

St Albans Cathedral Ex-Choristers Association

Annual General Meeting

Chairman's Report

Firstly I should like to thank our Patron, The Dean, our President, Dr Peter Hurford and our Honorary Members for their encouragement and guidance during this last twelve months. I should also like to thank Andrew Lucas, Master of the Music, Moira Dean who is also the Dean's PA and Gemma Saunders, Music Department Secretary for their support during a period which has seen some interesting activities and difficult challenges.

This year began superbly with the second reunion which was attended by over 120 members and guests. We were blessed with excellent weather and the day proved to be very successful in many ways, not least the opportunity to sing in the Abbey with the Cathedral Choir and some of the Abbey Girls, and the reception afterwards during which we met up with many old friends and colleagues.

My thanks go to Mark Adams and Rob Miles for producing a DVD of the Service of Choral Evensong. Members will be pleased to know that although we were not allowed to sell the DVD, those people who requested copies kindly donated approximately £500 to the Association. This helped tremendously with our ongoing general administration costs as you will hear from our Honorary Treasurer.

In addition to the reunion the other major highlight was the 50th Anniversary Choir Camp at Luccombe which was attended by Peter and Pat and some 30 ECA members and their families. Fifty years of camping was a tremendous achievement, not only for its founders and supporters in the early days and, over the years, successive Masters and Assistant Masters of the Music and Camp Masters and their spouses and partners, but also to the choristers and ex-choristers, lay clerks and ex-lay clerks, who participated and gave their time and skills to ensure its success.

Regrettably this was the last 'camp' in its present form, the Dean and Chapter and Master of the Music having concluded that the lack of leadership succession, coupled with the risks associated with HSE and Child Protection legislation, would make its continuation too difficult to manage. Choir camp was always seen as an important part of a choristers' social development and it will be interesting to see what alternative opportunities emerge in the future.

My thanks go to John Adams who made a DVD of the last camp; over time I'm sure this will become one of the treasures of our archive. I would add at this point that copies of both DVDs are still available.

During the year we continued to issue our quarterly newsletter which, thanks to Honorary Secretary Bob Staten, was renamed **Alban Notes**. It continues to be well received and reaches well over 400 people by e-mail or post. I am pleased to report that two recent editions were fully sponsored by ECA members.

Members will recall that Andrew Lucas, Dr Stephen Darlington, Colin Walsh and Dr Barry Rose were made Vice Presidents and ECA co-founders David Ireson, Christine Blackie, Moira Dean and also Tony and Ros de Rivas were made Honorary Members. I am also pleased to report that former Master of the Music and Vice President, Dr. Barry Rose celebrated his 75th Birthday; a congratulatory card was sent to him from the Association.

Members with internet access will, I hope, have logged into our website which has been revamped and has a much cleaner and user friendly look about it.

There have been one or two disappointments. Firstly, the major fund raising concert which was being planned for later this year had to be postponed until 2010 because of the enthronement of Bishop Alan Smith. Whilst this is a setback, not least because the ECA made a substantial contribution to the purchase of Handel's Coronation Anthems music scores for the Cathedral Choir, we are looking forward to 2010 when we hope to hold a successful event, subject of course to the continuing cooperation and consideration from the Cathedral authorities.

Secondly, the BBQ planned for June as a minor money-raising event did not attract sufficient interest in time to make it work, although there were a few late inquiries. It seems that dates for any summer activity need to be publicised well in advance with regular reminders to members if they are to be successful.

In April this year I attended the AGM of the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations at St. Edmundsbury Cathedral (I was one of the youngest there!) where I facilitated a forum on the future objectives and activities of the FCOCA. This work is continuing and it will be interesting to see whether in the future the FCOCA becomes a more relevant organisation. Disappointingly, my efforts to secure a grant (£2,500) from a legacy held by the FCOCA were unsuccessful on the grounds that we, at St. Albans, do not have a benevolent fund which supports the choir.

Work on developing the choir archive is proceeding well and I do thank all those who have contributed to date and those who responded to specific information requests with regard to identifying names and faces in photographs and recordings.

Unfortunately the eArchive has been delayed because our developer had to take on more remunerative work. I hope to report that the project has been completed in a forthcoming newsletter.

Turning to the future, there are some opportunities and challenges to be tackled. We will still plan to hold a major fund raising concert in the Abbey on 18th September 2010 and your new committee will be moving ahead with the preparations for both the 2010 Reunion on 26th June and the concert shortly after this AGM. The success of this venture will depend largely on the participation and interest of our members.

Whilst we continue to try to grow the association and make it sustainable the general response of members to communications during the year has been a little disappointing and together with an apparent unwillingness to stand for committee I have concluded that my own expectations for the Association need to be modified.

It is likely that our activities, after the concert next year if it goes ahead, will be the biennial reunion, the quarterly newsletters and website, and maintaining the Cathedral Choir archive – but maybe that is enough.

Before closing my report there is one possible opportunity which I believe could be an additional reason for our existence and that is if we make our biennial reunions a celebration of the foundation of the two choirs in April 1877 and January 1996 as well as an opportunity to sing in the Abbey and meet up with old friends. The committee will explore this in the coming months.

I should like to record my thanks to the outgoing committee. I am aware that it has been a testing year for those with young families and work commitments, nevertheless without their support and encouragement my job would have been a lot harder. I have expressed my own willingness to remain as Chairman for another year and if my appointment is confirmed today I look forward to meeting and working with the incoming committee.

Thank you.
Malcolm Bury – Chairman
11th July 2009