.  |
| Development Officer          | Arnold Wills     | Peterborough       |
| 2018 Festival Representative | Samuel Barber    | Peterborough       |

Associations' Representatives:

- |                            |                  |           |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| • South West               | Stephen Milner   | Salisbury |
| • East Anglia & South East | Ayrton Westwood  | Norwich   |
| • North and Ireland        | Alastair Pollard | Durham    |
| • Midlands & Wales         | Nick Hodges      | Warwick   |

**27j Reports by Chairman, Secretary and Associations' Representatives**

Copies of the Associations' Representatives' reports had been handed out before the start of the meeting. There were no further comments or questions regarding these. A copy is filed with these minutes

In his report, the Chairman said that we live in a changing world and the Federation must adapt to survive. He said that he was a little disappointed that more associations weren't represented at this year's AGM but thanked Gordon Hughes and the Christ Church team for organisation such a splendid day. He thanked Richard Watts for his contribution in producing last year's Once a Chorister magazine as an electronic document and regretted that, without a volunteer editor, we would not be producing a magazine this year. Being without an Honorary Secretary was a major concern and he hoped a volunteer would come forward during the coming year. The full version of the report is filed with these minutes.

The Acting Honorary Secretary reported that he was expecting to report that no new members had joined during the year however, he had today received an application for one new individual member and had been advised that Chapel Royal, Hampton Court would be joining and had sent their subscription. He also apologised to those who did not have access to email if they had been missed on any items that had been circulated during the year and encouraged everyone to embrace technology if at all possible to aid the dissemination of information.

**27k 2017 Festival – Norwich**

Ayrton Westwood, (Norwich) gave an update on the arrangements for the festival which is to take place from 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> June. He said that the new developments at the cathedral would come into their own for our visit and for the event to be cathedral centric, with easy access for everyone to all the activities. He reported that currently 85 delegates were expected for the three day event with 105 people booked for the banquet. He encouraged other associations to sign up for future Festivals as they had been able to complete all of the arrangements in a two year time frame rather than the four years suggested in the "Organising a Festival" guidelines.

**27l 2018 AGM - Chelmsford**

It was confirmed that next year's AGM would take place at Chelmsford on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May. As Michael Lake, the Chelmsford representative was not present, no further detail were available.

**27m 2018 Festival – Peterborough**

Samuel Barber, the Peterborough representative reported that all of the arrangements for next year's festival were well in hand. They were waiting on the appointment of a new Dean, which is likely to be known in September. In the

event of a Dean not being appointed, the Acting Dean would remain in post and host the event. It had been decided that the banquet would be held in the cathedral and that an on-line booking system would be available.

**27n**      **2018 Worcester Tour**

Gordon Hughes (Oxford Christ Church) reported that arrangements were well in hand and that it would be going ahead. The dates would be 26 April to 1<sup>st</sup> May. The hotel had been provisionally booked and it was intended that the first night would include an evening meal but subsequent nights would be ad lib. For the event to be successful it would require between 30 and 40 individuals to take part and the cost was estimated to be around £500 per person including hotel, coach and entrance to attractions visited. The itinerary was still in planning but it was expected that there would be plenty of free time and arrival back at the hotel each day by 6pm.

Geoffrey Webber (Exeter) asked about costs and Arnold Wills (Peterborough) asked about risks to the Federation. The Acting Secretary stated that the Executive Committee had made a decision following the last Federation Tour that the Federation would not sponsor any further tours as there was reducing interest and filling sufficient places was proving increasingly difficult. The Executive Committee has also agreed that it was prepared to support this tour and promote it through the website and newsletters but would not provide any financial support or cover any losses.

**27o**      **Once a Chorister magazine**

The Chairman reiterated that, as it had not been possible to find a replacement editor for Once a Chorister, it would not be published this year and there was no plan to attempt to create an on-line version. However, other methods of communication were being considered and developed and would be covered in the next item.

The Chairman said that it might be necessary to change the wording under Section 2.6 of the constitution where it says "To issue, at least once a year, an official publication and to maintain a website". As we do maintain a website and it is intended to regularly publish items through that medium and through social media, it was agreed that the relevant section should be changed to "To issue publications in an appropriate format and maintain a website".

**27p**      **Future communications – the FCOCA website and Facebook**

Samuel Barber (Peterborough) demonstrated the new FCOCA Facebook page and described how it might be used in the future to disseminate information to member associations, provide the platform for associations to post reports and advertise their own events and allow conversation between associations.

Ian Henderson expressed concern that Facebook was not universally liked and a proportion of the current membership did not use it.

David Tranter (London St Paul's) said that, though he personally was not a user of Facebook, he did accept that, if we wished to access those in their 30s and 40s, Facebook was probably the best way of doing so as it seemed that particular

age group were amongst the highest users. He added that it should be one of a number of ways in which we communicate with our prospective audience. David Lee (Eton) said that the Federation should either embrace modern technology or accept its slow demise. He gave, as an example, his own association, which was slowly dying with fewer than 30 ex-choristers as active members. Since embracing social media, they are now in touch with very many more with much higher attendance at association events.

## **27q Future development of the Federation**

Arnold Wills (Development Officer) spoke about our halcyon days as choristers and all present agreed both that they were indeed very special and that the tradition must continue. When we meet other OCs there's an immediate bond and the FCOCA could be regarded as the 'glue' for all the individual associations.

Arnold then posed some questions about his aims for the FCOCA for interest:

What is the purpose of a national FCOCA?  
Do we envisage it being around in say 10 years time?  
How will it continue and thrive?  
How do we best communicate?  
How many are on Facebook?  
How many use email?

This led to lively discussion and a general agreement from those present that we should continue to adapt and accept change. Most agreed that electronic communication rather than printed matter was the way forward for the majority of members.

Arnold then spoke about his estimate of say 10- 12,000 former choristers across the UK, of all ages, most of whom aren't touched by either their own or their local OCA. He spoke about his aim that all associations, as some now do, invite other OCs to join their associations as affiliates or associates. There was general agreement that this was to be encouraged. The FCOCA Facebook site had been developed to encourage contact between current members and those 10-12,000 potential members. Arnold said that ideally Samuel would have a named contact at every OCA to maintain, develop and moderate the Facebook site.

Arnold said that another aim would be to have as many potential associations as possible as members and provide support to those that had 'gone into hibernation'. He was also delighted to confirm that Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace had become members of the FCOCA. Arnold had been a Gentlemen there in the 1980s.

Communication including Facebook, is essential as a basis for social and also professional networking especially between young former choristers and a source of useful information.

Arnold concluded with his plan for a national survey of what is taking place 'out there' with the various associations. He was anxious through the survey to establish what was being done at the time young choristers finish and the extent to which they are nurtured and encouraged, or alternatively simply 'dumped'.

**27r**      **Any other business**

The Acting Secretary reminded the members of the Executive Committee that the next meeting would be held in Leamington Spa on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September at 11.15am

**27s**      **Vote of Thanks**

The Chairman thanked the authorities at Christ Church for the kind hospitality and Gordon and his team for such a well organised event.

**27t**      **Close of meeting**

The Chairman closed the meeting at 4.35pm.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Chairman) Date \_\_\_\_\_