

THE FEDERATION OF
CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATIONS

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THE FEDERATION OF CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATIONS

Federation Chairman's Report 2009

Since my last report in March 2009 for the AGM at St Edmundsbury your Executive Committee has discussed/agreed the following decisions on behalf of all our affiliated local association members :-

1. Clifford Sadler Legacy – A sub committee was formed to meet and assess all applications. Awards were made to those that met the published criteria that matched Clifford's wishes expressed in his Will with all funds, including accumulated interest and remaining benevolent fund, distributed equally to all successful applicants. Letters were sent to all applicants, both successful or not, to inform them of the decision.

2. 2009 AGM and Festival - St Edmundsbury OCA agreed to host our AGM but as their re-launch in October 2008 was not well supported the actual arrangements were put together by me and the Cathedral Music & Arts Department administrator Jayne Whiteman. We hope you enjoyed coming to see the recently completed Millennium central tower which now contains a gilded timber internal roof vaulting. Another re-launch is scheduled for St Edmund's day in June this year so let's hope more former choristers support this event?

Winchester OCA hosted an excellent Festival, with the convenience of having the hotel within walking distance of the Cathedral, Pilgrims School and The Castle for the banquet being much appreciated. Many thanks to Dr Brian Rees, Headmaster for showing us around Pilgrims School facilities which have been recently extended into the Dean's garden, Gavin Roynon and Andrew Snow with their committee for all their hard work arranging such an interesting programme and lastly to Andrew Lumsden, DOM for his encouragement to delegates to take part in Choral Evensong with the superb present choir.

Preparations are now complete for the FCOCA Centenary Year AGM at Peterborough on Saturday May 8 and Festival at Westminster Abbey on September 24-26. Please refer to the souvenir edition of *Once a Chorister* and Federation website for more details of the Festival arrangements.

3. Federation Tour – Geoffrey Mitchell is exploring the features and likely cost for a tour of Scandinavia in May 2011. More details will be placed on the Federation website www.onceachorister.org shortly. Many thanks to him and his team for all their efforts to date in drawing up plans for this exciting activity.

4. Federation membership – The Secretary's report includes the present results of our encouragement and support programme for re-launched, recently formed or established local associations through our communications by our Federation Local Representative's network. It is most heartening to report that more associations wish to become affiliated and I hope that more old choristers' organisations will be formed and express an interest to become affiliated and enrich us all by contributing their personal ideas of how best to drive matters forward in our next century.

5. Liaison with FCM – I receive mailings of their activities, including their plans to recruit former choristers to increase regular subscription income and print Christmas cards to sell through their website, diocesan network of branches and local/national gatherings. They actively encourage legacies and in 2009 distributed grants totalling over £125,000 to eight cathedral choirs.

Currently we are seeking their involvement to establish reciprocal arrangements to publicise any

event arranged by our affiliated local association members individually or collectively in an area which they wish to open to the wider public through their publications, *Once a Chorister* and website links.

6. Future FCOCA strategy – Your committee agreed to conduct a review of all our activities to date and consult our members nationally through a Forum held after the 2009 AGM. We were very grateful for all the hard work put together by Malcolm Bury, Chairman of St Alban's ex-Choristers' Association in leading this participative session, for all associations who took part and for the summary Malcolm provided to us for the Committee deliberations subsequently. Please refer to the Secretary's report for the results of these discussions.

Apart from the appreciation expressed for the social benefits of attending AGMs and Festivals, reading *Once a Chorister* publications and enjoyment of Federation arranged Tours, many members commented adversely on their experiences over insufficient communication of Federation matters and sharing ideas for recruitment and fund raising between local associations. We are in danger of being known only as a Gentleman's Club, not a dynamic force to support and encourage the development of traditional choral music in Christian worship and for the wider appreciation of future generations worldwide. I know that money talks when attempting to influence co-coordinated efforts with Cathedrals/Colleges, hence the success of the FCM in locations where we have no meaningful contact at present. **However the personal experiences, discipline and choral connections we have all gathered as youth choristers and adults through our lives is our unique selling point (USP).** The Federation could achieve so much more to support and encourage former chorister organizations, be more proactive in creating links with other music organisations such as FCM, Organist and Choir Schools Associations, Further Education Music schools and University Colleges, and the wider public to safeguard their present choir tradition for the future.

This is of major concern to me and some others on your committee and was not entirely unexpected. I personally feel that the Federation needs to consider offering umbrella services, harnessing IT facilities to help recruitment and create regular newsletters to all our members by sharing databases. I have checked with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO helpline Tel: 0303 1231113) who regulate data protection that as both the Federation and local association affiliated members are classed as "Not for profit" organisations who are already

- Established
- In regular contact with its members
- Only holding data relative to achieving the organisation's stated objectives

Their guidance is based on common sense, i.e. that such initiatives should be agreed initially with local associations who would then arrange for the distribution of the initial newsletter to their own members initially and inform them that future items will come direct from the Federation and neighbouring local associations. The purpose of sharing databases on certain occasions would be to extend an invitation to attend their own event or regional/local events to old choristers presently living in the area and the wider public on certain occasions. This approach naturally gives the opportunity for individual members to opt out of receiving such mailings without causing any offence.

Unfortunately my vision, enthusiasm and forthright business like manner in attempting to drive these issues forward for debate now by local associations has not been supported by the majority within your committee and I have been asked not to seek re-election as Chairman at the 2010 AGM. The choice is yours at the AGM?

Gordon Hughes, Chairman

THE FEDERATION OF CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATIONS

Federation Secretary's Report 2009

Despite one of the longest and coldest winters we have experienced, the Executive Committee has not been dormant, having met on four occasions since the last AGM. We are extremely grateful to the Warwick Association for providing a meeting room for us at no cost to the Federation.

Following the AGM last year, a forum was held where we started to consider the opportunities and challenges facing the Federation in the future. We are grateful to Malcolm Bury, St Alban's OCA, for leading us through this process. A questionnaire form was completed by those delegates present, and those not present were sent the form at a later date and invited to contribute to the discussion.

At the Executive Committee Meeting in November, Malcolm presented the summary results to the seven questions as follows:

1. A few associations felt that they had not benefited from affiliation to the Federation and others had through inter-association contact and networking
2. Responses to the question as to how the Federation was relevant to the existence, activities and future success of associations were very mixed
3. Aspects of the Federation which members wished to retain were Festivals/AGM meetings, *Once A Chorister* in A4, Tours, Website and Merchandise/Card membership
4. A few comments were made regarding things that could be changed/improved on e.g. more attractive to younger people, suggestions for future management of festivals and AGM's, regional activities, regional and national competitions, website enhancements and communications and support programmes
5. Various comments were made as to how associations could help support the activities of the Federation
6. Very few delegates could articulate the main purpose and objectives of the Federation and listed a few suggestions for the future
7. Only three out of fifteen associations replied to the question as to why they did not send a representative to the AGM

The Executive Committee has discussed Malcolm's overview of the forum with the following results so far:

- The website "onceachorister.org" has been brought up to date and awaits some remaining copy for individual association pages. There is also a "Latest News" page which associations can use to advertise events and post news to relating to their activities and members. There is no longer a link or access to the old website "www.fcoca.org" which was causing confusion
- A volunteer has come forward to act as webmaster for one year at no cost to the Federation
- A Regional Organisational Structure Chart has been adopted and is regularly updated
- Action has been taken to fill the vacant Associate Delegate positions with a view to making face to face contact with each existing member association if invited to do so
- The Secretary to be the first point of contact for any new membership enquiries
- Initial contact to be made with FCM, CSA and RSCM with a view to reciprocal promotion

- Regional Activities have been discussed and this is still ongoing
- The following are available to download from the Federation website:
 1. The updated booklet "Organising A Federation Festival"
 2. The updated booklet "Organising A Federation AGM"
 3. A new Application Form for new associations wishing to join the Federation
 4. A new Data Update Form for use when changes in association officers/details take place
 5. New Guidelines on how to form an Association
 6. Federation Insurance details
- The following will be available to download shortly after the 2010 AGM
 1. Federation Rules 2010
 2. Officers' Annual Reports

It is important that we reported back to associations on the results of this exercise and members of the Executive Committee are now ready to move forward as quickly as possible in a positive way.

I am pleased to report good news regarding contact made with new and reformed associations. We welcome back Bristol Old Choristers' Association, Dublin (Christ Church) Past Choristers' Association, Hereford Cathedral Former Choristers who now form part of the Hereford Cathedral Perpetual Trust and Wells Cathedral Choir Association. The application for membership from Westminster Cathedral Choir School Old Boys' Association is also welcome news. There are also a number of other candidates where application forms have been despatched and we hope that these will be received in the near future.

Venues for Annual General Meetings are now booked up to the year 2015, and for Festivals up to 2016. There is however a vacancy for the Festival in 2015 and a venue not in the south of the country would be preferred. Please let me know if your association can fill this gap or can add to the list for future years. Many thanks.

Finally, I would like to say that my first year as your Secretary has been a challenging but largely pleasurable experience. I am amazed by the amount of dedicated work that goes on behind the scenes by all of the officers for which we should all be extremely grateful.

Richard Belton, Honorary Secretary

THE FEDERATION OF CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATIONS

Federation Publications Editor's Report 2009

The overwhelming support for the move of *Once a Chorister* to the A4 size means that we shall continue to produce the magazine in this format, and this year is the second issue in which colour is provided throughout; I am very grateful to the associations which have supplied a number of interesting (and high quality) photographs – keep them coming!

In addition to the association reports, there is a number of free-standing articles: amongst the most encouraging is the account by Ben Nicholas on how the choristers of Tewkesbury Abbey Choir School were saved and given new birth (amongst their number is this year's BBC Radio2 Chorister of the Year). The 'headline' article is on the outstanding contribution made to the choral music in our cathedrals by the choirs of Blackburn Cathedral.

It has also been encouraging to read of the considerable achievements of the current choristers in our choirs: most Directors of Music now contribute news of their work with their choir during the year.

It is therefore somewhat disappointing that Associations are now beginning to discontinue purchasing the magazine. It can hardly be described as expensive (especially if compared with other similar publications), but the print run is now 400-500 fewer than a few years ago (ironically, since the change to A4). I assume that, in the current financial climate, adding £3 to a member's subscription (and the ever increasing cost of postage – nearly £1 now), is what has caused this re-trenchment. I hope Associations might debate anew the value of this vital organ of communication between us all.

Michael Barry, Publications Editor

THE FEDERATION OF CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATIONS

Federation Treasurer's Report 2009

Looking first at the Income and Expenditure Account, it's worth mentioning the net figure shown for *Once A Chorister* magazines. There was an initial concern with going full colour and changing the format, plus as has been mentioned by the Publicity Officer in his report, the number now ordered by associations, and we wondered how the sales would fare. It's felt our sums were done fairly in what to charge and it has been good that we continue to produce a reasonable profit from this publication. Continuing with income I need not say anything about the dismal amount of interest now earned on our balances!

Moving to expenditure the first figure shows what has been written off as far as merchandise stock is concerned, and the Marketing Officer's Report clarifies this. Whilst it is unfortunate, balanced against the sales in the last decade, this is something that we have to expect from time to time. We do now recapture the majority of our postage costs and we continue to enjoy competitive insurance cover through our long standing brokers. The significant computer/website costs of 2008 have not been repeated, although we have had to pay for some updating of our website and ensure we have sufficient anti-virus protection etc. With some additional meetings held during the year to discuss future strategy and the Clifford Sadler monies, there have been some costs to bear for our committee.

And of course finally the large debit figure as we see the end to the legacy monies in our accounts. Credits were shown as income so it is only right to show the payments out as expenditure, although taking this away from the deficit figure shown, the true deficit for the year was £1,861.

Turning to the Balance Sheet, we can note the reduced stock figure as a result of that written off, and the balance of the bank accounts returns to a sum similar to that before the legacy monies arrived. Although interest bearing accounts are not as they were, appropriate re-organisation of the bank accounts will be reflected in the 2010 year.

We still have a healthy balance sheet, although next year maybe the time to consider how we may generate more income to ensure that our capital is not significantly reduced.

Michael Lake, Honorary Treasurer

THE FEDERATION OF CATHEDRAL OLD CHORISTERS' ASSOCIATIONS

Federation Marketing Officer's Report 2009

I have now completed a full year as Marketing Officer, taking over from David at the last year. I am pleased to report that it has been a very good year, taking a total of £669.00. This is made up of £149.00 at the AGM, £245.00 at the Festival and £275.00 in postal sales.

I decided for the first year to see how things panned out and it is now clear that despite having a large and varied stock (and credit must be given to David for this), there have been some definite main sellers (Burgundy ties and Lanyards being the best) and some items that have been very poor or non sellers. In October, the Honorary Treasurer and I met to review the situation. We agreed that the shop needed new items but both felt that we can not simply keep adding to the lines we carry. So we have decided to clear some of the poorest selling lines and invest in some new ones.

New to the shop this year will be micro fleece jackets and waistcoats, greetings cards and Christmas cards, a Centenary celebration mouse mat and a new Federation tie. The run on burgundy ties last year left us with a stock of 6 so we have taken the opportunity to re-design the tie for the Centenary and this will be available from the AGM in both polyester and silk.

As a result of the clear out of stock, there will be some sale items this year, including sweatshirts, some of the polo shirts, umbrellas, old A5 binders for OAC magazines, mugs and pens (some of these were already reduced last year). We will also be selling the remaining blue and green ties at a discounted price.

We have also started developing a Marketing Policy and have agreed that:-

- When selecting and purchasing new stock, we would limit the quantity ordered, even if it meant the unit cost was higher.
- For expensive items, such as the new micro fleece jackets, we would have samples for people to see and then take orders for manufacture and dispatch later.
- We would no longer purchase items in multiple colours but would stick to the Federation Burgundy, which does seem to be the best seller in all lines where there is a choice.
- All merchandise will be 'branded' with the *foeca* motif, with the words "The Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations" added if possible. However, on the ties and where space allows, such as the reverse side of the greetings cards, we should also include the Federation's shield logo.
- Where at all possible, we would not hold more than £2,500.00 worth of stock at any one time

Hopefully by the time you read this, the merchandise page of the Federation's website will have been updated with all the new stock and prices and a new downloadable order form. Also, please remember I am more than happy to receive ideas of items you would like to see in the Federation Shop, should you see anything when you are out and about (contact details in OAC magazine).

Lastly, let me thank David (and Margaret) for their sterling work over the last 10 years or more, setting up the shop and running it so successfully. They have left me with a hard act to follow.

Andrew Orland, Marketing Officer

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