



FEDERATION OF CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATIONS

www.fcoca.org.uk

NEWSHEET 18

The Executive Committee met on Saturday 11th February in Leamington Spa. Our first task was to co-opt a new committee member. Arnold Wills (Peterborough) agreed to join the committee in the new role of Development Officer. The Executive appreciates that the world is constantly changing and we must be alert to how those changes affect us. Our recent experience with the magazine, *Once a Chorister* – discussed further in this Newsletter – demonstrated how change can affect us. We hope that Arnold's election to the committee and his new role will be ratified at this year's AGM. We look forward to his advice and help in ensuring the Federation remains relevant in the future.

2017 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's AGM will be held at Christ Church, Oxford on Saturday 6th May, to which member Associations are invited to send one or more delegates. It is planned that, following registration at 10.00 and a welcome from the Dean, delegates will have the opportunity to visit the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments, a short distance from the College. Lunch will be served in the Great Hall (Harry Potter fans please note!) and for those not attending the AGM there will be a tour of the Cathedral. Following the meeting and tea, evensong will be sung by the combined choirs of Christ Church, New College and Magdalen College. The formal notice of and invitation to the AGM will be sent no later than 24th March. We are still looking for volunteers for the committee and, in particular, for an Honorary Secretary. Please send any items for the agenda to me at secretary@fcoca.org.uk to arrive no later than Monday 20th March and ensure that the date for the AGM is in your calendar. Nominations for the Executive Committee may be submitted up to 29th April. We are grateful to Gordon Hughes (Chairman CCCSOBA) and his team for all they have done to arrange what promises to be a very special event.

2017 ANNUAL FESTIVAL

Invitations to this year's Festival to be held at Norwich from 9th to 11th June have already been circulated and bookings are progressing well. The deadline for booking is 1st May and it is advisable to book your hotel as soon as you can. Festival booking forms and full details of the weekend can be found on the website at <http://onceachorister.org/events.html>. We are very grateful to Ayrton Westwood and the team at Norwich for organising, what we are sure is going to be, an unmissable Festival weekend.

FINANCES

Our Honorary Treasurer, Michael Lake (Chelmsford) confirmed that the invoices for 2016 annual subscriptions were sent out in October. In past years these have been sent in May, along with the issue of the annual magazine. Because of the problems we faced in producing this year's magazine, invoices were not sent out until very much later. The Executive Committee would like to move the invoice due date to January so that the subscription relates to the calendar year and will be making this proposal at the AGM. The next subscription due date will be, therefore, January 2018. Though we are projecting a financial loss for the year, we are not proposing any increase in subscriptions whilst we are still discussing how the Federation operates in the future. Michael said that a good proportion of Associations had paid their subscriptions for 2016, there were some still outstanding for last year and 2015. As we no longer have the benefit of any profits made on the sale of *Once a Chorister* and

merchandise sales are much lower than they have been in previous years, it is vitally important for us to receive the annual subscriptions to meet our tightly controlled costs.

ONCE A CHORISTER AND FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS

Following the loss of Michael Barry as our Publications Officer, we have been unsuccessful in recruiting a successor. The result in 2016 was that Richard Watts (Westminster) our Website Manager, generously offered to draw together all of the items that comprise the magazine and publish it as an electronic document. This was then circulated to Associations and made available on our website to be downloaded for reading on screen or in a format to be printed. For the first time, the Federation did not provide printed copies. We are hugely grateful to Richard for undertaking this considerable task but he is unable to do so again. Without a Publications Officer/Magazine Editor it is not possible for us to produce the magazine and it was, with great reluctance, that the Executive Committee agreed that we would not publish Once a Chorister in 2017. Looking for ways to continue to communicate with member Associations (and through them, ex-choristers community at large) we asked Samuel Barber (Chairman, Peterborough OCA) to suggest a potential solution. Samuel is towards the younger end of the age spectrum of people linked with ex-chorister associations and has had success using Facebook as a primary platform for communication with his own association. His recommendation is that the Federation establishes a Facebook page, in the way that many clubs and social organisations have done. In essence, the Federation and member Associations would be able to "post" articles, information and items of interest easily and share them with the rest of the community. It is because of the ease of access and simple management that the proposal is so attractive. We have yet to work out all the details to ensure privacy and security, which we know will be a concern to some and we have asked Samuel to establish a Facebook presence for the Federation and suggest the structure for its management. We hope to be able to report in full at the AGM.

We also hope to report at the AGM that the new website is fully functional with a special area where member Associations may also post reports and information.

IS THE FCOCA FIT FOR PURPOSE?

The Federation has existed for over 100 years. It has represented the interests of its members, providing a forum for discussion, support to current choral foundations and an opportunity for those who have experienced the privilege of singing in a choir to come together to share their memories. Will it still exist in 100 years' time? Only if it remains relevant to the current generation. In the past we have published an annual magazine, organised tours and held an annual Festival. Now, it is only the Festival that remains and that sometimes struggles to attract sufficient interest. This is why we think the time is right to appoint a Development Officer who will look critically at what we are doing, attempt to discover what we should be doing and suggest how the Federation remains relevant to today's generation and continues towards the next. We look forward to a lively debate at the AGM in May.

THE GREAT SILENCE

Finally, we have been asked to bring to your attention this project, based around an anthem composed to commemorate choristers who fell in the First World War. Details may be found here www.thegreatsilence.co.uk/. Premiered at St George's Chapel, Windsor as part of the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations, it is hoped that choirs across the country will perform the work and contribute to the database of those who gave their lives.

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