

REACHING OUT

*A celebration of the work
of the Choir Schools' Association*





The Choir Schools' Association represents 46 schools attached to cathedrals, churches and college chapels educating some 25,000 children. A further 13 cathedral foundations, who draw their choristers from local schools, hold associate membership. In total CSA members look after nearly 1700 boy and girl choristers.

Some schools cater for children up to 13. Others are junior schools attached to senior schools through to 18. Many are Church of England but the Roman Catholic, Scottish and Welsh churches are all represented. Most choir schools are independent but five of the country's finest maintained schools are CSA members.

Being a chorister is a huge commitment for children and parents alike. In exchange for their singing they receive an excellent musical training and first-class academic and all-round education. They acquire self-discipline and a passion for music which stay with them for the rest of their lives.



CONTENTS

Introduction by Katharine, Duchess of Kent	1
Opportunity for All	2
The Scholarship Scheme	4
CSA's Chorister Fund	6
Finding Choristers	7
Chorister Outreach Programme	8
CSA's Purpose	12



About the author:

CSA is very grateful to journalist Peter Kingston for writing the text. Peter was head chorister at Westminster Cathedral Choir School and read music at Oxford. He has worked in Fleet Street for 30 years, including 18 years at *The Guardian* where latterly he was further education editor. His four children have all been choristers at Wells Cathedral and he conducts a local church choir.

UPHOLDING THE CHORAL TRADITION

In the last twenty years two important government schemes have played hugely significant roles in bringing choral music into the lives of thousands of children in England.



In 1985 the Choir Schools' Association set up a Bursary Fund with the long term aim of ensuring that no child is denied a place in the choir stalls through lack of funds. This celebratory document tells the story of how the choir schools became part of the Government's Music and Dance Scheme in 1991. Today the MDS supports over 2000 gifted children a year, including more than 100 cathedral choristers.

It also celebrates nationwide chorister outreach work which grew from an initiative launched in Truro in 2000 when a handful of choristers were used to help encourage singing in Cornish primary schools. Many of our cathedral and choir school foundations now run primary school workshops leading to performances in cathedrals throughout the country. The Chorister Outreach Programme has been part of Sing Up – the National Singing Programme – since 2008. Last year alone, cathedral musicians and their teams worked in nearly 500 schools, reaching more than 30,000 children and their teachers. Research by the University of London's Institute of Education has found that these outreach programmes are successfully boosting singing development and improving attitudes towards singing in our primary schools.

Singing – whatever the genre – has the power to unite and instil discipline, as well as encourage self-respect and respect for others. Nowhere is this truer than through outreach work, whether it be through singing or the number of other musical outreach initiatives in CSA member schools. Cathedral and choir school foundations are joining forces with music services to promote singing and, through teacher training, leaving a lasting legacy in our primary schools.

Of prime importance, however, is the CSA's commitment to the boy and girl choristers, who on a daily basis play such an important part in upholding the centuries-old choral tradition in British cathedrals and collegiate foundations. It is one of our greatest and best-loved national treasures and, thanks to the Chorister Outreach Programme, one that is being appreciated far more widely within the community.

I commend *Reaching Out* to you in the hope that you will enjoy reading it and understand why the last two decades have been both challenging but very rewarding for the Choir Schools' Association.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katharine'.

Katharine, Duchess of Kent

*Patron of the Choir Schools' Association and Founder of Future Talent,
a charity which finds, funds and nurtures musically gifted individuals aged 5–18*

OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

It was a pretty ordinary looking announcement, hardly distinguishable from the other small advertisements in the newspaper. But this one was going to change lives.

Back in 1963 this advertisement appeared in *The Universe*, the Catholic weekly, and in one household it set off a fierce debate. The small boy at the centre of the row was unaware of this, and the prospect of a trip to London, which he had never visited, was so exciting that he gave barely a thought to the condition attached to the deal. "You will have to sing for someone when you get there."

One verse of *Baa baa black sheep* – the only song he could think of when put on the spot – plus a few aural tests hardly dented the day and it was soon forgotten, by the boy at least. But for my parents the wait grew increasingly uncomfortable. The argument resumed.

Briefly, my father's case was that a council house family like ours was overreaching itself. He wasn't hostile to church music. Far from it – he loved it.

Wanted
boys aged seven
or thereabouts
with pleasant singing
voices and reliable
musical ears.

Ours was possibly the only radio on the estate tuned to *choral evensong* on Wednesday afternoons. My father, who had converted to Roman Catholicism during the war, had been a parish church chorister as a boy.

At Westminster Cathedral there was only one scholarship on offer which paid all the fees. If I didn't win it, my father argued, the family had no chance of being able to afford to send me to the school and I would be devastatingly disappointed. Better, he reckoned,

not to try at all, not to raise false hopes. And even if I did somehow win it there was no guarantee that my younger brother, if his turn came, would follow suit. And so he risked cruel disappointment, too.

A brief letter brought the news that I had won a place at Westminster Cathedral Choir School. Apart from having to purchase a voluminous amount of



BBC Radio 3's Choral Evensong was first broadcast in October 1926 live from Westminster Abbey and has been broadcast weekly ever since. It is aired twice weekly – live at 4pm on Wednesday and repeated at 4pm on Sunday. Here are Ely choristers in front of the outside broadcast unit early in 2010. For details of weekly broadcasts check the CSA website on www.choirschools.org.uk



uniform there was not a penny to pay.

The number of choir boys in the country as a whole had started falling in the early 1960s. How many other boys might have been in with a serious chance but were prevented from applying because of family circumstances or because they had cautious parents was open to conjecture.

Over recent years this problem has become of growing concern to the Choir Schools' Association (CSA), which represents 46 schools attached to cathedrals, churches and college chapels around the country. For one thing it is indefensible to restrict the worship of God through singing to those socio-economic groups that can afford to pay to do it, thus denying the wonderful opportunities of a choir school to many children who would benefit from a first-class musical education. It is also vitally important that cathedrals should broaden access to their choirs.

That is why two national schemes, unique in the world, and supported by governments and the taxpayer are so important – not just for choristers now but for future generations and the survival of this country's great choral tradition.

For nearly 20 years governments, Conservative, Labour and now the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition, have believed it right to help families of modest means who cannot pay the fees for a son or daughter who has been accepted into one of the CSA's member choir schools. The Choir Schools' Scholarship Scheme is part of the older and much bigger Music and Dance Scheme, a £30 million programme that gives over 2,000 exceptionally talented children access to the best specialist music and dance training available alongside a good academic education. It is currently funded by the Joint Children and Young People's Culture Team at the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

A second scheme, developed by choir schools and cathedrals themselves, involves taking singing into primary schools. It was created in 2000 at Polwhele House, the Choir School attached to Truro Cathedral. The initial results were impressive. So impressive, in fact, that the Government decided to nurture this

initiative and inject a healthy amount of money into it. In 2008 the Chorister Outreach Programme became part of Sing Up, the National Singing Programme.

The success of the scholarship scheme and of the choir schools' collaboration with Sing Up has been due in no small measure to the work of one man.

Robin Kiel, until March 2010 an official at the Department for Children Schools and Families, straddled the worlds of music and of government. A student motorcycling accident snuffed out a budding career as a professional bassoonist and he became a civil servant. For the past two decades he has worked hard to foster links and understanding between cathedral musicians and politicians, and has been a tireless advocate for Britain's choral heritage.

The fact that one-tenth of the annual £10 million funding earmarked for the National Singing Programme has gone to choir schools is a measure of the impact that they make and have made on the "national music ecology", he says.

"Choir schools tend to be quite reserved in broadcasting their own achievements," he adds. "More people need to be made aware of this great tradition and how it is now impinging on primary schools up and down the country."

There is, says Mr Kiel, a link between the state of health of cathedral choral music and the general musical health of the nation.

"You can find a choir school and a cathedral in virtually every major city and town in the country and they are a great resource. Not only do we have the great architectural and historical resource of cathedrals but there is that musical and excellence of singing that's the hallmark of their choir schools."

THE SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME

In 2010–11 this will help 120 children – roughly 10% of the total – become or remain as choristers.



Emilia's Story

"It's made such a difference to me," says Emilia Hughes.

The 24-year-old professional singer is describing her childhood years as a cathedral chorister, first at Salisbury and then at Wells. "All that early basic musical training: singing the psalms, sight-reading, and the huge repertoire was so important and I just carried on singing."

Those decisive years in the stalls might not have happened for her, however, were it not for some critical assistance with paying fees. Most choir schools are in the independent education sector. Emilia is one of many young people over the past two decades to have benefited from the CSA's Bursary Trust and the Government's Choir Schools' Scholarship Scheme. She also had an MDS funded place as a specialist singer at Wells.

"It did make a difference," she says. "My parents certainly wouldn't have been able to afford the fees."

The Choir Schools' Scholarship Scheme was launched on a modest scale nearly 20 years ago, and initially helped a few choir schools which were showing innovation. It reflected an increasing recognition in the choir school world that there should be the widest possible access to the unique opportunities that being a cathedral chorister brings to a child.

Since time immemorial chorister families have enjoyed a remission of school fees as recognition of the service their children perform and to help nurture their talent, through training and education. The scale of this has varied from foundation to foundation. Up to five years ago chorister parents would typically have had to find 50% of the fees for their sons but more in the case of their daughters because foundations on the whole have not had the time to build up the endowment funds to support their girls' choirs as bountifully as the boys.

At some foundations, the financial support for choristers was more generous. In the case of choristers at Westminster Abbey, for example, about 90% of their fees were subsidized.

Finding the remainder of the fees, whether 50% or not, still put a choir school education beyond the means of a significant proportion of parents of potential choristers. Five years on and many parents face the prospect of having to find even more than half of the fees as cathedral endowment funds are no longer able to keep pace with rising school fees and the ever-tighter demands on cathedral finances.

There are a variety of sources for help with paying the shortfall of fees. Foundations have sometimes been able to find other small parcels of money for deserving choristers, as have choir schools and Oxbridge colleges.

In 1991 the Conservative Government established a "modest grant scheme" for choristers at CSA schools. The late Dame Angela Rumbold, then Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (DES), was persuaded that there should be similar arrangements for choristers as existed to help very promising young instrumentalists and dancers. The need to maintain Britain's choral heritage was clearly understood.

The notion of some kind of bursary support for choristers from low income families chimed in with



These choristers sing in Westminster Abbey and are educated in the only UK choir school that admits just choristers and probationers.

the Conservatives' Assisted Places Scheme, which provided free or subsidised places at fee-paying schools for bright youngsters who could not otherwise afford to go.

"In 1991 £20,000 went to four choir schools – the fund was aimed at schools with innovative practices such as the new girls' choir at Salisbury," Robin Kiel recalls. "Now more than £200,000 of government funding supports a lot more choristers all over the country."

The Music and Dance Scheme has always enjoyed cross-party support and in 1997 the incoming Labour Government agreed that it should continue, although it scrapped the Assisted Places Scheme.

Robin Kiel is satisfied that the Scheme has gone some way to

broaden the intake of choristers to include more youngsters from families on income support, on benefits and on low incomes, who definitely would not have otherwise been able to go to choir schools.

In recent years the MDS has also enabled talented youngsters to attend 21 regional centres for advanced training (CATs), some of them in music conservatoires while staying at their own schools, as well as supporting a number of designated music and dance institutions such as Wells Cathedral School, Chetham's School of Music, the Menuhin School, the Purcell School, St Mary's School in Edinburgh and the Royal Ballet School.



Choristers at Durham Cathedral.

Sarah's Story

Her mother, Marie, recalls when Sarah came home from her Sunderland primary school fizzing with excitement, following an outreach visit to the school by a group of choristers from Durham Cathedral. Sarah also attended a Music Outreach Concert held at the Cathedral.

"She was completely in awe of the building," Marie says. "Her primary school then put some children forward to participate in Durham Cathedral Young Singers (a community choir for 8–13 year olds) and she just took to it."

Mish Kelly, Director of Music Outreach says, "Sarah immediately stood out. She could sing strongly and well in time, and acted as a musical leader for the other less confident singers."

Marie says, "When Sarah realised there were opportunities for girls to be choristers, she knew straight away that she wanted to be one. I was apprehensive about her boarding, but she loves it. Alongside the choristership, her academic work has improved, in particular her maths."

Patrin's Story

Heather, his Mum, is an employed single parent from Gateshead, where social deprivation levels are well above the national average. His brother had been a chorister before him (he is now on a fully funded place at a leading independent school in the North East).

Heather says, "As a toddler Patrin always loved attending services at the Cathedral, enjoying the pageantry and the music. As a church-going family he was familiar with worship."

Patrin, now age 10, has been promoted academically and is a year ahead of his peers. Heather says, "I am aware that Durham tries hard to provide opportunities to children from a wide range of backgrounds. Patrin is very proud of what he does. He loves taking part in the Music Outreach Programme and visiting primary schools and is aware that he is part of a centuries-old tradition and enjoys sharing this with others."

Both Sarah and Patrin receive a CSA grant from the Bursary Trust. Patrin receives additional help through an individual donor who is supportive of widening opportunities to children who may otherwise not be choristers.

CSA'S CHORISTER FUND

The CSA set up its own Bursary Trust in 1985.

As well as running its own fund to help choristers, the Association also administers the Government's Choir School Scholarship Scheme. Not surprisingly, more families than ever before have applied for help this year.

Anyone aged 8 to 13 who is offered a chorister scholarship by any of the CSA's full member schools can apply for money to help pay the difference between the value of the scholarship and the full fees. The size of that difference is growing in many cases because of the increasing pressures on cathedral budgets. Endowment funds built up over centuries that could once comfortably cover a sizeable portion of a typical choir school fee can no longer keep pace, so steeply have some of them been rising.

Parents who apply for Trust help are means-tested and each foundation offers a percentage of the fee in the form of a choristership. Trustees meet three times a year to decide on how much applicants should receive. A number of factors are taken into consideration: gross annual income, the contribution already made by the cathedral, and the number of services sung by the choristers.

For individual chorister recipients and their families, the benefits of the Bursary Trust are obvious. It also brings clear advantages for choirs and for cathedral music in general by helping to keep standards up by allowing cathedrals to choose the best applicants on merit.



11-year-old Laurence Kilsby, a chorister in Tewkesbury Abbey's Schola Cantorum, was BBC Radio 2 Chorister of the Year 2009 and a recipient of CSA funding. Laurence was the youngest of the 60 competitors. The final was presented by former chorister Aled Jones in front of an audience of over 2,000 in St Paul's Cathedral.

Despite the verdict of one instrument teacher that her then 6-year-old son, Laurence, did not have "a musical bone in his body" Mum Christine was not deterred. "I always thought Laurence was musical," she says. Luckily she spotted an advertisement for Dean Close School, Cheltenham which educates the Tewkesbury Abbey choristers.



FINDING CHORISTERS

Primary school teachers would once have greeted with scorn any suggestion that they needed help to get children singing, let alone help from cathedral musicians.

Whatever else they taught, they put their pupils through many hours of group singing and bequeathed them a legacy of folksongs and hymns that used to be a part of regular assemblies. That has long gone, as any church organist knows. The average couple in their 20s or 30s planning a wedding these days will struggle to name three hymns.

Inevitably the demise of primary school singing has had a profound impact, not least on cathedral choirs. Over the last couple of generations, the parents wanting a son or daughter to become a cathedral chorister have become a rarer breed.

Richard White, founding head of Polwhele House School in Truro, which educates the cathedral's choristers, recalls that at his voice trial in 1952 at King's College, Cambridge, there were 80 candidates for 3 places.

"Fifty years later even King's would be lucky to get 15 or 16 suitable applicants coming to the voice trials."

So far as anyone could make out there was no simple reason for the drastic decline in primary school singing. However, among the factors were the demands of the national curriculum and the dwindling numbers of teachers able to play the piano to the necessary standard for accompaniment. But schools were never the sole nursery for singing.

"Generations ago many of the boys who came as choristers to Westminster Abbey would have started in their local parish choirs," says Jonathan Milton, Headmaster of the Abbey's choir school. These days not only will many chorister candidates not have been in their parish church choir, but some will hardly have crossed the church threshold.

"We have had several families in recent years for whom the church experience is quite a new one,"

says Mr Milton. Applicants for chorister places are now very unlikely to have sung a psalm before. Some might not even have sung a hymn.

Over the past 50 years the Anglican church, like other Christian denominations in the UK, has seen a dizzying decline in Sunday attendance. In 2002 a European social study ranked the UK as 4th lowest for church attendance in the European Union.

The Anglican church's own "usual Sunday attendance" figures have virtually halved over the past four decades. More than 1.6 million weekly worshippers in 1968 had dropped to 871,000 in 2006.

"Many come for audition today having had very little experience at all," says Mr Milton. "They've sung a little bit at school. A teacher might have said: Oh you've got a lovely voice, have you thought about becoming a chorister?"

Most children will have no idea what a chorister is. "It's often quite difficult for the 8-year-old or 7-year-old child when they are auditioning to know what this would be like," he adds. "It's one of the reasons that we spend so much time in the audition and the whole admissions process."

Once upon a time a boy – in the days of boys-only choirs – would attend on voice trial day and go home to await the verdict. Now many foundations offer would-be choristers the chance to do an informal "pre-audition" to see if they should come along to the formal voice trials.

"We are looking for potential," says Mr Milton. "It's the old thing, a child who is quick on the uptake, who's got a nice clear voice, a good ear and has something about them."

"Be a Chorister for the Day"

Salisbury Cathedral pioneered this informal and friendly way for children to find out about the fun and opportunities offered by chorister life.

Director of Music David Halls, says: "The children have a great time with the current choristers. As well as singing together, they can ask them all the questions they've ever wanted answered about life as a chorister – the daily routine, concerts, recordings, radio & TV broadcasts, tours and all the extra-curricular activities which choristers enjoy. Parents have their own schedule allowing them to gain an insight into chorister life from a family perspective.

"I am particularly trying to reach families with musically-talented children who are not aware of the many opportunities being a chorister at Salisbury Cathedral offers. For many the first step is about breaking down the mystique and myth surrounding chorister life. My choristers are ordinary children from ordinary homes who happen to have a talent for music. True, these young professionals work very hard but they play hard too, their singing is widely appreciated and they learn important life skills. Our open day is a good way to show families what a fantastic time choristers have and see for themselves that becoming a chorister here is both desirable and possible."



CHORISTER OUTREACH PROGRAMME

The beginning

The original chorister outreach initiative was devised in Truro by Richard White. He became Chairman of CSA in 1999 and soon realised that there was a need to address the obvious lack of singing opportunities in primary schools, particularly for boys.

“But how do you get more singing into primary schools?” he asks. “You can’t just dictate to county music advisors or primary heads that there should be singing. You have to show the way – lead by example.”

So small groups of choristers – with the help of Cornwall County Music Services and Truro Cathedral Music department – were taken into three local primary schools in 2000. They sang with the children and showed by example the sort of things a boy’s voice could do.

The organist would take the children through warm ups and they would start singing.

Mr White adds: “They would look aghast as the choristers sang up to top Cs without embarrassment and still looked like rugby players. There would usually be a kick around in the playground afterwards which the choristers would join in. It was all very carefully organised to show boys in particular at the schools that singing was not for cissies.”

The response at the first schools surpassed all expectation and a concert in Truro Cathedral followed. A Junior Choir was set up and still meets every Saturday morning during term time in the Cathedral, so the most enthusiastic primary school singers can carry on and develop their skills after the programme has finished in their schools. Their

teachers can also attend rehearsals and learn how to teach singing and take choir training sessions.

Outreach was never about the cathedral and choristers going it alone. It had to be done in partnership with the county music service. Before the school visits by one of Truro’s three organists, an amateur from the music service would go in and teach the children two or three songs that they would polish up for the end of term concert in the Cathedral, involving four schools at a time.

The children’s families were invited to the concerts. Many of the parents and grand-parents had never visited the Cathedral before.

“The first concert was a wonderful success,” recalls Mr White. “The place was packed out. The children were centre stage but it was a wonderful and moving experience for everybody.”

The organists and choristers would not be coming back the following term because there were fresh schools to visit but on average 4 or 5 children from each school were keen to continue singing and joined the Junior Choir.

“What became very clear to us after these first primary school visits was that the work they needed was far more important than just recruiting choristers,” explains Mr White. “We stopped thinking of it as a recruitment exercise and started thinking in terms of something the country needed – singing led by people who knew what they were doing and could encourage and boost teachers’ confidence.”

A national conference was held in 2002 in the Crypt of St Paul’s Cathedral. Impressed by what they heard,



London Oratory COP programme.

Local children show their enthusiasm for the Chorister Outreach Programme (COP).

“Cos baby, There ain’t no mountain high enough –”

The year 5 class of 9 and 10-year-olds are really starting to sing out now.

There was a little hesitation initially because none of them had sung the song before but now the class is getting into it. All mouths are moving. All eyes are on the lyrics gently scrolling down on the screen in front of them.

“This time let’s see if we can all do the first verse in one breath,” says Dominic Bland, who is standing in front of the children and singing with them. You might recognise his voice if you caught Wells Cathedral boys’ choir singing *BBC 3’s choral evensong* in January. He sang the responses: *O Lord, open Thou our lips...*

Or you might not; just as you might have to look twice to recognise the young man at the keyboard as the figure in cassock, surplice and hood who regularly conducts the girls’ choir in the Cathedral.

Indeed few if any of Oliver Walker’s predecessors as Organ Scholar at Wells Cathedral would recognise his working routine. Accompanying services and taking choir practices, once the sum total of a typical cathedral organ scholar’s duties, is now just a fraction of his schedule. Had you put him in front of a primary school class 18 months earlier he would have had little clue where to start. Now it is as if he has been doing it all his life.

“It’s training for me and cathedral colleagues just as much as it is for the children,” he says. These two young men’s counterparts from cathedrals up and down the country are venturing into primary schools to get the children singing. They regularly bring along groups of choristers from their cathedrals to provide an example and a lead. Those are the bare bones of the Chorister Outreach Programme.

other foundations started to set up their own schemes. The Department of Education and Skills, as it then was, contributed £50,000.

In 2003 Lichfield, Liverpool Metropolitan and Hereford cathedrals launched similar programmes. The following year King’s College in Cambridge, and Bristol and Durham cathedrals joined in; Salisbury Cathedral followed in 2005 and Ampleforth College in 2006.

The Government’s Music Manifesto that year made singing in primary schools a priority. Richard White, by now CSA’s Director of Development, was asked to design and implement a scheme based on the Truro Outreach Programme that could be used by all foundations, whether they had choir schools or not. Ministers allotted £1 million a year until 2011 and the original cathedral and choir school outreach projects became part of the National Singing Programme (Sing Up) in 2008, and known as the Chorister Outreach Programme (COP).



A success...

42 cathedral and choir school foundations ran COP projects in 2009–2010. Their enthusiasm for it would seem to be justified. According to an evaluation of the first year of COP (2008–09) led by Graham Welch, Professor of Music Education at the University of London’s Institute of Education, the programme has proved effective. It has boosted children’s singing development and improved their attitudes to singing. The primary schools involved in it are gaining musically as a result.

“... there is evidence that participation in the COP makes a difference in comparison to a normal potpourri of singing opportunities found in primary schools that are likely to be less structured and sustained in design.”

A diverse catalogue of benefits experienced by schools, pupils and teachers is set out in the reports that each COP has compiled of its activities. The programme has improved the language skills of children for whom English is not their mother tongue; it has improved school attendance; it has calmed

Chorister Outreach Programme

children with behavioural problems; it helped an asthmatic boy's breath control; one boy has been inspired to learn the organ and a girl has been motivated to try conducting. Boys' attitudes to singing have been improved. The confidence of teachers to lead singing in their schools has been boosted by the visits from cathedral musicians and by the knowledge that they can pick these visitors' brains in future.

Merely seeing competent musicians at work has had a good effect. "Children have been inspired by hearing the piano played fluently (frequently not the case within their schools)," notes the report of the Ely COP in 2008-09.

A legacy...

There is tangible evidence that whether it is the prime motive for taking part in COP or not, the Programme has gone some way to reversing the decline in applications to be choristers. For example, numbers have picked up at Truro, the scheme's cradle.

"Recently there were 20 applicants for four places at the vocal auditions," says Richard White. "One or two had been involved with the Junior Choir."

Robin Kiel is convinced that outreach has added a new dimension to the benefits produced by the bursary scheme. "We are getting reports of much more interest in the work of cathedral and collegiate choir schools. The trend of falling chorister numbers has halted."



Ben's Story

The COP did not visit Ben Larham's primary school in St Austell but it has had an extraordinary effect on him by proxy, says his dad, Roger.

When he was eight, Ben came home with a message from his school that a "junior choir" was being started in Truro. Not knowing what to expect his parents took him along to a choir rehearsal.

"It was unbelievable," says his father. "He was actually quite a naughty boy at school. There was talk about him having ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and not being able to concentrate. His reports always said he needed to focus. Ben focused for two hours – he was following every single word. Suddenly here was a little lad who was into music big time."

Seven years later, Ben is a student at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester specialising in singing and composition.

Oliver Walker, fresh from his session with Year 5 at St Paul's Junior School in Shepton Mallet, Somerset, believes that the Outreach Programme is essential for progress. "Wells Cathedral, as a direct result of this project, has become much more approachable by local schools, children and parents. Choristers are being found from new sources."

You would think that it was hard to miss a cathedral, particularly in a place as small as Wells. And yet Oliver Walker and his colleagues have found that a staggering number of children in the surrounding district have never noticed it. "When we go into schools and say we're from Wells Cathedral many of the children don't know what it is. They've never seen it even though they are living within 15 miles of it, let alone heard of a chorister," comments Mr Walker.

He adds: "There is also a resistance from boys that has to be overcome. There is a tendency for them to regard singing as 'cissy'. I think singing is undoubtedly something that comes a lot more naturally to girls. Whether that's social or educational I don't know. But the more we encourage boys the more they realise it's something they can do and it's ok for them to do. That's what's great about taking boy choristers and men from the choir into the schools where they can also enjoy singing songs that aren't necessarily religious."

Gregory Byrne, teacher of the year 5 class I visited, is convinced of the Programme's worth. "I'm the school's music co-ordinator," he says. "But doing singing with the children would have been very difficult for me because I'm really not very musical. This has given me confidence."

As for the children... "They love it without a shadow of doubt. When Oliver came for the first session and did *Hey Mr Miller* the children were singing it all the next day. They look forward to every rehearsal."



"A hugely good thing..."

The schools that take part in chorister outreach have volunteered for it, and are presumably well-predisposed towards the theory of it. Nonetheless if the programme works to the extent that children want to leave their primary school and join the local choir school, any head might balk at that.

Christine Young, head of Valley Road Community Primary School, has lost three pupils – a boy and two girls – to Durham Chorister School. In all three cases not only was she thrilled, she also started fund-raising strategies to help their families to pay.

"The fact that children are coming and going might matter in some places but not here," she says. "Do you know Hendon in Sunderland? It's not exactly a leafy suburb. It's right at the bottom of social deprivation. There is a large turnover of pupils every year. In one academic year I'll have up to 80 children coming into the school and 75 leaving. There's a lot of running away... from debt, crime and broken relationships."

In her opinion the Chorister Outreach Programme is "a hugely good thing". "Anything that explores areas that you haven't been in before is worth doing," she says. "These are new horizons. Who knows what will come out of them? Our school was set up 8 years ago to try to inspire children. We will do anything for that."



Winchester Cathedral. Local children, led by Alan Quadros, Assistant Director of Music at The Pilgrims' School.

CSA'S PURPOSE

Our Vision The promotion of choir schools and choristers and the support of their work

Our Actions We work to;

- Support and promote music for Christian worship in the cathedral tradition
- Support choir schools and their heads
- Promote singing locally, nationally and internationally
- Protect and promote the values of choir school education

Elizabeth Cairncross, CSA Chair (2009-11) writes:

The Choir Schools' Association has been leading the way in sharing the excitement, wonder, awe, discipline, challenge and joy of singing for a long time, and this work is documented and highlighted in these pages. Sometimes schools and cathedrals have done it out of love alone, sometimes we have been fortunate to benefit from local or national support of varying amounts. Recently it has been a privilege to be an increasingly key part of the Government's Sing Up Programme.

We have watched with delight the results of numerous different partnerships as choristers have taken their work out to schools, hospices, hospitals, community groups of different kinds including groups working on 'singing for the brain' – for people with dementia, for example. We have watched people in all these places singing back and singing with choristers, and going on singing on their own. We have watched teachers previously timid about leading singing become enthusiastic practitioners. We have watched cathedrals welcoming increasing numbers of children to sing and to listen. We have watched directors of music, lay clerks and choral scholars and their teams becoming increasingly involved and increasingly skilled at getting people to sing.

It has led to funding not just for projects themselves, but for research, training and development to enable us to secure the future at a local level. It has been thoroughly and robustly scrutinised by rigorous academic teams, and their reports make exhilarating reading.

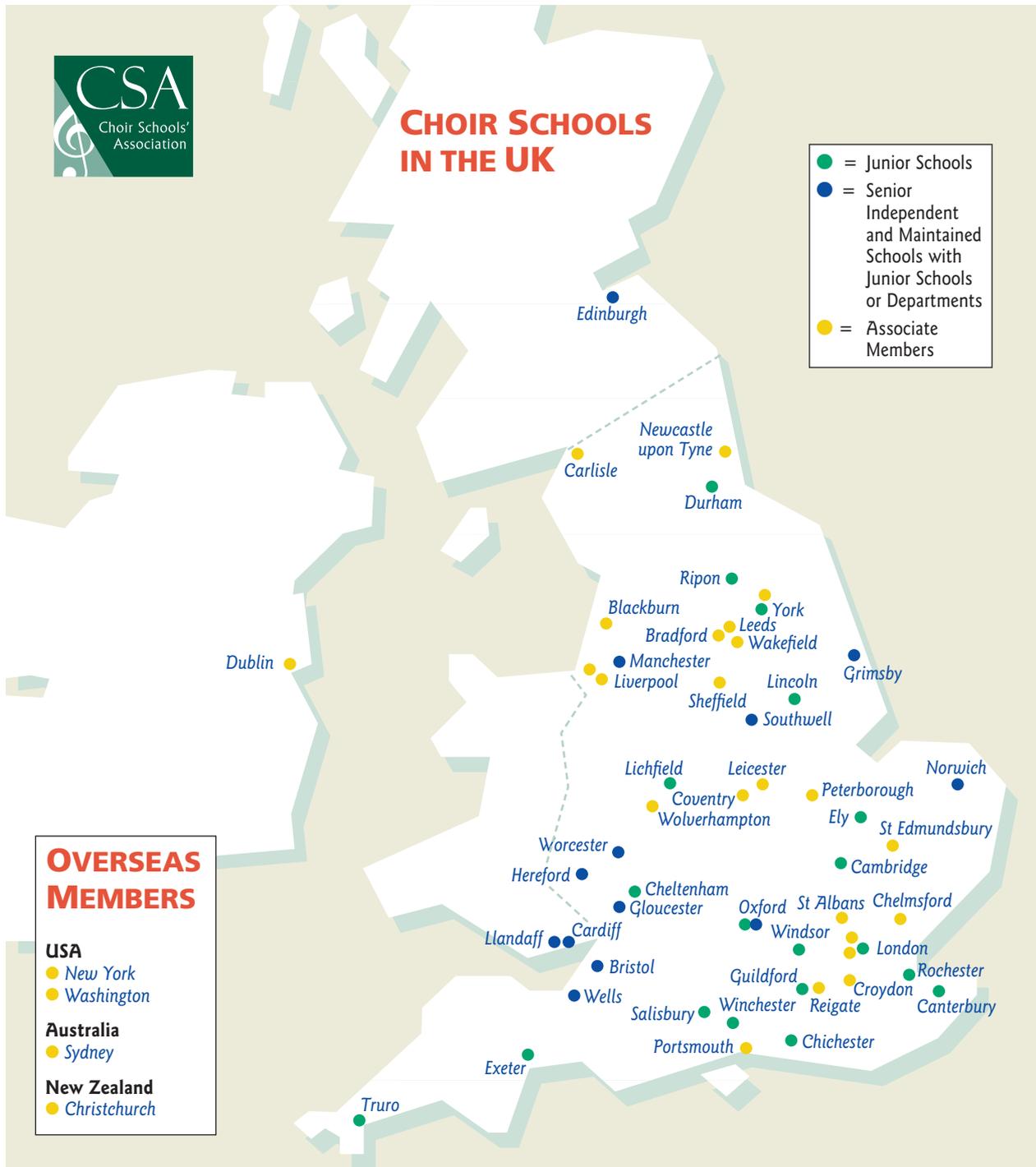
In doing this, many have found new confidence in leading singing, and cathedrals and other 'places where they sing' have developed their mission and purpose. Through all this the golden thread of choristers singing daily services has continued to be spun, and has been strengthened by partnership and outreach. Outreach has stopped being something that we do as an additional luxury. It has become part of our own purpose – a must-have rather than a nice-to-have. The CSA is stronger because of it, and is looking to the future with energy and enthusiasm – and with realistic optimism!





CHOIR SCHOOLS IN THE UK

- = Junior Schools
- = Senior Independent and Maintained Schools with Junior Schools or Departments
- = Associate Members



OVERSEAS MEMBERS

USA

- New York
- Washington

Australia

- Sydney

New Zealand

- Christchurch

CSA Membership

To be a full member of the CSA, a school must provide a choir that sings at least 4 services a week in the foundation it serves, be it a cathedral, church, chapel or a so-called “royal peculiar”, a place of worship that falls directly under the jurisdiction of the Monarch, such as Westminster Abbey or St George’s Chapel, Windsor Castle. Seven CSA schools provide significant girls’ choirs – significant in the number of services they sing. And two schools, Chetham’s in Manchester and St Mary’s in Edinburgh, provide mixed choirs.

