



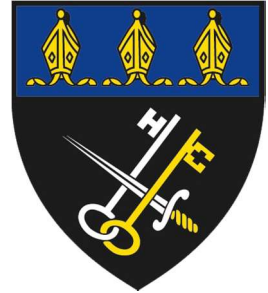
Chair's Update May 2024



Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations

Calling all former choristers

I am delighted to announce that booking has now opened for the **2024 Annual Once a Chorister Festival**, which is to be held at **Llandaff Cathedral** over the weekend of 20th – 22nd September. The formal welcome from Director of Music, Stephen Moore and full details of the weekend's activities can be found in the brochure. As some email clients block mails with large attachments, I will be sending the brochure by separate email but the booking form is attached to the email with this Update. Both can also be found via a link on the home page of the Federation website at www.fcoca.org.uk.



All members of Associations affiliated to the Federation of Cathedral Old Chorister Associations are warmly invited to attend the Festival and I do hope you will give this notice wide and prominent circulation amongst your membership. Following successful events at Ely in 2022 and last year in Warwick, it would be wonderful to welcome as many former choristers as can possibly attend this celebration of choristership.

Stephen and the team at Llandaff have managed to organise this Festival in a relatively short time and the Federation is hugely grateful for all the effort put in so far to make it happen and all the effort still to come to round off a memorable weekend. My wife, Carolyn and I visited Llandaff in April, attending morning service sung by the girls' choir and lay clerks. Following the service we met with Festival organising team and were enthusiastically briefed on what was planned for September. We also bumped into former St Mary's Warwick chorister, Paul Rothwell, who happened to be peeping in the back row for the weekend and is looking forward to joining us in September.

I truly believe that those who attend this year's Festival will be thrilled by the warmth of the welcome, the stunning beauty of the building and the quality of the music. There are many treasures to be found in the building and locality and, for those who have not been to Llandaff before, it will not disappoint. Please make every effort to join us for Festival this year and encourage as many of your members as possible to do so as well.

Cathedral Music Trust Chorister Survey 2023

We continue to support the work of the **Cathedral Music Trust (CMT)** and share our collective knowledge of all things choral. Earlier this year **CMT** shared the results of a survey they had conducted in 2023. The beginning of their report said this:

Choristers are the lifeblood of cathedral music. Yet very little is known about the overall picture of the young people who sing on the front rows of choirs in our cathedrals, major parish churches and collegiate chapels. The lack of such information was highlighted in the report The Future for Cathedral Music commissioned by Cathedral Music Trust in 2022. The Trust therefore undertook a major survey of chorister demographics between October 2022 and March 2023. 118

choral foundations were invited to participate in the survey, with a very high response rate of almost 80%. In almost all instances, the survey was completed by Directors of Music, and the qualitative comments received therefore reflect their particular experiences and viewpoints. We are very grateful to all those who contributed.

The key findings of the survey were

- Over 3,000 choristers make a significant commitment and contribution to the music making in the UK's cathedrals, churches and college chapels.
- Though retention rates are high, many choirs are not at full capacity and need help to recruit more choristers.
- Affordability is a key issue in providing wider access, particularly to fee-paying choir-school choristerships.
- Choral foundations are under considerable financial pressure and most choirs are insufficiently resourced to offer the level of musical education they feel their choristers need and deserve.

CMT has done a huge amount to support the continuance of music in worship in our cathedrals and other places of worship and to maintain the wonderful choral tradition that has been woven into the fabric of our heritage. If you would like to know more about **CMT**, their work and their events and to find out how you can support them, do go to their website, www.cathedralmusictrust.org.uk

Valedictory gifts

I received an email recently in response to my comment in the January Update on what to give choir leavers if ties were no longer appropriate. **Karen Fardell** is the mother of two boys who were in both St Paul's and Westminster Cathedral choirs and, in both cases, she designed artwork which was then printed onto mugs and given when the boys left the choirs. Karen has since helped produced similar items, some examples of which can be seen here.



If you would like to know more, please contact Karen directly by email at karenfardell@btinternet.com Karen makes the following points:

- In collaboration with each choral foundation I can propose tailored artwork to include girl choristers and be specific for each choir establishment. Further details in relation to the artwork can be discussed with me.
- Minimum order numbers would apply (25 units).
- **Timescale:** from initial artwork to completed mugs approximately 8/12 weeks. Artwork signed off at Easter for an end of Trinity term delivery.
- **Unit cost:** vary according to colours used and quantities ordered.

Membership Survey

Many thanks to the 21 Associations who responded to the survey included in the January Update. From those completing the questionnaire there was a common theme that though they were able to maintain an annual gathering there was limited support for attending OaC Annual Festivals or other events. In most cases, respondents were able to issue an annual newsletter, though none were forthcoming with offers to host a Once a Chorister event or join the Federation Executive Committee.

These and other issues will be the subjects for discussion at this year's **AGM**, which will be held on Saturday 21 September at Llandaff Cathedral as part of the 2024 Annual Festival.

...and finally

As noted above, the **Federation AGM** will take place in Llandaff and our Honorary Secretary will be sending the formal notification closer to the date but, in the meantime, if you have any items for the agenda or wish any of your members who have died since the last AGM to be remembered at the meeting, please forward details to secretary@fcoca.org.uk. We continue to seek new members for the Executive Committee and welcome nominations from our affiliated Associations.

And finally, finally, our Honorary Secretary, Alastair Pollard, has indicated that he intends to edit our on-line, annual, **Once a Chorister magazine** again this year. Copy deadline will be the end of October but now is the time to start planning what your contribution will be. Updates on your Association's and current choir's activities, articles about choristership and all things choral are all welcome. Please encourage your Director of Music to plan a submission into his busy schedule.

See you in Llandaff

Nick Hodges
Chair



Email: chairman@fcoca.org.uk

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. 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 email address shown: or to the Honorary Secretary at secretary@fcoca.org.uk.