

# St Albans Cathedral Ex-Choristers Association

THE CATHEDRAL AND ABBEY CHURCH OF ST. ALBAN

Affiliated to the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers Associations

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## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2019

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2019 at 1:30pm in The Deanery

The meeting opened with a welcome and prayer from the Dean, Very Reverend Dr Jeffrey John.

### Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed the members and guests, of whom 25 were in **attendance**:

Mark Adams, John Adams, Paulo Baroni, Malcolm Bury, Ros Clements, Nick Coleman, Chris Cutts, Moira Dean, Christopher Freeman, Martin Freeman, Andrew Freeman, David Ireson, Peter Jeffs, Trevor Jarvis, Chris Ladkin, Richard Lilley, Andrew Parnell, Peter Pearson, John Pedlar, Tony Price, Barry Rose, John Tournay, Simon Trott, Geoff Ward.

**Apologies** had been received from: John Bate, Helen Charlston, Laura Hicks, Rory Lumsden, John Marvin, Jeremy Meager, Rhodri Pazzi-Axworthy, Mat Taylor, Michael Milbourn, Ian Woods.

### Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2018

The minutes from the 2018 AGM were circulated to members in advance of this meeting. There were no issues nor actions arising, and were adopted unopposed, proposed by Malcolm Bury, seconded by Trevor Jarvis.

### Chairman's Report

*As my first year in office as Chairman of our Association draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on the last 12 months which have been eventful.*

*I am grateful to our committee members and Honorary Life members who continue to offer support and guidance as and when needed. Perhaps I shouldn't single individual members out, however our ECA would not continue to flourish if it weren't for the time, effort and commitment of a few working tirelessly behind the scenes; my particular thanks and acknowledgement of their personal support;- to my predecessor Malcolm, for ensuring the ECA is fit for the future, to Tony Price, our IT and communications manager who is committed to maintaining the high standards (we perhaps take for granted) behind the scenes relating to admin and technology, to Simon Trott who has been of great administrative support since co-opted as Honorary secretary, and to David Ireson – always at the end of a phone willing to provide advice.*

*The successes of the last 12 months have, of course, been overshadowed by the passing of our President, Peter Hurford in March of this year. Peter became President of the Ex-Choristers Association in 2007 and always gave us tremendous encouragement and support at events with Pat until, sadly, he became unable to fulfil his role due to ill health.*

*Many of you knew Peter personally and spent time under his tutelage, maintaining a relationship with him long after you left the choir. I am grateful to those of you who have sent a number of moving tributes to us, and for Simon Trott for compiling them into our special edition of Alban Notes in April. Peter clearly was a remarkable man in so many ways and influenced so many Choristers, Lay clerks and others closely associated with daily life at the Cathedral for 20 years as Master of the Music, and further afield since retiring. I find myself remembering fondly the time I spent as a Chorister, albeit in the 1980s, and realising how much the life of a young chorister is influenced by the Master of Music, instilling discipline, responsibility, a sense of teamwork, as well as a professional education. Although this expert teaching may not necessarily be appreciated at the time, or when leaving the choir as a teenager, it is clear from your tributes, extracts from Trevor Jarvis' book, and the many published obituary's, that Peter was held in high esteem both locally and internationally.*

*Having been born in Minehead it is easy to see the draw to the South West resulting in the Annual Choir Camp being established in 1958. Great times have been had in a tiny part of West Somerset, in the village of Luccombe by so many over 50 years during the official Choir Camp and since by members of the ECA. It was lovely in 2008 to join so many of you in the field with Pat and Peter and to sing again in St. Mary's Church.*

*I am pleased to have been able to move the date of our AGM to today and join so many members at 4 o'clock this afternoon for the Memorial Evensong for Peter. There will be an opportunity following the service to remember the great old times in the Cathedral where refreshments will be served.*

*I know you join me in sending our continued love and best wishes to Richard, Michael and Heather.*

*We have continued with the regular publication of Alban Notes having published the 47<sup>th</sup> edition during April of this year. I have reduced the number of editions from quarterly to termly, in line with Choir and academic terms. This reduces the administrative demands on the committee, enables increased content for each edition and is easier to manage. I am grateful to Andrew Lucas for his regular contributions detailing termly highlights of the Choirs.*

*Over the last 12 months we have welcomed several new members to our association:*

- From the Abbey Girls' Choir: Niamh Ireson-Crompton, Alexandra Snailham and Lara Cummins*
- From the Cathedral Choir: Oscar Bates, Colin Turner*
- Lay Clerks: Peter Martin (Tenor 2015 to 2019) - left to pursue a career in opera, Oliver Martin-Smith (Tenor 2009 to 2018) - left to pursue a career as a member of Apollo 5 vocal ensemble*
- Organ Scholar Marnus Greyling (2017 to 2018) - returned to South Africa*
- Precentor Berkeley Zych (2016 to 2019) - appointed Vicar of St John's, Harpenden*

*Sadly three members passed away this year;*

- John Pettit (9<sup>th</sup> Apr 2019 – aged 89), was a Chorister between 1940 and 1945 when he was evacuated during the war. He was head of Cantoris.*

- *Ross Thayne (Feb 2019) who was a Chorister from 1946 until 1949. He was one of the first Woollam Scholars.*
- *Peter Hurford (Mar 2019)*

*One of the projects behind the scenes this year, keeping Tony very busy, has been the development of a new ECA website which goes live today! I hope you will find this more intuitive, user friendly and interesting. One significant new feature is the search tool enabling the easy search of any member, providing more details than previously available. Do take time to use the site and provide us with any feedback, suggestions or updated detail of your own record or that of your peers.*

*Talking of technology, I hope by now you are aware of our Facebook and Twitter feeds which are a source of current news enabling you to comment, like or re-post/tweet, spreading news of what we do. Links are available on all electronic communication you receive from us, and on the website.*

*Saturday 7th July saw Stephen Darlington, one of our vice presidents, conduct his last Evensong at Christ Church, Oxford at an uplifting service billed as "Stephensong". I was honoured to attend representing our ECA, particularly as he was Master of the Music at St. Albans throughout my time as a chorister.*

*After a lunchtime cricket match the Old Boys Association joined the Choir with beautiful singing of canticles by Herbert Howells and the anthem "The Spirit of the Lord" by Elgar. Following the service, I joined over 200 guests in the master's garden for a BBQ, hosted by the Dean of Christ Church. It was lovely catching up with Stephen and Moira (and their grown-up girls!). We hope to see more of Stephen now he has retired and has family living in St. Albans.*

*I was delighted to contact Stephen earlier this year, on behalf of the ECA in the early part of January to congratulate him on being made an MBE in the New Year's Honours list 2019.*

*The last weekend of July found several of us back in Luccombe, Somerset to mark the 60th anniversary of Choir Camp. Despite the hottest July since 1976, in true Choir Camp style the heavens opened as we arrived. Not to be put off we enjoyed the weekend with the traditional walk up to Dunkery Beacon, afternoon tea at Horner and a BBQ on the Saturday.*

*Although the traditional annual Choir Camp officially ended in 2008 having reached its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary several members of the ECA have continued to visit the area as often as possible over the last decade, and on occasion to sing services at St. Mary's. We're all getting older and the prospect of camping appeals less each year however more hotels are being built in surrounding towns. The visitors' book in Church often provides evidence of those who can't help but detour through Luccombe if travelling in the South West. Perhaps we'll meet again one day in rural Somerset!*

*Members of the ECA have continued to sing as ExQuire on a number of occasions in the Cathedral, particularly when the choirs are on leave or experiencing busy schedules. Such occasions since our last AGM have included;*

- *Immediately after our AGM last year several of you joined the Cathedral Choir for Choral Evensong where we sang Stanford in B flat*
- *Eucharist for All Souls on 2nd November when we sang the Fauré Requiem*
- *Several members who are part of the Abbey Singers joined the current lay clerks for Choral Evensong on the Saturday before Christmas. This is becoming an established tradition, so I encourage you to make a note in your diary for this year*

- *A couple of weeks ago (2nd June) we sang as ExQuire for Choral Eucharist*
- *Further dates in the diary for 2020*

*Whilst we can't always rely on the organist drowning out the Dean, I have received very positive feedback about the quality of singing. Please support these events as the more who take part the more enjoyable it is for all. (particularly as we often retire to a nearby pub for lunch afterwards!!) My thanks to David Ireson who rehearses and conducts us, for Rogers who often accompanies rehearsals and sings solo's, to our organists and of course to the members who regularly attend in support of the ECA.*

*Several members have met on a purely social basis, most recently in St. Albans following the London meet last year. We expect to arrange future meetings, not necessarily local to St. Albans so please contact us if you would like to arrange a date and location during the next 12 months.*

*I think you've heard enough from me now. My thanks to the Dean, Andrew Lucas, Tom Winpenny, Lizzie Smyth and Marko Sever for their support of our association.*

*The numbers of similar associations around the UK are sadly on the decline due to lack of support and interest from new members. We maintain our association without a subscription and rely on the generosity of members to enable us to survive financially. Although our annual operating costs are low, there are some necessary expenses. As I have mentioned earlier a few members give a lot of time to ensure the ECA is sustained, none of whom claim personal expenses. If you wish to contribute financially please do so using the receptacle on the table at the back of the room.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen, this concludes my report for the past 12 months.*

Adoption of the Chairman's report was proposed by Dr Barry Rose, and seconded by Andrew Parnell.

## Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement

At the time of the AGM and ECA re-union on 16th June 2018 the ECA current account balance was a fairly healthy £2,255.03. Following the Evensong that day we enjoyed drinks and nibbles in the south transept and the expenditure for this came to £108.70. This was covered by donations from the ECA members, and a net amount of £100.00 was then paid into the bank account.

Later in June there were two amounts paid out which were as follows: £52.00 to Tony Price to cover hosting the website and £120.46 expenses to Malcolm Bury (to cover various music packs and archive storage boxes). In August there was a payment of £39.35 to Jeremy Meager to cover food for the Chairman's Lunch on Dunkery Beacon and on 21st March 2019 a payment of £40.00 to the FCOCA to cover the last two years membership, as the invoice in 2018 had unfortunately not been sent. The ECA current account balance currently stands at **£1,994.52**.

## Election of Committee Members

Simon Trott was co-opted as Honorary Secretary to the ECA at the committee meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018. The Chairman proposed to this meeting that Simon be formally elected to the committee in the role of Honorary Secretary. This was seconded by Nic Gibbon.

The Chairman reported that all other committee members have agreed to continue in post for another year, and proposed that they be re-elected collectively. This was seconded by John Tournay.

The committee is therefore made up as follows:

Richard Lilley	Chairman
Jeremy Meager	Honorary Treasurer
Simon Trott	Honorary Secretary
Tony Price	IT and Communications Manager
Trevor Jarvis	Representative for the Cathedral Choir 1950s
Nicolas Gibbon	Representative for the Cathedral Choir 1960s
Peter Jeffs	Representative for the Cathedral Choir 1960s
Nick Coleman	Representative for the Cathedral Choir 1970s
Paulo Baroni	Representative for the Cathedral Choir 1990s
Helen Charlston	Representative for the Abbey Girls' Choir
Laura Hicks	Representative for the Abbey Girls' Choir.

## Amendments to the Constitution

The Chairman proposed alterations to the provisions of three clauses in the ECA constitution, and explained his reasons for this.

- a) Section 4.1 Honorary President. Following the sad loss of Dr Peter Hurford our previous president, the clause reading 'The Presidency shall be for a period of five years or until such earlier time as that person relinquishes the position' should be reworded to reflect our considerations when inviting Peter's successor as President.
- b) Section 4.1 Associate Members: An initiative by the FCOCA to permit qualifying members of any federated association to be Associate members of their 'local' Association, for example where an ECA member relocates or goes to college in a new diocese. The converse arrangement is allowed where FCOCA members move to the St Albans diocese, they would be welcomed as Associate members of our Association.
- c) Section 4.2: Management Committee: The Chairman proposes that we adopt a convention that the position of either Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson should be held by a former member of the Abbey Girls Choir where one or other of the positions is held by a former member of the Cathedral Choir as a way of encouraging greater interest in the ECA from former AGC choristers.

The actual changes to the wording will be discussed and agreed in committee.

## Any Other Business

- Simon Trott expressed his thanks to those members who contributed photos and recollections which were used to compile our memorial tribute to the late Dr Peter Hurford, which was published recently on Alban Notes number 47.
- Trevor Jarvis's book: Trevor has recently published a booklet entitled 'Recollections of a St Albans Abbey Chorister'. Trevor gave a brief account of its contents, and invited attendees to purchase a copy from him after the meeting.
- Archive Working Group: The Chairman invited members to consider taking an active part in the proposed ECA working group to manage and maintain the archive of printed and recorded material now held in the Switch Room up behind the chancel triforium. Since the meeting Paulo and Nicola have come forward as willing to take the lead with this initiative, along with John Tournay.

- ECA 'yearbook'. Tony Price is working on the contents of our biennial Yearbook publication which is also delivered via our website. Members are asked to assist with proof-reading and providing feedback with the aim of publication in time for our 2020 AGM.
- FCOCA Annual Festival in Portsmouth: The Chairman announced that he will be attending the next FCOCA conference, to be held in Portsmouth from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> June this year.

The meeting closed at 2:10 pm. The memorial evensong service for Dr Peter Hurford was held later that afternoon in the Cathedral.