



NEWS FROM THE CHOIR SCHOOLS' ASSOCIATION

SINGING OUT!

The benefits of a Choir School education

ISSUE 20 • SPRING 2016

PATRON: THE DUCHESS OF KENT

Good news

- 85% of CSA members are actively involved in outreach work, promoting the creative arts within their communities. The Arts Council of Great Britain launched its Cultural Education Challenge in the autumn of 2015 urging all those working in the arts and education industries to "work together in offering a consistent cultural education for all children and young people."
- A recent CSA survey (see page 2-3) found that the majority of members continue to run singing programmes in primary schools, five years after the government's National Singing Programme came to an end. Many also share expertise and resources for instrumental music, drama and other forms of the creative arts.
- 21 members (just over 40% of our total of 52) are actively involved with their local Music Education Hub (MEH). This includes St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton whose Director of Music, Peter Morris, is Chair of the City's MEH. You can read more on page 2.

Not such good news

... but you can help!

The creative arts, however, are under serious threat if government plans for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) go ahead in their present form.

The Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) has campaigned hard to ensure creative subjects are given equal value to other subjects at Key Stages 4 and 5 under EBacc. CSA, along with more than 130 other organisations, has signed up its support. Read what the House of Lords and Tasmin Little think over the page.

• STOP PRESS • STOP PRESS •

The petition opposing the EBacc and its exclusion of creative subjects has hit its target of 100,000 signatures and thus triggered a debate in Parliament!

While we wait to hear when this will take place you can still help by writing to your MP and asking them to share your concerns with ministers. Visit the campaign website at www.baccforthefuture.com for the key messages sheet and a two-page briefing note to share with your MP.

It's not too late to sign the petition – you have until 9 May.

CHAIRMAN TIM CANNELL WRITES...

Welcome to Issue 20 of *Singing Out!* which I hope you will find both enjoyable and informative.

I'm delighted to see just how much outreach work is going on in CSA schools and that many are also part of a Music Education Hub. Hopefully Peter Morris's article on page 2 will encourage even more schools and foundations to become similarly involved. This is such a positive way in which we can share our expertise with the wider community.

This sort of collaboration introduces children to, and broadens their experience of, singing and instrumental playing whilst at the same time opening their minds to the opportunities that becoming a chorister affords.

The effects of austerity measures on county music have been severe in many parts of the country, and choir schools have been doing their bit to support their respective counties.

However, with the government's determination to push ahead with the EBacc curriculum, music education for young people has come under additional threat. We are delighted that ISM has successfully challenged a move that could see the demise of teaching the arts, including music, in state schools and we urge readers to lend their support before the Parliamentary debate.

The unique experience of being a chorister, singing with professional singers on a daily basis, encourages children to develop their musicianship in a structured and supported way. Alongside this, they also develop lifelong skills of understanding the importance of commitment, teamwork, self-confidence and many of the talents associated with leadership.



● Rochester Cathedral Choir with the James Taylor Quartet performing at Ronnie Scott's. James composed his Rochester Mass for the choir and last December it was performed at the world-famous jazz club in London. This innovative collaboration has united the two genres very successfully on several occasions. The choir has loved going into over-drive to learn the new repertoire – far removed from Gibbons and Stanford!

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In this issue: How Music Hubs can work • Support Creative Arts – p2; CSA Members Outreach Activity – p2/3; Ex-choristers expand horizons – p4; Imagine a life without the choir – p5; CSA People – p6

Working in a Music Hub

Peter Morris, Director of Music at St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton and Chair of the City's Music Education Hub (MEH) writes about the benefits. Opposite you can see which CSA Members are currently involved with their local hub and outreach work.

The bulk of funding from the Department for Education (DfE) for music services is now payable to the Music Education Hubs via the Arts Council of Great Britain. Music Hubs are designed to represent and encourage partnerships between musical organisations and the Music Service in a locality with funding from the DfE of £75m for 2015/16.

No two hubs are alike although music services come under the umbrella of Music Mark – a website well worth a visit to spark off ideas for all aspects of music education. Some hubs are organised on a county-wide basis and others are in consortia. Some are citywide.

What advantages do hubs offer a choral establishment and vice versa?

One of the great benefits of the Music Hubs is that of increased awareness and co-operation. Some of our major aims in Wolverhampton are the improvement of provision for singing and instrumental work across the area.

There is vibrant whole class tuition of instruments in primary schools; there is an emphasis on singing strategies in schools; there is a School Music Education Plan which concentrates the mind wonderfully on what are the important issues around the City's schools and at each point in the curriculum; there is an emphasis on 'large-scale and high-quality' experiences and approaches in the use of digital technology.

How does that affect our specialist choir schools and associated choirs?

I was delighted to be asked to be Chair of our Music Education Hub because the role connects us to many different areas of the musical life of the City. Our partnerships involve not only the primary and secondary

schools here, but also some of the freelance and adult organisations.

I have learnt so much – about the many ensembles and genres of music available, the use of resources, setting up events like 'playday' opportunities for young and old, about electronic workshops and visits to schools by local Rock musicians, seeking out and helping hard-to-reach children and about raising the visibility of church music amongst schools and parents.

We have been heavily involved in the provision and development of Music in Key Stages 3 and 4, as well as at Sixth Form level. There have been choral workshops, jazz workshops, composition workshops, percussion groups and many other opportunities to enrich and connect with the musical life of Wolverhampton.

Last year the BBC launched 10 Pieces that Key Stage 2 pupils ought to be aware of with supporting resources.

Many of our local ensembles came together in Wolverhampton's Civic Hall to present all 10 pieces last summer at a very vibrant, successful concert.

Taking part was a thoroughly positive experience for choirs and instrumentalists alike and the outreach value of the preparation was very much within the spirit of *Sing Up*. The next step on this particular road is to think what we can do with the BBC 10 pieces for Key Stage 3, recently announced.

Your local Music Education Hub will be looking for opportunities to connect with you. They may not have large amounts of money to lavish on a pet project but the interaction with children within the community is a two-way process which can certainly be musically and socially rewarding for all concerned.

- Ampleforth College
- Blackburn Cathedral
- Bristol Cathedral School
- King's College School, Cambridge
- St John's College School, Cambridge
- St Edmund's School, Canterbury
- Dean Close School, Cheltenham
- The Prebendal School, Chichester
- Croydon Minster
- The Chorister School, Durham
- St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh
- King's Junior School, Ely
- Exeter Cathedral School
- The King's School, Gloucester
- Lanesborough School, Guildford
- Chapel Royal, Hampton Court
- Hereford Cathedral School
- Leicester Cathedral
- Lichfield Cathedral School
- Lincoln Minster School
- St Edward's College, Liverpool
- City of London School, London
- The London Oratory School
- St Paul's Cathedral School, London
- Westminster Abbey Choir School, London
- Westminster Cathedral School, London
- Chetham's School of Music, Manchester
- Newcastle Cathedral
- Norwich School
- Christ Church Cathedral School, Oxford
- Magdalen College School, Oxford
- The King's School, Peterborough
- Portsmouth Grammar School
- Reigate St Mary's Choir School
- King's Preparatory School, Rochester
- Salisbury Cathedral School
- Sheffield Cathedral
- Southwell Minster School
- Wells Cathedral School
- The Pilgrims' School, Winchester
- St George's School, Windsor
- St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton
- The Minster School, York

Lords support creative arts

A House of Lords debate in February condemned the proposed EBacc reforms; every single speech called for the proposals to be dropped or dramatically reformed.

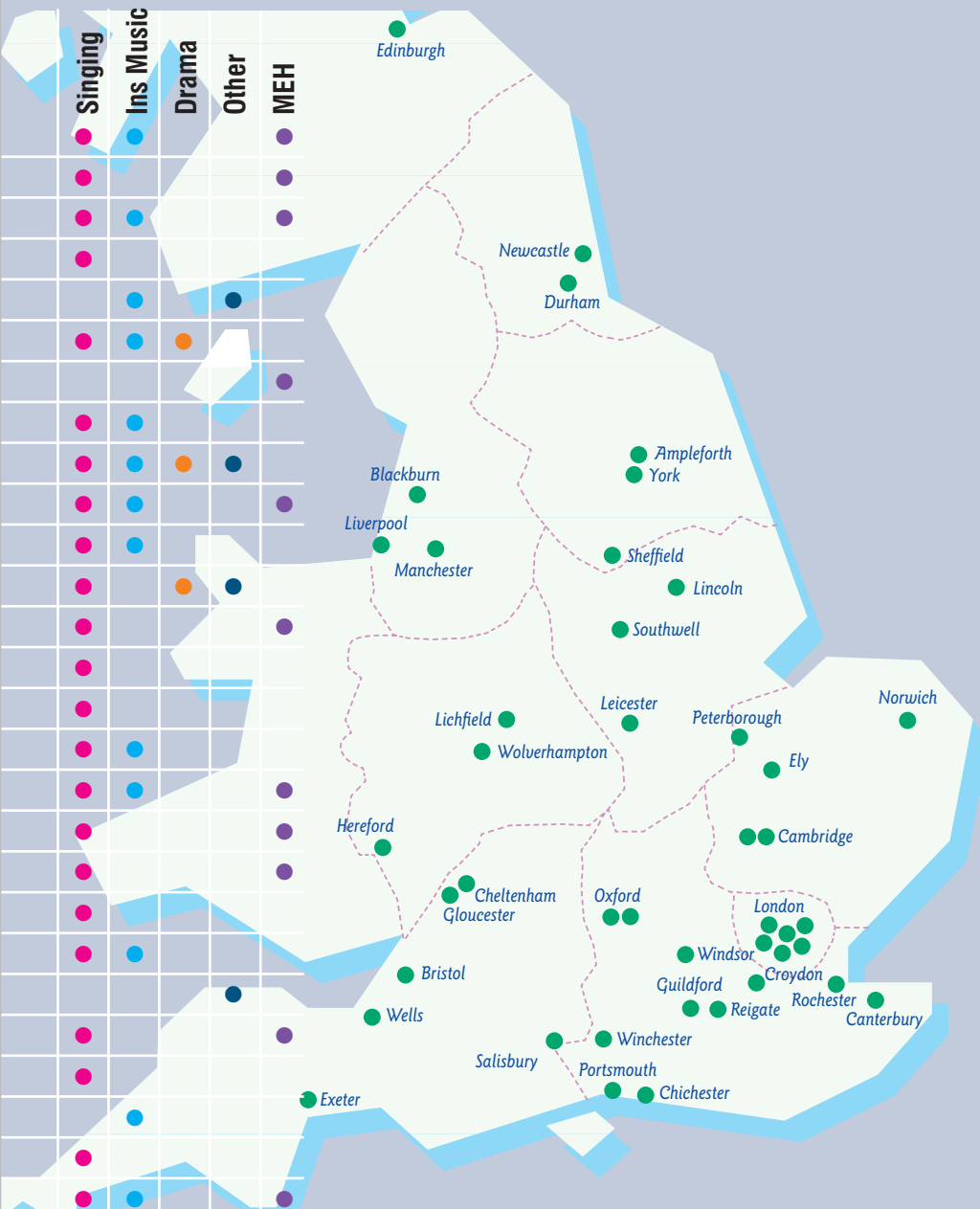
In a damning indictment of the proposals, Earl Clancarty warned that "An EBacc without the Arts should be unthinkable; a core curriculum without the Arts will not raise standards but lower them." He went on to criticise the "increasing lack of flexibility in subject choice."

Cross-bencher peer, Lord Freyberg, added that "All the evidence suggests that the withdrawal of creative subjects and the teacher training in these subjects will have a knock-on effect not just in the cultural sphere but across industry."

**Don't forget to sign ISM's petition AND write to your MP!
Find out more from www.baccforthefuture.com**

ERS' OUTREACH ACTIVITY 2016

and cathedrals engaged in promoting the creative arts locally.



Tasmin Little speaks out

Speaking at the inaugural meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education in December, internationally-acclaimed concert violinist Tasmin Little described how her 1970s London state primary school was able to employ a full-time violin teacher.

“During the 1980s, music education in this country took a nose dive and we are still recovering from an extended period when it was very far down the list of priorities. A whole generation missed out on opportunities to enjoy playing and listening to music themselves.”

Chancellor George Osborne recently said: “Britain’s not just brilliant at science. It’s brilliant at culture too. One of the best investments we can make as a nation is in our extraordinary arts, museums, heritage, media and sport. £1 billion a year in grants adds a quarter of a trillion pounds to our economy – not a bad return.”

Tasmin Little adds: “If this is the case and the Arts truly ARE valued in this way, then it is imperative that this is reflected and strengthened by their high visibility in the EBacc curriculum.

“We will cease to be brilliant at these subjects if we do not nurture music and the Arts from the very start of the education system, and keep it high on the agenda right through secondary education.”

● **New Music:** Two student composers Annabel Green (3rd left) and Oliver Buckland (seated left) pictured with Paul Whitmarsh and the New Music Ensemble of Wells Cathedral School – one of many ensembles providing first-class entertainment for CSA Members during our 2015 Annual Conference in Wells.



EX-CHORISTERS EXPAND HORIZONS



VOCE8

- They give 100 concerts a year
- They were the top selling choral artist in the UK in 2014 for *Eventide*
- Their album *Lux* was Classic FM Album of the Year
- In 2015 they worked with 40,000 students round the world
- They have trained 825 young leaders in the UK since 2012
- They provided 3,500 teachers with CPD in 2014-15.

VOCE8, one of our most exciting and well-loved singing ensembles, celebrated its 10th birthday in 2015. But it's much more than an 8-piece group. It's the flagship for a registered charity called Voces Cantabiles Music Foundation which, since its foundation in 2006, has invested more than £1m in music education in the UK alone.

Six of the original line-up went to choir schools: Paul and Barney Smith, Yandell Dingle and Ollie Vincent were all friends at Westminster Abbey Choir School, while Tom Elwin was at St Paul's Cathedral and Catherine Backhouse at St Mary's School, Edinburgh.

Today's line-up includes two Winchester choristers. Emily Dickens was a founder member of the Winchester Cathedral Girls' Choir while latest recruit, Jonathan Pacey was a chorister in the Cathedral Choir and a pupil at The Pilgrims' School.

Paul Smith is CEO of the organisation and heads the group's education initiatives. He reflects: "I don't think we realised how lucky we were whilst we were at the Abbey. As a young child remarkable opportunities can often seem normal, and it was only in the last decade or so that we really began to understand what an extraordinary education we had been given.

"When Barney and I decided to turn VOCE8 into a full time venture, and to set up a charitable foundation at the same time, we started to think how we could give back in some small way, trying to make a difference in the world of music education alongside our professional performance career.

"We were so lucky to be given such wonderful music-making opportunities as we grew up, and we see it now as our responsibility to be doing what we can to inspire and educate the next generations of musicians and music lovers.

"The group originally came about because we had been part of the Millennium Youth Choir, run by the Royal School of Church Music. By the time we got to 23 we were too old, so formed VOCE8!

"We talk a lot about our lives as choristers to encourage people to think about this as an opportunity for their own child."

So What Next?

Paul says: "We have an obvious focus on the UK, but much of our education work takes place internationally. The global landscape for music education is really very challenging in a number of ways.

The group now has a London 'home'. St Anne and St Agnes Church, just a stone's throw from St Paul's Cathedral, has been renamed the Gresham Centre, and supports vocal music, outreach and education. This lovely Wren church now hosts workshops, masterclasses, concerts and recording sessions.

The VOCE8 Method, written by Paul and available in English, German and French (with Japanese and Chinese versions in the pipeline) is a teaching tool for students of all ages and is successfully enhancing development in numeracy, literacy and linguistics – 200,000 students have taken part across nine countries so far.

Like many of the choir schools, the group is working with music hubs. They are already involved with a number of schools and hubs in London with financial support from The Arts Council. The focus is predominantly on their young leaders' programme, on choral music outreach work with schools, particularly in Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Redbridge as well as on teacher training and CPD.

As Paul adds: "We are training future leaders and offering first-class musical experiences to thousands of primary school pupils."

Over the next ten years the group are thinking about how they can use their music and skills to help build and strengthen communities and are eager to work with people who share their passion for training the next generation of young singers.

Holder of the David Willcocks Organ Scholarship 2014-15, Rose McLachlan, who was a chorister at Manchester Cathedral, writes: "It was such a great honour to receive the scholarship and it really changed my entire musical perspective. Without this wonderful opportunity I would never have been able to develop into an organist. I had fantastic, inspirational lessons from Mr Stokes, Director of Music at the Cathedral, and have given performances there. I recently gained distinction for my organ ABRSM grade 6 exam. I am so grateful for the life-changing experience I was able to enjoy and will cherish it forever."

IMAGINE A LIFE WITHOUT THE CHOIR

Sometimes we need to remind ourselves just how special being a chorister is. For the past eight years, the Nash family have made Portsmouth their home. Last Christmas Oliver signed off as Head Chorister at Portsmouth Cathedral and reflects on seven very happy years as a day chorister.

"Hundreds of morning rehearsals, services, evensongs and eucharists, weddings, funerals and tours! It's gone by so quickly.

"The Portsmouth Cathedral Choir has been half my life, and it was sad to bring so many experiences to a close. It didn't even seem out of the ordinary that my last days as Head Chorister were spent singing in The Alps, skiing in robes down the slopes of Alpe d'Huez!

"I have sung at St Paul's, Westminster Abbey, Menin Gate and many other locations but singing carols in my now-not-so-angelic-voice in the snow, attached to skis, will remain one of my fondest memories.

"The opportunities and knowledge I have gained are priceless and I miss the routine of it all. Not surprisingly, the solitary climb of over 1,000 metres up the mountain the day after my leaving didn't help alleviate the pain."

Oliver's brother Ben is still in the choir and Dad Phil, a Commander in the Royal Navy, tells us how Oliver's decision to become a chorister affected the family.

"Children aren't colouring books. You don't get to fill them in with your favourite colours." Those words, written by Khaled Hosseini, have often come back to me since Oliver, aged seven, declared that he was going to be a chorister in Portsmouth Cathedral Choir.

"During those daydream moments that we all have in which we plan out our children's entire lives I had not counted life as a chorister amongst the options. "But now, eight years later, and having just watched that same boy finish his spell as Head Chorister and therefore leaving the choir forever, I could not have imagined a more fulfilling way for my boys to spend their time.



● Oliver (right) with brother Ben

"Family life has been punctuated for both of our boys by a rhythm of daily choir practice, weekly services and annual peaks of music and singing at Easter and Christmas. The commitment is considerable but so are the rewards, not least hearing your child sing the solo for 'Once in Royal David's City' – by

candlelight in front of hundreds in a packed cathedral.

"Choristers may look angelic when performing, but behind the scenes they are like any other group of boys – noise, football and winding each other up all compete for centre stage.

"Getting a balance into our family life throughout all this has been challenging, but the boys have played rugby and cricket, done their homework and spent time 'melting brains' plugged into an Xbox minimised. In fact, we find it difficult now to imagine a life without the choir.

"My retired Head Chorister is getting to grips with life after the choir and enjoying the musical legacy, whether expressed through formal piano lessons or deciphering an Ed Sheeran song from YouTube and repeating it on the guitar. I think a return to some sort of choir, this time with voice broken, is also on the cards before too long.

"This chorister chapter of our lives has given us much more than we had anticipated. Indeed, whilst I was deployed overseas with the Armed Forces last year I found myself in a café in the sunshine. I dialled into WiFi to listen to Oliver not only singing but also reading a speech on BBC Radio 4 as part of the national service to commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

"There is no doubt in my mind it's a good thing we parents don't get to choose the colours!"

Let's hear it for boarding choristers too!

Marney Davies, a Year 8 chorister at Salisbury Cathedral, explains why she enjoys boarding:

"Being a boarding chorister gives you great opportunities to spend time with friends, and teaches you valuable life skills such as independence, adaptability and community living.

"With a busy school life and all the extra demands of being a chorister, boarding gives you so much more time to fit everything in, such as music practice, studying and after school clubs. But it's not all hard work! There is more time to socialise with friends, to go on adventure weekend trips and even get lie-ins!

"Like other choir schools, we have chorister holidays at the end of the school term, known as 'Chori Hols'. The choristers take over the school and boarding house and it's great fun – singing, chilling and enjoying other activities.

"Most choir schools have exeat weekends, but not quite the way we do it here at SCS. During these weekends when all the other boarders go home, either the boy or girl choristers stay behind to sing all the services and we really bond as a group and work as a team.

"It's my final year and writing this has made me think about and appreciate all I have experienced as a boarder and a chorister. After a big concert or service, for example, we return to the Boarding House after all the other boarders have gone to bed, and enjoy chatting it through with our House Parents over a drink of hot chocolate and bagels.

"I also think about being able to wake up every morning, open the curtains and see the beautiful cathedral from my window."



CSA Members are heading to Portsmouth in early May for their 2016 annual conference as guests of Portsmouth Grammar School.

Last Christmas 12 year-old Maddie Lyles made history when she became the first girl to be made Chorister Bishop of Salisbury Cathedral.

Member News

CSA was deeply saddened to hear that Dr David Neville, founding Headmaster of St John's College, Cardiff and Director of Music and Organist at the Metropolitan Cathedral for the last thirty-five years, passed away after a short, sudden illness on 14 April.

Recently we were offering him our warmest congratulations when he was presented with the Papal Knighthood of the Order of St Gregory in December for his outstanding service to the Archdiocese of Cardiff.

Speaking at the time, Canon Peter Collins, Dean of the Metropolitan Cathedral said: "Dr Neville has created a structure of musical provision for the Cathedral that is the envy of my fellow Cathedral Deans."

We offer our condolences to Diana and their sons Ambrose, Dominic and James.

FAREWELLS

It was 'goodbye and thank you' to Robert Bacon, Stephen Yeo and Clive Rickart in the last academic year.

CSA is particularly grateful to Robert, who retired last summer as Headmaster of St Edmund's Junior School, Canterbury. He has been a superb Treasurer for the Association since 2006. Thank you Robert – we hope you are enjoying your new roles as a farmer and curator of The Beccles & District Museum!

Our thanks and well wishes go also to Stephen Yeo, who moved from Exeter Cathedral School to The Purcell School in January and to Clive Rickart, who has left Lincoln Minster School after 19 years to become General Secretary of The Society of Heads. Both were valued members of CSA Committee.

Stephen's life is steeped in music – he began his musical career as a chorister at Llandaff Cathedral in Cardiff, sang as a lay clerk at Lichfield and taught music for a number of years before his first Headship. Chair of governors at Exeter Cathedral School, The Very Reverend Jonathan Draper, Dean of Exeter Cathedral, said: "We are thrilled that Stephen's talents have been recognised and that he has been offered this wonderful and rare opportunity, but we are very sorry to lose him."

HELLO AND WELCOME

..... to new CSA Heads: **Matthew Jelley, Paddy Moss, Mark Wallace and James Featherstone.**

● **Matthew Jelley** is Robert Bacon's successor at St Edmund's Junior School in Canterbury. He has a particular passion for sport and the creative arts and as Deputy Head at the Perse Prep School in Cambridge played a significant part in that Foundation's move towards a cohesive educational structure from 3-18. He will, however, be striving "to maintain the individuality of the Junior School within the wider foundation, and, importantly, that very special familial atmosphere that exists at St Ed's".

● **Paddy Moss** arrived at Dean Close Preparatory School, Cheltenham in September having spent the last nine years in Kenya as headmaster of a premier preparatory boarding school. He is a Canadian by birth and read Geography and Economics at London University. Like Matthew, he is also a practised sports coach with a passion for outdoor activities and scouting.

● **James Featherstone** is another new CSA member moving from The Perse School, Cambridge where he was Head of Lower School and part of the Leadership Team there. He studied modern languages at Durham where he was also a Choral Scholar in the Cathedral. His wife Julia was Assistant Director of Music at the Stephen Perse Foundation and is a singer.

● The new Principal of Lincoln Minster School is **Mark Wallace**, previously



Above:
Paddy Moss



Above right:
Matthew Jelley



Right:
Mark Wallace



James and Julia Featherstone with their two children

Principal Deputy Head at Kingston Grammar School. He too is a sports coach (hockey and cricket) and says he is enjoying working with the entire Lincoln Minster community – pupils, staff, parents, the Cathedral, its partnerships and Alumni.

We look forward to welcoming them all to their first CSA Conference in May!

The King's Singers have announced that Patrick Dunachie, a former Hereford Cathedral chorister, is to replace David Hurley as first countertenor after he sings his final concert in August.

Geoffrey Hammond, Deputy Head at The Pilgrims' School, Winchester was delighted with the 2015 Rochester Quiz results. 17 schools competed and Westminster Abbey Choir School's team score was the highest for many years. Well done Abbey boys and congratulations to Sebastian Wade from St John's College School in Cambridge for the top individual score.

www.choralevensong.org was launched in the autumn to promote choral evensong services in the British Isles. Visitors can search by location to find cathedrals, churches and chapels which sing Evensong, information about their choir, service times and links to music lists. It is a great site for those not familiar with the choral tradition. As website editor, Guy Hayward, says: "Whatever we may believe, choral evensong is a beautiful tradition just waiting to be witnessed that can give respite and inspiration during our busy modern lives."

As we were going to press we heard that Theo Collins, a pupil at Exeter Cathedral School is this year's winner of CSA's Composition Competition for Choristers, sponsored by the David Willcocks Music Trust. His introit, 'Sing a new song' will be premiered by Portsmouth Cathedral Choir at Evensong during CSA's Annual Conference in May. Well done Theo!

SINGING OUT!

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