



Chair's Update October 2022



Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations

We're back. Our first Festival since 2019 was held last month at Ely and our heartfelt thanks go to all the team at the Cathedral and King's School who made the event such a success. Especial thanks go to John Marshall, past Chairman of the Society of Ely Choristers, who navigated his way through many challenges in order for the event to take place and to Precentor, Canon James Garrard who, with his team, made us all feel so welcome and looked after so well.

This was my first Festival since 2018 and my first as Chair of the Federation and it was a pleasure and a privilege to welcome delegates to Ely over a cup of tea in the Lady Chapel on Friday afternoon. We may have been smaller in number than in previous years but there was no lack of enthusiasm to take the opportunity to catch up with people we had not seen for some time and, once again, to celebrate our choristership.



Attendees gather under the Octagon

Due to the death of Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, on the 8th September, the day before Festival began, a number of the planned activities could not take place. The Cathedral was closed to visitors and no tours were being conducted. Instead of the planned evensong, the service on Friday was reshaped as a Thanksgiving for the Life of Her Majesty sung by the full choir of boys, girls, choral scholars and lay clerks. A memorable and moving moment for many was hearing for the first time the versicle, "O Lord save the King" and singing "God save our gracious King" in the national anthem at the end of the service.



Our first day ended with Choral Compline sung by the lay clerks and choral scholars – and what an ending it was. Sublime singing directed by Sarah MacDonald, Director of the Girls' Choir in the most extraordinary acoustic of the chapel where so many memorable recordings have been made, brought a peaceful end to what had been an emotional day.

Our AGM was held in the Cathedral Centre during the afternoon on Saturday, which was concluded in time, for those delegates who wished to, to join the Cathedral choir to rehearse for Evensong. Our day concluded with the Festival Banquet in the 14th century Monastic Barn, originally built to store the Abbey crops and now used by the Kings School as a refectory. We were joined by members of the Society of Ely Choristers and Precentor James Garrard. It was also a great pleasure to be joined by our newest Vice President, Carl

Jackson, Director of Music, Chapel Royal, Hampton Court. The toast to the Federation was given by Dr Christopher Robinson who entertained us with stories from his long and illustrious career in church music.

Our Festival came to an end after Sung Eucharist on Sunday morning, led by the Bishop of Ely, The Right Reverend Stephen Conway, who also preached. He began his address with a memory of the late Queen. He had been invited to lunch at Sandringham and was sat next to Her Majesty. At the end of the meal she put a hand on his forearm and asked if he had had sufficient to eat, "because there's quite a lot of you".

There will be much to remember about our 2022 Festival and I know that all who attended thoroughly enjoyed their time in Ely and were hugely grateful to be able to spend time with friends once again.

A full report on the Festival will be found in the annual *Once a Chorister* magazine to be published in November and the minutes of the AGM will be found on the Federation website in due course.

And talking about **Once a Chorister magazine**, now is the time to be submitting your articles to our Honorary Secretary, Alastair Pollard. You can send them to him at secretary@fcoca.org.uk. As well as reports from your choir's activities over the last year and those of your Association, do share any articles about cathedral/choral music that you think might be of interest to others. Copy deadline is the end of October, so not much time left to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard).

RSCM International Chorister Day

Sunday 9th October is the date for this year's celebration of the amazing opportunities that being a chorister provides. Is your choir joining in the celebration? We know that many of our cathedrals and churches will be marking the day and the chance to showcase what it means to be a chorister. As the RSCM say on their website *"The chorister tradition is a living one, envied across the world. But like anything, if you take it for granted it will wither and fall away. People love the sound of choristers singing, and the way in which they bring worship in church alive. Choirs need a supply of fresh, new voices to become part of the next generation. It is vital to invest in that living tradition; and this is what the RSCM is encouraging today"*.



2023 Festival and beyond

No sooner than we come to the end of a Festival, we start thinking in earnest of the next one. I hope it will not have gone unnoticed that the 2023 Festival is to be hosted by my Association at Warwick on the 15th – 17th September. It will form part of the 900th anniversary of the founding of the church of St Mary and its choir. The town has been an important place in the country's history and as well as the church and its treasures, it boasts one of the finest medieval castles in the country and many historic buildings. A full programme of events is being planned for the weekend, which will be announced in the 2022 edition of *Once a*

Chorister, along with suggestions for accommodation, places of refreshment and other places to visit in the area. We hope that you and your fellow former choristers will join us there.

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Annual Festival 2023

Hold the date
Friday 15th – Sunday 17th
September

900 Years
St-Mary's
Warwick's Church of Healers

The Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick
Guild of Ex-Choristers
invites you to join them
for the 2023 Festival

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Programme to include Choral Evensong on Friday & Saturday, a festival banquet, and Choral Eucharist on Sunday morning.

Come and visit the historic town of Warwick and be part of the celebrations to mark the 900th anniversary of the founding of the church and also the choir.

Full programme and booking details available shortly.

This flyer is also appended to this newsletter. Please circulate it to your members.

Will Warwick be the last Festival? At this time, we have no further offers for hosting future Festivals after 2023. We know that hosting these events can be an onerous task, especially for Associations that have few resources. For this reason, last year we published on the Federation website a revised guide to hosting a Festival. It does not have to be a 3 day event, such as we enjoyed this year in Ely and Warwick is planning for next year. Whole weekend events have been the norm for many years but our Festival could just be an extension (included as part of) your own reunion event. It could just be a one day event which might include a lunch rather than dinner/banquet. There doesn't need to be the formality of speakers or tours or recitals. So, please, go to our website and read the guide and consider hosting an event.

<https://www.fcoca.org.uk/uploads/1/5/0/1/15016958/festivalplan21.pdf>

Nick Hodges
Chair



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You are receiving this newsletter because either we have you on our database as the contact person for your Association or we have had some contact with you personally i.e. in the "Meet the Chairman" sessions. I would like to continue to write to you but if you do not wish to receive further communications from me, please reply to the email to which this newsletter was appended with REMOVE in the subject line. Contributions to any discussions mentioned in the newsletter may be sent to me, Nick Hodges, at the above email address: or to the Honorary Secretary at secretary@fcoca.org.uk.