

GCOCA 2014 Chairman's Report

As an old new boy to the Committee (I last served here as the very first School Liaison Officer under the mentorship of John Bowdler) it was an honour to be asked to come back and a delight to have been working with an active Committee. Talking about John Bowdler, who finds it difficult now to get about, we have his apologies, through Betty his wife, who has sent us a lovely letter. John would have loved to meet up with you Donald as I believe you were both at King's together. He sends his best wishes.

May I first say how wonderful it is to welcome back Colin Charter to our reunion? Colin you have devoted so many years of your life to keeping this Association running, indeed in existence – as Secretary, Chairman (twice) and then as National Federation Chairman [Edit: Colin thanked JB for the promotion but confirmed that he declined requests to stand for Federation Chairman, choosing instead to remain as Gloucester's FCOCA Representative]. Colin – thank you – we owe you so much. Equally wonderful to see my old friend Raymond Highley who served as Treasurer, for over 30 years we think – again Raymond – thank you for such amazing dedication and loyalty.

turning to the committee, I should like to thank all members – Secretary John Heywood, without whom I should have been rather lost; Treasurer Elvin Young who has managed to bring HSBC under control and keep our books in order; David Arnold, whose invaluable help with all type-setting and printing – newsletters, menus etc contributes so much; Adrian Partington and his team members in the Chapter Office; Canon Heavisides for providing accommodation, together with spiritual and bodily refreshment and all other members of the Committee for their support, dedication and contribution.

We said au revoir to Stephen Power but not good-bye. Our grateful thanks go to him for all he has done for the Association over many years of hands-on involvement and we are delighted that Stephen would like to remain on the committee, helping us from a distance.

At the same time, we warmly welcome Nia Llewellyn Jones, our new Chorister Tutor who joined the Cathedral team last term. We look forward to Nia helping us develop much greater and more positive outreach to new OCs, indeed whilst they are still in the choir. Our thanks must also go to Alison Mayhew at King's for the help and guidance she has given us for this year's

reunion lunch here in the hall.

Since the last AGM, your committee has met on three occasions – November, February and June. Our key focus this year has been on providing an enhanced catering experience for this reunion at the same time keeping the cost acceptable to members. Having a lunch-time meal seems to have been well supported with 45 attending today. The committee will carefully note all feedback following today's event as we wish to ensure a positive experience which members enjoy and will wish to repeat.

In addition to this task, the Association jointly commissioned a new choral work by composer, David Bednall which a number of us has the pleasure of hearing at the Carol Service. We were delighted that Dr Donald Hunt would be our guest this year and look forward to welcoming Mark Lee in 2015. Numbers of Old Choristers singing evensong this year have grown to 14 – very encouraging. Our thanks to Adrian Partington for his continuing encouragement in this undertaking, it is greatly appreciated.

Sadly, we heard of the passing of Old Chorister (Francis) George Allen, just before Christmas last year at the wonderful age of 92. His daughter writes that he was always talking favourably about his time in the Gloucester Choir and his love of music continued all his life in various church choirs in Norwich, where he worked and lived after moving there after the war. Accordingly we have sent the Association's condolences. We also learned of the passing of Donald Green, chorister in the early '50s. I remember Donald very well – a life-long loyal Sunday evensong congregation member, who once kindly drove me home to Bristol, during choir holidays.

Our focus on the coming year will be to try to reinvigorate interest in the Association, through links with the present choir members, through present and past lay-clerks, past and present assistant organists, all of whom should be on our contact lists and who we should like to welcome to future Association events.

Thank you again for your support and involvement.

John Balsdon, September 2014