

ASSOCIATION OF CATHEDRAL VOLUNTARY CHOIRS

A meeting was held on Saturday 6th July 1996 in Vicars' Hall, Wells, Somerset attended by members of the Wells Cathedral Voluntary Choir (WCVC) and the following representatives of other Cathedral Voluntary Choirs (CVCs):-

Janet Love and Hazel Blackhall	-	Derby CVC
Margaret Williams and John Grant	-	Exeter CVC
Martin and Sheila Ham	-	Guildford Occasional Singers
Douglas Henn-Macrae	-	Rochester Special Choir
Bill and Rosemary Neale	-	The Minster Chorale, Southwell
Richard and Juliet Lingham	-	St Mary's Singers, Truro

Dudley Holroyd, Director of Wells CVC, was in the Chair.

The Chairman welcomed all those present and said that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the merits of forming a federation or association of Cathedral Voluntary Choirs and, if there was sufficient enthusiasm, what form it should take. The idea had come from WCVC's vice chairman, Lynne Browning, and the Chairman invited her to report on the reaction she had had from WCVC members and the results of her survey of cathedrals in England, Scotland and Wales.

Mrs. Browning said that the WCVC view was that any federation or association should be kept as informal as possible at this stage: no subscriptions or charitable status, therefore no central administration, treasurer, etc. Each event should be self financing. Of the 42 C of E cathedrals in England, 6 in Wales and St Mary's Edinburgh, only 12 did not reply to the survey. Of the 37 taking part, 16 have a voluntary choir, 14 of whom expressed interest in forming a federation or association of CVCs. 7 choirs were represented at the meeting and apologies had been received from Manchester, Salisbury and Worcester (and since the meeting Edinburgh) who wished to be kept informed.

There followed a very positive discussion. Some of the representatives were present as observers and were not empowered to make decisions on behalf of their choir but there was overall enthusiasm to pursue the idea. It was agreed by the meeting that we should form an association, not a federation, and that an article about the proposed Association should be sent to various church publications, national (**action WCVC**) and local (**action individual CVCs**), and to the RSCM quarterly (**action WCVC**).

The proposed objects of the Association were:-

1. To arrange events periodically on a national or regional basis, the form of which would be at the discretion of the host choir but suggestions were:

A combined evensong followed by a concert at which each choir could make its own contribution and some items could be rehearsed and sung together;

Workshops on a particular composer or period of music, or the combined learning of a modern work conducted by the composer;

2. Sharing or exchanging services between individual choirs;
3. To provide a channel for the exchange of information and discussion of mutually relevant matters.

Distance between cathedrals would be a major consideration and it was likely that the majority of events would be between small groups of choirs within easy reach of each other. Derby thought that small events would enable people to get to know one another and would provide opportunities to discuss mutual problems. Even if all the members of a choir were unable to attend an event, a balanced group of singers would be equally welcome. It would be the task of the host choir to decide on the form and duration and the numbers that could be accommodated for any event. It would also have total responsibility for organising the event and for setting the contribution from participants necessary to cover the cost of the event. It was thought that a major gathering should take place no more frequently than every eighteen months.

Wells offered to host an initial event on 26th April 1997 and Mr. Holroyd suggested for this first occasion a concert at 7.30 pm, perhaps preceded by a Festal Evensong at 5.15 pm. It was suggested that it might be possible to form an orchestra from friends and relations of choir members but Mr. Holroyd counselled caution because of the possibly unknown quality of players and shortage of orchestral rehearsal time.

Guildford offered to host an event in the autumn of 1998 and it was suggested that the date and venue of any event in 2000 should be fixed as soon as possible as many organisations will be competing for dates in that year.

Truro suggested involving ourselves in an already established festival, for example the Three Spires Festival which takes place in Truro each June and is followed in July by the Exeter Festival. Effort and cost would be greatly reduced as the administration and structure was already in place. Mrs. Lingham agreed to investigate plans for next year's programme.

Exeter suggested that some voluntary choirs may have never received the initial survey; Mr. Grant knew of at least one that had not. He suggested that correspondence should be sent to the Cathedral Office when the name of the director of the voluntary choir was not known. It was also vital that each choir should inform the others of any change in the name or address of their contact member.

Truro asked if the Roman Catholic cathedrals had been included in the survey. Mrs. Browning said that she had not written to them as few operate in quite the same way as C of E cathedrals but there would be no bar to their joining the Association if they wished.

Alan Overt Locke (Wells) reflected that by the year 2000 it was likely that much more of the church's affairs would be in voluntary hands and that the proposed Association of CVCs would be increasingly valuable.

Elisabeth Costley-White (Wells) said she would be sending a synopsis of the meeting to the CVCs who had replied to the survey. She suggested that each of the choirs represented might send their views of the meeting and ideas for the future to the other six.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending what had been a very positive meeting.

After the meeting the visiting representatives attended Evensong sung by the Wells Cathedral Voluntary Choir. Drinks were served in the garden of The Rib, a medieval house immediately to the east of the cathedral, and supper was enjoyed in Vicars' Hall. It was felt that the day had been enormously worthwhile and that good and friendly contacts had been made which could lead to exciting developments in the future.

Since the meeting the following suggestions have been made:-

Guildford thought members of the Association might send each other a list of their engagements so that fellow members would know when the voluntary choir of a particular cathedral was singing. Guildford would welcome any visitors, as would Wells, and they would encourage you to introduce yourselves. Enclosed are the WCVC's dates up to next January.

When choirs are assembled for an event, the hosts for the following event should present details of their plans.

Wells CVC will keep a file on the Association which, after the first major event here next spring, they will pass to Guildford, host in 1998. Would member choirs please submit a photocopy of articles as they appear in their local publications so that a record can be kept.

Please let Lynne Browning know the views of your choir, especially confirmation of their wish to become a founding member of the Association of Cathedral Voluntary Choirs. Could you please also confirm the name and address of your official contact. Enclosed is our current list of names and addresses of representatives of those CVCs who have expressed interest in forming an association.

Dudley Holroyd,
28 Audley Grove,
Lower Weston,
Bath. BA1 3BT

Mrs. Lynne Browning,
Elm Tree Farm,
Hallatrow,
Bristol. BS18 5EA

Mrs. Elisabeth Costley-White,
Middle Farm Cottage,
Dinder, Wells,
Somerset. BA5 3PL

Director and Chairman

Vice Chairman

Secretary and Treasurer

of Wells Cathedral Voluntary Choir

ASSOCIATION OF CATHEDRAL VOLUNTARY CHOIRS

The following representatives were either present at the meeting at Wells on 6th July 1996 or sent their apologies whilst expressing a definite interest in the initiative.

Mesdames Love & Blackhall c/o Mr. Tom Corfield,
Derby Cathedral Voluntary Choir,
St. Michael's House,
Queen Street,
DERBY DE1 3DT

Mr. & Mrs. Martin Ham,
Guildford Occasional Singers,
8 Scillonian Road,
GUILDFORD GU2 5PS

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Lingham
St. Mary's Singers Music Society,
10 St. Johns Terrace
Devoran
TRURO TR3 6NE

Mr. John Powell,
Salisbury Congregation Choir,
Bower House,
Shady Bower,
SALISBURY SP1 2RH

Mr. John Wilderspin,
Worcester Cathedral Voluntary Choir,
67 Primrose Crescent,
St. Peter The Great,
WORCESTER WR5 3HQ

Mrs. Elisabeth Costley-White,
Wells Cathedral Voluntary Choir,
Middle Farm Cottage,
Dinder,
WELLS BA5 3PL

Mr. Douglas Henn-Macrae
Rochester Special Choir,
7 Minor Canon Row,
ROCHESTER ME1 1TU

Ms. Anne Milne,
Chapter House Singers, Edinburgh,
c/o St. Mary's Cathedral,
Palmerston Place,
EDINBURGH EH12 5AW

Mr. Philip Rushford,
The Minster Chorale, Southwell,
Minster Office, Trebeck Hall,
Bishop's Drive,
SOUTHWELL NG25 0JP

Mrs. Margaret Williams & Mr. John Grant
Exeter Cathedral Voluntary Choir,
11 First Avenue,
Heavitree,
EXETER EX1 2PH