

Voice Box

Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers
www.labbs.org.uk



Spring 2024 £4

Shelly's Grand Tour, Education, and all your plans for '24!



Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers

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Chair's Foreward

Welcome to the first VoiceBox of 2024. Although we'll be into spring by the time you read this, I wish you all a very happy new year. The LABBS team has, as I write, run a very successful Director's Weekend jointly with BABS, started an online Foundation Course for anyone interested in how judging works, and is about to begin registration for the Singing Day. In addition, your Events Team has been to Bournemouth to check things for our 2024 Convention and the Convention 2024 Budget is ready for approval by the Board. And, as I write, it's still only January!

I've seen from your posts on social media, and from invitations that I have been kindly sent, that many of our choruses around the country are gearing up for *Learn to Sing* courses and other exciting events. 2024 is shaping up to be a busy year!

As you know, your whole LABBS team is made up of volunteers, and there are big teams supporting several of the Board members. We need volunteers for many tasks and we need all kinds of skills, from the highly specialised to general admin or support. If you have ever thought about volunteering for LABBS it is a great way of getting to know more about the Association and meeting new people, and possibly learning new skills and enhancing your CV. Please keep an eye on our social media pages for roles we're currently looking to fill, or contact our new Volunteer Coordinator, Caroline Poole, at volunteers@labbs.org.uk. We do sometimes find that people are a bit shy about coming forward so if you



know someone who would be great in a role with LABBS, please tell them how great they are and give them a nudge!

At the 2024 AGM we will be saying thank you to two of our volunteer Board members: Hannah Barber who has been our Secretary for three years; and, Christine Higham who has been our D&I Director. Both of these Directors have played important roles for us and we thank them, and wish them well. We hope to have the posts both filled by the AGM.

Once again I wish you all the happiest of times in 2024 and I look forward to meeting many of you through the year, and at Convention in October.

Sue Ranson
LABBS Chair

Update from your Editor

Reading through your articles for this edition, it's been great to see all the brilliant things you've been getting up to, and to hear about all the exciting plans you have for 2024. From Love to Sing courses, to concerts and collaborations, to welcoming new members, and more besides, you've all been so busy. A trend that

looks set to continue for the rest of the year!

Here at VoiceBox HQ, which doubles up as M&C HQ (my box room!), I've been busy too! Plans are well underway for Convention and I visited Bournemouth International Centre in January with our Events Director, Kristina, and some of the Events Team, to check out the venue and figure out where everything and

everyone goes. Have we got a Convention in store for you in '24! I'm really excited for October, and I hope you are too! We have a theme for the weekend - voted for by you, from suggestions made by members - which should be a lot of fun. It's strictly under wraps for now though, so you'll have to wait for the Council Meeting on the 23rd March to find out what it is!



In other news, we've started to add your special events to the [Upcoming Events page of the LABBS website](#). If you're hosting a concert, a Love to Sing event, or something similar, please do send details to marketing@labbs.org.uk and we'll add it to the calendar for you. If you don't have anything to share, do check out the page anyway – there are some fab events coming up which you're sure to enjoy!

E&J has been busy too, with LABBS and BABS working together on joint education events. We've had the first of four sessions on the Judging Foundation Course (not just for judges!) and a fantastic Directors Education Weekend already this year, with the Singing Category Day on 16th March set to be just as good. You can read more about the Directors Education Weekend on page 6.

Our Vice Chair, Jill, has been working hard too, producing guidance and advice documents for you, with support and input from experienced members. You can find all the current documents on the [Guidance and Advice page](#) in the members area of the LABBS website. Do check back often; the list of informative guides keeps growing!

Alys, our Finance Director, was busy working on the Convention Budget during the early part of the year, but she still found time to pen an informative article about all the grants LABBS makes available to members through our Voices in Harmony Foundation – check out the article below for more information.

Last but not least, we have a new [Facebook group for Club at Large](#)

[members](#), set up to give our CAL members a space of their own, to help them connect with each other, and to build a CAL community. This is in addition to our other groups: [LABBS Chair Forum](#), [LABBS Quartets Corner](#), [LABBS PRO & Social Media Network](#), and [LABBS Directors' Cafe](#). There is a wealth of experience, expertise and support in these groups from Board Members, LABBS Teams, and of course, our members. The groups really are worth a look.

There is so much on offer for LABBS members, clubs, and quartets. Please do explore our website – www.labbs.org.uk – or join our '[Members-only](#)' [Facebook Group](#) to find out more!

Mel Baber, Editor
VoiceBox

Finance

Grants and Awards in 2024

Chorus and quartet grants are once again available

for LABBS choruses and LABBS registered quartets where all four members are full LABBS members. The grant amount is £100 and can be used towards education and coaching. Full details can be found on the [Voices in Harmony page](#) in the members area of the LABBS website. This year all grant claims must be submitted within 30 days of the expense being incurred. The last day claims can be made is 13th December 2024.

Love to Sing grants are also available for choruses running courses – full details can be found on the [Voices in Harmony page](#) in the members area of the LABBS website. All grant claims must be submitted within 30 days of the course being run. The last day claims can be made is 13th December 2024.

There were grants available for the Singing Day in March 2024.

Regional Education grants are available this year – these are for choruses arranging days with other choruses. Full details can be found on the [Voices in Harmony page](#). Any questions can be directed to me at financedirector@labbs.org.uk.

Later in the year (around August time), nominations will be open for the Katy Phillips Young Barbershopper

of the Year award. This has been awarded to some amazing young people in our association, so do start thinking now about who you might want to nominate. The award will be presented at Convention in October.

The Jen Mills award is also available. This is for a quartet and allows them to commission a new arrangement which is then debuted at the following Convention. Sonic debuted their new arrangement at LABBS Convention 2023, and 2023 recipients Specs Appeal will be entertaining us this year. Applications will open later in the year (around August time). Keep an eye on the VinH page for that one too.

Both the Katy Phillips award and the Jen Mills award are decided by a voting panel made up of members of the LABBS Board and members of the respective family. I have the joy of administering the awards and getting to read all the wonderful applications.

All information about grants and awards are on the VinH page which can be found here: www.labbs.org.uk/vinh-members



Any questions can be directed to me at financedirector@labbs.org.uk

Alys Galloway
Finance Director

A exciting Championship Year planned for Barberlicious

2024 is shaping up to be an absolute corker of a year for Barberlicious! The four of us are very much looking forward to representing LABBS nationally and internationally over the coming nine months.

The run up to Christmas was quieter than anticipated due to illness and a couple of cancelled sing-outs, but by the New Year we were all fighting fit and ready to celebrate not only our Championship success, but our baritone Anna's 'big' birthday!

Plans for our Championship Year are coming along well: we're looking forward to representing the Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers in Harrogate at the BABS 50th

Anniversary Convention, and we are in talks with IABS for a possible trip to the gorgeous Killarney in October. The LABBS 2024 Convention in Bournemouth is also very much on our radar, and we're planning an exciting package to see out our gold medal year, along with the honour of crowning the new champions!

We were thrilled to accept the invitation on behalf of LABBS to compete at the BHS International Convention in Ohio along with The White Rosettes, and this is going to be a major highlight of 2024. We can only hope that Cleveland is ready for the full Barberlicious experience! We've had a very short space of time to [fundraise](#) but we are doing really well – thank you to ALL of you who have contributed, and if you

haven't, there's still time!

Our first date in the diary is the LABBS Singing Category Education Day on 16th March. We were delighted to be invited, and although the thought of being coached under glass by a team of judges is a little nerve wracking, we're looking forward to it!

With coaching booked, and new songs purchased (with more planned), we are already having an amazing time as your 2023 Champions. Big thanks to The White Rosettes and the LABBS Board who have dealt with our frantic BHS questions with tact and patience!

Love from Beck, Bushra, Anna & AMB Barberlicious



Cheshire Chord's Top Ten Moments of 2023!

2024 is shaping up to be an absolute corker A New Year for Cheshire Chord Company always starts with our annual AGM, and this year was no different!

This year, our Julia Bird award was presented to Emma Stones for her ongoing commitment to the chorus and overall enthusiasm! Although a relatively new member of the chorus, Emma has thrown herself into chorus life, going above and beyond what is expected of her. Similarly, the Musical Directors award was presented to Gilda Possibile, for her overall commitment to chorus and her wonderful ideas and inspiration that went towards this year's gold medal winning performance.

Each year, our PRO creates a video of Cheshire Chord's Top 10 Moments according to Facebook reaches. So, for all of you readers, here are our Top Ten Moments of 2023! (Read this with the original Top of the Pops soundtrack in your head !)

10. 2.1k reaches: One buttock singing with the fabulous Emma Shanks.

9. 2.1k reaches: Our final rehearsal completed- Harrogate here we come!

8. 2.2k reaches: Stockton Heath Festival

7. 2.3K reaches: Our newbies get their official badges!

6. 2.3K reaches: Retreat 2023 – hard work but so much fun!

5. 2.4k reaches: Dress rehearsal day.

4. 2.5k reaches: Party time at our annual Retreat weekend!

3. 2.8k reaches: Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral

2. 3.1K reaches: We won GOLD!

1. 3.4K reaches: Happy 30th Birthday to us!

If you'd like to see all our posts from last year plus any future ones, make sure you follow us - [@CheshireChord](https://www.facebook.com/CheshireChord).

Julie Phillips , PRO
Cheshire Chord Company



The Listening Director

At the end of January 114 Directors and Assistant Directors, together with Faculty, supporting chorus members, and LABBS' event support team, gathered together in Coventry for a weekend of education hosted jointly by LABBS and BABS.

As well as benefitting from the insights and skills of experienced faculty drawn from both associations, delegates also had the opportunity to learn from guest educator [Theo Hicks](#). With plenty of hands-on coaching and a range of elective classes in addition to the core sessions around the theme - The Listening Director - the weekend was a great success!

We caught up with some of the delegates after the event, to hear how they got on:

Caroline Bamford, Bristol Fashion

It was with a small amount of trepidation (and a few missed motorway junctions), that I made my way to the joint LABBS and BABS Directors weekend in January this year, organised by the inimitable Simon Arnott and Liz Garnett, and with support from a fabulous Events Team.

I have been assistant MD of Bristol Fashion for a number of years now, and have been to many similar events in the past. This year I was arriving alone however, as Craig Kehoe, MD of Bristol Fashion and now LABBS Singing Category Director, was already there due to his roles on the Faculty for the weekend. Any concerns about being Billy-No-Mates for the weekend were quickly squashed however, as I was scooped up by lovely friends that I have made over years in our fabulous association.

The weekend was jam-packed with sessions that had a diverse range of themes, many of which examined the physical and listening components of being a director, including 1:1 coaching of our own directing skills. It is

incredible to understand that even tiny movements of a finger or hand can really affect the sound being produced by the singers before you. Other sessions delved into the working relationships a Musical Director has with their music team, committee, chorus, and coaches.

I relish the opportunities these weekends bring to provoke thought, discussion, and the sharing of ideas and skills between faculty members and delegates. I certainly left with my head buzzing with ideas to share with my own chorus.

Hannah Barber, Six-Town Sound

As a Barbershop Singer of 15 plus years, I have always been in awe of the clever people out in front of the chorus, leading and inspiring week on week. I've always looked at them and thought: "I could never do that". However, over the years, my desire to develop leadership and directing skills has grown, until suddenly the perfect opportunity presented itself and I grabbed it! A new chorus, Six Town Sound, was born and the MD (Duncan Whinyates) asked if I wanted to be an AMD. I have spent this year warming up the chorus and finally felt confident enough to gain some arm waving experience and coaching at Directors Weekend.

It was an interesting and varied weekend with some inspiring sessions. Fundamental skills with Sally McLean was the highlight for me and a true essential experience for every new Director. It was also a privilege and real learning curve to get the chance to direct a chorus (many thanks to all the choruses who volunteered their time!), and to be coached whilst doing so - nerve wracking at first, but really valuable. Craig Kehoe ran our session and was marvellously encouraging.

Thanks to LABBS and BABS for putting on this event; I had a wonderful time!



Theo demonstrating concepts to delegates, assisted by one of our support choruses, LUX A Cappella

Ryan Wainwright-Meekins, Shannon Express

Where do I start? What a fantastic event with such a welcoming faculty and attendees. I walked into the cafeteria on the Saturday morning and the first person to approach me and chat to me was Theo Hicks. As someone that is new to barbershop, this was crazy.

This friendliness continued throughout the weekend and meant it was easy and enjoyable to meet new people and network. This friendliness was not compensation for the lack of education over the weekend though. With a plethora of core workshops, elective seminars, and everyone getting a personalised coaching session, the weekend was jam-packed full of insights and information on all things choruses and directing. From auditioning to conducting, and learning culture to warm ups, all sessions did well to use the lens of 'The Listening Director', while offering their own unique angle.

The other thing that I loved was how engaging the sessions were, with all of them offering some form of practical and discussions, meaning you got to give your own thoughts, ask questions, and have a good sing as well!

Victor Wong, Anvil Chorus

A unique aspect of barbershop singing is the common repertoire we share: there is no other choral event that I have been to that delegates are able to just sing together. Our love for barbershop harmonies has always been at the heart of what we do and is what drives us to collaborate and improve. This year's Director's Weekend, delivered jointly by both BABS and LABBS, gave directors of both organisations a

rare opportunity to come together to share their experiences and expertise, and it is through our members sharing their own experiences which formed the basis of the excellent number of electives on offer that weekend. In that spirit of collaboration, elective leaders did not claim to be experts but facilitated discussions; in fact, that was what Theo Hicks, our guest educator from BHS, said in the very first session (I think we can agree to disagree with Theo there!)

The range of electives also helped bring the focus away from just arm-waving skills. So much of directing a 'community choir' relies on more than that – working with music teams, selecting repertoire and so on, are what you would not find on a traditional music course and yet, is what we need in the real life of leading a chorus. I found myself thinking 'why didn't I think of that or doing it like that' many times during these sessions – ideas that were not necessarily new, but somehow I had never considered using them in a different context. An example of this is assessment: as a music teacher, I have had students record themselves and create portfolios of their work, charting their progress and improvements, giving them space to share with others, to self- and peer-critique. And yet, when it comes to chorus, the system used up to that point was one of 'pass' or 'fail'. This is something I have already started to change in chorus and while it will invariably take some time to settle and find what works for us, I am already finding it more enjoyable to evaluate with that mindset of looking for the good instead of just focusing on catching mistakes.

If you're considering directing or some other music leadership role, I think there is no better entry point than one of these weekends.

My thanks to Simon and Liz for organising the fantastic weekend.



As well as learning from faculty, delegates were encouraged to share their experiences and gain insights from each other.



Event organisers Liz Garnett and Simon Arnott, with guest educator, Theo Hicks

Hello from LABBS' new Youth Director

It's been a pleasure to represent you as your new LABBS Youth Director over the last few months. My name is Chloe and I sing tenor (you just can't introduce yourself to fellow barbershoppers without declaring your voice part!). I am proud to sing with GraceNotes Acapella in Saltash, Cornwall, who were my warm hug of an introduction to barbershop six years ago.

What an incredible feeling it is to be a member of LABBS, surrounded by like-minded individuals and bonding over a tag, or a mass sing, or a scratch quartet. We are so fortunate to belong to an association wherein we can meet so many people who share our passions, and where we are given the opportunity to learn, compete, grow and share knowledge. This is not lost on our youth.

I haven't been involved with the Youth Chorus for very long, but when I joined

the chorus I was instantly struck by the passion and thirst for greatness that each young person within it holds. It's truly inspiring. I don't know exactly what the future will hold for youth in barbershop, but what I do know is that it's going to be absolutely incredible. Our beloved hobby will be in very safe hands with these capable young singers for many decades to come.

With this in mind, I am particularly looking forward to exploring ways in which we can spread the word and get more young people involved in barbershop and our choruses. Over the next few months in particular, I intend to pick the brains of as many people as I can, to hear of their experiences engaging with young people, youth recruitment, event organising for specific demographics and, of course, hearing of the experiences of young people themselves. I encourage us all to think about how we can attract more people of all ages to barbershop, but I'd be particularly interested to hear our



LABBS Youth Director, Chloe Cale

members' thoughts on growing youth membership. You can contact me at youth@labbs.org.uk.

Please also get in touch with me if you have any questions about LABBS Youth - I might not have all the answers myself, but I know plenty of incredible young women who will!

Chloe Cale
LABBS Youth Director

Junior FR: Spreading kindness through song

Junior FR shines at The Big Sing fundraiser, raising over £990 for Christian Aid

On the 5th of December, the vibrant voices of Junior FR resonated through Zion Church in Frampton Cotterell as they took centre stage at The Big Sing. Organised by Alison Bray, the event marked a triumphant return after a hiatus due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alison expressed her appreciation for the performance stating, "It was lovely to see the girls perform, and thanks so much for your support. As always, Junior FR was amazing, and lots of people have said to me how impressed they were with the girls' performance, so well done!"

The evening featured a diverse lineup, including the Frampton Male Voice Choir, The Frampton Shanty Men, and Rhythmix, creating a musical tapestry that delighted the audience.

The event wasn't just a celebration of music, it was also a heartfelt effort to contribute to a charitable cause. Christian Aid, an organisation dedicated to addressing global poverty and injustice, benefitted greatly from the generosity of the attendees. The night

witnessed an impressive £887.30 in direct donations, with an additional £105.33 expected through Gift Aid, bringing the total funds raised to a remarkable £992.63.



Junior FR at The Big Sing

Junior Fascinating Rhythm Spreads Christmas Joy in Local Care Homes

Over Christmas, Junior Fascinating Rhythm demonstrated the true spirit of the season by dedicating their regular Friday rehearsals to bringing joy to local care home residents. The young performers, with their infectious enthusiasm, took the stage at Cambrian Green Court in Yate and Westgreen House in Kingswood to spread festive cheer.

The heartwarming connection between Junior FR and the care home residents added a special touch to the performances. Two of the care home residents are grandparents of two Junior FR sisters, and another care home resident is the father of a previous Junior FR helper.

The repertoire included a delightful mix of Christmas songs and carols, creating a festive atmosphere that resonated with the warmth of the season. The performance not only showcased the talents of the Junior FR girls, but also served as a reminder of the power of music to connect generations and foster a sense of community.

In these challenging times, gestures like these highlight the importance of bringing joy and companionship to those who may be feeling isolated. Junior FR's dedication to spreading holiday happiness serves as an inspiring example of how small acts of kindness can make a significant impact in creating a more compassionate and connected community.

Chloe Roberts, PRO
Fascinating Rhythm

Encore, encore!

"Again, again" came the calls

at the end of our A Cappella Extravaganza concert on a Saturday back in November. Admittedly, they came primarily from the sixty singers from three local choruses who had come together for the first time ever, but we're sure the audience members had an equally good time!

We had managed to secure funding from LABBS to hold a coaching event culminating in a concert with other local choruses, with the view of enticing new members. Without further ado, we teamed up with Cascade Southdown Ladies Harmony Chorus and Coastline Harmony Chorus, as well as quartets Ice & a Slice, Catra, and The Minims. Alison Thompson, LABBS' Education Director, was our wonderful coach for the afternoon and helped us put the finishing touches on our selected song that we'd been learning for a few weeks, You're my World, made famous by Cilla Black in 1965.

I moved to Bognor Regis just over a year ago, and joining Arun A Cappella

was one of the first things I did. I love singing, and it seemed like a great way of meeting new friends in the area. I had no idea what 'barbershop' involved or how complicated singing in harmony would be, but it's been a great vocal challenge! I thoroughly enjoy our practice sessions, and the camaraderie within our group is like having a ready-made group of friends.

I'd somehow managed to miss the majority of our singouts prior to our A Cappella Extravaganza, so I had no idea what to expect from the event. I did, however, imagine that the coaching element in the afternoon before our concert would be the tiresome part of the day - a bit like doing a mandatory sound check. Well, that couldn't have been further from the truth. We learned so much from Alison, and singing together with so many people was simply amazing. The difference between the fifteen people that I had been used to and the fifty people singing, was like going from having a song you love on the radio played quietly so you don't wake up the neighbours, to being in surround sound at top volume with the music reverberating through your very

core. After our first run-through, I think it's fair to say that a few of us were quite emotional. There's something tribal about so many women singing together.

After our coaching, we had invited audience members to watch us perform. Each chorus and quartet sang a couple of their showcase pieces. There was such talent in the room! The event coincided with some awful storms and a lot of flooding, so we were thrilled to have as many audience members as we did for the concert portion of the day. We finished off the evening all together, singing the song we'd been coached on earlier that day. The song builds to a crescendo - I feel a power so divine - and singing together with this amazing group of ladies, I have to say, really did feel like a power so divine.

Thank you to our two other choruses and quartets. What an inspirational event and one that we hope to repeat very soon!

**Sue Cooper, PRO
Arun A Cappella**



**Deadline for next edition:
Friday 26th April 2024**

Please send all submissions to voicebox@labbs.org.uk

Articles can be up to 350 words in length and should be accompanied by up to two photos.

Photos must be 1MB or larger. Original images taken on a phone or camera should satisfy this requirement. Please note, images downloaded from social media pages, websites or message apps will usually be less than 1MB.

More info can be found in the [VoiceBox Contributor's Guide](#).

2024 Deadlines: Friday 26th April, Friday 26th July, Friday 1st Nov

Belles ring in the new year at directors weekend!

What an incredible weekend we had!

On Sunday 21st January, The Belles of Three Spires, Coventry, had the privilege of being one of the choruses invited to assist with the 2024 director's educational weekend for LABBS and BABS.

It was such a great experience, full of encouragement for directors and singers alike.

Our own fabulous directors, Lucy, Ches, and April enjoyed a whole weekend of coaching and presentations.

Belles chorus members joined them on Sunday for a full day of singing. We were split into two groups and had the experience of being directed by many different delegates throughout the day, who were coached on their technique. We enjoyed the individual style each director had and the different interpretations of our repertoire songs. It was so lovely to meet everyone and catch up with some familiar faces also!

The guest educator for the weekend was the amazing Theo Hicks and we had the pleasure of taking part in his *Listening*

for the Singers' Joy section at the end of the day. This was such an insightful session, allowing us to identify what it is we love most about our fabulous hobby. We learned how to tap into that feeling as we sing.

Huge thanks to the organisers and faculty for a wonderful experience. We are so excited to get back on the risers and sing together again!

**Holly Dawes, Chair
The Belles of Three Spires**



The Belles directed by Lucy Whitwell with Theo Hicks in the Listening for Singers' Joy session



The Belles of Three Spires directors from the left, April Stevens, Lucy Whitwell and Chesca Cocks

Bringing Festive Bristol Fashion Barbershop Fun!

BF BF BF (See what we did there?)

Another fabulous year drew to a close, and Bristol Fashion went out with bang! Micro Fashions and Christmas Concerts ahoy!

We were contacted by a local pub, The Folly, who specialise in glorious food with a dash of live music, requesting a small group to sing during one of their Christmas menu themed evenings.

We certainly didn't want to miss this opportunity, but how could we squeeze Bristol Fashion into the cosy performing

space on offer? The answer of course, was a carefully balanced MicroFashion with a Sonic 'side'! For two hours we delighted the diners with our four-part harmony, taking turns with Sonic to jump into the 'Song-Spot' and deliver some festive barbershop cheer! Imagine our delight when one of the listeners chatted to us afterwards, revealing that his mother, Sheila Ogden, was one of the founding members and first Chair of Bristol Fashion, 45 years ago! Though we went by the slightly longer name of Brunel Ladies Barbershop Harmony Club back then. It really is a small (barbershop) world at times.

Our final festive foray was our Winter Warmer concert, held in the beautiful

venue that is Staplehill Methodist Church. We wanted the year to end showcasing our varied repertoire that we've worked so hard on, but also celebrating the incredible barbershop quartet talent that Bristol has to offer. In The Wings, Chance Encounters, Sonic, Specs Appeal, and Red Velvet all took to the stage in what was a truly beautiful concert. Our final song was the stunning candlelit rendition of Silent Night, arranged by our very own Craig Kehoe. It was the perfect end to a brilliant year!

Here's to more in 2024!

**Naomi Mallinson, PRO
Bristol Fashion**



Bristol Fashion, Sonic, Chance Encounters, Specs Appeal, In The Wings, and Red Velvet



MicroFashion with Sonic at The Folly Pub

What a wonderful winter for Junction 14

No time for the winter blues for Junction14! What an amazing few months we had over the autumn and winter. We had two recruitment workshops, two coaching sessions with the wonderful Simon Lubkowski, three social events, and six performances including a small concert for our family and friends. In October, we were honoured to be



Anne (L) Clare (R) about to perform with Junction 14 for the first time

asked back once again to take part in the Newport Pagnell Mayor's Musical Night Fundraiser. The event was held in St. Peter & St. Paul's Church in Newport Pagnell, and the event was so well attended that when we arrived there were no seats left and we had to sit in the choir stalls behind the performers! Some of our chorus members sing in other choirs and quartets who were also performing that evening, so there were quite a lot of quick costume changes going on. Two of our members joined us that evening for their first ever performance with Junction 14. Well done to Anne and Clare!

One of our many Christmas performances was once again on the concourse of Milton Keynes Railway Station. This is always a favourite of ours and the commuters and travellers are so lovely, not to mention generous with their donations. We managed to collect a total of £230 cash in an hour for our charity, MND. This is such an achievement nowadays when a lot of people do not carry cash. We loved singing all the



The Milton Keynes Station Christmas performance

Christmas songs and lots of people stopped to listen, film, and applaud us. One lady commuter said that we had raised her spirits no end after she had had a tough day at work and a challenging journey home.

We look forward to the spring months now, with already a few events in the diary.

**Val Hutchinson, PRO
Junction 14**

Welcome to the wonderful world of barbershop, Maisie!

Apologies in advance if this article feels like it should be in an edition of a parenting magazine!

We were all on tenterhooks as the deadline for the previous VoiceBox article approached. Our amazing MD, Emma McManus, was 38 weeks pregnant when we achieved fourth place at Convention and then stubbornly refused to produce her baby in time for the article deadline.

Needless to say, we were all overjoyed when Emma and Paul celebrated the birth of their beautiful baby girl, Maisie Katherine.

To say Maisie was much longed for would be a huge understatement. The Red Rosettes, who comprise not only her mum, Emma, but also her grandmother, Teresa Phillips, her aunty, Laura Phillips, and her cousin, Emily Dearden, have all been totally besotted with every picture we have seen.

We have been wonderfully supported by Deputy Chorus Manager, Teresa Phillips,

Helen Jones and Stacy Bridge, who have kept the chorus going, rehearsing, directing and performing at all our Christmas concerts and singouts in Emma's absence.



Maisie made her first public appearance at our Christmas concert and needless to say, the broody chorus couldn't take our eyes off her. Apparently, she loves our Convention ballad, but isn't as keen on the oppy!

Highlights of our Christmas performances included a beautiful

evening of music raising money for the Rosemere Cancer Charity in Preston, a joint appearance with the wonderful Leyland Brass Band and some lovely old buses to perform in front of, and our Red Rosettes Christmas concert accompanied by the children from Coppull County Primary.

Emma is now back directing the chorus, leaving Maisie in Paul's very capable hands.

In other news, our AGM saw us vote to apply for Charitable Status, choose a new charity to support (George's Kitchen in Preston), and present our annual awards. Barbershopper of the Year was Marcia Halliwell, our Chairman's Award went to Helen Jones, and The MD Award went to Jane Howarth.

We are all looking forward to another amazing year of music.

Life's a song, we sing it.

Ann Aitken
The Red Rosettes



Mission completed!

Early in 2023 I wrote to VoiceBox and told you how I was spending the year touring the UK in a caravan with my husband Adie and our little Yorkie dog, Ollie (that's us on the front page!). What an adventure it's been, travelling around our beautiful island, visiting places we had heard of but never seen.

I've been singing lead with Harmony Inspires, Oxford for the last twelve years, so it was a big deal for me to take a whole year out. I knew I would miss them, and the joy of singing, terribly. I tried to keep up with our repertoire and vowed to sit in my car every Wednesday evening for an hour and pretend to be with my choir, but I did get some funny looks from fellow campers! So, the suggestion to pop into local LABBS choruses en route was an exciting prospect.

I searched the website to find a local chorus near to where we were pitched and in total found fourteen that I had the pleasure of visiting.

My very first visit was to Red Rock Harmony, Teignmouth on 12th January 2023, closely followed by GraceNotes Acapella in Saltash on the 16th, then Celtic Chords in Truro on the 24th. I don't mind admitting I was a bit nervous when I first walked in the door, but there was no need as all three choirs were so welcoming and put me at my ease.

We travelled through Wales but sadly

our little dog was poorly and a couple of months went by before I was able to venture out, this time to Crystal Chords in Stockport on 23rd March. A real fun and lively group.

Three Crown Sound, Main Street Sound, in Hull and York respectively, and a fabulous visit to GEM Connection, Ilkeston, saw me through May.

Cumbria then Scotland, but sadly I couldn't find any chorus close enough to visit and a WHOLE FIVE MONTHS passed. Listening to recordings is just not the same as personally being amongst fellow singers.

As October approached I could feel the excitement for Convention building, not only from my own chorus (which I was still remotely involved with as part of the costume team), but the other choruses I had the pleasure to visit: Red Rosettes in Preston - a really friendly group - and the week before Convention; and The White Rosettes in Leeds, with the incomparable Sally Mclean. I had the feeling, just sitting out front watching their warm up, that I had been privy to a vocal masterclass!

I was delighted to attend Convention in Harrogate. There was no way I was going to miss it although our route had to take a bit of a diversion, much to my husband's amusement. Sitting in the audience I could see and hear the result of all the hard work of the choruses I had visited, as they performed their polished set pieces - WOW!



The Grand Tour caravan

I shed a little tear when Harmony InSpires performed. I was so proud of them, especially when they scored their highest points ever!

November saw Christmas songs being dusted off and a visit to Zero Degrees in Louth, Singchronicity and Rhapsody, both in Peterborough, and finally Norwich Harmony - a wonderful bunch of ladies, who were welcoming, friendly and great fun, with the best physical warm up ever! They definitely put me in the Christmas mood.

So that was my 2023. It's been a magical adventure that I will never forget, but thanks must go to all the choruses that welcomed me, even with my rusty voice! It was such a pleasure to meet so many of you from the LABBS family. Maybe next time I embark on a Grand UK Tour I can come and visit the choruses I missed. Hmm...now there's a thought!

Shelly Poynter
Harmony InSpires



The first visit - Red Rock Harmony



Shelly, with Sally and The White Rosettes



Harmony InSpires at Convention



The last visit - Norwich Harmony

Fascinating Rhythm, and friends

Harmony Unleashed: A night of musical splendour with Avon Harmony, Black Sheep Harmony, Bristol Fashion, and Fascinating Rhythm

The LABBS Bristol Choruses Meetup on November 9th at the Greenfield Centre in Winterbourne was a delightful gathering. Fascinating Rhythm hosted Avon Harmony, Bristol Fashion, and Black Sheep Harmony, and Natalie Feddon, the Immediate Past Chair of LABBS, shared insights on the association's initiatives. The evening featured warm-ups led by each MD, including vocal and physical exercises. Avon Harmony opened with California Dreamin' and Don't Stop Me Now, setting a brilliant musical tone.

Black Sheep Harmony mesmerised with White Winter Hymnal and an Abba medley, showcasing impressive body percussion. Natalie emphasised LABBS' commitment to members before the break, encouraging members to engage with initiatives. The evening resumed with Bristol Fashion's energetic performances of Jess Glynne's Hold My Hand and their Convention seventh place up-tempo You'll Never Go Wrong with a Song. Fascinating Rhythm delivered a powerful rendition of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah and closed with David Guetta's Titanium.

Afterward, all choruses united for a mass sing of the LABBS polecat Anthem from Chess, demonstrating the power of unity in barbershop singing. Attendees praised the event, with Avon Harmony's Mary Williams expressing excitement for future gatherings. Caroline Bamford highlighted the joy of directing Bristol Fashion Chorus, while Jo Thorn emphasised the strong barbershop community in Bristol.

The diverse repertoire showcased the creativity of barbershop singing, affirming the abundance of talent in the Bristol area. The event concluded with a testament to the strength and unity fostered by the shared love of barbershop singing, leaving participants looking forward to future celebrations of this vibrant musical community.

Nailing it in Nailsea

On November 25th Fascinating Rhythm participated in the Nailsea Festival of Music - a successful event organised by local volunteers since 2005. The singing competition felt like a mini barbershop convention, fostering a warm and supportive atmosphere. The Barbershop Open class featured various groups, including Fascinating Rhythm, The Great Western Chorus, quartet Off the Record, Avon Harmony A Capella Chorus, and quartet Specs Appeal.

Fascinating Rhythm showcased two songs in the class. The first, an up-tune with adapted lyrics for modern audiences, received praise for its confident start, clear rhythm, and engaging performance. The adjudicator, Anne Marshall, commended the group's crisp diction, balanced voices, and the director Jo Thorn's versatility. Their second song, a ballad arranged by Tom Gentry, earned an excellent score of 87, securing second place behind The Great Western Chorus.

In the Choral Open class, Fascinating Rhythm competed alongside various groups, including the Portishead Youth Choir, Waves of Harmony, Avon Harmony, and The Great Western Chorus. Performing Billy Joel's And So It Goes, they received accolades for careful word treatment, beautiful phrasing, and a moving performance. Their rendition of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah earned an even higher score of 88, yet they were edged out by The Great Western Chorus with a score of 89.

The event's success was attributed to the hardworking volunteers from the Nailsea Festival of Music, adjudicator Anne Marshall, Fascinating Rhythm's chorus organisers, and participants from other choruses. Despite the friendly competition, the inclusive and supportive environment made it an enjoyable day for everyone, allowing them to indulge in their shared love for music at a well-organised event.



Bristol Choruses Meetup, with Natalie Feddon



Fascinating Rhythm at Nailsea Festival of Music

Fascinating Rhythm celebrate their 2024 Love To Sing Day

A day brimming with musical joy and accomplishment unfolded on a frosty, late January morning when Fascinating Rhythm welcomed ladies from South Gloucestershire, Bristol, and surrounding areas. Their ambitious goal: to master a song from page to stage in just one day. The event proved to be a delightful journey as participants discovered the beauty of harmony and the thrill of live performance.

Fascinating Rhythm extended an invitation to ladies of all ages and backgrounds, aiming to create a space where participants could connect with like-minded individuals, explore their musical abilities, and embrace the transformative power of music.

At Marlwood School, participants, some with prior musical experience and others taking their first step into the world of singing, united in their shared curiosity, eagerly anticipating the start of an unforgettable musical journey.

Jane Sawyer, Chair of Fascinating Rhythm, warmly welcomed everyone, and Jo Thorn, the Musical Director, led the participants through a warm-up before organising them into their respective voice parts.

The day commenced with a performance by Fascinating Rhythm Chorus of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah, followed by the much-anticipated reveal of the song to be learned – an energetic rendition of Freddie Mercury's Don't Stop Me Now. Guided by chorus members, participants immersed themselves in the thrilling endeavour of learning the song from scratch, delving into deciphering musical sheets, mastering vocal techniques, and understanding harmonies.

As the day progressed, the ladies transformed into confident performers, showcasing their newfound skills on stage. With family and friends as their audience, the room buzzed with excitement. The chorus, now a harmonious ensemble, captivated hearts with a magical performance that left everyone applauding their remarkable journey. With beaming smiles and overflowing emotions, participants left knowing they had accomplished something truly remarkable.

Jo Thorn, the Musical Director, commended each participant for creating an extraordinary experience, expressing hope that they left not only with the memory of the day but also with the motivation to explore and embrace their musical talents in the future.

Reflecting on the day, participants shared their impressions. Mandy from Frampton on Severn was impressed by the quality of Fascinating Rhythm's singing, and expressed feeling happy, uplifted, and a real sense of achievement. Rachel from Chew Valley, a first-time choir participant, enjoyed the day thoroughly. Pam from Bath found the day uplifting and inclusive, and the chorus friendly, noting how singing in harmony has set her on a path to potentially singing again.

Fascinating Rhythm encourages these participants and others to explore more by keeping their doors open every Thursday evening, hoping to welcome those who took part in the transformative day, sparking an enduring interest in music.

**Chloe Roberts, PRO
Fascinating Rhythm**



Love to Sing

Double distinction

Red Rock A Cappella

competed in the Plymouth music festival on 18th November. We were delighted to be awarded two distinctions for the two different categories we entered.

The chorus were ecstatic with the comments from judge Christopher Fields. One of his comments, 'A beautiful, warm, well integrated choral sound. Rhythmically secure, with a fine dynamic range of softness detected' was wonderful.

Congratulations ladies: a well-deserved grade.

Jayne Trayler
Red Rock A Cappella



Warming Winter Singing

Welwyn Harmony had a busy festive season

full of singing to warm our audiences up! We were honoured to be asked to be part of Isabel Hospice's Lights of Love service at Mill Green Golf Club in Welwyn Garden City. This annual service is dedicated to loved ones we have lost throughout the year and allows friends and families to come together in one big community to celebrate their lives and remember together. We were joined by some excellent local primary schools as well as Welwyn Hatfield Community Choir, all singing a selection of carols and Christmas favourites.

Then on 15th December we were thrilled to put on our joint Christmas concert with Rickmansworth Players Choir (and associated talented musicians!), at Christchurch in Chorleywood. The two choirs met earlier in the year at the Watford Festival of Music and this concert was a result of our joint enthusiasm. The poster promised two choirs and one gloriously festive evening which we think we delivered! Each choir sang a range of music from their repertoire, many with a Christmas theme but not exclusively so. The two choirs then joined together for rousing renditions of *Jingle Bell Rock* and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*. We received many



compliments from the audience, some even saying it was our best ever concert! We thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with Rickmansworth Players Choir and hope we will be able to perform together again in the future.

Emma Harper, Trustee
Welwyn Harmony



Silver Lining round up

The end of the year is a time to reflect

This year saw a few long-standing members leave Silver Lining. Lin has new grandchildren whom she is very much enjoying watching grow. Who knows, maybe we will have a third generation Barbershopper in time? Jan, one of our founder members left us for health reasons. We still keep in touch with her and have chosen The Alzheimer's Association as our charity for the next two years in recognition of everything she has done for and with us. Katya is in the process of moving back home to Finland so clearly the commute on a Wednesday night is too much. We did persuade her to sing with us at Christmas and continue to work on her to stay. After all, Finland is so cold!!

A time to celebrate and be sociable

Our fabulous new members have brought a new energy to the chorus (please don't tell our MD Sara, as our energy levels really don't need increasing!). Mereta has completed her first year with us and is driving forward our new weekday singing opportunities for small groups. We love having her motivating us and pushing us a little outside our comfort zones. She has joined our warm up team and does a fantastic job. And most recently, Rachel passed her audition and then scarpered off to get married. She has now volunteered for a committee post which is amazing news. We had a week off rehearsals in December to see the King's Singers in Birmingham and so had time for a chat and a visit to the Christmas Market. Some enjoyed a mulled wine or two, too! We even tried to recruit a Kings's Singers bass into Silver Lining. He has yet to turn up but we live in hope.



A new member of the Bass Section? With Heather. Naomi, Bernadine and Caroline. Congratulations!



Our beautiful new lead, Rachel, on her happy day. Congratulations!

A time for Congratulations

Silver Lining Chorus has been going for twenty-four years and we are so lucky to have many members that have been singing barbershop for that time and longer. We celebrated 30 years of LABBS membership for our magnificent MD Sara, and two of our fantastic founder members Pat and Judith. We also celebrated twenty-five years of beautiful bari singing for Karen, our Bari Section Lead.

A time to learn

In January we were lucky enough to be a training chorus at the LABBS and BABS Directors Education Weekend in Coventry. It was brilliant to be part of that and I think we learned as much about reading directors' instructions as hopefully they did on how to direct with clarity. We also got to spend a little time with Lux A Cappella who were sharing the task with us, and we're sure that The Belles of Three Spires had a fabulous day on the Sunday when it was their turn.

And a time to look forward

The year is looking busy with three coaching sessions booked, convention plans and accommodation well underway, and further competition opportunities too. So in true Silver Lining way we are taking things very seriously and behaving impeccably during rehearsals. *(MD and VoiceBox Proof Reader's Comment: I WILL HOLD YOU TO THIS!!!)*

Heather Morton, PRO
Silver Lining



Celebration time. 30 years for Sara Jackson, Judith Medlock and Pat Flavell, and 25 years for Karen Lewis



Warming up with Theo Hicks at the Directors weekend 2024

Spinnaker Birthday Party

Save the date - Saturday 13th July 2024

Featuring
Scratch quartets
Bake off competition
Raffle
Afterglow

details to follow



Date: Saturday 13th July 2024 | Time: 2.00pm to 8.00pm
Venue: Park Community School, Middle Park Way, Havant, PO9 4BU

Thank you, Pam!

At our AGM in February

our Team Leader, Pam, stood down from her role after fifteen years of service to our chorus.

I joined Celtic Chords, or Dres Kernow as it was then, many years ago. Pam was Team Leader back then and has led us through some wonderful times since, as well as calmly steering us through some very stormy seas. That we are still here and thriving is in no small part due to her hard work and dedication to our chorus.

As well as being a fantastic Team Leader, Pam is one of the kindest, most thoughtful people I know. Many of us have reason to be grateful for her generosity of spirit which she has demonstrated in many ways, not only as a chorus member but also as a friend.

As an example of her kindness, she has twice organised a posse of Celtic fairies to transform my garden. The

second time I had been in Spain and on my return, I thought I'd come home to the wrong house! The change was nothing short of miraculous and had involved many, many hours of hard work on the part of the Celtic fairies. A Celtic husband had even been recruited!

And who can forget Pam's jams? Her jars of sweet loveliness are legendary, just like her.

Pam is a very capable organiser and as we all know, it will require a very special person to fill her shoes. I think we have that person in Anna though, our 2023 Deputy Team Leader who is now stepping into the Team Leader role.

Thank you for all you've done for us, Pam, and welcome to your new role, Anna - we're sure you're going to be brilliant!

**Isabell Austin, Deputy MD
Celtic Chords**



Pam and Anna

What a year we had!

Happy New Year All! Wow, what a brilliant year Chorus IcenI had in 2023.

Although we didn't compete at convention last year we did have a great time with singouts, coaching days, and concerts, plus our own charity fundraising concert which took place in November. It raised over £2,000 for a local charity.

We took on one brand new newbie, Alice, into our lead section! Alice is from a Musical Theatre background but fits in very well with us! We have an Open Evening planned in early February this year and hope to take on a few new recruits! 2024 will see us back competing and we're looking forward to Bournemouth in October!

Marvellous Mandy Miller
Lead Section Leader, AMD, and social media wizz
Chorus IcenI



Join us in Cleveland, Ohio!

By the time you are reading this article it will be just over three months until we are at BHS International in Cleveland, Ohio. As Sally McLean, our MD, mentioned at Convention in October, in a perfect world we would want every LABBS chorus to join us. We know that is highly impractical, so our very own Jean Lewis came up with the Jean-ious (get it?) idea of each LABBS chorus donating a memento to represent themselves. This memento would be tucked into the top of a White Rosette's dress when they appear on the stage at BHS. We have 58 members attending - I know we can't believe it either! Thus, every chorus can be represented at BHS if they wish. Many choruses have sent us theirs,

and we love what we've been sent, but there's still plenty of time to get yours sent in!

So, if you haven't already, get your thinking caps on and send your small (remember they will be tucked in the top of our dresses) mementos to us! If you don't have a contact, please email takeyouwithus@thewhiterosettes.org.uk and we can give you more info!

Finally, we are still fundraising! Since Convention we have performed singouts at Living North Magazine's Christmas Fair at York Racecourse, and Thackwray's Medical Museum, Leeds. Some of our members, including Jenny Jones and Jean, (yes, she is a superstar) have also been fundraising at craft fairs

and our fabulous 'fundraising lead', Margaret Wharton, held a 'Call My Bluff' evening at which Rooftop Social Club Quartet had their first official singout. With plenty of sing-outs and activities lined up for 2024, it's promising to be another great year for the chorus!

If you've been meaning to support us, our [fundraising page](#) is still open.

And, of course, we owe a BIG THANK YOU to everyone who has supported so far – you are AMAZING.

Ruth Kirby, PRO
The White Rosettes



New year, new members!

Crystals have started the year with a new song, an open evening and eleven potential new members through the door. They seem to have caught the barber-bug and want to return, so fingers crossed you will meet them all soon! At the other end of the spectrum, this month we got to give out four long service awards. Sue Ward (25 years), Carol McCully (30 years), Pat Gregory (35 years) and our MD Monica Funnell (40 years!) - see page 22 for a photo. What a fun way for 2024 to begin!

We are in full swing of preparing for the BIBA convention (formerly SABS) in Calpe in April. We've been drawn sixth out of eighteen choruses and we'll be competing alongside our LABBS sisters from Abbey Belles and Main Street Sound. We know BIBA2024 will be full of song and sangria. Fingers crossed for the sun to join us too!

Laura Orton, PRO
Crystal Chords



Our first open evening on 18th January with our potential new members

More Harmony LOVE To Sing!

It may sound a little obvious I mean, we wouldn't be doing what we do if we didn't love it - but for four, fun-filled weeks, More Harmony Women's Barbershop Chorus have been sharing our passion for all things a cappella on our *Love To Sing* course.

The course began hot on the heels of our chorus AGM, at which we welcomed Natalie Hann as Co-Chair alongside existing Chair, Emma Tofi (me!), whilst also naming her as Barbershopper Of The Year. A rather busy start to 2024 for Nat, I'm sure you'll agree - and she gets to be on the front page of this edition with our MD, Lesley! Our lovely Bari, Alice, was also presented with the Pauline Gobbitt Award For Musicality, given each year by our MD in memory of our founder.

A week later, it was back to business, as we started our singing course. We had some fabulous women through our doors, all raring to go! We taught these awesome new singers two songs - the gorgeous *True Love Ways* by Buddy Holly, and the Billy Joel classic *Uptown Girl* - and before we knew it, they were harmonising as though they'd been with us for years!

More Harmony are really proud of the warm welcome we give to everyone who walks through our doors and we were delighted with the feedback we had after week one. "We were greeted like old friends," one newbie exclaimed. "I can't wait to come back next week!"

The *Love To Sing* course culminated in a concert on February 15th giving our new singers the chance to show off everything they'd learned to an audience of friends and family.

If it sounds like More Harmony had earned a bit of a breather, rest assured we won't be sitting still for long! Wadebridge Festival of Music and Speech takes place at the end of February and at the time of writing, we're looking to equal or better the distinction we achieved at last year's event. We can't wait to hit that stage!

We've got plenty planned for 2024, from busking all over North Cornwall to recording tracks to put up on Spotify and we're really excited about it all. The future's bright - the future's purple!

Emma Tofi, Co-Chair
More Harmony



Alice winning the Pauline Gobbitt Award For Musicality

Margie Adams

It was with great sadness that Avon Harmony had to say goodbye to one of our longest standing members, Margie Adams.

Margie joined Avonbelles (as we were then called) in the late 70s and was a dedicated member until ill health forced her to stand down in mid 2000. All who knew her on and off the risers will remember her as a radiant soul who was attuned to the joys of singing, particularly as a barbershop tenor. She also sang in a quartet (Anything Goes). For Margie, it was not just singing but an expression of her artistic spirit.

Her artistic talents extended beyond singing; she was a talented artist whose paintings and sculptures were another facet of her many interests.

Margie was also a lover of animals and many of us will remember her two standard poodles and her last doggie companion, Bertie.

She will be sadly missed but her radiant smile and happy demeanour will never be forgotten.

Pearl Conway
Avon Harmony

Marion Brooks

Marion joined Bristol Fashion back in 2004. She'd been to see three local barbershop choruses (her husband sang with The Great Western Chorus), and asked a friend, Janis, if she wanted to go along too. They both auditioned as leads the following week and were 'in'!

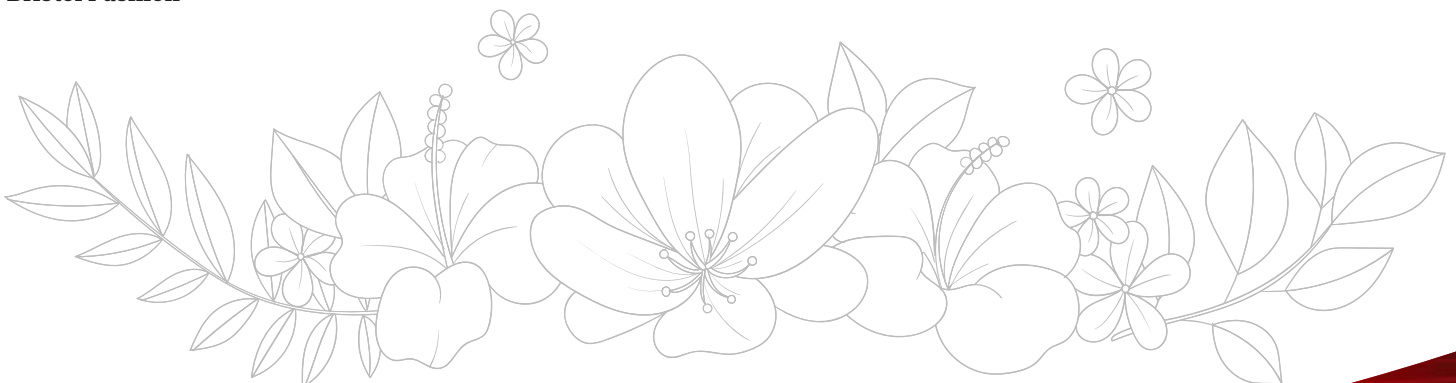
In 2007 Bristol Fashion's MD, Colin, resigned and Marion knew just what to do: approach a certain 23-year-old Assistant Director of The Great Western Chorus. The rest, as they say, is history!

As Chair she steered Bristol Fashion through some tricky times, and of course some wonderful experiences too. She was a massive advocate for youth and for modernising the chorus, and was instrumental in helping the club gain charity status.

When Marion retired from competing and joined 9-5, she remained passionate about Bristol Fashion, and continued to support them in her characteristically generous way.

Marion's strong Christian faith and her career in nursing enabled her to offer discreet sympathy and support to anyone in need. A generous soul who will be greatly missed.

Janis Smith
Bristol Fashion



Congratulations!

Congratulations to Crystal Chords' Long Service Award recipients: Sue Ward (who's also Cheshire Acapella's MD), who received her 25-year award, Carol McCully who received her 30-year award, Pat Gregory who received her 35-year award, and our MD Monica Funnell who

received her 40-year award. That's 130 years of barbershop experience between them!

**Laura Orton, PRO
Crystal Chords**



(L-R) Club chair Alison Liddell, MD Monica Funnell, Pat Gregory, and Carol McCully



(L-R) Club chair Alison Liddell, Sue Ward, and MD Monica Funnell. Peeking in the background is Sue's husband Ted!

Junction 14 Long Service Awards

This year we have two members who received their Long Service pins and certificates. They were presented by our Membership Secretary, Serena Teer, at our AGM in February.

Congratulations to Dorothy Moore on 35 years membership of LABBS, and to Marion George on 25 years membership of LABBS.

A fantastic achievement - well done.

**Val Hutchinson, PRO
Junction 14**



Dorothy Moore (L) receiving her 35-year Long Service Award



Marion George (L) receiving her 25-year Long Service Award

Congratulations, Anna!

Club at Large member, Anna Fletcher, has recently received her 35-year Long Service Award and pin.

Anna was introduced to barbershop in 1986 by her dad, Noel Robinson, who sang with Derby Chorus, Kegworth, Grand Central, and Costa Chordbusters in Spain. He still listens to barbershop and looks at his many photographs.

Anna's other barbershop inspiration is her best friend Janet Micklewright whom she met thirty-seven years ago when she joined Derby's Dawn Chorus.

Anna said "I have many joyful memories of singing and continue to find it a wonderful engaging hobby. I am a member of LABBS Club at Large and I also sing with Ignite UK, Sweet Adelines International".

Louise Williams
Membership Admin



Anna and Noel

Award lunch

My friend, Seager Banks, presented me with my 40-year pin and certificate at lunch on a Saturday in February.

Seager is currently a member of Capital Connection, but I have known her since 1999 when I joined Velvet Harmony. Seager and I sang in the Mixed Quartet, Mosaic, for eight or nine years with Margaret Davies and my husband, Neil Watkins (Music Judge, arranger and BABS Harmony College Educator) who was also Director of Velvet Harmony.

I was previously a member of Coast to Coast, Capital Connection during the time they won their first gold medal (LABBS), and Merrow Chimes (Guildford) where I was also Director for a short time (1989-1991).

In 2019, I stepped down from active barbershop singing and retired from a SAI chorus, Vocal Dimension (Redhill), with whom I gained two SAI International Silver Medals in their Harmony Classic competition. I currently sing with Cantata Conviva Chorus in the Reading area and Hearts Sing Chorus in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

Kay Griggs-Wright
Club At Large



Seager and Kay

Techie Corner (not really) - Websites!

Is your club or quartet considering revamping their website?

Debi Cox (that's me!) has been the LABBS Web Manager for a number of years, and she (!) can help you with yours!

I took on the LABBS site when coding websites was my day job, and 'amateur' websites were starting to become a thing. Through the years, the LABBS site has been through various designs and content has grown considerably. The site used to be completely hand-coded and maintained by me, as I didn't trust the likes of Wordpress (and still don't!).

Then the HarmonySite platform came along. It was built by a barbershopper for barbershoppers, and that insider knowledge has made my role so much easier since we moved to the platform a couple of years ago. Everything makes sense, and there's tons of functionality built in that is actually useful and relevant to how we run our clubs and Association. The site owner 'gets it' and is helpful to boot, creating more bespoke tools to LABBS' requirements.



If you are considering re-doing your club or quartet website, I would strongly recommend HarmonySite, if you want:

- a site that more users can collaborate on, to share the responsibility for updating it
- something easy to update, as it's very similar to formatting in a Word document
- a site which out-of-the-box is pretty much what you'd want it to be, but with complete flexibility if you do want to add content that's not standard
- a site that is automatically mobile-friendly
- a site that takes care of member logins, and is easy to manage for mailing lists
- lots of ready-made, useful, members-area options and tools, to help you run your chorus or group more efficiently than ever.

Once you understand the basics of editing (very simple once you know how), and how everything hangs together, it's quite simple to create something that looks professional. Admin becomes so much easier than managing with Google Sheets and Doodles, so you can spend more time on the music.

There's even an option for an app now, if you want something more svelte to use out and about for the important stuff!

As a newly appointed LLO with a remit which includes (amongst other things) helping members in this area, if any club (or quartet!) wants to find out more about HarmonySite and what it can offer, for now or the future, is setting up a new HarmonySite website from scratch and needs pointing in the right direction, or if you have an existing site and get stuck with something and need help, please contact me at llo-debi@labbs.org.uk and I'll help you in any way I can!

Debi Cox
LABBS Liaison Officer and Web Manager

