

The York Minster Choristers' Association

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The Association was inaugurated over a hundred years ago as the York Minster Choir Old Boys' Association (YMCOPA) and held its first reunion AGM and Dinner on 3rd October 1907. Some sixty six Old Choristers attended this first reunion and it was reported in the "Yorkshire Herald" - "The many 'old boys' gathered together found that it was indeed pleasant to renew old friendships and association, and to once again sing together within the grand old Cathedral". In 1910 YMCOPA was a founder member of the national Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations (FCOCA) and Arthur Hardgrave (York) became its first chairman. York was host to the first Annual Festival of the FCOCA on 6th July 1912 and has hosted subsequent festivals in 1938; 1960; 1977, 1992 and 2012.

On 19th January 1997 girls were admitted into the York Minster Choral Foundation, marking a key moment in the development of the Minster's choral tradition. The Association was duly renamed to York Minster Old Choristers' Association (YMOCA) and was pleased to welcome its first two female members in the summer of 2007.

In 2010 the Association revised its constitution to reflect a desire expressed between members and the Minster to work more closely with the current Choristers and songmen to make a positive contribution to the continuance of that choral tradition. The fundamental change was that Association membership now commences on being "read in" to the choir. The Association is now named the York Minster Choristers' Association (YMCA). Associate membership of the Association is also available by application to any other person sharing our objectives, as outlined above and detailed in the Association Rules.

Forthcoming events

The 106th Reunion of the Association will be on Saturday 21st September 2019. Reunion day commences with Eucharist in the Minster at 10am followed by the AGM and annual lunch in the Minster School. After Choral Evensong in the Minster at 5.15pm, the day's events conclude with a short reception in the Chapter House, leaving those attending free from about 7pm. A social event for the evening of Friday 21st may be planned, if there is sufficient demand, for the benefit of those able to be in York for the weekend. For more details of our plans for the whole weekend, please do contact the Association via the new Email address above.

The Francis Jackson Choral Fund

In 2005 we embarked upon an important initiative with the foundation of **The Francis Jackson Choral Fund**. The Fund is a registered charity (No. 1112876) established by the YMCA for the sole purpose of raising funds to support the continuance of the great choral tradition at York Minster. The Dean & Chapter report that "each chorister's scholarship costs £10,000 pa. The scholarships enable the Choristers to be educated at The Minster School, and normally represent 60% of the total cost, though a higher percentage is met. The intention is that no suitably talented child should be denied a chorister place because of financial reasons". The object of the

Francis Jackson Choral Fund is to support a minimum of two, and a target of four, choristers per annum

Dr Francis Jackson, The Fund's Patron, was born in 1917 and was a chorister at York Minster from 1929 to 1933 under Sir Edward Bairstow. In 1946 he became Organist and Master of the Choristers and continued to hold this post until he retired in 1982. Since retiring he has continued to write music and give recitals in York Minster and around the world.

Words of Support from Francis Jackson: 'I would like to commend most strongly the appeal and its splendid objective, which is to help keep alive the age-old choral tradition in York Minster. Having been a chorister myself, a parent of two and a grandparent of three (one of them a founder member of the girls' choir here at York), as well as a choirmaster for almost half a century, I have been able to observe, at close quarters, the beneficial effect of a chorister training. It has been a wonderful and fulfilling experience. I cannot express sufficiently the enormous advantages and privileges of an education based upon the regular singing of great music in the cathedral service and in an incomparable setting. The fundamentals of music and ensemble performance are learned naturally and effortlessly, along with the discipline that this exercise requires. I have never ceased to give thanks for the inestimable benefits gained through a long association with what is a very rewarding and intensely pleasurable pursuit.'

Words of support from Keith Jones, Dean Emeritus : "York Minster is not only the shell of a great building. It is a living, worshipping, Spirit- filled being. Music is as much a part of what York Minster is as the glass, the carved stone and woodwork. The English church has a great tradition of choral church music, and I am delighted that The Francis Jackson Choral Fund will help to encourage and provide for it in the future."

Giving to the Francis Jackson Choral Fund

We welcome all forms of giving. No amount is too small. For those who wish to make a regular donation we are able to provide a standing order form. A copy of the current publicity leaflet for The Fund, including a form, can be downloaded in PDF form here. As a charity we can take advantage of Gift Aid; if you are a taxpayer, we can recover a further 25p for every £1 donated. If you have any enquiries or would like to make a donation to the fund please email yorkmca@outlook.com

York Minster Choristers' Association Membership enquiries

If you are a former Chorister or Songman of York, a member of another Cathedral Choristers' Association, are otherwise interested in membership or have any other queries please contact us via: yorkmca@outlook.com

YMCA Officers

President

- The Rt Rev Dr Jonathan Frost

Vice Presidents

- The Residentiary Canons
- The Master of the Music
- The Headmaster of the Minster School
- Dr Francis Jackson CBE
- Michael Backhouse
- The Rev Jeremy Fletcher
- John D Cooper

Chairman

- Michael Backhouse

Hon. Treasurer

- Stewart Pearson

Hon. Secretary

- Philip Sowley

Committee Members

- David Amende
- Roger Boulton
- Mrs Margaret Horner
- Stewart Pearson.
- Rev John Roden
- Philip Sowley

Trustees of The Francis Jackson Choral Fund

- Michael Backhouse
- Roger Boulton
- Stewart Pearson
- Rev John Roden

Associated Organisations

The Federation of Cathedral Old Choristers' Associations (FCOCA) produces the magazine Once a Chorister annually in the spring. This is available online at onceachorister.org

We continue to support the aims and works FCOCA. The 89th Festival of The Federation will take place on 21 to 23 June 2019 at Portsmouth Cathedral. Members of any affiliated Choristers' Association may attend. Full details and booking links are available on the Federation website fcoca.org.uk