



**CHOIR SCHOOLS' Association**  
www.choirschools.org.uk

# NEWS FROM THE CHOIR SCHOOLS' ASSOCIATION

# SINGING OUT!

The benefits of a Choir School education

ISSUE 17 • SUMMER 2013

PATRON: THE DUCHESS OF KENT

## CHORISTERS... NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS!

CHORISTERS HAVE SUNG SERVICES IN ENGLAND'S CATHEDRALS AND OTHER LARGE CHURCHES FOR OVER FOURTEEN HUNDRED YEARS AND CONTINUE TO DO SO DAILY.



The summer term 2013 saw two very special services which showcased chorister skills to the world. Baroness Thatcher's funeral was held at St Paul's Cathedral in April, while Westminster Abbey was the venue for a service marking the Diamond Celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's Coronation in 1953. (See Centre Pages)

There are numerous other events in the choral calendar such as Magdalen College Choir's 500 year-old tradition of singing the *Hymnus Eucharisticus* from the top of Magdalen Tower at 6am, thus signalling the start of May Day revelry in Oxford (pictured bottom left).



However, it is the singing of the offices of matins and evensong that has been at the heart of choristers' work in the Church of England since the sixteenth century. We need to remind everyone that choristers aren't just for Christmas.

CSA Chairman, Roger Overend adds: "Choir schools also stand as beacons of education in all areas of school life, not just music. Our choristers are respected by fellow pupils for their skills and not ridiculed for their daily tasks. Their work is often taken for granted in terms of the quality of music expected by the thousands of visitors who come to our foundations and hear our choirs sing.

"Choir schools show a 'positive can do' attitude to education and our choristers are a wonderful group of young people, but do we sing their praises enough?"



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# The merry month of May



**May is an important month in the CSA calendar. It's when choir school heads take time out to catch up with colleagues and benefit from their own special brand of CPD (continuing professional development).**

This year's annual conference was hosted by Tim Keyes (right) and his team at The King's School, Worcester. They put together a programme which proved rich in variety and interest. Even the weather was perfect! Our grateful thanks to Tim and the Dean, The Very Reverend Peter Atkinson, for making us so welcome, and to our speakers who helped ensure the 2013 conference was so useful and enjoyable.



● Roger Overend and Edward Kemp

Our guest speakers included two very successful former choristers at Worcester. Dr Stephen Darlington is one of our leading choral conductors and has been Director of Music at Christ Church, Oxford since 1985. We were also delighted to meet Edward Kemp who became a cathedral chorister in 1972. Today he is the hugely energetic and inspiring Director of RADA.



● Stephen Darlington

We benefited from the educational wisdom of David Hanson, Chief Executive of the Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS) and the singing expertise of Katharine Lewis, formerly a performer but now a full-time teacher. Katharine works with Canterbury Cathedral choristers and students at the Royal College of Music Junior Department and the National Youth Choir.

Our final speaker was John Rutter who divides his time between composition and conducting. He formed the Cambridge Singers as a professional chamber choir primarily dedicated to recording after he gave up the post of Director of Music at Clare College, Cambridge in 1979.



● Sixth Former Dominic Lee entertains

● Susan Rees, CSA Administrator

Addressing conference delegates, Chairman Roger Overend, Headmaster of King's Rochester Preparatory School, said: "David Miliband said recently 'that those who mess around at school are heading for the dole queue'. I don't think our choristers will be there!"

"The Director-General of the CBI said that we need to help to make young people 'rounded and grounded' and I feel that we in choir schools certainly do that.

"There is no doubt that we teach choristers how to approach hardwork, how to work as a team-member and how to prepare for public performances in a way that probably no other group of young people (except possibly in sport) are prepared.



● Fr Sergi D'Assis Gelpi, Head of the Montserrat Choir School in Spain with The Dean of Worcester

"Our choristers usually have great confidence, few nerves, are disciplined and are leaders; something which I hope will greatly help them when they are looking for employment, in what will, I am sure, remain an uncertain area for young graduates leaving university.

"Choristers are usually highly-organised, motivated, aware of things of quality and keen to succeed. I strongly believe that choristership will help our young people be marked out as candidates of potential note in their chosen profession."

"There has been a cultural shift in music in this country. Classical music used to be centre stage; now it is peripheral. There used to be music (which meant classical music) and then there was pop music. Now, if you say "music", most people will assume that you mean pop unless you make it clear that it means "classical".

"In the 1950s, the funeral of Vaughan Williams was broadcast to the nation. Classical music was at the centre of the musical life of our country. Organists from our leading cathedrals routinely received knighthoods. These days, the Knights are Paul McCartney, Elton John and Cliff Richard.

"So classical music has to fight for public recognition. Many great concerts are not even reviewed. Classical writers and performers have to earn attention much more than they used to, and must learn to bang their own drum.

"Cathedrals have learned to be much more welcoming and to provide much better facilities. A cathedral shop is now a place where you expect to find a wide range of interesting recordings, for instance. For a visitor overseas, a cathedral evensong is still a unique experience in world music... What happens in a cathedral is still a mystery to most people. How can we change that?"

JOHN RUTTER

# BRITTEN CENTENARY

The world is commemorating the centenary of the birth of one of England's greatest composers – Benjamin Britten. He was born on 22 November 1913, appropriately St Cecilia's Day, celebrating the patron saint of music.

CSA Chalman, Roger Overend, says "Aldeburgh Music are organising a host of events including *Friday Afternoons* which is a year-long project highlighting the composer's legacy of work for young people. The set of 12 songs will be sung by thousands across the UK on Friday 22 November 2013. I would love all CSA schools to be involved."

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The project is also looking for a new song from a young composer. Author and screenwriter Anthony Horowitz has written

two new song texts, inspired by *Friday Afternoons*, especially for young composers to set to music.

The Britten Young Songwriter competition is open to individuals or groups aged 18 and under and the closing date for entries is Wednesday 11 September 2013. The winning entries from the two age groups (Best 13 and Under; Best 14-18) will have their songs recorded and published on the *Friday Afternoons* website. The overall winners will be invited to Snape Maltings on 22 November when their songs will be performed as part of the national *Friday Afternoons* culmination celebrations.

[www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk](http://www.fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk)

## CSA's Young Composer 2013

**12 year-old Seung-Youn Han, a chorister at Westminster Abbey, has won this year's competition. As reported in *Singing Out! 16*, we are delighted that the David Willcocks Music Trust now sponsors this and that Jonathan Willcocks was the Adjudicator.**

Jonathan says: "I was so pleased to be able to enjoy 18 compositions by choristers from CSA member foundations. Well done to you all! There was lots of contrast in music styles and approaches to the challenge of setting words by Canon Neil Thompson, Precentor of Rochester Cathedral."

Seung-Youn won £100 to be spent on something to help his musical development and will be custodian of the trophy given by Friends of Cathedral Music (FCM) for the year. We were delighted to welcome him to Worcester to hear the Cathedral Choir give his winning entry its first public performance during the CSA Conference in May. Salisbury Cathedral Choir will be singing runner-up Cecily Moorsom's introit at Evensong on Monday 8 July.

**Congratulations also to the five runners-up – each of whom received a prize of £35:**

- Francis Bamford and James Futcher from St Edmund's School, Canterbury
- Frederick Frostwick, from Westminster Abbey Choir School
- James Laczko-Schroeder – a pupil at St Martin's, Ampleforth
- Cecily Moorsom (pictured below right) from Salisbury Cathedral School



Seung-Youn Han



## Cathedral Primary School set to open

Bristol Cathedral Choir School, now an 11-18 Academy, opens a new junior school in September. As *Singing Out!* was going to press, BCCS received the final go-ahead from the Department for Education for its Cathedral Primary School, part of the government's Free School Programme.

Sara Yarnold, currently Deputy Head at Hotwells Primary School in Bristol is to be the first Head Teacher. The school will expand over the coming years but will start with 30 children in Reception this autumn.



"I am very excited and proud to be taking up the post as Head Teacher of Cathedral Primary School," she said. "I look forward very much to meeting the first Reception children and their families. It will be a real privilege working with them to create a vibrant and safe school where children will develop a love of learning and are engaged in all aspects of their school life."

Neil Blundell, BCCS Principal and Executive Principal of Cathedral Primary School, adds: "Part of the vision for the school is that it will provide a musically enriched curriculum, encouraging children to sing right from the beginning and giving them access to instrumental lessons. Our hope is that these children will form the core of the Cathedral Choir in the future, although we will still be drawing choristers from across the wider Bristol area."

Mr Blundell added that, following the expansion of Bristol Cathedral Choir School in recent years, the Cathedral Choir is currently in excellent shape, with 46 boy and girl choristers.

Abbey House, an historic building on the BCCS campus, will be the new school's home for its first one or two years. Recently refurbished, it overlooks the trees of College Square and has its own garden and separate access.

Stephen Parsons, Cathedral Primary School's Chair of Governors, said: "I would like to thank parents for their tremendous support over the last months, which has led to Cathedral Primary School being heavily over-subscribed, with 4.6 applications for every place in Reception – quite an achievement for a school that has still to open!"



# CHORISTER SKILLS SHO

## Baroness Thatcher's Funeral – St Paul's Cathedral

The announcement of Baroness Thatcher's death on 8 April brought about a flurry of activity at St Paul's Cathedral.



Neil Chippington, Headmaster of the Choir School, writes: "We had known for some time that her funeral would be held here, but those of us tasked with organising the choristers had hoped it might happen during term-time. Unfortunately it was in the middle of the Easter holidays!

"After numerous emails and telephone calls, I managed to get all the boys back from various parts of the world with the wonderful help and co-operation of their

parents and senior staff in the school. The boys returned two days before the service."

Harry Jackson, Head Chorister, takes up the story: "Our first rehearsal included just the choristers and Mr Carwood spent quite a bit of time explaining about Baroness Thatcher and why she was a controversial figure. "We couldn't rehearse the next morning because there was a memorial service for the

cricket commentator Christopher Martin-Jenkins. The first rehearsal in the afternoon was a dress rehearsal of the funeral service. Mr Chippington stood in for the Prime Minister and read his lesson and Mrs Lovell stood in for Baroness Thatcher's granddaughter. It was amazing watching the coffin being carried by the soldiers.

"We had a bit of a break after the dress rehearsal before going back to the Cathedral for a music rehearsal to check the sound balance with the BBC. The Thatcher family arrived during this rehearsal

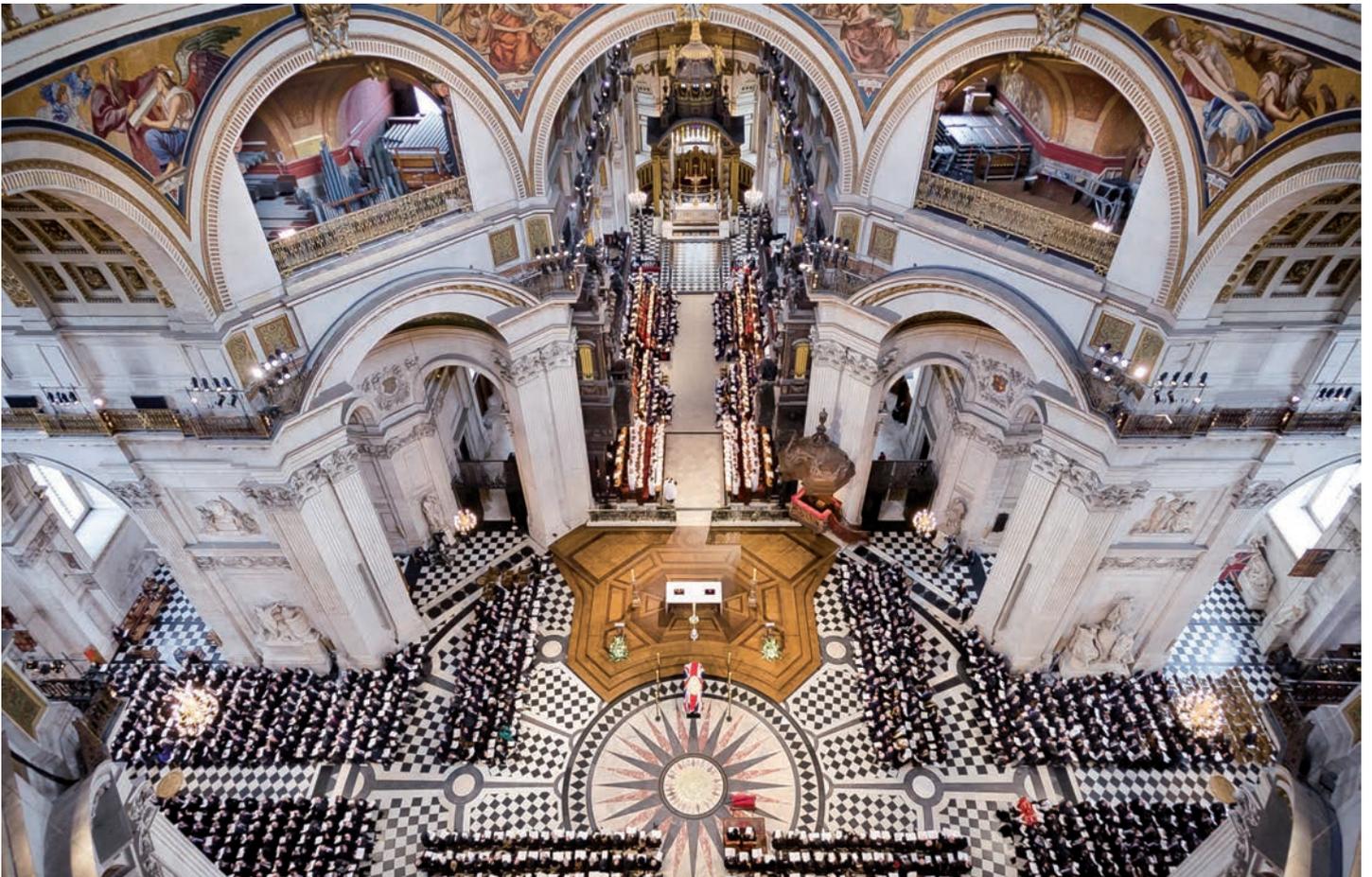
and we heard Baroness Thatcher's granddaughter practice her reading.

"We spent the night in school. Everyone was quite excited as we knew we had an important job to do the next day.

"On the morning of the funeral we went into the Cathedral for a final rehearsal and warm-up with the Vicars Choral. There were obviously a lot of people in there already as quite a noise was coming from the Cathedral floor.

"After all the rehearsing and the lectures from Mr Carwood and the Headmaster we were ready, and made our way to the west end where we were to lead the coffin down the nave. We saw the Queen and the Prime Minister as we processed and sang. The service went just like the dress rehearsal and therefore we didn't feel nervous. Everything ran to time and at exactly midday, the coffin left the Cathedral.

"We managed to get out of the Cathedral fairly quickly at the end of the service but we had to be taken to the edge of the security cordon by the police to meet our parents. It had been a great occasion but we were glad to get back to our holiday for few more days."



# WCASED TO THE WORLD

## Coronation Anniversary Celebration – Westminster Abbey

“WE ALWAYS LOVE SINGING FOR THE QUEEN. SHE IS A VERY SPECIAL PERSON AND THIS IS A SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY. IT IS A GREAT HONOUR AND PLEASURE TO SING AND WE WILL REMEMBER THIS PARTICULAR SERVICE FOR A VERY LONG TIME TO COME.”

Ben Maclean, Head Chorister,  
Westminster Abbey



**The term ‘chorister’ is often loosely used to describe any group of singers, whatever their ages. The chorus members of English opera houses are often described as ‘choristers’. Sometimes even solo singers are called choristers. Poets call birds choristers.**

The word – or rather its Latin forebear – emerged in the second half of the thirteenth century as *chorista* or *querista* and it referred exclusively to a boy with an unbroken voice singing in the choir of a secular (non-monastic) cathedral. Prior to the thirteenth century they had simply been *pueri* – boys. In the early middle ages the boys who sang in the choirs of monasteries and the girls who sang in nunneries were called oblates rather than choristers.

A ‘choral foundation’ refers to a church (or cathedral or monastery) in which a force of choral singers has been established, whether by statute, custom or endowment, to sing regularly.

*Adapted from ‘The English Chorister’ – Alan Mould.*



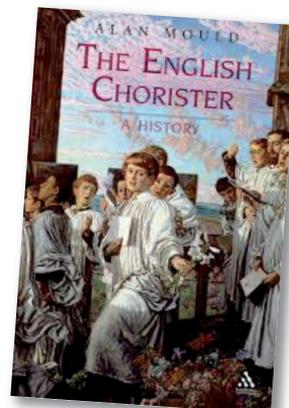
### The English Chorister

is a history of choristers singing in cathedrals, whether secular cathedrals like Chichester and Hereford or those that were originally monastic, like Ely and Winchester.

It is also a history of choristers singing in collegiate foundations such as St George’s, Windsor and King’s College, Cambridge which have combined roles of education and prayer.

Written by Alan Mould, former headmaster of St John’s College School, Cambridge and a former CSA Chairman, it was first published in 2007 and continues to be in demand. It is an excellent read and makes a terrific present for anyone with a love of our unique choral tradition.

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# FORTY YEARS ON...

CSA Honorary Member Robert Western reflects on attending forty CSA annual general meetings!

**I became headmaster of Lincoln Cathedral School in January 1974 having joined the school in September 1965 as an assistant master teaching mathematics and also to act as Priest Vicar at the Cathedral.**

At the outset I knew nothing about church music, although I had a general interest in classical music. In becoming the Priest Vicar I was stepping into a new world. For eight years I sang the Office four or five times each week (even though I couldn't read a note of music – and still can't) and soaked up this wonderful music; the settings and the anthems. I saw choristers who were totally committed in what they were doing as they sang their way through all this magnificent music. This experience and sense of wonderment has stayed with me ever since.

When I eventually became headmaster I found myself a member of the Choir Schools' Association and that, clearly, meant attending the AGM. My first was in the summer of 1974 at St Paul's. It bore little resemblance to the ones we have had in recent years.

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TO BEGIN WITH THE AGM WAS A ONE-DAY EVENT; IN FACT HARDLY THAT BECAUSE WE HAD TO GET THERE AND THEN HOME AGAIN AT THE END.

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I arrived at St Paul's mid-morning. The boys had been sent off for the day on an 'expedition' because (we were told) there was not enough space to accommodate them and us. After an excellent lunch we were addressed by Duncan Thomson (Headmaster of Ripon) who single-handedly, it seemed to me, ran the whole 'oufit'. 'Addressed' is perhaps something of an overstatement because the whole meeting had an air of informality. The Statement of Accounts listed subscriptions £62, advertisements £39, and Secretary's expenses £14.54. The balance in the bank stood at £15.69.

For some years the CSA Heads' Annual Meeting remained like a luncheon club. It was very pleasant but seemed to have very little to do with the business of running a choir school. Change came and the pace quickened when Jane Capon



● Robert and Thelma Western

(then at the Independent Schools Information Service) came to advise the Association about how it could move forward. We were introduced to the idea of realistic publicity and marketing, of raising our profile and of courting those in power who could enable funding to be made available. I felt, as a member of the committee by this time, that we were on the move.

However, the one-day AGMs continued and I recall, as Chairman, the meeting we had at St Michael's School, Tenbury in 1985. The imminent closure of the school hung over us but the only issue which seemed to preoccupy the Association was 'criteria for membership'. Problems with recruitment were starting to come to the fore but seemed, for most, low on the agenda or not an item for airing.

The annual meeting became a two-day conference in 1988 under the chairmanship of Christopher Martin, then head of Bristol Cathedral School. Speakers, discussion groups and a dinner gave the whole event a sense of 'gravitas'. A new agenda item was the Bursary Trust Fund which had been set up in haste in 1986 when a businessman in the Midlands informed CSA that he intended to bequeath a large sum of money to the Association.

These days, with the introduction of an informal, pre-conference meal the CSA Conference spans three days.

It is only necessary to look at a recent programme for the Conference together with the Accounts to see how dramatically things have changed over the last four decades. In 1974 we had a brief statement on the Association's standing from the Secretary and Treasurer – one person – Duncan Thomson. Now, as well as a report from the Chairman, there are reports from the Treasurer, the Administrator, the Director of Development and the Information Officer.

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IN SPITE OF ALL THESE CHANGES, THE RAISON D'ÊTRE OF THE ASSOCIATION REMAINS THE SAME; TO HELP SAFEGUARD AND PROMOTE A PRECIOUS AND VITAL PART OF THE CHURCH'S LIFE IN WORSHIPPING GOD THROUGH FINE MUSIC; AN EXPRESSION WHICH CAN INSPIRE AND UPLIFT THOSE WHO SING AND THOSE WHO LISTEN.

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With more and more people choosing to attend cathedrals to worship, not least, I suspect, because of this element in the services, it is so important that its future is ensured.

*Canon Western retired from Lincoln Cathedral School in 1996. In 1982 the Dean and governors had asked his wife Thelma to set up a pre-prep at the school which she ran until 1994. Before finally settling in their house in Sedbergh in 1998, they spent 18 months in Salisbury running the boys' and girls' boarding, with Thelma appointed Guardian of the Girls' Choir. Two years later and the pair were off to serve as Acting Head and Matron at Ripon Cathedral Choir School.*

# Spotlight on... Old Choristers

Each year about 200 boy and girl choristers at CSA schools stop singing in the choir. Most won't be thinking about joining old chorister associations immediately but over the years the majority will have either continued or re-established a link with their choral foundation.

The former chorister network opens up a world of friendships and there are now some 55 associations in membership of the Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations. FCOCA was set up to support Associations for former choristers in cathedrals, chapels royal, collegiate colleges and any other choral foundations with similar aims:

- To further the love of cathedral choral services and Christian worship
- To bring affiliated associations into closer touch with one another
- To encourage the formation of ex-chorister associations where they don't exist

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The Association celebrated its centenary festival in 2010 in Westminster, happily coinciding with the Abbey's 450th anniversary of its re-founding by Queen Elizabeth I. Also that year FCOCA held its 100th AGM at Peterborough Cathedral, where the Federation was originally founded, and where the local association was also celebrating 100 years.

The Annual Festival is the highlight of the year, hosted by a different affiliated association each year. It is a weekend package that usually starts Friday afternoon and includes accommodation, good food, good music and excellent company. The programme allows plenty of time to catch up with old friends and make new ones and there is often the chance for Old Choristers to join the host choir singing part of the service.

The Federation's aim to promote contact and friendship has evolved to help maintain and improve the high standard of choral music which plays such an important part in the daily worship in our cathedrals and collegiate churches. It has, at times, been very vocal in its support for the preservation of our choral tradition and was instrumental in the campaign to retain Choral Evensong on Radio 3 when the BBC threatened to axe the programme.

Any former chorister who is a member of an affiliated association is, by default, a member of the Federation. However, last year FCOCA introduced a new class of membership primarily open, but not restricted, to former choristers who belong to an association which is not a FCOCA member or who do not have an association to belong to. The yearly £10

subscription allows them to attend Federation events and to receive *Once a Chorister* magazine.

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**Richard Belton, FCOCA's Honorary Secretary and a former chorister at Leicester Cathedral writes:**

"We are grateful to CSA for sharing information about the Federation and we would love to hear from any readers who would like to know more about our work. Please visit our website where you will find a wealth of information about the Federation's history, events, shop and our annual publication *Once a Chorister*, edited by Michael Barry (a former Guildford chorister).

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## fooca

### FEDERATION PRAYER

Lord, we thank you for the music we enjoyed in our lives as choristers and sang in your house to glorify your name. Let that music always be a witness to your majesty and love, and remind us that you are always watching, and listening, from your heavenly throne. May your Spirit guide us through our daily lives so that we may continue to be the instruments of your peace, and proclaim your glory with a glad voice.

Adapted from *The Musician's Prayer*



Courtesy of Ely Cathedral Image Library

# Farewell and Welcome

● Tim Skipwith



## FAREWELL PAUL AND JANE

Everyone will miss **Paul and Jane Greenfield** when they leave Salisbury Cathedral School at the end of term and move back to Norwich where Paul was previously Head of The Lower School at Norwich School. However, they leave the school in the hands of someone who is very familiar with the choir school world – **Clive Marriott**, Deputy Head of St Paul's Cathedral School in London. Clive will bring a wealth of experience when he starts in September.



● Clive Marriott

- **Tim Skipwith**, Head of the Junior School at Magdalen College School, Oxford since September 2012 is now CSA member as Senior School Master, Dr Tim Hands prepares to take the Chair for the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference.

Previously Tim taught biology in the Senior School for ten years and for the last six of these was Head of Middle School. Under his watch the school achieved year upon year record GCSE results.

Tim, a former Hockey Blue, says: "The Junior School is every bit as exciting as I had hoped. The atmosphere is simply fizzing with energy; it is vibrant, friendly, purposeful and fun. The boys are engaging, enthusiastic and, above all, happy."

- The new Headmaster of Lichfield Cathedral School is **David Corran** who previously taught modern languages and was a senior housemaster at St Edward's School, Oxford. David is a keen sportsman as well as being an accomplished flute player. He also sang in the Chapel Choir while at Christ Church, Oxford. When asked why he wanted to come to LCS, David said: "As a convinced and practising Anglican, I feel very drawn to the School's unique ethos and place. The combination of absolute excellence in teaching and learning in a purposeful environment where Christian values are embedded in everything from policy-making to charitable fundraising, is inspirational."



● Paul and Jane Greenfield



● David and Florence Corran

- **Ronny Krippner** is the new Organist and Director of Choral Music at Croydon Minster. In an exciting new move the post also includes heading the music at nearby Whitgift School. He was born in Bavaria and studied organ playing and improvisation in Germany while working as Assistant Choirmaster of the well-known boys' choir, Regensburger Domsparzen (The Regensburg Cathedral Sparrows). He took his master's degree in English Cathedral Music at Exeter University and was a Choral Scholar in the Cathedral Choir. He particularly enjoys organ improvisation.



● Ronny Krippner

## Member News

CSA is delighted that once again **Ripon** is represented by the Association. Following the closure of Ripon Cathedral Choir School, Ripon Cathedral joins us as an associate member.

**We are also delighted to welcome a new overseas member – St Paul's Choir School, Cambridge MA in the United States. We will learn more about them in the next issue.**



## SINGING OUT!

is edited by Jane Capon, CSA's Information Officer.

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