

# 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 2023 Annual General Meeting

Held at midday on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2023, in the Chapter Room in what is now called Cathedral House (renamed from the Old Deanery in 2022).

### Welcome and Apologies

The meeting was chaired by Richard Lilley, ECA Chair.

### Attendance in the Deanery

Geoff Ward, Prof. Stephen Darlington (ECA President), Malcolm Bury, Chris Cutts, Richard Lilley, Simon Trott, Tony Price, Paolo Baroni, Simon Morley, Nick Coleman.

### Attendance via Zoom

Trevor Jarvis

### Apologies

Apologies had been received from:

Moira Dean, Mat Taylor, David Ireson, Ian Woods, Andrew Parnell, Jeremy Meager, Dr Simon Lindley, Peter Jeffs, Very Rev. Jo Kelley-Moore.

### Statement from the Secretary

ST read the following statement to the meeting 'for the record':

In contrast to last years' AGM statement which outlined the special arrangements to appoint an Interim Chair, I'm very pleased to welcome Richard back as Chairman for this year's AGM, and I believe I speak for all the committee.

### Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2022

The minutes from the 2022 AGM were circulated to members in advance of this meeting. (These are routinely published on the ECA website, under 'Governance'.)

There were no issues put forward, so the minutes were adopted as a true statement of that meeting by RL, seconded by MB.



**ST. ALBANS  
CATHEDRAL**

MB said that he has enjoyed reading Barry Rose's book ('Sitting on a Pin: A Musical Memoir').

## Chairman's Report

I welcome members today, both those here in Cathedral House (formerly known as the Deanery to all of us) and those who are joining our AGM via the internet.

Only a few years ago we, along with the majority of the UK population, tentatively ventured into unfamiliar territory meeting friends, colleagues and even family on Zoom (other platforms are available). It was easier than expected for some and has now become the norm. Your ECA committee now routinely meet in person, be it as a full committee, or smaller management meetings, whilst providing an on-line link for those to join in without having to travel great distances.

Recently Tony, Malcolm and I met in a local pub to discuss business with Simon joining us on-line from the south-west. That said, the benefits of meeting in person in this place, the very heart of our organisation, cannot be understated, particularly when we sing with the choir where we once did all those years ago.

I am very grateful to Peter Jeffs who chaired our AGM last year in my absence and indeed for your committee members for ensuring continued smooth running of the ECA whilst I took a break. Our ECA is very close to my heart, but I felt unable to commit the energy and time required for a few months last year due to competing demands and pressures. Whilst the workload is not onerous to run an organisation such as ours, there is naturally a regular amount of administration functioning behind the scenes throughout the year.

I am particularly grateful to our Honorary Life Members for their support and all committee members but particularly to Simon, for his tireless administrative support, Tony for his technical abilities and time, and Malcom for his wise counsel.

Alban Notes continues with two more publications this year. I'm grateful to all contributors and those who have shared ideas as we want to ensure Alban Notes remains current and of interest to you, the reader. I am particularly grateful to Andrew Lucas, for his regular feature, keeping us up to date with highlights involving the Cathedral Choirs.

Since we last met, we have welcomed several new members to our association:

### *Choristers*

Rupert Averill, Alex Beetlestone, Ben Buckner, Isabella Claudius, Rose Entwistle, Darcey Jones and Finley Roberts

### *Lay Clerks*

Ken Burgess (Bass)

### *Organ Scholar*

Dewi Rees

Sadly, a number of members have passed away during this time, including:

The Reverend Anna Matthews (Minor Canon and Precentor 2006 to 2012)

Adrian Weatherhead (Cathedral Chorister 1955 to 1957)

John Tournay (Cathedral Chorister 1943 to 1950 and Alto Lay Clerk 1958 to 1969)

I was pleased to join several members at John's funeral service near Leighton Buzzard a few weeks ago).

The highlight of the last year has, quite rightly, been the gathering and memorial service held in Luccombe to commemorate the life of Peter Hurford. We amassed a choir of 12 voices

with a larger number of members and friends joining us for a most enjoyable and successful weekend. The focus of the service was the unveiling of a memorial plaque to Peter Hurford which is affixed to the wall adjacent to the organ where he learnt to play, the inscribed wording carefully chosen by the Hurford family and ECA.

A full account of the weekend can be found in Alban Notes (54) complete with pictures. As Simon states in this account "This was a joyful weekend, with hearty fellowship erupting at every encounter, and acquaintances renewed after decades. It concluded in fine style with lavish refreshments provided by the village."

I would like to extend my personal thanks, and those of all who attended, to Simon Trott, our Honorary Secretary, for arranging such a fabulous event, not only for his efforts arranging accommodation and refreshments, but for his meticulous planning with the DAC and others to ensure the rules concerning installation of the memorial plaque were adhered to - no easy task.

The Cathedral Choir have just returned from a tour to Italy performing in several historic venues. I'm sure we shall all read detailed accounts in the next edition of Alban Notes.

I was pleased to attend fund raising events earlier this year to support the tour, a concert held at St. Nicholas Church and a quiz at the Cathedral. Over 200 tickets were bought for supporters to attend the quiz night held in the nave, and much fun had by all. As I drew the raffle during the interval I took the opportunity to promote the ECA and commented how the only tours held in my time as a Chorister was to Paris and Bedford and remarked on how many wonderful opportunities are available to the choristers of today.

I was pleased to meet with our Patron and Dean of St. Albans, The Very Reverend Jo Kelly-Moore, a few weeks ago with Malcolm Bury. During tea we discussed the history of our ECA and plans/ideas for the future. It is heartening to hear the passion and drive she has to support the ECA, building on such support from our previous Patron, Dean Jeffrey John.

As many members will know by now, the current Master of Music, Andrew Lucas, who has been in post for 25 years has announced his retirement at the end of the next academic year (July 2024). Ideas are already being discussed to mark his service and retirement, not only by the ECA but many other organisations which he is involved in.

During our meeting with Dean Jo, we have decided to hold next year's AGM prior to Choral Evensong in which we will participate with the Cathedral Choir, and no doubt hold a reception of some sort post Evensong.

Therefore, I am pleased to announce the date of next year's AGM as Saturday 15th June. Please keep the date free.

We will also be contacting our membership specifically inviting all members who sung under his baton to send photos, videos, stories and memories of their time in the choir and produce a tribute of some kind to Andrew.

I would like to draw this report to a close with, once more, my personal thanks to your committee, our Honorary Life Members and the Music Department for your support of this wonderful association, and look forward to continued support as we move forward.

Ladies and Gentlemen that concludes my Chairman's report.

*Richard Lilley*

## Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement

(Though JM was absent from the meeting, he had sent a Financial Statement for June 2022 to June 2023, together with supporting bank statement images).

My apologies for not being present for this AGM, but I send my best wishes to you all.

At our last AGM the ECA current account balance stood at £1,597.92

Since then, there has been little financial activity and the only transactions have been a payment to Simon Trott to cover expenses from the Hurford Commemorative Weekend in Luccombe in September 2022, and then a payment in March 2023 to the FCOCA for our annual membership subscription.

The total costs for the Luccombe weekend came to £572.13 and included the production of the plaque, the frame, and their mounting in church. The amount of £403.85 to cover this was kindly donated by the Hurford family.

We are also expecting to pay an amount to Tony Price to cover our web hosting, but the balance of the account as at today stands at £1,409.64.

*Jeremy Meager*

ST added that the portion of £168.28 paid by the ECA for the Luccombe weekend included refreshments at the Yarn Market Hotel for our welcoming reception (£135), printing of the service sheets and the music booklets for choir and organist (£33.28). TP expects this year's web hosting charge to be similar to last (£42). There has been no income this year.

## Election of Committee Members

No nominations for committee members had been received by the secretary. There have been no requests to stand down from the committee.

MB proposed that we re-elect the committee "en bloc" for the next term, seconded by NC (plus others).

The committee is therefore now made up as follows:

Richard Lilley	Chairman
<i>Vacancy</i>	Interim Vice-Chair
Jeremy Meager	Honorary Treasurer
Simon Trott	Honorary Secretary
Tony Price	IT and Communications Manager
Trevor Jarvis	Representative for the Cathedral Choir 1950s
Nic Gibbon	Representative for the Cathedral Choir 1960s
Nick Coleman	Representative for the Cathedral Choir 1970s
Paolo Baroni	Representative for the Cathedral Choir 1990s
Helen Charlston	Representative for the Cathedral Girls Choir
Laura Hicks	Representative for the Cathedral Girls Choir
Nina Vinther	Representative for the Cathedral Girls Choir

RL stated that he had hoped that he could attract a female member to the position of Vice Chair, as per the Constitution. This has not been achieved for four years, so considered that we should make the post available to a male member of the Association.

SD pointed out that it is now 27 years since the inauguration of the girls' choir. The lack of engagement by female members of the ECA is disappointing, though the meeting was sympathetic to what MB termed 'life-cycle issues' where the age groups of female members puts engagement with the ECA as a lower priority.

2024 promises to be an eventful year for the ECA with Andrew Lucas's forthcoming retirement and Dr Barry Rose's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday which both give us the stimulus to plan a significant event on 15<sup>th</sup> June (see RL's report, above) of interest to a wide range of ages and genders amongst members.

## Donations

ST reported on how we have been considering the process of collecting donations at ECA events, as well as facilitating collecting funds via the ECA website. With general moves towards a cashless society we have missed out over the last couple of years on meeting people's generosity with a convenient way of banking donations.

The likely options suggested by TP's research on the subject would involve purchasing a portable card-reader, as well as introducing a 'QR code' to the ECA website. Currently, visitors are invited to make donations to the Cathedral Music Trust.

Adding a facility to collect ECA-specific donations will involve some careful scripting on our web pages. Changes will also involve additional monitoring of our bank accounts, and some administrative effort to acknowledge donations.

To take this matter further it is suggested as a topic for discussion at our next committee meeting, for which we must ensure a convenient date for our Treasurer.

## ECA Archive

As our Archive lead on the committee, PB reported that efforts are ongoing to obtain the small amount of storage space needed to accommodate the 6 boxes of material comprising our archive. PB and RL have observed that there may be available space in the former Song School in Cathedral House, though the Dean's initial reaction was negative.

The meeting nevertheless felt that a persuasive case could be made to the Dean and Director of Music. TJ pointed out that the material needed to be located somewhere convenient for researchers, without the need to negotiate flights of spiral stairs.

MB reminded the meeting that previous discussions with the Music Department had established that the Cathedral Choirs now maintain an archive of "current" material, meaning that the ECA archive would not expand significantly, until maybe it was decided that part of the current archive could be handed over, perhaps considering the participating ex-choristers' dates of service.

TJ said that he will be pleased to assist with ongoing work on the archive.

## ECA Yearbook

TP is considering the best date to plan for publication of the next ECA Yearbook. The content of this could focus on Andrew Lucas's tenure at St Albans, making publication in 2024 / 2025 likely.

About 35 copies of the previous 2021 Yearbook remain available for distribution to interested members (also delivered over the website). Member updates are being continually updated on the database by TP, though a special call could be planned to encourage members to enhance individual's content with their stories.

## FCOCA

Further to RL's comment in his report, MB wondered about the viability of the FCOCA, considering that key officers of this organisation are considering retiring. RL stated that succession planning is ongoing, alongside a project of rebranding to make the FCOCA more engaging to younger generations.

*The meeting closed at 12:45 pm.*