



The Front Page photograph is of Durham Cathedral, taken by the Editor Alastair Pollard, who was a Chorister there from 1970 until 1974. The photograph was taken from the Western side of the cloisters. The Song School window is on the right hand side of the photograph, behind the large window on the first floor.



Contents

Welcome from the Chair	4
2023 Festival	6
A personal view on the Warwick festival.....	6
2024 Festival – Llandaff – 20th – 22nd September	9
Invitation from Stephen Moore – Director of Music	9
Proposed programme for the Llandaff Festival	11
First sight of Llandaff Cathedral.....	12
Future events	13
2023 AGM	14
Chair’s Report	14
Secretary’s report.....	15
Treasurer’s Report for Financial Year ending December 2022	16
Accountant’s Report	17
Membership report	19
Regional Representatives’ Reports	20
Royal School of Church Music update	22
Cathedral Music Trust update	24
Member news	25
Warwick Collegiate Church	25
Lincoln Cathedral	26
Norwich Cathedral.....	30
Rochester Cathedral	32
Salisbury Cathedral	32
Gloucester Cathedral	33
A tale of two Coronations.....	35
Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953	35
Coronation of King Charles III in 2023	45
Book Reviews.....	48
Richard Coles Novels	48
Death in Aberfan	49
Church Mice	50
The future of Once a Chorister.....	52
What is Once a Chorister?	53
Once a Chorister contacts	54
Affiliated associations	56



Welcome from the Chair



What a year that was. We ended the last OaC reporting year with a splendid Festival and AGM at Ely, at the time of our late Queen's death and the accession of King Charles III. This was followed in May this year with the coronation of the new King with all its pomp and ceremony - and music. For a few, it brought back memories of singing as children at Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953 and I was delighted to receive a small number of missives from choristers who were at either the Abbey or sang in special services in their respective cathedrals and churches. Our year ended with the Festival and AGM being held in September at my home church, the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, which celebrated the 900th anniversary of its founding and that of its choir. More

can be read about the weekend elsewhere in the magazine. Suffice to say, I was extremely proud of what the Warwick Ex-Choristers' Guild delivered and I know that those who attended had a wonderful time.

Looking back over the events of the last year - and a little further to the funeral of the late Prince Philip held in difficult circumstances at St George's Chapel, Windsor - it is impossible not to remember the music accompanying these events and, especially, the choral music. The coronation music was particularly uplifting, chosen, as it was, by our new King, who has a real interest in music. Whether it is because of the additional media exposure that public events engender or because we are finally coming through the ravages of the COVID pandemic, I have seen some reports of increased interest in attracting new choristers though, in some places, it is still a challenge. We can only hope that this new Carolingian era gives rise to renewed growth in choral music and the part it plays in Christian worship.

The Guild of Ex-Choristers of St Mary's Warwick was first established in the early 1950's. Around the same time, a group of youths, comprised of choristers who had recently left the boys' choir, their friends and girlfriends, was called the Backbenchers by the then Vicar, because that was where they sat when they continued to come to Sunday evensong. Both Guild and Backbenchers ceased to exist in the 1970s as the driving forces - two individuals, who saw the benefit of maintaining the connection with choristers - passed on and no one came forward to take on their roles. The Guild was re-established in 2005 following a successful reunion event. Nothing lasts for ever. Things come and go and those events that we think are permanent fixtures in our lives may not always be so. At the AGM in September 2023 we addressed the issue of the future of the Federation. As I have reported on numerous occasions over the last 3 years, unless volunteers step forward to join the Federation Executive Committee and help run the organisation, with two (possibly three) of the Officers stepping down in 2025, the organisation is facing closure.

Those of us who attended this year's Festival in Warwick and last years in Ely, agreed that we must do all we can to maintain the tradition. We had a thoroughly nice time, but, this year, only 12 of our 50 affiliated Associations were represented, with some 30 delegates attending, much



the same as last year in Ely. This compares with the 1955 Festival at Westminster, which attracted 17 Associations with some 250 delegates, excluding those from the home team. It is difficult enough to persuade clergy and music departments to add another event to their already stretched calendars if the numbers attending are so low. Combining the AGM with the Festival I think has helped and also combining with the host's reunion event has also boosted numbers for the banquet.

At the AGM this year, we resolved to write to each affiliated Association with a survey to find out what our members would like us to do and how they might engage with the Federation in the future. I am writing this report the day after the emails were sent and I have already received a number of replies; unfortunately, not all good news. The common theme is that the Associations, like the Federation, are finding it difficult to recruit volunteers and, for some there is a lack of resource to do much more than stay in contact with their membership through an annual newsletter. We heard shortly before the AGM that our hoped for 2024 Festival in Llandaff is now unlikely to take place and, as yet, no alternative has been offered. Warwick might well have been the last Federation Festival. None of us wishes to see the demise of an organisation which has existed for over 100 years but, as it was succinctly put by one of my fellow Executive Committee members, without an active membership of Associations, there is no Federation. If you have not yet responded, I encourage you to do so. If you haven't received my email, for whatever reason, and would like to complete the survey, please email me at chairman@fcoca.org.uk and I will forward it to you. We welcome feedback from all quarters.

It only remains for me to thank my fellow committee members once again for their loyalty and contribution and, in particular, our Honorary Secretary, Alastair, for his sterling efforts in producing this publication.

Nick Hodges

[Chair, Once a Chorister]



2023 Festival

The 2023 Festival was held in Warwick this year. We had a very successful Festival, and it was joy to meet somewhere that many former choristers had never visited. In addition it was significant as it was the first time (that I know of) where we met at a Collegiate Church rather than a Cathedral or University College. For those unable to attend, here is a personal report of the festival to give you an idea of what took place.

A personal view on the Warwick festival

My wife and I set off from sunny Harrogate to drive the 150 odd miles to Warwick. An uneventful journey until we got within a few miles of Warwick. There was major congestion on the M40 (roadworks at J15 reducing the road down to a single lane) meaning that lots of traffic was diverting through the town centre, schools were disgorging pupils, and the general Friday afternoon rush hour was in full swing. After crawling up Stratford Road, we saw the imposing tower of a large Church, cloaked in a white plastic bandage, rising high into the air. At least we knew where we were heading. The centre of Warwick has an abundance of one-way-streets, temporary road closures and expensive parking, but we managed to find our way to The Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick.



As any good historian will tell you (or Wikipedia), “a collegiate church is a church where the daily office of worship is maintained by a ... community of clergy. ... In its governance and religious observance a collegiate church is similar in some respects to a cathedral, although a collegiate church is not the seat of a bishop and has no diocesan responsibilities.” **Once a Chorister** (OaC) does not differentiate between former chorister association of either! We were invited to Warwick to help celebrate the 900th anniversary of the founding of the choir at St Mary’s. When we arrived, we were presented with a Welcome

Pack for the OaC festival, which included a book by Geoffrey Holroyde entitled “The 900 Year History of the Music of the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick”. Geoffrey was Organist and Choirmaster from 1962 to 1972 and joined us at the Festival; the book even has an article written by our Chair (Nick Hodges) about his time as a chorister of over 40 years. I won’t delay you with historical facts about Warwick and St Mary’s as you can read up on this elsewhere. We kicked off the Festival with a cup of tea at the back of the Church (with posh biscuits) and then sat up in the Chancel for Evensong. The choir of men and boys were in good form despite being depleted by traffic! Psalm 22 is rather lamentable, but Oliver Hancock encouraged a good range of dynamics, and I had picked up enough of the chant to sing the Gloria. The first lesson had words from The Messiah, or is it the other way round? George Dyson in F Magnificat is potentially not as well-known as his D Major offering, but St Mary choir did it proud with a lovely treble solo. The Sumsion responses were as joyful as ever. Hymn 477 was unfamiliar to me, but fortunately we were given a melody in the hymn book and the chorister training that taught me to sight-read pretty quickly.



The tomb of Thomas Beauchamp and his wife Katherine dominates the Chancel sitting right in front of the High Altar, with their tomb effigies holding hands (a relatively rare occurrence). Then on to a civic reception with the Mayor and a glass or two of Pimms (much appreciated) before a short stroll to <The Chip Shed> for fish and chips in our own private room upstairs. Although I don't live locally I can thoroughly recommend the food. We rounded off Day 1 with a service of Compline. Compline is usually a very moving service and this was no exception. This time we were invited to join the gentlemen of the Church Choir to sing some parts; with over 30 male-voice singers (and a few ladies too) sounding like a group of monks (and a few nuns) in the semi-darkness of the Beauchamp Chapel. The gentlemen of the choir topped and tailed the service with John Sheppards "In manus tuas" and "Civitas sancti tui" by William Byrd. A fitting end to the day.

Day 2 Saturday morning, most attendees were entertained and informed with a guided tour of the church and talk on its history. I am not a great fan of history (a product of a rather dull history teacher at secondary school) so went shopping with my wife. Ironically my younger son is fascinated by all history and studied ancient history for his degree. I was reliably informed that it was a great tour but you will need to speak to someone else to get the lowdown. My wife and I went shopping in the delightful market area of Warwick town centre. We held our **Once a Chorister** Annual General Meeting in the Regimental Chapel on the North side of St Mary Church. A full report on the AGM is shown elsewhere. We then moved to the Nave for an organ recital by Rachel Mahon. Rachel is the Director of Music at nearby Coventry Cathedral and was previously the first female organist at St Paul's Cathedral in London, amongst other posts. Although I love organ music, I cannot claim to be a connoisseur so it is difficult for me to write an authoritative review. St Marys has a console which allows music to be played on the West Organ or the Transept organ, and we heard both. We had music by Max Reger, J S Bach, Percy Whitlock and Rachel Laurin. Suffice it to say that I thoroughly enjoyed the music, as did Oliver and Rachel's young son who joined in on occasion!



One of the highlights of any OaC Festival is the Saturday Evensong where former choristers (men and women) are invited to join the local choir. In this case we had a choir of over 60 boy & girl choristers, gentlemen of St Mary's choir and men & women former choristers, all singing the whole of the service and making a fantastic sound. Although I still sing in a church choir, and consider myself capable, I normally prefer to listen from the nave. Much of the words and music today was very appropriate: Psalm 98 starts out with the words "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things". OaC Chair, Nick Hodges read a very apt lesson from 2 Chronicles chapter 5 talking about "Singers", "Trumpeters", "Cymbals and Harps". Stanford's Magnificat in B flat is well known to many former choristers, with an unexpected trumpet flourish right at the end. The Nunc Dimittis is a lovely piece for the gentlemen to sing; and a joy for the congregation to listen to the massed choir, gradually rising to a glorious crescendo and a swift diminuendo, all perfectly controlled by Director of Music Oliver Hancock. The anthem was again well known to many former choristers – Wood's "O though the central orb". My favourite bit is the delightfully chromatic "Come, quickly come, and let thy glory shine, Gilding our darksome heaven with rays divine". A photograph of all delegates was swiftly taken before we sauntered down the road to Warwick's Courthouse for the Festival Banquet.

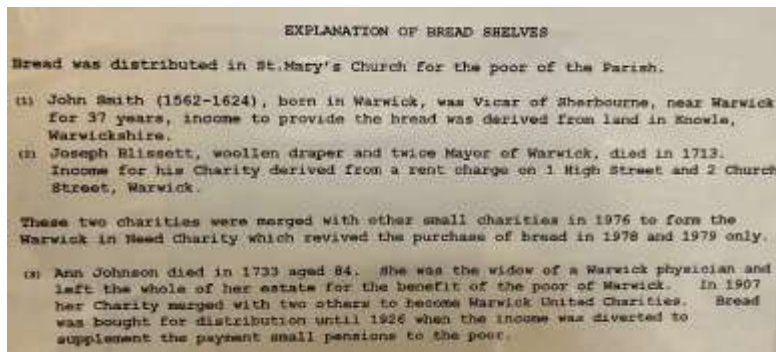


To be perfectly honest, it's difficult to convey the atmosphere of the 2023 OaC Festival Banquet evening to those who weren't there! We had a lovely meal, in a rather nice upstairs room, had a good chat with old friends, and made some new friends. The speeches were appreciated particularly by those who knew the speakers personally or the places and events referred to.

I am no longer an early riser since I took early retirement, so I started Sunday morning with a hearty breakfast at our hotel instead of attending the 8:00 am Early Communion service. Half past ten Holy Communion is quite sufficient for me, where we were ably served by the Choir of Boys, Girls and Men's voices. A pleasant surprise (for me anyhow) was that the liturgy was beautifully sung in Latin – Gloria, Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei from Missa Festiva by Peeters. Canon Peter Holliday felt compelled to apologise to all vegetarians when the first lesson from Paul's letter to the Romans stated "Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables!" I had to smile to myself when, just after the Gospel reading, the Order of Service said "The organist improvises on the Gospel Text." The organist decided to wake the congregation with rather loud and scary music, before swiftly reining back to a much more gentle introduction to Canon Peter's sermon. As the distribution of the communion elements moved to a conclusion, the choir sang a lovely rendition of Bairstow's Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence, unaccompanied. All rounded off by Durufle's Prelude et Fugue sur le Nom D'Alain Op 7.

My wife and I were unable to stay for lunch or Evensong, where the Girls' and Men's voices sang Grayson Ives Warwick service (very apt). Nicola and I made our way home up the motorways after a most pleasant weekend.

Let's hope it isn't the last Once a Chorister Festival.



In the Church is an interesting display of bread and story from centuries ago. As a Trustee of the Harrogate District Foodbank, this resonated with me.

Thanks must go to Colin Edwards, Oliver Hancock, Canon Peter Holliday, Nick Hodges and everyone else involved in making this a wonderfully successful OaC Festival, and a special mention to Carolyn Hodges for helping a damsel in distress.

Alastair Pollard

[Durham Cathedral Former Chorister 1970 – 1974]



2024 Festival – Llandaff – 20th – 22nd September

Invitation from Stephen Moore – Director of Music



I am delighted, on behalf of the Dean & Chapter of Llandaff, to invite you to join us here at the Anglican Cathedral of Cardiff for the Federation of Old Choristers' Associations Annual Festival from 20th-22nd September 2024.

There has been a Christian presence here, on the bank of the river Taff around a mile from the centre of the vibrant Welsh capital, from the time of Saint Teilo in the sixth century. The present building dates from the Norman period, around 1120 under Urban, bishop from 1107 to 1134 and was extended in the early thirteenth century, with further additions and modifications in the later Middle Ages. The Cathedral has undergone three major upheavals and restorations. The devastation of the Cathedral on 2nd January 1941 caused by the explosion of a German landmine outside the south aisle was addressed in the 1950s under the architect, George Pace, with a repaired and refurbished Cathedral and the addition of the St David, or Welch Regiment, Chapel. Pace's crowing glory for the Nave of the refurbished cathedral was the striking *Majestas*; a double wishbone concrete arch surmounted by a hollow drum. Jacob Epstein's "Christ in Glory" is mounted on the West face of the drum.



The origins of the present Cathedral Choir can be traced back to 1880 when Dean of Llandaff, Henry Vaughan, founded The Cathedral School to educate the boys who were choristers. The first Dean's Scholars (Head Choristers) were appointed soon after that. Girl Choristers, who for many years were trained by The Cathedral School, first sang in the Cathedral in 1996. In an historic change, the girls were welcomed into the music department of the Cathedral in September 2021. In September 2022, parity of opportunity for girls and boys who wish to be choristers was achieved in Llandaff for the first time, placing all choristers on an equal footing and strengthening the historic link with The Cathedral School where they all continue to be educated. We are proud to maintain a weekly output of seven choral services with the Cathedral Choir and are actively exploring potential new avenues of musical outreach.

Alongside the weekly round of seven choral services, over the past 5 years, the Cathedral Choirs have appeared live on Television and Radio, on Songs of Praise on Easter Day 2021 and Christmas Day 2022, recorded two CDs with Regent Records, sang at the 368th Clergy Support Trust Festival at St Paul's Cathedral and undertaken both domestic and foreign tours. The Cathedral Choir appeared on BBC Radio 3 Evensong in September 2023 for the first time in over 25 years and Christmas services will also be broadcast on BBC Radio Wales in December. Following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II, a service in September 2022 was attended by HM King Charles III and Queen Camilla and broadcast live on television around the world.

The Cathedral Organ is a 4-manual Nicholson & Co. instrument, built in two stages and installed between 2010 and 2013. The Organ is the largest, wholly new Cathedral Organ to be built in the UK since the 1960s and has immense colour and capacity as an instrument for both solo and accompaniment work.

Alongside the Cathedral choirs, we in Llandaff are dedicated to providing the opportunity to make music and sing for as many people of all ages as possible. In September 2023 the Dean & Chapter appointed a new Music Animator to work with school children from across the diocese with initial projects already reaching out to over 500 children. Alongside this, the Cathedral music department supports *Majestas Kids*, a group for children aged 7-11, *Majestas Consort*, an adult voluntary choir, and *Llandaff Cathedral Festival Chorus*, a community group of over 100 voices. It's certainly safe to say that Llandaff is a busy and rewarding place to work with a lot going on! We continue to actively explore new avenues of fundraising, engagement and support for the music at the Cathedral.

As part of this work, it is our hope that we can once again establish an active Old Choristers' network – something which has lapsed over recent years – for Llandaff Cathedral. We look forward to reconnecting with former choristers of Llandaff as well as those of other places at the 2024 Festival weekend and hope that you will be able to join us. Booking will open in early April.

Stephen Moore

[Director of Music , Llandaff Cathedral]





Proposed programme for the Llandaff Festival

Friday 20th September

- 4.30pm Reception – Welcome and tea *Prebendal House, Llandaff Cathedral*
- 5.30pm Choral Evensong for the Eve of St Matthew *sung by the Cathedral Choir*
- 6.15pm Drinks Reception in the Cathedral Lady Chapel
- 7.15pm Time for dinner in Llandaff Village (recommendations will be made)
- 8.45pm Choral Compline *sung in the Quire by the Cathedral Choir and delegates*

Saturday 21st September

- 10.00am Demonstration of the 2010/13 Nicholson Organ and short recital given by Stephen Moore and Aaron Shilson
- 11.00am Tour of the Cathedral followed by visit to the Ringing Chamber and/or Organ Loft
- 12.15-1pm Lunchtime recital given by pupils of the Cathedral School, Llandaff
- 1.15pm Time for lunch in Llandaff Village (recommendations will be given)
- 1.30pm Tour of The Cathedral School, Llandaff (for any who wish)
- 2.45pm Rehearsal for Evensong *Cathedral Choir and delegates*
- 4.00pm Federation Solemn Evensong for the Feast of St Matthew
- 6.30pm Pre-dinner drinks *Memorial Hall, The Cathedral School*
- 7.15pm Sit for dinner *Memorial Hall, The Cathedral School*

Sunday 22nd September

- 10.15am Cathedral Choir open rehearsal for those who wish to observe
- 11.00am Choral Eucharist
Followed by sherry/wine before farewells



First sight of Llandaff Cathedral

I was fortunate enough to visit Llandaff Cathedral earlier this year, on my way to visit my daughter just up the road in the cathedral town of Brecon. For those of you not especially familiar with Llandaff, it is a district of the city of Cardiff in South Wales, and the “cathedra” or seat of the Bishop of Llandaff and the mother church of the Diocese of Llandaff within the Anglican Province of the Church in Wales. Some call it “a city within a city.”

The first Cathedral in Llandaff dates from 546 and was tiny (15 foot by 28 foot and only 20 foot high), and although it has been rebuilt and added to over the years, even today it is not a large Cathedral. Moreover, it is not that easy to find, being hidden in a dip half way up a steep hill, at the top of one of the smallest high streets in the land having only a handful of shops and a small car park. The first glimpse is likely to be a tall spire and an ornate tower at the west end – one of each is a little unusual, but the whole building, inside and out, is a mixture of old and new with a splash of vivid colour. Brecon Cathedral may be small in size compared with others, but when you first enter the building it is definitely a Cathedral. Dominating the nave is the concrete parabolic arch supporting the former organ case, but allowing an uninterrupted view through the high altar and choir to the Lady Chapel beyond. The window at the west end is relatively plain giving a lovely view of the green trees outside.



The organs of Llandaff Cathedral have suffered a variety of troubles in the past 100 years, one being destroyed by a landmine in 1941 and another made unusable after a lightning strike in 2007. The current organ is the largest to be built in Britain for over 50 years and completed in 2013.

Perpendicular to the nave on the north side is St David’s Chapel, also known as the Welch Regiment Chapel dedicated in 1956 in memory of the fallen in wars since the 18th century. Lovely and bright.

There is so much to see, with ancient stonework & sculptures, wooden painted art, ironworks, and an open organ console, so why not come along to the Once a Chorister Festival next year.

Alastair Pollard
[Durham Cathedral Former Chorister 1970 – 1974]



Future events

At present the AGM will not be a separate event and will take place during the annual festival. This is because we are struggling to find any association willing and able to host a separate AGM event. However, this may change in the future if members associations offer to host a separate AGM event, possibly as part of their own association reunion.

We have no confirmed hosts for future Once a Chorister annual festivals after Llandaff. Unless a host for the 2025 Once a Chorister annual festival can be found quickly, we fear that Llandaff will be the very last OaC festival.

The guide to hosting a Festival is available on our website www.fcoca.org.uk giving useful information about hosting such an event. Executive Committee members and previous host associations will be only too happy to help and remember that you no longer need to arrange overnight accommodation for attendees or transport between event venues.



2023 AGM

The 2023 Annual General Meeting was held during the festival in Warwick.

Chair's Report

I start with heartfelt thanks to my fellow members of the Executive Committee for their continued support and guidance and for all that they have done on the last 12. I am delighted that they have all agreed to continue as members of the committee for a further 12 months, subject to their re-election at the AGM.

After last year's hugely successful Festival held at Ely, at the time of our late Queen's death, we have been looking forward to sharing the 900 anniversary of the founding of the Collegiate Church of St Mary's Warwick; in my home town and a place with which I have been associated since I was christened there 74 years ago and it gives me a huge thrill to welcome Festival to this very special place. I would like to put on record our sincere thanks to Oliver Hancock, St Mary's Director of Music and all the Warwick team who have made this weekend possible, with special thanks to Colin Edwards, Honorary Secretary of the Guild of Ex-Choristers of St Mary's, who has done so much towards the success of this weekend.

Events like these need volunteers to organise them. Associations need people to give of their time (an increasingly rare commodity) to run them. The Federation can only exist if Associations wish it to and, importantly, provide the manpower to run it. In the last year, sadly we have heard of the demise of the Leicester association, due to lack of people stepping forward to run it and we know that there are many other associations finding it difficult to keep going. Perhaps the way forward is to encourage the Directors of Music at places where choral music remains an important constituent of worship, to appreciate the benefits of an active former chorister association and do all they can to enliven their own associations and encourage other Directors of Music to do likewise.

We were hoping that Festival next year would be hosted by Llandaff Cathedral but, we have learnt in the last few days that issues with the establishment of their choral foundation have arisen, which puts in doubt the formation of their alumni association and, as a result, their ability to put on the event. As we have reported previously, we have no other associations offering to host future Festivals, at this time.

I reported last year on the challenges that the Federation was facing and very little has changed over the last 12 months. If anything, there has been less interaction with our membership, notwithstanding the increased communication we have introduced over the last 3 years. The challenges we face are nothing compared to those facing the Church of England who, as a result of visitor income being slashed during the pandemic and not recovering at the required rate together with the massively increased costs of running and maintaining buildings with rising energy and employment costs, many places are looking at the expense of maintaining the choral tradition as they have in the past and whether this is a luxury that cannot be afforded.



None of this is good news for our organisation and so, possibly, the time has come to take stock, batten down the hatches, reduce our activity and wait for fortunes to change and for a new generation to come forward and lift the banner.

Nick Hodges

[Chair]

Secretary's report

Last year, we had a wonderful Festival in Ely, uplifted by it being held in person but subdued due to the death of our late Queen Elizabeth II. A full report of the AGM and Festival can be found in Once a Chorister magazine 2022 on our website.

The Executive committee met (formally) on Zoom in March 2023, and again (informally) on 1st September, but we also managed to meet (formally) in person in Leamington Spa in July. Minutes of all committee meetings are produced, and Newsletters published to our Website. Alastair met Liz Atherton (Music Foundation Executive) and Stephen Moore (Director of Music) at Llandaff cathedral earlier this year in preparation for our Festival next year. They were excited about hosting the Federation Festival in 2024, but recent issues have cast doubt whether it will still take place there. I shall keep you all informed.

In addition to regular reports on finance and festivals, the major topics of discussion centred on the future of the Federation and the precarious state of our member associations. Most (but fortunately not all) of our members associations are struggling to remain active, relevant to their own individual former choristers, and recruit volunteers to serve on the committees. The Federation itself has very much the same issues to address, particularly a lack of committee members (in 2 years' time several executive members will step down). I was particularly disappointed that the Cathedral Music Trust did not see a benefit to working with us, and even announced setting up a similar connection for former choristers without any reference to the Federation.

I still enjoy producing the Once a Chorister magazine in October/November which is much appreciated by those who care to read it but I wonder how many actually do! So far, I have no articles whatsoever submitted for the 2023 Once a Chorister Magazine, so please feel free to submit.

Thanks again to my wife Nicola who often takes minutes during our committee meetings, and to our Chair Nick for his wisdom and friendship.

Alastair Pollard

[Secretary]



Treasurer's Report for Financial Year ending December 2022

The figures have been shown in the same format as in previous years, so if we look at the income and expenditure account, we can see subscriptions amount to a lower total than in 2021, as we were informed of a couple more associations not able to continue.

Merchandise, which in the last financial year equated to ties only, often given to leaving choristers as they move to be former choristers, made us £180. We completed the year without any stock left; hence the value of stock from 2021 is shown as "stock written off".

A generous donation of £500 has enabled us to show a surplus at the end of December 2022 of £679, as against a deficit shown in the previous years.

Looking at the expenditure, the amount paid for insurance cover reduced from £1,177 in 2021 to £850 in 2022, and, of course, this year will be nil as we have sought to remove all un-essential insurance premiums, which represented our major expenditure each annum. This was discussed at the last general meeting with the future storage of the chain of office explained.

As the balance sheet shows, it has been fortunate to be able to have a slight increase in our bank balance and in the surplus carried forward into 2023.

Statement of Income and Expenditure for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

INCOME	2022	2021
Subscriptions	£800	£930
Merchandise	£180	£29
Donations	£500	
Stock Written Off	(£141)	
Total	£1,339	£959

EXPENDITURE	2022	2021
Postage		
Printing & Stationery		
Insurance	£850	£1,177
Association Donations	(£260)	(£216)
Accountancy Fee	50	50
Subscriptions	20	34
Total	£660	£1,107
Surplus (Deficit)	£679	(£148)



Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2022

FIXED ASSETS	Note	2022	2021
Chairman's Chain of Office and Secretary's Pendant	2	£33,200	£33,200
CURRENT ASSETS			
Stock	3		141
Debtors	4		
Bank			
Current Account	5	£8,204	£7,384
Deposit Account	5	£105	£105
Total		£8,309	£7,630
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Creditors			
NET ASSETS		£41,509	£40,830

REPRESENTED BY:			
Revaluation Reserve		£33,200	£33,200
Surplus b/fwd at 1 January 2022		£7,630	£7,778
Surplus for the Year		£679	(£148)
Total surplus c/fwd		£8,309	
Total Assets c/fwd at 31 December 2022		£41,509	£40,830

Michael Lake
[Treasurer]

Accountant's Report

In accordance with Section 4.8 of the Constitution, I have reviewed, without carrying out an audit, the attached annual report and financial statements of the Federation for the year ended 31 December 2022, and would certify that they are in agreement with the accounting records provided and explanations given to me.

Matthew Guest
[ACMA] August 1st 2023



The notes to these accounts form part of the Financial Statements.

Notes to the Financials Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2022

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

- a) The Chains and Pendants are capitalised on a replacement value basis
- b) Equipment is fully depreciated in the year of acquisition

2. TANGIBLE ASSETS

Chains of Office	
COST	
As at 31 December 2022	£33200
Additions	<u>-</u>
	£33200
NET BOOK VALUE	
As at 31 December 2022	£33200

Note: The Chains of Office and Pendants were revalued for the 2020 accounts

- 3. STOCK as at 31 December 2022** **Value**
NIL
An amount of £141 was written off at the end of the year

- 4. DEBTORS**
NIL

- 5. BANK ACCOUNTS**
In general monies are held in a Current Account with Lloyds Bank Plc

- 6. TOURS ACCOUNT**
The balance as at 31 December 2022 was £NIL

Michael Lake
[Treasurer]



Membership report

Until relatively recently Once a Chorister had about 55 associations recently, but we are now down to 38 or 39. The recent rebranding of FCOCA to Once a Chorister is complete.

Since the last AGM at Ely, there have been fewer requests; 42 membership cards issued with cards issued to Christ Church Oxford, Salisbury, St Albans, Rochester and St. Pauls. In total, we have issued 3413 membership card numbers since we started. We were reminded that if you want membership cards, to please fill in the form to be found on our website, give plenty of time to produce them, and orders are processed in order of need and date of receipt.

@ChoristersAssoc follows 204 accounts and have 214 followers on Twitter (now rebranded as X).

Richard Lilley
[Membership Secretary]



Regional Representatives' Reports

Once again, many associations are struggling to survive, primarily due to the age of committee members, changes in attitudes, and particularly a reluctance for former choristers to serve on their committee. Many associations have not met in the past few years either in person or virtually using video-conferencing software. This has significantly affected churches, cathedrals and choirs, and many former chorister events, gatherings, and meetings were not possible. Organisational changes at some cathedrals mean that their choirs have sometimes been restructured or even disbanded, and some Former Chorister Associations have merged with other similar organisations that cater for other choirs, pupils, friends.

Report for the Midlands and Wales Region

Of the original 14 association in the region, only 4 remain active to my knowledge. Sadly, Leicester ceased in March this year after they failed to fill the four vacant positions on their committee. I am aware of similar challenges at Gloucester, Worcester and Lichfield and though there has been hope of re-establishing an association at Southwell, nothing has been confirmed. Oxford Christ Church, St Albans and Hereford continue to deliver events, as does Warwick, where we hold Festival this year. Though the Oxford New College alumni remain in existence and members receive an annual communication, the association is run by one person and does not attempt to deliver reunion events or engage with the Federation. Recently, we heard of issues regarding the formation of the choral foundation at Llandaff and that of their alumni association. Though an application for membership has been received from them, it is now uncertain how this will progress. We had hoped to hold Festival at Llandaff in 2024. Following last year's successful reunion of the consecration choir at Coventry Cathedral, no further activity has occurred.

Nick Hodges

[Midlands & Wales Regional Representative]

Report for the East Anglia and South East Region

There has been no enquiries or correspondence from the region for the period. Last year's Festival and combined AGM took place in Ely. This had been in the planning prior to Covid 19 and was duly postponed until September last year. Although the death of the Queen occurred just before the Festival, it went ahead with a number of alterations. The occasion was a most memorable one and the careful and thoughtful necessary last minute arrangements were extremely well executed. I was pleased to recently attend Ely's reunion and AGM to again thank John Marshall and Robin Laird for such a fine and momentous Festival. Interestingly Ely is consulting with York Minister at their request to assist York with their association arrangements. I was impressed again with the attendance and age mix of those attending Ely's reunion lunch. Norwich's reunion dinner which I attended and help arrange was showing increased attendance from last year and had a better age mix and variety of attendees with some ex lady choristers.

Ayrton Westwood

[East Anglia and South East Regional Representative]



Report for the North and Ireland Region

It is increasingly difficult to find an up to date status on the original 16 association in the region, as very few organisations respond despite several attempts, but some further research can be done by searching online. As far as I can gather, only 4 associations in my region remain active and are members of The Federation (Blackburn, Durham, Lincoln, Wakefield). 4 associations appear inactive but appear as members of The Federation (Chester, Dublin CC, Dublin St Patrick, York). Sadly 8 association are no longer members of The Federation (Belfast, Bradford, Carlisle, Edinburgh, Leeds, Newcastle, Ripon, Sheffield).

Blackburn association is going strong with a monthly Newsletter written by John Bertalot and regular events. Durham OCA was recently subsumed when The Chorister School and Durham School merged, and is struggling to keep going due to a lack of volunteers. I believe Lincoln association is still active having been recently relaunched. Wakefield is still active and have a reunion this weekend!

To many former choristers, it is very important to have the opportunity to sing at reunions, and a less formal event is preferred. Like The Federation itself, the lack of volunteer committee members is probably the greatest challenge, as existing committee members grow old and no-one wants to step up.

Alastair Pollard

[North and Ireland Regional Representative]

Report for the South West Region

There has been little or no contact with any association members this year. It is sad to say that it is very difficult to get any response whatsoever.

Stephen Milner

[South West Regional Representative]



Royal School of Church Music update

Being a chorister must have been important to you. If it wasn't, you wouldn't be receiving or reading this magazine. When I ask former choristers what they most valued about their experience, there are some consistent threads to their answers. This includes teamwork, fellowship, discipline, skills and of course singing wonderful music, often in amazing surroundings within the context of church and cathedral worship.



I was never a cathedral chorister myself; I got into church music through the chapel choir of my boys school which back in the late 80s and early 90s was quite a force to be reckoned with, run by a skilled RS teacher who was also the local vicar's wife as well as being an FRCO organist. However, both my daughters were cathedral choristers and benefitted much from it; and I have seen the difference it makes elsewhere. I can think of many examples I might share, but here are just a couple. In one of my former places of work, a lad joined the choir because he was encouraged to do so by his grandma. He came from the nearby council estate, from a family of limited financial means. Before trying out for the choir, he had never really sung at all. But he stuck with it, was always there, and rose to be head chorister and then a choral scholar who would sing solos at big services, setting himself up for a lifetime of singing. And I can think of a girl who was part of another choir I directed who had such low confidence and self esteem that she would barely speak to you, and struggled at school. But the choir helped that, to the point that she became a leading soloist for the biggest occasions.

But such great, transformative experiences being offered to choristers rely on the right opportunities to be there; and for the opportunities to be presented in the right way.

What does the RSCM want to do? We want to ensure that we enable the flourishing of church music. I want it to be that this is not the last generation who sing the Lord's song in church. We cannot preserve traditions in aspic – we will simply be left high and dry as the tide of society moves on – but need to be building on our inherited traditions to forge a bright future. We have identified three priority groups that the RSCM particularly wants to serve: young people, music leadership and clergy (and lay) leadership.

- **Young people** are obviously vitally important for the future sustainability of church music. We need to widen the 'reach' of church music to welcome in many more young people, from a much wider cross-section of society. More about that in a moment.
- **Music leadership** is important because if you stoke the fire of interest in young people, you have to have people with the right skillset to capitalise on that; and it is very important to recognise that this skillset is not simply the same as it was 30 years ago as the context for education has changed hugely. Without this leadership, they will simply drift away and find other outlets for their times and talents.
- **Clergy leadership** – which encompasses non-ordained worship leaders, too, since this is going to be an increasingly present part of the church landscape of the future – is also



important. This is because unless the church itself values music, capitalises on the positive enhancement it can make to worship, and leverages the connections to communities and people it enables, then the work of any music leadership will only ever exist in a silo, speaking (or perhaps singing) into a vacuum.

For the church and church music, we live in quite challenging times. Old assumptions no longer apply. Commitment is not something which can be relied on – it has to be earned, and is hard; but especially for choristers, long-term is an important view. I used to reckon it was 2-3 years before a boy chorister made the transition from learner to leader: significant knowledge and skill bank needs to be assembled. Regular participation in any particular activity is not prized above variety of experiences (preferably shareable on Instagram. Don't underestimate the impact this has!) More profoundly, we have a significant issue in that choristers don't just 'happen' – they need the support of adults to get them to choir, be that practical logistics, or actually thinking they might join a choir as an 'activity' at all. There is a significant, generational shift – the parents now making those decisions have, for the most part, no real idea of what is happening in church, or even what church is for. It's not that they are necessarily hostile to it; it's just that it's completely 'other'.

So, we have to start over. It's a long journey. The RSCM has a strategic aim to grow the numbers of young people singing in church. But how?

Firstly, we now offer **Hymnpact!**[®]. This is a grass roots, richly enabled resource to get children singing in schools, especially singing in collective worship/assemblies. It's designed to connect [church] schools with their local churches. It mixes new hymns and songs with those from the central church canon, presented in ways which then fit into local contexts. If you have any connection to a primary school, please encourage them to sign up to use it (just search 'Hymnpact'). But on its own it's not enough. We need to get lots of junior choirs up and running, too – and over the next year will be providing support mechanisms for this. We have just released the latest, digital version of our long-running **Voice for Life** scheme, which builds the understanding and knowledge of choristers. It uses the best of technology to take the time-draining burden of extra teaching away from hard-pressed choir trainers. Do take a look: [Voice for Life[®] Digital | New Digital Resource for Choirs | RSCM](#). And then, from that, we will build pathways into our own courses and choirs. For me, it is absolutely critical that Choristers should not only exist in Cathedrals and the largest of our churches, wonderful though these are. If there are not children in the 'ordinary' churches who are singing, there will be no 'ordinary' churches: this is a simple fact.

Am I discouraged? No. Am I a bit daunted by the scale of the task? Yes... but as one of our excellent RSCM Trustees said: you cannot eat an elephant all at once – you have to tackle it in bite-size pieces. I am now into my sixth year as RSCM's Director, and have so many things that I am still wanting to do.

How can you help? There are some simple things. Please share our work; share our story. Share your story. We collect chorister stories – whether you ended up as professional singer, hobby singer, or simply up-skilled in an entirely different role by having been a singer at all. If you don't read and subscribe to our monthly free eNewsletter, then I would encourage you to do so - [Notes from the Director | RSCM](#)



You might also consider supporting our work. We welcome individual members and friends, all of whom help us to do more of what we know is urgently needed. It can all feel a bit like pushing water uphill. But to end, here's a quote from an unsolicited piece of feedback from our Bath Course for Young People this summer. Happily, it was full again after some COVID-infested years of pause and recovery.

It was my second time on the Bath Course this year and I wanted to write to say thank you. The Bath Course is by far the highlight of my year and I have been looking forward to it everyday since I first came last year. I loved all the music we performed this year and found it so enjoyable to participate in singing in the choir.... My friends and I are already so excited for next year.

There are many young people out there who still value singing church music. Our task is to support them, and encourage others to join them. There is much to do!

Hugh Morris
[Director, RSCM]
October 2023



RSCM Annual Appeal 2023

Our mission is to enable the flourishing of church music in the widest range of settings.

Cathedral Music Trust update

Unfortunately, Cathedral Music Trust have not provided a report for this year's Once a Chorister.





Member news

Warwick Collegiate Church



2023 has been a year of celebration for St Mary's, marking the 900th anniversary of the founding of her choir. Fresh from the recent 'Once a Chorister' Annual Festival here, I am pleased to report on the past year's choral activities.

My last report signed off with the Choirs having marked the death of Her Late Majesty and accession of His Majesty The King, enjoyed a splendid 'Last Night of the Proms' with soprano Elin Manahan Thomas, and in the process of renewing acquaintance with Duruflé Requiem. Michaelmas Term thereafter ran its usual path through Remembrance into Advent and Christmas, with two notable and particularly special events: we were pleased to collaborate with Royal Spa Brass for Carols at Warwick Castle to a sell-out audience of 3,000 people, with added firework display to mark the 50th anniversary event, and the girl choristers gave the first performance here for many, many years of Britten's perennial favourite, A Ceremony of Carols to a packed building.

Lent Term 2023 marked the beginning of our anniversary year and, in addition to the usual round of feast and fast – with Epiphany and Candlemas Carol Services, the 'Warwick special' Feast of Thomas Oken (commemorating the 450th anniversary of this great benefactor's death), plus a joint Evensong for the boys and Gentlemen with their counterparts at Worcester Cathedral – we celebrated with a number of special events: the boys and Gentlemen performed a series of short, late-night concerts by candlelight, and the girl choristers performed the whole of Pergolesi's Stabat mater with string quartet and continuo as an Holy Week devotion. St Mary's journeyed through the Triduum in the company of the Bishop of Warwick, the Rt Revd John Stroyan, before arriving at a splendid Easter Day, made all the more so by a slightly ludicrous orchestral Festal Evensong with procession: Dyson in D (orchestrated by Hopkins), Vaughan Williams Easter and Stanford Te Deum in B flat were all complemented by splendid hymns, and a welcome return to 'Hail thee, Festival Day' in procession around the church.

For much of 2023, the West tower of St Mary's has been shrouded in scaffolding as the first repairs since the 1880s are made. The work, alas, meant we were unable to sing our usual Tower Service for Ascension Day, but we were grateful to the Lord Leycester Hospital for accommodating us – despite their own restoration works – and allowing the choristers still to have their 7.00am sing... Pentecost, Trinity, and Corpus Christi were marked in their own ways, and suddenly the Choir's annual concert was upon us: a feast of choral classics, including Haydn *Insanae et vanae curae*, Stanford *For lo, I raise up*, Bainton *And I saw a new heaven*, and Finzi *Lo, the full final sacrifice*, culminating in the chamber orchestral scoring of Duruflé Requiem.

The summer holidays saw (and heard) the Choir's long-awaited overseas tour. Originally planned as a trip to Poland in 2020, pandemics and Putin pushed us closer to home as we enjoyed a week in Normandy with a programme of mostly English music including Bairstow *Let all mortal flesh*, two of Tippett's Spirituals, Harris *Faire is the heaven* and works by Tallis and Byrd. We also performed *Vierne Messe Solennelle*, of course. Concerts were performed and Masses given in Lisieux Cathedral, Eglise St Jean in Caen, Notre-Dame de l'Assomption in Vimoutiers (a service



that shall forever live in the memory), and at Bayeux Cathedral. Much fun and educational merit were had and found along the way – including visits to Deauville, the D-Day Museum in Caen, the Bayeux Tapestry, and more – and the Choir returned ready not only for lots of sleep but for the new term. A stirring Patronal Festival weekend led on to a joyous weekend with ‘Once a Chorister’ delegates, including probably the best-attended Friday Evensong in living memory, a very moving service of Compline, a rip-roaring Festival Evensong and dinner, and a suitably celebratory Sunday services. Many thanks to all who put so much effort into making the weekend a success, and to those who attended.

At the time of writing, we are currently looking forward to a two-day visit from BBC Radio 3 and Radio 4 (with music by Byrd, Jackson, Willan, Howells, and Elgar), before plunging headlong into Remembrance-tide and beyond.

Oliver Hancock

[Director of Music The Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick]

Lincoln Cathedral



Since the beginning of the year the choir has participated in several important musical events and services. This includes preparing for the 400th Anniversary of William Byrd's death. The LCCOCA has also seen changes to the way it provides support to the choir and former choristers.

Recruitment is an ongoing issue - the girls are expected to achieve relative stability in 2023 and the boys hopefully to follow having had a dip in 2021/22. This was in numbers and quality, because of the recruitment hiatus induced by Covid-19. For both front lines interviews are on-going.

It is also good to report that much effort by the music department, led by Director of Music Aric Prentice, in the recruitment and training of choristers from local schools continues well with twelve schools participating. The cathedral's additional choirs (Consort and Youth Choir) maintain their contributions to the liturgy. This year is considered a year to consolidate (2022/2023) and to flourish (2023/2024) thereafter. Cost pressures are still preventing earlier changes to the current programme of services. Saturday Evensong is being sung on alternate weeks by the Youth Choir and in the intervening weeks by the choral scholars and lay vicars alone (ATB), Unfortunately Sunday morning Choral Mattins has not yet resumed.

On 29th January 2023 the evensong service celebrated the generous sponsor support given to the Cathedral Choir by individuals and groups across greater Lincolnshire and beyond. The service is to thank these sponsors and to join in worship to thank God for the gift of music, for composers, conductors, players, and performers. It was well attended and received with thanks to the Music Fund Council for the organisation and preparation and work on the day. Music for the service included the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis setting in the key of D George Dyson and for the Anthem Edward Elgar's setting of Great is the Lord. Then followed the presentations of Choristerships, Choral Scholarships, Chorister Bursaries and Lay Vicar Endowments by the sponsor representative(s). The Lincoln Old Chorister Choristership was presented to Issac Turner



by John Parry on behalf of LCCOCA. Issac was the ninth chorister to receive the award following the first recipient Jonathan Line in 2002. One of the aims of the association is to support the choir and like many other associations demonstrates the importance of such support by former choristers. This helps to sustain the viability of Cathedral Choirs and provides the opportunities for youngsters to enjoy the same unique experience which they gained.

As indicated the choir has continued to undertake a full programme of several important musical events and services. It performed Bach St John Passion on Saturday 25th March 2023 with Aric Prentice conducting the choir and soloists Chris Way, Evangelist and Alexander Bower-Brown who performed Christus. The programme then focussed on the 400th Anniversary of William Byrd's death and to hold a Festival to celebrate his time at Lincoln with Tuesday 4 July 2023 marking the 400th, actual date. Byrd came to Lincoln Cathedral in 1563 when, at the age of just 23, he was appointed as 'Song Master and Pulsator at the Organs'. Just 100 years ago Byrd's music - and the enormous influence that his music has had on the course of composition ever since - was little known. In fact, the concert given in Lincoln Cathedral in 1923 included more music by Mozart and others than by the man himself! However, this pioneering concert re-established William Byrd as the 'Father of Music' and his rightful place in musical history.

The Five- Day Festival was held (30th June- 4th July 2023), with daily choral services sung by the choir and predominantly of Byrd's liturgical music. The choir being joined in some of its regular services and events by the Chapel Choir of Merton College and the Tallis Scholars. Over the five days the Cathedral choir led the regular worship with singing all three Byrd mass settings, twenty motets and anthems including all four settings of the evening canticles. The Wetheringsett Early English organ, built on historic principals, was also on loan to the cathedral throughout the festival – celebrating Byrd's work for keyboard - and the music for viols featured in the concert by Arculo.

On Tuesday 4 July 2023 at the 400th anniversary evensong the music included; Byrd Responses, Byrd Verse Service, and anthem Prevent Us Lord. Then on Wednesday 5th July 2023 the choir sang evensong for a live BBC 3 Broadcast. The music included Byrd Responses, Byrd Verse Service, Anthem Ad Dominum cum tribularer and Byrd's introit, Sing Joyfully. The service ended with Jeffrey Makenson Organist, playing Fantasia in G by Byrd. The Festival was later concluded, with an evening concert given by the Cathedral Choir and the Tallis Scholars. This was an appropriate finish to the Festival having attracted over 1500 attendees, to the various choral services and events over the five days. It was also fitting that to mark the 400th anniversary of his death and celebrate the life and work of William Byrd, the Cathedral commissioned a memorial stone to be prominently placed in the floor of St Hugh's Choir. The Stone was unveiled and dedicated during Evensong on Tuesday 4th July 2023, the anniversary date.

Since the 2021 AGM the LCCOCA has renewed its' contacts with the FCOCA and on behalf of our Association John Parry is liaising with the Federation on matters of interest to both organisations. For the 2023 FCOCA National Festival it was hosted by the Association at Warwick on the 15th – 17th September. It formed part of the 900th anniversary of the founding of the church of St Mary and its choir. A full programme of events was organised for the weekend and much appreciated by the four former choristers of Lincoln accompanied by two guests. They particularly enjoyed an outstanding organ recital given by Coventry Cathedral's Director of Music, Rachel Mahon. Evensong was delivered by the full choir of boys and girls including some of the Festival delegates under the baton of Oliver Hancock Director of Music for The Collegiate Church of St Mary Warwick.



On the 2nd February 2023 Lincoln's Dean Very Revd Christine Wilson retired following a farewell evensong on the day. The Dean had been a good supporter of the Association and we send her our best wishes for a happy retirement. In June the election of the 73rd Bishop of Lincoln took place with Reverend Stephen David Conway duly appointed Bishop of Lincoln on 20th July with the King's and Government approval. We send Bishop Conway our congratulations and warm wishes for a successful future at Lincoln. At the end of July Alana Brook Assistant Organist left to become the Assistant Director of Music at Wakefield Cathedral after four years at Lincoln. We congratulate Alana in the appointment and wish her well for the future. The choir has been joined by a sixth Lay Vicar, Marissa who came from Worcester Cathedral, where she was a choral scholar. The choir will also welcome five new choral scholars and a first Organ Scholar Adam Chillingworth. We wish them well and success in their new posts.

Proposed LCCOCA Organisation Changes.

Since 2017 the recruitment of Cathedral Choristers has been mainly from state schools across Lincolnshire. At the same time the LCCOCA was established to support the work and promotion of Lincoln Cathedral Choir, to provide facilities for all its members. This included, acting as the membership organisation for all Old Choristers with reference to the annual reunion day for former members of the choir. However, in recent years the impact of Covid 19 clearly reduced such activities whilst the evidence from subsequent Annual Reunion/AGM events attendance support for the Association was reducing. In the LCCOCA AGM in October 2022, the meeting agreed for the remaining committee members to investigate how and / or if ways in which the activities of the LCCOCA can be continued in the absence of the current organization. What follows is the result of deliberations at a meeting held in June 2023 at which it was concluded that the governance of LCCOCA in its present form should cease. The Cathedral Chapter has now agreed to the proposals and the formal closure was confirmed at the Reading Out Sunday Evensong on 9th July 2023.

The responsibilities for events and actions previously undertaken by LCCOCA will now follow as indicated: -During the LCCOCA AGM in October 2022, the meeting agreed for the remaining committee members to investigate how and / or if ways in which the activities of the LCCOCA can be continued in the absence of the current organization. What follows is the result of deliberations at a meeting held in June 2023 at which concluded that the governance of LCCOCA in its present form should cease.

The activities undertaken by LCCOCA will now be as indicated: -

1. The annual Act of Remembrance for former choristers and Evensong will continue as an integral aspect of the liturgy of the cathedral. It is proposed this and an AGM will be held on the same day each year (e.g. 1st Saturday in October). Thus, to help embed it in the minds of those planning to attend. It is also hoped this will encourage attendance of old choristers to sing evensong and not be restricted to singing the anthem.
2. Choir social activities for the current choristers can be arranged and facilitated through joint efforts by the music department team and the parent body. Such activities will be ad hoc and will help to support a social network for those parents wishing to engage.



3. Fundraising forms a key LCCOCA function. The future of this activity to be managed by the music department and all monies held in a restricted fund managed by the cathedral finance team. The finances will be known as Choir Support Fund and ring-fenced sums will continue to be indicated for given events/items. Signatories for the funds will be both the Precentor and the CFO. Fundraising activities can be supported by the parent body, old choristers who wish / are able to participate and friends of the association. Such activities may include the sale of wine at choir events (Messiah, SJP etc.) with the sale of refreshments and choir associated items (e.g., CDs) at the Christmas Market and other activities throughout the year as appropriate.
4. Fundraising for sponsorship of the Old Chorister Choristership, will continue in its present format with monies going directly to the Music Fund. Requests for new sponsorship can be managed through the Cathedral's fundraising office.
5. Links between the LCCOCA and FCOCA can be facilitated as it is proposed old choristers will form The Fellowship of Old Choristers of Lincoln Cathedral. This group can be supported by the Music Department to ensure appropriate communications are distributed (invitations to the annual Act of Remembrance, reading out etc.). A former chorister is currently the link person between the FCOCA and the LCCOCA and is willing to continue in this administrative role.
6. The change in governance of LCCOCA and redistribution of activities undertaken, will primarily come under the Cathedral Music Department.
7. Sundry vacancies will be offered to old choristers as they arise (Music Council Rep / FCOCA Rep and others as may be required). Should there be multiple nominations / volunteers a vote will take place.
8. A group of parents is available to support fund raising activities on an ad hoc basis but working to a formal structure to ensure the monies are spent in line with the LCCOCA principles.
9. The website for LCCOCA will be updated to include these changes. The Constitution will need to be amended.

The LCCOCA email account to be redirected to the Music Department to allow the current distribution lists to be used and the email exchanges, (which are few- in-number and peak around the Act of Remembrance) are monitored and responded to as appropriate.

10. Current social media activity is limited but the Choir Facebook page provides key information. There is an old chorister page which needs to be, reviewed, refreshed, and invigorated; alternatively, those following this page could be directed to the choir page.
11. The Reading Out will be maintained and Choristers leaving the choir will continue to receive Psalters and an Old Chorister Badge during the ceremony. This action will be part of joining the newly titled Fellowship of Old Choristers of Lincoln Cathedral.



The Cathedral Chapter has now agreed to the proposals with the formal closure confirmed at the Reading-Out on Sunday Evensong 9th July 2023.

The Interim Dean, Simon Jones thanked those choristers who were read out of the choir for their service in the choir and God's blessing for their future. He presented each with a card showing their time in the choir.

To maintain contact with the Cathedral and the choir in the years ahead former Old Chorister Laurence Oliver, representing the newly formed 'Fellowship of Old Choristers of Lincoln Cathedral' welcomed them to the Fellowship. Laurence then presented them with Psalters and an Old Chorister Membership Badge.

In accordance with the LCCOCA changes the Fellowship of Old Choristers of Lincoln Cathedral held its Annual Commemoration of Old Choristers Act of Remembrance and Evensong on 8th October 2023. After lunch in the Cathedral Café, members joined the choir for evensong rehearsal in St Hughs Choir. The formal Act of Remembrance was held in the Work's Chapel and Evensong followed in St Hughs Choir led by the Cathedral Choir and participating old choristers under the direction of Jeffrey Makenson Assistant Director of Music. The music included Rose Responses, Stanford in B Flat Te Deum and George Dyson Magnificat & Nunc Dimittus setting in D. The service ended with Adam Chillingworth Organ Scholar, playing Gen Giilmore's Grand March, Baumbach Adolph, 1830-1880 (composer). After Evensong a drinks reception was held to include all choir members to help celebrate the event which had been an enjoyable first occasion for attending members of the newly entitled 'Fellowship of Old Choristers of Lincoln Cathedral'.

H John Parry

[FOCLC Representative]

Norwich Cathedral



Here in Norwich we are at the start of what is a new and exciting chapter in the musical life of the Cathedral. In September this year we welcomed back the Cathedral organ, after a £1.8 million rebuild by Harrison and Harrison of Durham. This monumental project has been many years in the planning and has come to fruition through the dedication and hard work of a great many people. We are tremendously grateful to all those who responded with such generosity to the Cathedral's music appeal, 'They shall laugh and sing', which provided the funds not only for the rebuilding of the organ but also to increase support for our choristers.

The work on the organ has been a great success and it is wonderful to hear the building filled with its rich tone after more than a year without it! The aim was very much to retain the character and voice of the 1942 Hill, Norman and Beard instrument whilst addressing the faults that had become problematic. At the same time, a complete redesign of the instrument's internal layout means that the organ now speaks with equal clarity and power to the East end of the building as it does to the nave. The opening of the organ is to be celebrated in November with three concerts. The inaugural recital is to be given on Saturday 25th November by internationally acclaimed concert organist, Thomas Trotter. On 16th November we welcome the BBC Singers and BBC Radio 3 to Norwich for a concert celebrating the music of Herbert Howells, presented and conducted in part by Ed Balls, who grew up in Norwich and still has strong links to the city and Cathedral. On



Saturday 11th November, Norwich Cathedral Chamber Choir will be joined by London-based ensemble Onyx brass for a celebratory concert including Rutter's 'Gloria', Bernstein's 'Chichester Psalms' and works for brass and organ, which will be played by Cathedral organist David Dunnett.

Alongside the completion of the project to rebuild the organ, the Dean & Chapter of Norwich recently announced exciting developments for our choirs, which will see the Cathedral providing high-quality singing opportunities for boys and girls alike from the age of 6 to 18. Our Cathedral Children's Choir is a non-auditioned group for Primary School children, who meet on Saturday mornings and perform at occasional family services and events throughout the year. Once boys and girls are old enough, they can then audition to be choristers in the Cathedral choir. From September 2024 we will welcome girls as well as boys to audition for the Cathedral choir. They will sing alongside each other on exactly the same terms, receiving scholarships to attend Norwich School until the age of 13 (the end of school year 8). Norwich has had a highly successful girls' choir since 1995, drawing together talented girls of senior school age from schools across the city. This will continue, but we will also start a group for teenage boys, enabling them to carry on singing at the Cathedral once they have finished as choristers in the Cathedral choir. As with the senior girls, this group will also be open to other boys from any school, enabling those who haven't been Cathedral choristers at a younger age to experience the joy of choral music through their teenage years. We are very clear about our priorities, namely to strive for excellence in our music and worship, recruiting the most talented children regardless of gender or background, and also to provide the best possible educational opportunities for boys and girls from across the city and county.

There continues to be a busy programme of musical activity for our choirs. December is always a busy month for Cathedral choirs but this year promises to be especially so. There will be broadcasts from Norwich on BBC Radio 3 (live Choral Evensong on Wednesday 20 December) and BBC Radio 4 (Sunday Worship, recorded for broadcast on Sunday 31 December). The Cathedral Choir will perform 'Messiah' on Saturday 9th December alongside period instrument ensemble Norwich Baroque and a cast of distinguished visiting soloists. In addition to our Christmas concerts in Norwich, the choir will travel to The Temple Church in London for a Christmas concert in aid of SUCCESS charity, which seeks to support children and families living with brain tumours. We will also be giving two premières in December: Bob Chilcott has composed a new carol for the Cathedral Christmas Processions, commissioned by the Dean & Chapter in celebration of the rebuilding of the organ, and Kerensa Briggs has written a new introit based on the Advent Antiphon 'O Clavis David' (O Key of David) for our broadcast of Choral Evensong on 20 December.

There is much to look forward to in 2024, including a performance of Bach's 'St John Passion' with James Gilchrist as Evangelist, and an organ festival in July 2024, which will bring a host of distinguished players to the Cathedral alongside choral concerts, schools' and family events.

We continue to be grateful to our own Guild of Ex-Choristers, who do so much to support us and demonstrate such enthusiasm for our shared musical life here in Norwich.

Ashley Grote

[Master of Music, Norwich Cathedral]

October 2023





Rochester Cathedral



Ian Henderson, Vice president and former chair of **Once a Chorister** found this in some minutes of his own association at Rochester Cathedral.

1926 12" record of the Cathedral Choir

With the help of JL and a member of the London Phonograph and Gramophone Society, JS had received an original 12", 80 rpm, shellac record disc of Rochester Cathedral Choir recorded on the 1st November 1926. The recording is of the Magnificat in B flat by Charles Stamford. The Master of the Choristers was Charles Hylton Stewart, Organist Percy Whitlock.

This is recognised as the earliest recording of a cathedral choir within a cathedral. The historic disc was presented to MR for the Cathedral music archive. MR returned it to JS for safe keeping having suggested that the disc be formally handed over to the Dean for the Cathedral music archive at a special sung service in the Cathedral in 2026 on the hundredth anniversary of the recording. AB agreed to liaise with the new Precentor, Dean and DAL accordingly.

Salisbury Cathedral



Over the past year, the work of Salisbury Cathedral Choir centred as ever around the Opus Dei - eight sung services per week during term time - including a Sunday sung Mattins which seems to be increasingly rare in cathedrals and churches across the UK.

In addition to the regular pattern of worship, the choir continued to take its diocesan responsibilities seriously, giving concerts in Sturminster Newton, Lyme Regis, Whiteparish, Stapleford and Newton Toney. It also collaborated with other choirs, notably Bath Abbey Choir and the girl choristers of Westbourne Church, sharing music together and making new friends. It enjoyed broadcasting Choral Evensong on Radio 3 early in December 2022.

The Salisbury Cathedral 'From Darkness to Light' Advent Processions saw congregations return to pre-pandemic levels and this enthusiasm for high-quality cathedral music was also reflected in large congregations and audiences for Handel's Messiah (with the City of London Sinfonia) and a liturgical performance during Epiphany-tide of Bach's Christmas Oratorio Parts 5 & 6 with a hand-picked Baroque orchestra. The choir is looking forward to performing Bach's Mass in B minor later this Autumn with the Salisbury Musical Society and Florilegium, and also singing a carol concert at Birmingham Symphony Hall, accompanied by Thomas Trotter.

In January and February of this year, the choir recorded a CD of Christmas Carols which will be released on the Salisbury Cathedral label in November. The repertoire included an exciting, newly commissioned work by Errollyn Wallen and other beautiful carols by Beamish, Howells, MacDowall and Villette. The choir also performed and then recorded the last movement of Holst's



Planets Suite, transcribed by John Challenger and the recording of the complete work is due for release in 2024.

There were two other high points in the choir's year. One was a highly successful and rewarding tour of the Channel Islands and the other was the Southern Cathedrals Festival (SCF) 2023, hosted by Chichester. The Channel Islands Tour was based in Guernsey and then Jersey and gave the choir chance to sing services and concerts in St Peter Port, St Pierre du Bois, St Helier and Victoria College and there was even time to take part in a choral workshop with the Jersey Youth Choir at Chateau Vermont. The SCF repertoire put an emphasis on superb music by Thomas Weelkes, but other composers such as Christopher Hussey, Parry and Stanford were well represented too.

We are about to hold our annual Be a Chorister for a Day and I hope that some of the young musicians will be bold enough to try and become Salisbury choristers in the future.

David Halls

[Director of Music, Salisbury Cathedral]

Gloucester Cathedral



For the Cathedral Choir, the past twelve months have been dominated by the preparation and delivery of the 295th Three Choirs Festival. 2023 will in fact be remembered as the year of the first post-lockdown Gloucester Three Choirs Festival. It was a very good festival, but perhaps not a vintage one, partly because there is now less money, compared to say 2019, to spend on large-scale choral concerts, which have always been the “unique selling points” of our famous festival.

However, thankfully, the usual Festival activities of the three Cathedral Choirs (Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester) remained undiminished this year, although there were only three joint Evensongs, rather than the traditional four. The Cathedral Choir contributed wonderfully to a vigorous Bach *St. John Passion*, conducted by my colleague from Hereford Cathedral, Geraint Bowen, and to three spectacular evensongs, one of which was broadcast “live” on BBC Radio 3. Gloucester Cathedral Choir offered its own evensong on the last evening of the Festival. (One of my many post-festival correspondents, who attended almost everything in the Festival, wrote to me that the Howells *Magnificat* which we performed at that service was the highlight of the week!). The Choir, together with some singers from the Cathedral Youth Choir, certainly sang splendidly at that Gloucester-only evensong. Earlier in the week, our Choristers, and members of our Youth and Middle Choirs, sang the thrilling off-stage choruses in Vaughan Williams’s little-known mystical cantata *Sancta civitas* to a packed Cathedral.

The work required for the Festival took up many hours of the Cathedral Choir’s rehearsal time each week for seven months. Nevertheless, the Choir still managed to perform at many important services through those months, and of course continued to offer the music required by the *Opus Dei*, the daily sung services which are the *sine qua non* of a great cathedral.



We will all remember with pleasure the Cathedral's Service of Celebration for the Coronation of King Charles III; similarly, we can look back with pride and joy at the Service of Installation of our new Dean, Andrew Zihni. The Cathedral Choir sang splendidly on both these wonderful occasions, as it did through Holy Week, and at Eastertide, Ascensiontide and at Whitsuntide.

I would here like to thank my colleagues Nia Llewelyn Jones and Jonathan Hope for their outstanding work through the year with, respectively, the Cathedral Junior Choir, and the Cathedral Youth Choir. I would also like to thank our first Sub Organist, James Mitchell, who has conducted the Middle Choir for two years, but has recently left us to become Assistant Organist at Sheffield Cathedral. We are currently seeking a replacement for James.

We have lost a large number of Choristers this summer, owing to their having reached the normal age of departure. I would here like to thank in print the following for their musicianship and loyalty over many years, not to mention the support we have received from their parents:

Boy Choristers: Thomas Caruthers-Little, Kasper Matley, Charles McKee, Charlie Pittock, and Joshua Wood

Girl Choristers: Brontë Cooper, Florence Lucas, Jemima McVittie, Harriet Perfect, Kirstie Philcox, Charlotte Prosser-Williams, Emma Stevens

I am pleased to report that a good number of these excellent young musicians have joined the Cathedral's Youth Choir, which is in good shape this term.

Adrian Partington

[Gloucester Cathedral]



A tale of two Coronations

A sort of old and new of coronations at Westminster Abbey, 70 years apart.

The first article was written by Chris Loring (aged 11) in 1953. Chris was a Chorister at Westminster Abbey with Richard Watts.

The second is the memories of Arthur Togneri (aged 13) who was the Abbey Senior Chorister at the 2023 coronation.

Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953

An account of the Coronation
2. June 1953.

C. T. L.
11 years.



On the day before the Coronation, I can remember that the barber came and we all had our hair trimmed. Viscount Montgomery came to the school and we were allowed to take photos of him in his Coronation robes. The Press came and took photos also. We had supper and went to bed at 7 pm. No talking after 8 pm. I woke very early on Coronation morning. It was between 4-5 A.M. At 5 A.M. Mr. Pine came to tell us that Mount Everest had been conquered. We had been reading about it in the newspapers and we were very excited and danced round the dormitory. The bell went at 5.30. We washed, and dressed in our best suits. There were very few people in Dean's Yard. Breakfast was at 6 A.M. At 7.15 the bell went for the Probationers. They put on their raincoats and went in the Abbey by Poets' Corner entrance.



to their seats in the very high triforium. Mr. Back went with them. We had Free Time. I made my bed, read some of "Jo's Boys", and then played with the others in form room. We watched workmen round two marquees set up in the centre of Dean's Yard. Viscount Montgomery and his Page (Nicholas Wright, son of British Ambassador in Norway) came to the school and they were given the small Sick Room to use so that they could get dressed in their Coronation Robes. We were all getting rather excited. Mrs. Thompson, Miss Williams, Mr. Pine, Mr. Back and Mungan all had invitations to the Coronation. Mr. Pine and Mungan were Stewards; inspecting tickets and showing people to their places. Our bell went at 8.10. We had to get our Coronation Music Books and our tickets were given out by Brown. Mungan took us to the Song School. Chapel Royal boys and gentlemen



were already there. We put on our new cassocks and surplices and ruffs. Paul Beard, the leader of the orchestra came in. Then Dr. McKie and Dr. Peasgood in lovely white dress shirts and black suits. The gentlemen of the Choir congratulated Dr. McKie on being knighted in the Coronation Honours. I talked to a Chapel Royal gentleman. He showed me his medals fixed on a bridge. He had medals for George V. and George VI. Coronations, George V. Jubilee, and Queen Elizabeth's wedding. Now he will need a bridge for 5 medals. I managed to get the autographs of John Dykes-Bower, the organist and Master of the Choristers at St. Pauls, of William Hario, a very little man, who is Master of the Choristers at St. George's, Windsor, W. H. Gabb, sub-organist at St. Pauls, and Dr. Peasgood sub-organist at the Abbey. The gentlemen of the Abbey choir came in and



congratulated Dr. McKie. We all practised the Processional Hymn 'Rejoice today with one accord'. Then we lined up in the cloisters. Twelve Trumpeters from Kneller Hall lined up in front of us. They played a fanfare and the hymn began, while we walked through the cloisters. They sounded a fanfare between each verse and we walked in step to No. 5. door, South Cloister, where we stopped and finished the last verse. The Trumpeters went to the Organ loft and we went into the Abbey and stood with our backs to the North Transept, facing the Peers and Queen's Scholars in the South Transept. The Dean distributed the Regalia to the Clergy. I looked round the Abbey. It seemed to be full of people right up to the roof. I wondered what the Nave looked like. I thought the Peeresses looked beautiful and very colourful. We turned West, and started to sing the litany with



two precentors instead of one. After the fourth answer, we moved off toward the West door. As we went under the organ loft, I saw a soldier on each side, dressed in a bushy red coat and blue trousers with a red stripe. We proceeded down the Nave to the West door where we stopped and finished the litany. The Dean and Clergy carrying the Regalia went through to the Annex while two guards at the door gave the salute. We turned and walked quickly to our seats on the front row of Decan, by the Organ loft. My place was fourth from the left and I had a very good view. We ate sandwiches of ham and also sweets which we found had been put in our cassock pockets. We talked softly and watched the people. Opposite, I could see Arab chieftains. They each wore a dark grey robe and white



head-dress with a kind of bamboo square frame to keep the head-dress in place. In the organ loft the orchestra were playing Greensleeves, Nimrod from the Enigma Variations, Orb and Sceptre by Walton, and Handel's Firework Music. Sir Adrian Boult conducted. The music stopped and the Queen Mother came in. I first saw her when she came under the organ loft. She wore a white dress with the blue Garter ribbon, and a crimson train edged with ermine. This was carried by four small pages, dressed in pale blue. She moved slowly and gracefully to her place on the right of the Altar. Princess Margaret followed. Her dress was white also, and I noticed she had a blue ribbon over her right shoulder. We were all waiting for the Queen. Then the trumpeters played a fanfare and we started to sing "I was glad when they said unto me". I had



one eye on Dr. McKie and one eye on what was happening below me for the great procession was making its way up the Abbey to the theatre led by the Abbey Beadle, Mr. Calvert. He must have felt very proud. I noticed Sir Winston Churchill, Viscount Montgomery, His Canons, the Duke of Norfolk, and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. The Queen was a beautiful sight. Her white dress was glittering and one on each side of her walked His Bishops of Durham, and Bath and Wells. The Bishop of Bath and Wells was very good all through the service, and was very thoughtful towards the Queen. As she reached the choir, the Queen's Scholars shouted 'Vivat Regina Elizabetha'. This has been the custom for hundreds of years. I shall always remember the maids of honour and how they acted as one. They walked, three on each side of the long ermine edged crimson



train and they did everything exactly together all through the service. Once the Queen reached the Sanctuary, I had to give all my attention to singing but I remember when the Archbishop raised the crown before placing it on the Queen's head and I saw the princesses ready to put their coronets on their heads, too. While we were singing, the Homage followed and then the Queen went behind the High Altar as we sang Walton's Te Deum. She returned later, wearing a marvellous train of deep purple with the royal cipher embroidered in gold. She had the Imperial State Crown on her head and I was glad because the St. Edward Crown weighs 7 lbs. and must have made her head ache. The procession moved to the West door as we sang the National Anthem. Once the Queen had gone, we sat still, finished our sweets, and watched the various



sections of the Abbey being emptied. It was very well organised, and in a short time we saw Cantor's filing out. About five minutes later came the welcome words from the loud speaker "Dean's choir may now move". We hastened out by door No. 5 and were soon changing in the Song School. Mr. Pine accompanied us to the Choir School and we went to the windows to watch the State Coach roll majestically out of Dean's Yard. Then we had a meal which was dinner and tea together. We had free time until 6.30, then we had sandwiches and went to bed at 7.15 pm. It had been a long day but as I lay in bed, I thought of all the wonderful sights I have seen. I know I have been fortunate to see our Queen Crowned.

Written during an exeat. 4 June 1953.



Coronation of King Charles III in 2023

The lead up to Coronation is one of the most amazing things I've experienced and something that I will remember for the rest of my life. I am privileged to have been the Senior Chorister of Westminster Abbey at the Coronation and it is hard to explain how incredible it was for us. In September 2022, we had the honour of singing at the Queen's funeral. In January 2023, Andrew Nethsingha took over from James O'Donnell, meaning the outgoing Director of Music did the funeral, and the incoming Director of Music did the Coronation. After the Queen died, and long before the date for the Coronation was announced, I remember my year group hoping that the Coronation would take place before we left the Choir School. Luckily, it was on 6 May 2023, a few months before our final services.

In the fortnight running up to the big event, we had approximately 70 hours of rehearsals: an extraordinary amount to fit in. We didn't have many school lessons, but we did numerous music rehearsals in Song School, and in the Abbey, with the orchestra and with the BBC.

Dean's Yard, the square next to the Abbey where the school is situated, was often full of police making sure the area was safe, and escorting the Royal Family for their rehearsals. On the way to one of our rehearsals, I remember lining up and waving at King Charles and Queen Camilla on the way back from theirs, and they waved back. The security was very tight and our teachers were questioned about their views on the Royal Family, and needed three different lanyards to get through to the secure zone. The food deliveries were often delayed due to additional security measures and we ended up with different meals than what were planned. Another time, some of us were playing computer games in school when we heard scrabbling paws and crackling radios as a pack of sniffer dogs and police came in to check the building.

As someone who loves composing, I especially enjoyed the Coronation for all the new commissions and the chance to meet and talk to some of the composers and the arrangers for the orchestra pieces. These were completely top-secret, and we couldn't tell anyone what they were until shortly before the service. The Abbey Choir went to a studio in North London to record one of the new commissions by Andrew Lloyd Webber, *Make a Joyful Noise*. It was a great afternoon and we met Lord Lloyd Webber who told us to "make it more joyful". Earlier in the morning, my French teacher gave me his *Phantom of the Opera* book hoping I would be able to get him to sign it. Luckily, he was very happy to do so.

In one of the Abbey rehearsals, I was glad to speak with John Rutter and I got a picture with him. We also had the pleasure of performing with amazing singers, including Bryn Terfyl and Roderick Williams. It was great to sing with the Choir of His Majesty's Chapel Royal, choristers from Truro Cathedral Choir, choristers from Chapel Choir of Methodist College Belfast and an octet from the Monteverdi Choir. All the choirs together made a brilliant sound, and the day we all sang with each other for the first time which was roughly two weeks before the Coronation, was a special day to remember.

The Abbey staff, including numerous individuals and departments such as: The Dean and Chapter, the organists, the Lay Vicars, the vergers, the flower arrangers, the bell ringers, the restoration experts, the beadles, the stewards, and many others, had six months to arrange things for the event. This was in sharp contrast to the Queen's funeral where we had ten days to prepare; however as a trained professional choir, to an extent we were already ready for both the funeral and the Coronation.



There were meetings taking place with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and meetings with the King discussing the music he wanted. The Quire stalls were all restored and gilded, and some of the gates were re-painted and gilded too - this all gave the Abbey a shiny new feel. At one stage, the Quire stalls were hidden under scaffolding, so we had to move over to a slightly different place to sing the daily services. While the conservation department was restoring the Quire; they found an old service paper from the 1920s.

At night there was none of the usual traffic noise because all the roads had closed around the Abbey, but there were news helicopters flying about and even military bands marching and practising at 3 am in the morning. Some of my friends found this annoying but luckily, I slept right through it all.

One of the exciting changes in the Abbey was that a whole new floor and carpet was put in: there were usually stairs going up to the high altar but that was changed to a gradual slope and the whole floor was raised up. There were fancy new blue and yellow carpets installed. Because of this we needed to wear shoe covers before we walked on the carpet! I had a nosebleed before one of the rehearsals and the staff were very worried that I would drip blood onto it, but fortunately I didn't. The carpet created a different acoustic because it absorbed lots of the sound, so we had to work extra hard.

The layout of the Abbey meant that the orchestra had to be high up in the organ loft which was out of sight from the Quire, so a system of cameras and screens allowed Sir Antonio Pappano, who was conducting the orchestra, to see Mr Nethsingha who was conducting everyone from the Quire. It was complicated and difficult to get everyone in time with each other, and we had to rehearse Walton's Coronation Te Deum a lot. However, our first full rehearsal with the orchestra & trumpeters was amazing; it was rewarding to hear everyone's hard work unite.

Two days before, on Thursday 4 May, we had the full-dress rehearsal. This was the first time we saw the whole service come together. Almost everyone was wearing either ceremonial dress, elaborate uniforms, opulent garments, and ancient costumes; many were adorned with jewels and embroidered with gold thread, others with swan feathers as part of their hats, some people were holding swords and axes. We also got to hear some of the other performances for the first time, including Pretty Yende, the Coronation orchestra, the Ascension Choir and the Byzantine Chant Ensemble. They all sounded wonderful.

By Friday, we were feeling confident with all the music, and we were having vocal rest and feeling the anticipation of the day to come. We had a special lunch, and for dessert, we had a cake aptly-named by the kitchen, 'Charles Sponge'. My Mum came up to see me briefly and due to the strict security, I had to meet her at the back gates of Dean's Yard near Westminster School. As we were talking, we saw the delivery of boxes of the Order of Service coming through. Later the choir members were each given one as a souvenir. Our Headmaster, Mr Mitchell, walked us to Hyde Park to see the giant screens that people would watch the following day. It was remarkable to think that our faces would be shown on these, as well as on televisions across the world.

On the day of the Coronation we all woke up really early, even though we were supposed to have a lie-in till 7.30 am. We had showers and were busy combing our hair, brushing our teeth, and polishing our shoes to look good for the day. At 8.45 am we walked over to Song School to get into cassocks and have our final rehearsal, which was fortunately very short. After that, we



ran through some of the practicalities like standing, sitting, and bowing. We stayed in the Song School and I talked to my friends and some of the people from the other choirs. Then Mr Nethsingha wished us good luck and we made our way in.

I was a little nervous for the service because of how important it was. I was worried about dropping my music folder because it had to hold up two hundred pages of music. Mr Nethsingha had even more, including several huge volumes of choir and orchestral scores. Walking in to Henry Purcell's Trumpet Tune, we made our way to the Quire and sat down and listened to some of the pre-service music. The Assistant Organist, Mr Jorysz played a lot of the music before the service and he also rehearsed some of the music with us, as did the Sub-Organist Mr Holder who played the organ for the service itself. In the Quire, I was sitting right next to a line of former prime ministers and had a good view of the Coronation Chair; we sat for around 30 minutes until the service started.

The State Trumpeters played their fanfare and we all stood for the arrival of the King and Queen. We sang Parry's I was Glad, as I sang the first three notes, I remember thinking, "Wow! This is it; it's finally happening." The suspensions in the piece were spine tingling and getting increasingly climactic as the slow procession made its way through. The whole service was incredible, it was amazing to sing with all the other choirs, and the singing was beautiful, and it felt so powerful and uplifting.

One of my highlights of the service was the Anointing, because it is arguably the most important part and because we sang Handel's Zadok the Priest while it was taking place. Another highlight was the Walton Te Deum – that was my favourite piece because it is complex which makes it fun to sing.

The service finished with Elgar's joyous Pomp and Circumstance March No. 4. We stood up and bowed as the King and Queen walked past, some of the Royal Family smiled and said thank you on their way out. I felt elated after the service and as we processed out, all the congregation clapped! We waited in the cloisters for everyone to leave, and in the meantime, I talked to some of the people waiting around me. There was one of the King's Bodyguards who let me hold their sword and someone from the army who won the Victoria Cross. Many of the guests, including the previous prime ministers, said "well done" to us.

We walked back to school and changed out of our robes. We were all so happy but it was slightly shadowed by the fact that it was all over. We had a small lunch and Mr Nethsingha came over to eat with us and congratulate us. After that, I left Dean's Yard where my parents picked me up and we went to a small Coronation party. We ate Coronation Chicken, pavlova decorated with berries in the design of the Union Jack, and a special cake in the shape of a crown. We watched the television to see who got close-ups. I got a few good ones and we were all in the national newspapers the following day.

As a choir that sings daily services and is always learning new music, we are used to working with very packed schedules, but this brought it to an extraordinary new level. Everything about this time including the music - new and old, the collaboration with the other musicians, the TV cameras and crew, the grandeur, the ceremony, and the historical importance, is something that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Arthur Togneri (aged 13)

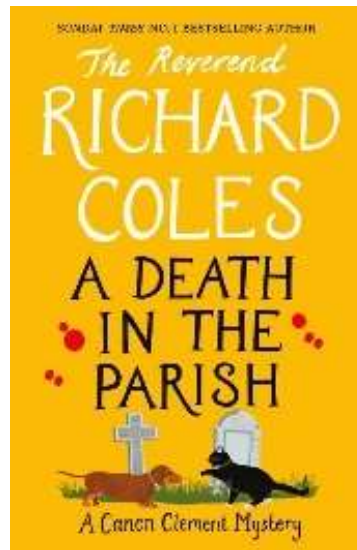
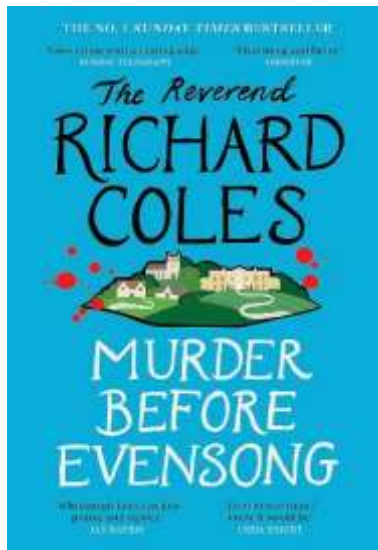
[Westminster Abbey Senior Chorister at the 2023 coronation]



Book Reviews

Regular readers of Once a Chorister will know that I like reading books with a strong ecclesiastical or clerical connection. Naughty vicars, curates in training, small-church politics and murder in an assortment of church buildings intrigue me, as do stories of adults who hark back to their chorister days.

Richard Coles Novels



The Reverend Richard Coles is well known to many either as a member of the 1980 band The Communards, or as a contestant on Strictly Come Dancing. He was a Choirboy at Wellingborough School, and ordained into the Church of England ministry in 2005. He has written 2 Novels, "Murder Before Evensong" and "A Death in the Parish". I believe the next novel is titled "A Canon Clement Mystery". Has someone got a promotion?

I am married to a High School Librarian, but I will admit that until recently I read very few books. However, I have learnt to enjoy novels that have regular references to Church life.

Both novels are set in the early '80s and gleefully talk about petty Parish politics, women priests, and even the need for a new toilet in the church building. The Rev'd Daniel Clement is Rector of Champton, living in the Rectory with his widowed mother and a couple of dachshunds. Daniel likes an easy life, but trying to keep everyone happy is not always straight-forward. In each book at least one person is murdered, with no shortage of potential killers, but fortunately the Rector is more successful at sleuthing than the local detective. This Rector (sometimes referred to as Vicar although the difference is small and historic) hated being referred to as "a man of the cloth; it was a phrase used by those outside, and when he heard it all he thought was: this is a person whose views I need not take seriously."

I particularly liked these books (and others I have read) due to the regular references to Church life, quotes from The Book of Common Prayer and even verses from traditional hymns and anthems. I may know the Church calendar reasonably well, and my time as a child chorister drummed into me the liturgy of "The Book of Common Prayer", but I'm not a clergyman so I still needed to ask Mr Google the meaning of some unusual words. I won't tell you whodunit, but when the killer(s?) was (were?) revealed it was not who I thought it would be! To me, that's the mark of good storytelling.



Death in Aberfan



Although this novel is fiction, the background story is real – in October 1966 a landslide in the small Welsh mining village of Aberfan buried their School leading to the deaths of 116 children and 28 adults. *A Terrible Kindness* follows the life of William Lavery, a newly qualified embalmer, who travels to Aberfan to help. This book was Jo Browning Wroe's debut novel and a Richard & Judy Book Club Pick Winner in 2022. I really enjoyed it and would thoroughly recommend the book. Although the subject may appear on the face of it to be a little gruesome, the story is far from that. Working in the aftermath of the disaster made William look back at his own troubled childhood, and the mental scars affected his future relationships. There are frequent links to his time as a child Chorister at (probably) Cambridge, where he didn't always fit in. But his love of Music finally helps him (and others) to come to terms with life.

The landslide disaster does not play a huge part in the story, but I took the opportunity to visit the village earlier this year when visiting my daughter in South Wales. The memorial cemetery was very noticeable, with almost 150 white arches and memorials reflecting the morning sun high up on the valley side. I found walking round the area incredibly moving, looking at each headstone, most of which related to the young children who perish in that fateful day. Most of the memorials had fresh flowers placed, and some graves were now the final resting place for the parents now reunited with their children in heaven.



The memorials in Bryntaf Cemetery Aberfan were refurbished in 2007 and the weathered masonry was replaced with polished pearl white granite.

Alastair Pollard

[Durham Cathedral Former Chorister 1970 – 1974]



Church Mice

We have all heard of church mice, but what about cathedral mice? Is there some sort of one-upmanship going on when you talk about rodents in a cathedral as opposed to in a mere Parish Church? Are they larger than normal (well in this case yes), better singers, or consider themselves “Superior”?



I thought of this on a recent train journey to Inverness in northern Scotland. Inverness cathedral is of the Episcopal tradition standing proud on the North bank of the river Ness. A small cathedral by today's standards, but perfectly formed. One of the things in the cathedral which made me smile was a series of knitted mice, dressed accordingly, each with a small label explaining their role in the life of the cathedral. Examples include a bishop, a chorister, a flower arranger, a server and a bell ringer. An original and clever way to get information through to children (and older folks too).

Chorister



Server



Bell-ringer



Bishop

Near where I live, lived a famous wood craftsman known locally as Robert (mousey) Thompson. His “Mouseman” oak furniture business still continues to produce high quality oak furniture from the original premises as Kilburn North Yorkshire, not far from the famous White Horse of Kilburn. His carvings can be found in many a church in Yorkshire, and also elsewhere around the country and the world.



My sister was particularly interested in the organ. A relatively recent addition (2004). She was a tad disappointed that we didn't get the opportunity to hear it played, and I suspect she had a hankering to actually play the organ herself. For those who are interested in more details, here are some extracts from the Cathedral's own website:

The present organ in Inverness Cathedral was installed by Makin Organ builders in 2004, during the redevelopment of the South side of the cathedral. It replaced a Hill organ which had served the Cathedral well, but had fallen into disrepair and had become unreliable. The decision was taken to replace the old instrument with a custom-designed digital instrument. The traditional drawstop console has 96 speaking stops and a complete range of couplers and other accessories spread over four manuals. The sumptuous console has wooden keyboards, long-throw solenoid drawstops and is made from polished oak to match the woodwork in the cathedral. Significant time was spent in voicing the instrument to amply cover a wide variety of musical and historical styles as well as the present day needs of the building.



The speakers are enclosed within four separate cases with polished tin pipe facades placed high up on the cathedral walls; the Great and Solo divisions being on the South transept, the Swell and Choir on the North transept. Two further speakers in the North and South transepts accommodate the Pedal and the 16' Great stops respectively. The West end section is in two enclosures on the north and south walls at the west end, with a rank of horizontal fanfare trumpets projecting from the West Gallery. With 46 channels of amplification, the organ has enough power and versatility to support a full cathedral of singers.

There is a fuller description of the present (and previous 1867 Hill) organ including the organ specification and stops on the cathedral's website.

Alastair Pollard

[Durham Cathedral Former Chorister 1970 – 1974]



The future of Once a Chorister

We have a problem. National former chorister events are popular with those former choristers that have attended such events in the past. Unfortunately, we struggle to attract new member associations, and Former Chorister Associations struggle to attract members. We all struggle to retain relevance, and sometimes to extract subscriptions. Moreover, although the **Once a Chorister** magazine is much appreciated by those who care to read it, I wonder how many do. I think we need to look at our target audience. Who do Former Chorister Associations and the Federation appeal to? We cannot appeal to everyone.

The majority (but not all!) of our members (the Former Chorister Associations) and The Federation itself are run by 'older men' who probably want different things from an association of younger people, both boys & girls, men & women. Youngsters today correspond with each other using Social Media and Mobile Apps and probably want different things in their lives than us oldies. How can a group of "older men" know what youngster want and organise events relevant to them? Why are there no ladies and girls on the executive committee? Former Chorister Associations and thus the Federation should be run by younger people that reflect former choristers now, or at least have a much more diverse committee in all its forms. Another problem is attracting volunteers to serve on any committee these days. Personally, I am a Trustee of 1 charity, Secretary of another, Treasurer of a third, Steward at a fourth, and a volunteer at two others. I would love to step back from some, but I know how hard it is to attract volunteers (especially to serve on a committee) as people are so busy living their lives, earning a crust, supporting their own children etc. Former Chorister Associations are no different to any other charity or voluntary organisation in that respect. Ultimately, we cannot force people to join us if they don't want to or our events are not relevant. If there is no demand, then let's support our current members and enjoy what we have. It's not really up to us if The Federation survives, it's up to our association members to attract new blood, and tell the Federation committee what they want from us. When we ask for suggestions the silence is deafening!

Earlier this year we received a sad letter form one of our member associations. I quote:

I am deeply sorry to report that our association sadly closed down with effect from 31st March due to the fact that no one came forward to offer to fill any of four vital vacant positions on our committee.

I fear that this will become an ever more common occurrence.

If you want the **Once a Chorister** organisation to continue, we must find some new volunteers to serve on the committee. Your own associations must encourage new members to join you, and encourage them to join the **Once a Chorister** committee. Otherwise it will soon close!

Alastair Pollard

[Secretary **Once a Chorister**]



What is **Once a Chorister**?



Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations

Last year the Federation successfully rebranded with a new 21st century image, and a brand new logo. We now prefer to refer to ourselves as “**Once a Chorister**”, the name given to our magazine from its launch. We believe that the new name better reflects our members and what we are about.

We discovered that if you say to a chorister, “**Once a Chorister**”, invariably you receive the response, “**Always a Chorister**”. Most choristers look back with fondness at their time in their choir and will tell you that it was an experience that has stayed with them all their lives. But it wasn't through looking back that we settled on using “**Once a Chorister**” as a brand name; we were very firmly looking to the future.

The Federation was founded and placed very firmly in the 20th century, but the old logo was no longer appropriate. If we are to appeal to former choristers of the 21st century we have to look as though we belong. We believe that the new simpler logo is more in tune with today.

We have to recognise that not all of our affiliated members are associated with Cathedrals but they do represent those places of worship where the very highest choral standards are maintained. Probably our biggest worry was the word “Old”. None of us wish to be thought of as old. It is for individual Associations to decide if they wish to retain “Old” in their name, and many have changed their name.

“**Once a Chorister**” exists to bring former choristers together and enable them to stay in touch with the world of choral music. Our purpose is clear – to celebrate choristership, which we hope to be doing for very many more years to come.

The organisation will continue formally to be the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations but we feel “**Once a Chorister**” much better expresses who we are and it rolls off the tongue more easily. We will endeavour to reduce the use of the word Federation.



Once a Chorister contacts

We have now published several editions of the **Once a Chorister** Magazine in electronic format, and this is the seventh. In general, the feedback has been positive about the content, and individual copies can be downloaded and printed for those who prefer a physical medium. Reports from Associations are not always published in the **Once a Chorister** magazine, but if not they can now be found on the Federation website www.fcoca.org.uk. 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. 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

Once a Chorister is a great vehicle for keeping people up to date with Federation events such as the Festival and AGM (when they are able to take place), and articles of interest from similar organisations or those that potentially affect choral foundations.

I hope that this edition is to your liking. Please continue to submit articles for publication in the **Once a Chorister** magazine or to the website www.fcoca.org.uk

The global pandemic has affected all our lives, but most places and events are now open, albeit with a certain amount of caution.

Alastair Pollard

[Secretary **Once a Chorister**]

Secretary@fcoca.org.uk

Committee emails:

Contact can also be made through these generic email addresses:

Chairman@fcoca.org.uk

Secretary@fcoca.org.uk

Membership@fcoca.org.uk

Treasurer@fcoca.org.uk



Committee members:

Chair	Nick Hodges	(Warwick)
Vice Chair	Vacant	
Honorary Secretary	Alastair Pollard	(Durham)
Honorary Treasurer	Michael Lake	(Chelmsford)
Membership Secretary	Richard Lilley	(St. Albans)
Development Officer	Vacant	
Deputy Development Officer	Vacant	
Website Officer	Richard Watts	(Westminster Abbey)
Webmaster	Vacant	

Regional Association Representatives:

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:

Geoffrey Mitchell	(Exeter)
Alan Oyston	(Durham)
Ian Henderson	(Rochester)
David Horwood	(Eton)
Carl Jackson	(Chapel Royal Hampton Court)
Dr. Barry Rose	OBE

The Federation Prayer

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"



Affiliated associations

Blackburn Cathedral Choirs Association
Cambridge, The Choir Association of **St John's College**
Cambridge, King's College Old Choristers' Association
Canterbury Cathedral Old Choristers' Association
Chapel Royal Choristers' Association
Chelmsford Cathedral Old Choristers' Association
Chester Cathedral Choristers' Association
Chichester Cathedral Choristers' Association
Durham Cathedral Old Choristers' Association
Ely Cathedral Choristers' Society
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
Lichfield Cathedral Former Choristers' Association
Lincoln Cathedral Fellowship of Old Choristers of Lincoln Cathedra
London (St. Paul's): The Guild Of The Companions Of St Paul
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
Southwark 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

<end>