



## Chair's Update May 2022



Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations

In a few weeks' time, at our AGM in Lincoln, I will be stepping down as Chair of Once a Chorister, having completed my 5 years tenure in the role. This, therefore, will be my last Chair's Update. It has certainly been a challenging time, as my chairmanship began at the height of the COVID pandemic, which had such a devastating effect on many voluntary organisations, including Associations affiliated to the Federation. Five years on, there are tentative signs of regrowth and increasing hope for the future, which I will come back to shortly.

If COVID caused us not to be able to meet in person it certainly encouraged us to make use of technologies in ways we had not done so previously. Our meetings were held "on-line" and we all became very familiar with Zoom and its idiosyncrasies. Oh, how we struggled with not all being able to talk at the same time! Although Executive Committee meetings are still mainly held on Zoom, because it enables bringing people together who are located all over the country, in the last 2 years we have met in-person for at least one of our meetings each year. We have also held three wonderful Festivals, in Ely (coincidental with the late Queen's death), Warwick and Llandaff. We may currently not have any enthusiasm for hosting future Festivals but I can report that AGM's are now booked through to 2030, which at least provides the ability to gather for a single day event, much as it was in earlier days of the Federation.

On taking the Chair in 2020, I committed to bringing the organisation more into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to have greater contact with our members. In 2022 we launched our new branding, using the annual magazine title, Once a Chorister, as our brand name but without losing the Federation and its history completely. Any change like this takes time to bed in. Generally, the branding has been well accepted but there remains a tendency to hang onto the familiar. It will be for others to determine how our brand is developed in the future. My Chairman's Update was introduced in May 2021 and issued 3 times a year. It adds to the Newsheet sent 3 times a year by the Honorary Secretary who has also edited and published our annual magazine, Once a Chorister, as digital document, on-line for the past 9 years, for which he has my heartfelt thanks.

I am disappointed that we have been unable to recruit new members to the Executive Committee and that there has not been a natural succession to the principal roles of Chair and Secretary, as has been the case in the past. And so, what of the future? Despite numerous calls to arms, the committee was left with the decision that it would be proposed at this year's AGM that, going forward, the Executive Committee would be chaired by the representative of the hosts of the next year's AGM/gathering, as it was likely that, following Lincoln, the next 3 years would be hosted by current members of the committee. However, a few weeks ago I was approached by members of the management team of Peterborough Cathedral Old Choristers' Association, Samuel Barber and Oliver Hamilton-Box, both of who have been Federation Representatives for their Association. They have offered to take over the running of the Federation with another of their colleagues, Brandon Odep, as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, on the basis that they would have a free hand to manage the Federation, in the way that they have successfully run their own Association in recent years. They have presented a plan to the Executive Committee, which is to be proposed for adoption at the AGM, whereby, through the use of IT, the internet and social media, they will

look to help other Association rebuild their membership and revitalise the Federation for it once again to become the leading national hub for former choristers.

I and my fellow Executive Committee members are hugely excited by this offer, not least because it brings skills to the organisation that we currently do not have and the team from Peterborough are passionate about choral music and choristership and the importance of maintaining contact with former choristers of all generations.

If you have not already done so, please let us know that you are coming to the AGM in Lincoln on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October by using this booking form

<https://forms.gle/ZnNnKumVGf24ZqQL7>

or by just dropping me an email. In addition to hearing more about the plans for revitalising the Federation you will also have the opportunity to sing Evensong with the cathedral choir and meet up with other former choristers from around the country. Here's the programme:

10.30am Eucharist

12.00pm Lunch at the Cathedral Café.

1.45pm FCOCA AGM

or

Guided Tour of Cathedral Exhibition Gallery, the Discovery Centre and Angel Choir

2.45 pm Rehearsal for Evensong

3.45pm Choral Evensong

To be followed by a drinks reception hosted by the Dean in the Deanery

Finally, in this my last newsletter, I would like to put on record my sincere thanks to those who have served on the Executive Committee over the past 5 years, not only for their unstinting support and giving up of their time, but also for their kindness and friendship, which will be with me for the rest of my life. I will continue to serve the Federation in whatever capacity I can and will always believe that Once a Chorister, Always a Chorister.

**Nick Hodges**  
**Chair**



Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations

Email: [chairman@fcoca.org.uk](mailto:chairman@fcoca.org.uk)

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## Post Script



The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) enables the flourishing of church music and across the UK, Ireland, and worldwide, supports thousands of churches, schools, and other institutions, together with thousands more individual members.

Here is a message from Hugh Morris, Director, Royal School of Church Music

Here at the RSCM we know the key to enabling the flourishing of Church Music lies in inspiring children and young people and giving them the opportunity to take part from an early age. Without them there is no future for church music or, indeed, for the church as a whole.

These days too few children have the opportunity to sing hymns or join choirs in churches or schools.

You can help change this. Join us as a Friend and your donation will support:

- Introducing children and young people to the joys of hymn singing through Hymnpact!®
- Developing their musical abilities through Voice for Life® and in person training courses
- Creating a new generation of choral directors and church musicians
- Churches using music as mission to attract children and families.

Become a Friend by making a regular monthly or annual donation. Your gift will contribute directly to enabling the flourishing of church music for current and future generations. As a thank you Friends enjoy opportunities for regular updates about our work in a variety of ways. To find out more visit our website <https://www.rscm.org.uk/support-us/friends/>