

**Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations**



# **ONCE A CHORISTER**

**Year 2019**

**Version 1.1**

## Introduction

The Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations has now published three editions of the Once a Chorister Magazine in electronic format, and this is the fourth. In general, the feedback has been positive about the content, but the size of the e-magazine has meant that printing individual copies has become expensive. Although a few former choristers liked to read about other Associations' news this was not a universal desire. Hence the decision was taken to publish reports from Associations on the Federation website [www.fcoca.org.uk](http://www.fcoca.org.uk) and not in the Once a Chorister magazine. This not only reduces the size of the magazine significantly and so reduces printing costs, but also means that our website has more up to date material - some of the reports currently published on the website are very old. This does rely on Associations submitting their reports and those of their organists and master of choristers to their Regional Representative or directly to [secretary@fcoca.org.uk](mailto:secretary@fcoca.org.uk).

Once a Chorister is a great vehicle for keeping people up to date with what happened at the Federation AGM and Festival, and some articles that potentially affect all choral foundations.

I hope that this edition of the online publication is to your liking. Please continue to submit articles for publication in the Once a Chorister magazine or the website.

*[Alastair Pollard - OAC Editor]*

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## 2019 Federation AGM in Lichfield



The 2019 Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations was held at Lichfield Cathedral on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2019. Thanks go to the Dean and members of the Old Choristers' Association in particular Francis Bunch.

Lichfield Cathedral in Staffordshire was built in the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and is one of only 3 cathedrals in the UK to have 3 spires, the others being St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Edinburgh and Truro Cathedral. Lincoln Cathedral also had three spires and was the tallest building in the world until the central spire collapsed in 1549. The west front is highly decorated.

The city itself is relatively small, but there are many historic buildings including some fine Georgian examples. Minster Pool lies between the Cathedral and the main shopping streets, making for a pleasant walk into town.

### Report on AGM

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We had a successful AGM at Lichfield, but the number of attendees (14) was rather disappointing. There was some doubt about having a choral Evensong as the cathedral choir was unavailable, but we managed to find enough singers from Lichfield OCs and Federation members to do us proud. The cathedral tour in the morning gave members the opportunity to see the best of the building with an experienced guide. We had a super lunch prepared onsite in the small Cathedral restaurant known as Chapters. Two courses of home-made food, and a choice for each course. There was even a licenced bar where some members found an excellent glass of wine.



The AGM itself was held in The Old Stables. As is the case with many Annual General Meetings for organisations such as ours much of the content of the meeting was procedural and to be expected, but an event like this is more than a boring meeting. It is an opportunity to visit one of our magnificent cathedrals, Collegiate churches etc, and enjoy the company of friends and former choristers. Attending an AGM is often a great opportunity to visit somewhere new, listen to (a possibly slightly different style of) Evensong, and marvel at the architecture of our great buildings. The Federation is making a deficit of several hundred pounds each year, primarily due to insurance so we need to be mindful or we may eventually run out of money. However, we are investigating ways of reducing our insurance premiums.

Nick Hodges, our Vice-Chairman led a short discussion at the AGM into our branding. We have been looking at our own name and image. For example, should we remove the word "old" from our name, or would it be better to replace it with the word "former"? In addition, should we drop



the word “Cathedral” from our name as we become more inclusive? Or should we stay with what we have.

On a more positive note, we have had two applications to join the Federation. All Saints Kingston Choir Association has applied for membership of The Federation (now approved), and we hope to have another application soon, plus a new Individual member.

*[Alastair Pollard – FCOCA Chairman]*

## Chairman's Report at AGM

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It is very disappointing to see so few faces here today in Lichfield. I thought a central location would attract more attendees, but maybe former choristers are saving themselves for the Festival in Portsmouth next month! So let's be positive ...

Last year (2018) was good for The Federation and there was much to be positive about. For a start, last year we had 2 excellent Federation events:

- For our AGM, we ventured into The East of England, to Chelmsford. I must admit this is one city I had never been to before, despite travelling widely in the UK. The cathedral may be small but it is very light inside, and supporting the diocese which is the second largest in England. We were treated to a tour of their new Song School, and short recital on the two organs (Nave and Chancel) but having a combined console! What more could you ask for?
- The 2018 Federation Festival was held in Peterborough, a founding member in 1910. Over 100 people joined together for a weekend of music, history and, most importantly, fellowship. We asked for something new, and we got it. A tour of the Cathedral roof and upper narrow passages, and a Wine & Cheese event on the Friday evening. Afterwards we rolled back to the hotel in hearty mood!

Things are looking up for the Federation committee, with some new members. The average age has dropped and we have our first lady committee member. At the last AGM in Chelmsford, my wife Nicola volunteered to take over the Honorary Secretary role. We also welcome Richard Lilley (St. Albans) to look after Membership and give a new perspective. He has already started work on our Social Media presence and offered some new ideas. Arnold Wills has some good ideas in his Development role.

Chester Cathedral have volunteered to host the 2020 Festival and Warwick the 2023 festival. We are still looking for hosts for events in 2021 and 2022. Would you like to host an AGM or a Festival? We would consider combining the 2 major events in the Federation calendar into one. This may appeal to some, but is not universally appealing.

I am pleased to say that have received an application from "All Saints Kingston Choir Association" to join the Federation (later approved), and hope to get another (Royal) application soon.

We are not alone, as there are several organisations that are like us. One such organisation with which we have much in common is Friend of Cathedral Music (FCM). Although we have different aims and objectives, both organisations want to work together whilst retaining our own identities. The Federation would like to highlight the good work that FCM does, advertise their events, and encourage former choristers to join FCM. FCM will reciprocate.

I firmly believe the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations does very well for its current membership, but we need to evolve to fulfil the needs of new members too. Are we relevant and ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What we have done in the past 109 years may not be appropriate for the next 109 year. The only certainty in life is change (plus death and taxes!) In the meantime, let's enjoy what we have, spread the word about the benefits of choristership and church music and be receptive to new members.

*[Alastair Pollard – Chairman]*

## Regional Representative Reports

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### North & Ireland

The past year may be considered a challenging time for many of the associations in The Northern & Ireland region with several former chorister associations struggling to stay afloat and trying to appear relevant potential members, but all is not lost. Some of the OC associations in this region are re-forming having been “in mothballs” for a time. There is clearly something special about being a former chorister, and people enjoy meeting up with likeminded people who enjoy music and friendship, who have something special in common.

Do not despair if your association appears to be folding. It may well resurrect, albeit in a different form more suited to the “New World” we live in today rather than the “Old World” we fondly miss. It takes time and effort to keep something special going. A former chorister association does not run itself, and one of the challenges that many OC association have is recruiting committee members. Former chorister often like to know what other former choristers are doing, what is happening in The Choir, The Choir School or The Cathedral (or church), but a formal Newsletter is not always the best way to disseminate information. Nowadays, many people use Social Media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and The Internet. Information can be posted by anyone, and is immediately available. Durham and Lincoln in this region are examples.

So, although an association may not hold regular gatherings, meetings, events at the moment, this does not preclude things becoming more active in the future, and there is often a lot of sharing of information by individuals. The North always has a presence at Federation events like the AGM and the annual Festival. It's not always “grim up t'North”!

*[Alastair Pollard – Regional Rep]*

### South East and East Anglia

There has been no general communication sent around the region from me or any correspondence received from the region except from Ely after I visited last September.

I had been asked to attend the Society of Ely Choristers AGM and give a short talk on the Federation. Lunch was served in the Almonry restaurant, part of the Cathedral buildings which was a very well attended and lively occasion, clearly enjoyed by all. At this occasion the final years of Paul Trempte and Sue Freestone were celebrated. What struck me was the excellent facilities the Cathedral had for staging a Festival in due course, which would be very Cathedral-centric. This matter was suggested by me and as with other cathedrals there is the lack of accommodation situation, which is not unsurmountable. It was felt that whilst the concept was favourably received no decision should be made until the new Master of Music had been appointed in Easter of this year. The matter was passed onto the Chairman of FCOCA and a dialogue has ensued and I understand would be further discussed once the new Master of Music has settled in.

*[Ayrton Westwood – Regional Rep]*



## 2019 Federation Festival in Portsmouth

The 2019 Annual Festival of the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations was held in Portsmouth from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Thanks must go to everyone involved in the organisation of the festival.

### Report on Festival

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Although the number of former choristers attending the festival from around the UK and Portsmouth itself was rather fewer than last year, this did not adversely affect the enjoyment of music and fellowship on offer. The FCOCA festival took place just after the main D-Day 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events, so attendees were invited to join in with some additional events. Portsmouth Cathedral is located in the Old City, almost on the shoreline and just behind the old city seawall defences. This area, including some of the cathedral itself, was badly damaged in the Second World War, so there is a wide mix of local architecture.

### History Talk

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The festival started out with a talk about the history of Portsmouth Cathedral and the Choir here. The former organist Anthony Froggatt explained how The Cathedral Church of St Thomas of Canterbury grew from a Parish Church when the diocese of Winchester was split into 3 in 1927. The original Parish Church was extended outwards to form the Quire, and beyond the 17<sup>th</sup> century tower to form the Nave. Work stopped during the war and languished for many years, and Anthony showed us some very futuristic designs submitted for the final building, before being eventually completed in 1991. The talk was interspersed with music recordings, photographs and a BBC Video of Songs of Praise from the Cathedral in (Anthony's first year of) 1977 showing some members of the audience.

As expected, many special services have Naval connections including the departure of the Task Force to The Falklands in 1982 and the Mary Rose Requiem in 1984 when an unknown sailor was interred in The Cathedral in a replica Elizabethan coffin.



David Price, the present organist, joined in 1996. He started by reassuring former choristers that the current thinking that “Cathedral Music has never been so good” does a disservice to previous choristers and choirs. David has spent the past 22 years adding more choral services and a wider repertoire, including the introduction of a teenage girls choir in 2005 and Choral Scholars. Different groups of singers give variety, blending, and flexibility for singers and a (slightly) less hectic schedule. There is no dedicated Choir School, but there has always been a strong link between Portsmouth Grammar School and the choir, but David moved rehearsals back from PGS to the Cathedral Song School. 2006 saw the introduction of Choral Scholarships, where students (before or after University) are paid to spend a year singing and working with the choirs – this gives them excellent real-life experience and a great addition to put on their C.V. Many have gone on to sing professionally in other Cathedrals or study at the top musical establishments. This year there are 22 boy choristers + 6 probationers, the girls Cantate, 6 lay-clerks and 6 choral scholars, and we heard all of them at times during the weekend. Portsmouth Cathedral now has 4 Carol Services and undertakes international tours, and even taken part in a service on an aircraft carrier! And yes, the talk did end with a recording of the choir singing “I saw 3 ships come sailing in”.



## Friday Services

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After such an excellent talk, we walked across the road for a sumptuous, home-made Afternoon Tea in Cathedral House, before returning to The Cathedral for Evensong. Amner’s Second Service and anthem ‘Consider, all ye passers by’ were a delight to those of us that love the style of 16<sup>th</sup> Century music, accompanied by Sachin Gunga (sub-organist) on the single manual, 3-stop chamber organ.

A buffet supper was provided in The Square Tower, a 15<sup>th</sup> century fortification looking out to sea. In addition to the excellent food, it gave us the opportunity to observe the entrance to the busy harbour before heading to “the Dolphin” hostelry to savour the local ale and gin. Some had to eat quickly and rush off to a Concert by the Tenebrae Consort – with ‘Medieval Chant and Tallis Lamentations’ representing daily duties of a singer in a Medieval English Cathedral. At 10:00 o’clock in the evening we returned to The Cathedral for Compline, sung by the lay-clerks and Choral Scholars, and a leisurely stroll back to our respective hotels in the warm night air. What a wonderful way to end a super day.

## Saturday Harbour Tour



Saturday saw us up bright and early (well most of us) to catch a boat for an excellent water tour of Portsmouth Harbour. Although the entrance is narrow and much of the inner harbour is shallow, this a very busy harbour with both contemporary and historical boats and ships. Ferries cross the harbour (saving a 14-mile detour) or take you to France and the Isle of White, whilst The Royal Navy does major maintenance work on a variety of ships from patrol boats to destroyers. We only



missed the enormous supercarrier HMS Queen Elizabeth by a few days. HMS Victory (Admiral Nelson's 104-gun, flagship, the oldest naval ship in commission with 241 years' service) and HMS Warrior (40-gun, steam and sail powered, armoured frigate) are on prominent views, plus the Mary Rose Museum. Looking down on us from a great height is the 560 foot high Spinnaker Tower. Some of us braved the trip to the top for a fantastic view of the harbour and surrounding area, and some even walked across the glass-floor. There was an opportunity to abseil down the outside of the tower, but I don't think any brave (or foolhardy) former choristers took up the offer.

The afternoon's highlight was an organ recital by David Briggs, consistently ranked as one of the finest organists of his generation. David's extensive repertoire spans 5 centuries, and he has become one of the foremost organ transcribers of symphonic works. He is particularly well known as "an intrepid improviser", able to improviser on well-known pieces of film music, or any topic provided by the audience. "I saw three ships" was a common thread. More formal pieces, transcribed by David, Bach and E H Lemare, were originally composed by Camille Saint-Saens, Vivaldi, Wagner and Ravel. Whilst some former choristers rehearsed in The Quire for Evensong, others went shopping or wandered around the many museums, and historic dockyards.

## Choral Evensong

The Festival Evensong was sung by the Cathedral Boys and Girls in the front row with some former choristers augmenting the back row. The responses (and last night's Complines) were led by Canon Precentor Jo Spreadbury. It is now not that uncommon to hear a Soprano voice singing "O Lord, open thou our lips", but it can sound different to those former choristers from many years ago when the priesthood was an all-male domain. Moreover, it is not unusual to have a female singing in the backrow as an alto. Almost everyone knows Dyson in D Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis so we could all sing along, either in the choir or quietly to ourselves. Elgar's anthem 'The

'Spirit of The Lord' was less known but equally delightful. Some commented that one of the cherubic choristers was only just tall enough to see over the music desk – we all remember that when we were first made chorister. But, how many people at Evensong noticed the soft toy monkey, apparently sleeping high up on a shelf in front of the organ pipes?

### **Festival Banquet**

The Festival Banquet was held in the nearby "Royal Naval and Royal Albert Yacht Club". The place reminded me of a former gentleman's club, although I understand that membership is much more open these days. The 4-part harmony, unaccompanied, Latin Grace had been written by Sachin Gunga (Sub-Organist at Portsmouth Cathedral). After a single run-through we were ready to sing for real – former choristers are taught to sight-read at an early age and it never leaves us.



Our guest speaker was The Right Reverend Graeme Knowles CVO – past Bishop of Sodor & Man and now Dean of St. Pauls. Elgar's anthem at Evensong earlier clearly affected him to state that only Elgar is in Heaven and others such as Bach and Stamford are in 'the other place'. Without waiting to see if you agreed with him or not, he went on to entertain us with stories from his time as former Precentor and Archdeacon of Portsmouth, including stories about the planning and special service for an unknown sailor from the Mary Rose. Graeme said he was proud to be sometimes thought of as a "Dinosaur of the Church of England" remembering the stories of days gone by, as we all have our own entertaining stories from our time as choristers. He summed up by saying how important music is to us, and our task is to 'keep in tune with heaven'. The banquet finished reasonably early (for a change) so several of us retired to the Club bar and put the world to rights.

Many of us had to leave early on Sunday morning so missed the planned services, including the Dean who caught the hovercraft service over to the Isle of Wight. BCP Holy Communion was at 08:00 and the Sung Eucharist included

Widor Messe Solennelle at 10:30 I was disappointed to miss Ives' 'This is the record of John' anthem at Evensong, but I had a long journey home.

### **Next year in Chester**

Altogether another successful festival, with weather to match. Chester next year in 2020 have a lot to live up to, to match Portsmouth's Festival in 2019. We hope to see you there on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020.



*[Alastair Pollard - Chairman]*

## Future Events

### AGMs

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|               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| Rochester     | 2020        |
| Gloucester    | 2021        |
| <b>Vacant</b> | <b>2022</b> |
| <b>Vacant</b> | <b>2023</b> |

### Festivals

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|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Chester       | 13 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2020 |
| Ely ???       | 2021   |
| <b>Vacant</b> | <b>2022</b>  |
| Warwick       | 2023   |

### (Draft) Chester Cathedral 2020 Festival Agenda

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*The final running order for the 2020 Festival in Chester has yet to be finalised, but in summary we hope to include:*

#### *Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September*

*Arrival & Registration in University Summer House, Welcome Tea in Cathedral Cloister Room, Choral Evensong in Cathedral Quire and Buffet Reception in Chapter House.*

#### *Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September*

*Tower Tour or City Tour and Town Cryer, Civic Reception with The Lord Mayor in the Town Hall, Rehearsal for Evensong in Cathedral Song School followed by Choral Evensong in The Quire, Organ Talk / Demonstration / Recital in Cathedral South Transept and the Federation Festival Banquet in The Cathedral Refectory.*

#### *Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September*

*Delegates are free to make their own arrangements on Sunday, but Services include Early Holy Communion, Sung Eucharist, Matins and Choral Evensong.*



# FCM Friends of Cathedral Music

## The Cathedral Choristers of Britain in Concert

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Liverpool Cathedral 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019



The **Friends of Cathedral Music (FCM)** aims are to increase public awareness and appreciation of cathedral music, encourage high standards in choral and organ music and raise money for choirs in need. Earlier this year (2019) FCOCA and FCM agreed to work closer together as we have much in common. One of the first things we

did was to help publicise the work of the FCM Diamond fund for Choristers, which hopes to raise £10 million by 2020 to relieve hardship with specific grants, fund cathedral choristerships, and provide support to help choristers develop and flourish. Cathedral music may be enjoying a golden age, but some cathedral choirs are facing increasingly serious financial pressures. On 13<sup>th</sup> June 87 choristers from 42 Choral Foundations came together in Liverpool to raise awareness of the Diamond Fund in the presence of HRH The Duchess of Gloucester.

We started in the crypt of Liverpool Metropolitan (Catholic) Cathedral, a vast, magnificent space underneath the main space. Stephen Cleobury (President FCM) welcomed us all and said of choristers old and new “choral music raised their spirits and soothed their anxieties”. What a great way to start proceedings. He then introduced James Clark, a distinguished violinist, and a chorister at Kings College Cambridge many years ago under David Willcocks.

James had so many fond memories of being a child chorister, but overall, he said “it was fun”. He told us about a trip to West Africa. Each night the choristers had to check their beds for scorpions – no common in today’s choir schools. The choir was presented with a collection of spears and poison-tipped arrows, which had to be hurriedly packed away and shipped home by sea – even then airlines weren’t keen to allow weapons on an aeroplane. When they arrived, it made for an interesting ‘crocodile’ walk back from the porter’s lodge! Like several others in the gathering, it brought back my own memories of “having fun” as a child chorister at Durham Cathedral under Conrad Eden.

We were then entertained by former choristers from Liverpool Metropolitan cathedral (under the direction of James Luxton (Assistant Director of Music) singing 3 delightful pieces: Fair Phyliss – a 1599 English madrigal by John Farmer; Elgar’s As Torrents in Summer; Arthur Sullivan’s The Long Day Closes. A delightful sound in such a superb setting brought the royal reception to a close.

A short stroll down Hope Street brought us to Liverpool’s (Anglican) Cathedral for the main concert. Liverpool Cathedral is huge in every sense of the word, built of reddish brown sandstone. The clergy and choir here wear cassocks of a similar colour, unique to Liverpool Cathedral. The building itself is magnificent, as is the 5-manual organ, but so too was the massed choirs of choristers from all over the UK. We were told in the introduction that Liverpool Cathedral is a place for encounters, one example being the massed choir on the platform in a riot of coloured cassocks, the predominance of red with a smattering of green, purple and blue, and the reddish brown from Liverpool. It was nice to see the girls there too, not just boys. Most of the music was well known to former choristers and the general public alike, ranging from grand coronation works



like Handel's Zadok the Priest and Parry's I was Glad (and yes they did hit the top B flat near the end!), to Howard Goodall's The Lord is my Shepherd (Theme from Vicar of Dibley). We also had contemporary pieces linked to Liverpool like Yesterday by The Beatles and Gerry and the Pacemakers You'll never walk alone. The first half ended with Allegri's Miserere mei – one of my favourite pieces of all time which I hope to have sung at my funeral (family and friends take note!) Some of the choir moved around the cathedral, to the East end, the North Transept, and high up on the arch of the Dulverton Bridge, adding to the antiphonal nature of the piece. Just wonderful. The second half began with John Rutter's Aaronic Blessing, The Lord bless you and keep you. I myself have sing this piece many times in many different churches, and it is one of my favourite contemporary pieces. The simplicity of the words and music are superb, and the massed choirs in Liverpool did it proud. John Rutter himself was at the concert and spoke about the FCM Diamond Fund. Leading with the fact that miracles happen every day in the NHS, he said that miracles happen every day in a cathedral too, with worship led by the clergy but it is choirs that make our cathedrals glow, with some choristers only 8 years old. Choristership give young children a Head Start. Alexander Armstrong (Choristers at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral) once said "the best leg-up you can give a child is his education". It shouldn't take a tragedy such as the dreadful fire at Notre Dame in Paris to make people concerned at the loss of a cathedral and its music. No child should be denied a place in a cathedral choir by their family's financial position. FCM Diamond Fund for Choristers and others are working to ensure this continues.

The whole concert was emotional for many of the audience, former chorister and lovers of church music in particular. The tone of the choristers was so clear, but with a much greater volume available than your typical cathedral choir. Not many cathedral choirs have over 80 choristers singing together, but it filled the vast space of Liverpool Cathedral. Moreover, you need a load organ (at times) to fill the space, and Liverpool Cathedral's organ can do just that, with a six or seven second echo – all courtesy of a massive "blowing room" underneath the cathedral. There is a lovely Trumpet stop on the organ, put to great effect in the opening fanfare, and Flor Peeter's organ piece Lied to the Sun. But the organ can be sweet and gentle too. The evening was rounded off with an encore of John Rutter's Deep Peace. A fitting ending to a superb concert. I was fortunate enough to speak to John Rutter briefly after the concert and thank him for the work that he does for church music, and the support he gave to us this evening.

John Snow of Channel 4 news said "I owe so much to my life as a cathedral chorister". James Clark said "... being a chorister had a profound influence on my life as a professional musician, and taught me to sing in tune, sing in harmony, how to breath, and cope with the disciplines of orchestra". I agree with both of them, and many other former choristers when I say "Being a Chorister set me up for life, with an understanding of self-discipline working alone or in a team, a love of music and architecture, and a good musical education". Eyes closed, listening in Liverpool Cathedral, I thought, what a superb sound these young choristers make. Long may the tradition continue, and thank you to FCM for supporting it.

Further details can be found on their website at <https://fcm.org.uk/diamond-fund-choristers/about/>

*[Alastair Pollard - Chairman FCOCA]*

## The Privilege of Choristership

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Alexander Armstrong's address at the launch concert, Diamond Fund for Choristers, St Paul's Cathedral, 27 April 2016



Your Royal Highness, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen: good evening! What a spectacular event this is and what a great honour it is to be a part of it. I am thrilled to be here. Moreover, I am delighted to have the opportunity to talk to you briefly about the tremendous privilege of choristership: the single greatest leg up a child can be given in life.

Now, I know that sounds overblown and, yes, it is a bold claim but the more I think about it the truer I realise it is. Someone made the mistake of asking me during an interview the other day what the benefits are of being a chorister. Well that interview ended up overrunning by half of an hour and I was barely halfway through

my list.

The most obvious benefit is the total submersion in music. This is a 'complete' musical education by process of osmosis. When you come to hang up your cassock for the final time at the age of 13 you will – without even having realised it was happening because you were just having a lovely time singing – have personal experience of every age and fashion of music from the ancient fauxbourdons of plainchant, to the exciting knotty textures of anthems so contemporary that the composers themselves might very well have conducted you. You will have breathed life into everyone from Buxtehude to Britten to Bach to Bridge to Bax to Brahms to Byrd to Bairstow to Bruckner to Bliss (and that's just the Bs I can think of off the top of my head). But you will know them, know them and love them in the way only a performer truly can. Choral music, to this day, has the power to move me so profoundly that I can lose myself in it for hours and just ride out the happy contemplations it evokes. It is a constant and lifelong tiding of comfort and – euphoric – joy.

Then there is the musicianship you absorb as a chorister, not just the music theory, the maths (the Italian!) all of which is very useful, but elegant musical phrasing, the projection of good diction, the shaping of beautiful vowel sounds for optimum tone, the careful precision singing of a psalm, which can only be achieved by listening intently to those around you and blending your tone and rhythm with theirs – all of these skills and sensitivities become second nature and all of them have strange and unexpected use and resonance in later life.

And then there's the language – and I don't mean the salty badinage of the vestry but the liturgy you're immersed in, the psalms, the collects, the canticles - the poetry you get to sing (Herbert, Donne, Milton, Shakespeare, Hardy, Auden are all poets I first learnt to love – Christopher Smart even – by singing and performing their words). Your lexicon at the age of 13 is astounding, and your turn of phrase, taught by endless psalms and hymns, and not just the range of your vocabulary but your innate sense of the poetic. You will have come to know only too well the powerful quiet of an evensong, the sumptuous echo of a final amen sung from an ante-chapel but rolling around the clerestory like wine in a taster's glass. And let's not overlook the discipline of choristership; the order it brings to a young person's often chaotic life, the friendship, the focus. Punctuality is one of the first lessons you learn: the ignominy of arriving even a minute late is something no chorister wants to experience twice. Then self-possession, decorum and grace are all attributes you quickly learn to fake – in the first instance – before adopting them for real as you gradually mature. But where else in the modern world is a child taught gravitas? Where else is a child taught, for example, to bow with proper dignity and humility?

I owe my entire career to my experience as a chorister. It was where I learnt to perform, where I learnt to use the full range of my voice; where I learnt to listen, where I learnt to write comedy, where I learnt to carry a pencil at all times – but most importantly it was where I learnt the wonderful truth that something exceptional, something as beautiful as anything anywhere, can be created just by you and your friends. I remember on a choir tour to Salamanca (ooh travel there's another benefit!) exploring the old cathedral with a couple of friends and finding ourselves alone in some sort of chapter house, we fired off a Boyce 3-part canon just to test the acoustics. A terrible, toe-curlingly self-indulgent thing to do but what a sound we made! And what a thing to discover: that we three – children essentially – carried between us all the components of something so joyous, so perfect, so complete. (And Boyce! There we are, there's another B for my list.)

I was lucky enough to be a chorister at St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh which had a good mix of boy and girl choristers as is now fairly typical in cathedrals up and down the country. And both there and at Trinity College, Cambridge where I ended up as a choral scholar, I sang with people from all walks of life (many of whom had their entire educations – at some of the country's best schools I might add – paid for by the music they had first learnt as choristers). I sang alongside some people of different faiths and plenty of none at all.

And I am always heartened by the ethnic diversity in our cathedral and college choir rooms. So you see, you don't need to be a boy to be a chorister, you don't need to be a toff to be a chorister, you don't need to be religious, you don't even need to be Christian.

Although as I say that I'm aware there is a certain spirituality that all choristers come to know well – something that lurks in the silences of a darkening nave while rush-hour traffic chugs about just yards outside the West door. A spirituality that is wrapped up in the ritual, the mystery and the beauty of this ancient tradition we have become part of. And I'm going to call that spirituality The Privilege of Choristership. That is what we are here tonight to celebrate and to preserve for the future, 'throughout all generations'.

*[Reproduced with permission from FCM website.  
Alexander Armstrong, 27th April 2016]*

## FCM and FCOCA Executive meeting

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In early January 2019, representatives of Friends of Cathedral Music (FCM) and Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations (FCOCA) met in London to explore areas where the two organisations could come together to their mutual benefit. Both organisations are experiencing similar issues of aging membership and falling or stagnant membership, and both organisations have explored, in recent years ways in which to make their appeal broader and better fitted to present times, often with some resistance from existing members. Both organisations wish to attract younger people but recognise, they are of a type that more typically appeals to an older age range.



The two organisations are different in their objectives and structure: FCM is a registered charity well known for raising funds in support of cathedral music. Its membership consists of individuals who make an annual donation. FCOCA is more of a social organisation and is not a fundraising body nor a registered charity. FCOCA membership comprises the former chorister associations of 50+ cathedrals, colleges and other choral foundations. A nominal annual membership fee is charged to cover the very low running costs of the organisation, including the provision of public liability insurance for members' events and regalia insurance.

Left to Right in the photograph:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Nick Hodges:            | Vice Chairman FCOCA                               |
| Alastair Pollard:       | Chairman FCOCA                                    |
| Peter Allwood:          | Chair of Council of Trustees FCM                  |
| Arnold Wills:           | Development Officer FCOCA                         |
| Maurice Kenwick-Piercy: | Trustee FCM; Director Diamond Fund for Choristers |

Through an open and wide-ranging discussion, it was agreed that there were areas where we could assist one another, such as Promotion of each other's events, Association contact with FCM, and possibly centralised administration in the future. FCOCA representatives have attended various FCM events.

*Maurice Kenwick-Piercy has been appointed as the FCM link with FCOCA.*

*Arnold Wills is the FCOCA link with FCM as part of his developmental role within FCOCA*



## Chorister News

This year the Federation welcomed a new Choir Association from All Saints Kingston upon Thames as an affiliated member. Paul Thompson, the Chairman of ASKCA here gives a short introduction to the Choir Association. Maybe this will encourage others to set up their own Choir Association and then join The Federation.

It is often said that our time as choristers in our formative years greatly benefits us in later life. We cannot all be top civil servants, lawyers, celebrities, sportsmen & sportswomen, etc, but we all have talents, skills and pastimes that are likely to have been affected to a greater or lesser degree by our time singing in a choir, worshiping in a great church, or learning in a choir school. These stories may inspire younger former Choristers too.

### Setting up the new All Saints Kingston Choir Association

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All Saints, the ancient Parish Church of Kingston upon Thames in Surrey, has a long choral tradition, but has only recently formed an old choristers association. During apres rehearsal 'refreshment' in a succession of pubs, we have toyed with the idea for many years, but it was the appointment of a new Director of Music last year that gave it the 'kick-start' it needed.

I have been a member of the choir, having sung treble, baritone, and Counter tenor, for over 60 years. When I joined at the age of nearly 10, we had already sent our first choral scholar to Kings College, Cambridge (who just happen to be our Patron, by coincidence), and have maintained the connection over the years. We had a long-standing connection with Tiffin School, and various Directors of Music there have been Organists &/or Choirmasters at All Saints, and present & past pupils have passed through the chorister ranks en route to Oxbridge choral scholarships. In a single year recently, we had no less than 8 choral scholars (not all Oxbridge) – an all-time record. We have now introduced our own Choral Scholar positions to encourage older teenage

choristers to maintain and develop their membership of the choir. We have also recently introduced monthly mid-week Choral Evensongs, and hope to make this a regular weekly service in the new year, in addition to the two sung services on a Sunday. Many of our ex choristers have gone on to make their careers as professional musicians, as singers, conductors, and players.

Another fascinating historical connection is with the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court Palace, just over the river and close enough for our tower to be visible from the Palace in the distance. At one point, the Vicar of Kingston was somewhat anti-music, so the men of the choir decamped to Hampton Court and were largely responsible for the re-establishment of the Chapel Choir there. We had a joint service with the present chapel choir at Hampton Court last year to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the occasion.

As well as providing music at services, the choir members have, over the years, provided musical entertainment at various functions and for many years, the Choir Panto was a big annual attraction. Home grown, the libretto was invariably both topical and satirical – perhaps too much so for some, which might explain why it fell into ‘disrepute’! We have amassed a large library of photographs of the pantos over the years and already had a nascent choir website, which has now been smartened up and provides access to our library for members, as well as past music lists, TV & radio broadcasts and recordings and other choir memorabilia.

Communication with past choir members is key when setting up a choir association. We were fortunate in that we had an ex chorister contact list containing some Royal Mail & email addresses from occasional past gatherings. We knew that many of them would be out of date, so our first communication was a ‘test’ email & letter announcing our intention to form the Association, and asking for an indication of interest, and for the communication to be passed on to anyone the recipients were in contact with. Those interested were invited to register for membership through the choir website, which captured their current contact details. This was followed up with an announcement of the agreement of the Bishop of Kingston to become our Patron, and the setting a date for our first AGM. Behind the scenes a good deal of work was done on drafting and agreeing a Constitution with the PCC and Diocesan authorities, as membership the Choir Association is open to all present and past choristers, although under 18’s do not achieve full membership until the age of majority.

We had our first general meeting, followed by a buffet lunch, and Festal Choral Evensong, on 8th September 2019, at which the Bishop preached. The music was suitably splendid, with Parry’s I was Glad, plus 3 trumpets, and Blest pair of Sirens, with a sprinkling of old choristers joining the ranks of the choir for the occasion. We also welcomed 3 ex Directors of Music. Unfortunately, as with best laid plans, on the day SWR chose to run no trains to Kingston, so we had some last-minute apologies – but we were still delighted to welcome a dozen or so guests.

Our future plans include an annual dinner in London in the new year, for greater ease of accessibility from those resident further North, and visits to Cathedrals and other places of interest. We will continue to build our contact list through referral and research, and thus hope that attendance at future meetings may be enhanced as a result. We are delighted to have been accepted as members of the Federation and hope to attend future gatherings there too. We were also very appreciative of the monetary contribution which helped defray our initial setup expenses. If any FCOCA members are in or near Kingston, do let us know, and we will be delighted to see you!

*[Paul Thompson. Chairman, ASKCA ]*



## **Michael Gamble – History of a Cathedral Chorister**

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Michael was a chorister at Peterborough Cathedral in the 1940s and wrote a fascinating memoir for their 2018 Christmas Newsletter.

Looking through my collection of music scores I came across my copy of the 'My Prayer Book for Men and Boys'. On the fly-leaf of which is written: Michael John Gamble, Chorister, Confirmed by the Lord Bishop of Peterborough (Dr C.M. Blagden) in Peterborough Cathedral on Thursday, March 4th, 1948. Signed Donald Southerd, Precentor.

It was from that very point in time that I was to wear a Surplice for, up until then, I had been a Probationer. Only pupils from KSP were allowed this privilege - pupils from the 'other school' (Deacons) were obliged to leave the choir - no matter how good they were (at singing, I mean!). I was an Asthmatic for whom singing 'did good'. My mother used often to comment on how I would leave for the Cathedral on my bicycle in the morning, wheezing and puffing, and return home in the evening free of Asthma. There was little relief for an Asthma Attack in those days - a new inhaler by Silbe being all I had - and that wasn't really portable - unlike the Ventolin of today! It was in 1948 that we had to literally dig our way to the Cathedral through the very deep snow which had fallen that night and which lay all around - and, of course, between Beckett Chapel - where we had been in rehearsal - and the West Door of the Cathedral. What fun that was!

The Beckett Chapel: all choir rehearsals were taken there. In it was a two manual pipe organ - to the left as you go in the door, placed facing into the room. There were two rows of continuous music benches with seating, facing each other across the old Bechstein Grand. In the East corner on Cantoris side was a door leading into the Music Library - the province of the Cantoris Alto Lay-Clerk who was also Librarian. It was Dr Hopkins who really put us boys through our paces - for it was a Men and Boys only Choir then. Matins in the Cathedral was 'said' on Fridays and Saturdays so the Choristers were free for Rehearsal on Friday and Saturday mornings. Full Choir Rehearsal was on Saturday afternoons. On one memorable Saturday morning Choir Practice in the Beckett Chapel, Dr Hopkins, with a twinkle in his eye, played the introduction to the Setting of a Magnificat we were to sing during that week. Neither he, nor we, had the music - yet! In we came, on cue. Dr Hopkins was so amazed he played a different introduction to another setting - probably 'Stanford in A' or 'Byrd in the Phrygian Mode' - and in we all came again - on cue! This went on for some time - so many different Settings. Then he started in on Anthems. No change! In we all came - on cue. I don't know what the moral behind any of this is, but the memory lingers fresh in my mind.

Other fun times were in one of the Houses in the Precinct. This house had been made over to us Choristers by the Dean (N. C. Cristopherson) and Chapter for recreational purposes - the Assistant Organist, Desmond Swinburn, was in charge - and was a great enthusiast of model railways. We had an extensive '0' gauge railway layout in there. We all brought our train sets from home for this. All clock-work, of course. I still have mine! Desmond Swinburn also had a wonderful big Green Raleigh bicycle - which I coveted! And which I was allowed to ride around the Precinct. The layout of the Precinct - so far as the houses and their occupants were concerned - was that the very last house in the North/West corner, on the West side was the Precentor's - Donald Southerd (known to us boys, irreverently, as 'The Duck'). Next door to him - may have been next-door-but-one - was Dr Hopkins with his 'man' Mr. Grubb - who used to cook for him and Desmond Swinburn - with his wonderful Raleigh Bicycle. The house we were using for our trains was the first house on the North side.

And there's more - like the time the builders left a long ladder in place and unprotected, over the South Aisle, and a small group of us, after Evensong, and having emerged from the Vestry into the Cloisters noticed it and waited until everyone had gone - or so we thought. We all climbed this ladder and gained access to the Triforium where we boldly walked to an opening in a corner allowing access to typical cork-screw stone steps to the Clerestory. It was here, on the Clerestory in the South Transept, that we were noticed by the Head Verger and made (gently) to wait whilst he came up to escort us safely down as there was no safety rails up there. We were more than reprimanded by Dr Hopkins I can tell you! Once, when I was up in the narrow passageway in the West Front - which goes over the main three arches. I noticed that this passageway is slightly curving: Eastwards towards the South end and bulging out to the West in the middle over the central Arch and that you cannot see one end from the other? Did you know that?

I used to keep a book in which I would copy all the Mason Marks from the massive stones which make up the Cathedral fabric. That was interesting (after almost a millennium) to be able to see these marks and work out how many of these huge stones different Mason had carved.

One of the wonderful Annual Events was the Three Choirs Festival. Norwich, Ely and Peterborough. We were bussed to these other Cathedrals for the occasion and had a wonderful time enjoying the different surroundings. When we went to Ely in 1947 I had just come out of Peterborough Memorial Hospital following a corrective operation on both feet. My lower legs were in plaster - and in this condition I hobbled around Ely Cathedral and sang in the Three Choirs Service. At Norwich the following year a great to-do was going on there - they were rebuilding the Organ - and had a scale model of the finished instrument to admire in the Nave. To me this was fascinating for I have always liked organs. I asked the Norwich Cathedral Association (from whom I get the occasional Newsletter) whether this Three-Choirs Festival was still an Annual Event - but was told 'No - but we'll investigate!' Maybe Peterborough should do the same!! Good Publicity - and any concern can always do with that! On one occasion we were involved in the Peterborough Choral Society singing of Mendelssohn's 'Elijah!' We Choristers were to sing 'Lift thine eyes, O lift thine eyes' but not with the Choral Society - Oh no! We were to be up on the Triforium in the Crossing - East side of the North Transept - I think this is over where the choir now robes itself - We were to be out of sight and the sound (my parents told me - they both being members of the Choral Society) was truly ethereal. I vaguely recall Malcolm Sargent as being the Conductor. Quite likely as he had strong connections with the Cathedral at Uppingham and Oundle.

Another thing Dr Hopkins instituted was 'The Glee Club' We boys would sing things like 'Peter Piper' and 'Sir Christopher Wren' (London Calling from Ten to Ten &c) and many other such ditties. We would perform these at Christmas dinners and such-like. One Choir Outing Dr Hopkins arranged for us was to St Paul's Cathedral, London, where he had been Assistant Organist. Here we were treated quite royally and invited to go up to the Ball over the Dome - I stuck my head it in, but it was too dark in there to see anything memorable! We had a 'go' in the Whispering Gallery' and looked at Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson's Gun Carriage in the Crypt - something I was to see again in my 'next life' as a Chorister as you will read later.

Back at Peterborough - on a Sunday. Sometimes the Sermons were so...boring to us choristers that we all had small occupations to keep us happy. Mine was drawing the High Altar. I still have this drawing. There was one exception to the boring Sermons - that was when it was given by the Archdeacon of Oakham. His Sermons were always entertaining to us boys. After one evensong Service - at which we had sung appallingly, Dr Hopkins told us, that the whole Choir was obliged, by him, to stay behind and 'do it again'!! Both Men and Boys!! Then he went off to drown his sorrows in the Pub next to the Market Square. My parents would often join him there after Services. He must have been a great friend of my parents for one year he was invited by them to

spend a Holiday with us in our seaside bungalow at Bacton-on-Sea. I still have one of these bungalows which I have virtually rebuilt.

Meanwhile - back to the Cathedral in the 1940s ....The five bells used to be rung manually before each Service and in this order: 5 -1 - 5 - 3 - 2 - 4 - 5 – 3 - 4 - 2 - 5 - 1 ... etc., until the five minutes before the Service began - when the 'five-minute bell', number 4 was rung – slowly and continuously until 'time'. There was a wall-mounted frame at the West End in which the bell pulls were housed, the ends being attached to that frame, so that only one person needed to be on bell-duty.

When I was obliged to leave the choir because my Father, who worked on the L.N.E.R., had been promoted from Assistant Goods and Passenger Manager, Peterborough to the same Post at Liverpool Street in London, we moved to Ealing in West London. From here I was eventually sent as a 'weekly boarder' to a Choir School in Bexley, Kent. This Choir School used to provide Choirs to various churches in London and elsewhere in London as Choirs for Weddings and Funerals. We were tested for our singing ability and doled out to certain Choirs formed to supply four London Churches: St Peter's Eaton Square, All Souls Langham Place (which had been bombed out along with the Queen's Concert Hall next door - so the choir sang at St Peter's Church in Vere Street until All Souls was rebuilt). Then there was Holy Trinity Brompton as the third Church and finally the Choir I and my brother John (who was also a Probationer at Peterborough with me) were enrolled in - the auspicious Kings Chapel in the Savoy - where we were duly and publicly 'bumped' as 'new boys' after the annual ceremony of 'Beating the Bounds'. The Organist here was Dr H. Bromley-Derry. Dr Derry was Head of the London College of Music where he took us Choristers to show off our prowess at learning a new song - written especially for the occasion. This was when our rigorous teaching by Dr Hopkins kicked in - in earnest. We learnt the New Song and sang it from memory to the astonishment of all gathered to hear it. I can still remember a great chunk of it! The Kings Chapel was, and still is, the Chapel of the Royal Victorian Order and many of the Order's Services were sung there and here we saw Royalty. Queen Mary was very aloof though, but the two Princesses were lovely. The Chapel had a revolting oleaginous syrup machine of an organ - a Hammond. (Christmas Carol: "And the playing of the Hammond Organ, sweet singing in the Choir!") We were to learn how to turn this thing on – without destroying the speakers! John and I were dubbed 'The Bee Boys' by Dr Derry as my father kept bees - and gave talks on the BBC about them. We learnt the different wording of the National Anthem in accordance with our position in Society as Choristers Royal - God Save our Gracious King, Long Live our Noble Duke, God Save the King ... etc. As choristers at the London Choir School we were also enlisted to sing elsewhere such as at the BBC in Maida Vale Studios where we sang in Mathis der Maler under Thomas Beecham (Don't any of you boys want my Autograph then?) So we were invited to join him in his room to get his Autograph. He was a very flamboyant Conductor, and on this occasion, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, sent the cushion flying off the tall stool he was sitting on.

We sang at a Royal Wedding in St Peter's Eaton Square where the two Princesses were dressed in wide-striped pastel shaded ankle-length dresses. We sang at 'Guild' services in strange out-of-the-way dusty Wren designed churches off the Strand and the Aldwych area. One such was for the 'Honourable Guild of Laundry-men and Washerwomen' In that church was, encased behind a glass front behind a door a full-size skeleton complete with skin! But the humerus? I mean Humourous thing was the Hymn they chose: "O for a Faith that will not Shrink tho' Press'd by many a Foe, that trembles, ling'ring on the Brink of Poverty and Woe!" At Christmas time we went to sing at St James' Palace for the Princess Royal - here I had my first taste of Punch! Also at the Savoy Hotel for the Conservative Party Christmas Dinner. Here we got many Autographs - but on the back of the only paper we could find: an "Invitation to the Labour Party Dinner at the Savoy"!!

In the two annual events at St Paul's Cathedral with the massed choirs of St Paul's, Eton (with their round collars) and the Choral Society in Handel's Messiah at Christmas and St Matthew's Passion at Easter. Dr Dykes-Bower was conductor - I do not know which Orchestra was involved, but Alfred Deller was a Counter Tenor in St Paul's choir then. And I decided to time the event with my clock-work Alarm Clock. Unfortunately, just as Dr Dykes-Bower was 'bringing-in' a Soloist my alarm clock went off. In the middle of the Massed Choirs! The clock was snatched from my hands by an infuriated member of the Choir, taken down to the Crypt and there hurled the length of the Crypt to land up next to Lord Horatio Nelson's Funeral Gun Carriage. So, after the Passion came Redemption - in a way - and I found myself once again looking at Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson's Gun Carriage.

One other obscure memory at Peterborough is that of the smell of the coke furnaces in the side aisles - add to that the strange cloying smell from the Sugar-Beet factory in due season. . . . that, coupled with the memory of H. Balfour-Gardiner's "Evening Hymn" will be my lasting memory of Peterborough Cathedral.

The legacy of such a formative childhood is the joy of remembering such wonderful music I have sung in and been a part of. The atmosphere instilled in me from being so frequently in such a wonderful, evocative building as Peterborough Cathedral and feeling as part of its very fabric. Together, more importantly to me, is my memory of the music we sang and anytime I hear Expectans Expectivi – or Hear my Prayer or Merbeck or this ... or that Anthem or Setting I still find I can sing along with – even if such singing is in my mind alone. And now at an advancing Octogenic Age such memories and the participation in my mind of such memories is a Legacy in the full meaning of the word. Then I taught myself to tune pianos - and got so good at it I was invited to tune at Glyndebourne Festival Opera and Touring Opera. I took on their Harpsichords and the Fortepiano - and the Sugar- Plum Fairy keyboard which Simon Rattle so delighted in playing. I was accorded the title: Production Tuner in their glossy programme. And for some years was also their Pit Manager. I was with Glyndebourne until my retirement some twenty-six years later. But that was all of twelve years ago now!

*[from Peterborough Cathedral OCA Newsletter 2018]*

## Twenty-first-century Woman: girls can't be choristers

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There's something unique about the sound of a boy's unbroken, treble singing voice. Their's has been the soaring top line in cathedrals the length and breadth of the UK since the middle ages and long may it continue for another millennium and beyond. Nowadays a boy chorister not only has the joyous and incomparable experience of being trained to sing from as young as 7 within the context of a professional choir, but the scholarships offered by many choir schools also enable him to have a world-class education at a fraction of the price. I know this because my sons are currently benefiting from this system (St John's College, Cambridge) as did my brother (Guildford Cathedral), my husband and my brother-in-law (New College, Oxford) and, last time I counted, at least 90% of my male singing colleagues. My nephews (St Albans Abbey and Peterborough Cathedral) and my father and uncle (Hampstead Parish Church) also had the experience of being choristers; my father says that he learnt all he knows about music – this is a lot – from Martindale Sidwell, the then director of music at Hampstead.

My husband, when invited by the Choir Schools Association a few years ago to write a sentence about the impact his chorister experience had had on his life, wrote "*My years as a chorister at New College, Oxford, have informed everything I have done since, both musically and otherwise.*" For him, it wasn't just the professional singing training, the coaching in different languages (Latin, German, Russian, French, Mandarin...), the foreign tours and CD recordings, it was the prep school education that went with it that made it all so worthwhile: the team sports, the drama productions, the trips, the subsidised instrumental lessons and on it goes. Our son Harry plays the violin and, through being a chorister, has had the opportunity to have masterclasses with world-renowned violinists Jack Liebeck and Tasmin Little. He also took part in the CSA chorister composition competition this year and was joint winner. He's still only 10! What a lucky boy. (And, don't you worry, he knows it.)

If only their voices had the same unique beauty, I'm certain that girls would have been given the same opportunities for the past 1,000 years. And if women had only been clever enough they'd have been doing all of the jobs which men have been doing for centuries too. Hm. The fact of the matter is rather that boys' choirs were borne out of the male-only monastic establishments of the medieval age where boys were given music lessons and also a rudimentary education by the choir master and, once their voices had broken, they became the singing men of the next generation (not to mention the priests, lay vicars etc) and so and so on. Since girls weren't allowed anywhere near those medieval monasteries, they weren't on the scene when choir schools were founded and choral scholarships established and, consequently, were forgotten about. Nobody thought to question this until, in 1966, on the morning of a planned BBC broadcast of evensong from St Davids Cathedral in Wales, the organist suddenly found that he had no choristers – they were all off sick. So he brought in the all-girls choir of a neighbouring grammar school to save the day and, shock horror, they were pretty good! Three months later, the cathedral formally admitted girls to the choir and set the ball rolling. St Mary's Cathedral in Scotland followed suit by admitting girls to their choir in 1978. England joined the party when the brand new girls' choir at Salisbury Cathedral sang its first evensong on October 7th 1991. I remember it well as I had just arrived for my second year as a music undergraduate at Oxford when news filtered through. I recall having conflicting emotions: while I was delighted for those girl choristers I also felt somewhat cheated out of an experience for which I'd have given anything as a child. When I'd asked if I could be a chorister I'd received the response "girls can't be choristers." Until the age of 18, my sole experience of choral singing had been in my little village church choir where my younger sister and I helped to bring down the average age by several decades. My foster father, Richard, loves to tell the story of how I had recently declared myself "too old for Sunday school" – I was 7 – and



so he thought I could join the choir instead. I am eternally grateful to him for this decision; cathedral-standard we certainly were not, but there I learnt to sing Psalms, hymns and, most crucially of all, to sight-read, a skill which got me successfully through an otherwise terrifying audition for Schola Cantorum of Oxford in my first term as a student and set me on course for 25 years (and counting) of singing in professional choirs.

Happily, most of the UK's cathedrals now have girls' choirs as well as boys' and some are admitting female altos too. Things are definitely looking up. Not all of the girls' choirs get to sing an equal number of services a week to the boys' choirs but at least girls now do have the opportunity to have the chorister experience. Peterborough Cathedral this week tweeted that one of their girl choristers was going to be conducting an anthem during evensong; what an absolutely brilliant experience for her. Who knows? That may well be a defining moment in her career as a choral conductor. Within the Oxbridge collegiate and choir school system the wheels of change turn more slowly but they are turning: ten years ago St Catharine's College in Cambridge blazed the trail for collegiate girls' choirs and, in September 2018, Pembroke College in Cambridge launched its girls' choir, directed by the brilliant Anna Lapwood. As an organist, she is also an important role model for any girls who may still be wondering if "girls can't be organists". Oxford has been slower to catch up but, in 2014, a group of forward-thinking parents helped to set up Frideswide Voices which gives girls the opportunity to sing evensongs in Oxford college chapels and, two years later, Merton College set up its girls' choir.

This is all well and good but anyone in the UK choral scene knows full well the boys' choirs continue to dominate. Since 1928, when 'Carols from King's' was first broadcast, it has been a mainstay of Christmas and now millions are able to listen to it across the world. For girl choristers, there are still no scholarships or other financial incentives towards their education which are equivalent to those offered to boys. The good news is that people have started to notice the inequality; the bad news is that polemical articles, designed to sell newspapers rather than to effect change, do more damage than good because they risk alienating or even vilifying the very people we need to get on side. As someone who spends a lot of time in Cambridge, attending evensongs at St John's, conducting my all-female a cappella group Aquila and coaching the choir of Trinity College in their jazz repertoire, I can confirm that there is genuine fear that introducing girl choral scholarships will somehow dilute or spoil the boys' experience or, even worse, kill it off completely. Don't forget that in state primary schools it's near on impossible to get boys to sing at all, hence the need for the brilliant initiative Sing Up, and so we must tread carefully (and get our facts straight). What we need, if girls in Oxford and Cambridge are ever going to be offered a chorister experience which is on a par with that afforded to boys, is a level-headed, well thought through, properly organised and brilliantly executed plan. Plans are afoot and nobody need worry. The future is bright. Watch this space.

*[Joanna Forbes L-Estrange (Singer, Composer, Choral Leader) ]*  
From [www.JoannaForbesLestrangle.com](http://www.JoannaForbesLestrangle.com)



## A Chorister Family Tradition

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It is not uncommon for children and grandchildren to follow their parents and grandparents in singing church music. Here is such a family who contacted me earlier this year to ask if we would be interested in their story.

It started over a century ago. **Norman Lilly** (1900-1990) was a boy chorister in the parish church of Gorton, Manchester, although from a non-musical family. This experience decided him firmly upon a career in music. After service in the Royal Navy, he started a career in sales, married and moved to London in his early 20s to be near the music scene. Although he had to work in sales



*Norman Lilly (L) with his London Singers in 1947*

to keep his growing family, he was also a semi-professional tenor on the oratorio circuit, singing regularly in All Saints Margaret Street choir and deputising at St. Pauls and Westminster Abbey.

Norman turned professional in 1945, founded the London Singers and the London Opera Group, a touring company which he ran for many years. He was still teaching singing when he died in 1990 at the age of 90.

Norman had trained both his sons to sing and they gained places in the choir of Christchurch Cathedral Oxford, where each in turn became Head Chorister. They were:

- **Keith Lilly**, chorister from 1933 to 1939 and
- **Gordon Lilly**, chorister from 1935 –1941.

Sir Thomas Armstrong (1898-1994) became organist of Christchurch Oxford in 1933, the year Keith started and all through the time of Keith and Gordon. Both boys respected him very much.

The boys went on to gain choral scholarships to Public Schools: Keith Lilly went to Kings School Bruton in 1939; Gordon Lilly went to St. John's Leatherhead in 1941 and then gained a Choral Scholarship to Gonville and Caius College Cambridge, but because of the war was unable to take it up. Instead he read Metallurgy at Manchester University (1946-1949) and sang in the University Chorus as a soloist. He had a fine baritone voice and sang in various choirs in the UK and in USA.



*Keith and Gordon Lilly in 1938*

Keith died in 2013 aged 89, and Gordon in 2019 aged 92. Both were passionate to the end about their time at Oxford. Gordon became an American citizen but visited the UK regularly, and on each visit they went together to Christchurch Cathedral School to talk with whoever was available, tour the school and attend Evensong at the cathedral. Gordon's last visit was alone in 2014, aged 87.

Keith's son **Christopher Lilly** was also trained by his grandfather and became a chorister of Llandaff Cathedral, Cardiff, where he too became Head Chorister and Dean's Scholar in 1966.



← Keith and Gordon Lilly at Christchurch Cathedral School, Oxford in 2010



Christopher Lilly, Dean's Scholar at Llandaff in 1966



Norman's grandson, **Alistair Fleeman**, was a chorister at Lichfield Cathedral and became Head Chorister in 1977. Although Alistair was not trained by Norman, he sang for Norman once and was told "I have nothing to teach you!"

Alistair has often said that his experience was a highlight of his life and nothing came close to it thereafter. He felt that the greatest gift it gave him, after singing solo as a boy in a cathedral full of people, was the ability to speak and perform in public without fear.

← Alistair Fleeman at Lichfield Cathedral Choir in 1976

None of this family of choristers subsequently followed professional music careers, but all remained deeply interested in music.

*[Anne Fleeman – Norman Lilly's daughter]*

## John Holt – Wakefield Cathedral, Obituary

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John Holt (1939 – 2019) - Wakefield Old Chorister Association

John Hindle Holt was a leading supporter of both the local Wakefield Cathedral OCA and the National FCOCA. He was a founder of the Wakefield Cathedral OCA, always an active member of the committee from 1966 to 2019, secretary from 1966 until 1988, and served time as the local chairman.

John was a chorister at Wakefield Cathedral from 1947 until 2016, starting as a Treble in 1947 and becoming Head Chorister in 1954. He also served for many years in the back row singing Tenor and Bass; and even stood in as interim Choirmaster where he persuaded Dr Saunders and Canon Pare, the Provost, that it would be a good move to establish choral Evensong in 1969.



John died on 10th September 2019 and the funeral service was held in Wakefield Cathedral on 27th September, attended by over 100 people including many former choristers. The service was led by The Dean The Very Reverend Simon Cowling, and warm tributes were given by Tom Moore (the current Choirmaster), and his son Jonathan Holt. John left clear instructions for his funeral service and there was some great music sung by the Cathedral Choir including “Steal Away” a traditional Spiritual arranged by Dale Adelman, “Fair is the Heaven” by William Harris, “It is a thing most wonderful” by Philip Moore, and “Prevent us O Lord” written by John himself. John asked that readings were taken from the King James Version of the Bible, and at John’s request the Organ Voluntary at the end of the service was on the theme of ‘a lifetime of joyful music making in Wakefield Cathedral’. Tom’s tribute ended with the words from the book of Matthew, and the verses telling the parable of the talents; “His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee

ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord”. A fitting tribute!

John was a choral scholar at QEGS (Queen Elizabeth Grammar School) in Wakefield where he excelled at cricket. He had a very successful career in Accountancy, travelling widely to over 32 countries and was a pioneer in computerised accounts. He was married to Margery for almost 55 years and a devoted Father and Grandfather.

John brought members of the Federation to Wakefield on several occasions and was Chairman of FCOCA from 1990 – 1992. His name is engraved on the back of the FCOCA Chairman’s chain of office.

*[Alastair Pollard, and John North WCOCA]*

## Norwich Valedictions – Summer 2019

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“Another wonderful year of music drew to a close on Sunday 7th July. The Eucharist service included an anthem with many high Cs, as if to confirm beyond any doubt that the departing choristers were ready to leave. A picnic lunch was then enjoyed by all in the sunshine followed by the annual, hotly contested ‘Can vs Dec’ cricket and rounders matches. In the cricket, Can won the toss and elected to field first. Under the expert head-umpiring of David Dunnett, Dec got off to a rapid start and had reached a very respectable 50 by the fourth over and finally finished on 82 - the chase was on! A slow start by Can and with time ticking on, a draw looked inevitable with the allocated overs unlikely to be reached in the time allowed. However, a late rally of boundaries from the tail-enders, including a valuable knock from (a strictly non-partisan) Ashley Grote, hinted at a thrilling finish. It was not to be, however. As the bowler ran in for his final delivery a pitch invasion ensued, ending the match as officially ‘no result’. Any hint of match fixing promptly quashed. In the end cricket won! The rounders match included an unprecedented number of team members ranging from the under-5s to the, well, quite a bit over-5s! There were many, many rounders run by both Dec and Can, often with the confusion of inter-play with the cricket match having to compete at close quarters. In the end everyone had lost count and it was unclear as to who was playing on whose team, so a draw was agreed. Rounders won!

Evensong was a beautifully constructed service, opening with “I was glad” by Parry and concluding with a full procession to the West Door to finish under the image of St Benedict. During the service a fond farewell and blessing was bestowed on the leaving choristers from both the boys’ and girls’ choirs by Dean Jane. The Ex-Choristers’ Guild welcomes fifteen new members and ex-choristers Esther Platten on behalf of the girls and David Clover on behalf of the boys, welcomed them into the Guild and presented them with a gift. A moving sermon was delivered by Canon Aidan, summing up the daily pilgrimage made by the choristers and a fitting tribute to mark their onward journey.



The day concluded with light-hearted singing and tea in the Cloisters, the plates of the children generally representing all of the vital food groups – chocolate, cakes, biscuits, jam tarts, crisps and cup-cakes. As ever, Ashley eloquently delivered the annual farewells and thanks, not just to the leaving boys and girls, but the choral scholars and all and everyone involved in the music and liturgy at the Cathedral. A warm response followed by Canon Aidan. A huge thank you to all involved in the music and liturgical department at the Cathedral, on behalf of the Guild for supplying fresh ex-choristers on an annual basis and on behalf of chorister parents for the warmth, empathy and understanding extended to supporting the busy and hectic life of a chorister’s family.”

Valediction, Reading Out, Leavers, Passing Out. Different words, but essentially the same ceremony to celebrate bringing a chorister time to a close. Many of us will remember with affection their last service as a chorister at the Cathedral, Church et al. When I left Durham Cathedral Choir in 1974 we sang Psalm 121, “I will lift up mine eyes until the Hills ...”. Even now I can still remember the chant, and the command “not to cry!” A day of mixed emotions, but the fact that I can remember the event shows that it meant something to me. More recently, leavers are led down the nave by a member of the DCOCA committee. Maybe you could write an article for next year’s *Once a Chorister* magazine describing what happens at your cathedral valediction?



## 40 years of The Sixteen – A new Heaven by Harry Christophers

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As The Sixteen celebrates its 40th anniversary, its founder and conductor Harry Christophers CBE and music broadcaster, writer and curator Sara Mohr-Pietsch embark on a series of conversations that look back over those four decades, and to the future. *A New Heaven: Harry Christophers and The Sixteen, Choral Conversations with Sara Mohr-Pietsch* was published by Faber & Faber on Thursday 15 August.

Accessible to everyone interested in classical music, from the professional to the amateur, each chapter is linked to a piece of music which prompted Christophers' and Mohr-Pietsch's discussions and all but one can be found on The Sixteen's own award-winning label, CORO.

In May 1979, a group of singers and instrumentalists, brought together and conducted by Harry Christophers, gave their first concerts as The Sixteen. Now, 40 years later, the choir celebrates its ruby anniversary with a season full of concerts all over the UK and internationally, going back to key works in its history which have provided its foundation as well as looking forward with new commissions. This mixture has cemented it as one of world's greatest ensembles, known for its tonal richness, expressive

intensity and compelling collective artistry. Highlights of the year ahead include a nine-venue tour of Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* in February; the annual Choral Pilgrimage, a much loved staple in The Sixteen's programming, which takes in 27 locations throughout the year and includes a new Genesis Foundation commission for Harry Christophers and The Sixteen by Sir James MacMillan *O virgo prudentissima*; and also The Sixteen's choir and orchestra join forces with The Grange Festival Chorus for five fully-staged performances of Handel's dramatic oratorio *Belshazzar*, conducted by Christophers at The Grange Festival, 20 June – 6 July.

Harry Christophers says: *'One can trace the story of The Sixteen's remarkable 40 years through our many recordings and I'm delighted that we are also marking it in words with the help of the wonderful Sara Mohr-Pietsch. It has always been about the music for me and with a specific work being the springboard for each chapter, we ensure that it still is very much at the centre of our celebrations. I hope everyone who reads it will enjoy both reminiscing about our beginnings and get excited about where we're going.'*

Sara Mohr-Pietsch says: *'I've long admired The Sixteen for their luxurious sound and ambitious programming, and it was a pleasure to discuss and unpack both with Harry in our conversations. Like his singers, Harry is warm and unpretentious, and speaks with great clarity about his deep love of music, as well as sharing fascinating insights about the world of choral music and the recording industry. It's been a real honour to be involved in The Sixteen's 40th anniversary celebrations, and made to feel part of the family.'*

## Contents & Corresponding Chapter Music

Prelude

Chapter One: Musical Beginnings (Part One)

Thomas Tallis: *O nata lux* CD: *An Immortal Legacy, COR16111*

Chapter Two: Musical Beginnings (Part Two)

William Mundy: *Vox patris caelestis* CD: *The Voice of the Turtle Dove, COR16119*

Chapter Three: The Sound of The Sixteen

Francis Poulenc: *Figure humaine* CD: *Francis Poulenc: Sacred Works, ERATO 5624312*

Chapter Four: The Life of The Sixteen

Tomas Luis de Victoria: *Vadam et circuibo* CD: *The Call Of The Beloved: Tomas Luis de Victoria, CORO16007*

Chapter Five: Sir James Macmillan and Genesis Sixteen

James MacMillan: *Miserere* CD: *James MacMillan Miserere, CORO16096*

Chapter Six: America

George Frederic Handel: *Messiah* CD: *Handel Messiah, CORO16062*

Chapter Seven: Conducting

Michael Tippett: *Five Spirituals from A Child Of Our Time* CD: *An Immortal Legacy, CORO16111*

Chapter Eight: The Future

John Sheppard: *Libera nos I* CD: *The Voice of the Turtle Dove, CORO16119*

**Harry Christophers** stands among today's great champions of choral music. In partnership with The Sixteen, he has set benchmark standards for the performance of everything from late medieval polyphony to important new works by contemporary composers. Under his leadership The Sixteen has established its hugely successful annual *Choral Pilgrimage*, created the *Sacred Music* series for BBC television, and developed an acclaimed period-instrument orchestra. Highlights of their recent work include an Artist Residency at Wigmore Hall, a large-scale tour of Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*, and the world premiere of James MacMillan's *Stabat mater*; their future projects, meanwhile, comprise a new series devoted to Purcell and an ongoing survey of Handel's dramatic oratorios. He was awarded a CBE in the Queen's 2012 Birthday Honours list. He is an Honorary Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, as well as the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, and has Honorary Doctorates in Music from the Universities of Leicester and Canterbury Christ Church.

**Sara Mohr-Pietsch** is a music broadcaster, curator and writer, best known for her work on BBC Radio 3. She is the Artistic Director of Dartington International Summer School & Festival, and a prominent figure in concert halls and at music festivals around the UK.



## What is the FCOCA?

We are often asked, “What is the point of The Federation?” and “Why should we join?”

Many former Choristers have a natural affinity with the places where they previously sang. Geographic mobility for employment or social reasons means that many people no longer live near their choral roots and Chorister Association, but the Federation can provide a social network to meet other Choristers, enjoy the architecture and music of our wonderful choral foundations, and reminisce about days-gone-by. It can also offer an umbrella for members of those associations currently in mothballs.

It is also important to remember that The Federation is not just for Cathedrals. We welcome former Chorister associations from other foundations including Parish Churches, Collegiate Churches and Chapels Royal. We also welcome individual members who do not have a specific association to join, and always welcome our members’ partners to events.

There are a number of benefits that you get from your membership fee:

- Publications such as this Once a Chorister Magazine!
- Opportunities to meet other like-minded former choristers
- Invitations to host and attend AGMs and Festivals
- Invitations to Federation tours organised by Federation members
- Special offers (museums, organs, organists, tours)
- Free entry to some cathedrals (e.g. York, Ely) where the general public have to pay
- Insurance for your association regalia and public liability
- News from your cathedral (et al) and others

## What it means to be a Chorister

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Mrs. Yvette Day was Headmistress at Durham Chorister School and did great work ensuring that The School provided the best environment and education for Cathedral singing Choristers and non-choristers alike, growing The School in so many ways. She was also a great supporter of the Durham Cathedral Old Choristers' Association, but then about 2 years ago moved to Cambridge to do more good work there. Although the number of Choir Schools is sadly reducing, the description of choristers and The Choir School at Kings College in Cambridge is similar to many other places, but also unique.

As it says on their website ....

*King's College Choir is perhaps the most famous choral foundation of its kind. It is made up of fourteen adult male Choral Scholars and sixteen boy Choristers. Choristers at King's College have an unbeatable start to life. The choristership experience is probably the best musical education available to boys between the ages of eight and 13; it also offers the benefits of skills that will last a lifetime. Performing to a highly professional standard, choristers gain a natural self-confidence, as well as the appreciation of good time-keeping and the rewards that result from hard work and disciplined study, combined with a well-rounded social experience. King's makes every effort to make choristerships possible for any boy with the right musical ability.*

King's College Cambridge and The School was highlighted last Christmas (2018) in a TV documentary. I particularly enjoyed the parts of the show showing the boy choristers preparing for "the main event" of the Christmas Eve Nine Lessons and Carols Service from Kings College. It was interesting as it showed a little about the historical background to the service, but also the day-to-day lives of Choristers and Choral scholars. I was very impressed with the School facilities. Even a Boarding House dog! As a chorister at Durham Cathedral I smiled that the School uniform even mirrors Durham purple, and seeing the formal black uniform reminded me of my own Eton suit which we wore every Sunday in the 1970s – I still have it in the back of my wardrobe! We didn't have the Top hats though; a mortar board sufficed at Durham

It was nice to see and listen to the words of wisdom from Stephen Cleobury. I met him in Kings College during a FCOCA tour of East Anglia in 2015. He gave us an impromptu personal demonstration of the organ, and even let us climb the stairs to the organ loft. He will be sorely missed in Cambridge.

Towards the end of the TV show, Mrs. Day imparted some wonderful words showing how The School looks after the children's health and well-being, through their early stages as a probationer, and taking into account the needs of their voices. Although the School looks after all 400+ pupils of which only a small proportion are choristers, I loved her final few words saying what it is being a chorister. She has given me permission to quote them here:

*"What an extraordinary experience it is. You're a child who is living a sound that lifts the spirits of the world who listens. There is no stronger power in a child's voice than the power to change the way people think. That's being a chorister."*

*[Alastair Pollard – Chairman]*

## Rebranding the Federation - Questionnaire

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At the AGM in Lichfield it was suggested that we consider making some major changes to our branding. Should we change the name of the Federation to make it more relevant to our membership, such as removing the words “Old” (it suggests elderly) and “Cathedral” (we are not exclusive to Cathedral choristers).

Secondly, membership cards are offered to all leaving choristers on demand, but many associations do not give them out, and youngsters have a habit of losing or ignoring them! The cost is small, but not insignificant (especially when postage costs are included). Are they still relevant? Can we add value?

Finally, we are struggling to find hosts for both AGMs and Festivals, and the number of attendees is dropping significantly. Are our events too formal/costly/intimidating? Should we combine or change the format of events?

Please respond to these are 3 simple questions: and add any comments you wish.

Send your responses to [Secretary@fcoca.org.uk](mailto:Secretary@fcoca.org.uk) or post to Alastair Pollard at 7 Masham Close, Harrogate, HG2 8QG

|             |   |           |
|-------------|---|-----------|
| Question 1: | <p>Should we change the name of The Federation?<br/>If so, which name would you prefer?</p> <p>A: Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers Associations?<br/>B: Federation of Former Chorister Associations?<br/>C: Federation of Chorister Associations?<br/>D: Once a Chorister?<br/>E: Suggest something else?</p> | Response: |
|-------------|---|-----------|

|             |  |           |
|-------------|--|-----------|
| Question 2: | <p>Should we discontinue the leavers' membership cards?</p> <p>A: Devise a completely new membership mechanism?<br/>B: Discontinue automatic leaver membership cards, but retain them for those who request them?<br/>C: Continue as we do at present?<br/>D: Remove membership cards totally?</p> | Response: |
|-------------|--|-----------|

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|-------------|--|-----------|
| Question 3: | <p>A: Should we combine the AGM with the Federation Festival to make a single annual event?<br/>B: Do we need to change the format of the Federation events?<br/>If so, please make suggestions?</p> | Response: |
|-------------|--|-----------|

Any other comments:

## **The Federation Prayer**

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Almighty God, we thank you for the music we enjoyed in our lives as choristers and sang together in your house to glorify your name. Let that music always be a witness to your majesty and love, and remind us that you are always watching, and listening from your heavenly throne. May your Spirit guide us through our daily lives so that we may continue to be the instruments of your peace, and proclaim with a glad voice your honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*Adapted from "The Musician's Prayer"*

## Contact Details

### Executive Committee members

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|                      |                  |                     |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Chairman             | Alastair Pollard | (Durham)            |
| Vice Chairman        | Nick Hodges      | (Warwick)           |
| Honorary Secretary   | Nicola Pollard   | (Durham)            |
| Honorary Treasurer   | Michael Lake     | (Chelmsford)        |
| Membership Secretary | Richard Lilley   | (St. Albans)        |
| Development Officer  | Arnold Wills     | (Peterborough)      |
| Website Officer      | Richard Watts    | (Westminster Abbey) |

### Regional Association Representatives

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

### Vice Presidents

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|                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| Geoffrey Mitchell   | (Exeter)    |
| Alan Oyston         | (Durham)    |
| Ian Henderson       | (Rochester) |
| David Horwood       | (Eton)      |
| Dr. Francis Jackson | CBE         |
| Dr. Barry Rose      | OBE         |



## Affiliated Associations

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**Belfast Cathedral** Past Choristers' Association  
**Blackburn Cathedral** Choirs Association  
**Bradford Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Bristol Cathedral** Choral Alumni  
**Cambridge**, The Choir Association of **St John's College**  
**Cambridge, King's College** Old Choristers' Association  
**Canterbury Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Carlisle Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Chapel Royal** Choristers' Association  
**Chelmsford Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Chester Cathedral** Choristers' Association  
**Chichester Cathedral** Choristers' Association  
**Christ Church Cathedral, New Zealand**, Choir Society (Inc)  
**Dublin Christchurch Cathedral** Past Choristers' Association  
**Dublin St Patrick's Cathedral** Past Choristers' & Pupils' Association  
**Durham Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Edinburgh St Marys Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Society of Ely Choristers** (Societas Choristarum Eliensium)  
**Eton College** Old Choristers' Association  
**Exeter Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Gloucester Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Guildford Cathedral** Choir Association  
**Hereford Cathedral** Former Choristers  
**Kingston All Saints Parish Church** Choir Association  
**Leicester Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Lichfield Cathedral** Former Choristers' Association  
**Lincoln Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**London (St. Paul's)**: The Guild Of The Companions Of St Paul  
**Newcastle Upon Tyne Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**New York Saint Thomas** Choir School Alumni Association  
**Norwich Cathedral** Ex Choristers' Guild  
**Oxford Christ Church Cathedral** School Old Boys Association  
**Oxford New College** Old Choristers' Association  
**Peterborough Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Portsmouth Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Rochester Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**St. Albans Cathedral** Ex-Choristers' Association  
**St. Edmundsbury Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Salisbury Cathedral** School Association  
**Sheffield Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Southwark Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Southwell Minster** Old Choristers' Association  
**Tenbury Wells St Michael's College** Society  
**Tewkesbury Abbey** Schola Cantorum  
**Truro Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Wakefield Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Warwick St Marys** Guild Of Ex-Choristers  
**Wells Cathedral** Choir Association  
**Westminster Abbey** Old Choristers' Association  
**Westminster Cathedral** Old Boys' Association  
**Winchester Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**Winchester College** Quiristers Association  
**Worcester Cathedral** Old Choristers' Association  
**York Minster** Choristers' Association